

Greenways Benefice Weekly Devotional (No 17)

12 July 2020

Living in God's Kingdom

Romans 8 : 1 – 11

Hello, I hope you are keeping safe and well. Today we are looking at the beginning of Romans chapter eight, which I think is one of the greatest chapters in the whole of the Bible. It is packed with amazing truths and encouragements. This morning I am thinking about the first eleven verses, but during the week try reading the whole chapter through several times – I can guarantee that you will feel blessed the more you read it.

Verses 1 and 2 make the monumental declaration that “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death!”

Imagine being in the condemned cell, waiting for execution. Suddenly the door is unlocked and the guards burst in - you are told “You are free to go, your penalty has been paid for you!” What mind blowing news!

The fact is, the whole of the human race *is* condemned – for continually breaking the absolute perfection of God's holy law. We can't help ourselves, we do it all the time. So, if the law is that hard why was it given to us? What is the purpose of the law?

Imagine a world with no law – or if you prefer, imagine a game with no rules. Chaos would rule - no right nor wrong, cheating, stealing, hate, even murder and hell on earth would reign. The purpose of the law is that order, honesty, love, purity of heart and all that is good would bring the peace that only comes from God on earth.

The problem is that the law can only reveal our weaknesses – it can't enable us to fulfil the perfection it demands and it can't give us life. Without Jesus we would have no hope. Verse 3 says “What the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering”.

I heard an illustration the other day that, being a lover of gardening, appealed to me and I found helpful. I hope it helps you to grasp this incredible fact too.

Digging the garden is a good workout – imagine you were digging a hard piece of ground and suddenly the handle of your fork breaks. The handle is made of wood, but the prongs of your fork are made of iron. There is nothing wrong with the fork prongs – it's the wooden handle that was weak.

There is nothing wrong with the law, just as there was nothing wrong with the fork prongs. The weakness is in us, as it was in the fork handle. The law has to work through our efforts. It speaks to us but can't change us.

That is why God, in his grace and compassion sent Jesus. It wasn't a rescue decision that was made after mankind had sinned, it was entirely planned by the Trinity before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1: 18 – 20). It is God himself, through Jesus, who provided our salvation through his own actions, planned in advance.

And the moment we accept for ourselves what Jesus Christ has done for us we are given a new life, we are under the rule and grace of God. We are no longer under the rule of sin and death. As verse 1 says "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". He has set us free – we have a bright hope for the future. We don't have to worry about what happens after death – we are safe, we are living a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In verses 5 – 8 the apostle Paul divides people into two categories - Christians and non-Christians - those who have accepted what Jesus has done and are living life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and those who choose to reject the rule and law of God and live according to their own thoughts and desires, thinking they know best. Paul says the one whose life is controlled and guided by the Spirit of God has life and peace, but the one who chooses not to follow God is controlled by the law of death.

How can we be sure which category we are in? How do we know if the Holy Spirit is living in us? If we have trusted in what Jesus Christ has done for us, we don't have to wait for a certain 'holy' feeling, we can be absolutely assured, because Jesus has promised it and He is trustworthy. God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us as a seal, a guarantee that, just as the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, He will also raise us to eternal life, and a home in heaven with Him.

But Paul reminds us, in chapter seven, that while we live in this world, sin remains in our bodies and we constantly have to fight it and pray. We will still not be perfect but our spirit (the person inside you) will be safe. We cannot lose our salvation. Our life in God is forever and we can look forward with great anticipation to the day when our bodies will be free from any disease and decay. (Hey, no more spectacles, walking sticks or wheelchairs etc!) And we will be perfect, worthy of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Which brings us back to those words in verses 1 and 2 - "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, not now, nor in the future. We are free and safe forever!

Now there's something we can celebrate!

God bless

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