

Romans 8: 1-17

How can we live a holy life? In Chapter 7 Paul has argued that though the law (the Sinai covenant) is good and righteous and points to the life God desires of us all – of itself it cannot produce that life. This is because the law cannot deal with our flawed and sinful humanity (Romans 8:3). A new 'law' (power) is desperately needed. Romans 8 is a celebration of that new power – the ministry of the Holy Spirit. So there are two alternative ways of living – a way that leads to sin, death and condemnation and the way of the Spirit that leads to righteousness, life and freedom.

1. The Spirit brings the reality of Christ's achievement to us (v.1-4)

'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'. Paul begins by describing what God has done in sending his own Son – bringing forgiveness and acquittal. This all becomes real to us by the Spirit who sets us free to live the new life Christ has won for us. Now the 'righteous requirements of the law' might finally be met as we walk according to the Spirit (v.4).

2. The Spirit gives birth to a desire to please God (v.5-8)

Paul emphasises the place of the mind. There are two possible mind-sets – a mind-set focussed on pleasing ourselves and our sinful passions and a mind-set focused on what the Spirit desires (v.5). One leads to death (being alienated from God) one to life and peace (v.6). It is only the Spirit who can change our appetites and creates a longing for God and his ways.

3. The Spirit makes possible resurrection hope (v.9-11)

Paul pauses (v.9) to affirm the identity of his hearers - as those who do have the Holy Spirit in them. To have the indwelling Spirit is *the* mark of all authentic Christian people (v.9b). And this Spirit (who raised Jesus from the dead) is the *guarantee* that on the Last Day new resurrected life will be given to our mortal bodies v.11. All this means we have an obligation to live according to the one to whom we truly belong – to live by the Spirit and not by the 'flesh' (fallen, self-centred human nature). We have an obligation to actively 'put to death' those behaviours and attitudes which are not of God (v.13)

4. The Spirit assures us of our place in God's family.

The imagery of slavery (Ch.6) now gives way to the image of being God's children. Instead of fear, we know God with intimacy as 'Abba, Father' and with the promise of a family inheritance. But the route will involve, as with Jesus, suffering before glory (v.17).

Read: Romans 8:1-17

1. This complex passage has many fascinating details but the overall outline is very simple. There are two (and only two) ways of living – living according to the 'flesh' (sinful nature) or according to the Spirit. One describes the non-Christian the other the Christian. What is the *overall good news* of this passage?

2. v.1-4 is a deeply Trinitarian passage. What does Paul say is the work of each person of the Trinity?

3. Re read v.5-8. Paul here describes *two mind-sets*. How does he characterise them? What does it look like to meet someone who has their mind 'set on what the Spirit desires' (v.5)?

4. The Spirit who raised Jesus to glorious resurrection life will also raise us (v.11). What do you look forward to most about your resurrection life? In what way should this hope shape our lives now?

5. What does it actually mean and look like to 'by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body?' (v.13)

6. Many struggle with a lack of assurance that God really loves them and has saved them. What encouragement does Paul give us in v.15-17?

7. How would you answer from this passage those who say that to be a Christian is to do as 'the Spirit says' and not as 'the law says'?