

## Thoughts on Romans 6 - 8

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In Romans 6. I understand the apostle to be reasoning with the believer upon the claims which sin has on him. And the apostle tells us that sin has been disposed of. Sin was once the master or king; holding dominion, it issued its commands through all the members which were thus "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." But sin has now, as such master, paid his wages. Its wages was death; and we have died in or with Christ, and thus sin is disposed of, or we have done with it; for Christ had done with it when He died. "He died unto sin." It is true He had to do with sin in His death which owned the dominion of sin, that being the wages paid. But in resurrection Christ had to do with God and not with sin. He rose by the glory of the Father, and by resurrection lived unto God as in His death, He had died unto sin so that the believer, now associated with Christ in His death and resurrection, has done with sin and has to do with God. Sin in its wages is disposed of and so should it be in all its claims; for if we no longer receive its claims, so no longer are we to do its service.

It is as those who are alive from the dead that we should walk, and if that condition be rightly apprehended (alive from the dead, or risen) continuance in the doing or service of sin will be found a thing not to be at all even counted upon.

Such indeed have rather to reckon themselves "dead unto sin" and alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

Such truths their baptism reads to them. If indeed sin be willingly served, we own that sin is still alive and not thus disposed of, and we deny the whole of this truth and our standing in Christ; for when we died to sin, that is when sin paid us its wages (in Christ put to death), then the "old man or the body of sin was destroyed;" that is, all our members and faculties, once the sphere and instruments of sin's dominion and service, in that character were put to death also, so that all our members and faculties now should own and assert and exercise themselves in a risen character.

I judge that sin itself must be distinguished here from both the "old man" and "the body of sin." These rather signify the scene of the dominion of sin or the strength or instruments by which, and in which, he ruled and exercised himself.

In Romans 7 the apostle entertains the claims of the law upon the believer, and shows that they also have been disposed of. He does this very simply; he says that the authority of the law addresses itself only to a living man, that is, a man in the flesh. It is the flesh or man as born of Adam, that the law was given to; but the believer has ceased in this sense to be a living man, has ceased to be of Adam, inasmuch as he has died and risen again; and consequently being a dead and risen man, and not a living man, the law does not address its claims to him, he is not the object for the law.

But in this the law is not spoken of in the same relation to us as sin had been. Sin had been spoken of as a master or being; but the law is here spoken of as a husband. And the result of our being dead to sin is life to God, but the result of our being now dead to the law is here shown to be marriage with Christ. These distinctions you will find have their beautiful moral force and meaning. Then in the close of this chapter (having thus shown how that sin and the law have been disposed of or set aside, the one as a master, the other as a husband) the apostle tells us at the same time that they have been discharged with very different characters: sin, with as bad, the law with as good, a character as even the inspired pen of an apostle could write for them. All evil in us is declared to have come from the one,

while from the other nothing flowed but that which was holy, just, and good. And the moment that the real character of the law was understood by the quickened soul, this grievous state of things arose — "the commandment came, sin revived and I died" — the law was felt to urge one thing upon the conscience — sin was felt to exact another thing in the old man or the members; and this state of things drew forth the sense of death in the soul and the cry for deliverance, and the answer comes in Jesus revealed in the power of His death and resurrection.

The law being good has not been discharged in the way that sin has. It has been discharged as a husband only (as that to which the soul was debtor and with which it was in union), because we are no longer living, but dead and risen, men. Its holy and good words as expressive of God are still delighted in and allowed.

In Romans 8 we get the believer thus escaped from sin as a master, and the law as a husband, in his new place in Christ. Being in Him the believer has become a spiritual person, no longer in the flesh, and thus the flesh is discharged as well as sin and the law; that is, we are neither under the old master with the old husband, nor in the old nature; and by the way the apostle shows that the flesh, thus discharged, could never (let God do with it what He might) have yielded any fruit or allegiance to Him, so that, as we speak, it was "bad rubbish" in itself, and to be free of it is "good riddance."

Having thus cleared the way to look at the believer in his new place in Christ, the apostle then with delight traces the holy prerogatives of such an one.

1. He is nothing less than a son, having the Spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage as a servant.

2. Being thus a son, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is in him as at home.

3. Being thus a son, he is also an heir, having co-heirship of God with Christ Jesus.

4. And as the great principle of this co-heirship, he is to shine in the same personal glory by-and-by as Jesus, on the hope of the manifestation of which glory in us the whole creation now waits. And though all this condition of the believer may cause him to groan under the sense of his present state in the body, and that he is only still in hope, like the whole creation. Yet the Spirit given to him and being in him, groans also, and groans with so pure a groan that God has entire fellowship with it. And even more than this: God, in His sovereign rule of all things, constrains them all to work together for the believer's good, that without as well as within us He may be for us.

And, finally, the one great original purpose of conforming the believer to the model or pattern of the glorified Son is that which has been the spring, and is the everlasting and abiding spring, of all the divine procedure and action.

This is the train of glorious privileges which flow forth from the believer's union with Christ. Nothing is too excellent for God to do or to devise for such an one; all the joy that the fullest love can inspire, all the dignity that the highest glories can put on us, are ours thus according to the counsel of God in Christ Jesus. God is for us — that can easily account for all this train of joys and glories.

But if He is for us, who can be against us? Who can do anything to harm us? Is there an accuser, a judge, or an executioner, still standing out? The first may go away rebuked by this that God has justified us; the second may go away rebuked by this that Christ has died — has already suffered the judgment, and His work has been accepted to the full in heaven itself; the third may go away rebuked by this: that all the malice of earth and hell together shall never drag us away from the embraces, the firm embraces, of our God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And if there be now neither accuser to charge, nor

judge to condemn, nor executioner to punish, the court is cleared. We have left the scene, to which as sinners we had been righteously dragged, to meet Him who has delivered us, in other scenes altogether; not as the Judge but as the Bridegroom, to enjoy a Husband in a Saviour for ever and ever. J. G. B.