

Devotions with Matt

May 12, 2020

THE DEEP END

Growing up in my Lucas Valley we had a community pool that all of the kids in the neighborhood would go to during the hot summer days. We got to swim and be crazy in the pool for forty minutes and then the adults got twenty minutes to swim laps with all of the kids on the sidelines just waiting for our turn again. As soon as the whistle blew all of us would walk as quickly as we could to the edge and jump back in. The younger, less accomplished swimmers, would jump into the shallow end, and the older, better swimmers could jump into the deep end. The deep end was where we all wanted to be. It had the diving board.

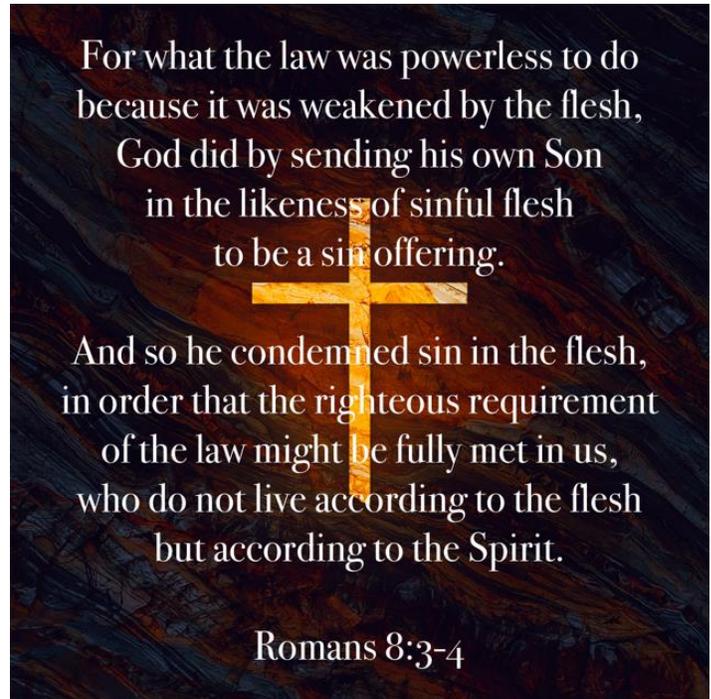
To be able to swim in the deep end, we had to prove we were able to swim. When you felt you were ready, you would go to the lifeguard and ask to do a swim test. If the lifeguard agreed to test you they would put you through a series of swim challenges: swim from one end to the other twice, hold your breath under water for thirty seconds and tread water for five minutes. If they were satisfied, you were deemed ready for the deep end. This was a huge day for each of us, a rite of passage. We could now tell all our friends we could swim in the deep end and jump off the diving board.

Jesus begins this next section of the Sermon on the Mount talking about The Law. He says He did not come to abolish The Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). As far as teaching goes, we are now in the deep end of the pool.

The Law is God's instructions concerning the moral, social and spiritual behavior of His people. The Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai and became the symbol and identification that separated the Israelites from everyone else. There were 613 commandments in the Law that each person in the community had to live up to. It soon became apparent that not one of them could live up to them- none of us can. But The Law wasn't given to them simply to be a heavy burden, but to point out that they, as we, are sinful and helpless and in need of help. To meet God's righteous standards we are going to need a Savior- One who is righteous and meets God's moral, social and spiritual expectations for us. There is only One who has, and can, meet them and that is Jesus.

Jesus does not come to abolish these standards, though. He doesn't say The Law is abolished and doesn't pertain to us anymore. God's standards and righteousness are the same yesterday, today and forever. God doesn't change just because the times do. Cultures and people change- God does not. So The Law is still with us. God's highest standards are still here. Those standards must still be met. Who can do it? No amount of effort will do. No amount of "goodness" can get us there. Only Jesus can.

"It is by grace that we have been saved", the Scripture says. Because of His grace we are no longer judged by how far we missed the mark of His standards. If we were, we would all stand condemned. We are now, In Jesus, judged by His sacrifice. Jesus' atoning blood washes over us and makes us clean. What our sin made dirty and kept us from being able to live out God's standards in life, is now atoned for. Now, because of Jesus, when God the Father looks at us He sees us through the lens of Jesus' blood. He no longer sees us as Law breakers, but rather He sees Jesus in us. He now sees us as holy, righteous and clean. In Jesus we now meet God's moral, social and spiritual standards.



That is not to say we never sin again, but rather Jesus' sacrifice is able to continue to atone for them and wash us clean. Every time we break God's Law we are forgiven. This is God's grace. This is God's mercy. This is God's love. This is Jesus. We are not free from His Law, but we are now free from the burden of it and the penalty of breaking it. This is part of the new life we have in Christ. We are free to not have to follow every letter of The Law, but rather we are free to follow Jesus who fulfilled The Law for us. Because of Jesus we are now in the deep end of the pool.

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:3-4

In Christ,

Matt