

Sabbath School Today With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Redemption in Romans Lesson 9: "Freedom in Christ"

In the seventh chapter of Romans, which was the subject of last week's lesson, Paul describes a problem. The problem is that neither knowledge nor effort enables one to keep the law. As a consequence, self-reliance, however well-informed or well-intentioned, is condemned under the law.

In the eighth chapter of Romans, which is the subject of this week's lesson, Paul presents the solution to the problem.

In the first verse, Paul correlates the absence of condemnation to being in Christ. Please note that the phrase "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," which appears in the KJV and implies that the absence of condemnation is attributable to what we call sanctification, the imparted obedience of Christ, is not in the original. Thus, a correct translation of the first verse of the chapter is: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (, Romans 8:1, NASB).

Thereafter, Paul elaborates on the concept of being "in Christ". In the fourth verse, he introduces the concept of the imparted obedience of Christ as the evidence of faith. In subsequent verses, he identifies the alternative to "the law of sin and death"; "the flesh", the carnal mind, fear, death, and bondage; as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, the spiritual mind, peace, life, and adoption.

What is the law of "the Spirit of life in Christ" (vs. 2)? When Adam and Eve hearkened to Satan, they lost their freedom and acquired the carnal mind, a mind at enmity with God that separates us from God and one another. In Christ, however, freedom is restored and enmity and isolation are abolished (Gen. 3:15; Eph. 2:14).

A. T. Jones describes this accomplishment: "It is true, the Jews in their separation from God had built up extra separations between themselves and the Gentiles. It is true that Christ wanted to put all those separations out of the way, and he did do that. But the only way that he did it, and the only way that he could do it, was to destroy the thing that separated them from God. All the separations between them and the Gentiles would be gone, when the separation, the enmity, between them and God was gone.

"Oh, the blessed news that the enmity is abolished! It is abolished; thank the Lord. . . . It is gone, in Christ it is gone. Not outside of Christ; in Christ it is gone, abolished, annihilated. Thank the Lord. This is freedom" ("The Third Angel's Message," Sermons at the 1895 General Conference, p. 57).

E. J. Waggoner explains verses two through four: “So the law as it is in the person of Christ is the law of the Spirit of Life. So he [the believer] takes the life of Christ, and gets the perfection of the law as it is in Christ, and serves Him in spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Thus he is delivered from bondservice to the law to freedom in it. There is a wonderful amount of truth in that ‘The law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’

“‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.’ Is there any discouragement in that? Does it cast disparagement on the law? Not in the least. What could not the law do? It could not justify me because I was weak. It did not have any good material to work on. It was not the fault of the law, it was the fault of the material. The flesh was weak, and the law could not justify it. But God hath sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh, that He might justify us” (*Bible Studies on the Book of Romans*, 1891, p. 29).

Please note that, in the third verse, Paul describes the human nature that Christ assumed at the incarnation as “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Ellen G. White wrote: “The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study” (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244).

The 1888 messengers recognized the connection between Christology and soteriology. They believed that, to redeem humanity, Christ assumed human nature as it was after the fall, with its tendencies and desires. E. G. White supports the post-fall view of the human nature of Christ: “In taking upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin” (*ibid.*, p. 256). “He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted” (*Medical Ministry*, p. 181).

Christ took our nature which would tend to pull Him in a direction contrary to His Father’s will and thus sin, but He denied Himself (Romans 15:3). Thus the sinful nature which Christ took upon His divinity was not a sinning nature and did not make Him, as such, a sinner. If He had pandered to that fallen nature then He would have sinned.

“Jesus came to the world, and put Himself in the flesh, just where men are; and met that flesh, just as it is, with all its tendencies and desires; and by the divine power that he brought by faith, He ‘condemned sin in the flesh’, and thus brought to all mankind that divine faith which brings the divine power to man to deliver him from the power of the flesh and the law of sin, just where he is, and to give him assured dominion over the flesh, just as it is” (A. T. Jones, *Review and Herald*, Sept. 1, 1896).

It is important to emphasize that Christ entered humanity not in sinning flesh but in “the likeness of sinful flesh”. The post-fall view of the human nature of Christ does not in the least compromise His absolute sinlessness.

The very words “likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3) and “was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7) is that there is no difference between His humanity and ours. He faced the same temptations as are the common lot of humanity. We have a Saviour who is near to us and not afar off. The difference between Christ and us is not the “flesh” which he took, but the “mind” or character which he maintained in the conflict, the end result of which is the righteousness of Christ.

As Christ had the mind of God, we are admonished to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). We acquire it. “Let this mind be in you.” By consent or permission we allow Christ to be formed within us. In other words, righteousness is by faith in Christ (1 Cor. 3:16) by a continual renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2).

There is also a difference between Christ’s life and our lives. The difference is His constant subjugation of the fallen nature. He never succumbed to it. Throughout His life on earth, Christ never exercised His own will; He chose to do only His Father’s will (Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38). “Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 664).

Believers in every age are saved by being “in Christ”. Even Christ’s end-time people, whom the True Witness identifies as keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will be saved being “in Christ”.

The eighth chapter of Romans is reassuring. We may experience “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ”.
—*Roland Fanselau*