**The Book of Romans**

Part Three: God’s righteousness is revealed in His free gift of Spirit-life.

(Romans 5–8)

***New Life: Free from the Law. Or, Why “Just say no!” didn’t work Romans 7:1-25***

Romans is an exposition of the New Covenant, and the Apostle Paul has explained why it was necessary. The Old Covenant had not been successful. But why? Was something wrong with the Law? Hardly. The era of the Law was a failure because we could not keep the Law, which only gives commands, but no power to obey them. In fact, as the history of Israel had shown, more laws only made rebellion even more obvious. When Jesus died, He inaugurated a new era, and believers, who died with Him, also died to the condemnation and powerlessness of that Law. Here’s why that kind of law-keeping was impossible and frustrating, and why obedience can only work when it is inside out!

***A question, a picture, and two patterns*** vv. 1-6

Laws apply only to the living. Simple, but profound, for if we died (in Christ) to the old era (sin, death, and law), we now are alive (in Christ) to the new era (obedience, life, and Spirit). These verses are key to what follows, for verse 5 is explained in the rest of chapter 7 (sin, death, law) and verse 6 is explained in chapter 8 (obedience, life, Spirit). (If you keep that in mind, you won’t get lost in the I’s that follow.)

***“It’s not you, it’s me.”*** vv. 7-12

While the Law is holy and just and good, I (Adam, Paul, you, me) am not. Our experience tracks with Adam’s in the Garden and Israel at Sinai: the more we are told what not to do, the more we want to do it. That is sin within us. No law can tame this beast. “I” is Everyman.

***The problem is not the law, but sin. . .*** vv. 13-23

because in fallen human flesh, I am sin’s slave. vv. 13-17

because as sin’s slave I have no power to do good. vv. 18-20

because sin itself is a power to dominate me. vv. 21-23

Who is “the I” of these verses? Let’s profile him. . .

He is of flesh, a slave to sin. (v. 14)

He can’t do what he should, and even wants to do. (vv. 15-17)

Nothing good dwells within him. (v. 18a)

He has no power to obey. Ever. (v. 18b)

He is powerless over the sin principle within. (vv. 19-23)

This is the old-era person under law and its condemnation.

***The solution is deliverance through Jesus.*** vv. 24, 25

The old-era person (unsaved, unconverted) under the Law is wretched and hopeless and ambivalent in himself because of sin and its death penalty, but hope has come, in Jesus. (Remember where we began, in vv. 1-6.) What now? Is there a way to destroy, or at least manage, the beast of sin? Yes, Christ Jesus.

(Here’s why: The Law is now within, and by God’s Spirit, we can put sin to death day by day and moment by moment. God has not left us powerless, but in Jesus provides victory, explained in chapter eight.)

***Living the “already/not yet” spiritual life***

***1. On the one hand, sin has been dealt a death blow.***

The “already” is that because we are in Christ, His death and resurrection become ours. So we are called upon to “rejoice in sufferings” (5:3), realize our peace with God (5:1), choose not to let sin have its way (6:12), yield ourselves to the risen Christ (6:13) and be trans-formed in our worship, our work, and our relationships. Col. 2:20-3:17

***2. On the other hand, the remnants of sin are with us.***

The “not yet” is that until we are at home with Christ, we will be tempted to sin, need to confess our failures when we do sin, seek and grant forgiveness, and be an active participant in a church seeking to reach the nations with the Gospel. Romans 8:12-17; 12:1-3; 13:8-14