

ROMANS CH.8

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN SANCTIFICATION

Hymn: # 437 I Know Whom I Have Believed

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

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In the introduction to Romans 1, I quoted Godet who called the book of Romans the "Cathedral of the Christian faith". With that imagery in mind, we now come to chapter 8 which may be seen as the highest of the towering spires of that magnificent Cathedral. It is daunting to scale and makes one's head spin at the dizzying heights of future glory it holds forth to believers. I must admit I feel wholly inadequate to do it justice in commentary or teaching. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all clearly seen, revealed and gloriously presented in various ways all of which can be summed up in the simple statement "God is for us" v.31.

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D) Power for Sanctification (8:1-17) “Life Through The Holy Spirit”

- i) V. 1 in the Greek is stated very emphatically. Lit. “Now, no condemnation”; Period!
 - (1) None of the condemnation warranted in chapters 1-3; no condemnation from Satan the accuser; no “self-talk” condemnation.
 - (2) For who? For those who are IN Christ Jesus; that is through regeneration (being born-again) and baptised INTO the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes us out of Adam and into Jesus spiritually and experientially.
 - (a) God the Father is the primary person of the Trinity we see at work in Condemnation and Propitiation
 - (b) God the Son is the primary person of the Trinity we see at work in Justification
 - (c) God the Holy Spirit is the primary person of the Trinity we see at work in Sanctification.
 - (i) The Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times in Chapter 8.
- ii) V.2 should be read literally as “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death”
 - (1) This law of the Spirit, is the 4th law that comes to deliver the “wretched man” of chapter 7 who is dying under the three laws of the “Law of God”, the “law of the independent mind” and the “law of sin in his members”.
- iii) V.3 God himself saw and acted on our behalf to free us from the Laws of Ch. 7.
 - (1) He did this by CONDEMNING SIN in the flesh of sinful men; NOT condemning sinful men in sin.
 - (a) 2 Cor. 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
 - (i) Jesus Christ himself became the SIN that God condemned in our place that we might be redeemed and reconciled.
- iv) V.4 is the key verse for this section on the Power for Sanctification. The law’s requirements are only met in us when we live “according to spirit”. (Note: no definite article in the Greek)
 - (1) This “spirit” means to live according to the dictates of our human regenerated spirit and NOT according to the dictates of the soul’s independent mind.
 - (2) When the dead human spirit is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, it is simultaneously indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Life of the ascended and glorified Son in communion with the Father.
 - (a) John 7:38-39 “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”
 - (3) Thus, to live “according to spirit” means to live according to the Trinity in dependence, dare I say even the “Trinity in me”; rather than living according to the soul-mind in independence.
 - (a) Man is a tripartite being; body, soul and spirit. Think of three concentric spheres. The inner core is our spirit, surrounded by the sphere of our soul, both of which are nested with the outer sphere of the body.
 - (i) The spirit (conscience, intuition, worship) is the core and is meant to be the “mission control centre” for the directing the activities of the soul (mind, emotion, will) which in turn directs the body (different members).

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- v) V.5-11 is where the rubber meets the road and explains very specifically HOW we are to do this “living according to spirit”.
- (1) Life according to spirit is a “Mind-Set”. Lit. keep on being mindful or “aspiring for”.
 - (a) The way tripartite man is wired, it is the mind/will that takes its cues from either the flesh (law of sin my members) or from the spirit (the law of The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus).
 - (b) The mind/will must choose one or the other. To choose to take our cues from the body and its desires will result in death. To choose to take our cues from the spirit, aspiring to what the indwelling Spirit of The Son’s communion with the Father desires will result in life and peace.
 - (c) The Holy Spirit speaks in Gal. 5:16-18 “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”
 - (d) Col 3:1-2 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”
- vi) V.9-11
- (1) The “if” in v. 9 “if the Spirit of God lives in you”, v.10 “if Christ is in you” and v.11 “if the Spirit of him of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you”, are conditional statements which in the Greek the condition is assumed to be true; it should be understood as “since” or “because”.
 - (2) Only by receiving the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit can anyone “belong to Christ”, because only the Holy Spirit can baptise you into his Body. There is an universal inclusion in Christ accomplished by His incarnation which has resulted in universal redemption, reconciliation and propitiation (see Ch.3), however, there is a “belonging to Him” which is the result of receiving Him by faith which results in a standing and state reserved for believers only, namely; Justification, Sanctification and Glorification, otherwise known as salvation.
 - (3) Our bodies are corrupted by sin, the “Biogenetic Weapon of Mass Destruction”, and they must be changed either through bodily resurrection from the dead or through being changed in the “twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52-53). Either way, we must put on incorruption and THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOING TO DO JUST THIS. He is the down payment **guaranteeing it** (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14)
- vii) V. 12-13
- (1) We have an obligation to “chose wisely” and have a “Mind-Set” on the spirt/Spirit.
 - (a) We are to refuse the inclinations and desires of the flesh and its schemes to impose its will on our life.
 - (2) If you chose poorly, Lit. “you are about to die”. This death does not mean a sinning believer will face eternal death/hell. It does mean he is about to die spiritually and lose the enjoyment of the indwelling presence of the Spirit. It can also mean he is in danger of undergoing divine discipline death. God brought you into this world; God can take you out of this world (Acts 5:5,10; 1 John 5:16-17)
- viii) V.14-17 The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit makes us children (Lit. τέκνα) of God in relationship. Submitting to the Holy Spirit’s direction makes us sons (Lit. υἱοί) of God in priveledge. A son, led by the Spirit, means a child who is mature enough to take on adult responsibilities **and enjoy more family privileges**.

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(1) The Six Marks of Sonship:

- (a) **Submissive**- “led by Spirit”; mind-set is on the Spirit’s desires
- (b) **Fearless**- no longer afraid
- (c) **Assured**- has the witness of the Spirit within as to one’s true identity; a child of God
- (d) **Dignified**- is an heir and a co-heir with Christ; responsibly represents the Family Name and his own future inheritance by how he carries himself in the world
- (e) **Courageous**- willing to suffer with Christ knowing as his duty and privilege
- (f) **Hopeful**-has a confident and favourable expectation of sharing in glory of Christ

E) Goal of Sanctification (8:18-27) “Future Glory”

- i) Future glory is to be revealed IN us.
 - (1) 1 Cor. 13:12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”
 - (2) To share in the perichoretic circle and life of the Father-Son-Spirit.
- ii) Suffering vs Glory; Temporal vs Eternal. There is no comparison as to which one is better, and this is where we are heading.
- iii) “The Three Groanings”

(1) The Creation Groans

- (a) Ever since the fall of Adam, the ground has been cursed. It has been frustrated, held in bondage to decay. It has undergone flood, fire, earthquakes, famine and pestilence. The animal kingdom has been subjected to violence, suffering and fear.
 - (i) Compare V. 22 “pains of child birth” and Matt. 24:7-8 where “birth pangs” are identified with earthquakes and famines among other things.
- (b) Creation is personified in that it “groans” under the weight of this as well as having an “eager expectation” for its deliverance.
- (c) The creation itself will be liberated when the “sons of God are revealed”, that is at the Second Coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom on the earth. At that time creation itself will be renewed and experience the freedom and rightness that we will. Humanity and Creation will once again be in harmony.
 - (i) Isaiah 11:6-8 “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

(2) We Ourselves Groan

- (a) We too have an “eager expectation” for the redemption of our bodies in either rapture or resurrection
- (b) The groaning we experience within us is itself the deposit and the guarantee of what’s to come and what we hope for. For it is sharing in the groaning of the Spirit who also groans as we shall see.
 - (i) C.S. Lewis described this groaning as an “unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of a bon fire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead... then we fix that sweet and poignant longing for joy

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upon some earthy object... And yet, whatever the object of our quest, we learn when we finally find it, that it does not ever contain the joy that broke our heart with longing... (we) must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given- nay cannot even be imagined as given – in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience.” (Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (New York, NY: Batnam Books, 1977) p.208-209)

- (ii) 1 Cor. 5:1-5 “Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we **groan**, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we **groan** and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, **guaranteeing what is to come.**”

(3) The Holy Spirit Groans

- (a) The Holy Spirit groans within us in the form of intercessory prayer, not when we are weak but because we exist in a state of weakness.
- (b) Our current state of physical, emotional and spiritual disability means we are not yet conformed to the image of Jesus. This is a groaning longing of the Spirit as He “bears with us” and as He “bears us” up until He completes His sanctifying work of conforming us to the likeness of Jesus.
- (c) Our current state of physical, emotional and spiritual disability also means the content and manner of proper prayer eludes us. We don’t know how to pray as we ought, but the Holy Spirit does... **and He does.** Thank God.
 - (i) He intercedes for us Lit. “according to God”.

F) Certainty of Sanctification (8: 28-39) “More than conquerors”

- i) We are certain and secure in our circumstances, because God is Sovereign and works **all things** together for our good.
- ii) We are certain and secure in our selection.
 - (1) To be “**called**” means more than just being invited to receive Jesus as Saviour, it means to be summoned and given salvation. Rom 1:6 addresses this letter to Lit. “called saints”, not called to be saints.
 - (2) “**Foreknowledge** and predestination” are terms that give further explanation to what it means to be a “called” one; that is a believer.
 - (a) Foreknowledge is not simply God knowing ahead of time *what* believers will do, but that knows *them* ahead of time. It means a relationship with that believer based upon election; that is God’s own choice in eternity before creation.
 - (i) The first election or choice of God is that of His own self-determination. God elected/chose to exist as Father-Son-Spirit.
 - (ii) The second election or choice of God was that as Trinity, He elected/chose the Son to be the God-Man united. In Him Deity and Humanity are One. This makes the Son both the Electing God and the Elected Man.
 - (iii) The third election or choice of God was to choose us IN Jesus Christ before the creation of the world. Jesus Christ is the one and only sphere of election.

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There is no other individual election nor any other ground or sphere of election.

1. This is one of the most stunning, glorious and secure revelations of God to us in His Son. It is indeed "The sum of the gospel" (*K.Barth*)
2. Our election is grounded in the very person and being of the Second Person of the Divine Trinity.

(b) **Predestined** has to do with God's pre-determined purpose for the entire group of called and foreknown believers. That purpose is simply stated as "to be conformed to the image of His Son". (Eph. 1:4)

(3) Let's try and summarize: The "those" who God foreknew are the full and composite members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Before the creation of the world He pre-determined that all the little "brothers" would look just like their Big Brother, the "firstborn" (Heb. 2:10-12). Being conformed to his image is the goal and end of sanctification. Predestination is NEVER to heaven or hell; NEVER about some "individuals" being elect/predestined to heaven and some other "individuals" being elect/predestined for hell, where both groups were chosen by a hidden, inscrutable and predetermined decree of God before any of them even born. (This kind of thinking is what is called Calvinistic Double Predestination). Rather, predestination is always about conformity to the likeness of His Son v. 29 and adoption as sons (Eph. 1:5) through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. God chose us in His Son, predetermined that we would then look like Him. Those who believe in Jesus are those who heard and responded to the call of salvation. Having been called, God justified them; that is he imputed His righteousness to them. Finally having been justified, he glorified them. Elect, Foreknown, Predestined, Called, Justified, Glorified...this is the progression and the certain security we in our salvation. Hallelujah!

iii) V. 31-39 **What then can WE say to all this?** There are six things we can say with certainty:

- (1) We are secure in the certainty that God is FOR US. Who or what could possibly be against us then?
- (2) We are secure in the certainty of God's provided Righteousness. God has already given us the greater, he will certainly give us the lesser.
- (3) We are secure in the certainty of being beyond charge. Satan is the accuser and his accusations are valid because we have indeed sinned. But through the presence and intercession of Jesus in the heavenly assembly, he stands and says "NO Satan! That accusation is not valid here. He turns to the Father and extends his nail pierced hands and the accuser is silenced by the Sovereign verdict is issued: "JUSTIFIED!" (*See Trinity in ME website- Contemplate on 6-5-17*)
- (4) We are secure in the certainty that our sufferings are part of the "all things" v. 28, 32, and 37 which God works together for our GOOD.
- (5) We are secure in the certainty of His love that makes us more than conquerors. This is His love for us, not our love for Him. (I John 4:10)
- (6) We are secure in the certainty of our inseparable union with Jesus Christ our Lord, the God-Man and our Vicarious Man. We are more than conquerors!

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How can we summarize the magnificent view of this this towering Cathedral spire?

Because God chose not to be God without you, he chose you in His Son Jesus Christ. He knew you even before you were born just as he knew Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) or David (Ps. 139:13-16). He predestined that you would become a son and live in the inner circle of the Trinity, fully conformed to His Son's likeness. He determined the exact time and place of your birth (Acts 17:26-27) so that you might recognize and respond to His calling of you. Having believed, He imputed His very own Righteousness to your account and sent the Spirit of His Son to indwell you. Having done this he guarantees that you will be glorified, seeing and sharing in the Eternal Perichoretic Life of the Triune God of Grace. This is the goal and your future glory. In the meantime, you are being sanctified, groaning with the Spirit and Creation eagerly awaiting His coming again and the rapture or resurrection of your body.

Let us keep our mind-set on the Spirit, holding to this vision in the certainty of our future glory and allow it to assuage our present griefs and slake our thirst on the pilgrimage HOME.