



Lent 3 B Rev
Epistle

ARTICLE NO.
2006.287
Ro 7:13-25

Law and works - Paul to the Jews in Rome

Collect

Almighty God, you know that **we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves**: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul is addressing primarily the Jews in Rome in AD 58: . There was, until the persecutions in the 1st. c., a large Jewish colony in Rome. Paul is preaching Christianity to Jews who still want to observe the rabbinical laws about circumcision, cleanliness, diet, and so on, because they have been taught by the rabbis that these laws are still effective.

In the KJV, 'law' is the translation for 5 kinds of 'Pauline' law : God's law = Christ's law; conscience; Roman law; Moses law (the law of sin); rabbinical law.

Commentary

12 But the Mosaic law itself is holy and the commandment holy, and just and good.

13 Was this coming of age covenant (today called being Bar Mitzvah) the cause of spiritual death for me? Of course not. But I now knew sin for what it was. I recognized my behaviour as being sinful. I now was in a much worse state, for I was spiritually un-prepared for the difficulties that now faced me after I signed the covenant.

14 But we (that is those of us who are Christians) now know that the law that we have to follow is a spiritual law. But because my behaviour is still centered on bodily satisfactions (carnal), I am a slave to sin.

15 And yet I am unaware of what I am doing to myself spiritually, and I actually don't do the spiritual things that I should, instead I do (against my conscience) the carnal things that I want to abandon.



Glen Miller



Verses

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Much of this tract is commentary - don't take it as Gospel. It is here to encourage meditation and study. Use your gift of discernment, to find the truth.

Law and works - Paul to the Jews in Rome

16 If then I do the carnal things that I want to abandon, it is only because I believe the rabbinical law to be necessary for my salvation.

17 It is a sinful nature that makes me do the things that I want to abandon

18 For the spiritual law as I now understand it states that if **I have to will myself to do something good**, it is not a good work. How can I then do good works?

19 I actually don't do the spiritual things that I should, instead I do (against my conscience) the carnal things that I want to abandon.

20 It is a sinful nature that makes me do the things that I want to abandon

21 owing to the fact that I have to will myself to do good, I recognize that my human nature is basically evil.

22 Yet, Inside I am a law abiding person.

23 The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and I am a slave to my body's desires.

24 I am mortified. Who is there that save me from my own carnal desires?

25 Jesus Christ can do it. With my mind I worship him, yet my body still obeys the Mosaic Law (which identifies sin for me).

The Fathers of The Church - Origen, commentary on Romans

Scheck, Thomas P.

CUA Press

0-8132-0103-9

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Good Works

Perhaps many people interpret this chapter as an example of why they can't behave "properly" and don't do the things that God has told them they must do. They say: "If Paul couldn't do the things he ought to do, how can I expect to?"

But of course Paul didn't say he couldn't do God's will - he obviously did do God's will. He is explaining to the Jews why without Christ within them it was impossible to do God's will. His argument included a comparison of life with and without Christ. he told them that even the rabbinical laws could not help them do the right thing, unless they were willing to surrender their bodies to the control of Christ.

Paul is saying: surrender yourself to Christ totally, and you will do the right things automatically. Which is what Paul did.

So, the same advice holds for anyone today. No matter what 'law' you are currently under, if you completely give the control of your body over to Christ, then He will, from within your body, perform the good works required by God. It is no more you who is doing the work, but Christ.

So when Luther was talking against works, he meant your own, unaided, attempts to do good, which would always be disastrous spiritually. This is what he meant when he said man could not be justified by works. Paul said the same thing. Both of them knew that it was only works done by Christ within you, that God would recognize as being good. And once you have Christ within you, everything that your body does is a good work. And you can recognize someone who has Christ within him, by the outward sign of these good works.

Faith is necessary to have Christ within you. Faith is a grace given to you by God through the Holy Spirit. It is given bit by bit, until you are full of Faith, and full of Christ.

Many people seem to think that they are supposed to profess a faith first, even before they understand what is the Christian belief. But Faith comes not from an act of will, but is a grace offered by God, to those who already have a full understanding of the scriptures and believe them. It is your understanding and belief, that brings you to a total commitment to Christ, and when this happens you have sufficient Faith from God to accept from him *"the new man"*, and to live with Christ *where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.(Col 3:11)*

Good Works

In his comment on the Homily on Justification attached to Article 11. Dr. William Forbes, First Bishop of Edinburgh (said): "Justifying faith, to speak distinctly and theologically, is nothing else than a firm and sure assent of the mind produced by the Holy Ghost through the word; by which we acknowledge as most true all that God has revealed in holy Scripture, especially the mystery of our redemption and salvation through Christ.

And so, considered in itself and in its essence, it is no other thing than the Catholic Faith (i.e. the faith of the Catholic Church), which of itself also beyond all doubt justifies a man, if all those other things which are necessary to justification are joined with it."...

And again: "**Very many of the Fathers assert that we are justified by faith only** (citing a great number of passages.) "But if all these and other like passages which might be found, be read fairly and honestly, the reader will plainly see that the Fathers by the word only, or alone, never thought of excluding simply all works of faith and grace from being causative of justification and eternal life:

Again: This conclusion then, that good works are necessary to salvation not only by reason of their being necessarily present, but also by reason that they are in some degree causative thereof, and that works no less than faith are in their own way referred to salvation, is admitted, as we have shewn, to be most true by very many of the most learned Protestants: and as for us, we think this controversy between the two sides vain and useless, and for the most part a mere logomachy.

Dr. William Forbes, First Bishop of Edinburgh 1846

Three horizontal lines for ISBN information.

