

Romans Study
Session 12 - Romans 8:1-11

Chapter 8 is one of the mountaintop passages of the Bible for believers. It's wall-to-wall good news, rich and deep. Chapters 6 & 7 are actually a slight detour from Paul's discussion of justification launched back in chapter 5. In chapters 6 & 7 Paul discussed the two major hindrances to living out and enjoying the justification we have through Jesus Christ and these are sin and the law. Our relationship has been irreversibly changed to both of these so that now our lives are different. Now that we are in chapter 8, we are going to see two major themes being presented: 1) Paul is going to elaborate on "serving in the new way of the Spirit" which he brought up on 7:6, and 2) he is then going to discuss and explain our security in Christ and just how secure we truly are. In this chapter, the Holy Spirit and His role in our lives of faith is revealed. Up to this point, Paul has kept his comments on the Holy Spirit short but now it's time to show us what grace truly looks like. In the 21 times the word "spirit" is used in Chapter 8, 19 of those refer to the Holy Spirit. This is good for us to know and see this as possessing the Holy Spirit is THE mark of being a new covenant believer.

Q: As way of review from chapter 5, what was the problem with being "in Adam"? (*it was a death sentence upon all mankind based on our relationship to sin. We were in bondage to sin and thus to guilt and death.*)

Q: What does it mean to be justified? (*it is a word that describes a person being declared, "Not guilty" by a judge. It sets a person in a state of innocence and freedom through a legal proceeding.*)

[Romans 8:1-4]

Q: What does the "therefore" of v.1 refer to? (*The good news of Jesus Christ setting us free from the body of death in 7:24-5*)

Q: Due to Christ's work for us, how much condemnation does the believer now face? (*none*)

The word "condemnation" means "adverse sentence". It's receiving bad news from a judge. This word only occurs three times in the New Testament and all of them are in Romans (5:16, 5:18, and 8:1)

In a courtroom, only one verdict can be given. Either a person is innocent or guilty of a certain crime. God could not declare us "Innocent" and "Guilty" at the same time. By the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and our acceptance of that work by faith, God declared us "Innocent" and so there is no basis for condemnation of an innocent person. In fact after being declared "innocent" there is no longer a basis for alienation or separation from God as we are fully acceptable to Him through Christ's work on our behalf.

This goes completely against the world's teaching that you are to "get your act together". You are to do things on your own to improve your situation. Under grace, it is God who worked

through Jesus' death in order to make our lives "work".

Q: God does not condemn any of the justified. However, in what ways do we condemn other believers? (*many answers - the point is that when we condemn other believers, we are actually engaging in an activity that God Himself is not doing and won't do. It's an unspiritual/demonic activity.*)

This comes at the very beginning of this chapter concerning the new life of the believer. What comes at the first and/or last of a chapter is often the most important thought or guiding thought for the entire section. In this case, the fact that there is condemnation from God towards us is essential. A believer must be assured of God's total and full acceptance before he can grow in grace and conformity to Christ. If you believe that God has some special or secret condemnation waiting for you at some point in the future, you are not going to grow close to Him. You are going to "sleep with one eye open" wondering when the hammer of condemnation is going to fall on your head. This verse sets out the foundation for God's love, acceptance and freedom for His children.

Another important point that needs to be made is that being declared innocent of all sins by the Supreme Judge of the Universe, means we are free from all sin. We are not free to continue in sin. That would be a gross abuse of the gift given to us by God. The idea that since we are not condemned any longer by God and thus that's His "green light" for continued sin misses the entire point of justification and sanctification.

In v.2 the word "law" isn't speaking of the Mosaic law but rather the regularity and certainty of the operation of something. The law of gravity is an example in that gravity regularly and without any ambiguity brings things down. The law of thrust and lift are the opposite in that if you exert enough force to a set of wings designed to give you lift - then the body will take off and fly. Thus the law of the Spirit of life is the certainty and regularity (or predictability) of the Spirit of God imparting Christ's life to us continually - like the law of lift and thrust whereas the law of sin and of death refers to the certainty and assuredness of sin bringing death to anyone who participates in it (which was everyone), like the law of gravity.

Q: What has the law of the Spirit of life set us free from? (*v.2 - the law of sin and of death*)

The word "set you free" is in the aorist tense meaning that we were set free in the past by Christ's work and now we are living in that freedom now and will be forever. This is part of our new identity in Christ - we are free from the law of sin and death forever. Paul is describing what the life of freedom in Christ looks like in practical ways. V. 2 grounds v.1 just as vv. 3 & 4 will ground v.2. They are all linked. And everything links to v.1 and the thought of no condemnation.

Q: According to v.3, what could the law not do? (*v. 2 - set us free from the law of sin and of death*)

NOTE: If you are using an NIV or other translation that is translating "flesh" with the term "sinful nature" you are going to be very confused if you don't at mentally replace "sinful nature"

with flesh. A believer does not have a sinful nature any longer (Romans 6:6 - it was crucified when we came to Christ). We share in the divine nature now (II Peter 1:3-4). A nature is what is at our core and what flows from that core is who we truly are and how we operate naturally. If a person has a sinful nature, it is because at their core they are a sinner. A believer is not a sinner at his core but rather a saint (holy one). Our behavior does not determine our nature - our birth (or re-birth) as seen in chapter 5 determines our true nature. Thus it is wrong to make the statement that believers still have a sinful nature. What we have, according to the Bible, is the flesh - which is our pre-Christian sinful programming loitering in our brains leading us to sin, even though we no longer find it natural to sin (see chapter 7).

Q: Why could the law not set us free from that law of sin and of death? (*it was weak because it was based upon our flesh*)

Q: What is our flesh? (*our human propensity to sin, our pre-Christian programming used to get our needs met independently of God*)

What Paul is saying is that since the law was based upon our performance (the old covenant), there was no hope for us ever gaining release from these forces of sin and death due to our human weaknesses built in from our life before Christ. The law was weak because it was based upon our ability to keep it, which we could not. The law could not save us. However, our new covenant life is not based upon our performance at all. Unlike the law and our inability to fulfill it, God did fulfill it and based upon His performance, we were set free from the law of sin and of death.

Q: How did God accomplish our freedom? (*v. 3 - by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin*)

Notice that Paul does not say that Christ came in sinful flesh but rather in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus was sinless but when He was wrapped up in human flesh, his flesh was like our flesh except without sin.

[Philippians 2:5-8]

[Hebrews 4:15]

Q: What did Jesus' offering of Himself do for us? (*v.3 - it condemned sin in the flesh*)

So to set the record straight and to see how God worked on our behalf: We sinned and we deserved to be condemned. Jesus never sinned yet He died as an offering in our place and as a result sin was condemned. What a divine reversal. Sin now stands condemned and it's "life span" is not limited to the time until the final judgment when sin will be ended permanently.

V. 4 gives us the purpose of Jesus' work for us. It is saying that since Christ fulfilled the entirety of the righteous demands on our behalf. This is all part of no longer being condemned. One way to put it is: the people in whom the law is fulfilled are those who live in the realm of the Spirit. It's not our performance that admits us to this realm but our rebirth into Christ. The story

in John 8 of the woman caught in adultery and hauled before Jesus to test Him as to whether He'd follow the law or not. The woman was guilty of adultery as she was caught in the very act. (However to be faithful to the law, both parties were to be put to death and the man was not brought out for public trial and shame - probably a set up by the religious leaders testing Jesus.) However, at the end, Jesus asked her where her accusers were and she said they weren't there - there weren't any left. Jesus then told her that He didn't condemn her either. Then Jesus told her to go and sin no more. She was free from a life of sin in adultery from that point on. She didn't have to return to it and she no longer faced any condemnation for her sins. This is an example of what's being discussed by Paul here. When God freed us from condemnation, we were freed to live a life pleasing to Him.

This sets up the next section where the Spirit and the flesh are contrasted. The main point is that the flesh brings death but the Spirit brings life. The life of the believer is always channeling the power of the Holy Spirit but the Spirit never releases the power to those indwells for independent use. It's only for the uses of the purposes and will of God that the power of the Spirit is exercised - such as in setting us free from the law of sin and of death.

[Romans 8:5-8]

It's important to define a few words before launching into explaining this section of Scripture.

1) mind - this isn't the usual word for "mind", it really means "mind-set". It denotes the direction of a person's will. (This word only occurs in this chapter of Romans.) It deals with the orientation of the will on a very basic level.

2) flesh - this is yet another of Paul's use of this word. It's the third way he uses the word in his letters and the most rare (only found here in these few verses and possibly in a few other instances in his letters). (In 95% of Paul's use of the word "flesh" he means the pre-Christian habits we learned to get our needs met independently of God. The flesh always works against the Spirit and is lodged in the brain patterns/mental thought patterns of all humans. It's just in Christians, we have input from the Spirit in addition to the flesh. About another 4% of the cases of Paul using the word "flesh" mean the human body. In fact in Galatians 2:20 Paul uses the word flesh twice: once to mean our physical body and once to mean our sinful habits lodged in our minds from our pre-conversion life. However, very rarely and in this case of Romans 5:5-8, he's got a third use of the word. In this case, he means the unregenerate or unsaved or lost person. This is a departure from his usual two uses of the word (Pre-Christian sinful habits or human body). We know this due to the context and v.5 saying that the flesh is who they are. These people still possess their sinful nature and due to the present tense used - it's the ongoing way of these people's lives. This would not describe the saved as the might succumb to the flesh (usual usage) but do not live there as it is impossible for them to do so. (There are arguments that many have brought up to say this is just another use of the regular way Paul uses flesh but I think that given the grammar of the passage, the case is stronger for Paul referring to the lost here.)

Notice how v.5 begins: "for those who ARE according to the flesh..." "For those who exist in the flesh..." In this case the word "flesh" is describing those who only have the flesh operating in their lives. Their very nature is being expressed through their flesh. These people are lost. They cannot set their minds on the things above because they have no way to do so. However, those in the Spirit do and their mind set is on those things of the Spirit. This isn't

speaking of their behavior but rather the core of who they are. Their flesh is expressing their sinful nature which is still the controlling influence of their lives. The rest of the passage cannot be (in my opinion) describing a saved person as we do know and can and do please God.

Q: What is the outcome of the mind set on the flesh? *(v.6 - death)*

For the lost person, this is spiritual death apart from the Lord forever. However, if the Christian sets his mind on the things of his flesh, he will experience the death of those things he hopes to gain through the flesh. (hopes, dreams, achievements, etc.)

Q: What is the outcome of the mind set on the Spirit? *(v.6 - life and peace)*

Life is the opposite of death and peace is the desired outcome. Once we are justified, we are at peace with God through Christ (Romans 5:1). That peace leads us to even greater peace once we set our mind upon the life of the Spirit within us.

[Philippians 4:6-7] - The peace that surpasses all comprehension is the peace we are talking about here. The thought here is that no matter what the outward, external condition or circumstance we face may be, when our minds are set on the Spirit and His work in our lives, there is a peace that overcomes us and surpasses all understanding. The world cannot know this peace or understand it but those in the Spirit can experience it. Think of this: if God does not condemn us then we know for sure that when terrible circumstances hit us, it's not God directing them at us. It frees us from the lie of the devil that God is mad at us in some way.

Q: What does the peace of God look like in our lives? *(many answers - but will include trusting God instead of self)*

Q: Why does the mind set on the flesh lead to death? *(v.7 - it is hostile towards God and does not subject itself to God.)*

The word "subject" is a military word that means to subject oneself to a commander. However, the opposite of this word, which is used here in v.7 means insubordination. The flesh is incapable of submitting to the law of God. It is always insubordinate to God and His ways.

Through this passage, Paul lists four characteristics of those whose life is the flesh (lost):

- 1) they are hostile towards God
- 2) they are insubordinate of the law of God
- 3) they cannot please God
- 4) they will experience spiritual death

[Romans 8:9-11]

Q: What is a Christian? What makes a person a believer? *(v.9 - the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. To not have the Spirit is to not belong to Christ. The New Testament teaches us that the gift of the Holy Spirit is an automatic gift to anyone who knows Christ. Note: the "if" clause is a condition of the first class - meaning that the idea is expected and assumed to be true.*

This is not trying to evoke doubt or fear but rather continue with the comparison Paul is making between Spirit and the flesh. In English a better and more suitable translation would be using our word “since” instead of “if” and it is a valid option.)

Every Christian is “in the Spirit”. The force of the verb makes it impossible to say that a Christian is “not in the Spirit”. We are under His dominion and control at all times and forever. We may exert our own flesh from time to time but it is not who we are at the core of our being as saved people. We still live in our mortal bodies and are under sin’s influence and temptation and these bodies will die yet we can take confidence because the spirit of the redeemed is alive because of righteousness.

In v.9 the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God because He carries out God’s will. He is also called the Spirit of Christ because He applies the fruits of Christ’s work on our behalf to our lives. It’s when the Holy Spirit enters us at the moment of salvation that every blessing of God begins to unfold in our lives. We are forgiven of our sin and made to be dead to sin. Our minds are able to be set upon the things above thus we are no longer slaves to sin. The Spirit fill us with eternal life and peace. We are made the very righteousness of God in Christ and for the first time ever can accomplish righteous works. We now belong to God and that made evident by the Spirit’s presence in our lives.

[Ephesians 1:13-14]

[II Corinthians 1:22]

A seal signifies the end of an agreement. A seal was only placed on a document after it was fully agreed upon and completed. Our lives in Christ are complete and our soul secure in Christ as the Holy Spirit is that seal on our lives to show finality. A seal also could not be removed once set except by a person of greater rank than those who were parties in the agreement. Thus, when a seal was placed on Jesus’ tomb, no one but the one (the governor) who set the seal could remove it. Thus the guards couldn’t undo the seal and take a quick peek in the tomb. In our case, only God could undo the seal but He won’t. His spirit is the seal and guarantee of our eternal life with Him. (Talk about eternal security!) But these verses also bring out the fact that the Spirit is God’s down payment on our lives. When you buy a house, you have to put a down payment on it to show you are serious about the agreement. God shows His earnestness in our lives by giving us His Holy Spirit as the down payment on our lives - He will finish the transaction in heaven when we are given new bodies and our faith becomes sight yet till then, we have His Spirit within us proving that He is going to do all He promised to do in us. (It all stems from the fact that we are no longer condemned. I told you this chapter was good news...)

What we see in v.10 is that our bodies, through our past sinful natures, have the seeds of death within them. Unless we are of the generation that sees Christ return, our bodies will succumb to physical death eventually. Yet, the good news is that our spirit is permanently made alive. Our righteous standing in Christ ensures our eternal life.

[Ephesians 2:6] - This is present tense. Our bodies are still on earth and our souls are confined to our bodies, yet our spirit, which was made alive by the Holy Spirit's entrance into our lives is now seated in heaven with Jesus right now.

Q: According to v.11, when will the Spirit bring life to your mortal bodies? *(in the future - when Jesus returns. This is one of the only references to the end times in Romans)*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and as such it was the instrumental cause for bringing Jesus back from the dead. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the resurrected life. The life bestowed by the Father through the Holy Spirit is beyond the power of death or any other agency to destroy. It is the very life of God that lives in us now as believers. This is the comforting and strengthening thought Paul wanted to communicate through this passage.

Q: How are we cultivating a Spirit-led mind-set? *(many answers but what we put into them can determine what we end up living out)*

Q: Are there any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?