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A Transformed Life

Romans 8:1-27

In Matthew 19, we read of Christ's interaction with a Rich Young Ruler... a man who at the end of the conversation walked away grieved because the cost of following Christ was too high (cf. Matthew 19:21-22). This produced an interesting response on the part of the disciples with Peter being their spokesman:

Matthew 19:27, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?'"

In other words, *“Unlike the rich young ruler we’ve paid the sacrifice. So, what do we get?”*

While the question may sound a little ugly, it nevertheless is THE question frequently asked by Christians when things aren’t going as we would like:

- I lost my job.
- I’m struggling with ill health.
- Things are incredibly tight.
- Life has gotten difficult.
- So, God, what good is it in following You?

Christ’s immediate answer was this:

Matthew 19:28-29, “And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, [in the regeneration] shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.’”

What an incredible answer! So encouraging! And yet, and maybe you noticed it as well, it relates primarily to the future, “...in the regeneration...” And that raises the question: Does Christianity make any difference in the here and now? The answer from Scripture is a resounding “Yes!” There are many passages which detail the temporal blessings that rest with the believer in the here and now and Romans 8 is one of them.

After Paul explained in glorious detail the good news of Christ’s sacrificial death — the fact that though “all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory” such that “all are under His wrath” (Romans 1-3:20) and nevertheless, God demonstrated His mercy and justice by punishing Christ for our sin but then giving us His life (Romans 3:21-31). Demonstrating that this doctrine of salvation “by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone” is found throughout the Old Testament (Romans 4).

Then, Paul begins to describe the benefits that flow from Christ in Romans chapter 5. Yet as soon as he started, he digresses into a discussion about sanctification (Romans 6-7) and he returns to the benefits that flow from Christ in chapter 8.

We have seen two of these benefits:

- No Condemnation, Romans 8:1-4a.
- Fellowship with God, Romans 8:4b-8.

We will now look at a third benefit, the benefit of a transformed life.

Romans 8:9, “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells [lit. ‘has taken up residency’] in you...”-

Continuing Paul’s discussion in v. 8 regarding the non-Christian’s inability to “please God,” Paul expresses his confidence that the believers in Rome were NOT in the flesh—that is, controlled and ruled by the flesh... and so NOT unbelievers. And he tells us that they are in the Spirit, showing us that they are controlled and ruled by God.

Notice the basis for Paul’s confidence here comes from the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Paul’s “if” is NOT a statement of doubt, BUT of confidence. It is better translated, “because the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Because the Roman believers were indwelt by the Spirit, they were “pleasing” to God.¹ Now this truth led to this important statement:

Romans 8:9b, “...but if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him [that is, God].”

Literally this means that “he is not OF Him” or expressed another way, he is NOT owned By God! The significance of this phrase is easily overlooked. Notice that this verse indicates that there is an incredible shift when a person enters into the kingdom of God, they become “OF God.” Formerly, they were “of the world”/in the flesh (v. 8), controlled by the world, and as such they were subject to the world’s system, its values, desires, and goals.

Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh [in other words, they were enslaved to their sin] indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

Yet In Christ the child of God is delivered from this slavery NOT now to do whatever they want as autonomous beings, BUT to serve God! You must understand that salvation is NOT emancipation BUT redemption in which we go from the service of a cruel, wicked taskmaster to the service of our Lord! There is perhaps no clearer statement of this that of Romans 6.

Romans 6:16-18, “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? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from

the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

That is why a common description used by Paul of himself is that he is a “bond-servant” of Christ Jesus (Romans 1:1). Furthermore, a common description used by Paul of the believer is “a saint.”

Philippians 1:1a, “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi...”

A saint is one who is set apart. The word is ἅγιος (*hagios*) literally means, “set apart ones” or “claimed ones”! It is used to describe ones who have been claimed by God as His own possession!

Truly, ALL are bound by something — or better yet, by Someone! There are NO free entities in creation! Autonomy is a myth! To be outside of Christ is to be subject to the reign and rule of Satan.

Christ told the Jewish leaders:

John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil...”

2 Timothy 2:26, “...held captive by [Satan] to do his will.”

AND SO, to be saved by the cross of Christ is to receive a NEW OWNER: God the Father! In fact, the ultimate fulfillment of the Gospel is God making us His possession!

1 Peter 2:10, “For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Talk about an amazing and glorious truth! Because of Christ, we have become the children of God! And thus, John could write...

1 John 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

That is the point of this text! As a benefit of the cross of Christ, the child of God is freed from servitude to Satan and brought into the service of God! Now you will NOT receive this as good news unless you understand that God NOT ONLY is sovereign, holy, and awesome, BUT ALSO is kind, merciful, loving, and just!

That is why this truth should fill our hearts with joy! Yes, we are NOT autonomous beings, BUT that is a myth inspired by Satan! The glory here is that the “Master” we

serve is good AND SO cares for us with unthwartable power and authority! Recall Moses' word of encouragement to God's people having just been redeemed from slavery:

Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent."

With all Israel quaking in their boots, hiding in the hills on account of the monster Goliath who threatened them, a Christ-figure stepped forward! We pick it up in 1 Samuel 17:41.

1 Samuel 17:41-47, "Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. And the Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine also said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.' Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands.'"

Whether we be threatened by a dictator (Putin), a disease (Covid), an illness (cancer), or a bitter providence, we need NOT be frightened! In Christ we are the possession of a sovereign and good God such that we know that NOTHING can touch us unless it first passes through His sovereign will! — which is why Christ gave this exhortation to His people.

Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul [Satan, evil men, disease, and the like]; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."- what a comfort!²

And so, part and parcel of the blessing that is ours on account of Christ is that we are now Owned by God! Notice secondly, our transformed life also involves a new life.

Romans 8:10, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit [the human spirit] is alive because of righteousness."

This verse is full of theological significance. Let's break it down.

“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin” though we have been redeemed by Christ, our bodies still lay in a state of death and they are subject to decay (2 Corinthians 4:16) and they eventually die (Hebrews 9:27). That’s the bad news! Now the good news is this: “yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” To say that “the spirit is alive” is to say that our soul/spirit has been resurrected in Christ and now lives!

To understand this, we have to go back to the beginning. The life which God granted man in his original creation can be understood from a variety of angles. In fact, it is composed of four elements: spiritual, moral, physical, and eternal. That to which I want to direct your attention is the moral element.

In the beginning, God created man that together we and God might have fellowship (cf. Genesis 3:8). Accordingly, morally we were endowed with three things:

- A perfect record- righteousness.
- Papers of ownership; we were owned by God- holiness.
- The capacity for a love relationship with God- knowledge.

Now when man sinned, what happened to these? They were lost, that is part of the “death” that came when Adam sinned (Genesis 2:17)! Yet upon the salvation granted us in Christ, the Lord resurrects us from the dead — we call this the Doctrine of Vivification — a resurrection which restores the moral image of God in us.

Ephesians 4:24, “And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Colossians 3:9-10, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge // according to the image of the One who created him.”

To be a child of God is to receive a New Life — here identified as a restoration of our original Holiness, Righteousness, and Knowledge by which we are able once again to walk with God!

2 Corinthians 4:16b, “...though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man [The Moral Image of God] is being renewed day by day...”

And yet, let me ask you: whose Holiness, Righteousness, and Knowledge do we possess as Christians?

1 Corinthians 1:30a, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom [another word for ‘knowledge’] from God, and righteousness and sanctification [another word for ‘holiness’]...”

Do you understand? The moral image which was restored in our salvation comes from Christ! Paul put it this way in Colossians.

Colossians 3:4a, “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed...”

In other words, the life we enjoy is NOT the life originally given to us in the garden; it is the very life of Christ! This is why we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12)! The life we are living is NOT our own, BUT Christ’s!

If you were to assume the life of another person? If upon your death you somehow were given the ability to assume the life of another person- what would you need?

- You’d need to know what they knew.
- You’d need to know NOT only where they lived, BUT *HOW* they lived — their values, wants, desires, passions, and beliefs.

If you were to live out THEIR life, you’d need to know all of this and more!

Brothers and sisters, this is NOT science fiction BUT what occurred when you were saved! The new life you have received is NOT your own, BUT Christ’s! Accordingly, that which must govern our thoughts, desires, goals, prayer, actions, motives, and outlook MUST be the principles and values of the life we have been granted in Christ! That is what sanctification is all about!

That brings us to a third element of our transformed life. It Involves invoking a new hope.

Romans 8:11, “But if [lit. ‘as is the case’] the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”

This was added because of Paul’s words in v. 10, “...though the body is dead because of sin...” To stop with that statement potentially is to lead to the conclusion that the physical body is evil and/or inconsequential. Yet that is NOT the case! God has a plan for our bodies! For just as Christ was raised from the dead and reunited with His earthly body, so also, we will be reunited with ours!

1 Corinthians 6:14, “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.”

At the Second Coming of Christ whether we are living or have died our bodies will undergo an incredible transformation! In this age, our bodies are dust- whether living or dead! And yet, in the “blink of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52) when Christ returns, our bodies will be resurrected, reassembled, and reunited to our soul! And thus, we will

spend eternity as corporeal beings! Notice the form/nature of the state in which we will dwell.

Philippians 3:20-21, “For our citizenship is in heaven; from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

So in the final state, we will have a body just like Christ’s! What does that mean?

1 Corinthians 15:40, 42-44, “There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another... so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a SPIRITUAL body...”

Here the word “spiritual”- πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*) does NOT mean ethereal or without substance. RATHER it is used to describe the functionality of our bodies in heaven. An “earthly body” is a body designed to function in our current state. A “spiritual body” is a body designed to function in the eternal state. Accordingly, a “spiritual body” is a vessel which fits perfectly in the New Heavens and Earth such that whatever we want to do as glorified saints, our bodies will be able to do it!

And what assurance do we have as God that this will come to pass?

Romans 8:11a, “But if [since] the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...”

This is the condition! In Scripture, it is the Spirit of God who serves as God’s “pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14). Accordingly, because the Spirit indwells us, we have the assurance that Christ will certainly bring to pass the promise to redeem our bodies!

That is the third and final description of the transformed life that we have received as a benefit of the Cross is a new hope! In Christ, we have the anticipation that one day we will dwell with God in a physical state with bodies specially designed to function in that world!

What an incredible expectation! Think about it! Among other things, that which separates a disembodied spirit from a spirit that dwells in a body are physical sensations: like touch, taste, feel, smell. And yet by the grace of God, we not only will spend eternity in the New Heavens and New Earth, BUT there we will be able to touch, taste, feel, and smell! What an incredible expectation! To experience the blessings of a corporeal existence and that free from the taintings of sin!

Now if you think that this is no big deal, think for a moment about the expectation we would have if we were WITHOUT Christ! Indeed, we would spend eternity in a corporeal existence except, instead of being in a place where our body is free from sin, we would be in a place where the only thing our bodies would know is sin and its awful effects! Think about that! Why is there pain in our world? Why is there misery? Why is there sickness? It is all because of Sin!

Understand therefore the expectation of all outside of Christ: A corporeal existence in a place of ultimate suffering, misery, sickness, pain, BUT no death!

And yet, against this dark and bleak backdrop, we come again to the Gospel- A Gospel that NOT ONLY involves a New Master and a New Life, BUT also grants a New Hope regarding our physical existence beyond the grave! What a glorious provision from the Lord!

End Note(s)

¹ Based on this it is important to note that though the Roman's had professed faith in Christ (Romans 1:7) and had a faith that was known throughout the world (Romans 1:8), that which determined their relationship to God was not their profession or reputation, but the presence of the Spirit of God in them! And so, it is with us.

We are children of God not because we believe, serve, or pray. We are children of God because Christ saved us through His cross, and this cross work has been applied to our lives through the Spirit of God! That is the basis upon which we approach God!

² This also brings with it a revolutionary way of viewing the world. If we are God's children, His servants, and so His possession, then we have no rights, no property, and so no ability to make a claim against God for anything! In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul wrote, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body." So long as we live on this earth making idle claims on anything, we will have much to lose and so be vulnerable to being "frightened by many fears." But when you realize that God is your Master and so you own nothing and can make no claim, you live with confidence and joy in and through all things! We see it in Paul, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (2 Timothy 1:12)