

# **Romans: The Good News of God**

## **Deliverance from the Flesh**

*Romans 8:5-11*

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# Deliverance from the Flesh

## Scripture

The first verse of the greatest chapter in the Bible—Romans 8:1—says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Everything else that follows in the rest of Romans 8 tells us why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The first reason why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because there is no condemnation from the law. That is what the Apostle Paul teaches in Romans 8:1-4.

The second reason why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because we have been delivered from the flesh, or as some versions put it, we have been delivered from our sinful natures. That is what the Apostle Paul teaches in Romans 8:5-11.

Let us read Romans 8:5-11:

**<sup>5</sup> 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

**<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> 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. (Romans 8:5-11)**

## Introduction

In Romans 8:5-11 the Apostle Paul says that there are fundamental differences between those who are in Christ Jesus and those who are not in Christ Jesus, between those who are in the Spirit and those who are in the flesh, between those who are Christians and those who are not Christians.

The reason Paul tells us this is that if Christ has saved you, then he has necessarily changed you. In other words, if you have believed in Jesus Christ, you have not only been justified, but you are being sanctified as well.

## Lesson

Today, I want you to see that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because we have been delivered from the flesh.

I propose to show you the difference by showing you:

1. The marks of a non-Christian (8:5-8), and
2. The marks of a Christian (8:9-11).

### I. The Marks of a Non-Christian (8:5-8)

First, notice the marks of a non-Christian.

Now, before we examine the marks of a non-Christian, let me clarify what Paul means when he talks of “**the flesh**,” or, as some versions put it, “the sinful nature” (8:5).

John Stott puts it best when he says that “by **flesh** Paul means neither the soft muscular tissue which covers our bony skeleton, nor our bodily instincts and appetites, but rather the whole of our humanness viewed as corrupt and unredeemed, our fallen, ego-centric human nature, or more briefly, the sin-dominated self.”<sup>1</sup>

Basically, when Paul refers to **the flesh** in this passage he is

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 222.

referring to a non-Christian.

So, what is that marks or characterizes a person who is not a Christian? Paul gives four marks of a non-Christian in this section.

*First, a non-Christian is marked by his thinking.* Paul says in verse 5a, **“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.”**

Non-Christians have their thoughts, interests, desires, and purposes focused on this life. They do not look at the things of this life from the standpoint of God’s glory or their neighbor’s good. They are self-centered, pursue their own agendas, and focus on things that ultimately will pass away.

In contrast, Paul says that Christians are **“those who live according to the Spirit, and set their minds on the things of the Spirit”** (8:5b).

One commentator said that one way to determine whether a person is a Christian or not is to examine what he sets his mind on when there are no distractions. When there is no TV, no work to be done, no responsibilities, and he is able to sit quietly by himself, what does his mind drift toward? Does it drift toward **the things of the flesh** or **the things of the Spirit**?

*Second, a non-Christian is marked by his state.* Paul says in verse 6a, **“For to set the mind on the flesh is death.”**

Paul is not speaking of physical death. He is speaking of spiritual death. What he means is that a non-Christian is as unresponsive to the things of God as a corpse is unresponsive to things of life. Non-Christians simply do not care about the things of God. They do not care about God, who he is, what he has done, his Word, and how to respond to him.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great Welsh preacher of the last century, relates a classic case of this lack of spiritual life in an incident from the lives of William Wilberforce, the man who led the movement to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire, and William Pitt the Younger, who was Prime Minister of England.

Wilberforce was a Christian, while Pitt was not a Christian. However, these two parliamentarians were friends, and Wilber-

force was concerned about Pitt's salvation. In those days there was a great preacher in London whose name was Richard Cecil. Wilberforce loved to listen to Cecil preach the gospel, and was constantly trying to get his friend Pitt to go with him to hear Cecil preach. Pitt kept putting Wilberforce off, but at last after many invitations Pitt agreed to go and hear Rev. Cecil preach.

Cecil was at his best that day, preaching the gospel clearly. Wilberforce was thrilled. He could not imagine anything more wonderful. He was delighted that Pitt was with him to hear Cecil at his best.

But as they were leaving the service afterward, Pitt turned to his friend and said, "You know, Wilberforce, I do not have the slightest idea what that man was talking about."

Clearly, Pitt was as dead to the things of God as if he were a physically dead man.

And that is true of all non-Christians.

*Third, a non-Christian is marked by his religion.* Having just said that a non-Christian is dead to God, it might seem strange to say that a non-Christian is marked by his religion. But all non-Christians are religious. And there is one common denominator that is true of every single non-Christian, regardless of his religion—and that is hostility to God. Paul says in verse 7, **"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."**

Non-Christians are opposed to God and his Word. They reject his rule by doing what they want to do rather than what God commands.

The late Dr. James Montgomery Boice, former pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church, noted that a religion writer once said that in the future we were likely to see the growth of "*a la carte* religion." By that the writer meant that people would choose the items they like from a potpourri of religions and then combine them to make their own comfortable little religious systems.

But isn't this already the case? In our largely irrational age it is a common thing for people to hold many mutually inconsistent

ideas, the only force holding them together being their own individual attractions to them. And this is what all religions already are in one sense. They are all a collection of human thoughts held for no other reason than that they are comfortable. They are comfortable because what they actually do is to protect their adherents from the only truly valid claims of God.

That is why Paul says that non-Christians are hostile to God and why they do not submit to his law. The two go together. They do not submit to his God's law because they are hostile to him, and because they are hostile to God they inevitably construct a religion that will protect themselves from him.

*And fourth, a non-Christian is marked by his present condition.* Paul says in verse 8, **“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”**

How could he? If a non-Christian is hostile to God and is resisting God's law, how could he please God?

Perhaps you are concerned a little about whether or not you are a Christian. Paul is showing you that there are not three categories of people in this world—non-Christians, spiritual Christians, and carnal Christians. In fact, there are only two categories of people—non-Christians and Christians.

While it is true that Christians still struggle with sin in their lives—and sometimes very badly—they nevertheless are on a path of discipleship that keeps them growing in Christ.

Non-Christians, of course, have no desire to please God.

But Christians want to please God and go forward with God.

Now, if you have taken sin too lightly, it is probably good if I have caused you to become worried about your spiritual condition. The Bible says that you are to examine yourselves to make sure of your calling (2 Peter 1:10). You should not be at ease in this matter. You should not rest until you are sure that you really are resting in Jesus Christ alone.

Yet we are studying Romans 8, and the purpose of this chapter is to give you assurance about your salvation. Romans 8 teaches that there is now no condemnation for you if you are in Christ Je-

sus. One reason you can have confidence that there is now no condemnation for you is that you have been delivered from the flesh.

## II. The Marks of a Christian (8:9-11)

Now, let's notice the marks of a Christian in Romans 8:9-11. Paul says that a Christian is marked by three states.

*First, a Christian is marked by his past.* Speaking of a Christian, Paul says in verse 9: **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”**

Notice the apostle's ruthless logic: (1) if you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you do not belong to Christ; (2) if you belong to Christ, you have the Spirit of Christ; and (3) if you have the Spirit of Christ, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. In other words, if you belong to Jesus, you will live like it. If you do not live like it, you do not belong to him, regardless of your profession.

But this is meant to be encouraging, as I said, which is why Paul begins this sentence as he does.

He is writing to the Christians in Rome and says to these believers, **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.”** That is, he is assuming that these professed Christians really are Christ's, and he is trying to explain the difference their new identification with Jesus has made and will make in the future.

What difference has it made? Well, when you look to the past, which is what the apostle does first, you see that as Christians you have been lifted out of your former sinful or fleshly state and into the realm of the Spirit. You are now **“in the Spirit,”** and, as Paul also says here, the Spirit is **“in”** you.

This is an absolutely critical thing, for it means that being a Christian is not merely a matter of adopting a particular set of theological beliefs, however true that may be. It involves a change of state, which is accomplished, not by you, but by God who saves you. And it means that you *will* live like a Christian because God has instilled a new life in you.

*Second, a Christian is marked by his present.* Paul says in verse 10, **“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”**

This is a difficult verse, but basically it means that although your physical body will die and is, in a certain sense, as good as dead now, your spirit has been made alive by the Holy Spirit because of your new relationship to Christ.

What does it mean to have your spirit made alive by the Holy Spirit? Paul is talking about the present experience of the Christian, remember. So he means that by the new birth the Spirit has made you alive to things you were dead to before. But, what things are you now alive to?

The first thing you have become alive to is God himself. Before you were born again, you may have believed that there was a God. But God was not real to you and he certainly was not personal to you. However, when you were born again this changed. Now, although there is still much you do not know about God and his ways, God is real to you. You know that God loves you and is watching over you.

You have not only become alive to God as the result of the Holy Spirit’s work, but you have also become alive to the Word of God. It is in the Bible that God speaks to you clearly, regularly, and forcefully. Before you were born again, the Bible was a strange and closed book. Little in it seemed to make sense. You even found it boring. But when you were born again, all of that changed. In fact, perhaps the most common expression among new Christians is that the Bible has suddenly become “alive!” It now makes sense. It seems as if you are reading the words of an intimate Loved One, which, in fact, you are.

Finally, you have also become alive to the Spirit in other Christians. For just as the Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Romans 8:16), so does the Spirit within you bear witness with the Spirit in other believers that you are fellow members of the one family of God and that these others are your brothers and sisters in Christ.



Let me suggest the following questions as excellent tests of whether you are a Christian.

First, is God real to you? I do not mean, “Do you understand everything about God and his ways?” Of course, you do not, for you will never understand God completely. I simply mean: Is God real to you? When you pray, do you know that you are really praying to him and that he is listening to you and will answer you? When you worship him in church, is it a real God you are worshipping?

Second, is the Bible a meaningful and attractive book to you? I do not mean, “Do you understand everything you read there?” Obviously you do not. But does it seem to be alive when you read it? Are you attracted to it? Is it precious to you? Do you want to know more about its message?

And finally, are you drawn to other Christians? Do you want to be with them? Do you enjoy the fellowship of other Christians? Do you sense how much you have in common?

If God is not real to you, if the Bible is dead to you, and if you are not drawn to other believers, then why do you think you are a Christian? You very well may not be a Christian.

On the other hand, if these things are true of you, you should be encouraged by them and press on in following after Jesus.

*And third, a Christian is marked by his future.* Paul says in verse 11, **“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.”**

Paul is speaking about a future resurrection, and he regards it as certain for all who are in Christ. In fact, he could hardly state it with greater certainty, for in developing the point the apostle brings in each member of the Trinity, as if to say that your final resurrection is as certain as God himself. At the resurrection, being freed completely from sin’s penalty, power, and presence, you shall be with God in heaven forever.

These, then, are the marks of the Christian’s past, present and

future. When I think of the past, present, and future of the Christian, as these verses in Romans causes us to do, I remember an anecdote told by Bible teacher, Harry Ironside. It is told in his study of Ephesians 2:1-10, which provides a similar description of what it means to be a Christian.

Ironside was riding on a train in southern California one Saturday when a gypsy got on and sat beside him.

“How do you do, sir?” she said. “Would you like to have your fortune told? Cross my palm with a silver quarter, and I will give you your past, present, and future.”

“Are you very sure you can do that?” Ironside asked. “You see, I am Scottish, and I wouldn’t want to spend a quarter and not get my full value for it.”

The gypsy was very earnest. “Yes, sir,” she said. “I can give you your past, present, and future. I will tell you all.”

Ironside then said, “It is not really necessary for me to have my fortune told, because I have had it told already. It is written in a book. I have the book in my pocket.”

The gypsy was astonished. “You have it in a book?” she said.

“Yes,” said Ironside, “and it is absolutely infallible. Let me read it to you.”

He then reached in his pocket, pulled out his New Testament and began to read from Ephesians 2: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath (2:1-3).”

“That is my past,” he said.

The woman had been startled when he pulled the New Testament from his pocket and now tried to get away.

“That is plenty,” she protested. “I do not want to hear more.”

“But wait,” said Ironside. “There is more. Here is my present too: ‘But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mer-

cy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . . (2:4-6).”

“No more,” the gypsy protested.

“But,” said Ironside, “you must hear my future, and you’re not going to have to pay me a quarter for it. I am giving it to you for nothing. It says, ‘. . . in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (2:7).”

By now the gypsy was halfway down the aisle of the train, saying, “I took the wrong man!”

We are dealing with a different text, of course, and the specifics of past, present, and future of Christians described in Romans 8:9-11 vary from what is said about them in Ephesians 2. But it is basically the same idea.

Christians are people whose past has been altered. Before, you were dead in sin; now you are alive in Christ.

Your present has been altered too. You have been awakened to the reality of God, the beauty of the Word of God, and the presence of the Spirit of God in other Christians.

And finally, you have a changed future before you. For in time death will be overcome, and you will be raised in a new resurrection body, like the resurrection body of Jesus Christ, and you will be with God and Jesus forever and ever.

## **Conclusion**

Are you a Christian sitting here today? By all means, ask yourself that question. Be sure of your answer. But when you are sure, be sure of this truth, too: that there is now no condemnation for you because you are a Christian who has been delivered from the flesh. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
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**PRAAYER:**

From Ray Ortlund's *A Passion for God*:

O Lord, you make a profound and searching distinction between natural human morality and authentic spirituality.

A veneer of correctness would only conceal our corruption within and utterly fail to touch the root of our sinfulness.

Your gospel, O Lord, is not just another human religion.

It is new and full of hope, because it replaces the best that we can do with the best that you can do.

Dear and blessed Savior, we look to you now with open-hearted faith and hope and desire. Let us draw strength from you right now. Make us living examples of authentic Christianity today.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.