

Spiritual Life

Romans Series

By Pastor Matt Morrell

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 8:1-16

Preached on: Sunday, July 25, 2010

Fourth Baptist Church

900 Forestview Lane North

Plymouth, MN 55441

Website: www.fourthbaptist.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/fourthbaptist

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter eight this morning. Romans 8:1-16 is our text as we continue our systematic study of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

I prepared a message simply titled, "Spiritual Life." The Holy Spirit is mentioned only one time in the first seven chapters of Romans, but is referred to nearly 20 times in chapter eight alone. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the one who imparts spiritual life, who quickens or makes us alive and the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us for spiritual living.

I have written there at the top of your notes, "Spiritual life is positional life in the Holy Spirit." But also spiritual life is practical living in the Holy Spirit.

Following the structure of our text this morning, I have divided your outline into two sections: positional life in the Holy Spirit and practical living in the Holy Spirit. Let's begin with a word of prayer.

Our God and heavenly Father, we do declare you to be holy, holy, holy. And, Lord, we do praise the name of our Lord Jesus Christ alone and we boast in the cross alone. Lord, I pray that as we turn our attention to the Scriptures that our worship does not cease, but rather, God, that you enlarge our hearts and minds with a full understanding of these rich truths that we might be changed by them, that I pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God so that we might fully understand the things that we study just now. God, I pray for boldness as I preach. God, I pray for brokenness for each hearer. And, God, I pray that your Holy Spirit might work actively among us this morning. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

You recall how Paul has been frustrated. He has even been furious in Romans chapter seven over his bondage against the law of sin, chapter seven verse 23. The law of sin that dwelt in him, chapter seven, verse 17, always seemed to coerce him contrary to what the law of God wanted him to do, chapter seven verse 22 and 23. His conclusion is in chapter seven verse 24.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”¹

Who will deliver me from my bondage? And the despair of chapter seven leads us desperate for a solution in chapter eight. As Paul described his struggle against sin in Romans seven we identified because we suffer in the very same way, for we, too, long for an answer to this struggle. And, alas, we come to Romans chapter number eight.

Romans eight and verse number one.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”²

Number one in your notes, the Holy Spirit frees the believer. How so? Letter A. From divine condemnation. Romans eight verse one, therefore, Romans 8:1 introduces the result or the consequence of what has been previously established in this epistle. Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have been saved from or freed from divine condemnation.

Now the word condemnation there doesn't so much refer to the verdict of a crime as much as it does to the sentence that the verdict demands. The verdict is guilty. There is none righteous, no not one. We are all sinners, Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23. The verdict is guilty. The sentence is condemnation. And that sentence is death, Romans six verse 23.

But the death sentences are paid by Jesus Christ on the cross and the guilty verdict has been overturned by his shed blood. Romans eight verses five through 11 calls that justification. We have been made alive in Jesus Christ, Romans 6:4-9. And now there is no condemnation for the believer, Romans eight verse one, amen?

We ought to be thrilled. No, we ought to be pumped about the truth of Romans eight verse one. There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Amen? Very good.

This positional truth, Romans eight verse one is absolutely, positively, fundamentally important. And if you have missed what I have just said in the last two minutes, get the podcast to this message and listen to it again.

Now the deliverance from divine condemnation is not a deliverance from divine discipline. For whom the Lord loves he chastens. He scourges ever son whom he receives, Hebrews 12 verse six. This deliverance from divine condemnation does not mean deliverance from divine accountability, Galatians 6:7. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows that he will also reap.

What this does mean is that we are free from divine condemnation, namely a death sentence, a death consequence of our sin if we are in Jesus Christ. That truth alone should

¹ Romans 7:24.

² Romans 8:1.

be sufficient for us this morning. At this point in our service we might all be dismissed rejoicing, because there is no divine condemnation to those that are in Jesus Christ.

There is a phrase at the end of verse number one in my New King James version:

“...who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”³

But that phrase is not found in the earliest manuscripts of Romans, so it is not included in many of the modern translations, the NIV, the ESV, the NAS. This is what we call a textual variance. Both the Alexandrian text and the Western text types don't include this phrase at the end of verses one. But only at the end of verse four. The manuscript family from which the King James or the New King James, in this case, have been translated, have it at both the end of verse one and at the end of verse number four and I will address that in a moment as we come to the end of verse number four.

The Holy Spirit frees the believer from divine condemnation, letter B, the Holy Spirit frees the believer because of justification. The divine condemnation from which the believer is absolved, letter A, is because of our justification in Christ Jesus, letter B. Paul who was desperate to be delivered in chapter seven verse 24 now declares his freedom from divine condemnation in chapter eight verse one because of justification through Jesus Christ, chapter eight verse two. Our being in Christ, you will notice it there in verse two, is one of the most profound mysteries of God's plan of salvation. Somehow our union in Christ justifies us before God.

Martin Luther helps us understand this when he wrote, “It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ. And if he has Christ he has at the same time all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is that by faith our sins are no more ours, but Christ's, upon whom God hath laid them all and that on the other hand all Christ's righteousness is ours. I call that that great exchange. Our sin was placed upon him. His righteousness was placed upon us. Christ lays his hand on us and we are healed. He casts his mantle upon us and we are clothed, for he is the glorious Savior, blessed forever.”

Justification. Verse number three.

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.”⁴

The Holy Spirit frees the believer by means of substitution, letter C. Verse three is a primary proof text describing the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. We couldn't satisfy the law of God. And the law of God couldn't satisfy the justice of God, so God sent his son to stand in our place. You see, the law cannot make men righteous, but only expose our unrighteousness and then condemns us for it. The law cannot make men

³ Romans 8:1.

⁴ Romans 8:3.

perfect, but can only reveal our great imperfection. And we have learned of that in previous weeks.

So Jesus Christ became our substitute in meeting the righteous requirements of the law, verse number three. And because Jesus took our place, we can be free.

Finally the Holy Spirit frees the believer, letter D, for the purpose of sanctification. Verse number four.

“...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”⁵

At this point Paul is moving his emphasis from the justifying work of salvation that we have talked about for so many weeks now to its sanctifying work. The Holy Spirit of God does not free the believer from sin in order for us to continue sinning to satisfy our flesh, but according to the Spirit we live.

You can cheat ahead and look at verse number five to understand that. Now the phrase at the end of verse number four

“... who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”⁶

The same phrase that some manuscripts include at the end of verse number one is not an admonition, but it is a statement of identification that applies to all believers. Let me explain this to you. At first read I thought this would preach very well. I thought that I could rant and rave about the Christian walk. Don't walk in the flesh. Walk in the Spirit. After all, the Scriptures command us to be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. And do not walk like the unsaved walk, Ephesians 4:17. When I found the phrase written twice in my Bible—the end of verse number one and the end of verse number four—I thought I could preach this even harder. That is the theme of the text, for it is cited twice. The theme of the text must be the command to walk in the Spirit, walk according to the Spirit. After all, that is what Galatians five commands us to do. But that is not how it reads.

Catch this now. In Romans eight the phrase at the end of verse one in my translation or at the end of verse number four in perhaps everyone else's version is not a command. It is simply a statement. It is simply identifying the believer. If we have been freed by the Spirit and are in Christ then we do walk according to the Spirit.

Look at verse nine.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”⁷

⁵ Romans 8:4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Romans 8:9.

If the Spirit of God dwells in you, believer, then you are not in the flesh, but you are in the Spirit. Let me say it this way. If you have been born again by God's Spirit, you are a believer in Jesus Christ. You have been saved. You are a Christian. Then you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the reality of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in your life will be manifest because you will walk in the Spirit. The true believer, whether young or old, whether immature or mature does not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, Romans eight. Every true believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and will produce the fruit of the Spirit in that one's life.

You say, "Now wait a minute, pastor." You say, "I know some Christians who don't walk according to the Spirit, but, in fact, walk according to the flesh." You say, "Pastor, in fact, I might even confess that I am one of them."

Ok. Then you may not have the Spirit of God living within you. What? Are you insulted by that suggestion? Hear me clearly. There are certainly saints who will sin. You are looking at one of them, ok? I am looking at a lot of them. The apostle Paul was one who still sinned yet in his life. Christians will still sin. There is even a category that we might call the carnal Christian or the fleshly Christian. That was characteristic of those in the Corinthian Church, but the key word in Romans eight is walk. And it refers to the habitual behavior or the bent of life. It refers to a lifestyle.

While each of us will continue to sin, we cannot sin continually and claim to be indwelt by the Spirit of God and walk or live perpetually in the flesh. Paul is saying it is a logical and a theological impossibility.

Romans eight verses five through 11, then, make it very clear that the genuine Christian is indwelt by God's Spirit and that our new spiritual life will not be characterized by carnality or fleshly activity, but rather by the things of God.

Let's look at the text, verse number five.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.⁸

What is the qualification? If, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in you. If you are a believer, if you are a Christian, if you have been born again, if you are saved, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Therefore you are in the Spirit.

Verse number nine.

⁸ Romans 8:5-9.

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.⁹

You see number two in your notes. The Holy Spirit changes believers. Salvation is not a transaction. It is a transformation. Ephesians 2:1 says:

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”¹⁰

2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”¹¹

And the Holy Spirit of God changes a believer. If you are not changed, you are not saved.

Pastor Matt, that is two insults in one sermon.

The focus of Paul here is now turning to our responsibility to eliminate sin in our lives though the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. And that is Paul’s explanation of practical living in the Spirit. All of the truths in Romans eight verses one through 11 as we have just read them are truths that we must know.

You will remember Romans six there were so many important truths that we must now. But now going forward these are some things that we must reckon or we must yield, practical living in the Holy Spirit. Verse 12.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.¹²

Number one, the Holy Spirit empowers the believer. Paul does not say that those who live according to the flesh are going to lose their salvation. He has already written verse number one declaring there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. He is saying that a person whose life or whose walk is characterized by the... perpetually characterized by the things of the flesh is not a true Christian and is spiritually dead no matter what the religious affiliation might be. But by the power of the Holy Spirit we have the resources to put to death the deeds of the body and not walk, not habitually live or perpetually practice our lives according to the flesh. The Holy Spirit is the key, for it is

⁹ Romans 8:9-11.

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:1.

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

¹² Romans 8:12-13.

the Holy Spirit of God who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit is God's agent to help us live in our daily lives.

You say, "Pastor Matt, give me something practical. Give me something tangible. I still don't understand how to gain victory in my Christian life."

Turn your outline over and allow me to give you some of these practical ideas that can help you. Number one. You must be indwelt by the Spirit. Circle the word indwelt. This is spiritual life. You must be quickened, made alive. You must be born again by the Spirit of God. You must be a genuine child of God. There is nothing more miserable than trying to produce the fruit of the Spirit without the Spirit. And I would lament that there are many who fill the pews in Bible preaching and teaching churches across America who are laboring very hard to have victory over sin but do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. It is futile.

Number two, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Circle the word filled. This is not an ecstatic experience, but a surrender to his control in your life. We talked about this very same thing in Romans six.

Number three. You must not grieve the Holy Spirit. Circle the word grieve. With corrupt communication, slander, evil speaking, bitter wrath. Never mind the gross sins of murder or grand theft, the Spirit is grieved with our communication, with our conversation.

Number four, you must memorize and meditate. Circle those words. Memorize and meditate on the words of the Holy Spirit, the Scripture. You recognize that the Holy Spirit is the one who authored the Scriptures at the hand of man. When we say the Word of God, when we declare this to be the word of God, what we really mean is this is the Word of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is the divine author. David declared, "Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you." Memorize and meditate the Holy Spirit's words.

Number five. Because you are not yet glorified, recognize that there is sin in your life. 1 John one says if we don't recognize sin in our lives we are deceived and we are liars. Also then, of course, the promise, number three, confess sin in prayer, for if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Circle the words there, number six, confess sin in prayer. Maybe we have too many worship services and not enough confession of sin services.

The promises that he forgives us and then, finally, number seven, practice obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul has already {?} in his own testimony in Romans sin, putting sin to death is difficult. It is slow. It is frustrating. But growing in grace, perfecting holiness, renewing the inner man is the process of sanctification. Putting sin to death and practicing obedience so that the true child of God will walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

There are more, but of all these spiritual disciplines they are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. It is not by might. It is not by power, but by my Spirit, the Lord told the Old Testament prophet Zerubbabel.

Quickly turn to Galatians five. We are racing to conclude. Verse 16. You know the admonition here very well. Galatians five verse 16.

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit.”¹³

Here we are instructed to walk perpetually, habitually in the Spirit.

“...and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another.”¹⁴

You don't say? We know that experientially.

“...so that you do not do the things that you wish.”¹⁵

Jump down to verse 24.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.¹⁶

Back to Romans chapter eight.

The Holy Spirit empowers the believer. Number two, the Holy Spirit assures the believer. Now the difficulty in talking about the Holy Spirit is that he is a Spirit. And we try to feel him and we try to sense him and we try to understand, but he is metaphysical. We can't touch him and we can't hold him and we can't see him. Nonetheless, before you leave this morning, I want you to know that he assures us of his reality in our lives as believers first by leading us, letter A. In verse number 14:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”¹⁷

If you are a son of God, you claim to be a son of God, have you ever been assured of the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life by leading us? The first inner confirmation of the Spirit's working is his leading.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

¹³ Galatians 5:16.

¹⁴ Galatians 5:16-17.

¹⁵ Galatians 5:17.

¹⁶ Galatians 5:24-25.

¹⁷ Romans 8:14.

David prayed, “Make me to know your ways, oh Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me. For you are the God of my salvation and for you I will wait all the day.”

Psalm 143: verse 10. Teach me to do your will for you are my God. Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

The Holy Spirit assures the believer by his leading in our lives. Now in the context of Romans eight Paul isn't pointing to the material issues of our modern life, where to go to college. I am sure Clear Water Christian College is a good option. Who to marry, where to work, where to move, what car to buy. In the context it is the Holy Spirit who leads us to victory and further holiness.

How often do we lean on the Spirit of God for those issues? But rather we are perplexed about what car to buy. The Spirit leads us. He leads us. I don't have sub points here, but I might give you two ways. First, by illumination, second, by sanctification. Illumination is an understanding of the Scriptures. Sanctification is the testimony of an obedient life. And we have a great assurance of salvation when the Holy Spirit leads us practically in these ways. The Holy Spirit also assures the believer by comforting by us, letter B, comforting us in verse number 15.

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear.”¹⁸

That was Paul's experience in chapter seven verse 24.

“...but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”¹⁹

We are no longer in slavery or bondage. We no longer feel the task master of sin. We have been adopted. And to the Christian God declares, “I welcome you and I will be a father to you and you will be sons and daughters to me says the Lord almighty,” 2 Corinthians 6:17-18. You see, God predestined to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to himself, Ephesians 1:5. And we can then declare Abba, Father, daddy, daddy. And we are comforted.

And then the Holy Spirit who is called a paraclete in the Scripture, the one who comes alongside, the Comforter assures the believer by, letter C, comforting. I am sorry, communing with us, verse number 16.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”²⁰

This is definitely subjective, but it is no less real. Spiritual living is an outgrowth of spiritual life. And spiritual life is life in the Spirit. And, dear friend, this morning you

¹⁸ Romans 8:15.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Romans 8:16.

struggle with sin. I struggle with sin. The apostle Paul struggled with sin. The Holy Spirit is the one who God has given us, not just so that we might have spiritual life, but so that we might have spiritual living. And perhaps you are here this morning and you say, "Pastor Matt, I am not sure I even have spiritual life, because there is no spiritual living."

The question is there at the bottom. Do I have spiritual life? The second question: Am I spiritually living? Am I walking according to the Spirit? Your walk, your habitual, perpetual life style.

And this morning I would ask that you examine your own heart to know if you are in the faith and if, indeed, you are indwelt by the Spirit of God you do walk in the Spirit. May that be evident.

Let's pray.

Lord, the things we have studied this morning are heavy. God, they are a bit confusing at times. Lord, they are abstract. But, Lord, we recognize the reality that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives life and the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us for Christian living. God, I confess that although I am a sinner saved by grace, I am still a sinner, that I thank you for the justifying work that you have done in declaring me righteous. I praise you, Lord, for the sanctifying work that you are doing in my life even though at times it hurts. But, oh, God, I look forward to the glorified when we will be free from the presence of sin for all of eternity. God, while we still trod this world, I pray that you would enable and equip and empower us to live according to the Spirit as we ought being indwelt by the Spirit. We pray this in Jesus' name.

“Spiritual Life”
Romans 8:1-16

Spiritual life is positional life in the Holy Spirit. Spiritual life is practical living in the Holy Spirit.

Positional Life in the Holy Spirit

- I. The Holy Spirit _____ the believer (1-4)
 - A. From _____ (1)
 - B. Because of _____ (2)
 - C. By means of _____ (3)
 - D. For the purpose of _____ (4)
- II. The Holy Spirit _____ the believer (5-11)

Practical Living in the Holy Spirit

- I. The Holy Spirit _____ the believer (12-13)
- II. The Holy Spirit _____ the believer (14-16)
 - A. By _____ us (14)
 - B. By _____ us (15)
 - C. By _____ with us (16)

Do I have _____ life? Am I _____ living.

1. You must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is spiritual life and the key to spiritual living.
2. You must be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is not an ecstatic experience but a surrender to His control in your life (Eph. 5:18).
3. You must not grieve the Holy Spirit with corrupt communication, slander, evil speaking, bitter wrath (Eph. 4:29-32).
4. You must memorize and meditate on words of the Holy Spirit - the Scripture. You recognize that the Holy Spirit is the One Who authored Scripture at the hand of man. David declared, “Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11).
5. Because you are not yet glorified, you must recognize sin in your life. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in me” (Ps. 139:23-24).
6. You must confess sin in prayer. “If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:8-9).
7. You must practice obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul has already made plain in his own testimony in chapter 7, putting sin to death is difficult, slow, and frustrating, but growing in grace, perfecting holiness, renewing the inner man, is the process of sanctification, putting sin to death, and practicing obedience.