

(Jeff Sherwood - Lesson 12 - 4.13.25) Living the Emancipated Life
Romans 8:1-11

I am so grateful that Paul concludes Rom 7 with a note of hope and certainty. I am wretched but God through Jesus Christ has delivered me. This is a summary of Rom. 1-6. That brings us to Rom. 8. J.I. Packer in *Knowing God* writes: *All roads in the Bible lead to Romans... Now as Romans is the high peak of the Bible, so chapter 8 is the high peak of Romans...* He continues: *...you will not penetrate the secret of Romans 8 by studying the chapter on its own. The way into Romans 8 is through Romans 1-7...* (pg. 231-232).

“Therefore” links the great chapter on life in the Spirit logically to the preceding chapter, but this is not the primary context. Paul is referring to the whole of the preceding argument. He has taken several chapters to bring out the way God saves us in Christ, and in the light of the whole of that massive argument he can say there is now no condemnation.

Why? Because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This chapter contains the greatest concentration of references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, an average of one almost every two verses. Whereas there are about 30 occurrences of “I” in chapter 7, there are 17 references to the Holy Spirit in chapter 8. Romans 8 is the chapter of liberation through God’s Spirit. This chapter explains the benefits of sanctification made available through the presence and power of God’s Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. Hence the title “*Living the Emancipated Life*”.

I. The Believers Position in Christ Provides Victory Over Sin Rom. 8:1

The word translated “*condemnation*” (κατάκριμα – katakrima the noun) is used only two other times in Romans – 5:16, 18. To be clear the word “*condemned*” (κατέκρινεν – katakrevo the verb) is used around 20 times. Condemnation is a forensic term which here includes both the sentence and the execution of the sentence. The verdict has been reached so the penalty must be applied. In Romans 5 “*condemnation*” is contrasted with “*justification*”. We are condemned to judgement because of sin while we are justified by the righteousness of Christ.

For the believer there is “*NO*” (*emphatic no*) condemnation meaning that God will never condemn us to an eternity separate from Himself for our sins. There is no penalty for our sins because Jesus paid for them – past, present and future one.

The immediate context is chapter 7 where Paul details his struggle with sin - his frustration, his feeling of being trapped, his sense of inadequacy and inability. The whole point is that the struggle is without condemnation.

What does it mean that God will not condemn us despite our struggles? One implication is no rejection from God. The struggle and the failures are without rejection from God. God does not turn aside, does not kick us out of his family, and does not leave us alone.

Another implication is that God is not angry with us when we’re struggling. He knows it takes a while and quite a while at times, to learn to walk. Even the best of saints will at times fall. In the midst of my struggle with sin there is no condemnation, not from the law; not from God; not from any source because we are “*in Christ*”. The term “*in Christ*” is a familiar one for Paul. That phrase is the key to every aspect of our salvation. A Christian is not simply outwardly identified with Christ but part of Christ, not simply united with Christ but united in Christ. This is Romans 5-6.

So far in v. 1 we have seen that because of our identification with Christ (Rom 5-6) despite our struggle with sin (Rom 7) there is no condemnation. Paul goes on to explain why this is true in the following verses. At its foundation it is true because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Believers Power in the Spirit Provides Victory Over Sin Rom. 8:2-4

A. We Have Been Liberated 8:2

The believer was freed (*the aorist points to a decisive act*) from the law of sin (cf. 7:23, 25) and death (cf. 7:10–11, 13). What is the law of sin?

The law is not just the Mosaic Law or the Old Testament law but it's the law in the sense of a regulating principal, an authority or a guide. In this verse there are two principles or authorities 1) the law or principle of the spirit of life and 2) the law or the principle of sin and death. You were under the old principle of sin and death meaning that when you sinned death in some fashion followed. You have been freed from that authority. You now have a new authority – the Spirit of life. Death has been replaced with life.

It does not mean that the law of sin no longer operates or that sin doesn't have consequences but it does mean that sin has been overcome by another law.

The reason for that is based on the Spirit's work within us. Without the Spirit within as a law of life, there would be nothing but condemnation: for the new creature has no power within himself apart from the Spirit.

The law of the Spirit of life is an unusual expression. Spirit here is the Holy Spirit, who is characterized as the Spirit of life, that is, the life-giving Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of the Christian, and this presence means the defeat of the power of sin.

By virtue of my position "*in Christ*" the Holy Spirit of Life empowers me in my struggle and I don't have to sin.

B. Sin Has Been Judged 8:3

God took the initiative to do what the law (*even though it was his own law*) was powerless to do. What could the law not do? The law could neither justify nor sanctify. Why not? Because it was weakened by the sinful nature (3a), or as one translation reads: '*because human weakness robbed it of all potency*' (REB Revised English Version). The problem is not the law. The problem is our sin nature.

So then, what the sin-weakened law could not do, God did. He made provision for both our justification and our sanctification. First, he sent his Son, "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*". Paul was very careful about his words here. He did not say Christ came "*in sinful flesh*" because that would imply sin was in him. Nor did he say, "*likeness of flesh*" because that might imply Christ only seemed to be in the flesh. He said, "*the likeness of sinful man*" because Christ took on man's flesh (*human nature*) without becoming a sinner.

Most translations read "*as an offering for sin*" but literally it is simply "*for sin*". By his life, death and resurrection Jesus Christ condemned sin. Paul is now picturing sin as a litigant in a law court; the verdict goes against sin and thus sin is condemned. Whereas sin once condemned the believer now Christ the savior condemns sin. Why? "*So that...*" v. 4

C. We Walk in Line with the Spirit 8:4

Here is what God was accomplishing by condemning sin - our holiness or righteousness fulfilled in us. By condemning sin God fulfills the requirement of the law which is righteousness "*in US*" not "*by us*". We're passive at this point and God by his power through the Holy Spirit is producing righteousness in us.

Notice that Paul does not say "*we fulfill the law's righteous requirement*", but that "*the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us*". This points to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Before we came to know Christ we were continually defeated by sin. When we came to know him and to receive the indwelling Holy

Spirit we were able to attain a standard we could never reach in our own strength.

John Stott: *Verse 4 is of great importance for our understanding of Christian holiness. First, holiness is the ultimate purpose of the incarnation and the atonement. The end God had in view when sending his Son was not our justification only, through freedom from the condemnation of the law, but also our holiness, through obedience to the commandments of the law. Secondly, holiness consists in fulfilling the just requirement of the law. This is the final answer to antinomians and adherents of the so-called 'new morality'. The moral law has not been abolished for us; it is to be fulfilled in us. Although law-obedience is not the ground of our justification (it is in this sense that we are 'not under law but under grace'), it is the fruit of it and the very meaning of sanctification. Holiness is Christlikeness, and Christlikeness is fulfilling the righteousness of the law. (The Message of Romans, pg.220-221)*

Thus God justifies us through his Son and sanctifies us through his Spirit. The plan of salvation is essentially Trinitarian. For God's way of justification is not law but grace (*through the death of Christ*), and his way of sanctification is not law but the Spirit (*through his indwelling*).

The Holy Spirit creates a new humanity which is characterized by walking "*according to the Spirit*." This new humanity, through its union with Christ, whose flesh never sinned, is infused with the power to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Everything the Law required is now realized in the lives of those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Walking by the Spirit requires a whole other lesson but simply stated it means walking in submission to and dependence on the Spirit – Gal. 5:16. Note the effect of walking in the Spirit – *you will not carry out the desire of the flesh*. Walking according to the flesh means behaving as the flesh dictates and allowing our sinful nature to govern our lives. Walking by the Spirit means behaving as the Spirit dictates and allowing him to live through us.

III. The Indwelling Holy Spirit Gives us a New Direction Rom. 8:5-8

Before we look at these verses I need to make a few general comments about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

1) By definition to dwell means to reside so firstly the Holy Spirit makes the believers body his home; 2) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit starts at the moment of conversion; 3) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is permanent. He is with us forever. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. With those thoughts in mind let's look at verses 5 - 8.

The contrast in these verses is on those who are according to the flesh or those who are according to the spirit; the mind set on the flesh or the mind set on the spirit. In God's eyes there are only two classes of people in the world: those who belong to him and those who do not.

The expressions are descriptive. In both cases their nature determines their mindset. Moreover, since the flesh is our twisted human nature, its desires are all those things which pander to our ungodly self-centredness. Since the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself (*and he is God*) his desires are all those things which please God, which glorify Christ.

One mindset results in death while the other mindset results in life and peace – 6.

Why? See vv. 7-8 describing the mindset of the flesh. The mind-set of those without Christ has distinct characteristics: death, hostility toward God, and an inability to subject itself to God. These govern its orientation to all of life.

What Paul is saying here is immensely important because our mind-set makes all the difference when it comes to daily living. One way of thinking leads to death – ultimately physical and spiritual death but also death in all its

aspects – restlessness, selfishness, broken relationships, internal distress, moral laxness and so forth. While the other way of thinking leads to life and peace – not just for the future but for now. Life with a sense of purpose, meaning, joy, contentment, humility, helpfulness, generosity, or the fruit of the Spirit – Gal. 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit gives us a whole new way of thinking about life, ourselves, values, eternity and God.

IV. The Indwelling Holy Spirit Give us Power to Live Rom. 8:9-11

Verse 9 is of great importance in relation to our doctrine of the Holy Spirit for at least two reasons. First, it teaches that the hallmark of the authentic believer is the possession or indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a clearer indication that the Spirit enters a person's life at the moment of conversion (cf. also Eph. 1:13).

Indwelling sin (7:17, 20) is the lot of all the children of Adam; the privilege of the children of God is to have the indwelling Spirit to fight and subdue indwelling sin. Conversely, if we do not have Christ's Spirit in us, we do not belong to Christ at all – 9b. This makes it plain that the gift of the Spirit is an initial and universal blessing, received when we first believe in Jesus.

The clear implication of Paul's use of the phrase "*the Spirit of Christ*" is that through the Spirit we experience something of Jesus' disposition—his kindness, his gentle care, his love in our lives. As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, we are filled with the ethos of Jesus, and life becomes more and more to us what it was and is to him. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life for the redeemed person who now possesses Jesus Christ's imputed righteousness.

Notice the "*ifs*" in 10, 11. They do not express any doubt about the fact of the indwelling (they could be paraphrased, '*if, as indeed is the case or since*'), for they point to its results. They are 1st class conditions and express certainty – since this is true here is what follows.

The problem is not with the "*if*" clauses as much as it is with the meaning of "*our body is dead because of sin*". It can't be physical death because the readers are alive so for those of us who have the Spirit how can our bodies be dead?

Basically it means that our bodies even as believers are subject to the consequences of sin – not so much personal sin but imputed sin. For instance do Christians stop growing old and wearing out? Do Christians get sick, suffer illness and pain? Do Christians endure natural disasters – floods, hail storms, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes? Do Christians sin? Our final redemption still awaits – the redemption of our bodies – Rom. 8:23.

Yet at the same time our spirits are "*alive because of righteousness*". Because we have the imputed righteousness of Christ we are alive. We are alive to God in the sense of communion with him, the ability to worship him and sense his presence. We are alive to the living text of Scripture – it speaks to us, we understand it, we desire it, it gives us wisdom for living. We are alive to other believers as we see the Spirit of God at work in their lives, pray for them and fellowship with them.

We are alive to righteousness itself. Because the Spirit of Christ indwells me I can overcome sin. Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world. I can say '*no*' to sin and '*yes*' to God.

He concludes his argument with v. 11 and the assurance of resurrection. Since Christ was raised we will be raised. Since the Spirit dwells in you, your future in heaven is certain. That is all true, but I want to add another thought for you to consider.

He is talking about the Spirit in us giving life to our mortal bodies. The sphere in which the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit works is this mortal body. We cannot reverse the process of death – no one can. Our bodies

are going to die, but we can refuse to let the members of our bodies become instruments of sin. By the power of the Spirit within us we can refuse to give in or let our members be used for that purpose. Resurrection power enables us to apply Romans 6:12-13.

Stated another way – We don't have to sin. We are free to live under the liberating power of the Holy Spirit. To do righteousness, to please God and to obey him. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of resurrection life. He is the guarantee that all the power which was put forth in raising Jesus Christ from the dead is available now to give us victory over sin today. Present triumph is ours through the Holy Spirit. Paul elaborates further in v. 12ff. So show up next week.

Conclusion

So far we have seen that the Spirit does for us what we cannot do for ourselves and he fulfills in us all that God desires. This does not negate the fact that we will walk through some dark valleys and neither does it deny that we must actively submit to the Spirit's work. However this text tells us that we are not alone in the battle. That the Holy Spirit is actively working to make us into the people that we should be. As we submit to him we enjoy the freedom and joy of living the Christian life.