

God Has a Problem

by Charles Anderson

The sermon explores the problem of sin in man and God's plan to deal with it through the justification of the sinner and the finished work of Christ.

Duration: 37:49

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:3-4, Romans 7:7, Romans 8:1-2, Romans 8:4, Romans 8:6

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a group of kids who spent 10 weeks mixing with other kids and witnessing to them. They captured their experiences on film and planned to show it on Labor Day Sunday. The speaker then transitions to discussing the assurance of salvation and confidently declares that he knows he is going to heaven when he dies. He then directs the audience to Romans chapter 8, which he describes as a powerful and important chapter in the Bible that addresses the struggle between behavior and justification as a child of God.

Transcript

Wish I'd known the words of that course some years ago. We had a very interesting experience in our church. We have a little park that's not very far away from the church.

I'd say, you know, two or three, depends on where you come from, squares or blocks, but a very short distance away. And for years, it was one of those nice little parks that had a, it's got a pond and it's got a little stadium and mothers would take their kids out there and wheel them around and play ball with them and stuff. It was safe.

It was nice. And then one day, where they came from, I'll never know, but the subculture found out, you know, the motorcycle gang and so on, and they invaded our park. I tell you, they really, I don't know where they came from.

We must have had a couple of thousand of them come from metropolitan New York and they ripped and tore around on their motorcycles and their black jackets, and eventually the park got a reputation. They called it the supermarket. They said, you get anything you want there.

You can get liquor, you can get dope, you can get sex, you can get anything you want. It was a disgrace. Well, here it was in our backyard, however, our church here in our backyard.

So I conceded the idea. I said, you know, here they are. The Lord must have brought them to us.

We didn't go get them, but they need the gospel. They need the Savior. How can we go after them? So we hired about 11 kids, I think, from our Bible Institute.

We got some Spanish-speaking kids, some black kids, some other kind of kids there, you know, and we hired them. We paid them a good salary so they wouldn't get enticed away through the summer and could make some money to help them with school when they went back in the fall. And I got them together and I said, now look, you kids, this is a job, J-O-B.

I know it's spiritual, but I expect 40 hours a week work out of you. I'm paying you good and I want work. You know, the trouble is that many Christians are a bunch of flukies.

You know, they think because they're in the Lord's works, they can let down on God and everybody else. I don't believe in that. I think that if you've got the privilege of being in the Lord's work, you ought to give them back \$2 for every dollar you earn.

Anyway, so I said, I want you to get out there and mix among these kids. See, don't tell them you're from our church. Don't say anything about a church.

And you, get that tie off. They'll never listen to you with a tie on. You know that for a fact.

And you got a beard and you started to grow, let her grow, buddy, until it gets to be a real good bushy beard. And they all they'll see is a couple of eyes and a hole where you eat. And I said, you can wear dungarees and sneakers and stuff, but get out there and mix among these kids and witness to them.

See what God will do throughout this summer. So for 11 weeks, I mean 10 weeks, these kids mixed with all those kids. And they had some very, very fascinating experiences.

But to top it all off, they said, by the way, we've been taking movies of this. We had a fellow following them around all over all day long with a camera and he was taking shots and movies and so on. They said, we're going to put this stuff all together and we're going to have a movie and we're going to show it over Labor Day Sunday in that building around the corner.

That's us, church. So if you want to see yourself in the movies, you come, seven o'clock, Sunday night. Well, first they talked it up and then it got a sort of excited about it.

And eventually the leaders of the group that was working among them came to me and said, we're going to get invaded tonight. These guys are coming, hundreds of them. Well, what turned out was 1,200 of them showed up that Sunday night in our evening service.

Now, I'll tell you, that was a service. It was something else. Some of them came barefooted.

They hadn't had shoes on for I don't know how long. You can imagine what the bottom of their feet looked like after walking around and spitting chewing gum all the week long. And they got the idea, some of them, because they hadn't been in church maybe ever, that the pews were where you put your feet as well.

So they'd put their feet up there. Had a hard time. One of our deacons, he's sitting here nice and prim and proper, and a guy had two feet all night long.

He's wiggling his feet by his face, you know, and they weren't so clean. It was pretty tough on the GIs, ex-GIs, when a fellow came in with the American flag sewed on the back of his britches and sat on it all night long. Well, when it came to the music, they didn't understand our music at all.

First of all, they thought it was too slow. So they started, you know, move it up there buddy, move it up. And when you get 1,200 of these folks, they really did move the tempo up.

And not only did they begin to clap, but they get the rolling too, you know. They had the rocking and the rolling. They were really having a great time speeding up our singing.

Well, I decided I'd give just about a 15-minute message that night. So I get to preaching away the straight down-the-line gospel message, and somewhere en route, and it must have been a little detour, I said something like this. Now, I want you folks to know that I know I'm going to heaven when I die.

I know that. Did you hear what I said? K-N-O-W. No.

I know that I know I'm going to heaven when I die. And furthermore, just in case you didn't hear me, I know that I know that I know that I'm going to heaven when I die. And maybe you got a deaf ear, so I want to repeat it.

I know that I know, I know, I know, I'm, I know that I know, I know, that I'm going, about that time they start saying, he knows, he knows, he knows, he knows. And on the way out, on the way out, they would say, instead of, you know, give you five and say that was a good message or whatever, they'd say, you know, you know, you're going to heaven when you die. It was very fascinating, but I'll tell you this, I wish I'd known that chorus.

That would have been fun, to be able to sing that chorus. To know, K-N-O-W, that when it's all over, you're going to go, or be in the Lord's presence. And I just figured that those guys never remembered another thing.

They know there's one fellow on the face of this earth who knows where he's going, when he dies. And if one can know it, maybe somebody else can know it, too. Maybe they could know it.

Now, friends, for this morning, for our thoughts, I want to ask you to turn with me to a very, very familiar passage of scripture. Let's do it now. Romans chapter 8, and I wish to read the first four verses of this great chapter.

Someone has called this the golden vein of scripture, and said that this is maybe one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible, the eighth of Romans. It sweeps us all across time and into eternity. Let me read so that we have the words fresh in our mind.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. If we may speak this morning of God as having a problem, and I hope you Calvinists won't be too tough on me when I say that God has a problem.

I know that nothing is too hard for God. I'm aware of all those assumptions, but I say if we may think in terms of the fact that God has a problem, and he does indeed when he deals with this creature whom he made in his own image and his own likeness called man, and deliberately endowed that creature with the power of free choice, he could choose which direction he would go morally. God did that.

It may have been indeed a calculated risk on God's part, but nonetheless he did. And then this creature, and we know the story well, this creature by his own act then fell into sin, and suddenly the creature that God made who was to reflect God's glory and God's image, it becomes a diseased creature. Several terrible things have happened to him as a result of the fall.

In the first place, he is in a state of enmity against God. He doesn't understand it. He doesn't know how it came about because, you see, he's unaware of the fact that he is now sick with a disease.

You must never forget that sin is a disease, and it is endemic in the human race. It afflicts all mankind, and it has some terrible results. One of those results is it changes man's whole attitude toward his creator and maker.

That's indicated quite simply in the story that we get in the early chapters of Genesis, when Adam ran away from the presence of God in the garden because he was afraid, he said, as he tried to explain the strange feelings that he had that he didn't have before. Apparently, he must have enjoyed the presence of God before. Now, how does he explain the fact that he doesn't enjoy the presence of God anymore? He doesn't want to be in God's presence.

He's afraid of God. Well, it's this disease of sin with which he is now afflicted. He discovers that his heart, his will, is affected.

He can no longer be obedient to God. He's a rebel inside, and he will transgress, and he'll break the laws of God when he finds out what they are. And, all in all, he's a sick creature because of sin, and the relationship between this creature man and God has so affected him and God that God has the problem of how to deal with this creature.

What's he going to do about it? Because this creature now is, first of all, guilty, and must therefore come into a place of condemnation or judgment because he has committed acts of transgression. He's guilty in his actions, and furthermore, he has now inherited a nature of sin. Not Adam especially.

Adam came into all of this by virtue of the fall, but the progeny of Adam, he passed on to his children his own nature, and that was a fallen nature. And God has to deal with the problem of man's sinful, fallen nature, and that's the story, the backdrop of the whole story of redemption. And I believe that Paul, in this great epistle to the Romans, attacks that whole problem of how God deals with sin in man.

He has to, first of all, find some way by which he can bring that creature back into relationship with himself, and do it in such a way that he does not compromise in the least his own nature. He must be consistent with his own nature. God cannot ignore the fact that man deserves judgment, and so he has to deal with that question, that problem.

And Paul, in the earlier chapters of the book of Romans, through chapters, the first five chapters at least, masterfully unfolds God's plan by which a sinner is justified in his sight, and he comes to the conclusion that he is justified not by his good works. He doesn't earn that justification by works, but it comes to him by faith, and that faith placed in the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, where he dealt

with the problem of man's guilt, and the fact that he's a condemned creature. But, you see, there's another side of the sin problem, and God must deal with it.

Indeed, there are those of us sitting here who can say, I'm justified, I know I'm justified in the eyes of God, and I praise God for that. But, you see, I am a realist, and I face the problem, as does everyone else, of dealing with the question of sin in my conduct, and in my character too. I wrestle with that problem.

I'm weak in this vessel of the flesh. I find a fundamental weakness. I want to do what God wants me to do, but I don't always, and I commit sin.

I disobey. How does God deal with that problem? Well, that's what Paul also attacks in this epistle, that God deals with the problem of our sins, plural, as well as the problem of our sin-singer. The Lord Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross in order to bring the sinner into a right relationship with God.

But now there rises the problem of how does God deal with the problem of sin, committing sin in one's life? Now, it's no profound statement to say that the seventh chapter of Romans precedes the eighth chapter, and that's great. You have to be a Phi Beta Kappa to figure that out. Seven precedes eight.

Well, what does that mean? It means that in the seventh chapter you have a man who's struggling. Now, I know that the expositores, that is, those who are students of the Bible and seek to explain all of its verses, have varying ideas about the seventh chapter of Romans, and who the person is who is speaking. Some think it's an unregenerate person, some think it's somebody that's on the way, some say it's a Christian who's struggling with a sin problem.

I'm rather inclined to think that the person who's speaking here in Romans 7 is indeed a regenerate person, and he's struggling. He's got a problem, a deep-seated problem, and he doesn't know how to handle it. Notice, for instance, in Romans 7 and 18 where he says, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing, because to will, that is, the want to do the right thing, is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.

His problem was a how-to problem. We got books on how to everything today, how to die for your baby properly, how to balance your budget, how to live with an ugly wife, how to cope with a coughing, spitting, collapsing Chevy, how to have victory even though life is so difficult, and we have how-to books on anything, and almost everything, but this person writing this, and I assume that it's probably Paul, he says, I wish I could get a how-to book, how to perform that which is good. I can't find it, and so you notice how he came toward the end of this chapter with that exclamation, what a wretched man that I am.

How am I going to be delivered from this dilemma? See, he's not discussing the question of his justification before God, he's discussing the question of his behavior after he's justified. How he behaves. He doesn't always behave as a child of God.

He resorts to his old life sometimes. Old habits capture him. Now, he's in a terrible state of affairs because he wants to please God, but he somehow hasn't yet found the secret of how to do it, and his only hope, of course, is in his exclamation in verse 25 where he says, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God with the flesh, the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation. That's the way chapter 8 opens.

Now, whenever you see that word therefore in the Bible, you ought to stop and ask what it's therefore. It's a connecting word, and it's a word that has an arrow running through it. Obviously, always the arrow is pointing backwards.

If you find a therefore with the arrow pointing forward, that's something's wrong. He's concluding something. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and you will notice there's a phrase at the end of that verse, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, which is repeated word for word at the end of verse four.

Really, that phrase, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, properly belongs at the end of verse four. Improperly belongs in verse one. Has no business there at all.

You can prove from the study of the manuscripts that somehow there was a repetition, there was a recopying of this phrase. It has no place in the argument that the apostle is developing in verse one, so that what you have is a declaration of fact, a declaratory sentence. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, period.

The King James Version has a comma. You may properly change that from comma to period. It's a flat statement, because the freedom from condemnation that he's going to discuss here is not dependent upon whether or not one walks in the spirit or the flesh.

It is not contingent upon your walk. However, in verse four, where he's going to be talking about the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in our daily walk, in our daily living, then indeed that application is only for those who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Now, I puzzled over that first verse for a long time.

Like many saints of God, I delighted in what it seemed to say, what it seemed to be promising. It seems as though he's talking about how we may have assurance of salvation. It's wonderful to know that we do not have to look forward with any fear or trepidation to meeting a holy and righteous God, because there is no sentence of condemnation standing against us.

And we may therefore rejoice in our freedom from condemnation. However, there was always a bit of a problem in my mind. Isn't it strange that Paul has not been talking about assurance of salvation up to this very point? Isn't it rather odd that the whole question of salvation is not in view at all? Rather, what is in view is the Christian's problem of how to deal with sin in his life.

What has that got to do with assurance? And I began to think that maybe, maybe in some way, this verse is not speaking to the subject of assurance of salvation, so much as it is speaking of something else. So, being a clumsy student of the Greek language, and I certainly am no scholar by any means, I use the concordance much more than I use the text, I began to dig a little bit into this verse, and I noticed something quite electrifying to me in the use of the word that Paul uses here. There's therefore now no condemnation.

Now, in the Greek papyri, that's all that vast literature outside the New Testament, and we have, fortunately, in Greek culture and from their history, we have a mass of materials. Business letters, love letters, legal documents, historical statements, philosophical ponderings, poetry. There's a vast literature, and students of Greek fit into that, as well as the New Testament language, which of course is Greek.

Now, in the papyri, in that great vast area of literature, the word that is used here by Paul is a word that has, it's a legal term. Basically, it's a legal term, not a criminal term, but it has legal implications. It has civil implications.

For instance, it refers to land that a person purchases, and before he can get the clear title to that land, he discovers that there's some legal embarrassment or a handicap of some sort, a mortgage on the property, a restrictive covenant of sorts, a ground rent that hasn't been paid, some arrears of taxes. It refers to the dead hand of the past pressing on the tenure of the present, and so when a lawyer dealt with this question, here's a man purchasing a piece of land, his task was to dig into all that he could find about that piece of property, to find out if there was anything that would restrict the owner from free usage of what he bought. And, if he could find nothing, he would then hand it to him in a ceremony in the court, at which time he could say, no handicap.

Or, put another way, no condemnation, no easement. I once bought a first piece of property I ever bought, and I was so green, it's pathetic, but I was getting ready to buy this piece of property, and the lawyer said, you know, of course, there's an easement against this property. I said, that's good, I got that too, huh? No, he says, no, you don't understand.

He said, you see, the law says that they can run a big sewer pipe right down through this property, and they can run it. I said, you mean right through my property? He said, through your property, yeah, if they want to. They may never do it, but they may do it too.

And I said, you mean, he said, if you put your house here, it'll go right through your cellar. Now, I had a beautiful idea of what it might be one day to have that sewer pipe running through my cellar, and the idea wasn't so good, so I swashed the deal. You see, I didn't want to buy a piece of property that had some kind of a handicap tied to it, so I couldn't use it the way I wished to use it.

That's why we have title searches. See, we hire somebody to search the title so that we can feel perfectly free when we take over a piece of property, and never worry a bit about some dead hand of the past reaching out and laying some kind of a claim upon us. That's what Paul says here.

There is therefore now, and that therefore, I think, goes all the way back past the seventh chapter into the sixth chapter, where you may remember he pointed out that they ought to know something. They ought to know that they have been united to one who was crucified and buried, and is now risen from the dead by baptism. I'm basically a Baptist.

My Baptist friends don't understand me. They say, you're working, you're finding more time among the TV's. I say, that's all right.

I think that means part Baptist, but I said, it's not worrying me too much. I'm having a good time, but I'm a Baptist of the deepest order, see? But I certainly don't think Paul's talking about water baptism in chapter six of Rome. He's talking about that mystic but marvelous operation of the Holy Spirit of God when he takes a regenerated sinner and unites him to the body of Jesus Christ, and that's the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And that born-again believer becomes a part of the body of Christ, and and this body of Christ is now his risen body. He was crucified, he was buried, he's now risen from the dead, and by baptism, yea even the baptism of the Spirit, and that's a once-for-all, never-to-be-repeated-again experience, by it we have been

united to one who's alive. Don't you know that, Sis Paul? We've been planted together within in the likeness of his death and his burial and resurrection.

Now count on it, reckon on it, and yield yourselves and the members of your body, yield them to the control of the Holy Spirit. All of that, he's really unfolding the key, the secret of how you have victory day by day, and he says, therefore, therefore there is no handicap, there is no hindrance to your living a victorious Christian life. Why? Why? You know, we hear it sometimes, you say, I've talked to some people say, well I'd like to, I know I'm, I'm not the kind of Christian I ought to be.

You see, the trouble is I'm a worrier. My mother was a worrier before me, my grandmother was a worrier, I just inherited worry. You know, I'm like King Blozo of the old comic strip.

He was found one day worrying about something, and they said, what are you worrying about your majesty? Because I got nothing to worry about. He's worried because he's got nothing to worry about. There are some people built like that, you know, and they say, I can't help it, I just can't help it, that's of my nature.

Oh no, yes, you can help it, and you must do something, or somebody says, but I've got a short fuse, brother. I tell you, there are some people can be sweet and lovely and kind in chapel, when they get in their automobiles, they go berserk, they become bears, and they, the things they say, good thing the windows are up, and the fuse gets short and blows, and I know it, I got a temperament. See, that's my nature, and that hinders me from being all I ought to be as a Christian.

Wait a minute, here's what Paul says, there is now to those who are in Christ Jesus, no handicap, no hindrance to your living, the life that you ought to be living for him. How does that work out, Paul? Quickly now, I want to conclude with this illustration. I'm not a scientist, but I'll invent something.

What is the law? Well, here goes, and if some of you are science teachers, and you say I'm wrong, leave me alone, I'm enjoying my ignorance, please don't disturb me. See, a law is the conclusion we come to when we observe the regularity of certain physical phenomena. See, we observe the occurrence of physical phenomenon of one kind or another, and it is the consistency or the inconsistency, whichever way you look at it, of that occurrence that we feed into our formula, which we call our law.

For instance, we talk about the law of gravity, and you know that if I let go of this book, what's going to happen to it, don't you? There it goes to the floor. Now, somebody comes and tells me that that's the law of gravity. See, and I'm losing my electrical connections here, so hang on.

So, I watch, and I say, is that so? Will that happen all the time? Sure, it will. Let's see, two times. Now, I wonder if it would happen three times.

Sure, it will happen three times, and then my curiosity being roused, I say, I wonder if it would happen a hundred times, or a thousand times, and if I should do this, I could stand here from now till evening service time, and when you come back, you'd see me going around like this, and I'd be saying 4876, 4877, and I'd be doing it. You see, what I'm hoping for is that maybe once, only once, instead of falling to the floor, it'll go up in the ceiling, up in the air, and I could catch it. See, there is no such thing as the law of gravity.

If it is, then it's got a flaw in it. There's one time that this book didn't go up, or, I mean, go down. It went up, but that's not so.

It does it with such regularity that we count upon it, and we organize our life around the occurrence, the frequency of the occurrence of that phenomenon. We even feed our laws of aerodynamics into it. Good thing we do.

The whole flying business would be impossible, unless we did. Now, see, it's 10,876. You're getting tired.

10,877. Hold it. What has happened to my book? Oh, you say it can't fall.

Why cannot it fall? Because you're holding it. What's holding it? Your hands. What energizes my hands? The principle of my life, and as long as I have life and strength, and I hold that book, the law of gravity, still pulling against it, and I can feel that law, still operates trying to pull it down, is nullified by a higher law, the law of my life.

Now, I'll get tired, and eventually, and if I allow it, I may be able to cut off the flow of life somehow, and the book will once again revert to the flow. You know what he's saying to us? Since you are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, his risen life is in you, and there's a new law operating in your Christian experience. It is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets me free from the law of sin and death that would conquer me.

So, you see, victorious Christian living in its final analysis is not dependent on whether you walk in the flesh or in the spirit, basically. It is whether you allow the life of Jesus Christ to flow unhindered through and to you, keeping you from sin's conquering force in your life. There is therefore now, for us who are in Christ Jesus, no handicap, no hindrance, nothing standing in the way of enjoying the full fruit of his risen life in our character and conduct day by day, to which there ought to be in this verse a hallelujah.

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