

SAKLC CONVERSATIONS

Mid-week adult study at St Armands Key Lutheran Church, Sarasota, FL

“ROMANS, a letter for today”

Session Plan for

Thursday, March 23, 2017

A TIME OF JOINT PRAYER

EXCHANGE OF GOD’S PEACE

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION;

- To begin an exploration of how Paul understands the work of the Holy Spirit.
- To more fully grasp how “in Christ” we gain Freedom from the condemnation of Sin.
- To understand the use of the word SPIRIT in the Bible.

FROM THE FACILITATOR – YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND AN IMPORTANT TRANSITION!

In the previous chapter of Romans (7), we saw that because *we are dead to the law* we are *legally free to be married to Christ*. *The law was not evil* – it accomplished its purpose. *It can only produce failure* because it gives occasion for sin to assert itself through our flesh. **The real message of Paul in Romans 7 is not sanctification, but rather, how justification by faith frees us from the practical influence of the law in our lives.** It has often been said that ***“Old habits die hard!”*** If you are still conditioned to think of God as you did before you came to Christ you will find it difficult to stop judging and forgiving yourself. In Christ you are free to turn away from your pasts and begin walking under the control of the Holy Spirit because your sins have been dealt with once and for all! Stop behaving as though you are married to your first husband! (*Remember: our previous use of the marriage/widowhood metaphor.*) If there is one word to describe our feelings after reading Romans 7 that word is **condemnation**. Any person who is under the influence of the law feels *condemnation – condemnation from the law, condemnation from God, and a sense of personal condemnation.*

Romans chapter 8 is a refreshingly different contrast from the previous chapter. It is like the exhilarating experience of walking from the darkest night into the brilliance of the most sun-lit day! The **great contrast between life and death** is seen over and over. **For the first time we see the workings of the Holy Spirit in the life of the one who is justified by faith.** It is generally acclaimed as **one of the most important chapters in the entire New Testament!** For that reason, your facilitator is departing from Dr. Roetzel’s original Kerygma Lesson Plan to consider the whole chapter in just one session; realistically, we will need to spend more than one session in our study of it! Are you ready to *“dig in?”*

ROMANS 8:1-8

(NRSV TEXT)– ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and***

peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

[CEB TEXT] *“So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁸ People who are self-centered aren't able to please God.”*

[THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION] ¹⁻² *With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.*

³⁻⁴ *God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.*

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

⁵⁻⁸ *Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.*

COMMENTS ON THIS SCRIPTURE:

IN CHRIST THERE IS FREEDOM FROM THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN – vss 1 & 2

- 1) It is available to those in Christ, made possible by the Law of the Spirit of Life.
- 2) The day a man/woman comes to Christ, he/she steps into the sunshine – and there is **“therefore,”** no condemnation! No more guilt! This is an occasion for **“fireworks”** and for celebration! This reference probably goes back to Romans 7:1ff.
- 3) Remember that one must be “in Christ” to experience this benefit! (According to Romans 6 – the person who has received Christ as Savior is **‘IN CHRIST’**).
- 4) If people are “in Christ,” there is no condemnation for them.
- 5) By coming to faith in Christ we have received the Holy Spirit and that Spirit produces life, whereas the Law produces death. So, we truly have been set free!

THE SPIRIT SUCCEEDS WHERE THE FLESH FAILED – vss. 3&4

- 1) The Law failed not in its purpose, but in its product. The Law could not gain our freedom because it was weak (vs. 3).
- 2) It was weak because of that with which it had to deal – sinfulness and punishment for sin.
- 3) The Law could not produce righteousness in us because, like feeding oxygen to a fire, it gave sin an occasion to express itself in our ‘flesh.’
- 4) The ‘anchor’ (pardon your Facilitator’s nautical bent!) of the Law (E. Petersen in MSG translation uses ‘Band-Aid’) may have appeared to be strong, but it could not hold fast in the muddy bottom waters of the human heart.
- 5) What the Law could not do, God did! God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a sin offering – thus He condemned sin in sinful man.
- 6) The purpose of this act was that the righteous requirements of the Law be fully met in us (vs. 4). Jesus fought the war where the enemy was – ‘in the flesh.’ We are sometimes too quick to read these words and not think about the price that was paid!
- 7) This verse describes a point of balance; otherwise some might overly stress the total doing away of the Law.
- 8) Hebrews 4:15 teaches us: **“we don’t have a high priest who can’t sympathize with our weaknesses but instead one who was tempted in every way that we are, except without [APART FROM] sin.”**
- 9) For what the Law revealed, “the righteousness of God,” is the standard to be met.
- 10) To say that we are no longer under the Law is true, but that is not a license to avoid the righteousness that the Law revealed. What Paul is saying is that the only way to meet the requirements of the Law is to be “in Christ” by faith.
- 11) Those who are “in Christ” do not continue to live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. The power for the Christian walk is the Holy Spirit – even though it is still our walk.

SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT ‘THE SPIRIT’

Remember that Paul was writing Romans from the city of Corinth. From earlier studies that we did in First Corinthians, you may recall the issues Paul had there related to the matter of Spirit possession. We, Lutherans, are often leery and on the defensive when charismatics encounter us; yet, in Paul’s experience all believers were most probably charismatics! That is, they claimed to be imbued with the Spirit that was poured out on all flesh during the end time, and the Scriptures affirm that they possessed rich spiritual gifts of one kind or another.

While Paul here repeats some themes that we earlier uncovered in the First Corinthians study, he seems to be especially careful in Romans 8 to avoid encouraging the kind of *'Spirit Enthusiasm'* that was so destructive in Corinth. He insists on the partial nature of the present experience of the Spirit, and contrasts the present sufferings with the future glory [Romans 8:18]. He notes that the community's experience of the Spirit is only the *'first fruits'* of the harvest [8:23]. He also notes the continuing dual nature of human existence. Here, in the opening vss. of Romans 8, he forges a strong link of Spirit possession and doing the "just requirement of the law." [8:4]. It answers charges made against Paul that his gospel encouraged immorality.

As we move forward in the current study, take special note that *'life in the Spirit'* for Paul was not just about an elite group within a church, but was a mindset that affected all areas of life; Paul draws distinctions between this mindset and the mindset of those who live 'according to the flesh.'

BRIEF OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION:

What comes to your mind when you hear a person described as *"spiritual?"*

What is the main difference between the *"Law of Moses"* and the *"Law of the Spirit of life?"* [see 8:2-4]

What are some very practical ways for us to be sure that our minds are being controlled by the Holy Spirit? Can this work without knowledge of the Scriptures?

Discovering "SPIRIT" in the Old Testament:

It can be safely assumed that Paul's concept of the Spirit was probably shaped to a considerable extent by his knowledge of Old Testament texts. Read the following O.T. texts; on the blank line below each text, name the Spirit's action as described in that textual segment –

Genesis 1:1-2 *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* (NKJV)

What is the Spirit's action here? _____

Judges 6:34 *"But the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him."* (NRSV)

What is the Spirit's action here? _____

Isaiah 32; 15-17 *"...until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. ¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. ¹⁷ The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever."*

What is the Spirit's action here? _____

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *"²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*

What is the Spirit's action here? _____

Joel 2:28-29 *"Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit."*

What is the Spirit's action here? _____

Zechariah 12:10 *"And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one^[a] whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn."*

What is the Spirit's action? _____

NOW! Return in this study outline to **Romans 8:1-8**; circle each occurrence of the word '**SPIRIT**'; then, on the lines below, add other actions of the Spirit that Paul describes:

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLICAL USE OF THE TERM "SPIRIT"

Old Testament: The Hebrew word for "spirit" is *ruach*. It appears 389 times in the Old Testament. It is used more often of God than of persons or animals. Its basic meaning is wind. The trees of the forest sway before a wind (Isa 7:2); a wind sweeps over the waters (Gen 1:2); and the Lord walked in the garden at the breezy time of day (Gen 3:8). It was an east wind that brought locusts (Exod.10:13) and a strong east wind that divided the Red Sea and dried it up (Exod.14:21).

Breath is also a basic meaning of this term. It is the Lord who gives breath to people (Isa 42:5) and to lifeless bodies. It is also used of bad breath! Job's breath was repulsive to his wife (Job 19:17).

By extension when applied to a person ruach comes to mean **vital powers or strength**. It is the spirit that sustains a person through illness (Prov 18:14), but the spirit of the troubled person can be crushed (Psalm 34:18). This dynamic force can be impaired or diminished as well as renewed or increased. It was a drink that caused the spirit (strength) of Samson to return and revive him (Jud 15:18-19). Spirit also bespeaks limitations. When taken back, the person returns to dust (Psalm 104:29-30).

The spirit of the Lord is the **creative power of life** (Psalm 33:6). When it descends on the judges it activates and enables them to do great exploits (Judges 3:10 ; 14:6). By contrast, there is no spirit in idols of wood and stone. Ruach can also refer to feelings. The queen of Sheba was left breathless when she saw the wisdom and wealth of Solomon (1 Kings 10:5). **Ruach can also refer to the will**. Those whose spirits God had stirred up went up to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:5) Ruach is also not living simply through a surge of vitality, but because of God's initiatives and actions.

New Testament: The Greek word is **Pneuma**; it is the counterpart to the Old Testament ruach. While it occasionally means wind (John 3:8) and breath (Matt 27:50 ; 2 Thess 2:8), it is most generally translated "**spirit**" an incorporeal, feeling, and intelligent being.

It was **Mary's spirit that rejoiced** (Luke 1:47). Jesus "*grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom*" (Luke 2:40). He was "*deeply moved in spirit*" when he saw Mary weeping over the death of Lazarus (John 11:33). Jesus pronounced a blessing on the "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3).

In the New Testament spirit is also seen as **that dimension of human personality whereby relationship with God is possible** (Mark 2:8 ; Acts 7:59 ; Rom 1:9 ; 8:16 ; 1 Cor 5:3-5). It is this human spiritual nature that enables continuing conversation with the divine Spirit (Rom 8:9-17). Occasionally pneuma will be treated in a parallel structure with psyche. The terms seem to be one and the same (Luke 1:46-47) and seem to be interchangeable. On the other hand, there are passages that distinguish between the two. Paul speaks of **Adam as a "living soul"** but of **Christ as a "life-giving spirit."** The one is oriented to human life and the other to heavenly life.

Flesh and spirit are often juxtaposed. Both can be defiled and both can be holy. The flesh (*works*) and the spirit (*fruit*) are unalterably opposed to each other (Gal 5:16-26). Spirit is also contrasted with letter. While the letter kills, the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6). Spirit is also contrasted with human wisdom (1 Cor 2:5). Weakness of flesh can prove stronger than the spirit's will to pray (Mark 14:38).

Worship of God in the spirit is acceptable, contrasting with unacceptable worship in the flesh. "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). While **God's Spirit is holy**, reference is also made to unclean, evil, and demonic spirits that are injurious to relationships with God and other humans.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS:

In Romans Paul is showing the influence of the Holy Spirit in our minds – our choices - our desires. Some people do not realize the Spirit is at work in their lives – they think that they need some spectacular experience, but most of the Spirit's work is not done that way. Thus, while many struggle with sin and guilt versus righteousness and a clear conscience, the Spirit of God is moving inexorably toward peace and life. By having the Spirit of God in our lives, we can see that life and peace result. For those who live in the flesh (*that is in sinful minds*) death results because they are hostile to God's love.