

Through the Spirit – Romans 8:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Being Specific*

1. A young minister, fresh out of seminary, was assigned to his first church in a small logging town.
 - a. Nearly everyone worked for the local lumber mill,
 - b. Which was in a *fierce* competition with the next town's mill downstream.
2. One day while taking a walk along the river he saw something that disturbed him.
 - a. He saw some loggers pulling logs branded for the *other mill* out of the water.
 - b. Then they cut off the brands & ran them through their *own mill*.
3. He was bothered by this obvious theft & spent the rest of the week on a powerful sermon.
4. That Sunday he got up & preached his sermon, *You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Property*.
5. The response of the congregation was enthusiastic.
 - a. As he stood at the back door greeting everyone, they told him how much they enjoyed the message.
 - b. "You really moved me preacher," they said, or - "Best sermon I ever heard in a long time."
 - c. He was sure the stealing logs had come to an end.
6. But that next morning it was business as usual. They were still hauling the other mill's logs out of the river.
7. So the *following* Sunday he delivered a real "pulpit-pounder" titled *You Shall Not Steal*.
 - a. That week they were *even more* enthusiastic & greeted him at the back door with "Fantastic!" & "Wonderful!"
 - b. Surely they'd gotten it & would leave off their theft, he thought.
8. But on Monday the other mill's logs were *still* being swiped.
9. The pastor realized they weren't connecting the dots so he decided to make it as plain as could be.
10. The following Sunday he got up & preached on the topic, *You Shall Not Cut the Brands Off Someone Else's Logs & Run Them Through Your Mill*.
11. They ran him out of town!

B. *Paul Gets Specific*

1. When I listen to a sermon, I appreciate it when the speaker *gets specific*.
 - a. A *general* explanation of the background is necessary,
 - b. But it's a lot more helpful when the teacher gives specific examples & insights in **HOW** to put the Truth to work.
2. A good part of Paul's explanation of the Gospel of Grace *so far* in Romans has been *general*.

3. In ch. 8 he turns the corner & begins to get *real specific*.
4. As he does, we don't do what those loggers did & shun the guidance he gives –
5. On the contrary, we're *eager* for his counsel.
6. Because as we saw last week in the last half of ch. 7, we can relate to the struggle he describes there.
 - a. The good *I want* to do, I don't do & the evil I *don't want* to do, I do!
 - b. In v. 24 he vents the frustration so often in us –

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

- c. V. 25 is the answer, the solution –

I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

7. In. ch. 8, which it's going to take us a few weeks to get through, Paul gets down to the nitty-gritty of

HOW to live the Christian life.

8. But before we dive into it today, I want to ask you to take a closer look here at v. 25 –
 - a. Deliverance from the moral struggle comes, *not* by striving to do better –
 - b. But through *complete surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord*.

Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

9. Paul means the word “law” here in the sense of →
Way – Order – Path – Plan – a System – or Mode of Operating.
 - a. The “*law of the land*” means the way things work, the system of order by which people live.
 - b. That's the way it's meant here.
10. There're 2 *ways* to live → God's way & Sin's way.
 - a. When Paul is trusting in himself – it's sin's way.
 - b. But when he remembers *who he is in Christ*, it's God's way.
11. He elaborates now beginning with v. 1 –

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

1. *Guilt* is one of the most powerful emotions known to humanity.
2. Many psychologists think it's the chief cause of mental disorder.
3. We all know the power of guilt to influence our actions: It's a potent *motivator*.
 - a. 13 year old Elizabeth Brinton, explained how she sold 11,200 boxes of Girl Scout cookies:

- b. She said, “You look people in the eye & make them feel guilty.”
4. It's amazing what lengths some will go to get rid of guilt.
- I've shown this before – *Wash Your Sins Away* soap.
 - Some years back a company came out with *Disposable Guilt Bags*.
 - It was a set of 10 ordinary brown paper bags on which were printed these instructions:
 - Place bag securely over mouth, take a deep breath & blow all guilt out. Dispose of the bag immediately.*
 - The Associated Press reported that 2,500 kits had been quickly sold at \$2.50 per kit.
 - While most were probably picked up as a gag, the point is still made that people want *desperately* to get rid of their guilt.
5. The IRS received this letter:
Enclosed you'll find \$150 in cash. I cheated on my tax return last year & have not been sleeping well. If I still have trouble sleeping I'll send the rest.
6. **One of the ways** people ease their conscience is by **getting others** to say they're okay.
- Remember the popular book of a few years ago? *I'm okay, You're okay*
 - It was a pop-psych attempt to remove guilt by lowering the moral bar.
 - If you've ever listened to Dr. Laura on the radio, at least half the calls are from people asking for guidance on moral issues – because they want to avoid guilt.
7. Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, visited a prison & talked with the inmates.
- There were endless tales of innocence, misunderstood motives, & unjust exploitation.
 - Finally the king stopped at the cell of a convict who remained silent.
 - Frederick said, “I suppose you're an innocent victim too?”
 - The man replied, “No sir, I'm not. I'm guilty & deserve my punishment.”
 - Turning to the warden, the king said, “Here—release this rascal before he *corrupts* all these fine innocent people in here!”
8. Man's attempt to erase his own guilt is *futile* at best & *damning* at worst -
- Because we *are* guilty before God - guilty of sin.
 - And God has sent the Holy Spirit to *convict* us.
9. There's *only one way* to removed guilt, thru Christ. So Paul says -
There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus
10. The word *condemnation* is unique; it refers to the *punishment* due to a crime. A good synonym for it here is *sentence*. Let's read it that way –
There is therefore now no sentence to be paid by those who are in Christ Jesus
11. We need not fear God's punishing us for sin.
- We don't have to worry He's going to smite us, or that we stand in jeopardy of falling into hell.

- b. The punishment due us passed to Christ. He bore the full weight of divine justice.
12. The Cross **sets us free** from the plague of guilt. **FREEDOM**
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13. Guilt has 2 dimensions, 2 sides – one’s *legal*, the other is *emotional*.
- a. On the **legal** side, guilt is our standing in relation to Law.
- 1) If you keep the law, you’re *innocent*. If you break it, you’re *guilty*.
 - 2) Then you’re subject to *judgment & punishment*.
 - 3) **Legal guilt** is a *judge’s business*.
- b. **Emotional** guilt is different.
- 1) This is our *personal sense* of sin & *feeling bad* about it.
 - 2) It’s an emotional reaction to **being** wrong - We *feel* guilty because we **are**.
 - 3) Such guilt carries with it the awareness punishment **is due**, it’s fitting!
14. Here is where we need to understand what Paul is saying in v. 1.
- a. As those who trust Christ, our sin was fully & finally paid for at the Cross.
- b. There is therefore now no condemnation, not sentence of punishment, for those who are in Christ Jesus!
- c. And since we **are** no longer **legally** guilty, there is **no need for guilt feelings**.
15. God **wants** us to be free! He releases us from the **debt of our sin** so we can be loosed from the pain & regret of failure.
16. When we turn to God in sincere repentance & ask Him to forgive us, He does – completely!
- a. And yet you’ll meet people who carry around a heavy burden of guilt that bums them out & steals all joy.
- b. They say, “I know God has forgiven me, but I’m finding it hard to forgive myself.”
- c. In light of what Paul says here, can you see how foolish & wrong that is?
- d. **It’s unbelief!**
- 1) It’s saying the Cross was **not enough**;
 - 2) That you must atone for your own sin.
- e. No! Forgiving yourself isn’t the issue – trusting God is!
- f. To **continue to feel guilty** when God says you’re forgiven is nothing but **unbelief**.
- g. If you look at the immensity of your sin, your failure & say that simply claiming the promise of God’s forgiveness **is too easy** – then you are doing **exactly** what Paul warns about next -
- who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**
17. Remember what we learned last week – we cannot live the Christian life through self-effort.
18. It’s lived by absolute surrender to & trust in Christ.
19. Deliverance from condemnation, both legal & emotional, comes when we look to Jesus **only!**

B. V. 2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

1. In 7:24, Paul cried out for deliverance from bondage to failure.
2. Here's the freedom he was looking for.
3. It's found → **In Christ**.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free.

4. Look at v. 1 again –

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

5. **Out loud**: Where is life? In Christ! / Where is freedom? In Christ!
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6. The Christian life isn't *trying our best* to be nice.
 - a. It's not even *trying* to be like Jesus.
 - b. The Christian Life **IS** Jesus → living in & through us.
 - c. It's not about striving to follow a set of religious or moral guidelines,
 - d. It's *total surrender* to Jesus, casting ourselves in complete dependence on Him so that we enter *into* Him & He, us.
7. This illustration is inadequate but maybe it'll help –
 - a. Picture a wet suit. Not a shorty for surfing but a full body scuba suit.
 - b. See it empty, just sitting there. It's made for being in the ocean.
 - c. Can it get there or do anything by itself? No—it possesses no ability, no power of its own.
 - d. It can *desire* to be in the ocean, exploring all day long—but it'll get not an inch closer to the water for all it's longing.
 - e. What that suit *needs*, indeed—what it's *made* for, was for a man/woman to step inside it – then it fulfills its purpose & the suit can enjoy the ocean.
8. We're *spiritual* wetsuits. Created by God to be the vessels thru whom He lives in this world.
 - a. This is our great gift & potential – to be the dwelling place of God on Earth.
 - b. **Without** His inner presence & power, we're empty & unable to live as we're meant to.

C. Vs. 3-4

³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

1. God knew that because of the Fall, people could never perform the requirements of the Law.

2. So God became Man in the Person of Jesus. Because He was untouched by the Fall, He was able to live a sinless life & satisfied the law's demands.
 3. By dying, which is sin's penalty, because He was Himself *without* sin, He now provides a *substitute* for all who look to Him in faith.
 4. The moment we turn from sin & put our trust in Jesus, He puts His Spirit within us – & that Spirit brings the means to live as we ought.
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5. Last week we saw Paul's moral struggle & how he just couldn't do what was right.
 - a. 33 times in just 10 verses he used the words, "I, me, my" revealing where his focus was – on self!
 - b. So far in Romans, Paul's only used the word "spirit" twice. In Ch. 8 = **20 times**.
 - c. The contrast is clear – it's self or the Spirit.
 - 1) Trusting in self leads to failure, sin & death.
 - 2) Trusting in the Spirit means success, righteousness & life.
*To run & work the law commands, Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;
 But better news the gospel brings: It bids me fly, & gives me wings*
 6. D.L. Moody was once trying to share the key to conquering sin with a group that was finding the lesson difficult.
 - a. He held up a large glass & asked, "How can I get all the air out of this?"
 - b. One man suggested a pump, but the glass was thin & would break under the vacuum.
 - c. Several suggested other ingenious ways to remove the air, but each would result in harming the glass.
 - d. As they continued to make their suggestions, Moody reached over to a pitcher of water & proceeded to pour.
 - e. When it was full he said, "There, the air is now removed."
 - f. He explained that victory for the child of God does not come by working hard to eliminate sin.
 - g. It comes by allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession of us.

D. Vs. 5-8

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1. Paul brings the flesh & Spirit into sharp contrast. They're mutually exclusive.
 - a. We cannot be in the flesh & the Spirit at the same time.
 - b. We're either in one—or the other.
2. What *mode* do you *normally/usually* live it, the flesh or Spirit?

3. You'll occasionally hear someone say something like, "I was driving on the 101 the other day when this guy came screaming by & cut me off. It was so close I thought for sure he was going to hit me. It made me so mad that I got ***all in the flesh*** & let him know what a jerk he was."
 - a. Now, by saying they "***got*** all in the flesh," they're implying up till that point, they had been walking in the Spirit but got ***bumped out*** by the rude behavior of another.
 - b. Is that right? → No way!
 - c. They were ***in the flesh*** all along. It just became ***obvious*** when a challenge arose.
 - d. If they'd been walking in the Spirit when that got cut off,
 - 1) They wouldn't have reacted the way they did.
 - 2) They would have rejoiced they weren't hit & thanked God for His protection.
 - 3) Then they would have prayed for that jerk instead of consigning him to outer darkness where there's weeping & wailing & gnashing of teeth.
 4. When we're in the Spirit, we come at life from a different perspective.
 - a. Being in the flesh isn't only manifested when we do something ***obviously*** wrong.
 - b. It's just relating to the world the way we did before we trusted in Christ.
 5. But when we're in the Spirit, we aren't concerned with "I-ME-MINE"
 - a. We're content to let God ***be God*** & to work in our lives & circumstances to accomplish His will.
 6. The essence of spiritual maturity is to live more in the Spirit than the flesh.
 7. We do that by ***choosing*** where we will **set our minds** – what we'll depend on: ***self or Spirit***. V. 5 →
- ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.***
8. With what ***mind set*** will you move through life?

*One ship drives east & another west - With the very same winds that blow.
'Tis the set of the sails, & not the gales - Which tells them the way to go.*

*Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate, - As we voyage along through life--
'Tis the set of a soul, that decides its goal -And not the calm or the strife.*

E. V. 9

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

1. This as a word of encouragement to those who've identified with the struggle described in ch. 7.
2. They're frustrated with continual failure to get it right – so Paul tells them they don't need to stay stuck.
3. They ***already have*** the answer to their problem – The Holy Spirit!

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

4. That's the bottom line → If a person is born-again, they already have the Spirit.
 5. He's is the *crucial difference* between being lost & saved.
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6. Here is an amazing, astounding truth – if you're born again: You already have **EVERYTHING** you need to live a full, productive, successful life.
 7. That's what the Spirit has come to bring you.

F. Vs. 10-11

¹⁰And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1. Because of the inner presence of the Spirit, we have the power to live as God intends.
 2. The proof of our present potential to live a life of glorious freedom is our future resurrection.
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III. CONCLUSION

1. I end with this – Will you be resurrected?
2. If you say “yes” – then understand –
 - a. While your body has to *wait* for **its** resurrection –
 - b. Your **soul** can enjoy the resurrected life of Christ right now!