

# Life & Peace in Christ Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Embraced by a God of Love 1*, September 20, 2015

## Romans 7:24 - 8:6

<sup>24</sup> I in myself as a **human** am in **deep distress!** **Who will deliver me** from the body caught in this **death?** <sup>25</sup> **Grace** belongs to **God** through **Jesus Messiah our Lord!**

So on my own, I with my mind am a servant of a law belonging to God, but with my flesh-weakened self I serve a law wielded by sin.

**8:1 Now, however, nothing** can bring **condemnation** for those who are **in Messiah Jesus!** <sup>2</sup> For now the law, under the power of **the Spirit who gives the life in Messiah Jesus,** has itself set you free from that same law as it was wielded by sin to bring death.

<sup>3</sup> **For God has done what was impossible** for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh. By **sending his own Son in flesh** so like our sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, **God condemned sin itself** in that very flesh. <sup>4</sup> God's purpose was that his faithful righteousness promised by giving the law might come to its full reality in us, who walk a path not determined by the flesh but **empowered by the Spirit.**

<sup>5</sup> For those who live lives determined by the flesh **think** in a way that can't see beyond the things of the flesh, but those who **live according to the Spirit think** in a way opened to things that only the Spirit can do. <sup>6</sup> For it is **death** to limit the mind to its enslavement to the flesh, but **to open the mind to all that the Spirit does is to receive true life and peace.**

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## Romans 8:31-32, 38-39

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ... <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 Messiah Jesus our Lord.

## Ephesians 3:14-19

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

## Romans 5:1-2, 8

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been declared right from his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Messiah, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. ... <sup>8</sup> but God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, the Messiah died for us.

## Romans 8:9-10

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of the Messiah does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if the Messiah is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of God's righteous faithfulness.

## Romans 10:5

<sup>5</sup> For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that "*the person who does the commandments shall live/have life in them.*" (Lev. 18:5)

## **The Passionate Participant**

We return from our Retreat: Seeking “Rest and Delight” in God’s presence, finding times of quiet renewal, meditation. If you look for books about meditation you’ll find many on western variations of Buddhism, almost always with the invitation that this ‘method’ doesn’t require any religion or faith. In that way they are true to the Buddha’s self-help orientation of breaking the human situation of suffering with no dependence on any gods.

Paul also is dealing with the human experience of suffering, evil, desire, brokenness. Some real similarities but a radically different vision of where hope lies. Paul sees our situation through the event of Jesus: his life, teaching, death, resurrection, all that he means in the light of God’s long history with Israel, all that he means for all peoples. Yes, the power of death, despair, suffering, evil can seem overwhelming, but Jesus shows us a God of passionate, profound love who reaches out to embrace us in the midst of vibrant life.

Paul experienced (and calls us to) a mysticism of love, a union with the divine, not at the end of a monastic practice of withdrawal and disengagement, but by God’s grace in coming to dwell in us, and us in God. Father, Jesus Messiah, Holy Spirit, all are vitally active in this. This is where Rom 8 is going. It is the astonishing reality created by what God did in Jesus.

## **Dealing with the Impossible Problem**

Paul starts Rom 8 after a dark analysis of human brokenness. It is the situation of all people, but it was brought to sharp focus through the Torah that Israel received. The intent of the law was to deal with sin and give life (Lev 18:5), but the scriptures bear vivid witness to how the commandments brought the sinfulness of people and leaders into sharp relief. Paul describes it as personal experience, the battle of good and evil running right through each heart. I myself am the problem, not the solution. Self-help is not enough either for Israel or for the rest of the world. Paul calls the deep problem our “flesh” – our built-in vulnerability to sin, our self-orientation (away from God), making even a good Law weak.

Surprise breaks in with the event of Jesus. God focuses Israel’s story in the Messiah, anointed by God’s Spirit. He is both Israel and humanity, but is also God’s own self. No one expected such involvement from God. Jesus is our flesh but breaks the grip of sin. He takes our sin, suffering, death, but instead of condemning us sinners he condemns sin itself so as to set us free from it. In the Messiah the Spirit gives life from God to anyone.

What God has always wanted – to overcome the alienation of his creatures from him because of their weakness – God did and is doing in Jesus and in the Spirit. He changes the fundamental situation of our life by his own passionate mysticism – union with his creatures in incarnation and in-dwelling that honors their freedom and humanity.

## **From Deep Distress to Unbreakable Confidence**

The deep distress of the human situation is transformed by God’s grace in Jesus. The Spirit, Father, Messiah all live in us and we in them. The result is beyond all hope. New power is “in Messiah Jesus,” and no form of condemnation can reach there. No condemnation of the law or sin or society or parents or peers or inner voices. Nothing can stand against us. We learn to say no to the deep brokenness that seemed our permanent condition.

A new path, new way of thinking opens before us. We’re used to our “flesh” point of view – God pushed aside, me in charge – and it’s hard for us to see its destructive blindness or to trust the power and possibilities opened by God’s Spirit being in our life. God, Messiah, Spirit all work with us in us to bring us into real life. Condemnation is silent. Peace!