

Life According to the Spirit

Turn in your Bibles to Romans 8, and I will read our passage for today. This is one of the most wonderful chapters in all the Bible, as it contains so many doctrinal truths, and so much encouragement for us it's hard to take it all in. We will probably be in this chapter for some time, as it is worth all the study that we can give it. In this chapter we have the idea of our new life in Christ, how we can know if we are saved, we see that we are the heirs of God, that means we receive an inheritance from God, here he talks about the consummation of our adoption as sons of Christ, he tells us how the Spirit prays for us, how God works all the events of our lives together for good, he speaks of our predestination, our calling, our justification, our glorification, our election, and our solid position in Christ that no one or no thing can take from us because God is holding it. What an amazing chapter this truly is! We certainly aren't going to cover all that today, but we will get started with the first eleven verses. **Romans 8:1-11** **Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But 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.**

Pray

Last time in chapter 7 we saw how sin and the sin nature works within the life of the believer. We saw how there is a conflict within us between the old nature that we all inherited from Adam, and the new nature that we have from Christ if we have our faith in Him. Chapter 7 is truly a complex part of Scripture that is easy to misunderstand, partly because of the difficulty in the translation from Greek to English. What I really wanted you to see last time was the difference between the words that are translated as "do" in that passage. The most important thing to glean from that passage is that it is not a license to sin because we have the sin nature. Paul in no way is saying that he is going around committing sins, and he just doesn't know or understand what he is doing. It is imperative that we keep the two natures straight while reading that passage, and that we see the conflict that goes on between the two, the old nature from Adam and the new nature from Christ. If we are in Christ, through faith, then we know that our new nature

does not “produce” sin; the old nature does that. This production of sin is what Paul talked about in 7:8, how sin took the opportunity through the law to produce coveting of every kind in him, and in verse 17 where he says that he is no longer the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me. Our old nature produces sin. Also, we really need to see that this is a battle that is in the mind, and that will be reiterated today as well. We must fight sin in the mind if there is to be any hope of victory. If we get to the point where we need to resist sin with only our physical bodies then we are going to lose. We need to have a plan of escape from the sin that is based on the Word of God, like Christ used in the desert, in order to resist the temptation, or we will fail. We really need to know that no good thing dwells in us; if we are trying to do this in our own strength then we are going to fail, because our own strength is based on our own flesh, which is weak because of sin. So, if we are in Christ we have a new nature that does not produce sin, the Holy Spirit indwells us and we are a new creature in Christ. But, now we still have this life to live. Like we have said before, we aren’t saved just to for our own sake. We are saved to serve Christ, so what do we do with this information? That is what most of chapter 7 is, information, and really that is what chapter 8 begins with as well, information. It is what we do with that information that is important. We are called to live in obedience to Christ, and we will hopefully see today how we can take this information and apply it to our lives so that we live in a manner that is pleasing to Christ. Today we will see the work of Christ in our lives, the work of the flesh in people, and the work of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

Work of Christ

Romans 8:1 is the ultimate comforter for the person who is in Christ. After all the back and forth of chapter 7, and the battling with the flesh we see that we have victory in Christ, and the result of that victory is no condemnation. **Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** If you have the KJV or NKJV you have another phrase attached on to the end of that verse that says **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** The commentators I looked at, even those who use the KJV said that this phrase is not in the best manuscripts. Now, the skeptic may say, “aha! I knew there were mistakes in the Bible.” But, this really would not be classified as a mistake, as it does not change the doctrine at all; the exact same phrase appears in verse 4, and it does not change the meaning of the verse at all here in verse 1. In fact, it is absolutely true that there is no condemnation for those who are walking, or living in the Spirit. J. Vernon McGee said that he believed this phrase to be the result of a scribe adding it to this verse from verse 4 many centuries ago. The earliest manuscripts do not have it though. But, let’s not get lost in the details and lose the simple beauty of this statement that we who are in Christ Jesus have no condemnation. If you are in Christ through faith you have no punishment, that’s what condemnation means, because of the sin that is in your old nature. Again, this is really important to see, if you have not been born again you only have one nature, the old nature that is sinful. This sin is what causes death, both physical death and spiritual death. God makes the determination if we are punished based upon whether or not we have faith in Christ. If we are not in Christ, we are punished, but this verse tells us that if we are in Christ, then we have no punishment. This word for condemnation is only in the NT 3 times, all here in Romans, with the other

two being back in chapter 5. Romans 5:16 says **The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.** So, we see here that the punishment arises from the judgment that is given because of the one sin that Adam committed in the Garden. If we are in Christ, we are not a part of that condemnation; we are rescued from it. Then in verse 18 of chapter 5 we see **So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.** Then we see that this condemnation that is a result of the one sin of Adam spread to all men, because we are all guilty of sin, but just like we see in our verse 1 of chapter 8 God provided a way for justification for us through the death of Christ. What this verse is really conveying is that even though we still have our sin nature, even though it is still producing sin in us, if we are in Christ, we no longer are held accountable for that sin nature. On the basis of the life that we receive from Christ at the new birth we are no longer going to be punished. Our new nature is the one that we received from Christ so it is perfect; this is the part that will go to heaven when we die, so it will not be punished, it is perfect. This is talking about the condemnation or punishment that will occur in the future, and if we are in Christ we do not need to worry about that at all, Christ has taken care of that for us by giving us a new nature.

Set free

Paul is using language here in this whole section that is reminiscent of being in prison, or being taken captive. Remember from chapter 7:23 **but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.** Here in verse 2 though we see why we are not punished, really why we are pardoned of our crimes against God, because that is what our sins are, they are an offense or a crime against God. David realized that in Psalm 51:4 **Against You, You only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Your sight.** When we sin against God, He has every right to take us prisoner and punish us, but through His infinite mercy He has provided a way for us to escape this punishment and that is what we see here in verse 2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.** The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; this is an important phrase to not skip over. If you remember last time we saw that the Law was spiritual. It isn't just a set of rules for us to follow; rather it is God's perfect standard, or God's perfect will for our lives. The Law has a spiritual quality since if we violate the Law we are spiritually dead. So, here we see that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free. We are set free if we use the Law the proper way. We are not to use it as a set of rules to show how pious we are like the Pharisees did, we are to use it to point us to Christ; we are to use it to show us how sinful we really are, we are to use it to show us that our only hope is Christ. When we realize that, we are said to be "in Christ", and then He sets us free from the law of sin and death. Our Scripture reading this morning showed us that this is the whole reason Christ came, to set the captives free, and here we see that it was to set us free from the law of sin and death. We saw in chapter 7 that this is the law that works in the flesh. Again if you do not have the new nature, this is the only law that is working in you so Christ cannot set you free. We must be born again to have the release from the law of sin and death.

Weakness of the Law

Verses 3 and 4 are all one sentence, and they really do need to be considered together. **For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** When we are in Christ we use the Law the way it was intended to be used. Here we see that it was not intended to be used as a means of salvation. It was never intended to be used that way, like we have already seen. Romans 3:20 says **because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** We only gain knowledge of sin through the Law; if we could follow it perfectly we would get life. But, since we are completely incapable of doing that because of the sin nature within us, the Law is said here in verse 3 to be “weak”. This does not mean that it is bad, or that it is somehow incomplete or in error. Romans 7:7 **What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be!** No, the Law is not sin; it is perfect. Notice the verse says that it is weak *as it was through the flesh*. Our flesh is what is weak, and that is what makes the Law unable to save us. It’s like a freshly cooked chicken that you try to pick up with a fork. If you stick the fork into the cooked flesh of the bird what will happen? It will just fall to pieces because it has been weakened by the cooking process. So, if you want to pick the whole bird out of the pan you have to use a big spatula, or a big knife and lift the whole thing from the bottom. This doesn’t mean that the fork is bad, or that it is not a good tool. The fork is perfect for the job that it was intended to do, and in this case the fault lies with the weak flesh of the chicken as to why it could not lift the bird. This is the way it is with our flesh, it is weak so the Law cannot save us, but fortunately for us God did not leave us in that predicament.

What the Law could not do because of our weak flesh, God did all on His own. Now, lest we think that this was some kind of a cosmic Band-Aid that God had to use to cover up for His *mistake*, we need to know that God had this plan for the sending of His Son in place from the foundation of the world. The plan of redemption is not just something that He came up with on the spur of the moment, rather Gal 4:4-5 says that at just the right time Christ came **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.** The fullness of time means that at the proper time Christ came. He came at the planned time. If He came at the fullness of time, or at just the right time, it had to be planned. Also, we need to realize something about the Law. The Law was given for a very specific purpose, it was given to a specific people at a specific time, and importantly that it was a conditional contract with the people who received it. The Mosaic Law was given to the Israelite nation, in order to show them that they were in desperate need of relying on God. They needed to realize that they could not attain to God’s holy standard. Part of the contract was that if they violated the Law or forsook the Law that God would take them out of the land that they were going to possess, and that is exactly what happened. The nation did not follow the Law, but rather they went after the false gods of the people around them, and God eventually exiled them to Assyria and Babylon. When they returned to the land they still misused the Law however, and then, like it says in Galatians 4, at just the right time, God sent His son to make a way for us to be redeemed in spite of our weak flesh.

God sent His Son in the *likeness of sinful flesh* it says. This too is an important point. Christ did have flesh; it was human flesh. He wasn't a spiritual aberration or something like that; He was a real human being. Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh in that, He had the body of a man, but He did not have the nature of a man. He did not have the sin nature that all people inherited from Adam. Christ was not a descendant of Adam's the same way that we all are. His natural lineage can be traced back to Adam, like we see in the book of Luke, but He doesn't have a father the same that we all do, as we know that Christ is eternal. But, He did come in the form of a man like we see here. And this is important, because through His death the sin debt is cancelled. That is what John the Baptist referred to when he said "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the *sin* of the world." So, Christ could condemn sin in the flesh because He came in the likeness of flesh. He was fully man, He had all the attributes of a man, but He was also God, so He did not have the sin nature, He was perfect in His inner man. And we see here in the rest of this verse 3 that He came for the express purpose of condemning sin. Sin has been pronounced guilty before all the world through the death of Christ, and now we all have a pathway to life through Christ as a result of what He has done for us. Verse 4 says that He did this so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Christ's sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay the price for the sins of mankind like the author to the Hebrews pointed out, He died once for all, Hebrews 7:26-28 says **For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest** (referring to Christ), **holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests** (referring to the Israelite priests), **to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.** And that really does point to a lot of what Paul is saying here in Romans 8. Christ was in the likeness of human flesh, but He was holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and He gave Himself for the sins of the people, once for all. He does this for those who walk according to the Spirit, and we will see just exactly what that means in the following verses. So, here in the first 4 verses we have the work that Christ did for us. Now, we are going to have to pick up the pace to get through the rest of this, but that is the work of Christ in this. There is no condemnation if you are in Christ because He has set you free through the spirit of the Law in Christ. In Himself He has set us free from the law of sin and death through giving Himself as the sacrifice for sin.

Work of the Flesh

Like we have said before, if you are not born again, you only have one nature, the old nature that we inherited from Adam. Paul used a lot of repetition in writing this letter because the material is so complicated and so important, so I'm doing the same thing. When we receive the new nature, the old nature is rendered powerless, however the flesh still has power over someone who has not put his faith in Christ, and verses 5-8 describe how the flesh works in people. The KJV puts verse 5 the best of the versions that I read, **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.** This is an explanation of the phrase that ended the last verse describing those who walk according to the flesh and those who walk

according to the flesh. If you are unsaved, your mind is set on the things of the flesh. That is a guarantee. But, don't forget, we still have the old nature as well after being saved, and we can obey that old nature if we are not walking in the Spirit. This doesn't mean that this person is some sort of raving lunatic that only does and thinks horrible things. What it means is that if you are in the flesh, you obey the things of the flesh, and people who are in the Spirit obey the things of the Spirit. Again, notice how this is in the mind, the battle with sin is in the mind. You can rest assured that if you do not battle sin in your mind you will live a life of sin, and this is a serious indication that you have not been born again. There is much theological debate about whether there is any such thing as a carnal Christian, and there certainly is evidence on both sides, which we won't get into today, but I just want you to see that the person who lives for the flesh, the person who lives for sin is considered to not be in the Spirit here, and we see that in the following verses. **For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** Here we see this idea of the mind being set mentioned over and over in this passage. Those in the flesh have their minds set on the flesh, the mind set on the flesh is death, the mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God. The mind set on the flesh is death; why is that? This is because the person who walks in the flesh is living according to their sin nature, and they are constantly going after the things of the flesh, sin. The flesh has an insatiable desire for sin, there is never enough, this is why alcoholics can't get enough alcohol, people who gamble do it more and more, people who use their computers inappropriately do it more and more, and worse and worse. And even if the person who is in the flesh is not sinning more and more, that sin is what separates them from God, and that is what leads to death. Adam's sin led to death, and so does ours. The mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God because it is going after sin, which by definition is hostility towards God. Whenever we sin, and this goes for believers and unbelievers alike, we are acting hostile towards God. Ultimately that is what sin is, hostility or rebellion towards God. This is why we must walk in the Spirit. We see a great contrast here with those who are in the Spirit. They have life and peace through the Spirit, as opposed to the death that is the result of being in the flesh. The Spirit is our only hope to have this life and peace mentioned in verse 6. This section ends with a very sobering thought, **and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** They cannot please God, because no good thing dwells in the flesh. Any so-called good works that are done to gain favor with Him are like filthy rags to a holy God. God desires a broken and contrite heart more than anything we could possibly do for Him, and the person who is in the flesh does not have that. He would rather have his sin than obey God, and that of course does not please God.

Work of the Spirit in the Believer

Besides repetition, Paul has used the technique of contrast throughout this letter. He has contrasted Adam and Christ, the gift and the transgression, slaves of sin and slaves of righteousness, law and grace, married to Adam and married to Christ, and of course last time we talked about the civil war that goes on within us between the flesh and the Spirit. And here in this chapter we are seeing how that civil war plays out in the lives of people. Make no mistake that a person who is living according to his fleshly

desires is not pleasing to God, and the result of that life is death. The next passage is where we see that those who do not have the Spirit are not in Christ. Verse 9 says **However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.** Regardless of whether or not a Christian can walk in the flesh for a time, we see here that a person must be indwelt by the Spirit to be a Christian. This is the mark of a true believer, and this is what allows the believer to be pleasing to God, and to live a life of obedience to Him; in the flesh this is not possible. Another neat thing to see in this verse is the mention of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, which is a very strong argument for the divinity of Christ. We don't need any proof in that area, but maybe some unbelieving friends you have, or perhaps a Muslim that you may have the opportunity to speak with might be enlightened by this passage. We have the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ fulfilling the same role; and it says that if we don't have that Spirit we are not in Christ. Next, we see a huge benefit of being in Christ **If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.** Here is the life that we have when we are in Christ like it said in verse 6, if we are in the Spirit we have life and peace, as opposed to the death that is the result of being in the flesh. This is looking to the future. Even though our mortal bodies will die, if we are in Christ, our spirit is alive because of righteousness. This righteousness that we have is imputed to us, or is given to us on the basis of our faith as we have seen throughout this letter. We don't have the righteousness inside our flesh; there is no good thing dwelling in our flesh. This righteousness must come from somewhere else, and that is from Christ. He is infinitely righteous, and when we put our faith in Him, He gives us a portion of His infinite riches of righteousness. So, I think of it this way. Before we come to Christ we only have one nature, the old nature that we inherited from Adam. We are dead in our trespasses and sins because we have nothing good in us. Upon placing our faith in Christ as our only hope of forgiveness, He indwells us with His Holy Spirit, and gives us a new nature. We become a new creation in Christ. Christ's righteousness is given to us and we are given life in our spirit. This is spiritual life here on the earth, as well as life for our spirit in eternity. If you are not in Christ, then you have none of these benefits, and your spirit does not have life, and there is no answer for your sin. But, verse 11 tells us that there is more in store for we who are in Christ than just life for our spirits. **But 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.** Not only do we have life in our spirits, but we have the promise of life in our mortal bodies as well. Now, that seems like a contradiction, because if our bodies have the promise of life then they aren't really mortal. Mortal means that it will die by definition. But, this is another reference to the new body that we will receive in the future. I never realized how much of Romans spoke of our future deliverance until doing this study. Paul has mentioned it quite often, and here it is again. The same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies. What an incredible promise this is, and Paul is emphasizing this fact, that is why he has repeated this promise so often. There are allusions to this in chapter 5 and chapter 6 in verse 22, and then in chapter 7 verse 24 Paul asks who will deliver him from the body of this death. He gives us the answer here once again, the Holy Spirit; the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will raise our bodies from the dead as well, or if we are alive

when He comes again, these mortal bodies will be changed in the twinkling of an eye to be a new body, a perfect, glorified body ready for eternal life with Christ. Notice in this passage that it says that the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, just using His given name, **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you**, and then in the second half of the verse it says “Christ Jesus”, using His title as the Messiah as well **He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you**. This shows us that He is the Messiah, He is the Christ, and the proof positive is the fact that He rose from the dead. And if we have our faith in Him, if we believe that He died for our sins then we have this same Spirit within us, and that same Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies.

Conclusion

Now, we don't have all this wonderful information just so we can sit on it, and not do anything. We have this because it should motivate us to action. That is what sanctification is; it is living out the faith that we have in Christ. He has saved us; He has given us this new life in order that we might serve Him. All this glorious truth that we have here should drive us into serving Him with glad hearts. Psalm 100 is a great place to see what our reaction should be **1 Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His loving kindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations**. Serving the Lord with gladness, that is sanctification in a nutshell. We are to serve the Lord with gladness because of all the amazing things that He has done for us. Today, we saw that He took away the punishment that we deserve, and He set us free from sin and death by coming in the likeness of human flesh, and giving Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Now if we believe that, if we believe in Him we are a new creation, and we have been given a new life now, and we will have a new life in the future as well, and because of all this we should serve the Lord with gladness wherever and however He wants us to.

Pray