

Romans 8:1-11 – “Life in the Spirit”

(Pew Bible Page: 944)

Intro: The apostle has been laboring to explain the certainty of the believer’s position “in Christ.” In verses 7-25 of chapter 7, he has pointed out that believers cannot come to the place of assurance through attempting to live lives pleasing to God by keeping the Law. Keeping the Law, we are taught, only leads to a deeper sense of our sinfulness, for that is the purpose of the Law – to reveal to us that we are sinners. Assurance lies in a completely different direction. When we cease trying to live by the Law, and begin living in the Spirit, our quest for assurance finds its reward. Assurance of salvation comes through living life in the Spirit, rather than in the flesh.

Proposition: We will begin to experience assurance of salvation as we learn to rely on the Spirit’s power rather than the Law’s.

Billboard: (vv.1-4) No Condemnation
 (vv.5-8) Two Ways of Life
 (vv.6-11) Victory in the Spirit

(vv.1-4) No Condemnation – The apostle showed us theologically in 7:7-25 what our experience confirms: trying to live a life pleasing to God by keeping the Law only brings us under a heavier sense of condemnation and uncertainty. It is hardly surprising, then, that his first statement concerning life in the Spirit is one of absolute assurance, followed by an orderly explanation of the basis for that assurance: **Romans 8:1-4** – *1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 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, 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.* The Apostle Paul’s mind was as clear as sunlight. In these verses he made three statements – in verse one he stated the principle, in verse two he gave the proof for the principle in verse one. In verses three and four, he explained the basis for the truth of the proof statement in verse two. Here is his contention:

- (v.1) The Principle – *“There is therefore now, NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* The principle is simply this: all who are in Christ Jesus have escaped any possibility of condemnation (lostness; damnation; eternal death) simply because they are union with Christ, apart from their failure to keep the Law.
- (v.2) The Proof – *“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”* We have moved beyond condemnation because in Christ, we have been placed under a higher law than we lived under in Adam. “Law” here is referring to “natural law,” something that happens unfailingly such as the law of gravity. Anywhere you go

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on planet earth, gravity keeps its grip on you. In like manner, all who are “in Christ” are inevitably set free from “the law of sin and death” because we are now under “the law of the Spirit of life.” All who are “in Adam” are invariably living under “the law of sin and death,” which says that wherever there is sin, there is death. All who are “in Christ” have escaped “the law of sin and death” and are now living under a new, higher law, “the law of the Spirit of life,” in Christ Jesus, which says that wherever the Spirit of God is there is life. How can this be so? In the following two verses, the apostle explains.

- (vv.3-4) The Basis – This is all BY GRACE: “*For God has done, what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*” What did God do for us that the Law could not do? He:
 - Sent His Son to become one of us – a human being.
 - Condemned Sin in the flesh, releasing us from sin’s power to condemn us.
 - Fulfilled the Law’s requirement for salvation: perfect holiness in the saved.
 - Caused the redeemed to “walk” (live in) the new power of the Spirit rather than in the old power of the flesh.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] We are no longer under condemnation because God in grace has set us free from the law of sin and death.

[ILLUSTRATION] What greater assurance could we ask for beyond the knowledge that God’s grace is fully responsible for our salvation?

[APPLICATION] Assurance number one: “*If God is for us, who can stand against us?*”

(vv.5-8) Two Ways of Life – The apostle now contrasts the two ways of life “in Adam” and life “in Christ.” Again, his logical mind is in action. Verse five explains the last phrase of verse four, “*Who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*”

(But before we begin our look at this it is important to remind ourselves to be on guard against a common mistake in reading this section: The apostle is NOT SPEAKING OF GAINING OUR SALVATION in these verses, but rather of gaining ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION as the context shows in verses 8:13-14. **Romans 8:13–14 – 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. 14* *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*)

- “Walking,” (KJV) he says, means “living.” **Romans 8:5 - 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* He uses the phrase, “*set their minds on,*” meaning, “is a slave to” or “obeys” (cf. 5:17). (“He is governed and ruled and

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controlled by sin. Sin ‘reigns’.”¹) There is no suggestion of choice here: “Those in the flesh (i.e., ‘in Adam’) set their minds on the things of the flesh (i.e., ‘sin nature’). Likewise, those who are “in Christ” set their minds on the things of the Spirit. What is being described here is the typical characteristic of each kind of humanity, “in Adam,” or “in Christ.” Verse six explains the inevitable result of living in the flesh versus living in the Spirit.

- Living in the flesh means death; living in the Spirit means life: Romans 8:6 – 6 *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. “Death” means “separation from God and spiritual powerlessness.” “Life” means “fellowship with God and spiritual power.” Verses 7 & 8 show that those who are “in Adam” cannot hope to please God.*
- Those “in Adam” are in a hopeless condition: Romans 8:7–8 – 7 *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 8* *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] There are two contrasting ways of life resulting from whether one is “in Adam” or “in Christ.”

[ILLUSTRATION] It is impossible for any “in Adam” to please God.

[APPLICATION] Assurance number two: Have we experienced a changed life since coming to Christ? Then we can rest in the fact that we are His, since “*Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*”

(vv.9-11) Victory in the Spirit – The apostle reiterated that all depends on the presence of the Spirit in those who are “in Christ,” and not upon our performance. **Romans 8:9–11 - 9** *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10* *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11* *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* ALL DEPENDS ON THE INDWELLING PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BELIEVER; THAT IS THE ONLY CONDITION FOR ASSURANCE. Let’s remind ourselves of the fact of the Spirit being given to each believer at conversion (cf. Ephesians 1:13; Acts 19:2). Anyone claiming to be a believer who does not have the Spirit, does not belong to Christ. But for all who do belong to Christ, all the rest follows inevitably.

¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Romans 5,” page 306.

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- (v.9) If the Spirit dwells in you...
- (v.10) Your condition is this: Sin still dwells in your body (the flesh), BUT the Spirit also dwells in you and is LIFE because of Christ’s righteousness gifted to you. (Remember the principle of “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” overruling “the law of sin and death.”)
- (v.11) THEREFORE, your resurrection with Christ spiritually in “the now” is certain, and your bodily resurrection with Christ in the “not yet” is just as sure. Note how the apostle begins this discussion with certainty in verse one and end this section with certainty in this verse.

Does this mean that we no longer should concern ourselves with putting Sin to death in our daily experience? Far from it! We strive to live godly lives BECAUSE we are saved, not SO THAT we can be saved. Our assurance is bolstered by our walk of faith. FAITH is the key concept. Just as we received Christ by faith, we receive assurance through faith. **Colossians 2:6 - 6** *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] All who are “in Christ” live by faith and receive assurance as a precious gift resulting from life in the Spirit.

[ILLUSTRATION] It is impossible for any “in Christ” not to be saved.

[APPLICATION] Assurance number three: If Christ’s Spirit lives in you, you can rest assured of your being raised with Him. As you live by faith in this truth, you will gain increasing experiential certainty of your salvation.

Conclusion: This may all sound complex, but it is really very simple: Just as we are not saved by keeping the Law, so we do not receive assurance by keeping the Law. We receive salvation by believing what we are told about Jesus; we receive assurance by believing what we are told about Jesus’ Spirit living in us. Assurance results from a life lived by the Spirit rather than the Law. How do we live by the Spirit? That’s for next week!