

Billy Sunday was an evangelist of the early 1900s. He led the way... in many ways for his successor... Billy Graham. Both men led a lot of people to Christ through their huge revival campaigns. The good that Billy Sunday did... was that we will see a lot of people in Heaven... because of how God used him. ... But evaluate this famous quote of Billy Sunday's:

Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot. I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. And I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth, and when I'm old, fistless, footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition."

As a baseball player... Billy Sunday was a well-recognized celebrity before he turned to Christ. ... He left major league baseball to become an evangelist... and he was not a student of the Bible for very long at all – before he led massive evangelistic crusades. ... This might explain why this quote is in direct opposition to what we have been studying in Romans. (It sounds good to many – but it is not Biblical.)

Last week... we saw how beat-up the Apostle Paul got... from trying to fight sin in his own effort and ability. He concluded that it is impossible! (Let's go back to Romans 7 for just a bit...)

Romans 7:21-24 (ESV)

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Paul's passionate conclusion is the cry of every Christian who has ever tried to please God on his own. This has been (and is) my cry. It has been yours too. We want to do good... but we end up doing the very thing we

did not want to do. ... Our inner being wants to please God... but the power to do so is out of our grasp. We are in bondage.

In the dark desperation of Paul's futile struggle against the flesh... he cried out: "*Who will deliver me from the body of this death?*" ... As we saw (last week) in chapter 7... Paul tells the believer that during his/her lifetime... there will be constant tension - because of our sinful nature. A believer is "a slave to sin." ... So... the question arises... *Are we to spend our entire lives defeated by sin? ... Must a believer spend his whole life on earth frustrated by ongoing defeats to indwelling sin?* The answer is a resounding - "No!"

Just after Paul cried out "*Who will deliver me from the body of this death?*" the answer immediately came in the next verse: "*God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (7:25). ... And this brings us right into Romans chapter 8. ... In this chapter... Paul describes the life of victory and hope... that every believer has because of Christ Jesus.

(You see) we have not finished the discussion we had started in last week's passage - Romans 7. Romans 8 is still answering those questions that I posed at the beginning of last week's sermon: *If we are redeemed... why do we fail to live up to the Bible's clearly- stated expectations? ... Why do we fail to live up to the standards that we expect of ourselves? ... Why are the pathways of our lives strewn with so many potholes that jar our anticipation of a smooth journey? If Scripture says that I am an overcomer – why do I so often feel overcome?*

Here is what we concluded last week... from Paul's teaching in Romans chapter 7: Our struggle against sin is normal for every believer. (Even

Paul was beat-up terribly by this struggle.) ... Second... I pointed out that it is God way of keeping us dependent on Christ. ...And now... (this week... where we pick up)... we will focus on God's provision for our struggle.

The theme of today's Bible passage is the Holy Spirit. ... In Romans chapter 8... Paul will describe the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God - Who is the source of divine power for our Spiritual growth... and the secret for spiritual victory in daily living. ... (So let's dive-in...)

Romans 8:1

I appreciate Paul's putting this reassurance up front. ... It consoles those who are miserable because of their struggle with sin. ... We see that our assurance is focused on Christ... not our performance. ... (And) because of Paul's reassurance here in verse 1... it frees us to hear and absorb what he has to teach us about the Holy Spirit.

The literal rendering is: "*Therefore now - not one condemnation.*" (In other words... even though the Apostle Paul - and all the rest of us - experience the type of struggle and failure that we saw in chapter 7)... we do not lose our salvation. ... There is no condemnation to those - who are in Christ Jesus. ... Now... what does in Christ Jesus mean? ...

The expression "*in Christ*" is one of Paul's favorites. It occurs in all his epistles... and denotes a new realm into which the believer is brought - at conversion. The concept of being "*in Christ*" is not an easy one to grasp apart from an illustration... and here... the Old Testament is helpful. In relating it... allow me to loosely quote from Adrian Rogers. (It is a rather long – but excellent quote – so please bear with me.)

"In Christ" means that Christ is my ark of safety - and I'm in Him. In the Old Testament, Noah's ark was given not only to preserve Noah but that it might be from time immemorial an illustration of what happens to us when we are saved. As Noah was in the ark, I am in Christ. You see that little preposition *in*? That's where I am. I am in Christ.

Now, when God told Noah to build the ark, God said, *"Noah, put some pitch on the inside of the ark and put some pitch on the outside of the ark."* (Genesis 6:14) That is, "Make it doubly secure within and without." Now, pitch was a tar—a gummy substance—that was spread all over that ark. The purpose of it was to make the ark watertight, to make it waterproof, because it had to float. The storm in Noah's day represented the wrath of God. The ark represented the place of safety. The pitch ... And, incidentally, the word *kaphar*, which is translated "pitch" in the Bible, is also translated "atonement." And, you could say that God said to Noah, "Put atonement on the outside and put atonement on the inside," because it is the atonement that keeps the waters of God's judgment from coming through. You see, not one drop of water could get in, and not one drop of judgment can come to me because I am safe in Christ.

Once Noah and his family were safely in the ark, we read that "the LORD shut him in" (Gen. 7:16). Here was complete security. God did not say to Noah, once the ark was finished, "Now, Noah, I want you to take eight nails and drive them between the outside timbers and the door. No! **God** shut him in. What it meant for Noah to be "in the ark," it means for us to be "in Christ." (God shuts us in.)

Now, that's one reason I believe in the security of the believer—because as Noah was in that ark, I'm in Christ. Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he could never fall out of the ark—amen?—because God, when He put him in, God sealed him in that ark. And, because of that—hallelujah!—there is no condemnation for sin. Do you see it? Chapter 8:1: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) I'm not going to be judged for my sins—no judgment, no condemnation. I have settled my case out of court. I am in Christ, and because I'm in Christ, I am safe.

“There is no condemnation.” This word “no” is weak in the English translations. ... In our versions it is a simple negative. ... But in the Greek text “no” is strongly emphasized. It is not the most commonly used word... as the simple negative “ou.” Instead Paul used the stronger negative “oude.” ... Second... it occurs at the beginning of the sentence... which intensifies it even further. ... Paul is saying: “*Not only is the Christian not in a state of condemnation now... he never can be; it is impossible.*” ... It is a very strong statement.

But even with such an assurance that Paul knew (expressed here in chapter 8)... we saw in chapter 7... Paul wasn't enjoying the Christian life -- he was a failure... and he was a wretched man. ... God wanted him to have joy in his life. ... So how is he to have this? ... Notice the next verse.

Romans 8:2

Here Paul gives the Holy Spirit one of His more magnificent titles: “*the Spirit of life*.” It reminds us of the first mention of the Spirit in the Bible (Genesis 1:2), when the Spirit brought forth creation - *ex nihilo*... (something out of nothing!) ... That same creative power is characteristic of the power behind the rebirth of every Christian... and the One Who helps us live the Christian life.

We have the Spirit of Life to overpower the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is a downward pull that is in every believer’s experience... and we all feel it. We even sing about it. “*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; Prone to leave the God I love.*” So we have the Spirit of Life... and we have the law of sin and death. Both are at work inside of us.

The law of sin and death is like gravity... and the Spirit of Life - we might compare to the law of aerodynamics... which supersedes the law of gravity to keep airplanes in the sky.

The law of aerodynamics does not cancel the law of gravity... but it overcomes the law of gravity. ... Whenever I fly in an airplane... I am so grateful for this greater law that overcomes the law of gravity and makes it have no effect on me. I depend on it to overcome gravity's attempts to make me fall to the earth (some twenty or thirty thousand feet.) Each time that I have flown it was a greater power than gravity... keeping me aloft.

Now... therefore... as a Christian... *“the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”* (Romans 8:2) ... That doesn't mean that the law of sin and death is not pulling on us. ... That doesn't mean that we are never tempted. ... That doesn't mean that there's not that downward pull. - There is... but Praise God! — there's also the greater power of the life in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:3-4

Everything the Law required is now realized in the lives of those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit. ... When I was preparing for this sermon... I came across these lines of poetry which speak of this. I didn't know who the author of the poem was... and I had posted it on Facebook... Elaine (a member of a former church that I pastored) wrote that it was John Bunyan.

*To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet or hands;
But better news the gospel brings:
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.*

What Paul wrote in Romans 8:3-4... is "*You are free from all condemnation, but you must now leave your sin.*" *God condemned sin in Christ, **so that** holiness might appear in us.* ... God made us alive in Christ... **so that** we might live for Him. ... For example... (we can also say)... He saved us by grace... so that we might be gracious in how we treat other people.

Please look at verse 4 again.

Romans 8:4

What does "*fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law*" mean? ... The answer is in the word "*walk*" (*peripateō*)... which follows this phrase.... The idea is that the Christian life is like a path along which we walk... following Jesus Christ who goes before us. ... The path has a direction... and it has boundaries.

Can Christians sin? Of course... they can—and do. We **all** do. But there is a big difference in the world between stumbling on the path... getting up... and then going on - and not being on the path of discipleship **at all**. ... Those who are on the path may fall... but they are following after Jesus Christ - and are never fully content unless they follow Him.

And the good news is: the life that Jesus lived... can now be reproduced in us... by His Spirit. ... (But notice!)... It is not reproduced **by** us... but **in** us... if we "walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

While the old nature never gives up... never backs off... never concedes defeat... we can live with confident assurance that the Holy Spirit is

stronger. ... Now... the question is “*To whom will we yield control?*” Paul’s explanation implies a choice on the part of the believer.

Romans 8:5-8

People who decide to follow their sinful nature will be dominated by it and think about sinful things. ... But believers do not **need** to live in sin... because they can now live *controlled by the Holy Spirit*... ... (How?) ... by constantly setting their minds on *things that please the Spirit*. ... It is a daily (moment-by-moment) - mindset.

What Paul is saying here is immensely important because our mind-set makes all the difference. ... We all live in a storm-tossed world. And *the set of our minds* will determine not only *eternity*... but (also) *the quality of our life - now*.

What Paul is talking about with the words “*to set the mind on the flesh*”... is whenever we (as believers) try to be righteous... *by trying harder*. (Billy Sunday... in the opening illustration that I used... is a good example of “setting the mind on the flesh.” - It won’t work. Bearing down with all our might... only leads to a deeper sense of being alienated from God... which is depicted in these verses as “death.”)

But setting our minds on the Spirit of Life ... will bring us full-life here on earth... and peace with God. ... So (perhaps) we should try to better understand what it means to *set our minds on the Spirit*.

All through the New Testament... we find the characteristics of a mind under the Spirit’s control. ... (So... briefly... here are 5 descriptions of it... and then a summary)... #1. It will be a mind directed toward truth... aware

of the Spirit's presence (John 14:17). ... #2. It will be a mind seeking to please the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:8). ... #3. It will be a mind active in memorizing and meditating on the words of Christ (John 14:26). ... #4. It will be a mind sensitive to sin (John 16:7-11). ... #5. It will be a mind eager to follow the Spirit's guidance (Galatians 5:16-22).

(In summary)... "Setting our mind on the Spirit" is a voluntary commitment - of our looking for where God is already at work (in and around us)... and seeking to join Him in it.

Romans 8:9

Notice the sudden change of phrases. Now Paul uses "*the Spirit of Christ*." ... The clear implication of Paul's use of the phrase "*the Spirit of Christ*" ... is that through the Holy Spirit... we experience something of Jesus' entire disposition... (His kindness... His gentle care... and His love in our lives.) ... As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us... we are filled with *the character and attitude of Jesus*... and life becomes more and more - to **us** - what it was (and is) to Him.

This phenomenon applies to *all* Christians... not just to so-called spiritual ones. ... This is an absolutely critical thing... because it means that being a Christian is not merely a matter of adopting a particular set of intellectual or theological beliefs... (*however true they may be*.) ... It involves a change of our whole being. ... (Here is more... about that change.)

Romans 8:10-11

Through the Spirit we have a new sense of life now... and the assurance of eternal life. The Holy Spirit confirms and intensifies our life. (The payoff for

being a Christian is not just *later*... when we go home to glory.) ... The "**now**" of our spiritual life becomes highly-pixelated 4k High-Definition!

Paul squarely confronted his readers with an uncompromising question. He asked his readers if their lives have had *this transformation*... by the work of the Spirit.. ... If teaching like this shakes you a bit... it is probably **good** for you to be shaken — particularly if you have been taking sin lightly. The Bible says that we are to examine ourselves to make sure of our salvation (2 Peter 1:10). We should not be at ease in this matter. We should not rest until we are sure that we really do rest in Christ Jesus. ... I would suggest the following as excellent tests of whether *you* are a Christian.

First... is God real to you? ... When you pray do you know that you are really praying to Him... and that He is listening to you... and will answer you? ... When you worship Him in church... is it a real God you are worshipping?

Second... is the Bible a meaningful and attractive book to you? I do not mean... "Do you understand everything you read there?" ... But does it seem to be right when you read it? ... Are you attracted to it? ... Do you want to know more?

Finally... are you drawn to other Christians? ... Do you want to be with them? ... Do you enjoy their fellowship? ... Do you sense how much you and they have in common? ... Now... if these things are true of you... you should be encouraged by them... and press on in following after Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:12-13

It is not enough for us to have the Spirit - the Spirit must have us! Here we read... that the Holy Spirit gives us a new obligation. ... Now ... this sounds like work... doesn't it?

We do (indeed) have an obligation... but it is not to do good things for God. The obligation is to allow the Spirit to do good deeds on our behalf - (through us)... so that we will become more like Jesus and share the blessings – the very blessings that are due Him.

With that we come now to (what I consider) is the most exciting part of our passage... (You see)... In assuring us that God will give us the very blessings that are due to Christ – we are given a new identity... as “sons of God!” And Paul (next) shows us how we can know if this is true of us.

Romans 8:14-16

Paul is talking about assurance of salvation and is arguing that one basis for this... is our new relationship to God... which is a family relationship. ... We sense that we really are God's sons! ... So intense is the reality of our adoption that we cry... "Abba, Father."

The Aramaic word "Abba," which means "Daddy," was never used by the Jews to address God... nor would they ever use it today. (It would be too disrespectful)... But Jesus used it... and this was (no doubt) considered scandalous by His enemies. He used it in Gethsemane when He cried, "Abba, Father ...everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet

not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). ... And here in Romans we read that the Holy Spirit compels the children of God to cry, "Abba, Father!"

Now... there is one other place in the New Testament... where we are informed about this cry. In Galatians 4:6... Paul wrote:

Galatians 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

"Abba, Father" is a reflexive response whenever we are faced with a dire challenge... It is the cry of children to their Daddy. ... (LISTEN!) The Holy Spirit inside a true believer... compels us to cry out "*Oh Daddy!*" to God... when we find ourselves in trouble. ... If that has frequently been your response... it is evidence of God's Spirit being present in you.

Another way that we are assured by the Holy Spirit that we are God's Children... is highlighted in verse 16. Let's look at it again.

Romans 8:16

Now... I want to say something that my fellow Baptists often overlook. ... And please know... I don't want to offend anyone here... but this verse actually teaches that it ***is*** possible for a Christian today... to have words and ideas spoken directly into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (gasp!) There I said it! Yes... and I believe that ***when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside the believer*** – He is ***not*** mute! (gasp!)

Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

I actually wrote such things in my Doctoral dissertation... which was about God's subjective leading of men to become pastors... and my faculty advisor at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary... told me that he agrees with me but that five years prior... my dissertation would not have been accepted at the seminary.

Well... what else could Philippians 2:13 and Romans 8:16 mean...? And what a marvelous truth Romans 8:16 conveys! ... Paul is talking about assurance of salvation... by speaking in our hearts that we are in His family. We are children of God!

Haven't you ever had such an experience? ... An overwhelming sense of God's presence? ... Or haven't you (at some point)... perhaps at many points in your life... been aware that God has come upon you in a special way and that there is no doubt whatever that what you are experiencing is from God? ... You may have been moved to tears. ... You may have deeply felt some other sign of God's presence... by which you were certainly moved to a greater and more wonderful love for Him.

If you have had any of these intensely spiritual moments... perhaps in your quiet times or while sitting in a church service... thank God for them. Know that they do not replace the study of God's Word. The Bible is primary... for knowing God's will... and the Bible over-rules any "God-told-me" message that contradicts it. ... But rejoice that God also has a way of making Himself so real to us... that we are actually lifted up... (even in hard

times)... and are assured by that spiritual whisper of divine love - that we **are** ... (and **always will be**) God's children.

Romans 8:17

There is a price for being identified with Jesus. Along with being "heirs of God's glory," Paul also mentions the suffering that Christians must face. Romans 8:17 mentions two important biblical ideas: "the hurts and the hallelujahs" - of being fellow heirs with Christ... because **both** are true!

The struggle for every Christian will continue until we go home to glory. But God... through His provision of the Holy Spirit inside our lives... has given us the ability to be sustained and to overcome.

My friend... what are you enduring for Him today? ... Whatever it is... Paul makes it clear that it is just a **light** thing we are going through now. ... But there is a **weighty** thing (an "eternal weight of glory") that is coming someday.

2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

So... let me leave you with this profound thought... (You know) I think that once we get to Heaven... we will wish that we had suffered a little **more** for Him... because that is the way He schools and trains us.