

A Change in Modus Operandi

Romans - Chapter 6

Please allow me begin today by telling a story that sums up, in my mind, the first five chapters of Romans.

One day God was looking down to earth and saw all of the evil that was going on.

He decided to send an angel down to earth to check it out so he called on a female angel and sent her to earth for a time. When she returned she told God, "yes it is bad on earth, 95% is bad and 5% is good."

Well, He thought for a moment and said maybe I had better send down a male angel, just to get both points of view. So God called a male angel and sent him to earth for a time. When the male angel returned he went to God and told him, "yes the earth was in decline, 95% was bad and 5% was good".

God said this was not good. He would send a letter to the 5% that were good and encourage them, something to help them keep going. Do you know what that letter said?

Oh, you didn't get one either?!

“The true value of a human being is determined primarily by the measure and the sense in which he has attained liberation from the self.” “The heart says yes, but the mind says no.” “It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man.” -Albert Einstein

As human beings, Thoreau said, “The mass of men lead **lives of quiet desperation**”.

A Change in Modus Operandi is needed.

You are all familiar with the term. This is a Latin phrase, approximately translated as "mode of operation". The term is used to describe someone's habits or manner of working, their methods of operating or functioning. In English it is frequently shortened to **M.O.**

I. The last five chapters, Paul has laid the groundwork for the remainder of this epistle.

Romans 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. **New Living Translation Rom 5:11 “Now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God – All because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God”.**

Note: Romans was written particularly to the Jews and Gentiles.

- Relationships are messy.

- Anyone watching T.V. will have an idea that relationships, international crisis, wars, can be solved in a few minutes. In between commercial breaks.
- Our otherness is messy, and complicated.
- Imagine for a moment the 1st century Christians to whom Paul wrote.
- Jews, Gentiles, pagans, Greeks, Romans, over 50% were probably slaves, slave owners, intellectuals, men and women.
- This letter reminds us of one important truth, this was a very intelligent, philosophical ...and dissimilar group of clear thinking people!
- **THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH DEPENDED ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO WALK IN THE FREEDOM AND ENJOY A RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD HIMSELF.**

II. Notice that as Romans Chapter 6 begins, Paul gives us an interjection, expecting the ground work has been clearly stated by him in the first five chapters.

¹What are we to say, then? Are we to continue to sin, in order that God's loving-kindness may be multiplied? ²Heaven forbid! We became dead to sin, and how can we go on living in it?

THE QUESTION

- Now that salvation from the penalty of sin has been received, **how can salvation from the power of sin be secured?** Saved by grace is one thing, walking by grace is ...quite another.

- How can believers learn to live enjoying a right standing with God?
- How do we change our MO?
- Paul objects to the idea that we have license to do whatever we want. The shallow idea that is basically saying, “Saved by grace, that’s it, let me live my life.”
- V.1 - God forbid, or “May it never be”. It is a gross perversion of God’s grace.
- So the question is, “How can we gain control over a sin nature that no longer has any right to rule over us?”
- It is a change of our M.O.
- Paul certainly speaks spiritual truths that apply to all Christians, and these three truths he points out in the scriptures today.

The 1st application is Baptism. V.3 “Or can it be that you do not know that all of us, who were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, in our **baptism** shared his death? And just as Christ was raised from the dead by a manifestation of the Father's power, so we also may live a new Life.

The 2nd truth that applies to all is V.6a “We recognize the truth that our **old self was crucified** with Christ, in order that the body, the stronghold of Sin, might be rendered powerless...”

The 3rd truth is found in Verse 6b ...“so that we should **no longer be slaves to Sin**. ⁷For the man who has so died has been pronounced righteous and released from Sin. ⁸And our belief is,

that, as we have shared Christ's Death, we shall also share his Life”.

- 1. Share in His death through Baptism. PAUL IS SPEAKING OF A SPIRITUAL BAPTISM; WE HAVE A NEW FOUND IDENTIFICATION WITH GOD IN CHRIST.
- 2. Our old self was crucified. Simply stated, when Christ died and rose from the dead, we who have trusted in Christ have Christ living in us. The Father sees the eternal fact that we died and rose with Him. That is why the scriptures can say “Where, O Death, is thy sting?”
- 3. We are no longer slaves to sin. The bondage or shackles of slavery that they experienced, habitually, have been broken. Christians do not have to serve sin ever again.

III. What do we need to do in order to change our M.O.?

- Paul answers us in Vs 11-14

¹⁴For Sin shall not lord it over you. You are living under the reign, not of Law, but of Love. Not the reign of law, but of Love.

- 1. “Regard yourselves as dead to sin”, V 11, consider, take into account, figure...that sin is no longer our master, but Christ is. You have been baptized, crucified, and free from slavery of the law.
- 2. Vs. 13a “Do not offer any part of your bodies to Sin, in the cause of unrighteousness”. This passage assumes that **we can quit sinning**, and calls us to do exactly that. We now have that power through the Holy Spirit, and Paul exhorts us to plug into that power and quit performing shameful, wrong doing.
- 3. ^{13b}...“but once for all offer yourselves to God (as those who, though once dead, now have Life), and devote every part of your bodies to the cause of righteousness”. Live in a way that reveals your right standing before God. Be Christ like in what you say or do”. ... **“The best defense is a good offense”**.
- Christ made it all possible by dying on the cross and rising from the dead for our sin.

IV. How can we experience freedom from sinning? How can we serve God on a day-today basis?

V.15: Obedience results in slavery.

- ¹⁵What follows, then? Are we to sin because we are living under the reign of Love and not of Law? Heaven forbid!.. to obey any one, you are the servants of the person whom

you obey, whether the service be that of Sin which leads to Death, or that of Duty which leads to Righteousness.

- **A Universal Principle – Paul says “choose”, to obey sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness. Obey sin or the Lord. Change your M.O.**

Let’s always remember, the Apostle Paul is teaching the same thing Jesus taught in the Gospels. For example, Jesus was talking with some who wanted to hear more about His message.

- John 8 ³¹So Jesus went on to say to those Jews who had believed him. "If you remain constant to my Message, you are truly my disciples; ³²And you find out the Truth, and the Truth will set you free." ³³"We are descendants of Abraham," was their answer, "and have never yet been in slavery to anyone. What do you mean by saying 'you will be set free'?" ³⁴"In truth I tell you," replied Jesus, "everyone who sins is a slave to sin."
- This sounds very similar to Paul’s message, doesn’t it?

Obey sin, or let the Lord Jesus Christ reign. Consider this. God provided a means to change our M.O.

This differs radically from the ideas of “morality” and “being good”.

In my personal life, I find it very difficult to meet the demands of my natural self. In fact, some of the things I thought were “being good” in the past seem outlandish to me today. The

shear business of life and trying to survive in this job market puts unnerving demands on me. I could live what I might think is the Christian life, and become a pest to those near me. Even then at this time, in my mind, I can still take something good from God's word and "own it for myself". But the chief focus becomes incorrect...even evil, creating a self-interested doctrine or idol. We can create a form of idolatry even with God's word.

For Example: The idea that the more I know, the more I will be perceived as having a right standing with God.

This chapter reminds me that redemption is not only the Atonement, Christ dying for our sin and raising from the dead. It reminds me that there is freedom from the human dilemma! There is freedom from the terribleness of life, the suffering and inequality, the broken relationships, the sickness and frustration. I gave up trying to be good. Instead, I look to Him who can change my M.O. and break the chains of my natural self. This chapter reminds me of what I need to do on a daily basis. I need to draw on that power which breaks the shackles of slavery, to not only being free from sin, but to live in a way that honors Christ.

C.S. Lewis said *"What needs to be made clear is that this is not one job among many jobs a believer has to do. It is the whole of Christianity. Christianity offers nothing else at all". "He has not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it." We can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments a new sort of life will be spreading through our system. It is the difference between paint which is laid on the surface and a dye or stain which soaks right through. When He said "be perfect",*

He meant it. He meant that we must go in for the full treatment.”

*This is the whole of Christianity. There is nothing else. Pg 166
Mere Christianity.*

Let us keep our eyes on the Prince of Peace. He is the one. He does not cling to His authority. He even refused to turn stones into bread, or jump from great heights. Remember, He healed the blind, talked with the outcasts, and told the cripple to get up and walk.

He is the one that provides forgiveness. He set us free from slavery. He encourages. “Feed my sheep”, He kindly spoke to Peter after he failed Him. Keep your eyes fixed on Him who became poor with the poor for us, meek, and rejected by men. He is the source of all peace. He is the one who changes our M.O. to become more like Him.

Why is it difficult for me to habitually be committed to a godly lifestyle? Why is it difficult to consistently walk by grace?

The answer is twofold.

Until we are resurrected, we will not be rid of our sin nature. Although it no longer has authority over us, it still raises its ugly head and tries to demand our servitude.

Secondly, our salvation from sin has given us the freedom and desire to have a right standing with God, but it does not force us to do so. We can still obey sin’s commands, even though there is no need for us to do so.

This is why Paul says to be “as slaves of righteousness, resulting in sanctification” in V.19b. When we come to the choices, those daily forks in the road, the Lord calls on us to make the right choice, and by listening and through the power of His Holy Spirit, He gives us the strength to carry through with our decision to do what is good. Service to God will bring, in a very practical way, a consistent walk with Christ that has holiness as its goal. He changes our M.O., having holiness as its goal.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace”.

—Colossians 3:12-15