

Romans 8 v 1-11

Introduction

Last week we looked at the “wretched man”. The good he would, he did not do, and the evil he would not, that he did. Delights in the Law of God, but another Law brings him into captivity to law of sin. Pre-Christian experience? But present tense is used, and Christian delights here in the Law of God. Normal Christian experience? In one sense this is true because of gradual discovery of sin in life. But from another viewpoint – abnormal. Absence of references to Holy Spirit whereas 30 references to “I”, “me” and “my”. In contrast to Romans 8 with over 20 references to the Holy Spirit. Therefore here is the Christian acting out of character as regenerate man. Relying on own resources. Not abiding in Christ. Eyes off Christ. Out of touch. Meets demands of law and temptation in any power short of definitely sought-for power of the Holy Spirit. Not using God as he might do. Christian condition when not seeking the Holy Spirit. Never pass out of the condition described in Romans 7. Not Christian life as God intended, yet true of many Christians.

No eradication of sin. No sinless perfection. Way of deliverance is through Christ Jesus our Lord. God’s method is not eradication but by suppression by counteraction of a stronger power. The Christian life – sin residing, but not reigning. Must appropriate and be under his control. This is a daily choice. All difference to our lives if we take doctrine of the Holy Spirit seriously.

Deliverance we have through Christ is described in greater detail in Romans 8. Splendid and glorious chapter. A Lutheran preacher said “If Holy Scripture was a ring, and the Epistle to the Romans was a precious stone, Chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel”. Wonderful charm of chapter 8. Atmosphere of blessing all through it. Important doctrines, especially of the Holy Spirit, meet here. Pulsates with life. Begins with “No condemnation”, ends with “No separation”, and in between “No defeat”.

Two Foundations for Christian Life

Two great gifts of Salvation through faith. Has given us (a) Son, and (b) Spirit. Through the Son we receive justification; Through the Spirit we have regeneration leading to sanctification.

The Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh (8:3). Like us in all things except sin. NB He was not sent in sinful flesh – because Christ was sinless. Nor was he sent in likeness of flesh – because Christ was truly human. His flesh was sinless and real. He was sent “**in the likeness of sinful flesh**”. Sent by God to die as sacrifice for sin. He was made sin, bore its penalty, and it was condemned. Its power over us was broken once for all. **Therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus** (8:1). God has nothing against us. Judgment day is behind us. Past is cleared. Made right with him. In right relationship with God. His power can now enter and transform and change our lives. Foundation blessing. Cannot talk about holiness till guilt and condemnation of sin are out of the way.

Peace with God comes before peace of God. Then gift of Holy Spirit. **Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** (8:2). New life. As it grows we are sanctified. In Christ we receive justification (by Christ's death). By Holy Spirit, we receive sanctification (by Spirit's indwelling power). One is the ground by which we are saved, the other is the evidence. One is the root, the other is the fruit. Calvin said "Faith alone justifies, but it can never remain alone". Christ's righteousness is imputed, then Christ's righteousness is imparted.

Only Christians know these two blessings. **To them which are in Christ Jesus** (8:1). Into the Christian's life comes the Holy Spirit. New nature, divine life. Therefore in the Christian there are two natures. Flesh (Rearrange letters and omit "H" and result is SELF) the nature we are born with, with its sinful downward tendency. Often respectable, but focus and reliance on self. Manifestations vary, can be very moral and religious, but not set on Christ. Secondly, the new spiritual nature by the Holy Spirit, bearing spiritual things, holiness. Two tendencies are at war (see Galatians ch5). We automatically live according to the flesh unless we deliberately appropriate and ask for the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes to rescue, allies himself with renewed mind, and subdues flesh. When the Spirit is in control, there is life and peace, integration and harmony. We would prove the Holy Spirit more if we only realised this. In contrast to the unbeliever with only one nature – flesh – whose tendency is spiritual death.

Possession of Holy Spirit – **Spirit of God** – is same as **Spirit of Christ** (8:9) – is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. If we have no Spirit of Christ, if Christ does not live in us by Spirit, this means we are not his.

Summary – Two gifts (Son and Spirit) lead to two blessings (Justification and Sanctification). Christian man is marked by possession of Holy Spirit. He has two natures – flesh, into which he can soon lapse, and the Spirit of God. God's purpose is that we should be Spirit-controlled, Christ-centred and God-focussed. Controlled by, led by Holy Spirit. Yield to the Holy Spirit means being more like Christ daily and more one with him, and coming nearer to heaven. Power for holiness is not mere influence but Divine person who lives within us. Counteracts power of flesh, which is within us till the second coming when we will be perfected.

Are we there? Peeping through windows or actually in the house this morning? Sir James Young Simpson (who claimed chloroform discovery the greatest discovery since Christ) on his deathbed said "I die with unshakable confidence in Jesus only".

The Work of the Indwelling Spirit

Holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit, as we walk in the Spirit, by his power and under his control. What God requires he first of all gives.

(a) **Made me free from the law of sin and death** (8:2). Downward pull of old nature. Implementing promise of **Sin shall not have dominion over you** (6:14). Not sin's helpless slave. **Walk in newness of life** (6:4). New power and deliverance through the Holy Spirit. Principle of counteraction. Aeroplane should fall by law of gravitation, but upheld and climbs by law of aerodynamics.

G. Goodman story. Boy in garden asked father what was the law of gravitation. "It is that all material objects fall to the ground. This is a law of nature." "Is a tulip a material object?" "Certainly" "Why not those in that bed there, that fall to the ground instead of standing up straight?" "That is because of another law – a law of life which counteracts the law of gravitation".

So the Holy Spirit is a counteracting law to law of sin and death within. Divine instrument of counteraction. Just as law of floating bodies, demonstrated by lifebelt, counteracts the law that makes someone sink.

(b) He enables us to keep the law. **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us** (8:4). In 7:22 we saw that the wretched man delights in the Law of God but cannot obey it. In 8:4 he fulfils the Law because of the indwelling Spirit. Not forget importance of the Law – the Ten Commandments. They are not the way of acceptance with God, but we are to keep them as way of holiness once we are saved.

What is holiness? Nice warm feeling within, pious look, holy tone in the voice, life of negatives? Basically it is keeping the commandments. The commandments give content to holiness. Let us never belittle the Commandments. Creed tells us what to believe; Commandments tell us what to do.

Samuel Rutherford's visit to James Guthrie. Maid heard his voice in the room. Thought he was alone, crept closer to the door. Found Rutherford was at prayer, walking up and down room "O Lord, make me to believe in thee" Pause, moved to and fro. "O Lord, make me to keep all thy commandments".

Liberty in Christ is not licence to disobey. Life in Christ is not a lawless life. Man contemplating trip to Bible lands. Said he wanted to stand on top of Mount Sinai and shout the Ten Commandments. Devastating reply from his minister, that he would do better to stay at home and to keep them.

Ralph Erskine of Scotland:

*When once the fiery Law of God
Has chased me to the Gospel road
Then back into the Holy Law
Most kindly Gospel – grace will abound.*

Reprehensible is the sickly sentimental kind of piety, which tells us we should pray for guidance about this and that. Some things we have no need to ask guidance for, because the answer is already there in the Ten Commandments. But the Gospel is that God's commandments come with God's enablings. Mighty Holy Spirit is within to help us to Love God and our neighbour. They are a tall order on their own. But God's purpose is that with the commandment should go the Holy Spirit's power.

Christian holiness is not painstaking conformity to external law code imposed on reluctant hearts from without. But Holy Spirit's fruit reproduced from within life. Cf. Jeremiah's new covenant **I will make a new covenant... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts** (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Also from Ezekiel **A new heart.. and a new spirit will I put within you... and I will put my spirit**

within you and cause you to walk in my statutes (Ezekiel 36:26-27). These prophecies were fulfilled in the Gospel.

*To run and work, the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands.
But better news the Gospel brings-
It bids me fly and gives me wings.*

What a pity we forget it. It is not a case of having to do your best for either salvation (which we remember) or for sanctification (which we forget). Justification by faith and sanctification by struggle is an utter mistake and disastrous to peace and progress of the soul. Fight the good fight – of faith! Never forget or ignore mighty energy of Holy Spirit within us.

Christian experience is like freedom of musician when scales and exercises have been mastered, and work has turned to play. Rules are lost sight of in the delight of musical satisfaction, but they are non-the-less there. Augustine said “Love God, and do as you like”. But the only thing that the Law would like is “fulfilling the Law”.

(c) The Spirit will raise up our bodies at the Resurrection. Christ by his Spirit indwells us, giving life for our spirits now and life for our bodies at the end. Though these bodies die, when Christ comes again they are to be resurrected. Spiritual and glorious bodies like His resurrection body. The Christian who is one with Christ shares in His victory over death. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of future resurrection. Body is not excluded from benefits of redemption procured by Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of glory yet to be realised.

Appropriation of the Holy Spirit

Two words here to guide us: **Walk after the Spirit** (8:4) and **Mind the things of the Spirit** (8:5). The work of the Holy Spirit is set out here. But it is not something about which we just inform our minds. It is something to be appropriated – otherwise we automatically look to ourselves and our own resources – with disastrous results.

- (a) **Walk after the Spirit.** Submit to the control of the Spirit. Seek for, and by faith appropriate his power. Have his power as practical going concern in daily life when choose to walk his way. Avail selves of life and power in Christ. Every day we are to draw on indwelling life giver. His energy, not ours. His driving power, not ours. To walk after the flesh is still present day possibility.
- (b) Give our minds to the Holy Spirit. Give minds to the Word of God, and **whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, of good report.. think on these things** (Phil.4:8). Trouble always begins with sin. **Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life** (Proverbs 4:23). How we think becomes how we behave.

Conclusion

Daily choice faces us. Look to selves and our ability – leads to misery and frustration. Or deliberately and daily seek the Holy Spirit. Dwelling within since regeneration, but

largely unrecognised and unused. Deliberate choice to walk by the Spirit, otherwise we will automatically walk by the flesh.

Two ways of propelling motor vehicle: (a) Motor Car – storage principle, put so much petrol in the tank, then it goes; (b) Old Tram – contact principle, not store up electricity inside, but continues to go as long as it is in constant contact with power outside.

Christian life should be on (b) principle. Not supply to last us so many days. But constant close spiritual touch with Holy Spirit. This is the secret of life, power, progress and peace.