

Diesel and Petrol

- Its a simple mistake to make - but a pretty dramatic one!
- Go to the petrol station, fill the car up, nip in and pay for it, all nice and normal.
- About 200 yards up the road something funny starts to happen.
- The engine isn't firing smoothly.
- If you are having a bad day, you'll probably try and rev the engine hard - hoping that all that's happened is that some dirt has been disturbed off the bottom of the tank when you were filling it up.
- Unfortunately, this is exactly the wrong thing to do!
- Car grinds to juddering halt in the middle of the road.
- What has happened? You put diesel into a petrol engined car.
- Don't ask me to explain exactly why, but it is a seriously bad idea, and can cause hundreds of pounds worth of damage - and its gets worse the more diesel is drawn through into the engine.
- You've made a mistake, pulled the wrong hose at the pump... easy to do.
- But you are trying to run on the wrong fuel.
- Power source is not what the manufacturer intended.
- A petrol engined car is not designed to be run on diesel - and gets damaged when you try it.

Life Through the Spirit

- Paul's progression through Romans:
 - *Road through Romans, looking back slide*
 - sin - a big problem;
 - God's provision for us - someone to justify us (acquit us from guilt), someone to redeem us (buy back our freedom), and someone to turn aside wrath from us for our sin - that provision in Jesus Christ, perfectly meeting our deepest need.
 - then the struggle with sin - how do we relate to sin now we are Christians?
 - and the discovery that even though we have a new life, we are still stuck with a sinful nature for just now!
- All of which, in a sense, sums up the start of life as a Christian - the beginning of a long road.
- That's where we all started - whether we can look back on a particular day when we accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and were "converted", or whether over time we came to the point where that was clearly the nature of our relationship with Jesus...
 - we are all sinners;
 - so we all started at the Cross, provided for by Jesus death on our behalf;
 - and we all still struggle with sin.
- But things don't stop there.
 - *Road through Romans, looking ahead slide*
- Jesus calls us to follow him, to become like him, to make him known to others, to be his disciples, to grow in faith.
- Not left like a roomful of babies!
- If the "big picture" of the start of the Christian's life is: God provides a Saviour...
 - what is the "big picture" for the rest of our lives as Christians? How do we go about living lives like Christ's? Becoming "disciples" and not mere "converts"?
- The "big picture" is... make sure you are running on the right fuel; make sure your source of power is the right one; make sure you are following the manufacturers instructions for smooth running; make sure you'll get to your destination!

Romans 8:1-17

- This passage draws a sharp contrast between living according to the human nature - older translations rendered the Greek literally as "the flesh" - and living according to "the Spirit" - God's Holy Spirit.
- The characteristics of each way of living are intertwined throughout the passage -

tease them apart to make more stark the contrast!

Human Nature

- Imprisonment (v.2) - to sin, to old habits, to old ways;
- Weakness (v.3) - can't accomplish anything of real value, of lasting strength;
- Unrighteous (v.4) - implied contrast with the righteous demands of the Law;
- Death (v.6) - to live this way is ultimately to reject Christ, and the provision he has made on the Cross;
- Enemy of God (v.7) - not merely passive, but active - God's enemy, setting self up against Him in defiance;
- Unable to please God (v.8) - corollary of enemy of God; live this way and way out of line with what God wants; disobedient;
- Orphans (v.14) - not children of the only true Father;
- Slaves (v.15) - bound to sin and its consequences, unable to exercise true freedom;
- Fear (v.15) - all of the above inevitably lead to fear, uncertainty in the face of illness, trouble, emptiness in success, and supremely in the face of death itself.

Holy Spirit

- No condemnation (v.1) - no guilty verdict, no indictment;
 - Life (v.2) - in union with Christ Jesus - both in eternity, and the "life and life in all its fullness" Jesus promised in John 10:10 - that living in alignment with the way the world is built by God;
 - Freedom (v.2) - from the law of sin - both from its ultimate consequences and power, and also from the immediate hold it has on us - ability to break that power (not glib, easy);
 - Powerful (v.3) - full of God's power, the same power that raised Jesus from death (v.11); ultimate good, things that will last for eternity - teaching SS class, being part of a youngster coming to faith, and knowing that youngster will spend eternity with God - that's power worth being part of!
 - Righteous (v.4) - Spirit life is pure, upright, admirable, marked by integrity, gentleness, love...;
 - Peace (v.6) - in face of all life's problems and torments - for most people, it seems to be more "why pray when you can worry and take tranquilisers?" than the Spirit's peace;
 - Ability to obey God (v.7) - we are so shot through with sin that all we do is tainted with mixed motives - our only ability to live God's way comes from God himself! Strength to "put to death" sinful ways;
 - Christ at heart (v.9) - this is Spirit life, Jesus Christ at the heart.
 - Children of God (v.14) - made so as Jesus wipes away our sin; enabled to grow in family likeness to Jesus as the Spirit works - develop Jesus like habits, mannerisms, ways of thinking and acting - I approach many problems in the same way my father does...
 - Child relationship with God (v.15) - warmth of family love, protection, care, growth, assurance and affirmation - this is where the Spirit brings us;
 - Heirs (v.17) - inheritors of all that God has in store for his family; the blessings Christ has won, of presence in heaven, honour, glory - a share in Christ's own glory!
- All of that is the character of the life the Spirit enables and draws us to live.

Conclusion

- Obligation isn't something we hear an awful lot about these days.
- If someone does us a favour, we may feel obliged to return the favour - or return the dinner invitation, or whatever.
- But obligations can easily be ignored - and many flaunt the fact that they feel no obligation, no compulsion, to do the right thing, to return a favour, or whatever. "I can do what I like!"
- Society has changed.
- **We have an obligation - but it is not to live as our human nature wants us to... rather, it is to live by the Spirit.**

- Are we responding to that obligation, or ducking it?
- Are we seeking to live our lives as our own bosses - taking charge ourselves of money, of relationships, of activities, of priorities - or are we putting all these at God's disposal?
- Are we really going in the direction that will bring life, or are we content to go with the flow of humanity and choose death?
- Are we prepared to "put to death" those patterns of behaviour that are contrary to God's will - that selfishness, that laziness, that short fuse and vicious temper, that greed and materially oriented life?
- Are we prepared to put in the hard work, the unglamorous decisions that build character - the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control...

Story:

Boy and father at lakeside in America - 10pm on night before bass season - lad catches huge fish - bass - "you'll have to throw it back, son" - no one around, only 2 hours, biggest fish.... couldn't we just? "You'll have to throw it back, son" - Boy learned character - integrity, honesty, even when no one is looking - but it cost, it wasn't "successful", it wasn't public and glorious - private, small;

- Just one example of the kind of learning process and path we must be prepared to go down...
- **We have an obligation - but it is not to live as our human nature wants us to... rather, it is to live by the Spirit.**
- Don't put diesel in - put petrol in - live according to the Spirit, not according to human nature.
- Heed the manufacturer's instructions!
- **"So then, my brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to live as our human nature wants us to..." (v.12)**