The Main Thing

I love the old saying, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." It keeps us focused in everything from sports to business to religion. In Romans 7 the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to reveal the main challenge and the only answer.

The challenge, as chapter seven so carefully elucidates, is temptation and sin. Sometimes we just don't manage to do the very thing we plan to do. Worse yet, sometimes we *do* the very thing we don't want to *do*. As Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Paul is struggling in his daily life, and God lets us peek in on his fight. Paul's faith is strong, his determination is deep, but sometimes his self-discipline falls short. In one way, his heart seems to be crying out in despair. A cursory reading might sound like Paul's lament is so hopeless that all is lost. But what Paul is really showing us is a contrast between what despair *would be without Jesus* and what reality is *with Jesus.*

Verse after verse points to the difficulty we all have in life on planet earth. Even with the softest heart and sharpest mind, the strongest among us can and will fail at times. But there is hope. Even the most evangelistic of the apostles needed to come to grips with *the main thing.*

In this chapter, Paul reminds us that discipleship to Jesus is not about public image or pleasing one's peers. Discipleship is not about body health or even mental health. (Those things are often nice side effects of discipleship, but they are not discipleship per se.)

The *main thing* in discipleship is forgiveness and our response to that precious gift. Our response to God's forgiveness is predicated on two things. First, the recognition of our need: we are sinners with no way at all to remove our own sins alone. Second, the acceptance of the reality that there is one way, and only one way to have our sins forgiven – Jesus the Christ.

The seventh chapter of Romans is not despair; it is deliverance. This chapter is not sorrow; it is salvation. The *key* is *don't stop until you get to Jesus – the last verse of the chapter!*

What about your life? Have you kept going? Have you found Jesus? Not just peace. Not just satisfaction. Not just fulfillment. Those things are nice but have nothing to do with eternity. *Have you found Jesus? Remember, that main thing is to keep main thing the main thing.*

Ray Wallace