

Wow! The 8th chapter of Romans is such a powerful place! It's one of those places that causes that spiritual spontaneous combustion! Reading through it I find myself exclaiming, "**Oh, how I love your instruction. It is my meditations all the day. You, through your commandments have made me wise than my enemies for they are ever with me!**" (Ps 119:97-98) OK, I'll calm down.

We spent the morning yesterday focused on Ro 8:1-9, emphasizing 'context'. What does that mean? Well, Paul was writing to a church that was predominantly Jewish by nature. They had previously lived according to The Law. So the first context we have is Law v Life, as in **Therefore there is now no condemnation to those *en* Christ, for the law of The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free, liberated, made you exempt from the law of sin and death.** Simply put, just because they were no longer observing the ordinances of The Law, they should not be under any condemnation, because they had been liberated from the works of the flesh by a higher Law, The Law of The Spirit, Life in Christ Jesus.

This is a common topic in Paul's letters. As many as 12 times he used the word "bondage" to describe what happens when we "**walk down from the flesh**" because, as verses 7 and 8 conclude, "**the mindset of the flesh is hostile to God, for it is not subject to God's law, neither can it be. Those being in the flesh are not able to please God.**" OK, but why? Because they are depending on their works instead of God's faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God, And. "God's law" is not referencing The Law of Moses, Paul is redirecting us back to The Law of Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. God's law of grace through faith energized out from Love. OK, but what does that have to do with us? We're not Jews.

The context for us here is an extremely powerful word. It's not "Law v Life" but rather "faith v works". You could say "form v substance". Or you could say, like we did yesterday picking up on 2Tim 3:5, that you can get to the place where you have a form of godliness but disregarding or neglecting the power of it. What are we talking about, or how does that happen?

Well, as I was sharing with someone yesterday, we, The Church, in some ways are no different than The Jews. Jesus told them in no uncertain terms that they had reached a place where they were teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, and that in doing so they were making the Word of God, "of no effect". (Mk 7:13) Through the centuries we also have accumulated a lot of "church doctrine" that's often not congruent with, sometimes even in opposition to, the Word of God, and it stunts our growth and weakens our faith. The power being shined down into us is of God, not ourselves. Jesus is the only One who can effect righteousness or holiness. He is The One Who fulfilled the requirement of The Law in all of us whose *phroneo*, thoughts directing our behavior, forms a mind set on life & peace rather than the consciousness and consequences of sin. Our behavior should be directed by the things of The Spirit'.

Paul wrote about this a lot, and he fully understood the problem. He reminded the Colossians that Jesus blotted out the handwriting of the ordinances against them, taking it out of the way and nailing it to the cross. (Col 2:14) He told the Galatians not to allow themselves to become subject to men who were teaching a doctrine other than living by the faith of the Son of God. He asked them why, if they sought to be justified by Christ, would they make themselves transgressors all over again by rebuilding the things that they had done away with? (Ga 2:17-21) Yeah, me too! Why? You tell me, but it's been going on for quite some time. Is it men that want to create a flock subject to them? Is it people who want to boast of their own righteousness? Probably both! But don't frustrate the grace of God, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and this not out from yourselves, it is God's present!" (Eph 2:8, enhanced version)

Love never fails!

