

Romans - Commentaries by George Vicesimus Wigram

Memorials of the Ministry of G.V. Wigram 1: Volume 1, Romans 8:1 (8:1)

No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Verse 2: " For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," &c.

That which God has appointed as an efficacious, continuous action, is a law. The law of night and day, of the phenomena in the heavenly bodies, of seasons, days, and years, is given to us in Gen. 1; see also viii. 22.

The law given through Moses is the efficacious, continuous action upon man as a creature, when fallen, of the righteous requirements of the Creator over and from man.

The law of day and night is an appointment of God. The law of Moses is inseparable from the relationship of a self-existing Creator, and His creature man.

He made man for His own glory. If man has subserved that, good; if not, what then? The curse, if I am the rebel against the insulted God, is all that my own state and my position authorize me to expect.

But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is quite another from the law of Moses. 1st. It sets me free from it. Am I in Christ Jesus? Is He the Anointed Man? Jehovah the Savior, is He to be cursed for having me in Him? All His dependent obedience unto death, is it to be ignored? And all the merits in Him which led God to award to Him a place at His own right-hand on the throne as Son of Man, and He able there to display God's delight in perfect obedience-is all that to be set aside, and made nothing of because of my demerit, because I deserve the hottest place in hell for my having served Satan, and because I have no fitness of my own for any other place than that? None, certainly, of my own for God's presence. But He has won that place already; has been in it 1800 years, and God cannot repent of that. It is the expression of His own righteousness. It is His vindication of Himself; and the showing of His reasons for His silence when the wicked said, " He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him for He said, I am the Son of God."

Either I must pull Him down to my low level, or He, through His work, will raise me to His level. And mark it HOW, O my soul! I have already the Spirit of life in Him. He is not merely as a rock hiding me in a cleft, but I have the Spirit of life in me, to which the law attaches freedom, not from condemnation only, but from the law of sin and death.

The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has its law, and sin and death have their law, and the former sets free from the latter. Moreover, what was lacking has been supplied; for God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; and for sin, and condemned sin in the flesh. There was the Sin-bearer; there the Man who knew no sin (no other such has there ever been among men), Seed of the woman, holy, harmless, apart from sin, had the sentence against sin executed upon Him, and (v. 4) with special object of writing love to God and man upon the hearts and minds of all those who are partakers of that nature of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and so it is with us. If we stood upon our being men, then we should have to honor self, and walk according to it, and so have our minds occupied with the things of men down here. Many a one has tried that, the trying to draw out from self what God would like. Many I have known to do so even after they have known this (Rom. 8), and the solemn warning not to go to the broken cistern, but to the well with its living water-water which only becomes cooler and fresher in the proportion in which it is drawn from. No; my standing is not according to the law of Moses, as if my standing were in flesh; but it is in Spirit-the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and being according to this law free, I mind the things of the Spirit. To try to lop off sins and to appropriate graces, as we see in the Colossians under law of Moses, is a very different way from our way; for under the Spirit of the Lord there is liberty. " We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

Verse 6. The flesh's mind, death; the Spirit's mind, life and peace. For flesh's mind, enmity against God. How simple! The mind of man (fallen) is not, cannot be, subject to the righteous requirements of the Creator; it cannot be so. So, then, my standing and abiding there cannot please God. To say they can involves no less than this, that God cultivates flesh and the fallen man.

Verse 9. No, we are not standing there; we are not as ruined creatures looking up to see what the Creator will do with the ruined creature which has not and cannot meet His most just and holy requirements. Brought into existence to subserve His glory, we have not done so. We are not there, or we should not have the Spirit of God dwelling in us. This Spirit characterizes our standard. God has wrought, and we have His Spirit—Spirit of the anointed Man-or we are none of His; but having that there is a law-the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus-and that sets us free from the other.

Verse 10. The effect of this, Christ being in us, is (however sure of blessing) now deeply humbling; for it declares the body to be dead¹ because of sin.

Before it was said we were set free from the law of sin and death, this was meant as to the condemnatory power of Moses over us. Here our bodies are declared to be dead because of sin directly we come to Christ in us. Out of that pit no pure water will rise-nothing like Christ in my human body; and I know it directly I know Christ in me. But if the body is dead, the Spirit is life, because of the establishment of righteousness.

Perhaps (vv. 9, 10) Christ is the Anointed Man as the object set before us—Christ by faith, as we have it in Eph. 3; and the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit. But Spirit of God (v. 9), Spirit of Christ (vv. 9, 10), and Spirit (v. 9) are to be marked.

Verse 11. But if the Spirit of Him that raised we Jesus from among the dead does dwell in us, then He that raised up Christ from amid the dead will also quicken, or give life, to our mortal bodies by [because of] His Spirit which dwells in us.

Verse 12. We owe the flesh nothing; good we never got from it; it has no claim to our living according to it. If we do, our path will end in death. If through the Spirit (through whom are all our benefits) we mortify it, that is an action of life, leading to life. Then too we shall know, that being led by the Spirit of God, we are the sons of God; born of Him, and having received authority or right and power to become sons.

The characteristics of the Spirit on our side, as it were are then gone into, even of Him who is named the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit.

Verse 15. He is not one characterized by bondage and servile fear. We have received Him, and know that of Him. On the contrary, He whom we have received is the Spirit of sonship or adoption, and we learn to cry without a thought, Abba, Father.

Verse 16. And Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Note the double and concurrent witness of the Holy Spirit Himself, and of our own spirits as children, for it is important. Such as to present privilege. Then as to hope (v. 17): "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs together with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together " with Him. This does the apostle write by the Spirit for our fullest confirmation in these precious privileges and hopes. The contrasts of the Spirit as looked at, on the one hand, God's side, or on ours, are to be noticed. " The Spirit of God," as to nature and power; Spirit of Christ, as to that part of glory being revealed—not now creation, providence, government, but Himself—God manifested in flesh, the Mighty One, Jehovah's Fellow, making good and revealing as a man, expiation, righteousness, and thus eternal salvation and redemption; on the throne, now our Deliverer and Savior, and shortly our Glorifier. God the Spirit, and Spirit of God, and of the Anointed One personally indwelling us.

On the other hand, He is the efficacious power of " the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (v. 2.) Walking according to whom, instead of according to ourselves, we get to be God's freemen. Good self is more dangerous in this case than bad self, because the former really turns its back upon gracious power and salvation, as being in another than itself, and looks to hold its Adamic position, which it has lost, and would fain cultivate innocency and perfect conformity of self, as a creature toward the Creator, and is self-deceived. The deception is patent. If its course were good in God's eyes, and not only in its own, God Himself would still be cultivating the Adamic nature and flesh, man's own fallen self. But He is not doing so at all, but gives over a man like Paul to see what, and where, the real difficulty is in Rom. 7:24; viz., that he was a ruined creature, needing deliverance for himself. Thus he is carnal sold under sin; " not allowing that which I do; I will to do one thing, but do it not; but what I hate, that I do; if I do what I would not, I consent to the law that it is good. It is not I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. Surely in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing, if to will is present with me, but that I cannot find how to perform that which is good; the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. (v. 20) Now if I do that I would not, it is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) There is now a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Intellectual clearness in a heathen philosopher of old could see the marks of one mind and plan and character, who thereupon confessed to the unity of Godhead. But while standing firm to that, and put to death for it, he did not see his own folly, if there was but one Supreme Being, in himself bidding his disciples to sacrifice a cock, as vowed by him to Esculapius.

Rom. 7 clearly came after Acts 9 Saul was converted to, and by Christ, before he wrote to the Romans or had to study the two minds which are brought before us in Rom. 7. Fallen man is Satan's slave, and while intellect can see and argue upon the relative positions of Creator and creature, just claims and requirements of the Creator and the utter ruin of the creature, will is stirred within us; power in us over ourselves there is none. The answer and cure are in another. All the groanings about self are all met and put aside directly we turn from self and our circumstances to Jesus Christ our Lord. " I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (v. 25.) The grand lesson in all this seems to me to be this, that there are two minds in man, according to the standing he takes; either that of a creature under its Creator, looking at itself according to the flesh, or that of a ruined sinner cast upon the Savior God and the salvation of Christ. The law of Moses attends the former, the latter goes after Christ, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. A man may intellectually weigh the two, until almost insane confusion fills him.

But no one can get into freedom upon the first position until he knows two things; first, how to say, " I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and " the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death;" and, secondly, that the standing, and life flowing from it, sets the expiation of sin over against the law of sin and death that remains in us, and will remain, and be remembered by us, until we see Him Himself, and are made like Him, seeing Him as He is.

Many a badly-taught Christian passes through the bewildering conflict, ere he at all knows clearly about this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making the believer free, and the judgment passed upon Him who was holy, harmless, sinless, being the condemnation upon Him of sin which is in us. It did reign; it still indwells, and will, until the Savior comes back with His salvation, and takes it out of us. •

Chap. 8:10. To be earnestly looking forward as one awaiting God's Son from heaven I should not be watching mine own shadow behind me: " I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt braise his heel." (Gen. 3:15.)

Chap. 8:11. God is light. In God's light I see light, for I see Christ there; and there too I learn in contrast to Him whatever is darkness in or immediately around me. How long until Christ shall be come? Give me a strong, bright lamp in a passage before me, and I shall not be able to tell you the distance. What is that if the heart loves Him who is coming, and is spending itself in shortening the intervening space? And when He does rise up to come forth, then will He recommence displays of new glories to bring Israel back to their land, &c., when we are satisfied in His presence, and with His likeness.

Nevertheless, the sooner He comes the better; and though when we think of His service and people we ought to be able to deny ourselves, and for His people's sake stay on, yet if our hearts are fresh to Him, it were self-denial and constraint the staying. How few are in that state, that of being in a strait between two things-the better for them to depart and be with Him, the more expedient for His people to stay and work. Do see whereabouts you are, my reader, in this matter. 2 Cor. 5 gives the other side-I groan after the glory, and desire to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

But why are we not to look straight up from where we are to where He now is sitting at the right hand of God This would warm the heart to Him, and let light into us, as to the dirt of the place where we are.

" We see Jesus," wrote Paul (Heb. 2), as if his eye beheld Him, " crowned with glory and honor." Himself seen anywhere causes all else connected with man to drop into a secondary place. Paul wrote thus about Him, and having attained to the fulfillment of Psa. 8, He (Jesus) entered and sat down on the throne, all things put under His feet, and thus become the securer to His people of all things being put under theirs.

Chap. 8:11. It is a simple fact, which people think very little of, even believers; but it is truth. A man in glory in heaven is a truth dear to the heart and mind of God. Of course, you may say, the Lord Jesus is there now on the throne of the Majesty of the highest, and will bring His heavenly bride thither hereafter.

Yes; but I was thinking of Enoch having been translated without seeing death. He has been on high from before the deluge; and again, the prophet was seen going up as in a chariot of fire; and again, that when Christ died, not only was the " veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matt. 27:51-53.) This, I suppose, is referred to in Col. 2:15.

Some consign these to the grave again. I dare not do so, unless it were written. Sure I am I have no wish, as parent to such a thought, to originate it.

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, God Is for Us (8:31)

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

The mark of a new creature in Christ is not having a better heart, for that remains the same as ever, but looking at everything as having God for the center, and not judging things as though man were the center.

It is seeing where God is, looking down deeper to the springs of love in God, flowing to us through Christ the fountain and all one spirit with the Lord.

How different are God's thoughts from man's as to walk! God looks at the One He raised up and says, "I have not a word against those who believe in Him; their guilt has been all rolled away; they are one spirit with Him whom I love up here; He is the head; those poor things down there are as His hands and feet: I love them and have given them one spirit with My Son."

Are these God's thoughts about us? Yes, and if we would only make them our thoughts too, we should have bright faces and happy hearts passing through this wilderness.

What then were all my adverse circumstances? What all that tries me? If God be for me, what is all that is against me? The primitive Christians, when spoiled of their goods, took it joyfully; they lost everything, gave up everything and had power to go forth with happy hearts, rejoicing in the Lord. Every necessity in us is only something for God to find grace in Christ to meet for our blessing.

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