

## Introduction

Happy Father's Day! To all you dads, grandpas, and father-figures who love Jesus and your families so well, you are a gift. You are a blessing. Thank you for all you are and all you do! Maybe you'll eat some great food, go on an adventure or take a solid nap. Whatever you end up doing, just know that your Heavenly Father delights in you.

This morning we're continuing in our new series, Everyday Faith, where we're talking about what it looks like to live the life God has given us. Because we've been made alive in Christ, there's so much He has for us to enjoy! The Holy Spirit moves in and takes up residence within us to guide and empower us to really live. The same Spirit that indwelt Jesus indwells us too and, because of what Christ has done, we're free to become the people that God designed us to be for His glory.

The problem is that many Christians never make the most of the incredible gift of the Spirit's presence in their lives. We seem content to be saved from hell, eternally separated from God, but we never learn how to really live. Why is that? Sometimes I think it's because people don't know that they have the Holy Spirit to guide and empower them. Sometimes they're just afraid. Sometimes they're so comfortable in the world that they don't want to leave it behind. Sometimes they don't know the whole story and that there's abundant life available *today* and not just *someday* when they step into eternity. Whether we experience the fullness of the new life that Christ has for us depends, in part, upon our willingness to say, "Yes!" to, and cooperate with, the Holy Spirit. That's what we're going to talk about today.

We're looking at Romans 8:1-11. I'm reading from the ESV. So you can open your bibles or apps and you can follow along. Before we jump into

the text, I want to define a few terms so they don't hang you up while we read.

## **Defining Terms**

1. Law: sometimes it refers the Mosaic Law. The laws and commandments given to Moses through the Torah (the first five books of the OT). But, in today's text, law [but] also means principle, power, authority or dominion. Paul uses the word 'law' several times, but he's not always referring the Law of Moses. You'll see what I mean as we walk through the passage.

2. Flesh: this is describing the sinful, default state of humanity. The flesh completely rejects God's will. It's our underlying way of thinking and living before we're made alive in Christ. Flesh is not describing our soft tissues or skin.

3. Mind: this isn't just about your brain. This is your mindset. It includes thinking but also involves the will and what most commands your attention.

Okay! Now that you're armed with definitions, let's get into the text. Take a look at Romans 8:1-4. [READ]

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

## **New Life in the Spirit** (v 1-4)

Paul is celebrating the fact that those who are made alive in Christ are no longer under the power and penalty of sin and won't face the judgment associated with it. At the end of Romans 7, Paul was lamenting because of

this battle raging within him. He *did* things he didn't want to do and he *didn't* do things he wanted to do. He loved the Lord and wanted to please God but there was this fight inside him between the old, sinful Paul, and the Paul that was made new in Christ Jesus. He's basically saying, "I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different."<sup>1</sup> Chapter 7 concludes with his rejoicing over the fact that Jesus has delivered him from bondage to sin even though his flesh, the old him, seemed to look for every opportunity to trip him up. He was free even though there was a struggle. And the same is true for us: In Christ we are free, even though we struggle with sin.

Here, in verse 1, Paul is saying that because of Christ's finished work, we have new life in Him and right standing with God. The sin that kept you at a distance from God has been dealt with. Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross and through His resurrection, and our faith in Him, "...we escape the sentence of spiritual death that our sins have justly earned."<sup>2</sup> We have a new life now and we no longer fear that our sins will ever condemn us! Our guilt is gone and we can live completely unafraid of any future judgement. Jesus took care of everything.

Because you have been made alive in Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in you. You have been rescued out of the dominion of sin and death and now can live under the authority of the Spirit. There was no way that we could have been made right with God by following the Law of Moses because our human nature was so corrupt, so everything-other-than-God-focused that we could never get anywhere near God. The Law only highlighted how messed up we truly were—and how desperately we needed a Savior. So in His grace, God sent His Son, who was fully God and fully human (but sinless!)—in every way human, experiencing the full capacity of the human experience, but *without sin*, to take our sin upon Himself. We're not condemned because Jesus took all our sin—past, present and future—

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:25 from *The Message*, by Eugene H. Peterson.

<sup>2</sup> Moo, Douglas J. *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2000), 248.

and paid our penalty in full with His own life. Jesus did for us what the Law of Moses never could. Jesus took our [my] condemnation. "God in Christ has fulfilled the entirety of the law's demand on our behalf."<sup>3</sup>

When you're led by the indwelling Spirit, you can live a new life and enjoy all that He has for you. You've been made new; you've been born again. But you're a new creation living in a world that is still broken and yet to be redeemed. We're living for God in a world that wants nothing to do with Him. You know this! It's hard to live for Jesus in a culture saturated with everything *but* love for God and His will. And there's a very real enemy who hates God and His kids, who would love nothing more than to completely derail us. *God knows we can't do it on our own*. And that's why the Holy Spirit is such a gift to us. God wants us to live fully and freely –even in the midst of the mess–today–not just someday.

But here's the thing: if you're going to enjoy the new life God wants for you, you've got to be willing to do the hard work of saying "Yes!" and cooperating with the authority and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. You cannot, you *will* not, live the abundant life Christ died to give you if you continue to live as though you don't know Jesus; to live as though you've not been made alive in Christ; to live like the *old* you instead of the *new* you. You must live under the authority of the Spirit, not the flesh, if you're going to become the person that God made you to be.

### **Death vs. Life** (v 5-8)

Now, take a look at verses 5-8 with me. [READ]

"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."

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 250.

Paul is writing to Christians in Rome and he's talking about the Christian life. It's easy to think that all the talk about the flesh is aimed solely at non-Christians—but that's not the complete thought here. He's talking about Jesus people! He's talking about followers of Christ and the very real struggle we all face: calling Jesus our Savior but living like we don't know Him.

### *Setting our Minds*

Notice the repetition of 'set their minds' in these verses. It's important. It's describing a mindset—where our focus is placed, what commands our attention, and what shapes our attitudes and decisions. As Christians, we will either "aspire toward the things of the Spirit or those of the flesh."<sup>4</sup> Every day you must choose if your thoughts and actions will be guided by the Spirit or the flesh. You can't do both at the same time. You can't simultaneously pursue holiness and push the line.

Remember, the flesh was your default *before* you were saved. The flesh functions against the will of God and can't please God. So why is this such a battle in the life of a Christ follower? I mean, we're alive in Christ. Wasn't there a 'switch' that got flipped? Absolutely there was! You were made spiritually alive through faith in Christ. But you still live in a broken, yet-to-be-redeemed world, and the flesh won't go down without a fight.

Our world is constantly shouting what it thinks we need. Advertisers have some of the biggest voices. 'You deserve more, you deserve better, you *need* this. Your deepest longings and desires will be fulfilled if you drive this car, eat this food, take this pill, join this gym or invest with us.' TV, movies, unbelieving friends, colleagues at school and work will tell you that your happiness is the cornerstone of a good life. So do whatever you want, as long as it makes you happy. Social media is a constant rush of 'if you have this or do this' you'll be fulfilled—just like the influencer. Radio and streaming music pump out songs that describe every sort of feed-the-flesh scenario you can imagine. The websites that feed on lust and

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<sup>4</sup> Briscoe, Stuart D. *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans* (Word, Inc., 1982), 159.

longing continue to surge because there's a seemingly insatiable desire for more in the sinful, broken hearts of people.

That's the world you live in! And if the primary things speaking into your life are things of this broken world, the things of the flesh, then it's no wonder you feel dissatisfied and disconnected from God. You feel distracted, discouraged and defeated in your walk with Jesus. That's what Paul is talking about when he says, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death..." When you live under the dominion, authority or power of the flesh, you will feel distant, estranged from God. The unbeliever lives like this because he is dead. But the believer whose mind is set on the flesh will only experience dullness and deadness. To be "in the flesh" is to live like you're not saved even though you've been saved. It's living like you're still dead, even though you've been made alive in Christ. Death is all the old life, the flesh, can offer. The old way is familiar, maybe even comfortable, but the flesh can never deliver what our hearts most long for; only God can do that! Ask yourself this question: "What kind of person am I becoming and is it more like Jesus or less?"

How you answer that question is a good indicator of where you've set your mind, and that's up to you. Before you knew Jesus, you had no choice. Your mind was set on the flesh. You were dead in your sin (like Brian said, "Dead. Dead. Dead"). But you're alive in Christ now, so you can actively choose to say, "Yes!" to what God wants and He will supply all you need to get there. At the same time, you now have the power to say, "No!" to the temptations of the flesh. When you choose to say, "Yes!" to the Spirit and "No!" to the flesh, you begin to experience what it means to be free from the law of sin and death.

The choice is yours: death or life. Distance from or intimacy with God. Existing or truly living. Jesus did all the heavy lifting so we could experience everything God has for us. He wants you close. He wants you to live like the new creation that you are.<sup>5</sup> But you don't have the strength

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

to live like God wants on your own. You can't become more like Jesus through your own grit and determination. (If that were possible, Jesus never would have come!) The only way to enjoy your new life is to set our mind on the things of the Spirit and let the Spirit do the work in and through you. But living according to the Spirit isn't something you'll coast into. Casual interest won't get you there. You have to want it. It's a deliberate choice. And by cooperating with the Holy Spirit, you can do anything God wants because He will empower you to do it! It's through the power of the indwelling Spirit that you can enjoy the new life He's given you. There's no other way.

### **Future Assurance** (v 9-11)

Take a look now at verses 9-11. [READ]

"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."

The signature mark of someone who belongs to Jesus is the presence of the Holy Spirit in them. And it is precisely because of the Spirit within you that you now have the ability to please the One who saved you. Anyone who doesn't have the Holy Spirit doesn't belong to Christ. And *everyone* who belongs to Christ, *in* the Spirit, is no longer obligated to live under the dominion of the flesh. Again, the unbeliever has no choice but to follow the desires of the flesh. But when you live under the authority of the Spirit you can enjoy the life that Jesus died to give you *right now*.

But wait! There's more. One day your body will die, but you don't need to worry about that. Since you've been made alive in Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in you, your spirit is secure because you belong to God. You

can rest assured that your physical body will be taken care of too. When Jesus comes back, 1 Thessalonians tells us that the dead in Christ will rise (with resurrected, perfected, eternal bodies) and will meet the Lord in the air and will be with Him forever.<sup>6</sup> God made you as a physical/spiritual being. It takes both parts to make you *you*. He's not going to ignore the body He gave you and have you spend eternity as a disembodied spirit. He's going to resurrect your body, it will be undeniably you, everyone will know it's you, but it will be sinless and perfect. No more wrestling with the flesh. Your body and spirit will be rejoined and you will enjoy the entirety of what God wanted for you since the Garden of Eden. The same Spirit who resurrected Jesus will resurrect [me] you.

### **Practical Applications**

The key to fully enjoying the life that Christ has given you is anchored in your Spirit-enabled ability to say "Yes!" to the things of God and "No!" to the things of the flesh. So, in these last few minutes, I want to share some practical things you can do to cultivate the habit of setting your mind on the things of the Spirit so that you can slowly push out the things of the flesh that so easily trip us up. Pick a few and start there. You don't have to do them all at once. You can add others as you continue to grow.

But before I get to the practicals, I really want you to *recognize the battle for your mind*.

- Your mind doesn't remain neutral. It is either being conformed to this world or being transformed by renewal (Romans 12:1-2). You must choose.
- Because you're in Christ, you can set your mind on and seek the things of Christ (Colossians 3:1-2). You don't have to be dominated by old thoughts or habits.
- Through the Spirit you can take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Okay! Now, some useful tips for *setting your mind on the Spirit*.

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

- Start each day by listening to, reading or reflecting on God's Word. Let Him speak to your heart and mind before all the other voices chime in.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through the day and to give you strength to resist the flesh.
- Memorize key verses to help you overcome temptation (Psalm 119:11). It could be as simple as "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). Recite the verse every time temptation comes.
- Pray aloud throughout your day. In the morning, when driving or working out in the yard. Pray aloud every time temptation comes. Praying out loud reminds you that God is present and listening.
- Listen to worship music. There are all kinds of styles and artists. Find some that lifts up the name of Jesus. It'll help push out the noise of the world.
- Immediate obedience. When the Spirit nudges you, move. How do you know if it's the Spirit? He will always guide you in ways consistent with God's Word. He will *never* contradict it!
- Hang out with other Christ followers. Make sure your inner-circle is made up of hungry, Spirit-led believers (Hebrews 10:24).
- Guard your eyes. Be careful what you watch on TV, movies or online. If it evokes fear, anxiety, lust or anger (to name a few), shut it down. You want to focus on things that are excellent or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).
- Invite the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit in you (Galatians 5:22-23). Love, joy, peace, patience and the rest grow in you as you are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit each day.

## **Wrap**

As these practices become habits, your mind will begin to gravitate toward the things of the Spirit, shaping your thoughts, attitudes and choices. Ultimately your life will be marked by His life and peace. You don't have to live like you used to and the Holy Spirit will help you every step of the way as you set your mind on Him. Say "Yes!" to His lead and

"No!" to the old, default way of living. "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

Let's pray.

### Pray

Help us, Lord Jesus. We want to be people who live fully and freely in You.

Help us to set our minds on the Spirit and cultivate a new default that is focused on You.

Help us as we seek You daily, hiding Your Word in our hearts, taking our thoughts captive, filling our hearts and minds with things that honor and glorify you.

Help us to fully enjoy all You have for us and give us the strength by Your Spirit to live like the people You created us to be for Your glory.

### Bless & Go

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

Prepared to worship through giving, the black boxes are by the doors on your way out.

Happy Father's Day! Go rest, play or celebrate in whatever way fills your tank.

Stay close to Jesus! Let His Spirit guide you.

We'll see you next time.

Goodbye for now!