



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

## WEEKLY UPDATE

July 22, 2020

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 29

## Sin and Grace

By Rev. Otto Menko

Please read Genesis 3:1-19 and Romans ch.1:18-32

It is the year 58 A.D. The apostle Paul is in Corinth and is planning to set out on a missionary journey to Spain. To this end he needs to secure both spiritual and financial support from those who were strategically best situated for this purpose. His obvious choice was Rome. Unfortunately, he had never been in Rome before and although by this time there were maybe half a dozen house fellowships of Jesus believers scattered in the city, they were not the fruits of his missionary work, he was not familiar with any of them. Not only that, but some of these 'house churches' were dominantly Jewish, made up by proselytes and Jews, while others were mostly Gentile and both had their own, conflicting versions of faith in Jesus Christ.

As it happened, a number of Paul's friends had moved to Rome in the past few years who would be more than happy to assist him in the execution of his plan for Spain. However, that alone would not be sufficient. He needed to garner wider support –if possible- from all the Jewish and the Gentile Christian fellowships.

To make a case for his missionary journey to Spain he decided to write a letter to introduce himself and outline his own understanding of faith in Jesus Christ. And thus, Paul's letter to the Romans was born. The task of carrying the letter and introducing it in each of the house fellowships was given to one of Paul's trusted, long-time co-workers, Phoebe.

In the letter - among other things – Paul emphasizes that although historically, culturally, ethnically as well as in the matter of religious faith and practices, Jews and Gentiles come from different backgrounds, they all share in a fundamental common trait, namely **sin**.

He argues in the first part of his letter that sin is universal, it has no boundaries, it is deeply rooted in every human being. In ch. 1:18-32, Paul lists the most common accusations leveled against Gentiles by Jews. It is a clear, descriptive list, leaving very little to imagination but by no means an exhaustive one.

As Paul continues, he flips the coin, explaining how the Jews have no ground assuming they are any better than the Gentiles and in ch. 3:23 makes one of his many remarkable statements:

*“for **all have sinned and fall short** of the glory of God.”*

This way Paul demolishes the arbitrary line of demarcation between Jews and Gentiles and shows them as they are, from God's perspective! Finger pointing becomes futile and self-deceptive, for we all, collectively and personally, are against God's intended purpose for creation.

There is no point in denying that the entire history of humankind is a full catalogue of atrocities, conflicts, abuse, violence, exploitation, destruction, injustice and evil, both big and small, personal and collective, in every sphere of human existence. The result is a never ending cycle of disharmony, suffering, decay and death. Just as in the past so it is in the present. How far we have come from what is described of God's creation in Gen. ch. 1:31

*“God saw **all that he had made, and it was very good.**”*

But now, as the result of sin, Paul says in ch. 8:22

*“the **whole creation has been groaning** as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”*



The “whole creation” includes not only the natural environment, but also human society and individual life. The “present time” refers to every era, to any given point in history and we too, who are living at the beginning of the 21st century witness the remarkable universality of Paul's statement.

We continue unabatedly the destruction of our natural environment for the sake of profit, nations rise against nations because of ideological differences and access to resources, societies are divided by race, class and ethnicity and our private lives continue to be controlled by selfishness, short-sightedness and a seemingly never ending variety of wickedness and corruption.

Paul's declaration about the universality of sin must have been sobering for both the Jewish and the Gentile followers of Jesus in the city of Rome. Besides their differences, they were still bound together as one by their sinful human nature. And this is

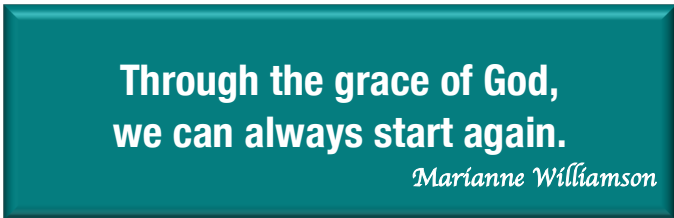
the point, where Paul can make his understanding of salvation crystal clear for them when he says in ch.8:1-2

*“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”*

**Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we all can find salvation and are made one in and through Him.**

The very core of Paul’s entire theology and message so succinctly summed up in this letter is that as much as sin is universal so is salvation and grace through Jesus Christ. But even more! God’s grace is far greater than sin. God’s grace triumphed over sin and death and it is ready and available to all who repent and put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ.

Soon after Paul finished writing his letter, Phoebe was dispatched to Rome with it. We know from the book of Acts that Paul indeed was able to visit Rome, albeit not as a free man but as a prisoner. When the Jesus believers in Rome received news of his impending arrival, a group of them gathered and welcomed him. Did Paul ever reach Spain as he intended? That remains a mystery. However, his letter to the Romans remains as a testament to not only the universality of sin but also to the universality of God’s grace which is far more powerful and greater than sin.



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**Crises Preparedness and Response Capability Guidelines for Congregations and Council**

**Part 3. NATIONAL EMERGENCIES – PREPAREDNESS, CAPABILITIES AND RESPONSE**

Secondly, Congregations must be ready to give guidance, oversight and assistance when a national emergency is declared. In all cases this will mean ensuring that guidance and direction given by the appropriate Government agency is followed. In the case of hurricanes, most steps can and should be ready in advance and reviewed before 1st June annually. These must include:

A. Each Congregation should have in place a Disaster Preparedness and Business Continuity Plan, that covers the functioning of the church itself, protection of the buildings – including the manse, etc. – the essential records, and the ability to resume the work of the church in the event that the primary location – office and/or sanctuary – should be destroyed. These arrangements must include adequate distribution of the list of members and adherents, to ensure that there should be copies of these available immediately after the event to ensure that all are checked on (see B below). [There is a Council Plan in the

Council Manual which may be used as a basis, but many elders will have access to professionally designed plans that can be used as guidance.]

B. A Plan of Action covering the Congregation’s Minister, Members and Adherents. This should have categorised the individuals, so as to enable us to give priority to those who may need our help the most:

- Age/infirmity
  - i. Any who require critical care where loss of electricity at the hospital(s) may have life threatening implications, e.g. those on dialysis. Such persons may need to leave the Island before the onset of an intense hurricane.
  - ii. Include ability to turn off utilities, concerns re propane, prescription needs, other physical considerations
- Single parent with minor children
- Extended Family not available
- Know official shelter - or Medical Shelter, if needed?
- No Available Transportation
- Strength of house and availability of resources to make storm-ready
- Ability to obtain (and keep secure) hurricane kit supplies, including water

After identifying the persons under B above who appear to warrant special concern, the Congregation must then seek to sensitively confirm the situation with those persons and establish individual plans of action for each person likely to need special assistance in the event a hurricane watch or warning is issued. These plans will include, as applicable:

- Those who may need to leave the Island (see (i) above); those who will need to be evacuated to an official shelter or other place of safety with members or others; and what kind of help each will need in order to move.
- Those who will need help to secure their homes, and whether or not they will be able to pay for this to be done (i.e. whether they only need a member to organise the work for them, or whether they will need the work actually done by volunteers).
- Lists of volunteers for shuttering houses, transporting evacuees, putting in food and medical supplies, etc.
- List of agencies and groups who are providing emergency services, rebuilding, road clearing, etc., known builders who can be called on to begin making repairs to church properties and properties of members, giving priority to needed living conditions.
- The persons who will be responsible for establishing the list of Members/Adherents who, after the event, are determined as needing specified help and ensuring they receive it.

The Congregation will also want to ensure that all Members/Adherents know that they should establish and keep under review a personal plan for themselves and their families – see appendix for those members who need help with this.

**NB. Please seek to obtain a Hurricane Survival Kit which contains detailed information on what preparations and precautions each of us should undertake and helpful numbers. Please keep handy and follow the advice in that.**

The Congregation should endeavour to implement arrangements to stockpile food, sanitary supplies, wipes, water, etc., to make available to persons in need after the storm if persons have lost their supplies, shops are unable to reopen, etc. Care must be taken in choosing where to keep this stockpile. Volunteers should be ready to make assessments and help distribute such supplies (and the list of these volunteers maintained by the Minister and delegated Elders).

Members and Adherents are also encouraged, depending on their personal circumstances, to volunteer to assist in the community as far as possible, as Shelter Wardens/Assistants, aid distributors, clean-up crews, rebuilding groups, etc. Often the extent of the work required to be done, which would include that needed by our own Members and Adherents, is of such magnitude and requires such equipment and skills that Members/Adherents may not have these in sufficient supply, and working with Government and other relief agencies, other Church and community groups, may be the most effective way of bringing help to our people and others.

The Synod has also requested each Congregation to create and build up a fund from which disaster recovery assistance can be quickly provided, both locally and internationally. After a badly damaging hurricane, the Congregation should endeavour to financially assist those Members/ Adherents (and others in the community) who have suffered major losses, especially those who are underinsured or those who have restricted incomes, etc.

As soon as possible after the emergency situation has been lifted, Members/Adherents should begin checking on each other as the situation dictates – i.e. travel may be the only form of communicating and that may be restricted. And as soon as possible again, the Minister and Elders should begin meeting to ensure coordination of the verification of the safety and situation of each Member/Adherent. Therefore, other Members who have made contact with persons in the Congregation should try to report in to the Minister/an Elder the situations that they have verified, in order to expedite the process. The agreed procedure should then be followed for listing the help needed by each Member/Adherent and how this will be provided, who is taking responsibility for whom, etc.

*(to be continued next week)*

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**Service of Thanksgiving  
For the Life of Rev. Ashley Smith**

**Friday, July 24, 2020  
9:30 am**

**Webster Memorial United Church  
Kingston, Jamaica**

Live stream links:  
<http://new.livestream.com/webstermemorial>  
<https://www.facebook.com/ucjci>

**In the CIRMC the Savannah United Church will accommodate those who wish to share in the live stream. Please call for seating availability at 947-6071**

UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

**Individual Prayer:  
Every Wednesday  
from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.**

(2 Timothy 1:7)

**WORSHIP  
THE  
LORD**  
Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council  
Worship at 7:45 am on Radio Cayman

on Radio Cayman 89.9  
every Sunday at 7:45 am

**July 26. Rev. Otto Menko**

**July 26. (Sunday) 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**All local United Church congregations are open-** Please contact the offices for details.

**Worship Services** are also available via video links.

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