

## The Letters from Paul – Session Ten

### Dear Rome & Ephesus: It's the "Now" Normal

Romans 8: 1-2; 7: 13-20; Ephesians 5: 8-10, 15-20

Jesus left the world a better place but also effectively turned it upside down. Days after He left, Pentecost occurred (as it did annually as a major Hebrew High and Holy time), and the world turned a couple more somersaults. It all led to a New normal that over time became a/the Now Normal; which stopped the somersaults, but the world would never be the same.

A pal of mine, Dr. Bo Prosser, a leading teacher pastor and writer, recently wrote an article about the New Normal. We regularly speak about the pandemic New Normal, but what if new and now are blending? If so life won't ever be the same?

A New Normal isn't necessarily a bad thing. Jesus proved that to us. But it is a stressor and very different and as such ramps up the need for Christians to focus on the need to live a life that demonstrates stability, harmony and higher plain living.

We know how to live on the high road. We know what righteous living looks like. We know that supernatural wisdom is exponentially better than any of us on our wisest day. And, we all know we can do better than we are presently doing. So, let's refocus our efforts and intent and show a scared and hopeless world the answer (to the meaning of life and how to get there).

1. **Seek wisdom, then live into it.** In Ephesians 5: 15-20 Paul states:

*Be careful then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

We could insert "scary" and it would read, "because the days are evil and scary," because they are. If we feel this way imagine how the unmoored, non-faith people feel. They do not share our supernatural hope and they are not privy to our supernatural wisdom. Their fear and worry is justified. Ours is not.

The gift of wisdom is our only avenue to knowing and doing life, the unique life God has created and equipped us to live. Sooner or later we will screw up our lives (to some degree) and cease being the example and witness that the non-spiritual world desperately needs. This means we must learn to forgive ourselves.

**2. Learn to forgive ourselves.** In Romans 7:14-15 Paul writes in very human terms:

*We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*

When the law became ineffective in leading holy lives and providing salvation, Jesus and the Spirit stepped in and changed the equation. The Spirit provides the knowledge and insight to/for living a truly holy life. That said, we continue to sin and we tend to have long memories of our past indiscretions. The more memories one clings to the larger the need to forgive one's self.

Being bogged down by guilt and shame leads to inferior faith living, thus:

*Do not allow our bad days to define us.*

*Do not allow our bad seasons to define us.*

**3. Aim high.** Always, always, always seek the High Road. Aim high each day. Want to live the unique, holy and called life God created us to live.

**4. Aim to be products of the light.** Again, we deal with a binary choice of right/wrong, light/darkness.

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light (Romans 5:8).*

All positive, uplifting and righteous elements of life are found in the light. The opposite is also true: All anti-God elements occupy the dark.

People outside faith are trapped in the darkness unless/until they find the light of God and choose to leave the darkness. This makes our need to live the entirety of our lives in the light. We are to be examples of *light-living*.

5. **Bad days do not mean we are bad people.** Bad seasons do not mean we are bad people.

So, forgive yourself. Move into the light and live toward never going back to the dark. Aim high in all things. Seek supernatural wisdom daily to accomplish your goal of aiming high. Be steady and patient.

Takeaway:

The **New** normal is giving way to the **Now** normal and non-faith people are in an existential tizzy. Many were having difficulty coping with the past, pre-pandemic normal and now they have been thrust into the most unsure world of their/our lifetimes. But, we have the answer (notice I did not say **an** answer).

The answer is closing the loop and accepting the need for God, Jesus and the Spirit into one's life.

Our ability to navigate the Now normal is the best witness to a scared, hopeless and anxious world.

We can be a beacon to this lost world.

We can show them a different way to see this **Now** normal.

Will we? That is our defining question.

Amen and Amen.

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