

## Notes on Romans 8 : 1 – 4 ‘Living the *life* of the Spirit filled with Joy’

Christmas, what wonderful word, as it speaks of expectation, gifts, joy, food, love but also of disappointment, arguments, washing up and sulking!! Christmas, what a wonderful word, it speaks of the rites and rituals we all have about how we hope the day should go, of how we like it to be as well as how it has always been to make it just so. Christmas, what a wonderful word, for it is the heart and life and soul of Romans chapter 8 which has more gifts than you could ever fit in Santa’s sack, it is better food than can ever be laid out on any table and it speaks of joy and hope and love fulfilled beyond all expectation. So let’s unwrap it.

When you think of Christmas preparations, one of them that may well have begun a little ago is your wish list. If you look at mine it was quite empty and so I’ve added lots of bike maintenance stuff! At Christmas we rightly and joyfully celebrate the gift of Jesus who is God in the flesh. Something that is rightly awe inspiring and wonderful and here in Romans 8 Paul adds another layer of why this is so. In Romans 8 the added layer to the wonder of Jesus being born like us is that in Jesus God is able to resolve the puzzle, the problem of the Law, or Torah as described in Romans 7. That extraordinary chapter says that Torah has been given to help us live the new life of love and obedience to God. It is the foretaste of the resurrection life, of the loved life but as we discovered there is a problem. This is that Torah can’t actually do this, as all it does is condemn us for though we may desire to live in and by the New Covenant all we know is failure; as described in Romans 7 verses 24 – 25.

This layer of wrapping paper is important if we are to appreciate and to revel in verse 1 and to understand and live out verses 1 – 4 as a whole. The gifts under the Christmas tree of Romans 8 are summarised in the astonishing declaration that we are not condemned. We are not condemned because of two things about Jesus. Firstly, he was swift not to condemn, like the time he spoke to the woman caught in adultery in John 8 verse 11. Secondly, Jesus was himself not condemned and as not condemned he was able to fulfil Torah’s other and less well known role of which was to concentrate sin in one people, or even in one person. As the Messiah, and as the true Israel Jesus was able to do that which neither Israel, or the King or the Temple could do, which was to keep the Torah completely. In keeping Torah fully he was able to concentrate sin within his real flesh and in doing this when he offered himself as a sin offering he was able to condemn sin and to resolve the problem as described in Romans 7 verses 21 – 25.

This is why we are to know such joy because the verdict again and again and again over us is that we are **NOT** condemned!! Thus, when the enemy tempts us to despair, as the old hymn goes, we need to ask ourselves, are we condemned and the answer is... **NO!!** When the enemy comes and taunts us over our failings, of which I know that I have many, we need to ask ourselves are we condemned and the answer is... **NO!!** When the enemy comes and twists our weaknesses against us, we need to ask ourselves, are we condemned and the answer is... **NO!!**

The astonishing gift of Jesus is that we are now able to live a life set free as we now are able to understand the role of Torah, which is to encourage us to live a life blessed by God, and because of Jesus' sin offering we are now free to imitate him in our lives. For in Jesus the heart of Torah has been unleashed in us as we live in the joyous life of the Holy Spirit. This life of the Spirit is to live out the life of the New Covenant because the Spirit has made our Hearts new and so empowering us to live out the life of Torah calls us to; which is of loving God with all our heart, mind, body and soul and our neighbour as ourselves.

When I pray for us as a church one of the things I pray for is that we will all know people investing in our lives and of us being trained to help us live our lives as Christians. This is part of what Mosaic Discipleship means for us as a church and as church we will seek to provide this, but if this is to work do you desire it? One of the reasons why I think investing in and training matters is because our Union have just begun a scheme called Continuing Ministerial Development. This scheme encourages me to do exactly what I am praying for you because the heart of the scheme is my own mental and emotional well-being. Our well-being is the soul of Romans 8. Our well-being is rooted in our not being condemned, since it is sin alone that is condemned, and in our learning to walk together by the Spirit. One of the steps of learning I would like to introduce is to restart our Monday night prayers by using Zoom. Mosaic Discipleship is not just about me and my maybe bright ideas. It is about all of us being and living well. It is about all of us being confident in Jesus. It is about all of us being joyful in Jesus because we know there is now no condemnation.

### Questions on Romans 8 : 1 – 4 'Living the *life* of the Spirit filled with Joy'

- 1 What do you think the puzzle and problem of the Torah is that Paul is thinking of here in Romans 7, and in particular of verses 21 - 25?
- 2 If the Torah can only condemn us why is Romans 8 verse 1 such a shock and a surprise to us?
- 3 What two things about Jesus explain why we are no longer condemned?
- 4 Does the idea of sin being concentrated in Jesus make sense to you? Why is it important in helping us understand why he gave himself as a sin offering?
- 5 What in your life tempts you to feel condemned but, and this is very important, what is your response and why?
- 6 What does it mean for us to live by the Spirit and why is this a life of joy?
- 7 What would you like to be trained in and how can we as church enable this?