**The Book of Romans**

Part Three: God’s righteousness is revealed in His free gift of Spirit-life. (Romans 5–8)

***New Life: Free to live a (really) new life.***

***Or, Cell unlocked. Time to walk.***

***Romans 8:1-11***

People everywhere are trying to change their lives, more accurately, make their lives better. But what is better? And what exactly is being changed? And what comes of their trying? We all know that most resolutions fall short because sheer willpower wears thin and old habits die hard. The intentions are positive, but in the end, the heart, what we truly want, works itself out in actions we think will make us happy, not what is good for us. But Jesus comes to our rescue by not only changing our hearts to desire holiness, but also by giving us His own Spirit of holiness. What was impossible under the condemning Law now is a reality through the life-giving Spirit. In Him we truly seek holiness and implement change because we have been changed.

***In Christ, we are now free to obey God’s will.*** vv. 1-4

Because Jesus became one of us, taking on human flesh, He then could truly die in our place, pay our debt, and purchase all of God’s blessing for us. So along with forgiveness of sin, and freedom from condemnation, He gives us a “new law,” the law of the Spirit of Life. “In Christ” is not a mere figure of speech. It is a whole change of reference, motives, life-goals, and desires. Because guilt is gone, we are free to serve as sons, not slaves. It is a real heart-freedom to please God.

***In Christ, we desire to do God’s will.*** vv. 5-8

Paul emphasizes what we need to remember, that behavior does not occur in a vacuum, but rather issues from the heart. Those in Adam follow their hearts in serving their flesh (fallen human nature in rebellion against God which in no way can please Him). Those in Christ follow their hearts in pleasing God–not against their will but in accordance with their new will, or choices, because they now love God.

(Remember that “morality” or “ethics” today has been reduced to being nice, and above all, tolerant of any most any behavior short of mass murder. That is not the holiness that fits us for heaven.)

***In Christ, we are empowered to obey God’s will.*** vv. 9-11

If we are in Christ, then Christ is in us, in the person of the Holy Spirit, transforming and encouraging and motivating us. It is not a “Part B” of the faith, nor an option for some of God’s children. It is our birth-right as God’s sons and daughters. Paul acknowledges the ongoing battle (since we are still living in fallen, mortal bodies), but in that battle God gives spiritual life and power to these bodies, not only in future resurrection, but in resurrection, sin-crushing power now. Eph. 1:18-20

***It is one thing to be forgiven and out of jail. It is another to “go straight.” This is why prisoners return to crime. Hearts have not been changed and they have no power to live a new life. Jesus gives all three: freedom from guilt (condemnation), desire to choose righteousness (new heart), and power to follow Him. We are free to obey, we desire to obey, we have power to obey. Jesus paid for all that with His blood, and it is yours if you know Him.***

***1. Our new life in the Spirit. . .***

is based solely on the work of Christ, not keeping the Law.

is energized solely by God’s Spirit, not self-reformation.

is a truth that must be believed, not an option or fantasy.

is a joyful lifestyle produced by heart change, not a drudgery.

What Jesus did brings the Spirit.

The Spirit determines who we are.

Who we are determines what we desire.

What we desire determines what we do.

***2. I believe in Jesus, now what do I do?***

Acknowledge truth: your cell is unlocked! John 8:36

Accept responsibility: you must walk. John 3:17-21

Appropriate power: you will be sustained. John 15:4, 5