**Romans**

**Lesson 13: The Indwelling Holy Spirit Romans 8:1-17**

The book of Romans is probably the greatest theological book in the entire Bible. In Romans, Paul puts forth an incredible treatise on how to be a Christian without being religious. If I had to choose one, and only one, book of the Bible to which I could have access the rest of my life, it would be Romans. Romans is the one book in the Bible that thoroughly explains what it means to be a genuine child of God. That being said, if I had to choose one, and only one, chapter in the book of Romans to which I could have access the rest of my life, it would probably be chapter 8. If Romans is the pinnacle of the entire written word and chapter 8 is the pinnacle of the whole book of Romans, then Romans 8 is the pinnacle of the Bible. Therefore, everyone should spend considerable time on this mountain top of Scripture.

As we begin chapter 8, a brief overview of previous lessons will help unify themes in Romans. In the first seven chapters, Paul has shown:

* The gospel is the *power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes* (1:16). *For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith (*1:17).
* Man’s basic problem, including moral people, is indwelling sin (1:18-32; 2:1-4; 3:10-18).
* *No one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law* (3:20).
* Men in the past, e.g., Abraham and David, were saved, not by works or by circumcision, but by faith. *Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness* (4:3).
* When a believer has been justified by God, he has peace with him, access to his grace, and can rejoice in the coming glory of God (5:1-2). All of this comes through the believer’s union with Christ in both his death and resurrection (6:1-7).
* All believers have been set free from the demands of the law and have freedom to live under God’s grace and mercy (6:22).
* Though the believer is engaged in an internal civil war (7:14-25), he is now free to live in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which brings us to chapter 8.

Chapter 8 begins with a word we have seen before— “therefore.” Remember, when you see “therefore,” you should ask, “What is it there for?” In this instance, it points the reader back to the first seven chapters. Assuming the reader has come to God the only possible way, through faith in Christ Jesus, Paul now declares one of the greatest truths in the Bible: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (verse 1). Wow! This is incredible! Think about it. No condemnation—no matter what you have done, are doing, or are going to do, all condemnation has been removed forever. God has declared you righteous in his courtroom…forever! The slate of sin has been wiped clean. You are totally and eternally forgiven. Why? Because of God’s grace. However, grace doesn’t give the believer license to sin. On the contrary, our love for Christ drives us to sin no more. Jude 4 states, “They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

How is it possible that believers are no longer under condemnation? Paul explains,

Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:2-4).

Jesus sets the believer free from the power of sin and death. How? First, believers are set free from the legal demands of the law because, through Christ, believers have paid the price for their sins. The key phrase is “through Christ.” Furthermore, God sent his Son into the world to die in our place. Jesus became our substitute (Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). Thus, through Christ, believers died on the cross. Remember—*the wages of sin is death* (6:23). As sinners, we all deserved death. That was our wage. We earned it. However, in God’s plan, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus’ death served as our payment. His payment was credited to us.

Hence, the righteous requirements of the law have been met in Christ for us. Understand then that salvation takes care of the believer’s legal guilt. At the moment of belief, God declares through Paul, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!” This is a legal declaration. Secondly, salvation sets believers free from the power of sin. The power of sin is broken by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is greater than the power of sin. Accordingly, the theme of Romans 8 is “How to live the Christian life in the power of the Spirit.”

Next, Paul reveals how the battle to live by the Spirit takes place in the mind. The mind is the battlefield. Consequently, Paul writes,

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their **minds** set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their **minds** set on what the Spirit desires. The **mind** of sinful man is death, but the **mind** controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful **mind** is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (verses 5-8).

The Spirit does not indwell unbelievers. Thus, their minds are controlled by their sinful natures. They have no choice. Their minds are constantly flooded with sinful thoughts, e.g., lust, greed, pride, hate, envy, and bitterness. These thoughts are destructive and result in broken lives and broken relationships. Those whose minds are controlled by sinful nature cannot please God, and it is impossible. While unbelievers are capable of many “good deeds,” they are done without consideration for God. Unbelievers do not glorify God with their lives; their thinking has become futile, and their hearts have become darkened (Romans 1:21). Their minds are hostile to God and controlled by their sin nature. It is ironic to realize there is no battle for the unbeliever’s mind. His sinful nature totally controls his mind, and he has no other nature. Thus, there is no conflict.

On the other hand, believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Understand that it is the presence of the Holy Spirit, and nothing else, in the “heart” of a man that makes him a Christian. Neither baptism, morality, ritual, nor church membership can make a person a child of God. Only the presence of the Spirit marks a man as one of God’s children, and salvation is entirely a work of God (John 1:13). We have already learned the Spirit indwells a man or woman at the moment of true belief. Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession (1:13-14).

From that moment, the man or woman who trusts in Jesus has not only his Spirit in him/her but also the power of the Spirit available to him/her. The presence of the Spirit presents the believer with a daily, even hourly, choice. Either his/her mind is set and focused on the things of the Spirit or the things of the flesh (sinful nature). And this is where the conflict occurs. Each day, the believer’s mind becomes a battlefield for the war between his/her sinful nature and new spiritual nature. Due to this conflict, Paul exhorts believers,

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3).

If you are in Christ and the Spirit is in you, you should set your minds on things that please the Spirit rather than your sinful nature. This is why Paul writes to the Philippian believers, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—*think* about such things” (Phil. 4:8). The believer’s mind and heart are to be controlled by the Spirit at all times. Paul continues in Romans,

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Verses 9-11)

What a joy it should be for believers to know the Spirit of God possesses them! God identifies his children by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the seal that denotes ownership. In other words, believers are possessed and owned by God. And, once God owns you, he neither can nor will, disown you. You belong to him forever! Even though your physical body is dying, your spirit is alive and will live forever. For this reason, the great hope of every believer is the day his physical body is resurrected. Stott writes, “The resurrection body will be the perfect vehicle of our redeemed personality.”[[1]](#footnote-1) In that day, the believer will be like Jesus and live with him forever in a restored earth. Wow!!!

In light of all God has done for us, as believers, we have an obligation to live for him, not out of duty but love. If we live for him according to the Spirit, we will experience life as God intended—abundant and full. Despite living in a fallen world, God gives peace, joy, and contentment to his children, who walk with him in accordance with the Spirit. Hence, this is what it means to live. There is also a word of warning: If a believer chooses to live according to his sinful nature, he will experience death. He will not lose his relationship with God as that is a permanent possession, however, he will not experience the peace and joy God intended for him. Paul explains,

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Verses 12-17)

These words represent the very pinnacle of Romans, if not the entire Bible. Consider this: By faith, believers become God’s sons and daughters. Verse 15 is translated in the NASV, “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received the **spirit of adoption** as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father.’” We are adopted into God’s family by faith. F.F. Bruce writes,

The term “adoption” may have a somewhat artificial sound in our ears; but in the Roman world of the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit [sc. not in the smallest degree] inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This calls for another “Wow!” As believers, God deliberately chose us to be his adopted children to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate. And now, as his adopted sons, we can cry out to him, “Abba!” Jewish children use this very intimate name to address their fathers, similar to our word “Daddy.” God is our heavenly daddy. We have access to him. We can come to him at any time with any need. He loves us. We are his children. We are his heirs, which makes us co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Finally, we read that identification in Jesus’ family means we will share in his sufferings. The more closely we are identified with Jesus, the more we will share in his sufferings—in his persecutions—but, despite these sufferings, we will share in his glory one day. Wow!! Hallelujah!! Praise the Lord!!

DAY 1. Read Romans 8:1-4.

1. The word “therefore” is significant. It points back to everything Paul has written in the first seven chapters. Summarize Paul’s “formula” for salvation based on these preceding chapters.
2. What is the good news that Paul gives in verse 1 concerning the legal status of every true believer? What does this mean to you personally?
3. Verse 2 states, “Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from   
   the law of sin and death.”
   1. What does Paul mean by “the law of the Spirit of life?”
   2. Explain how every believer is “set free from the law of sin and death” (John 8:31-36; Romans 6:17-18)?
4. Recall verses 3-4,

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God   
did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

* 1. What did God do to provide a way for men to be set free?
  2. What does Paul mean when he writes that God sent Jesus “in the likeness of sinful man” (2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 2:7; 1 Peter 2:24)?
  3. What does Paul mean that Jesus was sent as a “sin offering” (Isaiah 53:4-12;   
     Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:22, 27-28)?
  4. What was God’s purpose for sending His Son into the world to be this sin offering   
     (1 Peter 1:18-21)?
  5. Does God ultimately want us to obey His laws? What is the key? (Hint: The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in the first seven chapters but is mentioned 18 times in chapter 8.)

DAYS 2 and 3. Read Romans 8:5-11.

1. In verses 5-11, Paul contrasts the life of a believer with that of a non-believer. The key difference has to do with the mind. Dr. John MacArthur writes, “*Phroneo*, the verb behind **set their minds,** refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of the mind, rather than to the mind or intellect itself. It includes a person’s affections, his will, as well as his reasoning.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

What distinguishes the mind/focus of the believer from that of the unbeliever?

1. Read Philippians 4:8.
   1. What do you learn about the importance of the mind from this verse?
   2. How well do you obey this verse?
2. Romans 8:6 says, “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”
   1. Explain.
   2. Jesus said in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” What do you think Jesus meant by this?
3. According to Paul, the unbeliever’s mind is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God. This hostility is evident in that he is not willing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God’s law. Finally, the unbeliever is so controlled by the sinful nature that he cannot \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God. This is man’s predicament from the moment he is born (Psalm 51:5); he can never please God because hostility (strife) exists between God and sinful man. This is why every man needs to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God (Romans 5:10) and have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with him (Romans 5:1).
4. According to Romans 8:9,
   1. What determines whether a person is/is not a true Christian (believer, child of God)?
   2. Who should be in control of every believer?
5. Even though a believer belongs to Christ by faith, what is happening to his physical body, and what has happened to his spirit (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)?
6. Paul continues in v. 11, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”
   1. Who raised Jesus’ body from the dead?
   2. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 along with 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Who lives in the body of every believer?
   3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-57. What is the promise for the bodies of those who have the Spirit living in them?

DAY 5. Read Romans 8:12-17.

1. Again, in verse 12, we see the word “therefore.” Think about why it is there! We read in verses 12-14: Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die: but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who the Spirit of God leads are sons of God.
   1. What do believers have an obligation to do?
   2. Who gives the believer strength to live according to God’s law?
   3. If a believer lives his life according to his sinful nature, what will he experience? In your own words, what does this mean?
2. Read Colossians 3:5-8.
   1. How does a believer “put to death…whatever belongs to” his earthly, sinful nature?
   2. As the believer does this, what will he experience? What does this mean to you?
3. Finally, in Romans 8:15-17, Paul writes: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory.
   1. When a man places his trust in Jesus and is sealed with the Spirit, what does he become to God (John 1:12-13; Galatians 4:4-7)? What does this mean to you?
   2. As God’s children, believers are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Explain what you think this means.
   3. One day believers will share in Christ’s glory. As a man chooses to follow Jesus in   
      this world, what will he likely encounter (John 15:18-21)?
   4. Read Philippians 3:10-11. Do you want to live in the power of his resurrection?   
      Do you really want to know Christ more intimately?

1. Stott, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. F. F. Bruce, “The Letter of Paul to the Romans,” *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (1985): 157,

   quoted in John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody Press,

   1991), 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)