

# The Compass

Week 29

OT Readings: 1 Chron. 22:1 - 2 Chron. 8:10

NT Readings: Rom. 3:9 - 8:8

---

## Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

### Old Testament

- 1 Chronicles ends with David's death; 2 Chronicles begins with the reign of Solomon (1-9). Notice the amount of space given to the preparation and arrangements for building and equipping the temple.
- Interspersed are some wonderful passages about God's desire for wholeheartedness on behalf of king and people; here is what really matters (1 Chron. 28:9, 29:14-19).
- Worship is front and center. It was no mere formality, but heartfelt, joyful and exuberant. God is present and in wonderfully powerful ways (7:1-3).<sup>1</sup>

### New Testament

- Paul continues to address the Jewish Christian concern about the law (Torah) and what it means to be right with God. In 2:25-29, he shows that true rightness with God is an internal heart matter. He begins to address the significance of God's OT Jewish people (3:1), he continues this later (Rom. 9).
- Once we see that all are under sin (3:9), how does anyone become right with God? Paul shows it is by faith, based upon Christ's "provision for mercy"<sup>2</sup> on the cross (3:21-26). Abraham is exhibit A. He was right with God by faith before there was any Torah (Rom. 4).
- What Christ has done in His death opens up for us a new way of life (6:4) which is made real to us as we follow and are controlled by the Holy Spirit (8:4-17).<sup>3</sup> On Romans 7 see below.

## Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

**Romans 5:1-11.** I have found it helpful to read this passage backward: first 6-11 and then 1-5. In 6-11 we see the truth of what Jesus has done for us in light of our utter indifference, in fact, resistance and rejection of God. We were truly helpless; we could not escape the captivity of our sin nor undo the death penalty which we deserved. Yet, His great love! With no guarantee that we would even care – His great love put Him on the cross anyway – He loved us that much. It is beyond our comprehension that there is a Person in the universe like this, *but He is*. And this great love made it possible for friendship to be restored.

1-5 fleshes out the implications of His love and our restored relationship. We are at *peace* with Him, no longer at war, no longer resisting His Spirit, no longer rejecting His wonderful purpose for our life. To share in "God's glory" (5:2) is a way of saying "all God intends for us." Amazing beyond comprehension, these things will be fully realized (1 Cor. 2:9). Not that we simply wait; NOW we experience His love by the Spirit – so powerfully that our hearts are flooded and overwhelmed with its reality! This friendship is no relationship only between our ears; rather our ongoing *experience* with God's love assures us and transforms us. Is this your experience?<sup>4</sup>

## Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

**Rom. 8:1-13.** How can we experience Jesus' victory in our lives? By the Spirit's presence and power! But it is not automatic. It requires that we take responsibility for our life-focus and our thinking. Paul contrasts two alternative ways of life and ways of thinking – flesh<sup>5</sup> and Spirit. Because we have the Spirit (8:9), we must follow the Spirit. How? It means that we are deliberate in orienting, structuring, building our lives around the things of God. As we cultivate our life with Jesus, we invite the Holy Spirit to control, direct and focus our lives on the things of God: His way of thinking, believing, behaving. The "flesh" represents all that is outside of God and His ways. If we choose to entertain (let alone cultivate) our old way of living before Jesus, then we will experience defeat and death (8:13). We cannot live in both worlds.<sup>6</sup> If you think you can toy with the world, entertain a little sin and be okay in the end, then you are simply a fool. There is NO overlap in these two alternatives; either we follow the Spirit or follow the ways of the world – choose.<sup>7</sup>

## Difficult Question of the Week

### Romans 7. Q. “Is Paul describing his present or his pre-Christian experience?”

This passage has aroused significant debate over the centuries. Is Paul describing the normal, expected experience of the Christian or does the struggle of which he speaks describe before conversion? Arguments are made for both positions.<sup>8</sup> As with any passage of Scripture, context is essential to a correct interpretation; the context of Romans 6-8 determines (in my view) that Paul is talking about a pre-Christian experience:

- Both Rom. 6 and 8 describe a life of freedom and victory over sin. Rom. 6 shows how Christ’s death and resurrection has made this possible and Rom. 8 how we are to live so as to appropriate that victory. Decisive is the *past* tense description of the Christian life in reference to sin: 6:17-20 (you *were* slaves to sin) and 7:5 (“*were* controlled by our old nature” NLT). We are not *now* either slaves to sin or controlled by the old nature (NAU says, “*were* in the flesh”); all of that is in our past, before Jesus and the Spirit (8:9).
- Romans 7 stands in sharp contrast. The person’s experience is someone “of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (7:14 NAU), “prisoner of the law of sin” (7:23 NAU), “serving with my flesh the law of sin” (7:25 NAU).

Certainly this cannot be the experience of the same person at the same time! Romans 7 describes Paul’s<sup>9</sup> pre-Christian experience: one who knows the truth revealed in the law, but in bondage to the “flesh” and a slave to sin.<sup>10</sup>

Copyright July 2012 by Mike Huckins. **The Compass** is intended as an aid in the reading of the Bible; it is the property of the author and represents his views alone. While it follows *The One Year Bible* format, *The Compass* is not a publication of Tyndale. *The One Year Bible* is a copyrighted publication of Tyndale House Publishers.

---

<sup>1</sup> If it is our tendency to see OT worship as formal and legal, we would be wrong. When the living God is present with His people, who cannot but worship! In the NT, we as God’s people are now the dwelling of the Spirit, He *fills us* with His presence and He is *with* us (Eph. 2:22). Do we in our reserve hold back from worshipping when He longs to engage us in living and powerful way?

<sup>2</sup> Here (3:21-26) is an important passage about the nature of the atonement.

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars feel the translation of the Greek *sarx* (“flesh”) as “sinful nature” in Rom. 6-8 is unfortunate. I would agree. Gordon Fee, a NT scholar, makes a sound argument for understanding *sarx* (flesh) not as an internal “something” inside of me; but rather representing (for Paul) everything that was before, contrary to and outside of Christ. Thus *sarx* is about the old non-Christian way of life from which we are set free and no longer under its power. Our new way of life is about living “according to the Spirit” meaning to follow the Spirit and walk in His ways. See Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 816-822.

<sup>4</sup> I believe that this “heart filled with love” was Paul’s own experience with God and therefore he could write with confidence that it is to be ours as well. Many are the testimonies of those who being “baptized in or filled the Holy Spirit” experience an overwhelming sense of God’s presence and love. In fact, it seems the one universal element of people’s encounters with the Spirit. Is it yours? Have you asked for it? (Luke 11:9-13)

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2 above.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 6:7-8, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua 24:14-15. 1 Kings 18:21. How we need a revival. Studies show that many so called “Christians” differ little in their thinking and lifestyle from their non-Christian neighbors. This is an insult to the cross and grievous to God.

<sup>8</sup> A good commentary will even handedly show the evidence and argumentation for both sides.

<sup>9</sup> Paul does use “I” and the present tense which is the strongest argument in favor of present experience. However, it may be for effect (we do this today when we want to strengthen a point) or it might represent his personal experience before Jesus or he might be using “I” as a way to make the point about *anyone* in a similar situation. It is highly unlikely given Paul’s primary concern here and in the context of Romans (freedom from the Torah by the Spirit’s power), that he is presenting some kind of internal struggle within the believer between two natures.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus and the Spirit are the way to newness of life, not the old way of the Torah (6:4, 7:5-6). One might object, “Well my experience feels a lot more like Romans 7 than Romans 6 and 8.” Perhaps, but if so, there is a need then to ask some serious questions. Scripture is to determine our experience; we must seek to align our experience with the awesome freedom and newness of life God promises! Romans 7 is the experience of someone, perhaps Paul, who before conversion becomes clear about their hopeless condition and realizes that the Torah (law) only condemns – it has no power to bring freedom.