Series: LIFE 2.0   October 30, 2016

Title: LIFE 2.0

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Text: Romans 8:1-4

An Internet of (Evil) Things?

What's cooking?

Last summer I had a very interesting conversation with a friend of my son Roland who works in internet security for a major corporation. She told me the story of how hackers managed to gain access to the controls for the electric power grid for a major part of the country – just to prove that it could be done. These guys were the white hats of the hacker world; it's their job to find the vulnerabilities in computer networks before the black hats strike.

The hack of the power grid began with social media. The hackers found someone with access to the controls and then tracked him on social media. One day he posted the news that he had just purchased a new "smart" kitchen range – one that connected to the internet. That's all the hackers needed to know. In no time they had hacked into the computer built into the range. From there, they could mess with not only the range, but everything else in the house that was connected online. Just for fun, they turned his range on and off and opened and closed his garage door.

More importantly for their mission, they attached files to items in his house that he would take to work – like a flash drive or his laptop. When he took the infected device to work and plugged into the network there, the job was done. It took one month from start to finish.

The 2016 Dyn cyberattack:

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On October 21, 2016 it was the black hats' turn to launch a devastating attack. At 7:00 a.m. they launched their attack on a Domain Name System provider named Dyn. It was the first of three attacks that day. As a result, some of the internet's biggest services were suddenly unavailable, services like Amazon, Fox News, PlayStation, Twitter, Verizon, Netflix, PayPal,

Starbucks, and dozens more. By late in the day, the final attack had been "mitigated."

How did hackers manage to shut down the internet so effectively? They infected tens of thousands of IoT devices like cameras, home controllers, DVRs and other on-premise devices with a piece of malware called Mirai. Once onboard, it instructed these devices to flood Dyn's servers with data – an attack involving tens of millions of requests, crashing the system. The Internet of Things had become, as one journalist put it, an Internet of (Evil) Things.

Spirit malware:

The Mirai malware is able to hijack an unprotected computer chip in a household gadget. But a vastly more powerful malware has already infected something infinitely more precious: the human race. This malware has been passed along to each and every person on the planet. It is inescapable, and it inevitably leads to spiritual death.

Its name? Sin. It jumped on board the human race in the Garden of Eden, and it has been hijacking people, marriage, families, towns and cities, nations and empires ever since. It comes on board long before we are even aware of its existence. It resists any and all human effort to eradicate it. Like malware in a computer, it enslaves us to do its bidding. Even when we try our hardest to do the right thing, the malware is present. As Paul says:

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Romans 7:19-20 NIV

For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

No doubt we can all identify with Paul's complaint.

No Condemnation!

An astounding announcement:

But in Romans 8 Paul makes an astounding announcement to a human race thoroughly infected with Sin:

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Romans 8:1 NIV

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Paul's announcement says that the verdict of God's final judgment "has been brought forward into the present" (N.T. Wright, <u>Romans</u>, 575). The verdict is Not Guilty! And it is effective *right now.*

In other words, for those who are "in Christ Jesus" the malware of Sin has been conquered and humans have been set free from its slavery. The malware is still present in the human race, but when people enter into God's gift of new life in Jesus, they are set free.

The Law of the Spirit of Life:

Paul begins his description of God's victory over the malware of Sin by focusing on God's Operating System: the Law.

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Romans 8:2 NIV

*…because through Christ Jesus the **law** of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the **law** of sin and death.*

While it may sound like Paul is talking about *two* opposing systems, actually, as a person rooted in Jewish heritage and faith, he is talking about two aspects of the same system: God's **Law**, or Torah.

God gave His Law to His people to be their Operating System – God-written programming for living as a person created in God's image and likeness. The Law, then, provided a way of making right moral choices and of creating healthy relationships between people and with God Himself. As Psalm 19 tells us:

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Psalm 19:7a NIV

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

When Paul speaks of the "law of the Spirit who give life" he is talking about God's Operating System functioning properly in our lives. God's Holy Spirit lives in us, guides us, and gives us the power to overcome every attack of the malware of Sin.

The Law of Sin and Death:

The second reference to "law" comes when Paul says that the "law of the Spirit…has set you free from the law of sin and death." This "law of sin and death" is not some evil system or Operating System that has hijacked humanity. Rather, it is God's Law functioning so as to forever remind us that we are infected by the malware of Sin, but without the power of the Holy Spirit in us. By itself, God's revealed Law or Operating System makes us aware of how enslaved we are by Sin. It doesn't set us free. In fact, our understanding of God's Law becomes infected and distorted by the malware of Sin so that it becomes "sin's base of operations" in us. (Wright, Romans, 570). As Paul writes in Romans 7:

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Romans 7:22-23 NIV

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

The real problem, then, is never God's Operating System. It is the malware of Sin that has taken root in us, twisting and corrupting our hearts and minds so that we do its bidding.

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Destroying the malware:

So imagine that there was a terrible computer virus wreaking havoc around the world. Over and over, it invaded perfectly good computers and corrupted their Operating Systems to do its malicious work.

What would you have to do to destroy it? Well, first of all, you would have to have a computer that wasn't corrupted. Then you would have to create a fix and download the virus onto that computer. To be sure that you could destroy the virus, you would have to let it take its best shot at your

computer's Operating System – a system just like that on all those other at risk or infected computers.

The proof that your new program worked would be that the virus did indeed take root and do its nasty thing, but then the new and improved Operating System destroyed it.

Enter God's Son:

And that is what God did for you and me when He sent Jesus into this world to set us free from the malware of Sin. Paul writes:

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Romans 8:3-4 NIV

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

When Paul talks about "the flesh," he is talking about that part of us that has been thoroughly infected by Sin and is thus unable to keep God's Law or function according to His Operating System. Jesus came as one of us – "in the likeness of sinful flesh" He experienced the same temptations we all face. He was subject to the same hardships and desires.

But He was not infected with the Sin malware, but He allowed Sin and Death to take their best shot at Him – an attack that would have taken down any other human being! Paul says that instead, "he condemned sin in the flesh" by dying for us on the Cross. Sin had made its greatest attack and failed. And when Jesus said, "It is finished!" Sin's hold on the human race was broken.

It only takes *one* computer running the right software to defeat a computer virus. Then it's just a matter of sharing the new software with the rest of the world. It only took *one* human to defeat the malware of Sin. And when He rose on the third day, God's brand new Operating System was introduced to the human race.

LIFE 2.0:

Paul sums things up by saying that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, "the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us…" (Romans 8:4a NIV). In other words, we can finally function according to God's Operating System. We can finally be what we were meant to be. And we can finally reflect God into His world.

Think of it as LIFE 2.0! God's upgrade. Paul says that what makes us alive and gives us power over the malware of Sin is God's Spirit living in us, just as He lived in Jesus.

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Romans 8:4b NIV

…who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

No more trying to "be a good person" and, if we're honest with ourselves, finding that we never get there! No more trying to fool God and others, or hoping that God will grade "on the curve" or give us the benefit of the doubt. We are "in Christ." His life is our life. His Spirit dwells in us and gives us His strength and guidance. LIFE 2.0. At last, God's good and perfect Operating System has a home – a life filled with God's own Spirit.

LIFE 2.0!

This is the life that God has for you, if you will have it. This is the verdict that Jesus secured for you, if you will receive it. This is the way – the only way – to become what God made you to be.

LIFE 2.0!

"LIFE 2.0" Group Notes:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- Ever get a computer virus, or have your credit card account hacked?
- What did it feel like?
- What did you have to do to fix the problem?

Lesson:

- A hacked credit card doesn't mean that credit cards are evil. It means that someone has gained access to your personal information and has started using your card to enrich themselves. You are now going to be paying for their stuff unless you do something about it.
- A hacked credit card doesn't mean that the financial system is evil; it has simply been coopted by a thief.
- The same is true when it comes to God and His world, including you and me. The problem with our world isn't that God's Creation is defective. Nor is it that we are defective. We are created "in God's image." The problem is with this thing called Sin.
- Sin is described in the Bible as a malicious force – or as a person (think Satan) – that is always attempting to corrupt and destroy God's good Creation. Its main attack is on the most important part of that Creation: humans who are supposed to be the caretakers and stewards of God's world.
- And yet, because we are infected with Sin, we cannot live according to God's purpose and plan for us. That is why the Bible calls us "sinners."
- So we can see why Paul focuses on God condemning Sin, not human beings. You don't destroy your computer when it is infected with a virus; you get rid of the virus, even if that means reformatting the computer.
- And that is what God did through Jesus Christ:
  - He sent Jesus as one of us to live in this Sin-infected world.
  - He allowed Sin to attack Jesus just as it attacks every human being.

- o But Jesus was running a "new version" of God's Operating System. He was filled with God's Holy Spirit and was able to defeat the virus.
  - o The ultimate defeat of Sin was in His death on the Cross. Just as a deadly disease dies right along with its victim, Jesus went through Sin's most drastic effect – Death.
  - o And when Jesus rose from the dead, He demonstrated that God's new OS was up and running for good.
- Note: when Paul describes us as being "in Christ" he is saying that we, too, are filled with God's Spirit and living according to God's new OS. The same kind of thing happens when Microsoft or Apple send you an update that gives you greater protection from viruses and hackers. With the new download you are "in" the new version. What was developed successfully on a computer for Microsoft or Apple is "alive and well" in your computer.

Application: Embracing God's gift of freedom from Sin:

- Sin has corrupted our minds in many ways, even when it comes to trying to please God!
  - o Perfectionism: if I try hard enough God will accept me.
  - o Judgmentalism: I will help God find the sin in others.
  - o Low self-esteem: I'm a bad person.
  - o Pride: I'm better than others.
  - o What examples can you think of?
- Being "in Christ Jesus" means that we rest in His victory over Sin instead of trying to win that battle ourselves.
  - o Think of an example in your life where this is what you did.
- And when we fall back into our old ways, John reminds us:
  - o *1 John 1:9 NIV*
  - o *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Prayer time:

- Have group members pray for each other.
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