

Life in the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Romans chapter 8, we're going to read the first eight verses. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

! 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, and that it was weakened by the sinful nature, or by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin and 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. 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.

[1 : 15] Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Amen. Again, let me say what a great privilege it is to be here among you.

We've loved you from afar and have appreciated you, appreciated John's friendship and ministry to me. Also got to know Chuck years ago.

We served on a committee together. So remembering him and seeing him is also a great delight to me. And I do bring you greetings from Heritage Reformed Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia. And the saints there think of you often and prayed for you and your pastor. And we're just very thankful for the fellowship that we have in the gospel.

It's truly a great blessing, isn't it, to have people that you know from afar, and yet they love you, they love the Lord that you love.

[2 : 17] And it really is an amazing thing about our gospel, isn't it? Well, Romans 8, 1, it seems to me, as some might disagree, but I think it's sort of the climax of the book of Romans, where Paul lays down the foundational statement of sinners being laid right with God.

There is therefore now no condemnation. And I think the accent there is now. Now, in Jesus Christ, no condemnation whatsoever.

He'd just been talking in chapter 7 about the law of God and how the law condemns sinners if we're made alive to it. And that the gospel of Jesus Christ, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, a very careful phrase there, not a sinner himself, but in the likeness of that sinful flesh, a pure humanity, all of man and all of God, though that mystery is something for us hard to imagine. But God did. God saved. God withdrew the condemnation and poured it out upon his own son and condemned sin there in the flesh, the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there might be now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Remember how Paul had begun this gospel, as Jason quoted earlier, the apostle, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, for the Jew first and also the Greek.

[4 : 11] And then how he sets out there in that first chapter and carrying on through the middle of the third chapter, how that condemnation, that wrath of God, that rests upon all men, Jew or Greek.

It doesn't matter who you are, where you've come from, what sort of accomplishments you've had in your life, what kind of upbringing, what kind of training. The condemnation of God for sin falls on all men.

It's universal. And then the climax, we might say, of that section is that the whole world then, in chapter 3, is held accountable to God, under God, so to speak.

And then those words that flow from the middle there of chapter 3, that there is a righteousness that has come from God and has come to man, a righteousness that covers all of his sins in the blood of

Jesus Christ.

And that is a righteousness that you and every single one of us can have, even today, by faith, by looking to the Lord Jesus Christ and to be justified, to be declared innocent of all of our sin, all of our guilt.

[5 : 29] There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And then Paul gives us, of course, the example there of Abraham who believed God.

He believed God and it was imputed to him as righteousness and thereby showing that this gospel of saving grace did not begin in the New Testament, but it was all the way through the Bible.

God saves men and women and boys and girls the same way in both Testaments. And all of the history of man has been one that is looking forward to the Lord Jesus Christ or else looking back to what Jesus Christ has done.

But, you know, there is also a sense in which if you're a Christian, Romans chapter 8 and verse 1 is a kind of climax in your life. I can remember years ago speaking to my oldest daughter in the car. That's where our theological conversations happen the most is when we're riding along in the car and she'll ask me a question and she had this question in her mind.

[6 : 44] She said, Dad, is it possible to be a Christian and yet not be sure of it, not know that you are a Christian? Is that possible?

And, of course, I said, Yes, I think it is possible, but we're meant to know. We're meant to be assured. We're meant to be able to say no condemnation in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And so I told her, I said, You know, you're reading your Bible? Yes, yes. Where are you reading? Well, I'm reading in the book of Romans right now.

So I said, Well, you want to keep reading and ask the Lord to show you. Ask the Lord to give you this sense that you belong to Him and an assurance that you belong to Him.

Fortunately, I didn't make the mistake of saying, Well, you said something here, so that makes you a Christian. But I wanted her to know assurance from the Lord Himself that He gives.

[7 : 46] And so she goes back and she's reading in the Scriptures and she comes back to me in a couple of weeks and says with a great smile on her face, Dad, I know that I'm a Christian.

And I said, Oh, okay. Well, tell me about it. Tell me what has happened. And she sort of walked through how the Lord in her reading in Romans chapter 7 and she had come to verse 15 and says, For I do not understand my own actions.

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. If I do what I, if what I do is not what I want, I agree with the law that it's good.

So now it's no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. And she's having this struggle, this turmoil of identifying with the Apostle here and his, perhaps his struggles.

And then she came to the end of chapter 7, Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[8 : 55] So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. And she was struck by that verse. He was struck by that truth of God. And she told me, she said, Dad, I could have jumped up and clicked my heels.

And if you know my Megan, she's not a heel clicker. But the Lord had so enraptured her, first with her sin and then with the glory and the greatness and the compassion and the mercy of Jesus Christ.

And that was the beginning for her. That was the beginning of a new life. And of course, the book of Romans does not end with verse 1, does it? No condemnation.

But then he goes on to speak about this new life that is in Christ. And in fact, in chapter 8, I don't know if you've noticed this or not, but there is a kind of explosion of the Spirit's work in the believer, the life of the Spirit.

[10 : 06] Before only a mention here or there about the work of the Spirit, we see it in chapter 1 and verse 4 that the Lord was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And then again in chapter 2 and verse 29, we read, but a Jew is one inwardly and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the Spirit, not by the letter.

His praise is not from man but from God. And then Romans chapter 7 and verse 6, it speaks there, but now we are released from the law having died to that which held us captive so that we serve in

the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

So just those three references to the work of the Holy Spirit. But in chapter 8, an explosion, a veritable explosion, 18 times in this chapter, the work of the Spirit, the life of the Spirit.

And that's what I want us to look at and think on this morning. What is this life that comes by virtue of the Holy Spirit? What is this new life we might say?

[11:30] A new life for Megan, a new life for me years ago, a new life for you if you're not a believer this morning and not a Christian this morning. This is a life that the Spirit of God gives.

And what sort of life is that? Well, verses 4 to 8 really just plot that out for us and so we're going to walk, just walk through those verses.

First of all, I want to say that this life that the Spirit gives us is a righteous life. It is a righteous life. Verse 4, notice it kind of tacks on to verse 3, doesn't it?

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. I'm reading from the ESV. He condemned sin in the flesh. And then look at verse 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.

[12:35] It's a very important little phrase there at the beginning of verse 4. In order that. How your verses, your translation reads that. But it's a purpose clause.

As an English teacher, I know something about how these clauses work. And this is a purpose clause. This is introducing a purpose for which Christ has saved us.

And that purpose in his saving us is for his own glory. And it is that our lives be lives lived for his glory.

That the righteous requirement of the law, that law which condemns and that law which holds up the character and the holiness and the greatness of God to which we cannot come to.

That law that condemns us now becomes the law that is fulfilled for us, yes, in Jesus Christ but also in us his imparting grace to his people that they might live for him.

[13:46] That law which once condemned now there's a completely different relationship to it on the part of Christians. It's no longer the law that merely prohibits and condemns but as Alec Mateer says it's a law now that promises to his people you shall you shall no more thou shalt not but you shall you shall walk in these ways and the word of God the righteousness of Christ going now to be fulfilled in us isn't that what Jeremiah prophesied long before he said I will put my law within them speaking of his people and I will write it on their hearts their law will become their delight as it was with our Lord Jesus Christ you remember Psalm 40 David writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and and and perhaps we're seeing their

Jesus Christ's own will and own delight I delight to do your will oh my God your law is within my heart completely different relationship now to God's law on the behalf of his people remember of course Psalm 23 the Lord's my shepherd shall not want he makes me lie down in green pastures he leads me beside still waters he restores my soul he leads me in paths of righteousness why for his name sake for his glory we walk in the path of his commands that's Psalm 119 in verse 32 I run in the path of your commands for you have set my heart free that's the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ in order that the righteous requirement well he goes on then in verse five to speak about this life this new life would be a life of faith we might say a thinking life look at verse five 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 what are those things it's the word of God that he's given to us it's his it's his his his revelation to us to all of the word of God whereby we can live this life of faith Paul you know will go on in chapter 12 as he's applying this gospel to the hearts and minds of the people and of us he will say be transformed then by the renewing of your mind that's so important isn't it in our day we live in a day that really even in Christian circles gives much credence to the sense and feeling and emotionality that sometimes is connected with Christian experience I like to think I'm an experiential Calvinist but the mind comes first the precepts of the Lord that we come to and we believe and how much more so when we experience times of affliction when our senses cry out perhaps with every part of our being every cell of our being that that cry out to us that that God is not here and God is not around and God does not hear my pitiful! voice and maybe even in my emotional struggles I don't even want to pray to him I want to retreat and go somewhere else with my mind and yet this spirit of God will not allow us and he says the psalmist could say it was good for me that I was afflicted that that I might learn your statutes the Puritans wrote much of this I know you're not supposed to read things in the pulpit but my people

are usually accustomed to that so I hope this won't bother you but the Puritan Thomas Case in writing on that verse trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding he writes this in affliction we learn the lesson of the necessity of living by faith and not feeling or perception God teaches us this by the uncertainty of life's changes hope today and tomorrow at the point of death good news today and bad tomorrow comfort here soul wounding terror there oh the ebbs and flows of earthly hopes what a woeful heart dividing life is a life of sense it is a life worse than death itself it's bandied up and down between hopes and fears to be baffled to and fro between maybes it is like the mariners upon the tempestuous sea they mount up to heaven then down again to the depths their soul is melted because of trouble they reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wits end thus

God teaches the necessity of a life of faith a life lived upon the promises of God even upon the commands of God that he is with us he tells us that in the midst of our disappointments and our discouragements faith is never disappointed God is always better than our expectation he only lives an unchangeable life who by faith can trust in an unchangeable God that's the life that the spirit of God gives us teaches us to live this life this thinking life you might say upon the promises and the word of God well thirdly it's a peaceful life notice verse six for to set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace what does he mean there what is this life of peace well

[20 : 40] I think it could mean a number of things that first of all at bottom we might say is peace with God he's given us peace with God before we were separated from him before we were lost we maybe we would say prayers that would go up to the top of the roof and come right back down as you heard my own testimony a little bit earlier there's peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and the spirit brings the cross of Jesus Christ home to our consciences and we have peace with him there is therefore now no condemnation no hedge between us and God but he's come close to us in the Lord Jesus Christ and there is peace with him that's what Paul meant wasn't it when he wrote the end of chapter four the words it was counted to him that is his faith were not written for his sake alone but for ours also it will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead

Jesus our Lord who was delivered up on that cross for our trespasses and raised the third day for our justification therefore since we've been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God peace with God and it's a peace that is sustained in us by the Holy Spirit Isaiah would write you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon you there's the there's the mind the thinking part of the Spirit's work because he trusts in you and then there works this revolution we might say in our own characters by the Holy Spirit he makes us to be men and women of peace men and women who desire peace men and women who are able to take the lower place for peace with our brothers and with our sisters James writes who is wise and understanding among you by his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom but if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts do not boast and be false to the truth this is not the wisdom that comes from above but is earthly unspiritual demonic for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist there will be disorder and every vile practice but the wisdom from above spirits wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable gentle open to reason full of mercy and good fruits impartial and sincere and a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace peace he makes us to be as Jesus would tell us in that great sermon on the mount he makes us to be peacemakers we who have been at peace now with God by the blood of Jesus Christ we desire that peace with others we want them to know the peace that passes all understanding as they come to Jesus Christ themselves and so we become like our elder brother peacemakers and the Lord said blessed are those peacemakers because they are sons of God you know the old phrase like father like son well like elder brother the man on a mission of peace we also a mission of peace that they might come to know the peace that passes understanding and come to peace with the Lord Jesus Christ when peace like a river attends my way sorrows like sea billows roll whatever my lot thou has taught me to say it is well it is well with my soul it's peace well verse 7 leads us into a life of submission and this he does it's implied it seems to me verse 7 for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God that's a very strong word isn't it if you're not a

Christian today the Bible says that that's your mind you might say well I'm not hostile to God I'm just not really interested in him that's a kind of hostility isn't it one who's come come down and spoken words of grace and peace to you who said come to me you say no put up the stop sign I'm not going to accept these words of peace well that's hostility to the God of heaven and the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law indeed it cannot that is the prison of unbelief it cannot submit to the word of God and to God's law but there's an implication there isn't it the other side of the coin so to speak if the mind that's set on the flesh is hostile to God then what about this mind that is set upon the spirit of God by implication it implies to us that this is a life that can be lived in submission to God must be a life in submission to

[27 : 08] God indeed it is preacher William Jay back in the last century preached a message that is stuck with me and just reading it one morning and devotional it just struck me as so true he said the essence of the Christian life is submission think about that for a moment the essence of the Christian life is submission now that's not a word submission that we like to use these days wives submit to your husband submit to one another that's kind of goes against our nature doesn't it but he said the essence of the Christian life is submission and then he worked that out he said you know when we come to Christ we must submit to his gospel we we submit to his way of saving us that it's not what my hands have done but it's what he's done for me and there's a kind of submission to what Jesus Christ has come to do and I submit myself to it by grace of course and then when he sets us on this new life this new path there is a submission to his will to his law a following after him and what he has said as we talked about before and then the third thing he said which is often the most difficult we might say is a submission to his providence a submission to what he brings into my life to believe against all sense and sensibility and emotion to believe all things work together for good and to believe that and to grasp hold of that to in some sense submit to that the spirit of

God enables his people to do that to submit to it I heard a message a few weeks ago by David Vaughn who else he was at a conference the banner of truth conference over in Pennsylvania and preached a very good message as you might imagine from Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 18 and that verse of course says to be filled with the spirit be filled and the tense of that verb as David explained is a sort of ongoing it's a progressing kind of filling go on being filled so to speak with the spirit he pointed out as you might imagine in the text there that this is a passive command it's not something that we are able really to bring about but it is something that the spirit is working in us is filling us and we submit to that we want to be filled with the spirit of

God and he used an illustration that was really striking to me as a mother who is trying to clean her child's face and he's gotten outside and he's gotten all rubbed up in the dirt and he comes in and his face is dirty and he's going to have to sit down at the table and eat and so mom takes him off to the side and needs to clean his face and he's he's hostile to it and rubbing against it and he doesn't want his mom and so dad comes in and says now I want you to just be still and let mom clean your face that was the illustration to be filled with the spirit submit yourselves the bible tells us submit yourselves to the lord's working in your life to something that the spirit of god is doing submitting to him and then verse 8 of course those who are in the flesh cannot please god again the implied opposite to that is what well those who are in the who are in the spirit then can please god yeah does that strike you sometimes we think well it's the lord jesus christ who pleased god i'm a sinner sir surely i can't please god in in any way and yet the bible says those who are in the spirit are able to please god we please god when we submit to him we believe him we obey him we trust him it pleases him for his people who are united to jesus christ and we know this is all by grace but there is a life that is pleasing to god that has god's smile might say upon it the one who is desiring to live a righteous life a holy life and obedience to the lord jesus christ the one who is seeking to fill his mind with the scriptures and with the words of god both his promises and his commands the one who is submitting to god's ways in his life and desiring to please him in his submission the pleasing to god in ephesians chapter 4 i think speaks to this as well you remember these verses verse 32 chapter 4 be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as god in christ forgave you therefore be imitators of god as beloved children and walk in love as christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to god but sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place but instead let there be thanksgiving for you may be sure of this that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is

covetous that is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of christ and god let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of god comes upon the sons of disobedience therefore do not become partners with them for at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the lord walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true and try

to discern what is pleasing to the lord well let me ask you is is this your life this is the life that would perhaps describe you none of us would say perfectly but truly really this is the life that the spirit of god gives is it your desire to be to walk in the ways that are pleasing to the lord to be not self oriented but him oriented in his word to live a life of faith not to be transported all the time by our feelings and by our sense which is so strong to us but to live a life that is trusting and believing the word of god you know there's a fight to faith a fight to believe and to continue to trust in the promises and the work of god spirit of god a life of peace not at war not hostility peace with god peace with my fellow man desiring those who are alienated from god to be at peace with him and to be about that business as he said as the father sent me so now send i you to be a peacemaker by the blood of christ to be submissive to be humble and not proud remember our lord jesus christ he fulfilled all of that didn't he when he's tempted in the desert and weak no doubt thirsty and hungry for days on end without food or drink and the devil comes to him the tempting he was always with the word of god in fact the commands of god that became means of grace for him to walk in that path and to say no to the temptations of the evil one and how our lord jesus christ was often distressed!

and encouraged he was a man like we are and the scripture tells us that that he entered into times of temptation and times even of discouragement it's not a sin to be discouraged it is a sin to throw away and to cast off the word of god and he never did that he said not my will but thine be done you see and his was a life that was lived and this is the life this is the life that the spirit of god brings to us think of it this way perhaps that the spirit of god that loves the lord jesus christ perfect love perfect harmony in the godhead father and son and holy spirit and the spirit of god design designs and desires to paint that portrait of jesus christ all over the world in his people he loves that picture you know how you go into a home and you know what is you know what is aspired to you know what is loved in that home because of the portraits and you can see the pictures of this one and that one and the spirit of god so loves the lord jesus christ that he he desires to paint that portrait that living portrait of christ all over the world and he works this in his people that they might be like him conformed then to his image i have one more word that i want to say to those of you who might not yet be christians and i say that i say that uh very carefully not yet not yet i'm so thankful that the lord when i was a young person and pushing against the lord and running from him that he did not uh abandon me to my unbelief but he he came by his grace to me in isaiah chapter 45 we read these words this is about the lord for thus says the lord who created the heavens he is god he formed the earth and made it he established it he did not create it empty he formed it to be inhabited i am the lord and there is no other all these idols that you are pursuing all these other things i pursued them and the lord arrested me and he showed me the lord jesus christ and his glory this is what he does i am the lord and there is no other i did not speak in secret in a land of darkness i did not say to the offspring of jacob seek me in vain i the lord speak the truth i declare what is right then he says turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth for i am god and there is no other some of the other versions say look look to me charles spurgeon was converted on a winter night he couldn't make it to his own church and so he he sort of passed into a a little methodist church there in town and spurgeon was had been troubled in spirit would not had not yet closed with christ we might say but was troubled and he came in and he sat and the weather was so bad that the pastor hadn't come was not able to get there to the church and so one of the deacons just stood up and he turned to [40 : 21] Isaiah 55 and he had this passage he turned right to it and he says look to me and be saved all the ends of the earth and he just his eye caught spurgeon and he could he could see there was this look of trouble on his face and he just pointed to him he said young man he said you need to look to christ and he says what is there in looking not doing but looking to the lord jesus christ how merciful he is that a look to christ can save what to say look to him today look up and see your god see the god who's made all things all the beauty of the earth all of its matchless wonder your own body that is so wonderfully made and he says to you look look and be saved turn to him and be saved all the earth will you not do that he is a great savior glorious god wonderful savior and he saves all who will look to him let's pray father we thank you for your word speaks truth to us we thank you for the revelation of the lord jesus christ and his coming we thank you lord for the work of

the holy spirit that takes the things of christ long long ago and far far away and brings them right home to us even now today speaks to our consciences and frees us from guilt because of what the lord jesus christ has done lord would you open up the hearts of all to receive you may you do that great work of the spirit in us that we might be emblems we might say many portraits of the savior in our lives that we might bring glory to you and what we do and say and how we live and how we think lord do not let us give over to the the world of sense that everyone experiences but open our eyes to the greatness and the glory of god and his word made known to us now by the lord jesus christ and the working of the holy spirit that he sent may it be so lord we pray in jesus name amen let's get