

# **Record of Sermons delivered during the month of May 2020**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

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(see following pages)

Romans 7:1-4  
***The Christian Life***

Rom 7:4

***<sup>4</sup> Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.***

This verse provides the application for the first three verses of Chapter 7 (of Romans). Paul has used the illustration of the ideal of marriage to explain our relationship to the Law, both before and after regeneration in Christ; together with our new standing before God in and through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It can be seen as a summary of the Christian 'life'. What it means to be a Christian. The gospel in a nutshell.

This profound nature of the Christian life is often overlooked, when its full and deep character, its true greatness, depth and largeness is not recognised.

Paul has already summed up aspects of the Christian life in Chapter 6: <sup>1</sup>*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* and <sup>17</sup>*But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,* But now in 7:4 we have a particular emphasis that has not been given in exactly the same way as previously.

Now we can identify four characteristics of the Christian life:

1. **An entirely new life.** In the form of a general description and definition the Christian life is a conversion from being 'dead' in sin to being 'alive' in Christ. This is a radical difference between one's old existence and the new. A radical difference between the Christian and the non-believer. More than a few adjustments and modifications to the old. The living of a somewhat 'better' life, say. So radical that it is described in terms of: a new creation; new creature; regeneration; born again. The difference between death and life.
2. **A new relationship.** The non-Christian's relationship to God was through the dominion of the Law. The Christian's relationship to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Once 'under Law' now 'under grace'.
3. **A new purpose in life.** It is now *in order that we might bear fruit for God*. The non-Christian brings forth fruit to himself. The self-assessed 'good person' takes pride in their sense of morality; of not being like others whom they disdain; he pleases himself; applies his own standard; trusts in his own efforts and endeavours; revolves about the 'idol' of self.

So natural, in our fallen nature, is this, that even sincere Christians will make invalid assumptions about their loved ones. A Christian mother confesses that her son is not a believer. She then goes on to add, "But he follows the principles of a 'good life'". If her assessment of her son's status with God is correct then he, like all 'morally good' non-Christians is under fatal judgement – as we all once were.

4. **An entirely new ability.** The infusion of new power and strength which enables one to do what could not be done before. This new power through Christ, by the indwelling of the Spirit, is what makes the previously impossible demands of the Law, the willing fruits of the Spirit.

Here we contrast Paul and Popeye. Popeye had the answer to all his challenges. Confident in his own spinach-given power he declares, "I yam what I yam and I yam what I yam." Paul on the other hand, is also confident in the power and result that follows, but with a vital difference. (1 Cor 15:9-10) <sup>9</sup> *For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* <sup>10</sup> *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.* Popeye, and all other self-energised 'good' people cannot claim, "By the grace of God that is in me, I am what I am and I am what I am."

All four of these characteristics are found, in some measure, in the true Christian. Perhaps, like me, you will gain some assurance of your status as Christian by applying them as a self test:

1. Not what I once was? A different person. Not necessarily constantly very strong or very powerful, but nevertheless different in attitude, motive, desire, intent and with a love for God. Born again in Christ. Perhaps still a new-born – a 'babe in Christ', (which has little to do with time or age). A babe is not as strong as a grown-up adult person, but still has 'life'. We are different not by any act of our will – it has been done to us. Surprises us. We can only wonder at it. God's grace.

Specific tests that reveal the possession of the 'new life':

1 Peter 2:2. <sup>2</sup> *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

Enjoy public meetings for Worship? Natural man, the non-Christian, does not. Such meetings are the height of watch-watching boredom. 1 Cor 2:14 <sup>14</sup> *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

"If you can say honestly that your desire is to know God and to serve Him, you are a child of God."<sup>1</sup> One's understanding may be small, and still immature. Having just a glimmer of light – wanting more. Drawn to the truth. Liking to be with God's people. By these we know that we have passed from death into life.

A Christian has had a death and then a new birth – into 'life'. This brings a whole new dimension to the catch phrase, 'Get a life!'

Other tests can follow:

2. When you think about and turn to God, no longer with a slavish fear, but have some consciousness within you that God is your Father, and that God loves you. Some awareness of a change in your relationship to God. Before as a condemned criminal. Now as a child who still feels ashamed. Conscious that you are offending not so much against a law as against love. A filial, child relationship rather than the old legal one.

1 This Sermon follows closely Chapter 3 of: D Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Exposition of Chapter 7:1 – 8:4 The Law: Its Functions and Limits. ROMANS*. This specific quote from p 32

3. Then you really have a new purpose in your new 'life'. However unworthy, your underlying purpose is to serve God. You are a 'child of God' because in the new way you experience a vital living, because of that new relationship with God. Your newly capable ability to love Him. Not the old, mechanical, legal way.

4. You recognise a new ability. A new power – even if still weak. Still needing to grow and mature. Even at such a stage an awareness of something in you that wasn't there before. To say with Charlotte Elliott, “Just As I Am”<sup>2</sup>

These tests have been introduced at an 'entry level'. Appropriate to a 'babe in Christ'. Perhaps the starting point for all newborns. Unfortunately some newborns are offended and made to stumble and feel miserable by legalists. Self-appointed judges of all but themselves. Not having sufficient understanding to see that it is the essential difference in one's nature that is of prime importance. On the other hand, having an understanding of the 'babe in Christ' and encouraging their first steps, far from generating antinomianism, as the legalists imagine, such understanding, will help the babe to recognise that they are on the way. Thus they are stimulated in their growth and they gain the desire to please God more and more. Yes! Help through training, teaching and even loving discipline are necessary but never discouragement.

How does one become a Christian, and thus have such characteristics and grace-given attributes?

Altogether and entirely in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him there is no Christianity. Salvation is in Him alone. “In Him” from beginning to the end.

What do we learn when we may talk to people about themselves? Perhaps they may regard themselves as being Christians, but in what they say, do they mention Jesus? Do they concentrate on what they do, rather than on what He has done?

As before we reiterate: No matter how good a life a person may seem to lead. How moral and upstanding they may appear to be. If their life is not entirely dependant upon the Lord Jesus Christ – they are not Christian. Popeye no! Paul yes!

It's not a matter, initially, of the life lived, but the relationship to Christ. From that relationship comes the true life and the direction and power to live it as God has ordained from the beginning.

In general: The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ must be in the very centre. Everything must focus on Him.

In Particular: The essentials to our salvation, which are expressed in our Doctrine provide the means by which the Christian is to know that he is saved.

Not just that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but what we believe about Him:

1. Not just the fact of His **incarnation** – God comes to earth.

Not just the **Word** made flesh – See Jesus to know the nature of God.

Not just His **teaching** – The Sermon on the Mount doesn't save! It, like the Law, condemns.

Not just by His **example** of how to live – cf the limiting of Liberal theology.

**BUT** by his **death!**

A death that was absolutely necessary in God's design to fulfil the holy Law. God's immutable Law. One of God's eternal, infinite and unchangeable attributes is His **justice**. All that God does is just. This is what God is (among the other attributes). He does not go back on Himself! The Law is an expression of the character of God. Not apart from Him.

“So when you are asked how a person becomes a Christian you do not start talking about yourself and what you have done; nor do you speak only about the Person of our Lord and His teaching and example. You say, first, that one becomes a Christian solely because, at a given point in history, 'God sent forth His own Son, born of a woman, made under the Law'. Then you go on to say that He lived a perfect life of obedience to God's Law, and honoured that Law in every respect. But He did not stop at that, He put Himself 'under' its punishment, under its penal aspect, He took our sins upon Himself; God laid them on Him; and then the Law delivered its judgement and He was smitten and slain. He died the death that we should have died; He died 'for our sins'. Salvation becomes a fact to us through His broken body, His shed blood. The Law demanded that satisfaction, and He rendered it to the full. That is the first absolute essential.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Not only do we become dead to the Law's penalties through our death to the old self through this atoning death of Christ, but we become married to another. Even the risen Lord! This is not some spiritualised concept as the liberals would have it, but a literal physical resurrection. A changed but still the same body. As we will have on the 'last day'.

This resurrection is the other essential for our salvation. It is the final proof, the assurance, that what He did in His life and death is sufficient. He has answered the demand of the Law AND He has conquered the last enemy, death itself. As Paul has already put it in the last verse of Chapter 4: <sup>25</sup> *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

He had to rise again in order to present us to God. Further we have the ultimate guarantee that our salvation will be complete and entire. Our bodies will be raised, glorified and completely delivered from sin.

“We are thus left always looking to Him and at Him. These are the events, the facts, the historical happenings which are absolutely essential to our salvation. We are not saved by teaching, we are not saved by ideas; we are saved by the fact that the eternal Son of God came into this world, had a literal physical body, was born of the Virgin Mary, died upon the Cross, was buried in a grave, conquered death, bursting asunder its bands, rose triumphant, and ascended unto God, and is seated now at God's right hand.”<sup>4</sup>

'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.'

[2084]

3 D Martyn Lloyd Jones, pp 39,39

4 D Martyn Lloyd Jones, p 41

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen**

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, I can allow so many things in this world to define me: my job and my family, my education and my accomplishments, my social reputation and my economic status. Without denying that these things matter, they are not the main thing that should define me. The main thing is you: your creation and your calling, your salvation and your community, your love and your grace.

Help me, O Lord, to see myself more and more in light of your grace alive within me. May I be able to echo the words of Paul, "I am what I am by your grace." Help me to live in this grace, to be energised by it, and to give it away generously to others.

**All praise be to you, O God, because I am what I am in you. Amen.**

Romans 7:7-25

**The Christian Life in Grace**

Rom 7: 25

<sup>25</sup> **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

We begin today by considering the Old Testament reading. Psalm 119:33-40. As we may know this Psalm is an acrostic. The Psalm is divided into 22 stanzas each of 8 verses. Each verse in a stanza begins with the same Hebrew letter. All 22 letters are used, in order, for the sequence of stanzas. Thus by verse 33 we begin the fifth stanza with each of the following eight verses beginning with the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (aleph-bet, in Hebrew) which is He (ה).

הורני יהוה דרך חקיך ואצרנה עקב:	לג 33
הבינני ואצרה תורתך ואשמרנה בכל-לב:	לד 34
הדריכני בנתיב מצותיך כי-בו חפצתי:	לה 35
הט-לבי אל-עדוּתִיך ואל אל-בצע:	לו 36
העבר עיני מראות שוא בדרכך חיני:	לז 37
הקם לעבדך אמרתך אשר ליראתך:	לח 38
העבר חרפתי אשר יגרתִי כי משפטיך טובים:	לט 39
הנה תאבתי לפקדיך בצדקתך חיני:	מ 40

This portion of psalm 119 is relevant today, because it supports the answer given by Paul to those critics (then and now) who claim that he finds the Law irrelevant and even sinful. They wrongly infer this from his insistence that we are not saved by **our works** of the law, but through the loving grace of God through Christ. His answer is the emphatic: "Certainly Not!" of verse 7 and <sup>12</sup> *So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.* of verse 12.

The psalm portion even 'on the surface' agrees with this. But on deeper reflection we find that it anticipates (as the whole of God's OT revelation does) the NT fulfilment. Paul is also answering the antinomian inference that some attempt to make: That since God's grace is always greater than the worst that sin can deliver, we should deliberately and comfortably continue sinful lives to show, even more, how gracious God is. His answer, at the beginning of Chapter 6, was, "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" Chapter 6 describes what Christ has done and Chapter 7 describes what we can't do. Christ has buried our sinful state with His death and risen to show the final defeat of death itself. We die with Him to the power of sin and death. We rise with Him as our new master and with His power to life. Verses 7-25 of Chapter 7 graphically illustrate the futility of attempting to please God and earn our own redemption through the Law and not by the in-dwelling of the Spirit of Christ. The fifth stanza of Psalm 119 also affirms this: The fifth Hebrew letter, *He*, when used before a verb, causes it to be in the causative tense. The tense that in what I do I am

caused to do it. By something outside my own will, ability or intention. This is exactly what Paul is saying. In this Psalm we don't only get the idea that the Law of God is perfect, true, holy, trustworthy, pure, precious and sweeter than honey, as we did in Psalm 19:7ff but we are given the key to how these benefits can be acquired. Only by the will and power of God. Who will **cause us** to be:

taught the way of His decrees;  
given understanding to keep and obey;  
directed in the commands;  
changed in heart towards His statutes;  
turned away from worthless things;  
filled with the fear of God through His fulfilling His promises;  
no longer disgraced for His Laws are good; and  
preserved in life through His granting of righteousness to those who are caused to long for His precepts.

We remember the main trend of Paul's theme. Stated in Chapter 5 and continued on from Chapter 8. <sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* <sup>2</sup> *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* (5:1,2) and <sup>1</sup> *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* (8:1). The verses in between are an aside to answer the false inferences that some may offer.

In Chapter 7, having used the analogy of the ideal of marriage, Paul has shown that just as death cancels the earthly dominion of marriage, The dominion of 'original sin' and the result of our transgressions of the Law are cancelled by our death with Christ in His crucifixion. We are then free from the dominion of the law (as the widow would be from the lawful claim of the previous husband) to be bound to another, even the risen Lord Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> *For while we were living in the flesh<sup>5</sup>, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.* <sup>6</sup> *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.* (Rom 7:5-6)

And so to the objection: <sup>7</sup> *What then shall we say? That the law is sin?* (v 7)

Paul is certain that the Law, the commandment, is holy, righteous and good. Just as we found in Psalm 119. Without it he would not have been able to recognise his sin. He would not have been convicted of his sin. He would not have been made accessible to the call of God. Once again he points out that the inability of the Law to bring about (through one's own effort) neither justification nor sanctification was not the fault of the 'good' Law but that the Law was powerless against the 'sin within'. Paul defends and vindicates the Law from the charge of being itself sin. <sup>13</sup> *Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.*

5 Rom 7:5 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit. (NIV)

Stuart Olyott relates an analogy, which may help to resolve some of the paradox which Paul mentions within verses 7-13:

A single man, living in his own house, and set in his ways, decides to employ a housekeeper. However it didn't take too long before he realised that she didn't understand what he expected of her. So he put up a list on the kitchen wall. It read like this.<sup>6</sup>

#### RULES OF THE HOUSE

Meals are to be served at 8.00, 1.00 and 6.00

Dishes to be washed immediately after each meal

No tea bags to be left on the sink

The beds are to be changed once a week ...

When the housekeeper saw these rules, she resented them. The more she thought about them the greater was her resentment. But she was not in a position to do anything about them. So she decided to try to keep them. But this did not lessen her anger and bitterness. Every time she even glanced at the list she grumbled, "Who is he to tell me what to do?"

Before the rules were put up she had had no sense of not measuring up to her employer's wishes. But this was no longer the case. Previously she had never even thought of putting tea bags on the sink. She hadn't even heard of anyone else doing this. But now, when the opportunity came (the master wasn't looking) on the sink went the tea bag!

The parallel with Paul's personal account is clear.

Why did God give the rules? Just as in the case of the man, the rules were given so that we might realise what was expected and be able to meet with God's approval. In our case to obey the commandments and live! But because the Law stirred up our sinful, fallen natures the actual effect was that we die. Can we then say to God, "It's all your fault. If you had not given the rules I would not have broken them." Paul's reply, "Certainly not! The rules are holy and just and good. They are not to blame. It is your own depraved nature, which is so deceitful that it actually took hold of a holy thing and, by it, worked death in you. This shows just how wicked your nature is,"

Remember, that the overall purpose of Chapter 7 was to vindicate God's holy Law, while showing what it could not do. In verses 14 – 25 Paul presses home his point by writing a hypothetical example as if it were his own experience. A typical literary device to add emphasis and command the reader's attention.

This passage does not describe any real person. It does not describe an unbeliever since they could not claim a recognition of the Law as Spiritual. Nor can it describe a regenerate Christian, <sup>1</sup> ..., *since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (5:1) Far less is it (despite the change to the present tense) a description of Paul himself.

According to Paul's purpose throughout the chapter, this description is what the result would be if a person who aspired to the Christian life, attempted this solely through self

attempts to satisfy God through observance of the Law. A person who wants to do good. To delight in God's Law but who has another law at work in the members of his body, waging war against the law of his mind and making him a prisoner of the law (common practical principle) of sin at work within his members. What a wretched man he is! Who will rescue him from this body of death?

Return briefly to the housekeeper analogy.

The story continues, some years later, the housekeeper eventually marries the house owner. Because she has come to love him, things are now entirely different. She can not do enough for him. She tries to satisfy his slightest whim. The rules are taken down, but knowing that these were the things that pleased him, she does them with a willing heart. She wants to do them, because she is so much in love with her husband. There is a distinct difference between her past experience and her present one.

This is precisely the distinction between a pre-Christian and the Christian state as described in verses 4-6. When unconverted, God's commands are resented. Once converted the God-changed 'new heart' is home to the Spirit, by whom the power is given for one to love and serve the Lord. One is joined to another, even the risen Christ. The One who gave the rules. You serve Him, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.

[1743]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.  
Amen**

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, I can allow so many things in this world to define me: my job and my family, my education and my accomplishments, my social reputation and my economic status. Without denying that these things matter, they are not the main thing that should define me. The main thing is you: your creation and your calling, your salvation and your community, your love and your grace.

Help me, O Lord, to see myself more and more in light of your grace alive within me. May I be able to echo the words of Paul, "I am what I am by your grace." Help me to live in this grace, to be energised by it, and to give it away generously to others.

**All praise be to you, O God, because I am what I am in you. Amen.**

**Romans 8:1-4**

**Assurance**

**Rom 8:1**

***<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

Today we commence to examine Romans Chapter 8. While our formal NT reading used only the first 4 verses, we will refer to the remainder of the chapter as we proceed, with what is today an overview of the whole of the chapter. Please keep your Bibles open to Chapter 8, to follow as we do this.

To begin (following the detailed exposition of D M Lloyd Jones) we suggest, (as he does) that not only is the understanding of individual verses dependant on their context, so also whole passages and even whole chapters.

The word, 'therefore', in the opening of Chapter 8 makes it clear that there is connection with an earlier context . An earlier proposition or argument. Which? Commentators do not all agree but Lloyd Jones' assessment is that he, and the majority, agree that Paul is referring back to his main theme. The one that is traced throughout the whole letter and was made clear in Chapter 5: That salvation and sanctification are free grace from God through Christ and are appropriated to each of us, solely on Christ's merit, not in the slightest through our own works or merit.

Chapter 5 begins: *<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* We are made right with God, have peace with Him. Are pronounced just by Him. That is Justified.

Chapter 5 ends with: *<sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In identifying this context for the understanding of Chapter 8 we refer to Chapters 6 and 7 as being a parenthetical digression to clear up potential misunderstandings that the statement of the main theme, up to the end of Chapter 5, may produce – particularly with those who hold to the 'idol' of self: The Jewish Christians of Paul's day who clung to self-energised, self-meritorious law keeping and also modern day Christians who put 'good works' before God's grace through faith in Christ, rather than as the expression of Christian love to the neighbour and the 'brother' as a result of God's *imputed* grace and the Spirit's *imparted* Christian growth.

The 'therefore' at the beginning of Chapter 8 refers to the conclusions of Chapter 5: Peace with God; Justification; Righteousness from God; and Eternal life. All in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so what does Paul now say? Essentially he repeats this theme. But now, because the 'objections' have been answered, more emphatically and with additional em-

phasis. <sup>1</sup> *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ...*  
 . We will look more closely at the first 4 verses next week, since they represent the key statement of the chapter. But perhaps we should quickly note one particular word. 'in'. There is now no condemnation to those who are 'in' Christ Jesus. This being 'in' is most significant. It not only defines those who are justified (by imputation of Christ's merit) but also those who are being sanctified (by the imparted power of the Spirit). And it is both justification and sanctification which has been and is being accomplished by the state of: 'in' Christ Jesus. There are not two levels of Christian life: conversion and then eventually (perhaps) a 'higher' state that brings about sanctification. The Christian, who by necessity, is 'in' Christ is at once Justified and being sanctified. This is God's immutable plan, for which he gave His one and only begotten Son. What greater guarantee can we have that when He calls, He Justifies (and through sanctification by the Spirit) He Glorifies into eternal life? This is the great unchangeable assurance, those who are 'in' Christ Jesus have. There is only one type of Christian. The one who is 'in' Christ, who has been Justified by Faith and is being nurtured through the power of the Spirit (Sanctified) to eternal life.

Chapter 8 in part has Sanctification as a theme, but more than this: *The great theme is the security of the Christian, the absolute certainty of the 'final perseverance' of the saints, and of the ultimate, complete and entire salvation of every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>7</sup> And who has thus become 'in' Christ Jesus.

The fundamental proposition of Chapter 8 is that of verse 1: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ...* . He uses 6 arguments to support this:

1. Verses 1-4. There is no condemnation because, we have been delivered from the Law altogether and are joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit. What the Law could not do, Christ has!
2. Verses 5-13. There is no condemnation because, of the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Working in our Sanctification by delivering us from sin. Even at the start, while our sinful nature is still strongly present we recognise our sins not in terms of breaking the Law, but in terms of disappointing – love. Our failure to please the One who so loves us to have died for our sin and our current failure to live to His glory. By life's end, through the Spirit, Paul declares: that this failure will be overcome: <sup>11</sup> *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
3. Verses 14-17. There is no condemnation because, the very presence of the Spirit within us is proof that we are the adopted children of God. Sons of God! <sup>17</sup> *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

We should realise that having become sons and daughters; and if God has thus changed our whole relationship, with all that entails, how can our salvation fail to be complete at the 'last day'?

4. Verses 18-25. We as subjective and self obsessed humans need reminding, as Paul does, that sin not only affects us and our fellow human beings but also the whole creation. As adopted children we have the inheritance of glory, which God has prom-

ised, but not only for us but the whole creation. God's whole creation has been marred, yet we can recognise that salvation and our place in it is but a part of the glorious scheme which God has, to renovate the entire cosmos. Since God has purposed to do this to the whole cosmos, He is certain to do it to us.

5. Verses 26-27. Even in this present world, with its difficulties, problems and struggles, God has seen to it that we are not left to ourselves. The Holy Spirit acts within us as an intercessor, praying – teaching us how to pray, stimulating prayer, showing us our need, reminding us of the supply that can satisfy it, and sometimes in a manner we cannot understand: even praying within us. How can we doubt that nothing can separate us from Him; we are 'in' Christ Jesus; and this communion is going to be maintained always.<sup>8</sup>

6. Verses 28-34. Why can we say, with Paul, that the final complete salvation of the Christian is guaranteed? The answer is that the very character of God is involved in it all; and that if this fails, if it fails with respect to any believer, the character of God has gone. God has told us quite plainly that He has a great plan and scheme and purpose of salvation. He formed it. He planned it, before the foundation of the world. There are steps and stages in it, and God has told us what they are: He set His heart upon us in eternity, and predestined us; then He calls us; and separates us; and goes on with His work within us through all the steps and stages from justification to final glorification. Such is God's announced plan and scheme of salvation. God purposed it in Himself before man had ever been created, even before he had ever sinned. God has announced it and promulgated it. It cannot fail because God is God, and His purposes are ever faithful ever sure.<sup>9</sup>

Even more so, consider what God has already done in connection with His plan. The most outstanding astonishing thing! To bring about His great plan He did not spare His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all. This is the absolute guarantee that the rest will follow. We not only have God's plan; God's Word; God's purpose; God's character, but also God's action in the once for all deliberate, intended, essential incarnation of the Son to die as sin-bearer, to be the 'Lamb of God'. God planned the death of His own Son in order to save us. It is inconceivable that He would go that far and then not finish the plan. Our salvation is certain: <sup>30</sup> *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Finally, Paul sums up, in verses 35-39: <sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* <sup>36</sup> *As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

<sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

<sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

[1682]

8 *Ibid*, p 226

9 *Ibid*

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ, to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.  
Amen**

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, I can allow so many things in this world to define me: my job and my family, my education and my accomplishments, my social reputation and my economic status. Without denying that these things matter, they are not the main thing that should define me. The main thing is you: your creation and your calling, your salvation and your community, your love and your grace.

Help me, O Lord, to see myself more and more in light of your grace alive within me. May I be able to echo the words of Paul, "I am what I am by your grace." Help me to live in this grace, to be energised by it, and to give it away generously to others.

**All praise be to you, O God, because I am what I am in you. Amen.**

Romans 8  
***Blessed Assurance***

***<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Last week, after a brief comment on being 'in' Christ Jesus, we looked at an overview of the whole chapter.

We find that Paul after digressing in Chapters 6 and 7 is returning to his main theme, Justification by faith alone, but with a fresh emphasis and vigour – since the various objections, raised already by the first 5 Chapters, have been dealt with.

Some may say that Paul has moved his focus to sanctification, starting in verse 1 (of Chapter 8). But his fresh statement is: there is no *condemnation!*

Now, *condemnation* is the opposite of *justification*. A person who is no longer condemned is justified. Especially since each of us was and is 'guilty as sin'. We are guilty then, now and in the future. We deserve to be condemned, but by God's free grace, through the work and merit of Christ there is no condemnation for those who are *in* Christ Jesus! So we see that Paul is continuing the theme of Justification by faith.

But, as we found last week, that word, 'in' puts sanctification (or the Spirit led growth in the Christian's reborn life) into the context. How? To be justified also means to be 'in' Christ. (This is just another way of saying *by* faith alone, but not *with* faith alone. Or as James puts it: Faith without works is dead – no faith at all). 'In' Christ, means the presence, leading, power of His Spirit forming, directing and completing the new life of the Christian.

Being justified means also being 'in' Christ Jesus and thus being led by the Spirit. Later we will sing a Hymn (REJOICE! 270, "Gracious Spirit, Dwell in Me") which speaks of this true Christian life. The life 'in' Christ Jesus.

Incidentally the tune used is called 'Toplady'. This is because the tune is most often associated with a Hymn by Augustus Montague Toplady, a strong opponent of Wesley's Arminianism. He wrote 'Rock of Ages'. In verse 1 he wrote:

let the water and the blood  
from Your wounded side which flowed,  
be of sin the **double** cure,  
cleansing me from its guilt and power.

Here again we find the nexus between justification and sanctification. At one and the same time: no condemnation for the guilt of sin – justification – and the Spirit's power to resist further sin by our being 'in' Christ Jesus – sanctification.

Lloyd Jones regrets the fact that false teaching, particularly by the Roman Church, separates these outcomes of the 'water and the blood, which flowed' from Christ. It is taught that after each and every further sin after initial conversion (justification) a further confession-led conversion and act of justification is required. There is no assurance of final victory in this. It depends on the merit – the 'observance' – of the person. Back 'under the condemnation of the Law!' Yet Paul says that for those, once and for, all 'in' Christ Jesus 'there is now no condemnation'.

Having thus made this richer statement of his main theme of Justification by faith alone, Paul goes on to develop the ways and means and consequences of this glorious gospel, this blessed assurance.<sup>10</sup> He began the Chapter with the absolute 'no'. No condemnation, ever. Now or at any time in the future. Then finishes the Chapter with the emphatic assertion, that reinforces the absolute 'no' of verse 1:

<sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

<sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Blessed assurance, indeed!

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**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen**

<sup>10</sup> Please see last week's overview of the whole chapter.

**Jude 20-25**

**A First Century 5<sup>th</sup> Column**

**Jude 24a**

*<sup>24</sup> Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling*

We pause today in our sequential study of Roman's to consider, on what would normally be Communion Sunday, some verses that drew special notice during our Tuesday Bible Study series on the letter of Jude, held at the close of last year.

We will briefly consider two aspects of the verses: one drawn from the overall purpose of the letter – to warn of the false teaching that was already threatening the early Church – and to explain the doxology that we sing every week – in the context of that purpose of the letter.

At the beginning of this sermon Stuart Olyott, asks that his hearers follow the Biblical text as he preaches: saying, “receive God’s truth both by the eyes and the ears.”

Right from the first verse of this short letter, Jude states that his message is for Christians – *To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:* And as such is a message for all the time that is given to this earthly existence. As he began his letter, even in those early days of the Christian Church, while he acknowledged that he was eager to share the wonders of the salvation that we share in Christ, he was compelled *to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Even then – and we must see that it is even more so today – <sup>4</sup> *...certain people have crept in unnoticed ... , ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God ...*

Olyott describes this as an example of a 5<sup>th</sup> Column.<sup>11</sup> Those within the Christian churches who seem to be Christians but are actually false teachers undermining the Faith.

In God’s economy they will all be judged! As the examples and outcomes quoted in verses 5 to 11 demonstrate.

We must be on our guard against the certainty that they will be amongst us. This is not easy to do because what they say is so cleverly disguised in Christian sounding words. However it is what they encourage that is indicative of their nature. Consider the ‘narrow road’ to glory with ‘fences’ either side to guide us. On one side *the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints ...* by the Apostles (doctrine); and on the other the *mores* of Christian ethics and morals. Our beliefs and behaviour. The false ones’ nature is that they remove both these ‘fences’. First for themselves and

<sup>11</sup> **Fifth column**, clandestine group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation’s solidarity by any means at their disposal. The term is conventionally credited to Emilio Mola Vidal, a Nationalist general during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). As four of his army columns moved on Madrid, the general referred to his militant supporters within the capital as his “fifth column,” intent on undermining the loyalist government from within.

then for us, leaving us groping to find our way. They are recognisable by the lives they live! We must be on our guard.

Be careful! You may even find that you are one of them.

What then are we to do? Verse 4b: *contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*. And again at verse 20 <sup>20</sup> *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life*.

Words like 'contend' and 'building yourself up' reveal that it is a costly, painful and constant battle. We must work at it! One of the most damaging attacks on our psyche, that we will encounter, is found in verses 17-19 <sup>17</sup> *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ*. <sup>18</sup> *They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."* <sup>19</sup> *It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit*. We may be able to endure direct verbal attacks on our beliefs and behaviour, but when they laugh and ridicule them (and us) that is the hardest to endure. But we have been warned and therefore are 'fore armed'.

### **The Call to Persevere:**

(For those of us who have spent nearly a year studying the Book of Hebrews, this is not a unknown command.) "Once saved – saved forever" (otherwise called 'cheap grace') is one of those easy and popular, over-simplified 'catch phrases' that ignores more of the Bible than the little it is dragged from!

Yes it is true that those that God foreknew: He calls and saves. But through the Spirit He is very active in providing the means and applying the means throughout our life on this earth until at last we are not only 'fit for heaven' but eager to experience it. We are converted as spiritual babies and must then develop to mature Christians. We are **preserved** in His grace by the means that He supplies for us to **persevere**.

- Building yourself up in your most holy faith.  
Firstly we notice the term 'most holy faith'. That glorious, treasured faith – handed down from generation to generation from the Apostles. Completely different and separate (holy) from every other religion and infinitely more precious. Every day your life is to be built with the bricks of your: thoughts; emotions; actions; and words. The rooms you're building are your: private life; family life; church life; work life; extended family; and society at large. All building on the foundation of Scripture. So you must know and listen to Scripture. It's all there. There is no new revelation since the Revelation!
- Praying in the Holy Spirit.  
We must live this Christian life in constant fellowship with God. Recently we had the same advice from Paul in Ephesians: <sup>6:18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...*  
While a basic principle is found in the experience of Daniel. His 'secret' was that he read the Scripture and prayed.

- Keeping yourself in the love of God.

Here we might seek clarification through the words of Jesus: John 15:9-10.

<sup>9</sup> *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.* <sup>10</sup> **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.** Which is a call for obedience. (one of the three 'marks' of a Christian described by John in his first letter 1 John 2:3-6 – and several further times).

Some have difficulty with Jude's words, but they are even more explicit from Jesus not only reiterating that we have a task to do but that this involves obedience!

Ulyott brings understanding and also comfort to the true Christian in the following:

All Christians have been loved by God – eternally (as long as God was, is and will be God). So what does Jude and also Christ mean?

Imagine you wake up in the morning with your curtains drawn. The sun is shining out there but you sense it rather than see it. You open the curtains. Now you see it, but you're not in it. You need to go outside to experience the full glow and pleasure of the early morning, refreshing sunlight – without being in the shadows.

God's love is the principle influence on the life of a true Christian, but we can be in the shadow of our disobedience. Then without such disobedience, we come into the full glow and influence of God's love! We are 'enraptured' as our soul is, as it were, 'taken up' by His love. Greater 'oceans' of spiritual blessing are ours if they are not diminished as we 'grieve the Spirit', by 'keeping' doubtful areas in our lives. Having known disobediences (even small, but continual things) in them.

Take everything that you know to be grieving to God – put it to death! Walk into the plain, undisturbed 'sunshine' of the smile of God – Keep yourself in the love of God.

- Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. The day is coming when the wicked will be cast into hell – where we deserve to go! BUT we look for His mercy. God's life is in our soul.

Today could be the day of His glorious return and our last day on earth. At the very least we are one day closer.

Christians are guided by being immersed in Scripture.

### **Rescue Others:**

Verses 22-23 give us a role to play in rescuing the false ones among us. But notice what has come before: we are to make absolutely sure that our perseverance is secure. Then three levels of the false ones are shown.

- Those who are in error because they still have doubt through lack of knowledge. We are to be gentle and merciful in bringing them to true faith.

- Those that are being consumed by their false ideas will require much more forceful help – snatching. With these we must not dwell on their ideas lest we also be singled.
- The ‘out and out’ dedicated false teacher is a particular problem. We are called to mercy but with fear. The analogy is with that of a leper whose inner garment (the meaning of the Greek) is stained with disease. We pray for God’s forceful intervention as and if He wills – and keep our distance.<sup>12</sup>

### **Doxology:**

As we come to the ever so familiar doxology we now have its context. We know why we need to be kept from **stumbling**. The false teachers are a force ready and willing to cause us to stumble. We are to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit with the means God provides for our **perseverance** in the faith.

However, above all, we should make the Lord the centre of our thoughts. Despite cunning false teachers; the fire that may fall on you; or the ‘leprosy’ like affects you might catch: He can keep you from stumbling. (It is instructive to note that the Greek word used by Jude is only used this once in the New Testament. Its meaning has been determined from its use in contemporary secular writings of the time, to refer to the sure footedness of specially trained horses that can faithfully carry the rider over all sorts of irregular terrain.) How great then is the promise of God’s ‘keeping’ us from stumbling!

Further our Lord presents us blameless (faultless). Here the word used is the word used for the Jewish Priest when he is commissioned to select the perfect lamb for sacrifice. Here it is Christ the High Priest presenting you without blemish or blame to God on the Last Day – in the presence of His glory with great joy. The ‘picture’ of the banquet feast in heaven which will go on for ever. The Lord bringing us safely to heaven and welcoming us with great joy. By this He does what we can’t do for ourselves, so we must keep Him ever in our thoughts. (Hebrews 12:2) <sup>2</sup> *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So, while you do well to follow the four rules above for preserving your faith fix not your eyes on your own Christian faith but only on Him. Not on others, though you seek to rescue them where you can with safety, but only relying on the Lord.

And who is our Lord? (verse 25) *only God our Saviour.*

God the Father: He sent the Saviour into the World.

God the Lord Jesus Christ: He died to save us and rose again.

God the Holy Spirit: brought us to experience salvation and keeps us there!

God (in three Persons) is our Saviour.

He alone is wise. The Devil is cunning, while the 5<sup>th</sup> columnists are subtle and clever. But God is wise. None can undo any knots He ties!

To this God: – be **glory** (His splendour and light)

<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere we are counselled not even to pray for the worst cases.

- kingly **majesty**
- **dominion** (power & control over everything)
- **authority** (he does all according to His holy will)
- before **time**, now, and for ever.

Put yourself, only in His hands.

[2007]

**May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.**