

**THE SPIRIT, SANCTIFICATION, AND SECURITY**  
**ROMANS 8 OVERVIEW**

When I go to the mountains, the last morning I am there I invariably go outside for one last round of pictures of those majestic hills. Then, as we leave the area — when my car is about to take me out of view of the mountains — I slow and sometimes stop so I can turn my neck and get one last view of the sun gleaming off those favored spots.

When I was in Tel Aviv a few weeks ago, Dan Kirk and I walked down to the Mediterranean Sea and I took a series of pictures of the sun dipping below that sea, waiting until the last ray of sunshine was gone for the day, before turning and going back to the hotel.

When I finish reading a book, I will often flip through its pages and relive some of the highlights of the book, and the passages that stimulated me, before I put the book on the shelf.

I guess I am nostalgic. I just don't want to miss anything of the beauty that I have enjoyed from those experiences. Today is our corporate nostalgic view of Romans 8.

This chapter sits in the middle of one of the most beloved books of Scripture. And it is the pinnacle of the section of that book that speaks of sanctification. One 17<sup>th</sup> century pastor said of this chapter: “if the Bible was a ring and the Book of Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be ‘the sparkling point of the jewel.’” [Quoted in Boa] Pastor Charles Trumbull wrote of this section, “The eighth of Romans has become peculiarly precious to me, beginning with ‘no condemnation,’ ending with ‘no separation’ and in between, ‘no defeat.’” Ray Ortlund has summarized this chapter by saying, “Here in Romans 8 there is refreshment enough for dry and thirsty believers!” [*Supernatural Living for Natural People.*]

We began our study of this chapter nine months and 20 sermons ago. This morning I want to take one more look at this glorious chapter around the theme of the Holy Spirit. What does Paul teach us in this chapter?

**THE GRACE OF GOD THAT GIVES SALVATION TO THE BELIEVER ALSO GIVES HIM THE SPIRIT  
AND HIS SANCTIFYING AND SECURING POWER.**

The believer is inhabited by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and made secure by the Spirit. The spiritual life is the *Spirit*-life. Let's look at that life in Romans 8 —

- 1. Highlights of the Holy Spirit's Work**
- 2. Implications from the Holy Spirit's Work**

## 1. Highlights of the Holy Spirit's Work

- The Holy Spirit is the dominant theme in this chapter; He is mentioned by name 20x (vv. 2, 4, 5 [2x], 6, 9 [3x], 10, 11 [2x], 13–14, 15 [2x] 16, 23, 26 [2x], 27). The Spirit dominates this ultimate chapter on sanctification, because the Spirit dominates the process of sanctification. There is no sanctification without the work of the Spirit.
- **He has removed our condemnation** (vv. 1-2)
  - ✓ Because the believer still sins (7:14-25), he might still feel that he is under the condemnation of God.
  - ✓ But we have been set free from the bondage to sin through Christ and through the Law of the Spirit who has given us life (which we see in both 7:4-6 and 8:2). The Spirit applies the work of Christ to us, giving us *new life*, and *freeing* us from *the law of sin and death*. It no longer captivates us.
  - ✓ Notice that He is the *Spirit of life* — He is the Spirit who contains life (life is in Him) and He is the Spirit who gives life (He originates both physical life in creation and spiritual life in regeneration). In giving us life, He has removed our condemnation.
  - ✓ We *were* under condemnation, but because of the work of the Spirit, the sentence of death that was over us has been removed and we have been liberated eternally.
- **He has given us a new way to live** (v. 4)
  - ✓ When Paul says that sin was condemned in the flesh (v. 3) *so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us*, he means that sin was condemned so that we could begin to do the works of the Law in a way that pleases the Lord.
  - ✓ He doesn't mean that we are justified on our own, but he does mean that through the empowerment of the *Spirit* the believer can increasingly perform acts of obedience that are pleasing to the Lord, in fulfillment of the Law's demands. Our obedience to God is Spirit-controlled and Spirit-empowered and a manifestation that the Spirit is living within us. We have a new way to live (obedience) that we can only do because we have the Spirit of God within us.
- **He has given us a new way to think** (vv. 5-6)
  - ✓ How do you finish the sentence, "I used to think that...?"
  - ✓ The Spirit of God gives us a new way to think. He transforms our minds. Before Christ, our thinking was all *on the things of the flesh*. We only used to think of fleshly things (or spiritual things in fleshly ways — how we could be spiritual ourselves, and without Christ). Our entire worldview was oriented to the flesh — doing sinful things in contrast to and opposition to God (1 Cor. 2:14-16).

- ✓ But with the Spirit, we have a new way to think. Our minds are fixed so we can think in ways that honor God and demonstrate that the flesh no longer controls us; we can think right thoughts that are preoccupied with God and in submission to Him (Rom. 12:1-2).
- ✓ The result of that new way of thinking is that we have *life* and *peace* — we have spiritual life (no longer in bondage to death) and we have peace with God (5:1).
- He indwells all believers (v. 9)
  - ✓ To say that the Spirit of God *dwells in you* does not refer to the location of the Spirit (since the Godhead doesn't have a physical body or form). The word *in* can be translated "by" or "with" — it refers to how the Spirit relates to us — He is *with* us, providing authority and control over our lives. We are being directed constantly by the Spirit of God.
  - ✓ The emphasis of this passage is also that the Spirit does not just occasionally show up to help us, but He is an ever-present help to us, directing us. He permanently resides with us.
  - ✓ And because His job is to point us to Christ, and manifest Christ to us, it is as if Jesus was living with us at all times (cf. John 14:16-17). The Spirit gives us everything we need to live the Christian life. He is as resourceful and beneficial to us as if we had Christ walking beside us every moment, every day.
- He is empowering our new lives (vv. 10-11)
  - ✓ Because the Spirit is always with us, we always have the *Spirit's life* (v. 10) and the Spirit's resurrection power (v. 11) available to us. If He could raise Christ to life, then He is capable of doing all that we need in our lives.
  - ✓ Further, what could we do if Christ is with us and if He is praying with us and for us? He *is* with us. The text emphasizes that the Spirit resides in us, but notice the interplay between *Spirit* and *Christ* in vv. 10-11. To have the Spirit is to have Christ. And not only does the Spirit pray for us, but so does Christ (v. 34). So to say that the Spirit is empowering our lives is to say that Christ is empowering us, in the very same way as if He was walking physically beside us each day.
  - ✓ One of the most compelling parts of my trip to Israel was the time in Capernaum; the town was two acres (less than 1/3 of the church property); that's where Jesus spent most of His ministry. Sleeping and eating and worshipping with a few hundred (?) others in intimate fellowship. How encouraged and helped the disciples must have been to have Him so close. And that is what we have in the Spirit.
- He empowers our mortification of sin (v. 13)
  - ✓ Of all the problems we have, the greatest problem is our problem with sin. My biggest burden in my life is me. I have created more problems for myself with my sin than anyone or anything else.
  - ✓ And because of the Spirit, that can change. Notice — *if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live*. You must put to death (mortify) your sin, but you will never do it by yourself. You can only do it by the Spirit's power. And He gives you that ability (Col. 3:5ff).

“We humans don’t merely *have habits* — we *are habits*, said Jonathan Edwards. Therefore most of life is not first deliberated at the conscious level and then acted out. That’s true. Rather, the only hope for the sanctification of our habits and loves is the Spirit. He must awaken his transforming power deep inside us and open our eyes to behold the splendor of Christ. So in his sermon on 2 Corinthians 3:18, Edwards can say this: ‘The glory of Christ is such, that it is of a transforming nature. It’s of a powerful nature: it changes all that behold it into the same image; it reaches to the bottom of the heart, to the most inner soul; it is a sight that purifies and beautifies.’ Only the grand Spectacle of Jesus Christ can reach to the bottom of our loves and longings with power to shape us into something whole and beautiful.” [Reinke, *Competing Spectacles*, 97.]

- **He is uniting us in sonship to the Father (vv. 14-16)**
  - ✓ The Spirit is ***the Spirit of adoption*** (v. 15). He doesn’t just mean that we “feel adopted” or “have a sense of adoption,” but that the Spirit of God produces and confirms our adoption. He brings us into the family of God as adopted children.
  - ✓ As adopted children, we owe new allegiance to our new Master, the Father, and we have every benefit of the position of sons, approaching Him as our ***Abba*** (Daddy, v. 15) and we *do* inherit the promises made to us (v. 17). God the Father is intimately close to us and gives us what we need.
- **He is our guarantee for salvation (v. 23)**
  - ✓ In this world we have suffering (not just from our own sin, but also from others, vv. 18-22). As a provision for that suffering, God has given us the Spirit as ***the first fruits***.
  - ✓ These first fruits are like the first pickings of a harvest; ordinarily there were given to God in worship and trust that more would come. Here, the worshipper doesn’t give God a gift, but God gives the worshipper a gift — the Holy Spirit — to say, “you have just tasted the beginning of your salvation with this gift of the Spirit. You have the appetizer of salvation; but there is more to come, and it surely will come (that’s a guarantee!).”
  - ✓ Suffering does not remove our salvation; the presence of the Spirit in our suffering reveals the security of the salvation that has been given to us.
- **He is helping us, particularly by praying for us (vv. 26-27)**
  - ✓ We have ***weaknesses*** for which we ***do not know how to pray*** (we don’t know what God’s will is).
  - ✓ Into that need, the Holy Spirit steps with prayers for us — He can appeal to the Father because He is One with the Father, has access to the Father, and knows what ***the will of God*** is (v. 27).
  - ✓ There is perfect intimacy and communication and knowledge between the Spirit and the Father so that no prayer request is ever mishandled.
  - ✓ We have needs (especially in suffering, vv. 18-25) and the Spirit knows how to pray and He does (always) pray for us.

- Notice something else: the last time the Spirit is mentioned by name is in v. 27. But the work of the Spirit undergirds everything that follows in vv. 28-39. If the Spirit didn't do the works we have just spoken of, then the security that we experience in vv. 28-39 is impossible. The only reason we have this security is because the Spirit has been working.

## 2. Implications from the Holy Spirit's Work (Since the Holy Spirit has done this...)

### • Live by His power (v. 4)

- ✓ Fill your mind with His Word. It is interesting that this chapter contains no imperatives. Paul is not overtly calling us to do anything. But He does want us to think in new ways. He wants us to comprehend the greatness of the Spirit's work for us. He wants us to meditate on the truth of our position in Christ. He wants us to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2), and especially on the things of the Spirit. Transformation begins with a renewal of the mind. If you want to change the way you live, you must first change the way you think (Rom. 12:1-2).
- ✓ So live by the Spirit's power means first of all that we meditate on and contemplate the Spirit's work for us. And then considering His work for us, we submit to all that He commands us to do in His Word. Spirit-filled living is Bible-submissive living. We now obey God, because we *can* obey.
- ✓ Failure in living means I'm living by my strength (and the flesh) and not by His power

### • Set your mind on Christ. The Spirit's job is to point the believer to Christ (1 Jn. 4:2). The Spirit does not exalt Himself, but He does exalt Christ. We know the Spirit is working when Christ is pre-eminent.

- ✓ Fill your minds with Christ and His work on the cross for you. We need to stop loving the world (1 Jn. 2:15). To stop loving the world we need the expulsive power of a new affection (Chalmers).
- ✓ Stop filling your eye-gates with the world's vision for you and fill it with the vision of Christ.

"The mind is not merely a computer for data processing; it's the faculty for seeing. Of course Paul meant seeing in Scripture. But our gaze is direct. Our Object is real. These commands are not optional...

"Every palate is directed by an intuitive, native relish. Our natures must be completely changed and renewed by grace if we are to have a taste for Christ. Only when he becomes sweet to us can we be freed from the mass appetites of the world's pleasures. The sweetness of sin must be spoiled by a new savor. The pleasure of Christ kills the old pleasures that led us, but only after we get new, instinctive taste within us....

"Our movies and television dramas present a view of the world where God is inconsequential. Thus pastor David Platt's warning is necessary: 'You don't become like Christ by beholding TV all week. And you don't become like Christ by beholding the Internet all week. You don't become like Christ when you fill your life with things of this world. You become like Christ when you behold the glory of Christ, and you expose your life, moment by moment, to his glory,' all through God's revelation in Scripture." [Reinke, *Competing Spectacles*, 139-41.]

- **Work hard against sin (v. 13).**

- ✓ **The spiritual life is synergistic.** You cannot simply say “I’ll let God do this...” Invariably those people end up saying, “I wanted to change but God never took away the desire or changed me, so I guess I’m just stuck in my sin...” (People have said that to me.) You must work, but when you work, you must also realize that it is not your work, but the Spirit’s working in you; everything good thing you do and all spiritual progress you make is only the result of the Spirit of God working in you.
- ✓ You must work. What must you do?
- ✓ **Identify your sinful tendencies.** It is easy to identify the sinful tendencies of the culture when we are sitting in the barber chair getting our hair cut — “all those bad people out there...”
  - But what are the sinful tendencies in here (in my heart)? What are my desires and longings?
  - Where and when am I predisposed to sin?
  - Where and when will I make unwise choices?
  - Where does my mind and heart go when it has time to go wherever it wants?
  - I do what I do because I want what I want. And I want what I want because I believe what I believe. So what am I doing? And what do my actions say about what I want? And what do my desires say about what I really believe? My verbalized theology is probably correct, but my functional theology — what I believe when I act — tends to be ordered by the flesh. And that’s what I want to examine and eliminate. Identify those tendencies and desires and beliefs.
- ✓ **Set your mind against the flesh (v. 5).** I.e., hate your sin. The battle against sin begins in the mind. You will never succeed in fighting against sin if you love or desire your sin in any way. If you desire your sin, your mind will rationalize your sin and give you excuses to engage it. You must hate sin for what it is and what it does. What should we say about sin?
  - It is contrary to Christ and against Christ and all He has done for you.
  - It will never lead (ultimately) to joy. There *are* passing pleasures in sin, but there are no *lasting* treasures in sin.
  - It will always lead (ultimately) to grief and loss.
- ✓ **Take action.** Establish a plan that will help you fight against sin. Give no opportunity for the flesh (15:14). Don’t just attempt to stop sinning; stay away from situations that entice you to sin. That was why Joseph succeeded and why the fool in Proverbs failed (7:7-10ff). One had a plan and didn’t give his flesh an opportunity to engage; the other was oblivious to his flesh’s power and gave it opportunity to operate.
- ✓ **Be persistent.** The flesh doesn’t stop enticing you when you defeat it one time. It will continue to nag you and tempt you throughout your life. You must be vigilant to stay on guard against it (and you have the Spirit who is ever-working on your behalf and ever-praying for you).

- **Pray** (knowing He also is praying).

- ✓ If the Spirit is praying for us, doesn't it make sense that we also should pray? And shouldn't we also be praying for each other?
- ✓ As I read through the prayers recorded in Scripture, two things are particularly striking:
  - How rarely health is prayed for (3 John 2)
  - How rarely we are commanded to pray for ourselves (Mt. 26:41)
- ✓ That doesn't mean that we shouldn't pray for health or for ourselves; but it does mean that a significant part of my prayer life needs to be for others, and particularly for their spiritual progress (e.g., 1:10-15; 10:1; 12:12-13; 15:30-33).
- ✓ Is the failure of some of you because of my failure to pray for you? Are our failures because we have not persisted in praying for each other? (Just a question, but it does indict me.)

- **Don't be anxious for your salvation.** Your victory over your sin is not your security (which is good news, since you *will* sin again). The Spirit is your security and Christ's victory over sin and death is your security. Nothing on this earth will ever make you secure. But the Spirit has made you safe in the Father and is keeping you safe.

- **Give thanks and worship.**

- ✓ There is nothing in this chapter commanding us to worship. And there is no command to give thanks.
- ✓ But it is notable that the end of the chapter explodes into a crescendo of praise in one of the most well-known doxologies of Scripture (vv. 37-39). Paul was so overwhelmed with the Spirit's work, he could not stop himself from overflowing into a declaration of praise (cf. also 11:33-36).
- ✓ Grumbling is what we do when we are dissatisfied with God; giving thanks is what we do when we are satisfied with God. Sin is what we do when we are dissatisfied with God; worship is what we do when we are satisfied with God.
- ✓ Contemplation of this chapter should lead you to worship and gratitude and joy as you realize that you were (rightly) under God's condemnation, but because of the Spirit's work to identify you with Christ, you have been set free from sin and death, liberated to obey God, and made secure.
- ✓ Do you often thank God for your salvation, freedom from sin, the cross, the presence of the Spirit,...? Don't leave worship this morning and don't go to bed tonight without affirming worshipping.

**CONCLUSION:** We have spent 15-20 hours examining the wonders of this chapter. It is a treasure of God's provision for us in sanctification. He has given us Himself. We are united to Christ, adopted by the Father, and indwelt by the Spirit. All the Triune Godhead is working on our behalf for our salvation and sanctification. Let us contemplate that work, let us be obedient to that work, and let us rejoice in that work.

**BENEDICTION:** Romans 8:37-39