



HISTORIC ST. JAMES AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
222 NORTH ROMAN STREET
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70112
Telephone: 504.586.8381 Facsimile: 504.586.8993

THE REVEREND JONATHAN C. AUGUSTINE, J.D., M.Div., PASTOR

February 27, 2019: “Dead to Sin, but ALIVE in the Spirit!”

I Prayer

II Overview and Objectives

In our last Bible Study, covering Romans 5 & 6, we continued our analysis of Paul’s theology of “justification by faith.” Chapters 5 & 5 are considered transitional chapters, in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. They introduce us to the sinfulness of “Adam,” (a name used to collectively represent humankind/man), in contrast to the victory humanity has in Christ Jesus. This evening’s exploration of Romans 7 & 8 goes further. Insofar as our last session introduced us to the concept of “original sin” or “ancestral sin,” something adopted in the Methodist Articles of Religion, this evening’s session introduces us to the concept of “free will” and forces us to look at whether we can control our sinful actions. Paul forces us to ask this question, as he also begins to introduce the concept of predestination, meaning “the elect!”

In chapter 7, Paul sets the stage for division and conflict. He begins by using an analogy about marriage, to illustrate how the Spirit divorces us from dominion of the law, such that we can have new life in the Spirit (7:1-6). Paul then outlines a division between the Law and Sin (7:7-13), before detailing an inner conflict that exists within all of us, because of our sinful selves (7:14-21). How does one resolve this inner conflict or battle between “the law” and “the flesh?” Paul’s response to this implied question is the subject of Romans 8.

In Romans 8, Paul resolves the conflict by pointing us to “choosing” a life in the Spirit and rejecting the things of “the flesh” (8:1-17). The inherent questions must be, however, whether human beings have the capacity to choose (*i.e.*, to choose right from wrong) and what exactly does it mean to reject the flesh (*i.e.*, what does “the flesh” symbolize). In focusing on a life in the Spirit and rejecting “the flesh,” Paul is telling us that our desire for the Spirit is met by God’s love, expressed through God’s Son, Christ Jesus. Paul also shows a Trinitarian theology, focusing on the power of the Spirit, as an intercessor for us (8:26-27). Additionally, Paul gives us an assurance of victory by telling us, in one of the Bible’s most popular passages, that nothing can separate us from the love of God, expressed through Jesus (8:31-39). Indeed, to choose Christ is to be **“Dead to Sin, but ALIVE in the Spirit!”**

Different religions/denominations view the Bible in different ways. Romans arguably has something for everyone! Whereas Calvinist traditions (e.g., Presbyterians) might place an emphasis on predestination, Wesleyan traditions (e.g., AMEs and United Methodists) place more emphasis on grace (*i.e.*, the free gift). In considering Romans 7 & 8, I invite you to challenge yourself and define what you really believe.

III Reflective Matters for Consideration



As we proceed through chapters 7 and 8, please consider how the following apply to you:

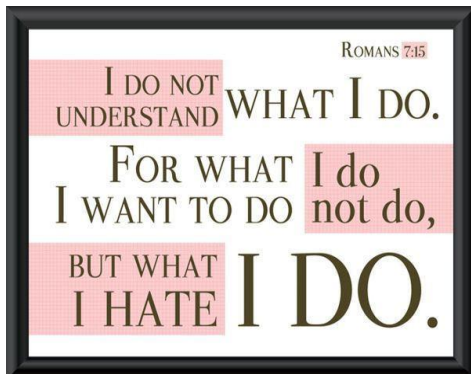
- Is **World War III** within you (mankind/humanity?) Meaning, are we, as humans, consistently engaged in inherent conflict over matters of sin and righteousness? Assuming there is such inner conflict, who appears to be winning?
- Where do you come out on the concept of “predestination?” Are you a member of “the church” because you’re supposed to be? Is so, what about someone who is not?

IV Textual Examination (portions of Rom. 7 and 8)

- In 7:1-6, Paul uses an analogy about marriage to support his position that the Spirit divorces us from the law, so we are not bound by or held captive by it, so we can unit with the Spirit to receive new life. How might this apply to you? Need you be weighed down by rules or dictates or will you seek good because of the Spirit?
- In 7:8, Paul writes that “Apart from the law, sin lies dead.” He then goes on to write that, because of the law, “sin revived” and *he* died. This suggests the power of sin is so strong because humans can never meet/match what the law requires. Where do you turn when (**not IF**) you fall short?

TRANSITION FROM LAW TO GRACE

<p>The first husband The husband is “the law” (the old man who tries to be saved by obeying the law). As long as we are married to the law, we are under its demands.</p>		<p>The “old man” is the first husband. The crucifixion of the “old man” (chap. 6:6) is the death of that husband. The resurrection to a new life (chap. 6:5, 11) is the new marriage. The final result is bearing fruit for God; the fruit of a reformed life.</p>
<p>Death of the first husband When we are crucified with Christ, the old self dies and we are free from damnation and from the control of sin and law.</p>		<p>A new marriage We are reborn through the Holy Spirit when we are joined to the resurrected Savior; thenceforth, we no longer serve God because of fear, but because we have a new spirit of freedom and love.</p>



- In 7:14-25, Paul goes on to suggest that he can’t help himself and that all human beings sin! Is this true? If so, is there a such thing as “free will?” (discussion of Luther’s *Bondage of the Will* in response to Erasmus) Where do you come out?

- In 8:1-8, Paul solves the conflict in chapter 7 by pointing us to Christ and a life in the Spirit. According to Paul, Christ came for us. In pointing us to the Spirit, however, Paul contrasts the Spirit with things that are of “the flesh.” What is the flesh to you? Should we take Paul literally? Symbolically? Or both? Explain

- In 8:12-17, Paul is clear that if we are led by the Spirit of God, we are children of God. He is even more clear that, as children, there is an heir relationship we have with our parent (please also pull Galatians 4:4-7). Paul writes, “We suffer with Him (Christ) so we may be glorified with him.” (7:17). What glorification awaits you as an heir and how does it relate to Paul’s concept of life in the Spirit?
- In 8:18-25, Paul takes an eschatological (end times) position, as he compares the pain of “now” with the glory “to come.” Does this type of position help you? Has it been a staple of the lived Black Church experience in America? How does this apply to you?
- In 8:26-27, Paul presents the Spirit as an *intercessor* who is actually working on your behalf, just as we work on behalf of others when we pray for them as intercessors. Does this mean the Spirit is like an advocate (pull John 14:15-17;25-26)?



- Before taking a victory lap in 8:31, Paul squarely address predestination in 8:28-30. How do you understand predestination? Is it a happy or sad thing? How does such a theology make you feel, especially considering the victory lap Paul takes in verses 31-39? If you’re “predestined” to be in the church (the elect) NOTHING can separate you? What do you think?

V Follow-up Questions?

VI Closing Prayer

