

The Law of the Spirit of Life

Romans 8

Romans 8:1-17: "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be: and they that are in flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you; but if any one has not the Spirit of Christ he is not of him: but if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of his Spirit which dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to flesh; for if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him."

Let us have a word of prayer:

Father, we again come to You utterly dependent knowing that Your words are the only words that matter this morning, and we know that Your words are Spirit and life. And once again we bow before the throne of grace. We have heard so much this morning about the grace of God. How inexplicable is the greatness of Your grace. We are asking for grace this morning for us to be able to utter what God has written. We are asking for grace to be able to speak with boldness what You have spoken in Your Word. And we are asking for grace to be hearers of the Word, and not only hearers but doers of the Word. We are asking that that grace that has been poured out on us or as that verse says in Ephesians, "lavished upon us" would not be in vain this morning. That we would apprehend what these verses are about and how they can lead us into an overcoming walk in Christ. In Your precious name. Amen.

Introduction

As you know, this is back to the Bible Study on Romans. I never expected to be doing this in Richmond, because I volunteered after much pressure from Pakistan to teach on Romans for Pakistan. By the way, they recently cancelled, and it is a little unknown when we will have another meeting. We might catch up to Pakistan even though we started later.

I cannot think of a more important chapter for us to take up. Romans 8 is the pinnacle of Romans; it really is the high point of Romans. If you do not understand Romans 8, you cannot live the Christian life. It is the grand summary of the gospel of grace, the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. You remember how the Apostle Paul began in chapter 1:16 in which he gave the subject for the entire book: "I am not ashamed of the gospel or the glad tidings or the good news, whatever your version says. "For it is God's power (not man's power), it is God's power to salvation to everyone that believes, first to Jew and then to Greek." So that is the grand outline, the subject of the book of Romans, and particularly in chapters 1-8 are the explanation of that glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 is in one sense an end in the book of the grand subject of the book. Of course, it is not finished, and we know that. Chapters 9,10,11 are about the mystery of election. How wonderful that is! And I think 12-16 is a practical explanation of living the Christian life; how it works in us. We are living sacrifices, and all that that means, and what God gets in the end in that plethora of names. Romans has the longest list of names at the end that Paul mentions in any of his books. And in that plethora of names God is saying, "I have a testimony in a people." That is the whole thing. In the first chapters are the works of God, the mighty works of God. You can look at 9, 10, and 11 as the ways of God, His mysterious ways. We see it, and it is so beautifully displayed there. Then, of course, you can look at 12-16 and see the will of God; that we would do the perfect will of God, and not just the acceptable will of God. May those little things help you as they helped me to have sort of a broad roadmap of where we are going.

Now we are going to look at these first verses: "It is the law of the Spirit of life." There is not one thing more important for the Christians to know in a living way, and not just have some idea of doctrine in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is the secret of the Christian life. It is the summary of the Christian life. It is how we get there, and how we walk, so this is of the utmost importance. Now if you do not believe me, maybe you will believe others.

I like what Frederic Louis Godet said about this chapter: "If the Holy Scripture was a ring, and the epistle of Romans was a precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel." When light comes into the many faceted parts of the diamond, there is something called refraction, and the glorious light is displayed in all its beauty and all its sparkle. That is what Romans 8 is.

Then I think of Griffith Thomas when he said, "It is undoubtedly the chapter of chapters for the life of the believer." So we need to really think about what we are doing here in this grand testimony, how we come from the utter ruin of man when we look in those first chapters, particularly when we get to chapters 1:18-3:20. We see the absolute utter ruin of man, and then we come to Romans chapter 8, and we come to glory, to the glorification of man in Christ Jesus. It is unspeakable glory! So that is the importance, and I will not go over all the summary of the earlier pages.

Outlines

Let us begin and there are a few things I want us to consider as new law, chapter 8:1-2. There is a new law. You know, I used to like western shows growing up, and they would say, "There is a new law in town." There is a new law in town for us believers. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Then we are going to look at the flesh and the spirit. This is the conflict of the ages.

You think of the many wars of mankind and the blood lust of mankind; he loves war. But there is nothing, in one sense, compared to the war of the flesh and the Spirit. It is a battle within our very being. It is a civil war; it is raging, and we need to understand the contrast in that. The second part is, walk in the Spirit, verses 3-4. The third part is the flesh and the Spirit, where you really see those contrasts, and it is the longest part, verses 5-13. And finally, the Lord's Word is always encouraging. The last thing in verses 14-17 that we will look at is the blessings of the Spirit. If you can imagine when we get there, we should be on our face, bowed before the Lord that He has given us such extraordinary, inexplicable blessings. How they have been poured out on us! That is an outline; at least it gives me an idea of how to follow this book.

A New Law

Romans 8:1: "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus."

King James Version: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, ..."

This is something tremendous. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus."

When you study the Word of God, notice words that are repeated because words that are repeated are the Holy Spirit trying to convince you of what His thought is. Paul, in particular, used the word "therefore" with great liberty when it comes to the book of Romans. In fact, he used it sixteen times, and when you get to turning points in the book of Romans in this subject, you often see that the word of choice of the Apostle Paul was "therefore."

I think I have told you that before, and some of you may remember, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, ..." What a glorious word to begin this chapter with, "therefore." It is a summary word; it looks over all the things that have occurred in the first seven chapters. It comes to the simple and glorious conclusion that now something is different. Now something has happened. There is no longer any spirit of condemnation. If you just take that lightly and read it causally, you will not understand the importance of what the Apostle Paul is saying. If you look at chapters 1:18-3:20, the whole point of the Apostle Paul is that he lays out in explicit words the condemnation that is heaped upon man. He spent almost three of the first chapters telling us about that condemnation.

Now when we come to chapter 8:1, the first thing that comes out of his mouth is that there is therefore now, and it just does not say "now condemnation." He said, "There is therefore now *no* condemnation to those in Christ Jesus." What a mystery that is to me because in those early chapters it was full of condemnation; it was the ruined condition of man. We were without hope, lost, without God; for all have sinned. You remember the verse in 3:23: "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" It was absolute condemnation. But now in glorious fashion that only the Holy Spirit could say in summary is that there is therefore no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. The emphasis of this ought to grip you. Condemnation has disappeared for us that are in Christ Jesus. There is a new day; the sun has broken out through the clouds, and all the despair that preceded this is over in Christ Jesus. Isn't that wonderful! That is a wonderful start to this wonderful chapter.

Griffith Thomas said about this: "He calls it the glorious fact" (I like that), just two words, therefore and now, not later, not sometime in glory we will be able to say, "finally now." But we can say, "Now there is no condemnation." He says, "No condemnation", in the Greek is a very emphatic "No!"

It is not like me when I tell my grandsons, "No." It is not too emphatic. They know how to work around my "no." But you cannot work around God's "no." He says, "There is no condemnation; absolutely none." He (Griffith Thomas) went on to say, "No sort of condemnation." Isn't that marvelous, "rather judicial, or experimental." Then he went on to say, "It is only on this basis of no sort of condemnation that holiness or sanctification is possible."

Now you know that we are dealing in chapters 6, 7, 8 with the glorious subject of sanctification. We have been justified, we have been saved, and that is chapters 1-5. Chapters 6, 7, 8 are sanctification which concludes with glorification. He says, "There is no condemnation that makes holiness or sanctification (it is the same word) even possible." How glorious! What a change from chapter 7 and the awful vice of the law when Paul said in Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" Of course, it is in Christ Jesus. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, ..." A helpless struggle of the Apostle Paul, a desperate battle came to an end, and finally, when he came to this point, he was free, totally free in Christ Jesus. That is the glory of this chapter.

In Christ

In those first two verses in chapter 8, there are two things that are prominent. First, there is our position. Now do not just laugh off position. Position in the heavenly world, in the spiritual world is of absolute importance. Position is in two words, "in Christ." Now you were formerly "in Adam" before you were saved. God looks at the whole of mankind based on these two phrases alone. You were either "in Adam" when you were not saved or now you are "in Christ" after you are saved. It says in I Corinthians 15:22, "For as in the Adam all die, thus also in the Christ all shall be made alive." How marvelous! This is a new position: "There is therefore now no condemnation." Did he stop there? No, he did not stop there, "to them which are in Christ Jesus." Now I am afraid we have made that a religious phrase, "in Christ."

Brother Sparks said, "Those are the two most important words in the New Testament, "in Christ." There are many times, if you do not understand your new position "in Christ," you will never understand all the blessings that have been made available to you in Christ Jesus. You will never understand how to walk in the Spirit. You will never understand the power of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

I Corinthians 15:22: "For as in the Adam all die, thus also in the Christ all shall be made alive." Notice what this means. It means that the believer shares in Christ's own risen life. Did you know that? It does not mean that somehow you are saved to struggle, like Romans 7. It does not mean somehow you are given that religious list of rules, do this, do not do that, you need to rise to the occasion and do it. It means God, by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has put something in you of phenomenal power, inexplicable power. That is what this new position is.

Romans 6 is the position of “in Christ.” You understand that we are baptized into Christ Jesus. That is a marvelous thing; that is position. Hold on! God first changes your address. You can say to people, “I no longer live at that old address in Adam. Sorry, I have moved, forever moved into a heavenly address. My new address is “in Christ.” How marvelous! That is the first thing we notice.

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

The second thing we notice is a new law in verse 2: “For the law of the Spirit of life (notice the word) in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death.”

Isn't that marvelous! There is a new law. How wonderful this is! A new law that overcomes the old law. A new law that overcomes the old man. A new law that can correct every deficiency of human life. That is how wonderful this is. It is a powerful law. First, it is a new position in Christ. But then there is a new law in Christ, and that new law is not just words; it is the power of God Himself in the believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit. I cannot imagine when God and the counsels of God thought of that plan, that marvelous, divine plan of God. I will put God and the Holy Spirit in His people, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and that will be the power for them to live by. That is so different than what we hear so often preached in Christianity: “Now He is your God, live for Him.” “Now if you are the Lord's, do this and do that.” How different it is when we know we have in us a new law, a new power, divine power, overwhelming power that was used to create the heavens and the earth.

This is the glory of Romans chapter 8. Unthinkable! How marvelous! But you understand that this is marvelous. This is beyond anything we can imagine, anything we could ask or think. So now we not only have position, but we also have power, the power of God Himself in His new law. It is of tremendous significance. This law is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is the power that overcomes the law of sin and death. Notice that there were two laws in chapter 7, and you can summarize the whole thing in Paul's agony as the law of sin and death in chapter 7. In chapter 8 you can summarize it all with one phrase, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” That is how marvelous it is! It is so powerful it can overcome the law of sin and death in chapter 7 because it is the life of the Lord Jesus living in us by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

I will never forget when I was a younger man, and that was many years ago, I first flew in a Boeing 747. I thought that beast would never fly. It came out in 1970, the year of my high school graduation, and it was that ugly plane with that big bump on the front. It looked like it had a big wart on the top. That is what I always thought of the Boeing 747. It was a massive machine. All by itself it weighed 500,000 pounds. As a guy that has only dealt with pounds in all my fifty-year career, I have a sense of what 500,000 pounds is like. It takes a lot to support 500,000 pounds, but it takes even more to get 500,000 pounds in the air. It is not just that because of the empty weight, then you must put the luggage in, then you have to put the cargo in, and then you have to put the people in. In the 747 you could have the dense seating, which I would never want, to be up to the six hundred range or you could have the more relaxed seating in the 300-400 range. I would much prefer that.

I will never forget the first time I got in a 747, and the thing was rumbling and weighed a million pounds, 500,000 more pounds in cargo, people, and lots of fuel. Just ask the aerospace engineer how much fuel the plane is carrying. You do not want to know when you fly a plane how much fuel you are sitting on; just do not think about it. My wife does, by the way; I will tell you a little story about her; it is only because I love her, I tell these stories. She watches air disasters. "Honey, I do fly. Why would I want to watch air disasters?"

Here is this beast of a plane, one million pounds, five hundred tons, and how does it fly? The first time I took off in one, it was rumbling, wings flapping like a bird, and I am thinking this runway is going to run out; it is not that long. And it is still roaring, and suddenly it tips up and ascends into the air. How did that million-pound beast do that? There was a higher law than the law of gravity.

In Romans 7 the law of sin and death is like the law of gravity; it is always there. Give it a chance, and you are on the floor; it will take you over. The law of gravity never goes away, but there is something marvelous; there is a greater law, and it is a higher law. It is a divine law, and that divine law is the law of the Spirit of life. It requires two things to work.

Divine Power, the Indwelling Holy Spirit

When they designed the 747, they decided to put four engines in it; you need four engines. They put more power in that plane, and they thought about five engines in the plane. They even thought about a sixth engine in that beast. But the point was to put in a power that could overcome anything else. That is divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And there is another little secret about the plane. Jerry is an aerospace engineer, and I asked him about the details that I get wrong. Wings are not just a flat plate. The wings on the airplane have a flat bottom, and they have a nice contoured top shape. And what happens in science is when the wings are in flight going 500, 550, 600 miles an hour, the air goes over this wing foil, and there is a lower pressure on the top of the wing foil because of the distance the air must travel. And it causes something these aerospace engineers call "lift." That is why it is given enough power (two principles) and given a special design that can lift it up above the earth. That is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We are lifted up. We have power, and it is not our own; this is glory.

Walk In the Spirit

The next section is walk in the Spirit; it is something important. This is not just to be a theory. We can go to conferences, we can sit around, talking all day about the law of the Spirit of life, but this is for those who walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh. That is what verses 3-4 say:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit."

We are to walk in the Spirit, and this was meant to be very practical. This was meant to be part of your life, not a seminar or a doctrine. This was to come down to the very places and

difficulties that we live in, and to know how to live by that new power and resurrection life, which was lifted up to the heavens, that lifted our Lord. This is God's perfect plan. He did not remove the law of sin and death. He gave a higher law. He gave a greater power than the power that is in the flesh. He gave a greater principle, the law of resurrection life that lifts us to the heavens. This is the whole secret about walking in the Spirit.

A Law in Our Flesh

Paul shares his agony in 7:21-23: "I find then the law upon me who will to practise what is right, that with me evil is there. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring in opposition to the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which exists in my members."

Brothers and sisters, this is the problem with the flesh. You have a law in your flesh, and as much as you try, as much as you struggle to be a Christian, there is always that downward pressure of sin's gravity, and you cannot overcome it; do what you will. Recommit yourself to the Lord many times. Rededicate your life to the Lord as many times as you want to, but in yourself what chapter 8 is teaching us is that it is absolutely impossible for us to live the Christian life. We need a higher power; we need a higher law, and with that you can overcome in Christ Jesus.

Overcoming Power in Christ by the Indwelling Holy Spirit

Thank God that He sent His Son to prove this. Now people say that is unfair. They say, "Well Jesus, of course, He could prove this." But it talks about how God having sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh and sin and for sin has condemned sin in the flesh. He came as a man; do not forget He came as a man. Sure, He was sinless perfect; He came as a man, subject to every temptation, and I would say, more temptations than we have. Impossible temptations, and He overcame them because of the law of the Spirit of life. He proved without the shadow of a doubt, that man can live by this new law, and overcome by this new law, and be victorious by this new law. Christ proved it; it was not just a dictate from heaven. That is what that verse means. Now God has put us in Christ and provided this overcoming power in Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome the defect that is in us.

Why did not God just remove the law of sin and death? He could have. Why did He not do it? He did not want to. He wanted us to learn to live by the life of Another. That is what He did. Remember, He came, and He walked upon the earth. He said, "I no longer say what I want to say but what I hear the Father saying." He said, "I no longer do what I want to do but what I see the Father doing." He was living through His Father, and now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is in us living through the Lord Jesus. Are you living through the Lord Jesus? If I lived for the Lord Jesus, it would be a disaster; I do not know about you. That is what Paul was doing in Romans 7. But if I live through the Lord Jesus, that is what I John says, what a difference! What a marvelous, marvelous difference!

Two Choices: Walk According to the Flesh or the Spirit

To those who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit, there are two paths for us, only two paths. You only have two choices; so narrow it down. God narrows it down,

and now so can we as believers. This is about believers; these are already those who are justified. You can either choose to walk (important phrase) according to the flesh or you can choose to walk according to the Spirit—two most important phrases Paul put in there. That is our only choice as a believer. It is easy.

I started to tell my story about The Cheesecake Factory. I went there and they handed me a menu, the thing was as thick as a book. Now I am not the best reader in the world, and I did not come to a restaurant to read a book. I would have gone to the library if I wanted to read a book. Who would make a menu like this? What marketing team came up with a menu that has a hundred pages? You only have two choices, walk according to the Spirit, or walk according to the flesh. There are just two paths, and that is all we have.

Paul discovered in his walk according to the flesh that he was the problem. Many Christians do not understand that we are the problem. If you read chapter 7, it says thirty times the word, “I,” over and over again. When I first saw that, it was light to me. It was a revelation to me. I, I, I, thirty times he says I. And sixteen times he says, “me” or “my.” Finally, he said, “me, myself” in the grand finale. That is the problem with the law of sin and death. It is all about us; it is centered in us. It is centered on our deficiencies. It is not centered in Christ. I am waiting to see the bumper sticker on that young lady’s car, “Me, Myself,” right besides, “I am the center of the universe.” Everything revolved around Paul. Sadly, everything in us in the Christian life often revolves around us. It needs to revolve around Christ. Only then will we find the breakthrough. Then when you come to chapter 8, the key word is Spirit, which occurs twenty-one times in chapter 8. Now “flesh” does occur thirteen times just to show us the difference. The comfort I have from the Holy Spirit is that there is more Spirit than there is flesh. That is the good news.

Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit

Dear brothers and sisters, how we do need to see this difference between Romans 7 and Romans 8 because it is the way out. The divine solution and sanctification are not to remove sin and the flesh, but we should walk according to the Spirit. The secret of overcoming life is to yield to the divine indwelling Spirit.

Let me share something with you of most importance. I think the problem with most of us as Christians is that we spend most of our earthly days grieving the Holy Spirit. You remember what it says in Ephesians 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption.” In other words, the Holy Spirit was given to us to sanctify us and prepare us for that day of final redemption. And yet we spend most of our life grieving the Holy Spirit. How easy it is to grieve the Holy Spirit. It can be a word, it can be a thought, it can be an action, but what God is after in a people that learn to walk in the Spirit is to not grieve the Holy Spirit. Just cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Learn that still small voice in you. John called it that utterance, that unction in us, that spiritual sensitivity. Then you hear His voice, and you obey His voice. That is the secret of the law of the Spirit of life. Thank God, He put His divine indwelling Holy Spirit in us. Chapter 7 is the indwelling sin, but in us it is the indwelling Holy Spirit. That is the divine plan. What a difference!

When the Lord Jesus spoke to his own in those chapters in John 13-17, what beautiful words! Thank God! John was the only one to give us those words. None of the other three gospel writers gave us those words. But these intimate words of assurance, that John captured by the Spirit, were shared by our Lord Jesus before He went to the cross, and John captured them by the Spirit, and saved them for us.

The Holy Spirit Abides with Us, and Shall Be in Us

John 14:16-17: The Lord said before He ever went to the cross: “And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever,” That is good enough, right? I will take that in a heartbeat if the Lord stopped there, but the Lord did not stop there. “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you.”

Unbelievable! Marvelous, beyond anything you can imagine! This promise of the Father was the first business the Lord had in His ascension when He went before the throne of grace. He asked the Father for His promise that the indwelling Holy Spirit would be in you and in me. That was His first request. The first request when I get up in the morning is, “Where is breakfast?” Think about it. How precious! That is the law of the Spirit of life.

Submit to the Indwelling Holy Spirit

We mentioned a few other things in this section about walking in the Spirit. Man was created as three parts being, spirit, soul, body. I Thessalonians 5:23 says, “Now the God of peace himself (notice the context) sanctify you wholly: (that is an important word.) and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now what happened in the garden with Adam and Eve? As they were contemplating these two trees, and the other trees of the garden that were given for food, the Lord said, “On the day that you eat of that tree, (speaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,) you shall surely die.” Now, did they die? An analytical person would say, “They did not die. They realized that they were naked, but they did not die.” What died? The spirit died. Now they were a two-part being. They were just soul and body. And when you get to soul, which is your mind, your will, and your emotions, and you get the body, that is what the Bible calls flesh. Do you wonder if this word “flesh” in chapter 7 and in chapter 8 thirteen times, is when you are controlled by your own mind, will, and emotions, and not by the Holy Spirit? For those who walk according to the Spirit must be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

So, the first thing that happens to you when you are born again, you are born from above, right? In John 3 in the story of Nicodemus, you are born of the Spirit, right? What happened at that moment? Your spirit comes alive; your spirit that has been dead now is alive, and you have the opportunity to be what God originally designed, a three-part being, that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The soul, which is your mind, will and emotions, the “I”, by the way, of Romans 7 comes under the control of the Holy Spirit. And your body comes along with your spirit and soul. This is again the two choices; walk according to the flesh or walk according to the Spirit.

The Flesh and the Spirit

Let us look at the flesh and the Spirit. There are a few things I want to at least point out in this next section.

Romans 8:5: These are vivid contrasts between living according to the flesh or living according to the spirit. They are vivid contrasts. They are not even close. They are distances apart.

“For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

This is not proper English, but I often do that. Flesh does what flesh is. We are a chip off the old block. The apple does not fall far from the tree. If we are flesh, we are going to do what flesh does. That is what it means. But if we walk according to the Spirit, we will mind the things of the Spirit. We will know that still small voice. We will walk in communion; we will walk in fellowship. We will know the Lord, and the Lord will speak to us, and we can have this grand fellowship. How are you walking? And where are you living? What one of these two paths have you chosen? Remember, this is talking to Christians not unbelievers. You will have to make a choice if you are going to be wholly sanctified. That is the whole point.

Moses said in a warning that is so graphic in Deuteronomy 30:19: “I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you: life and death have I set before you, blessing and cursing: choose then life, that thou mayest live, ...” This is the only way; choose life. What is life? “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

The Mind of the Flesh is Enemy Against God

Verses 7-8 talks about the contrast because the mind of the flesh as the enemy against God. Did you know that? This is talking about believers. We often talk about enemies who are the unsaved. They are enemies as you look at Romans 5, but Christians can actually be an enemy to God, believe it or not. If you live in the flesh, if you walk according to the flesh, if your soul controls you, then you become an enemy of the cross. You remember Paul said in Philippians 3:18: “... and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” The cross says, “Not I but Christ.” The cross says to the flesh, no more, no more! I have a new way to live, I have a new power to live, I have a new law to live under, and I will not live according to your desperate and overpowering bondage. These are the choices we have. It is not I but Christ. But then verses 9-10 have strong encouragement. I am always grateful that Paul ended with encouragement. Often, we do not, but Paul did. Listen to what he explicitly says to believers.

“But ye are not in flesh (isn’t that wonderful!) but in Spirit,” By the way, it is the capital S. When you read your Bible, notice if it has a capital S in front of Spirit; that is always the Holy Spirit. Now I cannot speak for Chinese versions, I do not know how they do it. A capital “S” in English is the Holy Spirit. Lower case “s” is the human spirit. And the Holy Spirit is to be in control of the human spirit, and that is how we begin to walk in the Spirit.

“But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you” (Romans 8:9). Now that “if” in Greek is not a question for the believer; it is a guarantee. It means God’s Spirit dwells in you, so you are not according to the flesh. “but if any one has not the Spirit of Christ he is not

of him: but if Christ be in you, (leave the 'if' out for a moment) the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness." This is encouragement. Brothers and sisters, we do not have to beg God to do this; He has done it already. The indwelling Holy Spirit is a fact. All we must do is take it; yield to it. Live by it, and it will make such a difference in our life. To me this is such broad encouragement.

Holy Spirit Quickens Mortal Bodies

Verse 11: "But if the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of his Spirit which dwells in you."

Let me try to interpret this in plain English. We have the Spirit of the Lord in us which is a fact for life now, not life later. But we have a promise for life later, that if that Spirit is in you, which it is if you are a believer, He will quicken even your mortal bodies. This is talking about the day of redemption that the Holy Spirit has sealed you for. So, think about it. The encouragement is that you have everything you need now to walk in the Spirit, and you have everything you will need for eternity to walk in the Spirit. It is life now, and life then that was the encouragement that the Apostle Paul gave. This is so precious.

Bring the Deeds of the Body Under Submission to the Holy Spirit

The last encouragement is verses 12-13: "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to flesh; for if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live:"

That is the wonderful thing about walking in the Spirit. You were left on this earth to be conformed to the image of Christ by the indwelling Spirit, and what you need to do is learn to put to death the deeds of the body and bring it under submission to the Holy Spirit. And bring your soul under submission to the Holy Spirit, and then you will live in full. That was the encouragement that the Apostle Paul spoke of.

The Blessings of the Spirit

The last thing is the blessings of the Spirit. Look at those last four verses. How tremendous!

Sons of God

Verse 14: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Now Paul was not discriminating against you sisters. These sisters are sons; you are a female son or male son. All it means is that these are ones who come to maturity in Christ. It is not a little babe; it is not even a little child, but the encouragement, the blessing that he concludes with is that all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. Did you know that we are sons? It means sons of adoption; it means sons of maturity.

In Hebrews 2:10 it says, "For it became him, (speaking of the Lord Jesus) for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings."

Do you understand that He has set His heart on making us fully grown, mature sons? That is the blessing. How has He done it? With unthinkable blessings; He has put within you the indwelling Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. And if you yield, if you obey that voice, if you learn how to walk in the Spirit, you will be made a full-grown son. In fact, the word “adoption” in the Bible means “sonship.” I like the fact that Darby pointed that out in his notes. Let me read the word “sonship” which means “adoption.”

Abba, Father

In verse 15 it says: “For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Now Abba is an Aramaic word. The Lord spoke in Aramaic, not in Hebrew, when He was on the earth. In Aramaic He says, “Abba, Father.” Now Abba means, “Father.” So the Lord is being redundant—“Father, Father.” But Abba is the most intimate description of a father in the Bible. This was the Lord’s own words: “Abba, Father.” You remember in the garden of Gethsemane in that dark moment before He was crucified the next day, He fell before the Father as the disciples slept and said, “Abba, Father, if it is possible take away this cup from Me, but nevertheless (speaking of the cross,) let Your will be done and not Mine.” That is the Lord’s own personal word for the Father.

But when it comes to Romans chapter 8, Paul says, “It is our word.” We now can say, “whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” the Lord’s own personal word becomes our word. And there is also a place in Galatians, only the third place it occurs, where we say, “Abba, Father.” You cannot think of anything more of a blessing than that, that you are now being made a full son of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit. And you have now the Lord’s own personal word of intimacy in fellowship with the Father that you can say, “Abba, Father.” Do you think He will ignore your cry?

That is the ultimate fellowship, “Abba,” that is communion. I sometimes get distressed when I hear the word, “We have a relationship.” We have much more than a relationship. Relationship is not a word that is in the English Bible, old or New Testament. We often say that, but we have much more. We have a fellowship, communion, sharing in common, all of which are in Christ, koinonia, the Greek word. Can anything be any more specular than that!

I Corinthians 1:9 says, ““God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship (koinonia) of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” Now you can say, “Abba, Father,” the closest communion.

Joint Heirs with Christ

This is the blessing in verse 16: “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.” How marvelous that is! We are children of God! Isn’t that a blessing? We are newborns; we are sons. It is a different word than sons. It is “Tekna;” it means a newborn. It means a little child. We are not only being made sons through the indwelling Holy Spirit, but we are His children. Then it goes on to say, “And if children, heirs also:” If you are a child of God, you are “heirs of God.” It could not be anything better than that. You better not hope that you are an

heir of mine; there might not be anything left for you at the end. But as an heir of God, look what He shares with you.

And then it goes on to say something even more spectacular, if God could get more spectacular. He says, "and Christ's joint heirs;" Do you know that that mean? A joint heir shares everything equally with the other heirs. Now our three kids are joint heirs of ours. They might not get much, but they are still joint heirs. Every once in a while, I tease them. "If you act up, I say that you are out of the inheritance." And they look at me with disbelief because they know that I am too much of a softie to do that. So, they are completely at rest.

But here the Bible says something explicit and clear. "The blessing that has been poured out on you is that you are a joint heir with Christ." It does not say with the angels. It does not say with the cherubim, it does not say with the seraph. If you are a joint heir with Christ, that means God shares with you everything that is in Christ. Not His deity; do not ever make that mistake. Do not ever go there. It is a dangerous place to go, but God freely shares everything else.

A sister in the Lord that met with us for many years, and now no longer lives in Richmond, told me a story yesterday when she was reading the outline, by text, and she said, "When her father died and her mother was still alive talking about the joint gravestone, a single gravestone for both graves, anticipating one day she would pass. This young sister was fellowshiping with her mother, who is a dear believer, and they thought, "What should we say on the gravestone?" You cannot write a chapter unless you have a very big gravestone. So, they said let us put: "Joint heirs with Christ." What a blessing. I cannot think of anything more appropriate for an epitaph than to say, "We are joint heirs with Christ." That is the ultimate blessing.

When William R. Newell was dealing with this thing about heirs and joint heirs, he said something remarkable. He said, "It is said of no angel, cherub, or seraph that they shall be an heir of God." Think about that! It will never be said of the heavenly beings that they will be an heir of God, but it is said of us children.

Then when He came to this ultimate phrase, joint heirs with Christ, Newell could not contain himself, and he wrote, "I could not have the presumption to write these words if they were not in God's holy book." What a blessing! This is you; this is me; this is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus with all its blessings, with all of its benefits, with all of its power to sanctify us wholly. This is Romans 8:1-17.

Lord, we come to You and bow before You and ask You to somehow interpret to us by the Holy Spirit the things we fail to be able to explain. Cause us to hear that still small voice speaking to us. You have used the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. You have even Christ dwelling in us. Is there more that You could do? Never more! You have done it all, and we bow in Your presence and acknowledge that You have done far beyond all we could ask or even imagine. And we say, "Thank You, Lord, for the divine mystery, the divine plan," and we bow and worship You. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

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