

Freed by Faith

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Introduction

- A. Interesting study—two concepts that permeate Romans, but may not be as clearly in view as would seem to justify a sermon with this title from this text—faith, freedom.
- B. Faith has largely disappeared from view (at least in word use) after 5:1-2.
- C. This is about liberty and freedom; that connection is clear in Rom 6 in Paul's teaching concerning baptism.
- D. Romans 8 allows us to see freedom, faith, and the HS in relationship. Romans 8 brings the ministry of the Holy Spirit into clear focus. Prior to this chapter, the Holy Spirit is mentioned only one other time in the entire epistle (Rom. 5:5). However, here he is referred to nearly twenty times.

The Treasure of Romans

Hard to express all the riches in this chapter—like an ascending path culminating in praise, sweeping you off your feet, carrying you into the presence of God. You will be enriched; impossible not to be changed by the truths in this life-changing chapter.

The Theme of Romans

Paul has one major theme in Romans: justification by grace through faith based on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's plan of salvation. Paul outlines that plan throughout the book of Romans.

The great declaration of no condemnation is so fantastic that Paul used the rest of the chapter to explain it. In verse 34 he asks the rhetorical question, "Who is he that condemns?" The obvious answer: No one. The highest court, of God through Christ, does not condemn us. Therefore, no one else can rightly condemn us.

Rom 8 is not an isolated chapter about the HS; everything fits within the flow of the book of Romans. Chapters 3-7 detail how Christ frees people from condemnation, and chapter 8 proves how the Holy Spirit confirms that believers face no condemnation.

Summary

The Holy Spirit does several things to confirm that we, as believers, are not condemned: He frees us from sin and death, He changes our nature, He empowers us for victory, He confirms our adoption, and He guarantees our glory. The result of the Holy Spirit's ministry is mentioned in the climactic ending of Romans 8. We can praise God and glory in that tremendous benediction because of what the Spirit does to confirm our "no-condemnation" status before God.

I. HE FREES US FROM SIN AND DEATH (vv. 2-4)

What is "the law of the Spirit of life"? The gospel—a law because it demands our obedience (Acts 17:30). The law of the gospel of life in Christ came to us through the Spirit and made us free from the law of sin and death. We are not condemned because we have been set free from the law and its just punishment, which is death (Rom. 6:23). Because of our faith (dependence) in Christ, the work of the Spirit has set us free from sin's power and penalty. We will not experience the punishment of sin. How marvelous! The Holy Spirit frees us not only from the consequence of our sin, but also from its power so that we need not succumb to it.

When a person is saved, he is freed from sin's mastery but not from sin's presence. He will still battle sin, but it will no longer dominate him because he has the ability to forsake it.

A Christian does not fulfill the law by producing external behavior based on a code of ethics. Holiness, righteousness, and obedience are not external; they are internal. They are the product of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the believer's heart. When a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in him, and begins to produce a life of holiness. If a Christian is disobedient, he is fighting against himself and thwarting the Spirit of God. Being a disobedient Christian is like holding your breath--it's easier to do what the Spirit of God generates. The disobedient Christian is actually fighting against the new nature within him.

God not only redeemed us transactionally (by imparting Christ's righteousness to us) and forensically (by judicially declaring us righteous), but also planted His Spirit within us to produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). That results in actions pleasing to God because Christ has given us His Spirit.

Justification and sanctification are inseparable truths. If you have been redeemed, you will manifest that reality in your life. But the Holy Spirit, who resides in your heart, will produce evidence of a righteousness that fulfills the law.

II. HE CHANGES OUR NATURE (vv. 5-11)

A. Comparing Our Old and New Natures (vv. 5-6)

1. Contrasts (v. 5)

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

There are only two kinds of people in the world: those who follow after the flesh and those who follow after the Spirit. God never divides people by sex, culture, race, class, or education. His concern is whether they follow Him or not.

There are degrees within each category, however. Some Christians don't mind the things of the Spirit as well as they ought to. Some who mind the things of the flesh actually behave better than some Christians.

People who walk after the Spirit do so because they think about the things of the Spirit and live their lives according to the Spirit. Those who walk in the flesh have their minds on the things of the flesh because they live according to the flesh. Romans 8:8-9 indicates that those who are after the flesh are in the flesh. Their fleshly nature causes them to have fleshly thinking patterns (or a fleshly disposition), which becomes manifest in their behavior. A Christian is able to fulfill God's law because he has proper thinking patterns, which come from his new nature. From the moment of his conversion, a Christian's disposition is changed toward the things of the Spirit.

The phrase "they that are after the flesh" (v. 5) in the Greek text literally says "the ones being according to the flesh." When a person is "after the flesh," he will "mind the things of the flesh" (v. 5). The common Greek word translated "mind" (nous) refers to the brain and its function, but here Paul used phroneo, which means "disposition" or "bent." It is derived from the root phren, which refers to the seat of all mental affections and faculties. Unbelieving people are disposed toward the things of the flesh. 1 John 2:15-16 says that if a person has a love or bent toward the world, he is not of God. Phroneo is also used in Phil 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Our Lord was bent toward humbly submitting to God; we are to follow His example.

Those who mind the things of the flesh are bent toward depravity. Their minds are not set on God but on all that's temporal and corrupt in this world (e.g., Rom. 1:28-31; Gal. 5:19-21). Fleshly things have no connection with the eternal kingdom of God.

In contrast Rom 8:5 speaks of "they that are after the Spirit, [who mind] the things of the Spirit." Since the HS dwells in those who are redeemed, they are bent toward the things of the Spirit. They walk in the Spirit and pursue what is precious to Him. That's why Paul said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). Now what are the things of the Spirit? 1 Cor 2:10 says, "The Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." That encompasses the very mind and will of God.

The phrases "mind the things of the flesh" and "[mind] the things of the Spirit" in Romans 8:5 are genitives of possession. An unregenerate person's mind is possessed by the flesh and a regenerate person's mind is controlled by the Spirit. We who have been redeemed have been given a new nature. We are no longer walking after the things of the flesh; we are now walking in the direction of God's Spirit.

2. Consequences (v. 6)

"To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Vs 6 gives us a deeper distinction between those who are after the flesh and those who are after the Spirit.

The person who does not know God and is bent toward the flesh is in fact dead. Eph 2:1 says, "You hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." 1 Tim 5:6 says, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." A carnally minded person is spiritually dead--the life of God is absent in his soul. He lives physically, but not spiritually.

Rom 7:5 says, "When we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Sin is so dominant in unregenerate people that all it produces is death. Men and women without the Lord live in a state of death.

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace." When God's Spirit changes a person's nature, He makes him alive to God and spiritual truth. 1 Cor 2:14 says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." However, the Holy Spirit enables a redeemed person to understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:15-16).

When we were redeemed, we were given new life. Romans 6:4 says that since we died with Christ, we will also rise with Him. If we were buried with Him in His death, we will rise with Him in His resurrection, and walk in newness of life. The Spirit of God has made us alive to God. Because we have new life we who are redeemed can feel God's love, sense His power, and understand His Word and work in our lives.

A person who is spiritually minded has peace with God. Before a person is saved, he is at war with God. But after redemption, God becomes his constant companion.

We who are redeemed have life. In that life we have sweet communion with God. His grace is bestowed upon us and His love is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). We have joy forever and are at peace with Him for eternity.

Do Believers Still Sin After They Are Saved?

Even though we are redeemed, we don't always pursue the things of the Spirit. However, before we were redeemed, we never pursued them. Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Even though we were given new life when we were redeemed, sin is still in us, though it doesn't dominate us anymore. When we are glorified we will no longer be in the flesh, but for now we have to battle against it.

An unsaved person doesn't battle against sin because he is disposed toward it and dominated by it. A Christian has to battle against it because he is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and the flesh strives against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Gal 5:16 tells us how to win the battle: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." We have to respond to the Spirit and not to the flesh. The latter produces the sins mentioned in verses 19-21, and the Spirit produces the virtues listed in verses 22-23. Verse 25 concludes, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The Spirit-filled life is a step-by-step journey. Those of us who are redeemed will always struggle with our humanness until the time God perfects us.

B. The Character(istics) of Our Old Nature (vv. 7-8)

1. Its inability to submit to God (v. 7)

"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." A depraved person cannot subject himself to the law of God. That's because he is at war with God and dead spiritually, for he is cut off from God, who is the source of life. However, a person who minds the things of the Spirit is able to have victory over his sins through the Spirit's power.

The Greek word translated "mind" in verse 7 is also phroneo, so the text literally says, "The fleshly mind is bent against God." That's why an unbeliever doesn't obey the law of God. His bent against God is seated deeper than mere disobedience: an unbeliever's acts of disobedience are just the external manifestations of the mind's disposition. Sin is not only outward rebellion, but also an inward attitude. There is no way that the flesh can be subject to the law of God.

You might ask, "Since I have been redeemed, is my flesh now subject to the law of God?" No, because your flesh has not yet been redeemed. If it had been when you were saved, you would be perfect. But you are not because you still have unredeemed flesh to contend with. That's why salvation has a future aspect. Rom 8:23, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body."

Since our humanness cannot fulfill the law of God, it has to be eliminated. But that won't happen until we receive our glorified bodies in heaven.

When you are redeemed, you become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). But you are still in your mortal body, which cannot be redeemed in this life. That's why Paul called it "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24).

2. Its inability to satisfy God (v. 8)

"So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Depraved people cannot please God because they cannot obey Him. That's tragic because God created mankind to please Him. purpose of all creation is to be to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:12). Those who don't please God have forfeited their reason for existence.

C. The Conclusions Drawn as a result of Our New Nature (vv. 9-11)

1. The Spirit's presence proves our salvation (v. 9)

"Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." In verses 5-8 Paul refers to "they," here in verse 9 he says "ye" because he is speaking to believers only. As believers we are neither in the flesh nor bent toward it. Far from being opposed to God, we are able to fulfill His law and please Him. We are in the Spirit, who has given us a new nature. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." A Christian is born of the Spirit and is no longer in the flesh. Although the flesh is still in him, it isn't controlling his life.

If the Spirit dwells in you, then you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. Being in the Spirit is not a matter of professing Christ, looking holy, or attending church, but of being indwelt by the Spirit. The Greek word translated "dwell" (oikeo) indicates that the Spirit makes His home in you. He lives in every believer. However, he who doesn't have the Holy Spirit residing within him doesn't belong to Christ.

People need to be warned about that. If your life isn't showing evidence of the power and presence of God's Spirit, then you don't belong to Christ. If you aren't fulfilling God's righteous law, desiring to walk in the way of the Spirit, and seeking with your heart the things of the Spirit, then He is not in you. No matter what you claim, you don't belong to Christ.

We are to examine ourselves. 2 Cor 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." Look for manifestations of the Holy Spirit in your life: Have you experienced a divine sense of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23)? Do you see the fruit of righteousness in your life? Do you long to commune with the living God? Have you ever had a love for God's Word? Does your heart praise God? If you have experienced those things in your life, know that they were produced by the Spirit. Even though you may behave in a fleshly way occasionally, if those things have generally characterized your life, the Spirit of God obviously dwells within you.

All Christians struggle with sin. Paul said that sin dwelt within him (Rom. 7:17, 20). However, it's comforting to know that the Spirit also dwells within us!

2. The Spirit's presence guarantees our spiritual regeneration (v. 10)

"If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." When a person receives the indwelling Christ, his body remains subject to death because the flesh doesn't get redeemed in this life. That's why Christians still have to face death. The body must be changed because it can't go to heaven. Terrestrial bodies vs. celestial bodies. We will be changed. The physical body exists only so we can live on this earth. It is a temporary tabernacle, but it is not us. The body of death will die, but we continue to live spiritually. This physical body will suffer from disease, sickness, and trials. Eventually it will weaken and die.

But "the Spirit"--the Holy Spirit and your human spirit with its new nature--will live because of Christ's righteousness. Bodily death is the result of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12). Like the rest of humanity, you entered the world as a sinner. But because Christ now lives within you, death will merely usher you into eternity. And we won't take the bodies we have up into heaven; we'll get new bodies (1 Cor. 15:44-53). In Phil 3:8-9 Paul joyfully

says, "I count all things but loss ... that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

3. The Spirit's presence guarantees our physical regeneration (v. 11)

"If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you."

If the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you have the assurance that the Father will raise you from the dead just as certainly as He raised Christ. God promises you a glorified body. If you were regenerated spiritually, you will be regenerated physically as well.

What does the Holy Spirit do for us? Take us from sin to righteousness by freeing us from sin and death, enabling us to fulfill God's law, and changing our nature that we become new inside and out.