



HEIRS WITH CHRIST

ROMANS 8:1-17

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Union Church. My name is Kyle Rodriguez, I am one of the pastors here, and it is a privilege to get to once again dig into the Word of God with you.

One of the great things about being a church plant is that we get to see new faces every week. The Lord has been so kind to us to allow us to meet new people over these last few weeks, but one of the downsides to that is that many of us don't know each other very well yet. I don't know many of you, you don't know much about me. And if we are going to be a church where real fellowship happens, where real discipleship happens, where real *life* happens, then we need to know each other. So, I'll go first.

I can very distinctly, as a child, remember my father trying to teach me how things worked. And I also remember that I didn't particularly love those conversations. I just wanted to go play with my friends. I just wanted to go read a book. I just wanted to go plan the trampoline outside. I didn't want to learn how the plumbing worked. I didn't want to learn how the different parts of the toilet flush valve worked together. I didn't want to learn how the wood stove and the furnace connected to the hot water heater. I just didn't care.

But, now I have a house. Now, I have no idea if the water coming into our basement is because of a foundation issue, or if it's because of a grading issue outside, or if it's because of a sump pump issue. I have no idea why our tub keeps clogging, I just buy Draino every other week. I have no idea where to start, when something goes wrong. And I also don't know how to be grateful for the particular systems. We moved into this new house and there is a brand new furnace, brand new water softener. There's a brand new thermostat and a whole HVAC system that had been put in, with humidity control and whatnot. And I have no idea how to use all these different things. The different benefits that they have, different features, because I've no idea how they work.

The less we know about how something works, (1) the more trouble we're in, when something goes wrong and (2) the less we can be grateful for them and utilize them well.

And that's just as true of our faith as it is of our tools and toys. It's especially true of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation he has granted to his people. We've been talking a lot over the

last couple weeks about our union with Christ, and we've talked about how union with Christ is one way that we can describe the salvation that the Lord has given us, that he has united us to Jesus.

Which means, we have been buried with Christ. Our guilt and our sin has died with him. It's been killed and we've also been raised with Christ. We have been raised to new life, actually able to live a life that pleases God. And we will be raised with him bodily and resurrected one day and those are good things.

But today, we are going to be asking the question. Well, how does God do that? How does that work? How is that salvation possible? What, what happens to actually make that union with Christ a reality?

Because the more well-acquainted we are with the way that God works—the way that our salvation works—the more well-acquainted we are, the better prepared will be when something goes wrong. We'll know what to ask for from the Lord, for example, and the more grateful we can be for our salvation, the more effectively we can utilize it and live into it.

So, that is our goal today. And to do so, we'll be looking at the first 17 verses of Romans 8. Now, before we dive into Romans 8, would you pray with me?

TEXT

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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.

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. 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, 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.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON SUMMARY

What we see in this passage is just a snapshot of the “how it works” of our salvation. And what we see is that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, is that method. If you’re a note taker, here is our main point for today:

Through the Holy Spirit, we are united to Christ and given all of the benefits of his inheritance.

We have said throughout the last two weeks that the “salvation” that you often hear Christians talking about *is* Union with Christ. Because we are united with him, we are “saved.” And our salvation through that union is comprised with several different elements. One way that Christians have talked about this salvation is being composed of three elements:

- **Justification:** Being made right with God because of the death of Christ on a cross.
- **Sanctification:** Being gradually transformed into the image of Christ as a part of the Christian life here and now..
- **Glorification:** Being one day reunited with Christ, seeing God face-to-face, and being completely and totally renewed, body and soul.

So, to give you a little window into where we’re going today, we’re going to be looking at each of those three elements. Because Paul here shows us that the Holy Spirit is uniquely involved in each of those things. So, here’s what we’re going to cover today:

1. The Holy Spirit applies our justification.
2. The Holy Spirit enables our sanctification.
3. The Holy Spirit assures us of our glorification.

The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in every aspect of the salvation that God has provided for us, and so, I hope that by walking through that in this manner, we will be more grateful for him, we will know him better, and we will have a more intimate relationship with him.

1. The Holy Spirit applies our justification.

Take a brief look back at the very first two verses of chapter 8.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”

These are two of the most beautiful, life-giving verses in this book, at least, they have been for me.

We’ve talked quite a bit over the last two weeks about our justification—how Jesus Christ has made us right with God by dying on the Cross on our behalf, taking the just punishment for our sin in our stead. So, I won’t belabor the point this morning, but I do want to point to a few things that Paul is doing here in these first two verses.

Paul’s primary point to start out this chapter is that there is now “no condemnation” for those who are in Christ Jesus. For those who have been united to Christ, condemnation has disappeared. It is no longer in the vocabulary, in the reality, in the experience of the Christian.

One of America’s great theologians of the 1800s, Charles Hodge, put it like this:

Those who are in Christ are not exposed to condemnation. And this ... is not to be understood as descriptive of their present state merely, but of their permanent position. They are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. They shall never be condemned. ... The whole chapter is a proof of the safety of believers, of their security not only from present condemnation, but from future perdition. Nothing shall ever separate them from the love of God, is the triumphant conclusion to which the apostle arrives.¹

If you are united to Christ, then your condemnation has already occurred, with Christ, and thus, present and future condemnation from God is no longer something to be feared.

But how has this condemnation been removed? Remember, that’s the question we’re asking today.

By the Holy Spirit, who has set us free from the law of sin and death. Now, Paul has spent a lot of time in Romans up until this point working through the role of God’s moral law, how merely having the law of God available to us does nothing except reveal how unable we are to follow it. We’ve talked about this a lot over the last two weeks. Paul is saying: You once were bound to the law of sin and death, you were slaves to sin, which naturally leads to death, death of the body and death of the soul, eternal condemnation.

But now, the Spirit has set you free from that condemnation by placing you under a new law, a law of life and redemption, the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ! He has bound you to Jesus and has given you new life.

And here's the thing I want to leave this point with, friends: Only the Spirit can do this. You can't do it. You can't voluntarily unite yourself to Jesus any more than an unconscious body can voluntarily give itself CPR!

You don't have the heart to love and desire him (Ez. 36:26-27; Gal. 6:16-17), you don't have the eyes to see him (1 Cor. 2:9-12), you don't have the mind to a worldview that reflects his worldview that would drive you to see your need for him or to trust him (Eph. 4:23, Tit. 3:5).

You can't get any of those things but by the Holy Spirit. He is the one who must apply the justification of Christ to you by helping you see, feel, and think the gospel. You naturally should operate under the law of sin and death, you need something supernatural to be placed under the law of the Spirit of life. You need the Spirit to give you new life, or, as the Bible so often puts it, you need to be born of the Spirit.

And when the Spirit does that in you, friends, it is a miraculous thing. It is a wonderful thing, to say: "There is therefore now no condemnation, for I am in Christ Jesus!"

When you can say that, friend, the Spirit has applied the justifying work of Christ on you.

Again, we've talked a lot about that over the last two weeks, so let's keep moving to what else the Spirit does.

2. The Holy Spirit enables our sanctification.

We've said this a few times the last few weeks, the salvation of Jesus Christ is not merely meant to put you in a new position. Right, that's what that moment of justification is meant to do for you:

- You once were at odds with God, now you have been made right with him.
- You once were citizens of the kingdom of darkness, now you have been made a citizen of Christ's kingdom.
- You once were under the law of sin and death, now you are under the law of the Spirit of life.

You've been put into a new position, given a new status.

But the salvation of Christ is not merely meant to give you a new status. The status is meant to lead to something. Just as a new job title is meant to lead to new job responsibilities, being united to Christ to new life is meant to lead to a new kind of living.

And the way that Paul describes that *new* life here in verses 4-11 is by contrasting the life of the "flesh" with the life of the "Spirit."

Now, the flesh, is synonymous for the you without Christ, your broken, sinful self, and it produces a certain kind of life, a life full of sin and a life destined for condemnation and death. But the life of the Spirit looks different, elsewhere Paul says it's marked by fruit of the Spirit.²

Now, here's the interesting thing. Our justification was a one-time, snap moment. In the eyes of God, we are holy, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Right now! It was instantaneous as soon as the Holy Spirit united us to Jesus and gave us new life in him.

And yet, Paul knows that our experience of that new life is not an instantaneous transformation. Although our status has changed, we have a lot of growth to go to live into that new status. And that's why Paul writes these letters to these churches, to encourage them to continue striving and persevering toward holiness, in the process of sanctification—that's what sanctification means, the process of being made holy.

And what is also clear from this passage is that that process of sanctification, which gets worked out in our lives every single day, only happens by the power of the Spirit.

And how does the Spirit do this? How does he produce these fruits in us? **He transforms our minds.**

Look at verses 5-8:

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. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So, the first thing the Spirit does to affect our sanctification, to grow us into people who *do* please God, is by renewing our minds.³ And he renews our minds by giving us something new to think about.

Friends, I'm sorry if this frustrates you, if it's ultimately not what you came to Union Church this morning for, but we want to be a people who *think* hard, about God. About Christ and his redemption. About the Spirit's mighty work.

One of the things that I have been getting into more and more over the last couple years is reading the works of Puritan pastors from the 17th and 18th centuries. I first started intentionally reading the Puritans by reading the Valley of Vision, which is a collection of Puritan prayers and meditations. And I was struck by how beautifully written these prayers were, how they affected my heart, and my longings and emotions in powerful ways. And ever since, I've tried to read more and more of them. And the more I've read of them, the more I've come to understand that for these Puritan pastors, these emotions, this visceral love and affection for God and the gospel, those feelings didn't come by accident. They came by deep, intentional thinking.

If you start reading sermons from these pastors, you see that they did not read scripture quickly. They would take one verse and they would milk it for all it was worth. They would look at each word from different angles, they would think about how the logic of the verse fit together, they would think about their life experience of those topics and compare them to Scripture. They spent so much time thinking about the Word of God.

Because the Puritans knew, as J.I. Packer once put it, “that God’s way to the human heart is via the human head.”⁴ If you want to obey the Lord more, to be sanctified and made holy in his image, then your desires, your affections need turned to him. **And God will never be the object of your affections until he is the object of your reflections.**

Your brain is accosted every single hour of the day with the things of this world. You turn on your phone in the morning and you have notifications from social media, reminding you of all the restaurants you haven’t been to, all the new (or thrifty) clothes that you could be buying, all the current events you’ve missed, or at least the memes you’ve missed. You drive in your car to work and you’re thinking of all the things you have to get done today, and you start dwelling on that one thing you don’t want to do or that one person you don’t want to talk to. You’re sitting at home alone, for whatever reason, and your mind starts to wander down forbidden, tempting paths.

What is it you think about? What is it you set aside time in your day to think about? What is it your mind wanders to when you have to sit still for a moment? Does it seek out distraction? Does it drown in anxiety and worry? Does it turn inward and focus on the self? What do we set our minds on?

Friends, if you want the Holy Spirit to be working in you, if you want him to sanctify you and renew you: then we have to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. You have to set your minds on the book that he wrote for you!

We have to read our Bibles! Deeply, richly. We have to talk about these truths, get curious about them! Come to Bible Study. Join a group of men or women who are setting aside time every week to probe this book.

Think on these things, friends. Think on them until you’ve wrung them dry. Think on them until your heart has been stirred up, until your love for the Father has been rekindled, until the beauty of Christ has become more clear, until the work of the Spirit is made real to you. The work of the Spirit in your life starts here.

This might seem daunting. It might seem like something that’s not up your alley.

But friends, the work is not merely left up to you. Because if you are united to Christ, Paul says here in verse 9 that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If you belong to Jesus, his Spirit is in you. And if Christ is in you, by his Spirit, then that same Spirit who rose Christ from the dead will give you life (10-11). He will renew your minds, and you will live (13).

3. The Holy Spirit assures us of our glorification.

Now, again, Paul knows that the process of sanctification is hard. It takes work. It takes perseverance. And so once again he reiterates that for the believer, the Holy Spirit is hard at work right now to carry us along. And one of the ways he carries us along is by assuring us of the hope of what is to come.

Let's finish our passage, starting from verse 14.

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, 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.

So, the hope that Paul is holding out to the Romans, the hope that this passage holds out to us today, is that we have been adopted by the Father, through the Spirit of adoption, as sons and daughters. Because we've been united to Christ, and Jesus Christ is the son of God, we too are drawn into the family of God as children of the Father.

And the reason why this is so hopeful for Paul is that becoming a son of God means becoming his heir. His son. His daughter. Set to inherit all of his wealth, all of his estate. It is the inheritance that was foreshadowed to the people of Israel in all of the promises of God to them.

It is an inheritance of new, redeemed bodies. Bodies that not only will never break down with the curse of cancer and COVID and colitis, but bodies that will never sin, never feel the poisonous ache of temptation, never will be distracted by the things of the flesh.

It is an inheritance of family. The presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as he is our God, and we are his people. We shall see him face to face, as he really is, without the veil of sin, death, and brokenness that limits us now.

It is an inheritance of a new creation, a place made for our enjoyment and cultivation, a place where catastrophe never occurs, creativity can be utilized to its fullest potential, and unrest and division are never heard from. It is the Father's family estate filled with rooms to be explored and feasts to be had.

It is an inheritance of responsibility. Paul says in 2 Timothy that we will reign with him—given responsibility and authority over that new creation to manifest the rule of Christ in all his goodness, creativity, love, and joy for all eternity.

And though that inheritance is not in our possession yet, we are assured of its reality, of this incredible hope we have, by the Holy Spirit here and now. It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to truly see God as our Father. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the knowledge of the promises of

our Father to us, through his Word. It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we really are children of God.

Friends, how will you know if the Holy Spirit is moving in your life? How will we know if the Holy Spirit is at work here at Union Church? How will we know if the Holy Spirit is bearing witness here?

If we are a people who are putting to death the deeds of the flesh. If we are a people who set our minds on things of the Spirit. If, in this place, life is given to our mortal bodies and we cry with one voice, Abba, Father—if the Holy Spirit bears witness in our souls that we are sons and daughters of God, if he assures us of the hope that is to come and that hope prompts us to holiness and faithful witness, that is how we will know the Holy Spirit is working here.

So, friends, today, let us plead with the Spirit to apply the justification of Christ's blood to the lost, to enable us to be a holy people, and to assure our spirits that our inheritance is secure. And let us love him more, for doing all that we ask.

¹ Charles Hodge, [*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*](#), New Edition., (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 391.

² Now, it's important to not that this new life, this new fruit, doesn't make you right with God. That's already happened, by the Spirit uniting you to Jesus Christ, who died for you. There is nothing you can add to Christ's life, death, and resurrection that will make you any more acceptable to God. Instead, Paul says, this new life is meant to be fruit of the Spirit, evidence that the Spirit is working in you. Now, I can't tell you the difference between a birch tree and an ash tree, but I can tell you the difference between an apple and an orange tree. The fruit makes it really easy! In that same way, the fruits of the Spirit at work in our lives are meant to be evidence of the kind of being we are. Are we people of the flesh, or of the Spirit?

³ Paul says it more famously in Romans 12:2 – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewal* of your mind.” And Paul only uses that word *renewal* one other place in the New Testament: Titus 3:5, where he says that God “saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and *renewal* of the Holy Spirit.”

⁴ Ryken, Leland. *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*. United States: Zondervan, 2010.