

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 8, Verses 12 - 17
Notes from Tuesday November 30, 2010
Last Revised on November 30, 2010

Songs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we did not meet, because of the national holiday in Japan.

The previous two weeks, November 9 and 16, we looked at the first 11 verses, of Chapter 8.

Tonight after a very brief review we will continue reading at Verse 12 of Chapter 8.

And we shall read only to Verse 17.

Please open your text now to Chapter 1 and follow along with me as I review.

Review

Remember the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is ... the **gospel**.

After the first 17 verses or so, which contain important introductory material, Paul begins in **Verse 18** of Chapter 1 to examine the **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men. This examination continues to the end of Chapter 1.

In **Chapter 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3**, Paul argues that such ungodliness and unrighteousness has **always** pervaded **all** of humanity, including **even** the most **law-abiding Jews**.

The point, as Paul explains in **the remainder of Chapter 3**, is that nobody can be saved from sin and death, **except** as a **free** gift of God, which we receive through **faith**.

That this has always and everywhere been true, Paul illustrates in **Chapter 4**, which is all about **Abraham**.

In **the first 11 verses of Chapter 5**, Paul speaks of the peace, joy, hope, and love we experience as we come to understand that God in Christ came down to suffer **with** us and **for**

us while we were still his enemies.

In the remainder of **Chapter 5 (Verses 12-21)** Paul illuminates the marvelous power and efficacy of the gospel, through which God in Christ eternally overcomes the Fall of Man:

In Chapter 6, and in the first six verses of Chapter 7, Paul makes it plain that the gospel is not an invitation for Christians to continue sinning, but just the opposite.

In the remainder of Chapter 7 Paul explains how the law helps us to understand our sinful nature and cannot itself be blamed for our sin.

Now we come to **Chapter 8** where we have already spent two weeks on the first 11 verses.

Q. What is focus of this chapter?

A. The Holy Spirit.

We have noted carefully that the Holy Spirit is not a thing, but a person.

It is improper to ask “what is the Holy Spirit.,

so let me ask you then:

Q. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. God

A. One of the three persons (along with the God the Father and God the Son) whom we find in the one true God.

This is a hard thought, but necessary to a proper understanding of God and the Bible.

In reading the first seven Chapters of Romans, we have understood that it was God the **Father** who sent his **Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, to die on the cross as a propitiation for sin, and there openly to condemn sin in the flesh.

Pastor Takeshi’s sermon this past weekend was a very fine exposition of this: of the **finished** work of Christ on the cross.

That day, on which Christ was crucified, was the day of our salvation,

That day on which **Christ** was crucified, was the day of salvation for **everyone** who ever has been, is, and ever shall be saved from sin and death.

We understand that Jesus died **once** for **all**.

We understand that each of us comes to **know** his or her salvation through **faith**

And we know that such faith is the **miraculous, supernatural** work of God, the **Holy Spirit** in us.

If we truly **have** faith, then it is **from** God.

Once I was **blind**, but now I **see**.

Once I was **dead** in sin, but now I am **alive** in Christ

Such is the **regenerative** work of God the Holy Spirit.

But creating such saving faith in us, is not the **only** work of the Holy Spirit.

As he brings us to faith in Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, in some sense, **takes possession** of us!

He comes to **own** us and he moves **in** and takes **control**.

Because we **belong** to God now and He **lives** in us, **we live** according to **His** rules,

We “*...walk **not** according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*”

Even while we continue to inhabit this “*body of death*,” this flesh which has already been condemned on the cross and shall soon surely die, that part of us which shall live and walk in accordance with the Spirit of God forever is **already** alive and active in ways that can be detected,

This new life is detected first in our **minds**, which are increasingly drawn to the things of the **Spirit** and increasingly **less** attentive to things of the flesh,

We increasingly come to lose our fear of **dying** to the flesh and, instead, come to **welcome** it, as the complete and final release from the sins of the flesh.

We welcome death because we know that we will live **forever, with Christ**, in a **better place**.

The same Spirit that raised **Christ** from the dead, that is the **Holy Spirit**, is also in **us**!

So ends our review.

Are there any questions or comments before we read on?

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 12-17

OK then would someone please read Chapter 8, Verses 12-17, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs---heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Thank you.

Verse 12 reads:

(Verse 12)

“So then brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

“So then...”

Paul is drawing a **conclusion** from what went before.

“So then brothers,”

Paul's conclusion applies **equally** to **all** believers in Christ, whom Paul's calls **brothers**,

by which he means to include both brothers **and** sisters,

and this of course applies equally to **you** and to me also, if we are truly believers in Christ.

“We are [all] debtors...”

Q. So what **is** a **debtor**?

A. Someone who has a **debt** to pay.

Q. What is a **debt**?

A. That which we have **received** from and must repay **to** someone else.

Q. Is anyone here a debtor? --- please explain (non-spiritual example first of all)

(examples may include house loans, credit card debt, personal borrowing from friends and family)

(examples may also include debts of gratitude to ancestors, parents, teachers, and the like)

Here Paul is speaking to **Christians** about **Christian** things. And he is speaking **figuratively**.

Q. So let me ask those of you here who are **Christians**, to whom do **all** Christians owe a debt?

A. To **Jesus Christ**, God the **Son**, who became a man and went to the cross to take away our sin.

A. To God the **Father**, who created and ordered all things and sent his son to save us from sin.

A. To God the **Holy Spirit**, who awakened us from death to saving faith in Christ and who has come to dwell in us and is even now leading us safely home to be with God in Christ forever.

A. To the Triune **God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who in bringing us to holiness and on **to** blessed eternal life, **delivers** us from this sinful flesh.

A. Our debt to God is **massive**, **inescapable**, and **utterly** beyond our ability to repay.

I believe that all of this and more is in Paul’s mind here in verse 12, but he states it **negatively** by reminding us that our debt is **NOT** to the flesh, to live according **to** it, which is to sin, and to die.

It is precisely the **flesh** (and sin and death) **from** which God has delivered us.

Q. Why does Paul need to **remind** us of such an obvious thing? (i.e. that we owe nothing to the flesh)

A. Because we **constantly** forget and need to be reminded.

A. We often do, indeed, live as if we owed much to our flesh:

We are **keenly** aware of all of the things that we desire and think we need or even deserve: more money, a better job, a better school, a wife, a husband, a different wife or husband, more free time, a vacation, more friends, a better church! etc.

So Paul reminds us that our debt is **NOT** to the flesh, which is already dead and passing away.

We should not care about and work for that kind of stuff.

In this way Paul means to remind us of where our debt truly **does** lie,

meaning, as we have already noted, the debt that we **do** owe to God.

It is worth stopping here, I think, to **meditate** on something.

We very often remind ourselves that salvation is by **grace** through **faith**, and that even our **faith** is a gracious free gift of God, so that **none** of us can **boast** in our own salvation.

This is the **gospel**.

Nothing is more true and this bears constant repeating.

Pastor Takeshi reminded us of these things **very** well this past weekend.

Paul has made these points very effectively here in this letter and in his other writings.

I think we in this class basically **do** understand that this means we **cannot** ever even begin to take **credit** for our salvation.

We did not and could not have done anything to **earn** it or to **deserve** it. Nor **can** we, ever!

However I think we often **do** make the mistake of thinking that this means our salvation **costs nothing**.

Of course we know that it cost **God** something --- we usually remember that part, because the **cross** reminds us.

But what we often do **not** understand and remember well enough, at least I often do not, is that **we** owe a **debt**, to **God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is a debt that we can not **ever** repay.

And this does **not** mean that we can simply forget about the debt, because it is **so** large.

(This is a very common mistake in Christian thinking.)

On the contrary, the size of our debt to God means that we must **continually** pay **all** that we have to God **forever**.

We are called to imitate Jesus.... to follow **Jesus**,**all** the way to the **cross**.

The meaning of this is not, of course, that we will all end up literally being **crucified**.

The meaning is that we all owe a debt of **total obedience**, **complete self-sacrifice**, and **perfect trust**

These things are not **optional** ...for any Christian.

“Grace is obedience.” (Barth)

“ We cannot **use** grace as a dispensation from following Christ.” (Bonhoeffer)

“Only he who is obedient **can** believe.” (Bonhoeffer)

“Cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works.” (Bonhoeffer)

The whole ministry of Jesus teaches this ... from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus calls his new disciples together and tells them that they are **blessed** because, as his disciples, they **will surely** suffer ... to the supper just prior to his death where Jesus ties a towel around his waist and washes his disciples feet, and reminding them of what greatness looks like in the Kingdom of God, where the first shall be last!

Woe be to us if we forget our **debt** to God and use God’s grace as a dispensation **from** following Christ, and **blessed** be we if we share **fully** in his suffering. This is the gospel **too!**

Verse 13 continues

(Verse 13)

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

God's grace is really a very serious, hard, sweaty, bloody business.

Being redeemed by Christ, means living according to the law of the Spirit of life, means putting to death the deeds of the body, means giving everything you have and ever will have to God forever.

It all hangs together. You cannot have one without the other. There is no "*cheap grace*."

To continue to live according to the flesh is to die.

But again, it is important not to confuse cause and effect.

We do not become spiritual by putting to death the deeds of the body.

We put to death the deeds of the body because God --- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit --- has redeemed us, come to live in us, and made us spiritual.

We belong to God and, therefore, he leads us unfailingly in the difficult way that we should go.

He makes us his children and expects us to act like it!! Like our brother Jesus!!

Verse 14 reads

(Verse 14)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

I want to spend a lot of time with this verse.

The first word, "*for*," looks back to Verse 13, which says that living according to the flesh leads to death, whereas the way to eternal life, is to live by the Spirit which necessarily involves putting to death the deeds of the body.

Verse 14 explains that this correlation between life and death, spirit and flesh, can also be

understood as a correlation between **being** a child of God and **not** being a child of God.

All of God's children **are** led by his Spirit and therefore **put** to death the things of the flesh and therefore **live** eternally.

There are no exceptions.

Any of you who are God's children **are** led by the Spirit.

Consequently you **will** put to death the things of the flesh and have eternal life.

This is all of a piece.

There are **no** Christians who are **not** led by the Spirit.

And there are **no** Christians who are led by the Spirit any **more** or **less** than other Christians are.

At least not in the sense that Paul is discussing **here**.

Q. So what **does** Paul mean when he says the we are all "*led by the Spirit of God?*"

It might interest you to know that this, Romans 8:14, is almost the **only** passage in the Bible that speaks of the **leading of the Holy Spirit**.

The only **other** passage that is similar is **Galatians 5:18**, which reads: "**But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**" There quite clearly, Paul is speaking of our moral obedience, of the moral battle that is going on between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit.

A related but still less similar reference is John 16:13 which reads: "**When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.**" There and in the surrounding passages Jesus is speaking of Christological and theological truth, the truth concerning himself and his father and the things of the coming **kingdom**.

Otherwise we can find no direct or indirect reference in the Bible to "**leading of the Holy Spirit**"

So whatever we **do** know about the leading of the Holy Spirit, we must learn from these passages we have just read and, in particular, from Romans 8:14

First, then, let's notice that neither in Romans 8:14 or either of the other two passages is the

Holy Spirit said to provide any sort of practical guidance or leading concerning things of the flesh or the affairs of this world.

Second, in view of everything that has gone before, we understand that the Holy Spirit is not about the business of leading us **away** from earthly suffering. It seems rather more likely, on balance, that the path he chooses will pass **through** suffering.

Indeed the whole notion of the Holy Spirit somehow giving concrete or detailed earthly instructions seems somehow counter to the **spirit** of all these passages.

The Holy Spirit **cares**, so to speak, only about things that are **spiritual**. Things that are eternal.

He has set us on the **path** that leads to life eternal and through, out of, and away from the things of the flesh and of the world.

It is a journey that **nobody** can walk alone, we have discovered.

Only God's children can walk there, but they can do so only by being **led**.

And the Holy Spirit, is the one who leads us on **that** difficult and largely hidden path.

So let's try to understand a bit about **how** he leads us and what this means.

First of all, when one is "**led**" one does not go his **own** way.

Left to **ourselves** we would all eventually wander into to **Hell**.

The "leading of the Holy Spirit" is, then, an influence over our actions which is **external** to us, external even to the **regenerated** us, and which acts **contrary** to our natural inclination.

This is **NOT** a matter of our higher nature gaining control over our lower nature. Rather it is a matter of **God** taking possession of and gaining control over us.

We do not "**lead ourselves**."

Secondly, when one is "**led**" one is not simply **directed** where to go or merely **assisted** as he finds his own way.

If Paul had **meant** to say such things, he could have said them. There were perfectly good Greek words available to convey the ideas of **direction** and **assistance** and **guidance** and **teaching**.

Paul uses those words **elsewhere** (e.g. the passage cited previously in John 16) but carefully

does not use those words here.

Clearly from all the Paul has written to this point, we understand that men **never** find their own way and if simply directed, we **refuse** to follow the directions.

That is why we need to be **led**.

The verb here translated as "**led**" was carefully chosen by Paul from among several other verbs which he **might** have chose.

It is the same verb used in Matthew 21:2 where Jesus tells his disciples to go and find the ass and her colt and to loose them and **lead** them to Him.

The verb is also used in Luke 18:40 where Christ commanded that the **blind** man of Jericho be **led** to him.

The same verb is used in John 18:28 when Jesus is **led** before Caiaphas and in Acts 6:12 when Stephen is **led** before the Sanhedrin.

This is the verb that Paul selected to describe the "leading of the Holy Spirit."

It is a leading that is not only **external** but also **compulsory** and **irresistible**.

It is a command which is **enforced** and cannot be **effectively** disobeyed!

At the same time, however, when one is **led** in this way, one is **not carried**

Paul had words available to convey that notion also.

As when Peter says that the words of the prophets are carried by the Spirit of God.

In that case the prophet is passive and has not control over what is said.

He cannot be said to work out his own prophesy in fear and trembling.

As we who are led by Spirit are instructed to work out our own salvation.

So while we cannot resist the leading of the Spirit we are involved in the process.

And to be led in this way is not to be dragged or drawn.

Paul had such words available to him also.

As when it is said in John 6:44 than no man can come unto Christ except the Father **draws**

him.

That is an accurate description of the first step in our salvation, or conversion from death to life.

But following conversion Paul does not use this verb to describe how we are led.

While we are led firmly and irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, we are neither carried, drawn, or dragged.

We walk the path by our own steps.

This is rather like a difficult escape or rescue operation, where the rescuer comes and leads us safely through difficult and dangerous surroundings and on to safety.

He's not going to lose us, but we need to work for it.

Because our rescuer is God Himself, we can be fully assured of our survival.

And still somehow the road is very difficult.

It is the road to the cross.

(Verse 15)

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Animals are led.

Prisoners and slaves are led.

But children are also led.

And praise be to God Almighty, who invites us to call him Father!

Even as donkeys of the living God, I dare say we would be perfectly safe!!

But as children of the Living God, we need not fear anything of the flesh or in the world.

We need fear only God, and this only as child might fear a perfect, loving parent.

We fear offending him. We fear dishonoring him. We fear disappointing him. We fear holding back.

And he lifts us up. And leads us on.

(Verse 16)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

How do we know this?

Somehow, we know.

The God who is capable of saving us is capable of assuring us that we are saved.

The Father who loves us wants us to know that we are loved,

and he is capable of letting us know this,

and that he expects much from us and for us.

Notice here that one instance of the word “spirit” is not capitalized.

this is our higher faculty, our heart, our inner part that delights in the things of God,

that actually loves God and is for God and is willing to pay everything to God forever.

(Verse 17)

and if children, then heirs---heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

God loves us so much, that he calls Christ our brother,

and he molds us into his likeness,

meaning that we suffer as he suffered,

so that we may be glorified as he is glorified.

Q. What is the point of all of this?

A. I am not sure I know the whole point but ...

A. God is making us into the sort of children he desires and with which he intends to spend

eternity!

Surely then, we owe everything to God and nothing to the flesh.

And we must live accordingly,

Questions? Comments?

Closing Prayer