

#3078 – January 16, 2008 – “Dead Reckoning” – 2

[Gauger:] You’ve trusted Christ for your salvation, you’ve got the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, yet still you struggle with sin. What does the Bible say about that?

Hi, welcome to the Wednesday edition of *PROCLAIM!* and what Romans has to say about sin is not just important, it’s critical. Michael Easley is leading us on a journey through this most important book of the New Testament, and I think you’ll find today’s study very eye opening as we turn to Chapter 8. Now, let’s get right today’s teaching time. Here’s Michael Easley.

[Easley:] Dead reckoning in navigation is a way to determine your position by advancing from a known point of departure. You know where you’re starting and you dead reckon your way on to the next point. The pictures you see are a few samples from the remarkable story of Sir Ernest Shackleton’s voyage of the *Endurance*. For 2 years and 22 days Shackleton, in an attempt to cross the Antarctic in a failed expedition, as his boat after being wedged in an ice pack for 9 months, finally sank and they had 3 small open vessels. This incredible story became a story of discovery to a story of survival where Shackleton was able to save all 29 of his crew, but it took him over 2 years to do it.

One part of the story, it’s a remarkable story, but one small vignette of the story is when they had to leave from Elephant Island across the Weddell Sea in open ocean to South Georgia where a whaling station was in a small open boat called the *John Caird*; and, that’s the little boat you see up there with 6 men tugging it around. It had never been done before. Eight hundred miles of open sea. Fifteen inches of ice pack building up on the outside of the boat as they crossed the open ocean in tempestuous seas during these months.

They departed on the 24th of April 1916 and his navigator was a man named Frank Worsley. Worsley only saw the sun four times in 17 days. And, in those four points he was able to dead reckon that little tiny open boat, 800 plus miles, across open seas. If he had missed by one degree, they would have perished. It’s one of the greatest maritime, dead reckoning stories of all time. A dead reckon to advance your position from a known point of departure.

If you’ve trusted Jesus Christ, if you have believed upon Him, you’ve put your faith in Him, you have been indwelt by His Holy Spirit; your point of departure is no longer according to the flesh. Your point of departure is now according to the Spirit. The entire life we live now as believers in Jesus Christ takes on a different point of departure, a different point of origin. Now, once we were in the flesh, a sinful, despised, self-absorbed lifestyle, but if you’ve trusted Christ you’ve moved from death to life. And, some of us here in this room, and I believe it is many people every service, every Sunday, have never 100% confirmed and assured their relationship with Jesus Christ. And, today I’m going to talk about what happens when the Holy Spirit indwells you and me. But if you’ve never trusted Christ, then this is an experience you’ve not yet enjoyed.

And, to trust Christ is the most important decision you’ll ever make; that He lived, that He died, He was buried, that He came back from the dead. And, as He goes into Heaven He sends His Holy Spirit. That’s what John 14 teaches us. And, His Holy Spirit indwells us. And, if you’ve not yet trusted Christ, let me encourage you. Come to Christ at some point in your journey and here’s a good place to do it because all of our departure points of life make an eternal difference of whether we hit the goal we’re aiming at or by one degree miss it and perish forever, which is what awaits all who are apart from Christ.

Now, Romans 8, Verses 12-13, is a mother load of Pauline Theology. John Owens, a prolific, loquacious writer, 1850 to 1853, published his 23-volume set affectionately called the works of John Owen. This systematic theology covers shelf space oh, at least a meter in length, and I own 16 of the 23 volumes.

When I was in Seminary I had a professor say read Volume 6. Forget the other ones. Read Volume 6, which I started in Seminary. I read about oh, 30 pages of it. Volume 6 is entitled "Temptation and Sin". If you read the Front's piece of this section of his Systematic Theology it is about Romans 8, Verse 13, mortify the deeds of the flesh. Let me just read you the Front's piece. "Of the mortification of sin in the believers the necessity, nature, and means of it with a resolution of sundry cases of conscious thereunto belonging." And, it gets better with age. It was a goal of mine the year my professor told me to do this to read this in a year. It was a futile goal. The rest of the book reads just about like that.

The reason I raise this, though, is that Puritans, Reformers, anyone who's trusted Christ has wrestled with the nature of how do I live in the Spirit of God still fighting sin? And, this was his attempt in a systematic theological approach to answer that question. I don't think it's this complicated. That's sort of the way I think in life. I'm a simple kind of person. I don't think God intended you to read Volume 6 of John Owen before you understand this. But I do think the Scripture is a mother load of theology, but I want to offer you today a very simple view of how we distill this passage down to what does it mean to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to live differently. If you've trusted Christ, you might have had a romance when you first started. It might have been a rich, early experience. Mine was. Mine was just a remarkable thing like a love affair when it started. And then, the reality of sin crashes in and the tension and the conflict, and the guilt, and then it seems as though we're sort of left and abandoned to this lifestyle of knowing I shouldn't do things, and still doing 'em, and feeling guilty about 'em, and no real help how to get out of it, and feeling embarrassed, and ashamed, and all points in-between. And, that wrestling of the spiritual life is what Romans 6, 7 and 8, I believe, are all about.

When you trusted Jesus Christ, I know say this often, I will say it 'til you can say it without having to think about it, when you trusted Jesus Christ, His Holy Spirit indwelt you. His Holy Spirit is your permanent roommate. That is the core of the Gospel; the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He goes to Heaven to send His Spirit and He tells His Apostles, "If I don't go I can't send the Spirit and I have to go to send the Spirit because He's going to help you. He's going to indwell you. He's going to teach you. He's going to come alongside, *para colleteo* you, so that you can live this life that's impossible for you to live apart from Him. It is better that I go so I can send Him," Christ told them, and He told us.

Do we really understand what it means for the Holy Spirit to indwell us? On the one side we might have our charismatic Christian brothers and sisters in Christ and we look at them and we might sort of be afraid because of the seeming excess from where we may be comfortable with their expression of the Spirit. On the other side we have the frozen chosen. They wouldn't know an emotional experience if it hit 'em on both sides of the face. Is the goal some balance in between this extreme, if it is an extreme? On the one hand, perhaps, an overemphasis of the Spirit to an excess on the other and overemphasis of truth to an excess? Evangelicals and Fundamentals are not excluded from this dilemma, but it illustrates the point. We don't understand the Holy Spirit. And, I think this is one of the great tragedies of the Christian life for all of us, is that we do not understand the very person of God indwells us. We're not little gods. We're sons of God. We're adopted children of God. We're illegitimate throwaway children that He adopted and called His own. And, Paul is teaching us in this section, how do we live in this tread, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit?

John Stott put it this way, "How can we possess life and court death simultaneously? How can we possess life and court death simultaneously?" It is unthinkable, even ludicrous. How can we who have died to sin still live in it? And, that's what this passage is all about; to understand the Holy Spirit's indwelling. We are no longer under obligation to the flesh. We are now under obligation to the Spirit.

[Gauger:] You know, Michael, earlier in the message you offered us a quote by John Stott that I think bears repeating.

[Easley:] “How can we possess life and court death simultaneously? It is unthinkable, even ludicrous.” Yeah, to think, you know, how we live in this life, we possess God’s Spirit, we have been forgiven our sin, we are no longer condemned; and yet, we court death, we court the sin nature, and it really is a juxtaposition of how we shall then live.

[Gauger:] So, what is the answer? I mean, this discussion is not something that one size is up and launches out with immediate victory on, obviously, or there wouldn’t be Chapter 8.

[Easley:] I go back to the way we begin this dead reckoning concept. You have to know your position before you advance where you’re going. You have to know where you are before you depart. And, I think that’s where many of us struggle and fail; is that we don’t understand our position in Christ, we don’t understand our walk with Christ, we don’t understand that He indwells us. And so, that’s where the knowledge of Scripture, you know, changing our mindset, is so critical.

Now, how do I then live? If I’m in Christ, if I have been forgiven, if I have a relationship with Him, if I am alive in Him, then I should therefore walk in it. You know, it’d be analogous to a person struggling with cancer who went to get cancer treatments. If you don’t finish the course of chemotherapy, if you don’t finish the course of radiation treatments, or whatever else the medical profession offers, you’re not going to get better. I mean, certainly God could intervene and heal, but let’s just say He chose to use medicine. You have to finish that course. You have to know where you start. I’ve got cancer. And, you got to finish the treatment. And, it’s not too unfair of a comparison to say we have to know who we are in Christ and then, live that way to reckon it toward righteousness.

[Gauger:] Maybe, Michael, as we close a prayer from you on behalf of people particularly troubled by this struggle.

[Easley:] Father, we all wrestle with our relationship with You with living the way You want us to. Thanks that You don’t condemn us or hammer us, but that You long for us to follow You. We do embrace the conviction of sin and the conviction of our choices, but we also know that You are ready to help. Help us to understand our relationship in You, our position in You, and that we embark even on today that we understand we’re in Christ, we’re dead to sin, and we can choose by the power of Your Spirit to live in Christ. We ask this in Your powerful and precious name. Amen.

[Gauger:] Amen. Boy, isn’t that an encouraging prayer? And, speaking of encouragement, very little is more encouraging than an email from you. You can write to us online at proclaim@moody.edu.

Dave writes, “*PROCLAIM!* is the best and easiest way to get my daily feeding of biblically correct theology. I utilize some of the teaching with my men’s group to augment our Bible study. I have purchased CDs and used them, and then given them away to other Bible study groups. Moody, in general, and *PROCLAIM!*, in specific, is the plumb line to our faith.” Wow, what a compliment. Thanks, Dave. And, all the credit, of course, goes to Jesus Christ.

You know, Dave mentioned CDs. As you may be aware at our website right now, you can purchase a 14 message set, 7 compact discs, from the Book of Romans. It’s all there at www.proclaim.mbn.org. Check out the link and order a set today, www.proclaim.mbn.org.

For Executive Producer, Tim Svoboda and Nate McMillan, I’m Jon Gauger. Thanks for listening. See you Thursday right here on *PROCLAIM!*