

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CROSS, THE LAW, THE FLESH, BAPTISM

The center cross was designed for Barrabas but Jesus took his place on that cross and Barrabas went free. The innocent died and the criminal went free. Barrabas is a picture of each one of us. There is a criminal in each one of us who not only deserves to die but is already condemned to die. All have sinned and the sentence of death is upon each one of us. The “old man”, the “old self”, or the “old nature” is a rebel with cause who cannot be reformed. God can only deal with him by death and burial. The cross of Calvary deals with our sin through the blood of Jesus and is activated by our faith. The old nature is dealt with at baptism. The “flesh” is a combination of the body and mind turned toward this world. The “flesh” is dealt with by the Holy Spirit.

The exchange that is available to us at His cross follows.

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| (1) He was Punished | (1) So we could be forgiven |
| (2) He was wounded | (2) So we could be Healed |
| (3) He took our sin | (3) We received His righteous |
| (4) He died | (4) That we might live |
| (5) He received the curse | (5) So we could receive the blessing |
| (6) He experienced poverty | (6) So we might have abundance |
| (7) He was put to shame | (7) So we might receive glory |
| (8) He was rejected | (8) So we could be accepted |

The Barrabas in us is the old nature which is the source of unbelief. He is also the source of rebellion. He is also the source continuing sin. He has been freed from the sentence of death on Calvary but he still has to be dealt with or he will rebel again, doubt again and sin again. Water baptism is the first strike against the old man. It is designed to be a death blow but experience tells us he dies very slowly.

ROM 6:6 **knowing this**, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin (our sin factory) might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; If we don't “KNOW” this we can't reckon ourselves dead and the power of that death will not work with us.

One interesting thing about the last part of Rom. 6 is that sin is presented as an outside force now rather than an inside slave master. It is a “thing” trying to manifest in us. Our redeemed will is an instrument that can be used as a weapon against this “sin” from manifesting in us. After baptism and the death and burial of the “old man” sin is a matter of choice. We are no longer slaves of sin but we can still sin anytime we choose because sin is a choice. If we choose to sin we soon become a slave of that sin that results in unrighteous. 1 John says that all sin is unrighteousness.

Also, Romans 7 shows that the “law” (meaning the Old Covenant law) results in sin and sin makes slaves. If we yield to sin we become a slave of that sin. We can choose concerning sin but we can not choose the consequences of that sin. We can’t say “I will choose to sin but I will reject slavery because of my freedom in Christ”. Slavery is the consequence. ROM 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone {as} slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, **either of sin resulting in death**, or of **obedience resulting in righteousness?** ROM 6:22 But now having been **freed from sin and enslaved to God**, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. Being “ENSLAVED TO GOD” is also a choice but it is the only alternative to being bound by sin. Many want to be freed from sin but are very reluctant to be “enslaved to God”. Joshua said “Choose you this day whom you will serve”. It is not possible to remain neutral or lukewarm. You will choose one way or the other.

When the old man is alive he will always be wanting to return to Egypt because he will always remember the leeks, the garlics and the flesh pots he once enjoyed. The old man can’t remember that he was a slave in Egypt. If you look back you will soon go back or turn to a pillar of salt in the pew.

A live chick will not live under a dead hen. The new life must come out from under the old nature. The dead hen must get buried. Baptism is the way. That is first part of Romans 6.

Romans 7 speaks of the most difficult part of “BEGINNING” the Christian life. The problem is being able to lay aside the law so that we can be “JOINED” to Jesus. The problem is that we cannot participate in both Christ and the law because that is spiritual adultery. The only way to escape the law is by death and burial. The only way to be “JOINED” to Jesus is by resurrection. Through our flesh and old nature we were married to the law. Our desire is to be free. If the law would just die we could be free to marry Jesus. However, the law will not die. Therefore, we are the ones that have to die so we can be joined to another, to Him who raised from the dead. If we are “married” to Jesus there is no law because there is no need as long as we live “in the Spirit”. There is no option in the Christian life about bringing forth fruit. In JOH 15:2 “**Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away**; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. It is through the marriage relationship or union with Jesus that we produce fruit. Fruit is not an option. Either produce or be cast into the fire. Confessing that a believer cannot be cast into hell will not save the barren branch. Fruit is not a matter of being clever but simply by being joined intimately with Jesus in a life flowing union.

The law is “good” but good laws will never solve the problem of bad people. Somehow bad people must be transformed into good people. Unrighteous people will always do bad things. The problem is that righteous people also do bad things. Righteous people must become holy people. HEB 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and **to the spirits of righteous men made perfect**. The law will never change bad people into good people. If it would Israel would have become “good people” but the opposite was true.

Romans 7:7-25 The flesh = Man putting forth his best effort to please God. Result is all bad.

- (1) Law is not sin but reveals sin
- (2) Law revives the old man and activates his deeds.
- (3) Law brings hidden sin into full view.
- (4) Law has no power to make us righteous, experientially.
- (5) Law is negative. It commands but then stirs up the opposite.
- (6) Law says don't lust but stirs up lust of all kinds.
- (7) Law kills me after I have come alive in Christ.
- (8) If we choose law over spirit, death begins to set in.
- (9) Must be free of the law to live in the spirit.

Adam was alive with the breath of God but the commandment killed him because it activated flesh, which activated sin which activated death. The discipleship movement died when it came under law in the late 1970's. It was not that they despised grace but that they failed to walk in the Spirit and rules and laws was the result. When doctrine becomes LAW the flesh will rule. JER 17:5 Thus says the Lord, **“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And (the result) whose heart turns away from the Lord. JER 17:6 “For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant.**

In church we see that many began in the spirit but tried to finish in the flesh through more laws, doctrines, rules, regulations and by a hierarchy of leadership that quenched the Spirit. Galatians 3 is about Spirit filled believers trying to be perfected by the flesh by coming back under the law. Romans 7:7 says the fault is not the law because it is good and even holy and spiritual. The problem is with the flesh. The law reveals flesh but has no power to deal with the flesh. This problem is solved in the New Covenant by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Legalism is the attempt to obtain righteousness by laws and rules which reflect man's concept of holiness. It adds to what God requires to be declared righteous, faith in the working of God. These laws produces an inner conflict. I want to do good and conform to church "standards" but I am conscious that even when I want to do good evil is driving me to do the opposite.

When Rebekah was pregnant there was a conflict going on within her. These twins represented two nations or two kinds of men with opposite natures. We also have twins within us. God loved one and hated the other. We also should learn to love one and hate the other. One nature will sell the birthright cheap while the other, after it matures, will not let God go until it is blessed. This always produces conflict. These twins represent either law or grace. When grace receives the birthright and matures it can be reconciled with law because law no longer stirs up flesh. GAL

5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Therefore, the law is no threat to us. Ishmael and Isaac also picture the obtaining of the promise. Ishmael is a picture of the child of the flesh who was conceived by natural ability and not by faith. Isaac is a child of promise that was conceived by faith. These two women, Sarah and Hagar, represent two covenants. GAL 4:23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. GAL 4:24 This is allegorically speaking: for these {women} are two covenants, one {proceeding} from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

Flesh will never inherit the promises of God but will cause us always to become slaves even though both have the same father. Birth is not the deciding factor but walking according to the Spirit. Flesh can't wait for the promise in faith. Lets us do something even if it is wrong. That is Abraham and Hagar at Sarah's insistence. Ishmael and Hagar will mock the ones who are born into the promise. God says " Cast out the son of flesh because can't inherit along with the son of promise".

GAL 5:3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. GAL 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. We can't submit to law and still be under grace. It has to be one or the other. True circumcision is not because of law but because of the covenant made with Abraham which came before the law. If any is circumcised because of LAW they will fall from grace. Paul had two disciples who were later circumcised. One he yielded to circumcision easily while the other he fought against. What was the difference? One was a covenant person as a Jew and heir of Abraham and the other was a Gentile.

GAL 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. We see that the truth of ROM 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; **must to come to reality in our experience.** Crucifixion is not a theory but a fact. Baptism is where it begins. This is the least painful part of crucifixion. The next part is painful. Passions and desires don't die easily. The New Covenant demands obedience but by what method? Buy law or by grace? Law won't get it and has no power to enable obedience. Grace is the only option but grace doesn't cover over our lack of obedience as is commonly taught. Grace carries with it the ability to obey.

There is war, conflict and total opposition between flesh and spirit. God deals with the rebel in Rom 6 in a legal way but we have to move from the legal to the experiential by faith and obedience. All Canaan was legally theirs before they left Egypt but the Canaanites still possessed it. They could only possess Canaan experientially by putting their feet in it and driving the Canaanites out. There also were giants in the land. Too many confuse the legal with the experiential.

ROM 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh **set their minds on the things of the flesh,** but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ROM 8:6 For **the mind set on the flesh is death,** but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ROM 8:7 because the mind set

on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able { to do so }; ROM 8:8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Whether we operate in the realms of flesh or in the realms of Spirit will be determined by which way our mind is turned. Either toward the flesh of man or toward the spirit of man. If the mind is set on the flesh there is no way to walk in the spirit.

Law can set limits on the external but only the Spirit can change the internal to conform to the image of Jesus. The carnal nature cannot be converted by law or by Spirit. God's only plan for it is death and burial. The basic enmity against God is in the mind of man. For that reason man must have a change of mind. ROM 8:7 **because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able { to do so }; COL 1:21 And although you were formerly **alienated and hostile in mind, {engaged} in evil deeds**, Corrupt nature cannot be reversed, restored or converted. A rotten apple cannot be made whole again. No religion can stop corruption. The mind has to be transformed through total commitment and consecration. ROM 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. ROM 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Living by the flesh is such a destructive thing that Paul says ROM 8:13 for if you are **living according to the flesh, you must die**; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Those who continue to live by the flesh must surely die. In other words how can we maintain our salvation experience by living in the flesh? ROM 8:9 However, you are **not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. There must be a transition from flesh to spirit. If the Holy Spirit completely fills you and rules in and over your life you are not in the flesh. If that is how it is, I can make that work in experience. However, too many people who speak in tongues still walk in the flesh.

Not only did man's sins cause him to suffer but the whole creation was caused to suffer. Not just pain but total corruption. PSA 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; PSA 96:12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy PSA 96:13 Before the \Lord,\ for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples in His faithfulness. It seems that all the world and all of creation including the heavens are rejoicing and anticipating the coming of the Lord but the church is unconcerned or asleep or ignorant. All of creation is involved in singing and rejoicing and proclaiming the coming of the Lord when creation will be set free from corruption. In that day redeemed man will come into full salvation. God's judgement was cursed is the ground because of you. Man's fall touched all the earth because man was responsible for all the earth to guard it and rule over it. The earth "fell" with Adam.

The birth pains or pangs at the close of this age signals the birth of a new age and a restoration of nature.

Abraham was “in the flesh” when he took the initiative to bring forth an heir. Ishmael was the result. According to the picture faith never takes the initiative but waits for the promise of God. Jesus never initiated anything. That identifies His faith. One activity of flesh is to take the initiative and call it moving by faith not by sight. We have not heard anything from God but we are going to step out in “FAITH” (FLESH). Abraham was “reckoned” righteous in Gen. 15 but was circumcised in Gen. 17. Righteousness preceded circumcision. Circumcision was the seal of “FAITH” that was already active. Works followed his faith. Circumcision is NOT the seal of righteousness but of FAITH. FAITH is not seeking for evidence but acting upon the rhema from God. FAITH comes by hearing and hearing comes by the rhema (voice) (word) of God. If we really haven’t heard anything from God it is difficult to exercise His kind of FAITH for a promise that does not exist. FAITH accepts the promise of God exactly as it is given and does not try to modify it or ask for an extension until we raise some more money. Gideon’s fleece is not given as an example of faith. Israel failed not because of hardship but because they didn’t maintain their faith and obedience.

FAITH is not according to law but according to grace. ROM 4:14 For **if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified**; ROM 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. ROM 4:16 For this reason {it is} **by faith**, that {it might be} **in accordance with grace**, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ROM 4:17 (as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”) in the sight of Him whom he believed, {even} God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. FAITH cannot work in the flesh or by the law. These things actually hinder FAITH. GRACE is what supports FAITH. EPH 2:8 For by grace you have been saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God;

Religious legalism produces pride which undermines grace and destroys FAITH.

Abraham “became strong by faith”. He didn’t necessarily have “strong faith” but the faith that he had made him strong and he kept on giving glory to God. Grace can only really begin when human effort fails, is poverty stricken and is bankrupt. As long as there is still hope that we can do it, we cut ourselves off from grace which contains the ability to do it.

We are not “saved” by believing the historical facts about Calvary but when we appropriate those facts into our experience by FAITH.

God reveals different time periods. From Adam to Moses there was no law. From Moses to Christ there was law. From Christ until now there is a New Covenant that contains the law of the Kingdom that is put into our minds and written upon our hearts. This is real law but it comes to us by grace and is perceived, understood and obeyed by the ability of grace. ROM 5:17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more **those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life** through the One, Jesus Christ. Abundance speaks of more than enough but excessively more. Reigning in life requires that we receive the “Abundance of GRACE and the gift of righteousness”.

COL 1:9 **For this reason also, since the day we heard {of it}, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,** COL 1:10 so that you may **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,** to please {Him} in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; COL 1:11 strengthened with all power, according to **His glorious might,** for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously COL 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. COL 1:13 For He delivered us from **the domain of darkness,** and transferred us to **the kingdom of His beloved Son,** COL 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

If forgiveness of sins was all that God wanted we have to wonder why Paul was praying in this way. The reason given was so the believers would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. To do that many spiritual provisions had to be received.