

Musing #59: Romans 8:1–13

We are looking at the difference between the acts of sin and the power of sin. The power of sin is rendered powerless for those who are in Christ. But it continues to tempt us to its ways. The power is still active in us and in the world system.

We who are in Christ are now free to live by the inner principles of the Holy Spirit. The Law of the Spirit of Life is now our guide and source. We've been taught to be good "givers" but we need to also learn to be good "receivers."

Martyn Lloyd Jones, the great English preacher said... **"When you preach grace, unless your conscience accuses you of license you haven't preached grace."**

Paul noted to the Galatians — **3:3 Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** We can't add anything to the finished work of Christ. Any attempt to do so is foolishness and ends in defeat. He did it all — "It is finished!"

Let's consider three words that are often misunderstood.

• **#1 - Confession** - What comes to mind? The word translated means "agree with." Yet - confession and sin are always tied together. If God has removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west—why is our focus on sin? Contrary to popular opinion, the term "confess" is only found 5 times in the entire N.T.—

— 3 in reference to unbelievers. Matthew 3:6, 10:32, Rom 10:9

— 1 is in reference to confessing to one another. James 5:16

— 1 refers to unbelievers confessing sins to God. 1 John 1:9

One verse has incorrectly become a "proof text" for sin. We must put 1 John 1:9 into a context for unbelievers. When you read carefully through the first 9 verses of 1 John it is talking to unbelievers about salvation—Paul's version of "Evangelism Explosion."

1 John 1:1-9 We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

- **#2 - Repentance** - to think again, to “rethink.”

Paul was trying to convey... there is a transition for us.

- there is a new order of things
- the law is no longer the centerpiece
- grace must now be our focus
- we must “rethink” all of our previously held beliefs
- we must adjust (repent from) our old thinking
- we now have the mind of Christ - think like he thinks
- be anxious for nothing - we are at peace with God

The Prodigal Son - in Luke 15, *...but when he came to his senses...*

- He began to rethink and apply “truth”
- His father had no anger... no demands

Romans 2:4 ...the kindness of God leads us to repentance (a change in thinking).

Repentance is all about believing the truth... the renewing of our minds.

• **#3 - Conviction** - Another word in the arsenal of sin management—and behavior modification. Again, a concept that is usually associated with sin. Convict comes from a Greek word that means “to convince.”

John 16:-8-9 “When he comes, (the Holy Spirit) he’ll expose the error of the godless world’s view of sin, righteousness, and judgment: He’ll show them that their refusal to believe in me is their basic sin.

John 16:13 ...when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth.

As believers John is “convincing” us to change our thinking—guiding us to receive our “righteousness,” our “holiness,” our “acceptance,” our “completeness.”

The Holy Spirit “convinces” us that we have believed a lie. We become confident that God is changing us through changing the way that we think and believe.

In Romans 8, “condemnation” has no place in our thinking anymore. However, Romans 8 is also a good news/bad news message. The good news is we are free from the bondage of sin’s power. The bad news is to exercise that freedom may bring dismissal and rejection from some in our world.

The Common English Bible translation states the point well. **Romans 8:1-13 So now there isn’t any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. 4—He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.**

5—People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that

comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. 7—So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. People who are self-centered aren't able to please God. But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him.

If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

- Verse 4 The process a believer is under is learning how to rely on, and yield to, the Life of God within.

- Verse 5 People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things. Unbelievers think about themselves—they “can't not” think about themselves. Love the Lord with all your heart is outside of their understanding and control.

- Verse 7 Selfishness doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. The carnal Christian may be saved from sin but still demands control of his desires and perceived needs. He is “walking after the flesh” which is at war with the indwelling Spirit, and he resists the Spirit of God within. This is why much of the church likes man-made laws and rules. It helps them maintain control and provides their judgement of others.

- The Ultimate Problem: Man-made laws and controls work to teach us to trust in ourselves, under our own power—**“they mind the things of the flesh.”**

Religion is okay for many. Just don't mention that the Bible is literal, or talk too much about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. That kind of religion allows “self” to take the place of God. The liberal church is all about “love”—but it's the love of themselves, their works, their perceived compassion. Their Bible is collecting dust and their average tithe tops out at less than 2% of their “net” income, according to some estimates.

If Christ is in us, the Spirit is our life because of God's righteousness, but the body will ultimately die from its continuing decay. Paul reminded us to quit running errands for a corpse—our body is destined for the grave. Our renewed soul and spirit are eternal.

1 Peter 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ suffered as a human, you should also arm yourselves with his way of thinking. This is because whoever suffers is finished with sin. As a result, they don't live the rest of their human lives in ways determined by human desires but in ways determined by God's will.

Clearly Peter is telling us to not be controlled by selfish desires and the flesh.

Charles Trumbull in his book *Victory in Christ*, writes—**It is not that the Christian is not able to sin, but it is that we are able not to sin.**

Like so many things in life, as humans we have a choice. Believers and unbelievers all have the conscious call to say “No!”. The issue is who can draw on the power to do it.

Jude, one of the Lord’s brothers, was addressing the apostacy in the church. Eugene Peterson put it rather succinctly in *The Message*.

Jude 12-13 These people are warts on your love feasts as you worship and eat together. They’re giving you a black eye—carousing shamelessly, grabbing anything that isn’t nailed down. They’re puffs of smoke pushed by gusts of wind; late autumn trees stripped clean of leaf and fruit, doubly dead, pulled up by the roots; wild ocean waves leaving nothing on the beach but the foam of their shame; Lost stars in outer space on their way to the black hole.

Some in the church were believers living out a life under the Spirit of God. Some were not believers and were manifesting a life still under slavery to the power of sin. But both were among the members of the congregation.

Something to be aware of in our current culture and world.