

# ROMANS

## 8:1-17

### Romans 8:1-17

---

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 26th March 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Romans 8:1-17

### Introduction

We are studying the book of Romans - written by the apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome, that speaks just as much to us as Christians today.

And we've got as far as chapter 8, which is one of those chapters that I'm glad is still there when I open my Bible - for the joy, the comfort, and the hope it brings is surely unsurpassed. This is what Paul has been building to as he has laid out his case in the prior chapters.

### Chapter overview of Romans

#### Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
  - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
  - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living

In those first 7 chapters we saw Paul *begin* by showing that all mankind was under *condemnation*. He then set out *justification* - that we can be justified by faith in Christ (that we would be seen just as if we had never sinned), and then he brought us to *sanctification* - both that positionally we might be set apart for Christ, and that we may grow *in* Christ. And in chapter 8, which we'll *begin* this morning, he'll show that it is the *Holy Spirit* that brings us to the place where sin no longer reigns in our lives. Where we yield to God, and *not* to temptation to sin. And we'll take a couple of weeks to study through these 39 verses.

## Overview of chapter eight

### Overview of chapter eight

- v1-11 — No condemnation for the Christian
- v12-17 — Not debtors to the flesh, but adopted by God

So then, in the first 11 verses we'll see Paul explain that we are not condemned, because we have been justified. But how having been justified, we are now to walk in newness of life - not through our own efforts (for that never did us any good) but through the Holy Spirit living in us.

And then in verses 12-17 Paul will write of how our relationship with sin and God has changed. Having reckoned ourselves dead to sin, we owe it nothing. And having been justified by God, we find ourselves adopted by Him - that we are seen as His heirs, His children.

This is nothing short of amazing. And to help reinforce this, I want to read to you from J Vernon McGee's Thru the Bible commentary on this chapter:

*While inadequacy has been my feeling all the way through this epistle, especially here I feel totally incapable of dealing with these great truths. This is such a glorious and wonderful epistle that all we can do is merely stand as Moses did at the burning bush with our feet unshod and our head uncovered, not fully realizing or recognizing the glory and wonder of it all.*

*Chapter 8 is the high-water mark in Romans. This fact is generally conceded by all interpreters of this great epistle. Spencer said, "If Holy Scripture were a ring and the epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter eight would be the sparkling point of the jewel." Godet labeled it, "this incomparable chapter." Someone has added, "We enter this chapter with no condemnation, we close with no separation and in between all things work together for good to those that love God."*

*My friend, how could you have it any better than that? We find that there is to be given to the child of God in this life joy and peace. He is to live for God in the very presence of sin. Sin is not to dictate his life's program. It has already been shown that there is nothing in the justified sinner that can produce this ideal state. We have seen that the new nature has no power and the old nature has no good. Then how is a child of God to live for God? Paul cried out for outside help, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). In other words, who is going to enable me to live for God?*

As we saw last time, Paul concluded emphatically that is Jesus Christ our Lord that can and will deliver us from that rotten, filthy, stinking old nature of ours, so long as we have put our faith and trust in Him as our Saviour.

## Chapter eight

And, as we continue right into chapter 8, since it is Jesus who has justified us, we can conclude as Paul does in verse 1:

### **Romans 8:1**

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

That is, since it is Christ, and not myself that saves, there is no condemnation now or in the future – for I'm not trusting in my own continual works, but in Christ's completed work on the cross. It is finished – my debt is paid in full. I am justified by faith in Jesus.

But also, now that I am saved, I am to walk in the Spirit – which as mentioned last week, Paul will mention at least 18 times in this chapter. Does that mean I can't or won't sin? No, for as we read in 1st John *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* Does it mean that my salvation is dependent on how I walk, and whether I sin? Again, no. For John writes in the very next verse *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

So what *do* we conclude from the second half of this verse? Simply that this is not a *condition* of our salvation, but a *statement* of what a Christian is like. They are ones that walk according to the Spirit – something that Paul makes abundantly clear in verse 9 of this chapter where he'll add *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."*

However, at risk of detouring, I should note that some conclude that this second half of the verse shouldn't be there at all – and suggest that it was a scribal error that saw it copied from the end of verse 4 which uses the same phrase. Where does that suggestion come from? In short, this comes down to the manuscripts on which your translation of the Bible is taken from.

The KJV and NKJV, which are based on the **textus receptus** include the whole verse. However, those translations (which includes most modern translations) that are based on the Alexandrian manuscripts (that were influenced by the gnostics) do not include the second half. And I would add, that while the NKJV is an excellent translation, you'll even see footnotes in paper copies that refer to the NU-Text, saying this portion is omitted in what are described as the "most reliable manuscripts".

The problem, however, is that those manuscripts are *not* the most reliable – and indeed they call into question other parts of the Bible, which is why many modern translations have missing verses, or you'll hear suggestions that the last 11 verses of Mark's gospel were not in the original text – doing away with (amongst other things) the great commission and Christ's ascension into Heaven.

Why do I mention this? Because I don't want your confidence in the Bible to be knocked when someone erroneously says "did you know that that verse or part of a verse wasn't originally in the Bible". You can trust what you read.

And getting back to what Paul is saying here in Romans, having said there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (who we can identify as those who walk in the Spirit), he continues:

**Romans 8:2**

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

So here he is saying that there is a higher law that has set us free once and for all. Like the law of aerodynamics overpowers the law of gravity to allow a plane to fly, so the Holy Spirit working in us enables our new nature to live yielded to Christ. No amount of self help, life coaching, positive attitudes or the trend of manifesting will ever stop you sinning. Only the Holy Spirit working in the new nature in you can overcome the old nature that still wants to influence you (even if it no longer controls you). Verse 3...

**Romans 8:3-4**

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

And so Paul says *I now live in with the Holy Spirit in me, who has freed me from the power, that is the need to obey the law of sin*. That's something the law could never do, for it couldn't save us or sanctify us. And as we saw in our Bible study last Sunday, sin even took advantage of the law to produce yet more sin in us. However, God sent Jesus to earth - fully man and fully God (not a Spirit only, as the gnostics teach) - and consigned Him to death, rather than us.

Why? So that we might be justified AND, we read here, so that the law might be fulfilled in us - that is Christians (who by definition walk according to the Spirit), contrasted to those who walk after the flesh, that is; those that are not Christians. And note that this is not *by* us, but *in* us - who don't (and can't) please God by our own efforts, but that can now please Him by walking in the Holy Spirit, that we would live as the law instructs us to; not through our own efforts but through Christ in us producing the fruit of the Spirit. (Yet not I, but Christ in me).

For you see, the law could never do this - there could never be a written instruction for every occasion - but now the Holy Spirit leads and prompts us at any time; giving us the words to say when we have none, holding our tongue when we shouldn't speak our mind, warning us when we are faced with sin, exhorting & correcting us too.

*"But I thought the law was done away with?!"* you might say. Well, we might not be held by the oldness of the letter of the law, but now, serving in newness of the Spirit in our lives, we find the heart of the law still present. For it's still wrong to murder, still wrong to commit adultery. Look at the Lord's prayer (or disciples' prayer) for example:

- The law said "I am the LORD your God". But now the Lord says, when you pray, pray like this - saying "Our Father".

- The law said "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" - we now pray "Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven".
- The law said "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" - we now say "Hallowed be Your name".
- The law said "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.". We now say "Your kingdom come".
- The law says "Honour your father and your mother". We now pray "Your will be done".
- The law says "You shall not steal". We pray "Give us this day our daily bread".
- The law says "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour, You shall not covet." We pray "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one".

You see, the very heart of the law is still there. But not it's not mandated from the outside, but now on the inside, our hearts — because of what He has done, and His Holy Spirit in us — want to live for God. So then, we read in verse 5, the Christian lives according to the Spirit:

#### **Romans 8:5**

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, the things of the Spirit.

So Paul explains the difference between the flesh and the Spirit, in that the natural man doesn't seek after spiritual things, while the Holy Spirit in us (as Christians) will not lead us to sin, or to set our affection on the things of the earth. Indeed the one who lives according to the Spirit, both desires to yield to the Spirit, and has the power to because of Christ in them. And there is therefore a marked difference between those that are habitually, constantly pursuing the things of the flesh vs those who are habitually, constantly pursuing the things of the Spirit - who, finally, are able to live in a way that pleases God.

We read in Galatians chapter 5:

#### **Galatians 5:16-26**

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

There is then, a difference between Christians and the world. The world sets its mind on the things of the world, the flesh, the sin that scripture talks about. But we set our mind on the things of God. We may be prodigals at times, but we are no longer pigs. That is, we may stray into the pigpen, but we no longer make our home there - in fact we find ourselves uncomfortable there, and like the prodigal son, we return to our Father.

I quoted the following from JC Ryle a couple of weeks ago, but I think it is helpful to share again:

*To be born again is to enter into a new existence, to have a new mind, a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likes, new dislikes, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love for things once hated, new hatred towards things once loved, new thoughts of God, ourselves, the world, the life to come and salvation.*

**JC Ryle**

Everything has changed. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

And continuing with the contrast, Paul writes of the end result of these 2 ways of living:

**Romans 8:6**

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

A carnal person, whose thoughts are on all things physical, will reap death. Indeed, all this world can offer will not satisfy in the end. And all the money, property, cars and worldly goods one can accumulate will be of no benefit once you're in a wooden box six foot underground.

But a Christian who is filled with the Spirit, and therefore sets their mind on the things of the Spirit, will reap life and peace. Not *only* everlasting life, but peace with God. And the peace of God. While they may not understand everything that happens to them, or around them, there is a peace that passes all understanding that only comes from God.

The non-Christian can never know this peace, for we read:

**Romans 8:7**

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

We were the enemies of God, and our thinking was likewise completely opposed to Him. Indeed, there was no way we could ever keep the law, nor did we have the desire to do so. And so we read:

**Romans 8:8**

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Make no mistake, you can live like the world, or live for Christ. You can't do both. And living like or for the world will never please God. Yet, living according to our fleshly desires was our natural sinful state that was against God – and it couldn't be fixed. That's why God didn't reform us, but redeemed us. He made us a new creation.

Let me clarify. If we sin as Christians then that is displeasing to God. However, the bigger statement this is making is that if you are not a Christian, you *cannot* please God. God is not impressed by mere human kindness so long as there is sin present. You cannot earn your way to heaven. The debt is too much to pay. That's why Jesus needed to pay it, because you can't. And only once it is paid then is there no condemnation, to those that are in Christ. That the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in and not by us, so that we may be pleasing to God.

And because those Paul is writing to are those who are Christians, he writes:

**Romans 8:9**

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

The first *if* in this verse is not calling the Roman believers' salvation into question – but rather implies "you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit *since* the Spirit of God dwells in you". That is, the mark of a genuine Christian is that they have the Holy Spirit in them.

But contra-wise, if someone does not have the Holy Spirit, they are not a Christian. It doesn't matter if they call themselves one, or if they go to church, or do good works. Only those who have Christ's Spirit in them are His. And we read on...

**Romans 8:10**

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

As Christians, we are no longer slaves to sin. We are no longer without choice. The body — the fleshly desires — no longer control us. In Romans 6:11 we read "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And so we are to yield, that is, present our bodies to Him. Don't say you can't do this — that is not the language of a believer. Paul could say;

**Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And we read in 2 Corinthians:

**2 Corinthians 5:21**

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

J Vernon McGee wisely points out that if you today are not conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God in your life and if you do not have a desire to serve or obey God, then it would be well to do as Paul suggests in 2 Corinthians 13 and:

**2 Corinthians 13:5-6**

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

Here in Romans he continues...

**Romans 8:11**

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

That is, the Holy Spirit in us is assurance that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so we will also be raised from the dead, given new bodies, and an eternity in Heaven with our Saviour...

**Romans 8:12**

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

That is, you don't owe your flesh anything - it has not done you any favours! Again, you do not owe it to your flesh to satisfy it. Don't do you. Don't try and be true to yourself - that's not a good plan - rather be true to Christ.

**Romans 8:13**

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.

This is what we are now called to do - to put to death the old man, giving up these sinful tendencies, habits and thoughts. But — and this is important — we are not to do that through our own strength, but through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

How does that work practically? Well, consider what we read in 1 Samuel chapter 5. There, the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant, and they brought it into the house of Dagon their god (who was basically just a statue made with their hands). When they woke up the following morning, the statue of Dagon had fallen on its face before the ark. Rather than acknowledge the silliness of their situation, they stood him up again. But the following morning they found he had fallen on his face again - and this time his head and hands had been broken off. By the time this account finishes, we find they realise it is the ark — symbolic of the presence of God — that was causing their god to fall over, and so they send it away.

And so it will be with us. If you want all the idols in your life to topple over, you need to be in the presence of God too. To put the deeds of the body to death by the Spirit, you need to walk in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit you need to set your mind on the things of the Spirit - that means reading your Bible, praying to God, listening to Him, fellowshiping with believers, worshipping Him.



This is the wonder of this chapter! You don't need to set 16 reminders a day not to sin. You don't need to recite specific chants. You don't need to have a special diet. You just need to live in the presence of God, and as you walk in the Spirit, you'll see the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Don't exhaust yourself trying to come up with or follow schemes and 12-step programs to keep from sin. Just walk in the Spirit. And do it continually, following His leading.

#### **Romans 8:14**

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

You can follow your heart, or be led by the Spirit. But remember, your heart is desperately wicked. And it is those that are led by the Spirit that have this incredible reality, that they are sons of God.

Verse 15 says:

#### **Romans 8:15**

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

So then, we are neither under the power of sin or the demands of the law. But rather, we no longer look at God as our judge, but as our Father. What an incredible reality that is.

The term **Abba** that is used here is an untranslated Aramaic word that means 'daddy'. It's what you'll hear young children in Israel shouting out to their fathers to this day. And that shows the closeness with and dependence on our Heavenly Father that now have. Do we speak to our heavenly Father like that - "Dad, I need you. I need your help". Or "Dad, I love you"?

I don't propose that we use the word *Dad* when praying — I personally think that is far too irreverent and tries to make a principle out of something that is an illustration — but this idea of closeness to and wonderful bond *with* our Heavenly Father gives us a wonderful insight to that which is now open to us with God (because of what Jesus has accomplished). And as we walk in the Spirit, we know this to be true. Paul writes:

#### **Romans 8:16-17**

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs —heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

I find it hard to respond to this without 1 John 3:1 coming to mind, which says:

#### **1 John 3:1**

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

This is truly incredible. Just think of the journey Paul has been taking us on in this letter. He showed that we were condemned and helpless, but then justified through faith in Christ. But more than justified, we are now being sanctified. And we will be glorified - that is we will spend forever in His presence as His children, His heirs.

It should stagger us that we can even stand in God's presence - let alone that we would be seen as His children, His heirs. Yet that is exactly what we know to be true. It is written throughout scripture; Paul speaks of us being heirs in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Titus and Hebrews. And both James and Peter speaking of us being heirs too in their letters.

What a glorious gospel this is! We have contributed nothing to our salvation - and we have received everything we could ever need. There is no better news.

## Conclusion

What a marvellous chapter this is! That since we are saved by Jesus, and not ourselves, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. None whatsoever! You have no need to trust in your continual works, but rather in the completed work of Christ on the cross for you.

But more than that, God has put His Holy Spirit within you, if indeed you are a Christian, that you may now live a life that pleases and honours Him - not in your own strength, but in His. To do that you must simply walk in the Spirit, living in the presence of God. And as you do that, you'll see the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

## Application questions

So then, as we consider these things - that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, that He has given us His Holy Spirit so that we might be able (and not only desire) to live for Him, and that we are now God's children - and joint heirs with Christ - what should we ask ourselves?

I suggest two things. First...

- What thankfulness should that produce? Where is that evident in our lives?
- How will we walk in the Spirit this week? What priority will we give to our relationship with God?

But I must end by ask you each directly; are you aware of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you have any desire to live through Him? If not - and be honest with yourself - are you indeed a Christian? Remember we read that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His". In other words, if you don't have the Holy Spirit in your life, you're not a Christian.

And that will evidence itself in how you walk. As one commentator put it, when the lost man goes out at night and paints the town red, he comes back and says, "I'll get a bigger brush and a bigger bucket of paint next time; wow, I want to live it up!" While the child of God, if he does a thing like that, will cry out to God, "Oh, God, I hate myself for what I've done!" And this idea today that you can somehow train your old nature, and live in it, is false.

The very last thing I want is to see is any of you sit in this church for weeks, months or even years pretending to be a Christian - fooling yourself, and maybe others, that because you try to live a good life, or go to church, or sing Christian songs, that that is what being a Christian is all about. It's not. You need a Saviour. And the horrors that await those who refuse to accept Christ as their Saviour are unthinkable. I beg you, come to your senses and put your faith in Christ without delay.

**For the audio recording of this Bible study, and for additional studies, please see the DCF web site:**



**Deal Christian Fellowship**  
Simply teaching the Bible, simply  
<https://dcf.church>