

Changed By The Spirit

David Carter

Unshakeable: Romans / Romans 8:12-18

There are some changes in life that happen in a moment, but take a while to sink in. Changes in status that we have to grow into.

Like I remember when Ally and I first got married, right after the ceremony we got into the limo and we looked at each other and said, do you feel any different? And we both thought for a second and said no.

We didn't feel any different, but something monumental had just happened that drastically changed our identity. We didn't realize it at the time, the impact of that day would take years to sink in.

You think about it, in one moment you go from being an individual, only concerned about yourself, to being one with another person, and everything you do from that moment forward impacts each other.

In one moment, I was made the husband of Ally, that was my legal status. But it took me years to learn what it meant to be a husband. Still learning by the way.

I often think about that connection when it comes to what it means to be changed by the Holy Spirit.

I mean here's what Paul tells us today, that if you are a follower of Jesus, if you have made that decision to follow Jesus. You are not the same person you were before you made that decision.

When you place your faith in Jesus in an instant you become a child of God, you have been adopted into God's family. And you may not feel any different, but a monumental shift has happened.

And yet from that moment on we have to learn what it looks like to walk and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit, to teach us, and train us to walk worthy of the calling that has been placed on our lives, we cannot live this Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit changes us.

The Work of the Holy Spirit isn't just to help you and I survive the Christian life; he changes who you are, who you belong to and where you're going.

Look with me this morning at our passage in Romans 8

Romans chapter 8 just may well be my favourite chapter not just in Romans, but in the whole Bible. I know that sounds a bit drastic, but when I grasped what Paul was saying here it was a true turning point in my Christian walk.

It helped me understand what it means to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8 is all about the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. What it looks like to live and walk in the Holy Spirit and how it is absolutely impossible to live the Christian life apart from his working in our lives.

Chapter 7 led us to this point, like the key to understanding what's going on in chapter 8, is to remember the defeat and frustration we left off with in chapter 7.

That vicious cycle we all feel so often. Oh how I want to live my life for Christ, I want to honour God, I want to walk in obedience to his commands, I want to grow in holiness and righteousness.

But so often I fail, so often the very thing I don't want to do, the very thing I hate is the thing that I keep on doing, and the things I want to do, I cannot do.

Remember what Paul said, he said I have the desire to do it, but not the ability. And we all felt that remember. We've been there, that cycle of falling, and failing and coming back to the cross, confessing, repenting, only to find ourselves failing all over again, struggling with guilt and shame.

The frustration, the exhaustion, and the answer we said wasn't that I need to try harder or lock in, the answer wasn't that I just need to focus.

Paul left off crying out who will deliver me from this body of death!

Romans 8 is that answer, if we are going to experience victory, if we are going to experience any kind of spiritual growth, if we are going to see any progress in holiness and righteousness, the answer isn't trying harder, the answer is learning what it means to walk and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to be reminded of the gospel! And what we gain by faith in the gospel.

Like if we are going to grow, if we are going to experience victory over sin, we need to be reminded of the gospel, it's why Paul starts the way he does in Romans 8:1.

Romans 8:1 ESV

¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Why would he start that way, except for the fact that we need to preach the gospel to ourselves everyday,

Be reminded oh child of God in your battle against sin, that because of what Jesus has accomplished on the cross there is no condemnation for you. Jesus Christ took on all the condemnation our sin deserved, he who knew no sin, became sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God, do you see.

Be reminded of the gospel! Preach it to yourself everyday, because you need to be reminded on your worst day, when you have failed the Lord for the 100th time you need to be reminded that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But brother, sister you need to be reminded even on your best day, the days that you and I think we got everything right, that you are still not beyond the desperate need of the gospel.

But because we belong to Jesus, we have his presence living in us every single day...

Romans 8:9 ESV

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.

When you place your faith in Jesus, you gain his Spirit, his presence living in you. It's what makes you his, anyone who doesn't have the Holy Spirit, doesn't belong to Christ.

Which means the opposite is true doesn't it. That if you have his Holy Spirit, you belong to him. It's what makes you belong to Jesus, you have his presence, his power living in you right now. And that changes everything.

What kind of power is that, well look again at what verse 11 says!

Romans 8:11 ESV

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.

You have life, the life of Christ in you. But I love what Paul says here, like he wants you and I to know what kind of power is in you and me. It's the kind of power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, think about that. How much power do you think it took, what kind of power do you think it took to raise Jesus from the dead.

And Paul is saying to you and me, the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, that resurrection power, lives in every one who belongs to Jesus.

Why in the world, would we try to live this Christian life in our own strength, in our own flesh, when we have the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

That's the key, the key to victory, growth in holiness, is learning what it means to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But what exactly does the Holy Spirit do? Paul digs into that here.

The Holy Spirit changes us, he changes who we are, who we belong to, and where we're headed.

And we don't always feel it, no. In fact it's a change that takes time to learn what it all means and what it looks like to walk in it.

But it is a change, nonetheless.

CHANGES WHO WE ARE

See the Holy Spirit changes who we are. That's the first thing Paul tells us in verse 12 and 14.

The Holy Spirit changes who you are. He gives us a new identity.

Romans 8:12-14 ESV

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Notice that Paul starts with who we used to be...

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, but not to the flesh. That's who we used to be. We used to be debtors to the flesh.

He mentions something else in verse 15 do you see it there, he says you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear... that's who we used to be.

We used to be in debt, under control by this flesh, we used to be slaves of sin and fear. But the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ who now lives in us has given us a new identity.

Verse 14, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. That's who we are. I used to be a slave to fear, and in debt to my flesh, but not any longer, now I am a child of God, now verse 16 you see the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God.

That's the status that has changed. You are not who you used to be. You have a new identity.

But now, now you're identity is, you are child of God. Because of how the Holy Spirit changes you, you are no longer defined by your past, fear, guilt, shame, but you're identity, who you are is a child of God.

If you are here this morning and you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, if you are here this morning and you have been saved by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus repeat after me, I am a child of God.

That's who you are...

And it may not always feel like it, but your feelings aren't relevant to this fact. It's a change in your status, a change in who you are. And you might not feel like it all the time. You might not feel like it right away, but the work of the Spirit in us is to teach us what it means to walk as a child of God.

See the idea behind this is to understand the opposite, we're not debtors Paul says to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. The idea behind debtor here is not so much that we owe somethings, but that we have an obligation.

We have no obligation to the flesh; we have an obligation to Christ. The idea here is to keep the rest of Romans in mind, where we've been so far. Think about all that Christ has done for you, for me.

He has saved us from the wrath and judgement of God, he fulfilled justice on our behalf, taking the just penalty of our sin, he has given us new life in his name, we have been resurrected with him, he's set us free from the bondage of sin and the burden of the law, he's given us peace with God, and here he has made us a child of God.

If there is anyone we have an obligation to, it is to Jesus. That's the powerful motivator, what do you owe the flesh, what has the flesh given you except, guilt, and shame, bondage, and fear.

If you live according to the flesh, you will continue to experience death.

Then what does it look like to live in obligation to Christ, look again at verse 13.

If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live...

That's what it looks like, that as you and I follow Jesus more and more we are putting to death, we are killing the deeds of the flesh.

Notice that contrast, if you live by the flesh you will die, but living by the Spirit is killing the flesh, do you see the contrast, here are your choices, either you are killing sin, or sin is killing you, either you are putting sin to death, or sin is causing death in you.

How do I do that? How do I kill sin, well notice that key phrase by the Spirit. Remember that's the whole point we can't do it on our own, we can't fight it in our own strength, we can't kill it put it to death by ourselves, we do it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But practically what does that look like, well look at verse 14, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

That's the answer isn't it. Are we being led by the Spirit?

See growth doesn't happen by us sitting idly by and just waiting for the Holy Spirit to work, growth happens as you and I submit to the leading of Holy Spirit, when we allow ourselves to be led and in tune with the Holy Spirit.

That as the Holy Spirit convicts us we listen to that conviction, when he places a burden on us to speak, to read, to listen, to go, we follow. As he leads us, we follow that leading, as he probes us we don't quench him, but follow his leading.

A change has taken place, and when we first come to Jesus and we have the power of the Holy Spirit we don't know all that he entails, but we learn about

him the same way you learn what it means to be a husband, to be a wife, to be a parent, you take steps and live and learn as you go.

How is the Holy Spirit leading you this morning? Is there a sin that he is calling you to put to death, a relationship that is holding you back, causing you to stumble, do you sense him placing a burden on your heart to read, to study God's Word, is there someone he has been calling you to reach out to, is there somewhere he is calling you to go, a step of faith he is urging to you to move.

The Holy Spirit changes who you are, he's given you a new identity in Christ...

But you need to know, you're not alone in this journey.

WHO WE BELONG TO

The Holy Spirit changes who you belong to; he adopts you into God's family.

Romans 8:14-16 ESV

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

You did not receive the spirit of slavery, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry Abba, Father... we are now children of God.

Think about that for a second. You know I thought to myself, like God didn't have to do this right. Like he could have just forgiven us our sin, he could have just given us eternal life.

But he doesn't have to adopt us, he doesn't have to make us his children.

What an act, what a demonstration of his love, that he would not just redeem me, but make me his own.

Think about what adoption means, it means that God has chosen you for himself. When you adopt someone, it means it's a purposeful choice isn't it.

I've talked to some people who have been adopted as kids and they express to me what a difference that makes to them, that their parent didn't have to adopt them, but they chose them, they chose to make them their child.

God chose to make you his child.

What assurance that gives us, that our salvation isn't by chance. Your salvation isn't an accident, but this image is that God has chosen you, chosen me to be his child, how humbling, comforting, assuring is that. That I am not here by accident, but God has chosen me to be a part of his family. The Holy Spirit makes that a reality.

But we can't think of adoption like we do today, it wouldn't go far enough. Usually people adopt because they desire to have a child but are unable to.

But in the Roman world, that wasn't the case. It was usually people of status or wealth who needed an heir, someone to take over their fortune, their position or status when passed on.

And maybe they didn't have a child of their own or maybe they felt that the children they had were not fit to take that role.

And so what they would do is they would search for a child that met their specifications. And they would pay the parents an amount to relinquish their parental rights and they would take the child into their home as their own and they would raise this child, train this child, prepare them for their future inheritance.

That's the image that we're meant to have. That God has chosen me as his child for a purpose, to train me up in righteousness, to prepare me for the inheritance, the future he has for me.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit as he adopts us into God's family he trains us up in righteousness, shows us what it looks like to walk worthy of the calling that has been placed on us.

It's this motivation, this goes back to our obligation, that you and I have been called to be representatives of God's family, we represent our heavenly father wherever we go. When people look at us and they know that we belong to God, when we call ourselves a child of God, the way we act, we talk, we treat people, the decisions we make all reflect the family we are a part of.

We know this as parents don't we. Because each of our kids has our last name tied to them. And when they're out in public the way they act, the way they talk, the way they carry themselves has a certain reflection on us as parents. Our kids represent us out there in the world, they represent our family.

That's what Paul is saying here, you are a child of God, which comes as a great and amazing privilege, but it comes with responsibility. We carry the name of Jesus wherever we go.

Some people the only Bible they'll read is the life you live before them.

But there's something far more precious here that comes with adoption. This personal and intimate relationship with the God of all creation. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And because you are a child of God, you have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry Abba, Father.

And I know you might have heard it before, but that title 'Abba' there, is an intimate title for father, something like daddy, dad. Now that doesn't mean that you can go into prayer and say daddy and start calling God daddy, I don't think that's what it means, it's just a symbol of the close relationship we have with our heavenly father.

Like there are certain names that my children call me, dad, yes, my daughter likes to call me padre, but they have access to me that no one else does. That I could be doing the most important thing in the world, and if my kids need me, truly need me, I will drop what I am doing and be there. I will rearrange my schedule to make sure my kids are a priority.

It's this symbolism of how precious you and I are to the God of the universe, the one who holds all of existence in the palm of his hand, the one who created, and sustains every thing seen and unseen, he is our heavenly father. And we can cry out to him any time of the day.

But what does that mean for us in our growth in holiness, how does this help us in our fight against sin.

We'll think about the difference that is being laid out here... You did not receive the spirit of slavery... but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons...

What's the difference between a slave and a son? Fear and love, obligation and honour isn't it.

See a slave obeys out of fear, if they disobey there are consequences from their master, they obey maybe out of obligation.

But a son a daughter, obey their father out of love, out of a desire to honour them. What a difference, like what is more powerful motivator, fear or love, obligation or relationship.

See the difference is this, that I go to church not because I have to, but I want to, I set aside time to read and study God's word not because I think God is going to withhold his love, but because of his love, I don't give into temptation not because of obligation or fear, but because I don't want to dishonour a father who has loved me, and given me so much.

It's a difference, you are not a slave to obey out of fear, but a child who fulfills God's command in love, knowing that it comes from a place of love.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit within us; he changes who we are, he changes who we belong to,

Finally The Holy Spirit changes your future, he gives us a future and a hope.

CHANGES OUR FUTURE

We are children of God, look at verse 17.

Romans 8:17 ESV

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Sit with that for a moment, as a child of God, we don't get a title, we have an inheritance waiting, we are heirs, heirs of the King of the universe, we are fellow heirs with Christ, which means that you and I share in the eternal inheritance of Christ.

Can our minds even fathom, what that means.

1 Peter 1:3–4 ESV

... an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

This is the hope of the Christian life. Not just that we can get by in this life, but that we have a future in Christ, an eternal future, a future far beyond what we know in this life.

We will one day reign forever with Jesus.

Much more than just sin forgiven, much more than just being adopted into Christ's family, but the work of the Holy Spirit is to prepare us for this future hope, this future glory.

And as amazing as that is, Paul has a way of keeping our hope in balance... do you see what he says.

We are fellow heirs with Christ verse 17... ***provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.***

It's this reality that we need to hear, that even though you and I have been adopted into God's family, even though we have a future waiting for us in heaven, there are real struggles in this life, there is real pain, real suffering that comes.

We wonder don't we, why, why if I am living my life for Jesus, why if I am a child of God, is life so hard at times, but then we find verses like this and we're reminded that suffering is a normal part of the Christian experience.

We are destined for glory, but the road to glory often leads through paths of suffering. Paul is saying, isn't that the road that Jesus walked, the road to glory for Jesus led to the suffering of the cross.

We want to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we want to share in the glory of Jesus, the inheritance of Jesus, but not in the sufferings of Jesus. And the suffering he's talking about isn't just the wear and tear of life, it's the suffering that comes from being a child of God, the suffering of rejection, the suffering of resisting sin, the suffering of going against the crowd.

But the hope is that even the suffering of this life is preparing us for glory. We serve a sovereign God, he takes the good, and the bad, and the ugly and he uses all the event of life to prepare us for glory.

Like an adopted child is prepared for their inheritance, sufferings have a way of preparing us for our eternal inheritance. We're like a diamond covered in rough and dirt and dross and when placed in the fire and all the mess is burned away, purified so trials have a way of purifying and preparing us for what's waiting.

Look at Paul's words in verse 18, this precious promise to hold onto.

Romans 8:18 ESV

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The promise isn't that we won't have trials and suffering, the promise is that the glory that God has prepared for us, far outweighs any suffering any cost in this life.

They aren't even worthy to be compared, not even in the same category, that when we reach heaven, when we are in glory for eternity with Jesus, the sufferings of this life won't even be a thought in our minds.

They cannot compare to the future, the inheritance, the glory that awaits us.

Let me take you back to that limo after our wedding ceremony, when we looked at each other and said — do you feel any different? And the answer was no. We didn't feel any different.

But something monumental had just happened. Something that would take years to fully understand.

That's exactly what Paul is describing this morning.

When you place your faith in Jesus, when the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life, something monumental happens. A change takes place. A real, permanent, legal change. And you may not feel it right away. You may not fully understand it right away. But it is real.

And the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, from that moment forward, is to teach you what that change actually means. To help you walk in it. To show you who you really are.

If you are in Christ — if you have placed your faith in Jesus — I want you to hear this.

You are not who you used to be. You are not that slave to fear anymore. You are not that person defined by your failures and your flesh. You are a child of God. That's your identity. That's who you are.

But you are not on your own. You have a Father. Not a distant, disinterested Father. Not a Father you have to perform for to earn his approval. A Father who

chose you. Who searched you out. Who paid a price to bring you into his family. And you can cry out to him any time, any place, in any season. Abba. Father.

You have been given a future and a hope.

Whatever you are carrying right now — whatever suffering, whatever hardship, whatever feels like it might break you — it is not the end of your story. You are a fellow heir with Christ. And what is waiting for you on the other side of this life cannot even be compared to what you are walking through right now.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't just help you survive the Christian life. He changes who you are. He changes who you belong to. And he changes where you're going.

And maybe you're here this morning and you're not yet in Christ.

I want you to know that these precious promises are held out to you this morning. Coming to Jesus is so much more than just your sin being forgiven. It's abundant life Jesus said, life as it was meant to be lived.

Life with meaning and purpose, life in God's family, live with a future and a hope.

God so loved the world that he gave us his son, that whoever believes in him has eternal life...

You can experience true life in Christ today.