

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

April 19, 2023

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

*The Letter to the Romans*

*The Righteousness of God*

Text – Romans 8 – *The Work of the Holy Spirit – Part One*

### Introduction

So far in our study in the Letter to the Romans we have seen the condemnation of all men because of sin (Romans 1:18 – 3:20), the justification of some men because of God’s grace and through their faith (Romans 3:21 – 5:21), and the sanctification of all who are truly justified. (Romans 6 – Romans 8)

Chapter seven painted a hopeless picture of the ability of the believer to live a life of righteousness on his own. Paul who is perhaps the best of the best as far as Christians go plainly confessed that he was a wretched man who had no good thing dwelling within his flesh. The chapter ended on a high note, however, with the declaration that “through Jesus Christ our Lord” we will be delivered from the body of death, and that comes through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

What the apostle described in his bleak self-portrait is the futility of trying to live the Christian life without the Spirit of God. It’s no less futile than trying to earn righteousness apart from faith. We were helpless to overcome the deadly disease of sin without His unmerited favor, and we are equally powerless to please God without His Spirit providing grace.<sup>1</sup>

There has only been one direct reference to the Holy Spirit thus far in the Letter to the Romans. (Romans 5:5) In chapter eight, however the Holy Spirit is no longer behind the scenes; He is mentioned nineteen times in twelve of the thirty-nine verses of this chapter. In this concluding chapter about sanctification, we will understand that the process of sanctification in our lives is just as much the work of the Holy Spirit as was justification.

J. Vernon McGee noted:

Now here in chapter 8 we see the Holy Spirit and real sanctification. A life that is pleasing to God must be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul said to the Ephesian believers, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the regenerated life of a believer, delivering the believer from the power of sin—even in the very presence of sin—and performing all God’s will in the life of the believer.

Chapter 8 is the high–water mark in Romans. This fact is generally conceded by all interpreters of

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<sup>1</sup> Swindoll, Charles R. (2010-03-24). *Insights on Romans* (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (p. 137). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

this great epistle. Spencer said, "If Holy Scripture were a ring and the epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter eight would be the sparkling point of the jewel." Godet labeled it, "this incomparable chapter." Someone has added, "We enter this chapter with no condemnation, we close with no separation, and in between all things work together for good to those that love God."<sup>2</sup>

All of this is possible because of the Holy Ghost of God within us.

## I The Spirit Gives Us Life (vs. 1 – 17)

### A. A Contrast Between the Saved and the Lost (vs. 1 – 9)

***"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)***

Romans 3:20 tells us, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." That "therefore" condemned every man, woman, and child on the planet. But the "therefore" found in Romans 8:1 tells us that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Only God could fully release from guilt those who were completely guilty.

The phrase, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit", is the same as in v. 4. It is not stating here that to be "in Christ Jesus," you have to walk after the Spirit. It is stating that if you are "in Christ Jesus" (saved), you will walk after (or follow) the Spirit. The proof of this is found in v. 9. This does not mean that you will never be "fleshly" or "carnal", but because of the presence of the Spirit of God within you, your life will be nothing like what it was before.

***"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)***

You will note that this is both positional and practical. Positionally, you are sinless before God, but in a practical way, God is transforming you into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit of God is doing a renovation within you, and you are no longer what you used to be.

The best part of this verse, however, is the fact that there is "no condemnation" for the believer. The believer is completely secure in Christ:

***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10:27-30)***

***"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" (Philippians 1:6)***

You cannot undo the new birth.

***"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and***

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<sup>2</sup> McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Romans 1-8)* (electronic ed., Vol. 42, p. 135). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

***death." (Romans 8:2)***

As we saw previously in chapter 7, we learned of the law of sin and death. The law condemned because there was sin in my life. Remember what Paul said in Romans 7:22 – 23. Paul wanted to obey the God's Law, but his sinful flesh within him rebelled against what he wanted to do.

*"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:22-23)*

"The law of sin and death" is the authority that sin had over our old nature, ending in complete severance of fellowship with God. That new nature could not break the shackles at all. Only the coming of a higher authority and power could accomplish this, namely the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates upon the new nature, which is vitally joined to the life of Christ. The man in Romans 7, who was joined to the body of the dead, is now joined to the living Christ also.<sup>3</sup>

***"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:" (Romans 8:3)***

The law was weak because our flesh is weak. Jesus said, *"the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matthew 26:41) The flesh is weak in that it is powerless to obey God's Law, but at the same time, our flesh is powerful in that it is very influential in pulling us out of the will of God. God accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ what the Law could never do; not that the Law was wrong, but our ability to keep the Law was flawed.

***"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:4)***

Notice that we could not fulfill the Law and achieve righteousness in our flesh, but through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us. Again, this is both positional and practical. Within every believer is a perfectly righteous new man, indwelt by the Spirit of God. Unfortunately, that new creature is still trapped within the old sinful flesh. But the Spirit is far more powerful than our flesh, and He gives us liberty to break free from the bondage of sin. Someone once said that a believer may wander into a hog pen like the prodigal did, but he won't be able to stay there, because the Holy Spirit within him won't give him peace until he heads back to the Father's house.

***"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5)***

These verses (vs. 5 – 8) are not speaking of levels of spirituality among believers; they are contrasting the lost with the saved. Again, as in verse one, they that are "after flesh" are lost people, and they that are "after the Spirit" are the saved. The phrase "do mind" has the idea of understanding. It means to think about, or to savour. The lost understand, savour, think about,

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<sup>3</sup> McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Romans 1-8)* (electronic ed., Vol. 42, p. 137). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

and are mindful of fleshly things, but a saved man is drawn toward the spiritual. This means that the Holy Spirit will be bringing to our minds the spiritual things that are according to the will of God. This is not to say that we will never think about fleshly things, but it will be hard for us to do so. Jesus told Paul that it was hard for him to “kick against the pricks”, meaning that God had a plan for Paul, and his resistance was futile. The Holy Spirit will work in us both to will and to do of God’s pleasure.

Warren Wiersbe points out that there are four contrasts made in vs. 5 – 8:

- 1 Contrast 1 – Those that are “in the flesh” with those that are “in the spirit”.

***"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)***

- 2 Contrast 2 - Death with life and peace.

***"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7)***

- 3 Contrast 3 – The enemies of God with those at peace with God.

***"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:8)***

- 4 Contrast 4 – Those that live for pleasing self with those that live for pleasing God.

***"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9)***

This is exactly what Jesus was saying when he told Nicodemus that he must be born again. (see [John 3:1 - 12](#)) Note - Nicodemus didn’t understand what Jesus was saying because he was “after the flesh” and he [minded] the things of the flesh. Paul told the Corinthians:

***"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1Corinthians 2:14)***

## **B The Creation of Life (vs. 10 – 13)**

The Holy Spirit gives us life. The lost man is dead, but the saved man has life. The Holy Spirit is the life of the new believer.

***"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)***

Our bodies were dead, but are now alive through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God:

***"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ... Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (Ephesians 2:1, 5)***

***"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Romans 8:11)***

This is not just a reference to the resurrected body that we will receive at the rapture, but it is also a reference to the abundant life that we now have through the Holy Spirit of God. Notice here he doesn't say, "flesh", he says, "bodies". The body houses the old, sinful flesh, but it also is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God gives life to our bodies so that we can glorify and serve God.

***"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." (Romans 8:12)***

We don't owe the flesh anything, it did nothing but destroy us, but we owe a great debt to the Lord. Because of this we need to:

*"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:" (Colossians 3:5)*

*"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:11-14)*

Also see [Ephesians 4:22 - 29](#)

***"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Romans 8:13)***

This is certainly not teaching a works salvation. Those that are in Christ have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, and if the Spirit of God indwells us then we are no longer "in the flesh", and we are very much alive. Jesus died so that we could have eternal life in Heaven, and through the Spirit of God, abundant life down here.

### **C The Conception of Children (vs. 14 – 17)**

The Holy Spirit makes us the children of God. Though Jesus purchased us, and had every right to make us slaves, instead He adopted us into His family:

*"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," (Ephesians 1:5)*

***"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14)***

*"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12)*

When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour you become a child of God, and the children of God are led by the Spirit of God. Our master used to be sin, but now we have God for a Father.

***"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15)***

This is the same phrase that Jesus used to refer to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. It implies an intimacy in relationship. God is our “daddy”. He loves us, not only with the unconditional agape love, but also with intimate affection. We don’t have to fear our loving Father. He is very pleased with us because we are “in Christ”.

*"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6)*

***"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" (Romans 8:16)***

The Spirit of God will be in harmonious agreement with our spirit assuring us that we are “in Christ”, and thereby God’s children. This is one of the evidences of true salvation – the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

***"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:17)***

*"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:7)*

We, as His children, stand to receive everything that our Lord receives, except for worship. He will not share His glory with anyone.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen that the process of sanctification in the life of the believer is a work of God just as salvation is. It is frustratingly impossible to try to live for God in our own strength. I love what Chuck Swindoll had to say about this process of sanctification:

In my own Christian journey, I have discovered that “wretchedness” seems to be a necessary waypoint. Like Paul, I came to a place of utter hopelessness. I felt trapped by my inability to live in a manner that God would find pleasing, a mode of life I genuinely desired. I labored under the weight of condemnation, which is perhaps the most demoralizing feeling a Christian can endure. Nothing will drag you more quickly to a halt and pull you toward sin than shame.

To make matters worse, I was guided by well-meaning people with bad theology. Many churches today preach a gospel that goes strangely silent after one believes in Jesus Christ and only promises to speak again after death. According to this version of the good news, Christians are left to wrestle the flesh on their own until Judgment Day, at which time a tape of their miserable pummeling will be played for all to see just as the pearly gates open to receive them. Strange teaching.

Saved by grace, but sanctified by works? That’s not good news.