

Title: The Empowering of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: Romans 8:1-17

Series: God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

a. Romans 7:14-25 taught us about the futility each Christian will encounter when trying to please God in their own strength. Human effort, even for the redeemed, cannot satisfy God's standards.

b. Previously, we have learned that there is nothing wrong with God's Law. It is perfect. So, the problem lies with us as it did with Paul, who, in frustration over the lack of sanctifying growth because of the inability of human effort, cries out:

i. **Romans 7:21-24** 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?

1. Beloved, this has often been my cry, and I am sure 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 not within human grasp.

c. However, there is another experience that also belongs to every Christian, and it is described in **Romans 8:1**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- i. Christians have been placed beyond the reach of the condemnation of God. The condemnation about which Paul writes refers to the last judgment, the outpouring of God's wrath, or what the scriptures describe as damnation.
 1. We live in a time when people laugh at the idea of a wrathful God. Even within the church, some believe there is no room for damnation, but the Bible clearly teaches the certainty of eternal damnation.
- ii. What Paul is saying is **that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus** because they do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. In other words, as we realize the futility of sanctification by human effort, the Christian thrusts himself unto God the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit's power, we are relieved and comforted.
 1. So, the futility of sanctification by human effort is washed away by the reality of sanctification by the Spirit's power.
 2. The unbeliever must fear condemnation but the believer is assured of God's salvation.
- d. So, in verse one, Paul introduces the grand theme of Romans 8: the work of the Holy Spirit in effecting the sanctification of the saints, and he contrasts this with the helplessness of the unbeliever.
 - i. Chapter 8 focuses on God the Holy Spirit. Until now, the Book of Romans has only mentioned the

Spirit's glorious work a few times. Now, chapter 8 mentions the Holy Spirit twenty times!

- ii. For the believer, I hope that our study of this chapter will enable us to live more and more in the power of the Holy Spirit so that the frustration expressed in chapter 7 will become less and less our experience. For the unbeliever, we further hope that that same Spirit would convert you today.

2. Verses 2-4: The Holy Spirit

- a. Verse 2 introduces the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing liberation: **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** In other words, we were under the old principle of sin and death, but the new principle of life has transcended the old. In Christ, the believer is free.
- b. The old principle showed us our sin, stirred it up so that we sinned even more, and then brought us to condemnation. But the new principle liberates us. Eternal death has been replaced with eternal life.
 - i. This is true because of the working of the Holy Spirit, whom Paul gloriously calls **the Spirit of life.**
 - ii. This title reminds us of the first mention of the Spirit in the opening chapter of the book of Genesis. It is here that the Spirit brought forth creation from nothing. In Romans, the same Spirit of God **gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist** (Romans 4:17b).

- c. This **Spirit of life** carries out the work of God the Father, securing our liberation.
 - i. We read in Verse 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
- d. The Law held up its perfect standard but could not empower us to live up to that standard because of the weakness of our flesh.
 - i. Since our flesh was inadequate, God sent Christ **in the likeness of sinful flesh**. Paul was very careful about his words here. He did not say Christ came in sinful flesh because that would imply sin in Christ. Nor did he say the likeness of flesh because that would imply that Christ only seemed to be in the flesh. He said **the likeness of sinful flesh** because Christ took on man's flesh without becoming a sinner.
 1. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ is like us in all respects except one. He is without sin.
 2. When Jesus went to the cross, the last thing He worried about was the Romans' punishment. He went to the cross to receive a far greater punishment from the Father to remove our sins. Christ did that in His flesh!
 3. That is the thought here. Because the Son was condemned in the stead of the elect, there is no condemnation for God's people
- e. What this means for us is given in 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.

- i. God creates a new humanity characterized by walking according to the Spirit (alongside the Spirit). This new humanity, through its union with Christ, who never sinned in the flesh, is infused by the Spirit with the power to live in a pleasing way to God.
 1. What we could not do in our own effort, the Spirit accomplishes through His power! We are saved and can walk in sanctifying obedience as we walk with the Spirit.
- ii. Everything the Law required is now realized in the lives of those whom the Holy Spirit controls.
- iii. Beloved, when Christians yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, we are liberated. We no longer have to sin. Through the Holy Spirit, the virtue, perfection, and power of Christ's life are communicated to us. We actually keep the Law of God from the heart. Now, we love God with all our hearts, and we love our neighbors as ourselves. Just as the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep and, with power, called forth a new creation, the Holy Spirit called us forth into liberty!

3. Verses 5-8: The Spiritual Mind and the Fleshy Mind:

- a. Verse 5 tells us that **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.**

- i. People in the flesh are incapable of obeying the law, so when they look to the law as a means of salvation, they reach for the impossible.
- b. Paul continues to set forth the contrast between life in the flesh and life in the Spirit, between the old man and the new man, giving us more characteristics of each.
 - i. First, **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh** (v. 5). The unregenerated person can only think about earthly and carnal things.
 - ii. Second, **those who live according to the flesh are carnally minded**, and this leads to **death** (v. 6). Carnality kills the unregenerated sinner.
 - iii. Third, **those who live according to the flesh cannot be subject to the law of God** (v. 7).
 1. Why does the natural man hate God by nature? Why do they have debased minds (1:28)? The reason is God's law. Man is at war with God.
 - a. Whenever we want to do our own will, express our appetites, and live out our preferences, we demonstrate the depth of our disobedient nature.
 - iv. Fourth, **those who live according to the flesh are unable to please God** (verse 8). This is Paul's devastating conclusion.
 1. Unregerated man can **do nothing to please God**. So long as man is in the flesh, the only thing he will receive from God is God's displeasure and wrath.

- v. We must remember the context here: **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit** (v. 1). Therefore, those who do not walk according to the Spirit, those who are not in Christ Jesus, there is nothing but condemnation. That is the only possible consequence for a life defined by a mindset of the flesh, one in which the mind is at war with God and with his law and does not want to be ruled by His sovereign majesty.

4. Verses 5-17: Four of The Holy Spirit's Liberating Gifts to God's Elect:

- a. First, the Holy Spirit gives God's elect a new mindset. Verses 5-8 describe two mindsets, one without Christ and the other with Christ.

- i. The mindset of those without Christ has distinct characteristics: death, hostility toward God, and an inability to subject itself to God or to please Him. These characteristics govern the sinner's life, and how he will behave and believe.

- 1. **1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- ii. On the other hand, **setting one's mind on the Spirit is life and peace** (verse 6).

- 1. What Paul says here is immensely important because our mindset makes all the difference

in daily life. We all, whatever our spiritual state, live in a storm-tossed world. But we know that rain falls on the just and the unjust. Our mindset will determine not only eternity but also the quality of our lives now.

- b. Second, the Holy Spirit gives a new sense of life.
 - i. We believers have the **Spirit of Christ** (verse 9), the indwelling **Holy Spirit**. As the Holy Spirit fills us, we are filled with Jesus's nature, and our lives become more and more like His.
- c. The third element the Holy Spirit gives us is a new obligation.
 - i. Verses 12-13: So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (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.
 - ii. Paul realizes that though we all have the privilege of victorious Christian living through the Holy Spirit, we will not all automatically follow God's will. Therefore, he exhorts us to live **by the Spirit**. Day by day, we are constantly tempted to follow the flesh, and that is why Paul encourages us to **put to death the deeds of the body**.
- d. Lastly, the Holy Spirit gives us a new identity (verses 14-16).
 - i. The identity the Spirit gives us is that of being sons and daughters of God. Verse 16 tells us that **the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God**. Paul calls the Holy Spirit **the Spirit of adoption**.

- ii. In the most real way, we are God's children! So intense is the reality of our adoption that we are given the right to cry, "**Abba! Father!**" The Aramaic word "**Abba,**" which means "Dear Father" and has the same sense in which we might call God "Dad" or "Daddy." The Jews never used this Aramaic word to address God, nor do they use it today. In the New Testament, Jesus alone used it, and this was no doubt considered scandalous by his enemies. He used it in Gethsemane when he cried, "**Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will**"
- iii. And here in Romans 8, the Holy Spirit's work makes it possible for us to cry, "**Abba, Father!**" **Galatians 4:6** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
 - 1. This is the cry of a desperate child.
- iv. Can anything be more beautiful in this cold world? Jesus, through the Spirit, has given us his own special name for God the Father, and it has become our natural cry to a loving Father. Beloved, there is nothing better that we can offer a lonely world than the adoption into God's family!
 - 1. Remember, today, many have never known a meaningful relationship with an earthly Father. Or some have, but now that earthly father is gone. Today, through the Gospel,

God offers Himself as Father to all who come to him through Jesus Christ by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Do not leave this place without surrendering to God and having the ability to call out, “**Abba, Father!**”

- v. The text outlines the keys to personal victory in this world as 1) experiencing the renewal of the Holy Spirit and 2) living according to the Spirit. May all this be ours today and always!

5. Conclusion:

- a. Beloved, the new life, effectuated by the Holy Spirit, is of the greatest importance. Paul writes **but you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you** (v. 9).
 - i. There is one condition to salvation: the Holy Spirit of God must dwell in us. Understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is vitally necessary to a biblical understanding of Christianity.
 - ii. We cannot be Christians unless the Holy Spirit regenerates us and changes our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.
 - iii. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, **unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot even see the kingdom of God**, let alone enter it.
 - iv. The Spirit enters and indwells every person whom he regenerates, guaranteeing future redemption for everyone he indwells. He seals the redeemed against the day of judgment. We are

signed, sealed, and delivered when we are born of the Spirit.

- v. We will still fight with ongoing sin, but if the Spirit is in us, we are not in the flesh. We are in the Spirit, in Christ, and the blessed promise of no condemnation applies to us.
- b. Paul reminds us that **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His** (v. 9).
 - i. If the Holy Spirit does not indwell us, if we have not been reborn, we do not belong to Christ. Beloved, there can be no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. May the Spirit make you able to come to Him!

6. Benediction

- a. **John 16:7** Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Public Reading of Scripture John 16:4-15