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## Indwelt by the Spirit's Enabling Presence

### Romans 8:1-17

*Pastor Russ Kennedy*

From Romans 1 through Romans 7, the Holy Spirit is mentioned only twice. Here in Romans 8, He is referred to twenty-two times! While we have a decisive deliverance from sin's power through the cross of Christ in Romans 6 and a frustrating futility from sin working in us in Romans 7, we have a freeing liberation through the work of the Spirit as we walk in the Spirit in Romans 8.

"There is no reason why those who are in Christ Jesus should go on doing penal servitude as though they had never been pardoned and liberated from the prison house of sin." (F.F. Bruce) Romans 8 shows us how we live in the freedom and power of God's Spirit while yet groaning and suffering. While we walk in the Spirit, we do so in the world until the Lord comes.

So we begin with the ministry of God's Spirit. He indwells us and He enables us. He assures us of our sonship. He brings to our experience all the promises and privileges of the New Covenant.

We now have a present indwelling that enables godly living. "The fundamental contrast in the whole passage is between the inability and weakness on the one hand of the law to renew and reorder life so long as sin is in control, and the effectual life-giving power of God's own presence in the Spirit on the other. The outcome is to open the way for the fulfillment of God's holy and just commandment."<sup>5</sup>

Godly living begins with the truth that there is no condemnation for us (v.1) and ends with our personal testimony that there is no one to condemn us (v.34).

### **To Change us by God's Righteousness**

**(v.1-8)**

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. <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>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>5</sup>James Luther Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996, c1988).

### ***God's Spirit changes us because of Spiritual Realities (v.1-4).***

We who are in Christ are not condemned. Why? The law of the Spirit of life set us free from the law of sin and death. What does he mean by this? He explains it in the next verse.

**The law of sin and death is this:** weakened by the flesh, the Law could not bring nor produce righteousness with the consequence that we are controlled by sin and condemned to death.

**The law of the Spirit of life is this:** God sent Jesus in a human body into the realm of the flesh to condemn sin and complete the Law for us.

“As believers ‘in Christ’, we are free from condemnation because Jesus Christ has completely fulfilled the law on our behalf. He became what we are – weak, human and subject to sin’s power – that we might become what he is – righteous and holy.” (D.A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary*).

### ***God's Spirit changes us through Spiritual Practice (v.5-8).***

What God has done in Christ He makes true in us. Those who have been set free from sin’s domination to the Spirit’s control are those who do walk according to the spirit. They are characterized by how they live. They live the way they do because of their mindset.

Through these contrasts Paul explains why it is that the Spirit, and not the flesh, brings life. People ‘in the flesh’ – that is, those who live in the ‘old regime’ where sin and death reign – have mind-sets dominated by ungodly impulses (v.5); they cannot *submit to God's law* (v.7) or *please God* (v.8) but are under sentence of death (v.6). On the other hand, Christians, ‘in the Spirit’, who have been transferred into the new regime where grace and righteousness reign and who have therefore been given a new mind-set focused on the Spirit, enjoy *life and peace* (v.6).” (Carson, *NBC*).

Here is the primary function of the Spirit in practical terms of changing us: He gives us a new mindset that transforms us. Notice, those who mind the flesh, are live according to the flesh, are hostile to God, do not and cannot submit to God’s law, do not please God and all this is death, God’s judgment.

## To Indwell us as God's Life

(v.9-13)

<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.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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.

### *The Spirit in Us*

If the Spirit is in us, then we are in the Spirit and not in the flesh. All of those who are in Christ have the Holy Spirit in them. It is the Spirit's work to take the promises of the Scripture and the work that Christ has done and apply it to us. He does this by indwelling us, giving us life. He does this by placing us in Christ. All who are in Christ have applied to them all that Christ has accomplished. Therefore, we are dead to sin and alive in Christ. Yet we live in this world until He comes.

We will be characterized by life, the life of Christ. The indwelling of the Spirit imparts the character of Christ so that we will live the righteousness of Christ. Further, this life is God's gift by the Spirit as opposed to sin's wages of death and judgment.

### *Us in the Spirit*

Those who are in Christ are in the spirit. This is another way that Paul identifies the new realm, the new creation. The new creation is marked by life and by spirit. It is an immersion into the blessed life of God just as we are immersed in water in baptism (Romans 6).

In these verses, the words life and death are also meant to convey blessing and judgment. The body is dead, not in that it is inanimate, but that it is corrupted and condemned; it is mortal. But we have God's approval and right standing before Him characterized by the word, *life*. So, the present possession of spiritual life in dying and mortal bodies anticipates the possession of spiritual life in a living and glorified body at the resurrection.

### *Christ in Us*

Notice that Christ is in us *by the Spirit*. The second person of the Godhead sits on the right hand of God in heaven. The Spirit indwells us in such a way that it is Christ in us. While maintaining the uniqueness of each person, Paul underscores the unity of the Godhead. The Father sent the Son to do what those who were in the Spirit needed (v.3-4). And now, the Spirit is in us as an extension of the Son (v.9-12).

Here we are called by faithfulness to the Scriptures to hold in tension two clear truths: that the indwelling of the Spirit infallibly secures eternal life, and that a lifestyle empowered by and patterned after God's Spirit is necessary to inherit eternal life. The Spirit is given to empower our activity in righteousness. (Carson, *NBC*).

So, we do not owe the flesh anything. Sin has its wages, its cost. Sin tries to enslave us as a means of debt. But it is operating in the sphere of death. We are now in life with life in us. Sin no longer owns us. Sin no longer contractually holds us. So we put to death what has already died and live in the life we already have. This is how the New Testament talks about the Christian life.

## To Assure us as God's Sons

(v.14-17)

Since this is so, we have a new obligation and a new identification.

<sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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.

### *Of our Relationship as Sons*

We are obligated in how we live. We are not to live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Why? Because a ministry of the Spirit is to assure us that we are God's sons. The *being led by the Spirit* is not in terms of making personal decisions, but rather of being under the Spirit's control. Those whom the Spirit controls, He helps to recognize their sonship, and bears witness in them that they are God's sons. He therefore functions as the Spirit who makes our sonship real to us. Adoption here is not the idea of being brought into the family, but that of being recognized as sons. So Jesus is publicly acknowledged as God's true Son and He responds with these words of intimacy, *Abba Father. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."* (Mark. 14:36, ESV). This term also points to God's people who are His sons and daughters, graciously chosen by Him according to His good purposes. (See Romans 8:23; 9:4; Galatians. 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).

### *Of our Standing as Sons*

Our adoption into God's family, however amazing and comforting, is not the end of the story. For to be children is also to be *heirs*: to be still waiting for the full bestowment of all the rights and privileges conferred on us as God's children (v.17). As *the* Son of God had to suffer before entering into his glory (1 Peter 1:11), so we sons of God by adoption must also suffer 'with him' before sharing in his glory. Because we are joined to Christ, the servant of the Lord 'despised and rejected by men' (Isaiah 53:3), we can expect the path to our glorious inheritance to be strewn with difficulties and dangers. (Carson, *NBC*)

So, verse 17 is a transition from 1-16 to 18-30. We have this amazing privilege and glorious reality of being God's sons, and thus His heirs. Yet, we must suffer now. If we suffer now, we will be glorified later.

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## Reflect and Respond

After all the more difficult to understand principles and precepts of Romans 5 – 7, we are now brought to a simple resolution. We now live as the sons of God by the Spirit. not by the flesh and not under the Old Covenant Law.

What does this mean? What are the practical implications?

Brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your old sinful person urges you to do. For if you live by and submit to its dictates, you will be judged in death.

But if through the power of the Spirit, you put to death what your old sinful self wants to do, you will live. For all who are led and submitted to the Spirit of God are children of God.

Therefore, know this: you have not received a spirit that turns you into fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when the Lord adopted you to recognize you as own children. Now, through the Spirit, we recognize God, not as judge administering Law, but as a dear and precious, Father.

What does the Spirit do in our lives that is so important?

He is changing us by His power to become more and more like Christ.

He is residing in us as the very life of God in our souls.

He is assuring us of our relationship and standing as the children, the sons of God.

Are you still enslaved to sin and the Law so that you are fearful of God's wrath?

Are you living, really living, the life and power in the spirit by the Spirit?

Do you now a sense of reality recognize God as you loving Father?

Are you willing to embrace these truths, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him?"

