

# Walking After the Spirit

*Radio Broadcast*

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**Bible Text:** Romans 8:1-9

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding Broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, Louisiana. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

I want to speak to you today on a subject that is very popular in church circles and that has to do with the Spirit of God. And you hear a lot of discussion about what it is to walk in the Spirit or to be filled with the Spirit. Well, here in Romans, chapter 8 of the scriptures we have a very clear exposition of what it is to be in the Spirit, what it is to walk after the Spirit and what are the characteristics of those in whom the Spirit of God dwells.

Now, the chapter begins in verse 1 with this statement, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now, the chapter divisions in our Bibles are put there by editors to help facilitate their reading, but many times those chapter divisions fall in places that tend to make us forget the context. And so, when chapter 8 begins with verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation," what you have to do is ask yourself, What is the therefore, there for? And then you go back to the previous chapter and you see the Apostle Paul was writing to the Roman church and expressing to them the struggle that every true child of God that has been born of the Spirit experiences.

And that struggle is between the flesh, that is, the sin nature that is within us and the Spirit. The Spirit of God within the child of God and that struggle, as Paul expresses it, is something that continues on through the lifetime of the child of God. And so he expresses in Romans 7, verse 24, his concern, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And then he gives the answer, and this is the answer for every child of God that has been chosen of God, redeemed by Christ and called by the Spirit, this is our cry, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh, the law of sin.

Now even with that struggle, and if you are the Lord's redeemed one, called of the Spirit, you know of what struggle I am speaking. Our confidence and our hope is in what we read here in chapter 8 and verse 1, "There is therefore now." Now since the work of the Lord Jesus Christ has been accomplished, now sins upon completion of his work there at the cross, God has once for all declared righteous or just every one for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died.

So there is therefore now no condemnation. Now this is a truth that some have yet to understand and that is that if Christ paid the sin debt then the sin debt is paid. This is why I cannot agree with those who preach that Christ died for every single person in the world. He did die for sinners from every tribe nation and tongue, but to say that he died for every single person in the world is to say then, that there is therefore now no condemnation for anyone. And that would be not true. The fact is, the truth is that there are those who stand condemned yet today, they have no mediator, they have no ransom, Christ has not paid their sin debt and so they stand condemned. But for those for whom Christ has paid the debt, there is therefore now no condemnation. And it says, "to them which are in Christ Jesus," so that begs the question, Who are those who are in Christ Jesus? How do I know whether I am in Christ Jesus? The rest of the verse tells us, "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Now that poses a problem if we understand "walking not after the flesh" to mean that we no longer have a sin nature. Some would try to interpret it that way, but that's not what it's saying. All of us struggle with this sin nature, even as Spirit born children of God. But these of whom Paul writes, "who walk not after the flesh," he speaks of those that have no confidence in the flesh, their hope is not in their works, its not in their will, its not in their own well being spiritually, but their hope is in Christ alone. So they "walk not after the flesh," I am not going to lean on the arm of the flesh in any way either to gain or maintain my salvation.

That's what it is to be in Christ Jesus and it says, "who walk not after the flesh." This is not a fleshly work, it's not a matter of walking an aisle or saying a prayer or bowing the head or raising a hand. It is the practice in so many communities today but it says, "after the Spirit." Now, this is important, "after the Spirit." That means the Spirit is leading and the sinner is following after the Spirit and where does the Spirit lead? Well, Christ himself told the disciples that when the Spirit would be sent into the world that he would take the things of Christ and would reveal them unto them and so the Spirit directs them to the Lord Jesus Christ alone and causes them to trust in and rest in Christ alone. And here's the reason, verse 2 says, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Again, this is language that Paul uses to describe what it is to walk after the flesh. If I walk after the flesh, if I think that my coming to God in any way is dependent upon something I do or moving this flesh in any way toward him, he calls that the law of sin and death. Those who live after the flesh are dead. They're dead in their sins. To think that somehow I can approach unto a holy God through my own works, because the word "flesh" there speaks of effort. If by my efforts I can somehow come to God, I have not

really understood the nature of God and his holiness and justice. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is what Romans 8:2 says. And all of that is important. The Spirit never works independent of the person of Christ or of his work accomplished there at Calvary, but there is that law of the Spirit, that ordinance, that sovereign work of the Spirit, here called the Spirit of life, that's what a dead person needs, is life. And the Spirit gives life, it says, "in Christ Jesus." And delivers me from any effort or any thought of being able to produce something of my flesh to please God.

And the reason is given to us in verse 3 of Romans 8, "For what the law could not do." This is important, the law cannot make you obedient. All it does is declare unto you what God demands, but it cannot make a person willing, it cannot make them obedient. In fact, it is such a serious and just taskmaster that none *can* fulfill it because you realize that the law of God demands absolute perfection. There aren't degrees of holiness. Some preachers when you listen to them, you come away with the idea that you're at different stages of holiness, what they call progressive sanctification, but dear friends, such a teaching is contrary to the scriptures, contrary to reality. You're either holy or you're not. And without that holiness, without that justice, no man will see God. And so the law can only condemn.

But the good news, verse 3, is that, "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," how many times have you made a resolution to be better or do better, act better, be kinder? All of these things that you hear people talking about and in yourself you think, "I'm going to give it a shot." How long has it lasted? Probably not further than the thought. And so the flesh is weak. The problem isn't with the law of God it's with our flesh, we are born in sin. And our sin nature has a current that takes us away from the truth, away from God and therefore the law is good but the flesh is weak. And so what's the remedy? Well, verse 3 of Romans 8 tells us, "God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." There again, it comes back to why it is that there is "therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." He has paid their debt. God sending his own son, so we see there the source.

If we are to have salvation, that salvation is in God having sent his own son. And notice it says, "in the likeness of sinful flesh." It wasn't necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to take on sinful flesh but he was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," he was made in the likeness of those that are sinful. But what's the difference? He was without sin. That's important. Had Christ in any way had been tainted with sin, his sacrifice could not have been accepted before a holy God. And so he was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but it says, "and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." He had to be the sin bearer.

And this is the simple message dear friend, of the gospel. That the sin of those people from every tribe, nation and tongue that God from eternity purposed to save was laid on the Lord Jesus Christ, not put in him but laid on him. And so complete was that work that he accomplished, it says their "condemned sin in the flesh." What is the wage of sin? Well, the wages of sin is death, it required him to be obedient unto death and in so doing he condemned sin in the flesh. It was put to death. And when he died, this is the glorious truth of substitution, every sinner that God purposed to save and was in him, has there

representative died as well. That judgment that passed upon the Lord Jesus Christ was accomplished on their behalf and so that's the remedy. "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 it says "for sin," Christ could not side step this condemnation as the representative, he had to bear it because of sin, for sin, not his own but that of his people and in so doing condemned sin in the flesh.

Now, listen to verse 4, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." In other words, that work that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished, was the exact righteousness that the law demanded and Christ having accomplished it, that law then has already been fulfilled in us. It was as if we had obeyed. His obedience, that putting to our account that obedience, is as if every sinner for whom Christ died actually obeyed the law himself or herself. And again, it says "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Why does Paul repeat that? He stated it in verse 1, and here again in verse 4 he states it. Well, less there be any boasting of the flesh, any confidence in this flesh, any thinking that "Ah ha, now that I'm the Lord's, now that I'm justified and righteous before him, I need to go back somehow to the flesh to maintain that standing." No, dear friend, we don't trust the flesh to gain salvation and we do not trust the flesh to maintain that salvation. It was either accomplished through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ or we are yet condemned.

And so, we see in verse 5, where Paul expresses that, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." Natural minded men, mind the things of the flesh. They can't see what it is I'm telling you right now, they're blind. And so they pursue things of the flesh. This can be true of somebody out in the world pursuing the things of the worlds but its also true of many sitting in congregations, even where the Bible is read. And their natural mind tries to hook on to certain things that they have to do or not do. "Just give me a list," one man said to me one time, "of things that I need to know to do or not do in order to please God." Their mind is after the things of the flesh and not after Christ, they mind the things of the flesh.

But it says, "they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." This is truly a miracle of God's grace, that God would take an otherwise sinful soul and by his Spirit, revealing Christ in that soul, cause that sinner to long after, to seek after and to hope in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The alternative is death because verse 6 says in Romans 8, "For to be carnally minded is death" If I'm left to myself to continue to pursue what I think to be the way, then it's the way of death. But to be spiritually minded, is life and peace. It's life. First of all, I wouldn't be spiritually minded unless the Spirit of life had been given to me by God in his grace and mercy because of the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work. So to be spiritually minded is first of all life, and then peace. That word order is important. Peace that comes from *the* peace that the Lord Jesus Christ already established in reconciling the sinner to God by his death.

Now, I have no peace until the Spirit of God brings home to my heart my need and shows me I'm lost and turns me to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then peace is established. So, first life, then peace. The Spirit has to give me life to see my need, the darkness of my heart, my lostness and then cause me to look to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. So there's that distinction again between being carnally minded, which is death, and those that follow after the flesh, that's what they are, they're dead in their trespasses and sins. But to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.

And Paul says in verse 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." This is what an individual finds difficult to confess. That they're not just mistaken or in a weakened state because of their sin, but they're actually rebels. It says here "the carnal mind is enmity against God." The very God that I'm declaring unto you, the very Christ of scripture that I'm declaring unto you men in their natural state of mind are against. They're rebels by nature. I was that way until the Spirit of God was pleased to open this lost heart of mine and caused me to bow to the Lord Jesus Christ, surrender my arms and declare my need of the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in his finished work.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." That's because of that sin nature. Notice, neither indeed "can be." I could stand up and preach to you the Ten Commandments every day for the rest of my life but that will not bring you to bow. You know what men's laws do, the moral laws that are created, the more men create ways around them. That's their sin nature and if that's true with men's laws how much more so with the very law of God that reveals his holiness and his justice. And yet men will always try to find a way around. And it says there "therefore."

In verse 8 of Romans 8, "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." I don't care how righteous a person thinks they're being by doing something or trying to reform the way they think in order to align themselves with God, all those are works of the flesh. And all that are in that mindset and have that sort of thought it says, "cannot please God."

And so what's the answer? Well, we come now to verse 9 which is the key to this message. Verse 9, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit." Now, when it says you're not in the flesh, it doesn't mean I'm outside of this body, I'm still in this body but I've put no confidence in this flesh with regard to my eternal hope, with regard to my salvation, with regard to being just before God, I'm not following after the flesh. But it says "in the Spirit," and then says "If so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." And then this very clear declaration, one of the awful truths of scripture, it says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That is a condemnation of natural man upon whom the sentence of death stands against him. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, he is none of Christ.

So it begs the question, What is it to have the Spirit of Christ and how may we know that we have the Spirit of Christ? I don't want to be deceived in this matter do you? And so it's important for us to consider this passage of scripture and consider what you've heard already and weigh these things prayerfully before the Lord because you either have the

Spirit of Christ or you don't. And not to have the Spirit of Christ is to be dead in your sins, but to have the Spirit of Christ, as we read, is life and peace. So how can I know whether I have the Spirit of Christ? We know that the Spirit is given through the person of Christ and through his accomplished work. There's no such thing in the Bible as a spirit who is frustrated, who is going around the world trying to get people to believe anybody and everybody, that's a spirit of man but not the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God in scripture is always directed to the mind and heart of those sinners for whom Christ died. You see, if the debt has been paid then it is the Spirit who, like the jailer, wants the judge his issue to pardon, opens the door of the jail cell and brings forth the one who had been accused or condemned, brings them forth to liberty and to life. That's the Spirit's work to do.

First of all, he opens our eyes to see both our own sin and misery but also to behold the very righteousness that Christ has accomplished on the sinners behalf. As we read on in this chapter, Romans 8, in verse 14, it says "For as many as are lead by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." So this leading is literally taking the sinner out of the depths of their darkness and ignorance and rebellion and lostness and bringing them to Christ. And so that's how we know that we have the Spirit of Christ. If he's in us, our eyes have been opened and we behold Christ.

Secondly, he enables us to believe in Christ. We already saw that without the Spirit of Christ none could believe, none would believe, such is the rebellion of our soul and the state of our heart. And so to believe on Christ is the gift of grace by the Spirit of God. And the sinner in whom the Spirit is revealed, therefore comes to Christ, believes on Christ, rests in the Lord Jesus Christ and cries out to him, Oh, the cry of the sinner is like a child being born. In the flesh, theirs the cry of the baby that indicates that there is life and so it is with the sinner in whom the Spirit of God has revealed Christ. There is that crying out to none but Christ. There is that understanding that none but Christ will do, none but his work will do for time and for eternity.

So, I have to ask you dear friend, Is there that sigh in your heart after Christ? Is there that cry after him? 1 Corinthians, chapter, 1 verse 30 says, "Who of God, has been made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Has Christ been made to wisdom unto you? Have you seen that apart from his righteousness imputed that you have no righteousness? Do you see that sanctification is a matter of being set apart in him? Its not something you do or work after by you're efforts but by being set apart in Christ, in his death, burial and resurrection. That God has purpose for the salvation of sinners and redemption. Not just the redemption of the cross, which was the putting away of the curse of sin, but that final redemption when all that are Christ's, for whom he died, will be once for all delivered even from the very presence of sin.

And so this is the need of the sinner as the Spirit works in their heart. One for whom Christ died, there is that yearning after Christ, that running after Christ. In this we've grown, under the body of sin and death, and we cry out even as Paul, we read in Romans 7, "Oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver us?" But our heart and mind by the Spirit of God is brought back to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we thank God for Jesus

Christ as the only savior, the only justifier and the only deliverer? If so, there is a good indication that we have the Spirit of Christ. Can we come to the throne of grace, seeing ourselves as miserable sinners yet believing the blood of Jesus Christ? That it cleanses from all sin? And the righteousness of Christ, that because of his finished work at the cross has once for all justified us from all condemnation. And therefore we cry, "God be merciful to me, the sinner! Jesus save me or I perish!"

Dear friend, if that's the case this is from the work of Christ, it's the evidence of the Spirit of Christ in the heart that causes you to cry out. Do we delight to hear of Christ? To have fellowship with him? To live on him? To walk with him? And to have the power of his grace subdue the very power of sin in our hearts that would otherwise lead us away from him? If that is the case, then verily we have the Spirit of Christ.

Oh dear friend what a blessing it is to have the Spirit of Christ and to walk after the Spirit.

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