



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Power For The Journey

Romans 8:1-39

Introduction

1. D. A. Carson begins the first chapter of his book, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering & Evil*, with some true stories that he calls “Hard Cases.” Here’s the first:

A pastor is cutting his front lawn. He looks up from his task just in time to see a heavy dump truck back out of his neighbor’s driveway — right over the neighbor’s eighteen-month-old son, who had been squatting behind the huge tires. The pastor accompanies the hysterical mother and ashen father to the hospital in the ambulance. There is no hope for the little boy; he has been crushed almost beyond recognition.

Where is God?¹

2. In the Preface, Carson says his book was “written by a Christian to help other Christians think about suffering and evil,” and “is a book of preventative medicine. One of the major causes of devastation and confusion among Christians is that our expectations are false. We do not give the subject of evil and suffering the thought it deserves until we ourselves are confronted with tragedy” (Carson, 9).
3. As you might expect — both from the subject, and if you know anything about Carson’s writing — the book is a thorough study of Scripture and various explanations that have been offered on the subject. Yet, as he draws his first chapter to a close, he makes an important point: “. . . the truth of the matter is that naked beliefs offer little consolation under the worst experiences of suffering and evil” (Carson, 20). He continues:

To put this in terms of Christian experience: in the dark hours of suffering, Christians want more than the assurance that their beliefs are consistent. They draw comfort only from the living Lord himself, from the Spirit whom he has graciously given, from a renewed grasp, a felt experience, of the love of God in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:14-21). That is not to say, however, that a set of beliefs is irrelevant. It is to say that, in addition to holding that Christian beliefs are true and consistent, the Christian, to find comfort in them, must learn how to *use* them (Carson, 20-21).

4. Romans 8 helps with both concerns Carson identifies: Paul reminds us of fundamental beliefs that sustain us, and demonstrates how to use those beliefs when face a crisis.

Body

- I. Resurrection Is the Key.

A. Romans 8 has two main sections.

¹ D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 15.

1. Deliverance from slavery to live the life of the Spirit (1-17).
2. Living in glory: hope and power to overcome life's troubles (18-39).

B. In both sections, Paul grounds his argument in the reality of the resurrection. The verses that do this appear later in their sections, but could be at the beginning as the guiding theme.

II. Deliverance for Godly Living (1-17).

A. The resurrection statement is in v. 11.

1. The power that was available to raise Jesus is available for all disciples.
2. The fact of the resurrection guarantees the continued presence of God.

B. Verses 1-10 build up to that point; the reality of the resurrection is assumed throughout.

1. Verse 1 — there is no condemnation (*κατάκριμα, katakrima*) for those in Christ.
 - a) There is evidence from antiquity that the word was used more to refer to punishment or doom than to being condemned.²
2. Verse 2 — as we submit to “the law of the Spirit,” Christ frees us “from the law of sin and death,” a victory brought about by resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-57).
3. Verse 3 reviews how the deliverance happened: He stresses the incarnation and reminds us of the crucifixion in the latter part of the verse, but in the context of Romans (4:25; 6:3-4; 8:11), the reality of the resurrection is assumed
4. Verses 4-8 explain what the resurrection means for present living.
5. Verses 9-10 explain how: the Spirit of God/Spirit of Christ dwells in us. The question in vv. 9-10 is, how can Christ dwell in us unless he lives?
6. Verse 11 directly connects the assurance of God's presence with the resurrection.

C. Verses 12-17 draw on the assurance of v. 11 to urge living according to the Spirit.

1. Verses 12-13 speak of us as “debtors” by virtue of the new life we've received.
2. Verses 14-17 show what being led by the Spirit makes us: sons of God fully embraced as adopted sons, granted the closest of relationships (“Abba”), with status as joint-heirs with Christ (who must be living to still be an heir).

III. Glorious Living in the Face of Trouble (18-39).

A. The resurrection statement is in v. 34: because Christ Jesus, who died, is alive and at the right hand of God, interceding for us, who will dare to condemn us?

B. Verses 18-33 build up to that point; the reality of the resurrection is assumed throughout.

1. Verses 18-23 — Death has been conquered, so it is only a matter of time before we are freed from its effects, something for which even the creation longs.
2. Verses 24-25 — We enjoy certainty in an “already / not yet” state: not having realized the goal, we “hope,” a hope guaranteed by resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15).
3. Verses 26-30 — The hope does not assure us that we will not suffer, but we are promised help when we do (26-27) and given confidence that God will prevail (death being a defeated foe) (28-30; cf. 1 Cor. 15:55-57).
4. Verses 31-32 — How could it be otherwise? If God could bring about deliverance through the Son, surely we know that he can deliver us!

² J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), BibleWorks, v.9. See also Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), BibleWorks, v.9; Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976) 2:362.

5. Verses 33-34 — So, who will dare to “bring any charge against God’s elect?”
 6. Verse 34 — We have Christ, who *is* at God’s right hand.
- C. Verses 35-39 draw on the assurance of v. 34.
1. Verse 35 — the love of Christ (see 5:8), ongoing because of resurrection, keeps us in his presence, no matter what harsh realities (and they are) we suffer.
 2. Verses 36-37 — even if we are killed for his sake, we *are* hyper-conquerors (ὑπερνικῶμεν, *hypernikōmen*) through the one who has loved (aor. ptc.) us.
 3. Verses 38-39 — in a series of paired realities, Paul said that none of the things that bring the most uncertainty and fear should intimidate us.
 - a) Paul does not say that the problems will not be substantial, or that we will be spared from them; he says they do not have the power (δύναμαι, *dynamai*) to pry us from Christ’s love.

Conclusion

1. Among the most prolific of poets and song writers in 19th century America was a woman who wrote over 1,000 poems, published four books of poetry, co-wrote several political and patriotic songs, and composed at least five cantatas, including *The Flower Queen*, the first secular cantata by an American composer. Her accomplishments are all the more amazing given the fact that she was blind from the age of six weeks until her death just a little over a month before her 95th birthday in 1915.³
2. You know her for some of the more than 8,000 hymns she wrote. One of the best known expresses well what we should take from the whole of Romans 8: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! // O what a foretaste of glory divine! // Heir of salvation, purchase of God, // Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”⁴
3. That blessed assurance is ours because of the marvelous work of Jesus. It is available to all who will respond with “the obedience of faith” and be “called to belong to Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:5-6). Have you answered his call?

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³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny_Crosby. Accessed April 18, 2013.

⁴ Fanny J. Crosby & Phoebe Palmer Knapp, “Blessed Assurance,” in John P. Wiegand, ed., *Praise for the Lord* (Nashville, TN: Praise Press, 1992), Song 71.