

Covenant Life College
Paul's letter to the Romans
Session 8 – Robin Boisvert

Romans Chapter 8.1-17

1. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
2. *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*
3. *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,*
4. *In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
5. *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*
6. *To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
7. *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*
8. *Those who in the flesh cannot please God.*
9. *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
10. *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*
11. *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus From the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
12. *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*
13. *for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
14. *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*
15. *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*
16. *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*
17. *And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

I. Introduction

This is one of the great chapters in Scripture. It features the Holy Spirit, with references to Him fifteen times in the first seventeen verses alone. But, it has been remarked that the theme of the chapter is the absolute security of the believer, from the "no condemnation" of verse 1 to the nothing "will be able to separate us" of verse 39.

II. Romans 8.1-4 No Condemnation

1. Paul's "therefore" looks back at what has been said. "No condemnation" is a statement about our justification negatively considered. This is the portion of those who

are “in Christ Jesus.” United with Christ by the Holy Spirit, we stand justified before God (cf. 5.1-2).

2. We are set free from the law of sin and death. This is a recap of 7.1-6. In spite of the positive things Paul says about the law in Chapter 7, it is so closely associated with sin and death, that he can call it the law of sin and death.

3-4. Again, this was not the fault of the law. It was weakened by the flesh. But God did what the law was unable to do. He sent his Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” for sin (as a sin offering) in order to condemn sin so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. The careful phrase, “likeness of sinful flesh,” is a reference to the incarnation. Jesus came in real flesh, not a mere likeness or appearance of flesh. But it was not *sinful* flesh—he had committed no sin. His body was both sinless and real. This was necessary for his atoning death to effectively save us.

A purpose clause begins verse 4, “that the law’s righteous requirement (the summary of what the law requires—Moo) might be fulfilled in us.”

Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law as our substitute. He lived a life of perfect obedience, which is now accounted to us. We are regarded by God as having fulfilled the law. This is how we are accounted righteous before God.

“Law was given that grace might be sought, grace was given that law might be fulfilled.” Augustine

But it remains that the purpose of our justification is our sanctification (cf. Ephesians 1.4). God wills to make us holy. He wants to make us what He already counts us to be. And this occurs as we “walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” These words are descriptive of all who have the Spirit. It is important to see that while our obedience to God is in view, our obedience is not the *basis* of our justification or even our sanctification. That would be like going back under the law, which has already been denied. No, *Christ’s work* (his active and passive obedience) *is the basis* of our justification and our sanctification.

III. Romans 8.5-17 Life in the Spirit

Life in the Spirit involves the subduing of our flesh through the power and activity of the Holy Spirit..

There is a contrast set up in these verses between the flesh and the Spirit. Mindset!

.5	Live according to the flesh	Live according to the Spirit
.6	Set the mind on the flesh	Set the mind on the Spirit
.9	Not in the flesh	In the Spirit

This is a contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian. This is made clear by verses 9-11. Paul is describing a state of affairs. There are no commands given here. (He does do this in Galatians 5.16-26, where he exhorts the Galatians to walk in the Spirit.) His point here is to emphasize that the Spirit is the one who makes the difference. (It is true that what we set our minds on does have an effect on us. Notice the contrast between “death” and “life and peace” in verse 6.)

8.9 The Spirit dwells in us. He has made his home in the believer (cf. John 14.17).

8.10 "... although the body is dead because of sin" probably refers to the physical body and the penalty of death that still comes to us all.

8.11 The Spirit raised Jesus, the Spirit will raise our mortal bodies also. This is a reference to the resurrection (cf. 6.5).

8.12-13 "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

We have an obligation to live a holy life. We have no obligation to the flesh.

This is similar to what Paul expressed in 6.1 "Shall we continue in sin (that grace may abound)? NO! The reason given is that living according to the flesh (the desires of the sinful nature) leads to death. Instead, we are to put to death the (mis)deeds of the body and the result will be life. This is to be done by the Spirit, not by the law. This is *mortification*.

Mortification is "... a clear-sighted recognition of evil as evil, leading to such a decisive and radical repudiation of it that no imagery can do it justices except 'putting to death.'"¹

We are to put to death every misuse of our bodily members.

It is something *we* are to do. But we are to do it *by the Spirit*. He gives us the "... desire, the determination and the discipline to reject evil."²

"Negatively, we must totally repudiate everything we know to be wrong, and not even 'think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature' (13.14). This is not an unhealthy form of repression, pretending that evil does not exist and refusing to face it. It is the opposite. We have to 'pull it out, look at it, denounce it, hate it for what it is; then you have really dealt with it' (Lloyd-Jones). Or, as Jesus graphically expressed it, we must gouge out the offending eye and cut off the offending hand or foot (Matthew 5.29f.). That is, if temptation comes to us through what we see, handle or visit, then we must be ruthless in not looking, not touching, not going, and so in controlling the very approaches of sin. Positively, we are to set our minds on the things the Spirit desires, set our hearts on things above (Colossians 3.1f.) and occupy our thoughts with what is noble, right, pure and lovely (Philippians 4.8). In this way 'mortification' (putting evil to death) and 'aspiration' (or vivification), hungering and thirsting for what is good, are counterparts. Both verbs ('set their minds,' verse 5 and 'put to death,' verse 13) are in the present tense, for they describe attitudes and activities which should be continuous, involving taking up the cross every day (Luke 9.23) and setting our minds on the things of the Spirit every day."³

¹ Stott, p. 228.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 229.

The reason why we should take such pains is that we have an obligation to do so, we are debtors to grace and mercy. But there is also a promise attached, “you will live.” Living in the good of what we are called do, does depend on our obedience to the Spirit of God who is always prompting us toward holiness.

14-17- The Witness of the Spirit

The “for” that begins verse 13 ties being led by the Spirit with the holiness of those who practice mortification. He is, after all, the *Holy Spirit*. “Led by the Spirit” probably summarizes the descriptive phrases Paul has used in the previous verses.⁴ To be led by the Spirit means to allow ourselves to be controlled by the values, impulses, inclinations and directions of the Spirit. This is what marks us out as “sons of God.”

In verse 15 “the spirit of slavery” and “fear” are contrasted with “adoption” which is to be equated with “sons of God.” “Abba” is an Aramaic word, the word that Jesus used when addressing his Father.

Verse 16 tells us that not only has God made us his children, but that He has made us *aware* that we are His children.⁵

Verse 17 introduces the ideas of joint inheritance and joint suffering. The purpose is that we might be glorified with him. Once again, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, our union with Christ is central.

⁴ Douglas Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans, p. 498.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.503.