



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Called to Life in the Spirit **Study Scripture: Romans 8:1-14**

Lesson 11, May 11, 2019

Key Verse

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
Romans 8: 1

In the Chapter previous to our Study Scripture the Apostle Paul had stated clearly that once a person could be classified as part of the brethren they had become dead to the law by being in the body of Christ. This union meant that they would be married to another, namely, married to Jesus Christ who has been raised from the dead. We can never forget therefore that the church or the congregation of God is the bride of Christ with all the marvelous blessings that that union entails.

Clearly, faith in the work that Christ at done on the Cross is indispensable to salvation and if one did not believe in the efficacy of that work done the Cross by the Lord Jesus Christ they could not be part of the brethren.

This of course means that the whole purpose of the existence of the brethren was to be in union with Christ. They are clearly therefore now part of His body.

The purpose of that union was that they would bring fruit unto God.

This of course meant that the brethren, who it is stressed are in union with Christ, should walk in newness of spiritual life so that in their walk they would bring marriage fruit unto God.

In our Study Chapter the Apostle introduced us to the Holy Spirit who would provide power to meet the aims of God. So now he in the power of the spirit is indispensable for the

ongoing work of sanctification. Now that the brethren had been reconciled to God and found peace with God by accepting the finished work of Christ on the Cross, they would be dependent on the Holy Spirit who is the sign and seal of the continuing work of redemption. The Spirit would now work through the heart of believers. In chapter 8 then we would see the Holy Spirit mentioned above 21 times while in chapter 7 we have the term "law" mentioned 20 times as if to invite us to look at the shift in emphasis.

Now it is good that Christians understand the role of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross in bringing salvation, but it is quite clear that genuine Christians who want to live the Christian life are often also unclear about how this is done.

Some therefore have created norms which have become strict taboos on some kind of behaviour, hoping that these human created norms would bring them acceptance with God. They really want to live a holy life and they want to find assurance that they are doing that. They invariably become legalists and have created complicated systems of "dos" and "don't" which if the brethren follow will guarantee a place in heaven. So they will say among other things if you wear jewellery, drink even a little wine or beer, wear dresses that are considered to be too short, or watch movies, you will be on God's hit list.

But let us remember that the Christian life is the life of faith and we have been told that the just shall live by faith.

The newness of spiritual life is made clear by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10
"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me".

Now it should be made clear that the Apostle stressed the fact that there is freedom, not only freedom from divine condemnation, but also freedom from the law of sin and death.

This of course has very practical implications for the Apostle states that in our new situation the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. But he warned that this new freedom does not provide anyone with an excess of liberty for they could easily turn that to license. He clearly stated, "Use not your liberty for license".

So how do we please the Lord in our Christian life? Over and over again the Apostle points out that it is the possession of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to walk in such a way that they please God.

As we are introduced to the work of the Holy Spirit we are warned that the believer in Christ who has been born again with a new nature still has the sin principle indwelling within him or her and so they cannot expect to have complete victory in the Christian life even with this new nature.

Our Study Scripture therefore tells us that the power for deliverance must come from outside of our redeemed spirits, says one writer. The Holy Spirit acting at the request of the Lord Jesus Christ takes up and continues the work of sanctification in a believer's life.

THE TEXT

Verse 1: In this chapter, and especially this verse, the Apostle underscores the privilege of true Christians, and then moves on to describe the character of those to whom it belongs. The fact that he says that there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus is a burden lifter or freer to ones soul.

In the previous chapter the Apostle spoke about sin remaining, disturbing, and vexing ones spirit. However, by the Almighty God, one can still be called a believer and redeemed to God as they at the end of it all are not ruined to God. His summary of complaint is to all believers including himself, for he knows or counts himself chief among sinners. Knowing this, the force of this discussion is not towards chastisement, but more towards the great hope we have through Jesus Christ and hence the consequential joy for what He has done for us. There is no condemnation that can come upon a Christian, as all those who are found in Christ Jesus share in this privilege and comfort.

It is important to consider what the Apostle is saying and what he is not. For instance, he does not say that there is no accusation against the Christian, for there can be and they are often is. However, it is thrown out and the indictment quashed. He doesn't say that there is nothing in them that deserves condemnation, for in truth there is, however, even though we should see it, own it and mourn over it, it is not our ruin. Likewise, the Apostle does not say there is no cross, no affliction to them or no displeasure in the affliction, not so. However, there is no condemnation.

The statement about "no condemnation" is a very interesting one and it has been interpreted in several ways.

Some say that it means something like "penal servitude". This would of course mean that there was punishment that might follow a sentence for crimes committed. The Apostle would therefore be saying that we are not responsible any longer for what had been done.

Others say it meant something like "legal burden". This of course would introduce a judicial concept.

Yet others believe that what the Apostle is saying is that we have freedom from sin, and we have freedom from death and that is so because there is a new law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This makes the believer free from the law of sin and death. This seems to be the true explanation of the phrase.

It is important however to note that in the Greek text the emphasis rests on the word "no" and not on the word "now". And so believers are encouraged that once they come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour there is no condemnation for true believers forever.

The Lord will chasten, but every Christian should be convinced that they will not be condemned with the world. And this arises from their being found in Christ Jesus by virtue of their union with Him for through faith they are thus secured. Christ is the Christian's refuge, the protector of our souls and it is He who protects us from the avenger of blood. He is known to all Christians as our Advocate, and justly so, as He and only He could satisfy the law through His death, and more importantly, through His life.

One scholar points out that we should be very careful in reading Scripture and he states this making an important distinction in doctrinal thought:

“The Bible distinguishes between judgment and condemnation. Condemnation in this passage and usually this root means this is the ultimate condemnation. It's the ultimate condemnation of eternal punishment. Put in the biblical terms, it is the ultimate punishment of the Lake of Fire. The Lord Jesus says that when we have believed in God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall not come into condemnation. That is, we shall not enter into a judgment that means that we are eternally lost. Having believed in Christ we are delivered.

But even as believers we ultimately face a judgment. This judgment, however, does not affect our return the destiny. It affects our rewards. There is the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and we must stand all of us believers before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things that have been done in the body.

When a man or woman believes in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no condemnation for them. They are placed in Christ. That is their position. And being in him, they now are free of eternal judgment.

The reason? The penalty Has been paid by a substitute. The Lord Jesus came and bore that judgment, and because our penalty has been paid it is impossible for us to have that penalty laid Upon us. That is why we believe Jesus Christ came and died for his people. That judgment for them has been borne in their Substitute. And of course, they are free”.

The character is given from their walk, not from any one particular act, but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk, the flesh or the spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? Which of these do we mind, for which of these do we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with?

For those in Christ, God does not condemn us but is well pleased in us. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus as to be freed from condemnation that they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

The privileges of which the Apostle speaks is centred on justification and sanctification. Repeated many times, there is no condemnation to Christians and we, the Christian also knows that they walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. This is not just our privilege, but it is as much our duty.

The law in or of itself could neither justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt nor from the power of sin, having not the promises either of pardon or grace. The law made

nothing perfect. It only serves those that have no sin, but to one who is with sin, only Christ can bring redemption, not the law. It is due to the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable either of being justified or sanctified by the law. We had become unable to keep the law, and, in case of failure, the law, as a covenant of works, made no provision, and so left us as it found us. It could never take away sin, Hebrews 10:4.

The issue of carnal Christians do arise, but that is a temporary condition not a permanent condition and cannot described a man or woman's whole bent of life. The bent of a Christian life is a life of holiness and righteousness even though it takes a long time sometimes to develop by the process of sanctification.

Verse 2: As the verse says, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus does it, that is makes all believer and followers of Christ free from the law of sin and death. We, children of God, have received a pardon and a new nature, being freed from the law of sin and death, the guilt and power of sin, the eventually course of the law and the dominion of the flesh. That is the covenant of grace made with us in Christ: it is a treasury or repository of merit and grace for His people.

The Apostle gives the reason for the “no” condemnation and the freedom if we are in Jesus Christ and it lies in the gift of the Holy Spirit who operates in the life of the believer. This operation has the fixedness of a law. The Apostle therefore says “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”.

This is a law, a fixed law and it is something that has taken place, past tense, for we have been freed from the “law of sin and death”. This is really a natural law that operates in the heart of every believer as the Holy Spirit works deliberately to free believers from the bondage to sin.

There is nothing wrong with the law that existed but it was weak because of the flesh. One writer explains”

“The anchor of the law was strong in itself but it wouldn't hold into the mud bottom of the human heart”.

Another writer adds:

“Even a Rembrandt cannot create a masterpiece on tissue paper”.

Christians, children of God, now fall under a new covenant, under the law of the Spirit, the law that gives the Spirit spiritual life to qualify us for eternal life. To be clear, when the law is mentioned in context with the Spirit is it not the same as the Law of Moses. It is meant to exclaim to grace that only God can provide to accomplish redemption. God is the author of our salvation, justification, and our redemption. By law of the Spirit, it is meant to imply an immutable fact in all creation that God wills something, so shall it be done. As such, the foundation of the glory and honour, this freedom is based upon is Christ and what He has done and continues to do for us as our Advocate.

It is the Spirit of God who has the power and efficacy to deliver regenerate persons from the dominion and tyranny of sin; and which may be considered as a reason why they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit".

Verse 3:

The law cannot justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt nor the power of sin. This is because in itself it does not have promises of pardon or grace, it is just a law, a barometer of sorts, pointing the way towards a mark. Because of the corruption of human nature we are unable to keep the law truly. The redemption that Christians attain is due to Christ and what He has done. The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us. God sent His Son. God provided another method, when the law was not sufficient to meet the needs of redeeming His creation.

Note notice the marvelous and powerful statement that God sent "his own Son, for this marks out and distinguished God's unique Son from all other sons. We are sons of God but He is the redeeming Son, God's own Son and He is different in kind from us for He is a divine person.

The statement "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, is very important for he emphasizes that Jesus came in the likeness of flesh and did not just appear to be a man appearing to have human nature, but was a real man not having sinful flesh for He did not and could not sin. He came as a human and offered a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.

So note that Christ appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful, for He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He came in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful. He took upon Him that nature which was corrupt because of the fall in Eden, though perfectly abstracted from the corruptions of it, His being circumcised, redeemed, baptized by John's baptism, implies the likeness of sinful flesh.

We should consider what God has done for us. It was a great condescension that He who was God should be made in the likeness of flesh, but even much great that He who was holy should be made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Even so, He was sent to be that perfect sacrifice for us, because only He could be. By His coming, sin was condemned, that is, God did therein more than ever manifest His hatred of sin, and not only so, but for all that are Christ's both the damning and the domineering power of sin is broken and taken out of the way.

By Christ's work sin is condemned, and though it lives and remain, its life in the saints is still but like that of a condemned malefactor. It was by the condemning of sin that death was disarmed, and the devil, who had the power of death, destroyed. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was made sin for us, and, being made so, when He was condemned sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ, condemned in the human nature. So was sanctification made to divine justice, and a way made for the salvation of the sinner.

The Spread of the Gospel

Verse 4: Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. Meaning, A righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost demands of the law.

The purpose of the freedom we have is holiness and holiness consists in righteousness, the righteousness of the law through the Spirit. A righteousness of obedience to the commands of the law is fulfilled in us, when by the Spirit the law of love is written upon the heart, and that love is fulfilling of the law. One writer explains:

“In other words, what is done in the believer's life is fully consonant with the demands of the Mosaic law. If we could think of the Mosaic law as a person, a righteous person examining the life of a man walking of the Spirit, looking at that man he would have to say I find nothing in life by the spirit that I can condemn. The righteousness of the law is produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.. We say that the standard of walking by the Spirit is at least as high as the standard of walking according to the law of Moses. It is the Spirit who gave us the law of Moses. And as the apostle says, “The Son of God has come that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” through justification, through sanctification. Notice it is passive, “might be fulfilled in us”, because it is someone has who does it through us; us who walked not after the flesh but after the Spirit”.

Though the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us, blessed be God, it is fulfilled in us. That is the gift of God to us. This is what His blood has done for us, blotting out our sins and opening up the lines of communion to even greater extents with God than Adam had. And so it shall be said of we who are God's children, that we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. This is the description of all those that are interested in this privilege. They act from spiritual and not from carnal principles, as for others, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled upon them in their ruin.

Verse 5: By looking into our minds, we may know if we are spiritually bonded or are bound to the flesh. Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour; the things of sense and time, are the things of the flesh, which the unregenerate people mind.

The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity are the things of the Spirit, which those that are after the Spirit do mind.

The man is as the mind is. The mind is said to be the forge of thoughts, and the Bible seems to allude to the fact that sin is conceived first in the mind. Prov.23:7.

It is a great matter what our Saviour is, what truths, what tidings, what comforts, we do most relish, and are most agreeable to us. Now, to caution us against this carnal mindedness, the Apostle shows the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

Now we should at this stage point out to believers that there is progress in the experience of deliverance for the Canaanites as one writer says are in the land and even with the Holy Spirit in our bodies we have to wrestle with the Canaanites. This writer states:

“And that wrestling continues our inmost being is ultimately brought into conformity with the law of God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are like escaping slaves still in the wilderness. The enemies’ dogs are being at our feet, but we are going to come to the land of complete freedom. The first stage, the gift of the Holy Spirit in power has been given to us; the work of appropriation is the work of a lifetime. What a magnificent God we have; A God who has redeemed us in the shedding of blood and who now continues his work of redemption through the Holy Spirit who indwell us”.

Verse 6: It is spiritual or in most being death, the certain way to eternal death, to be alienated from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul consists. A carnal soul is a dead soul, dead as a soul can die. A soul that lives in pleasure is dead not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death includes all misery, and hence carnal souls are miserable souls.

In contrast to be spiritually minded is life and peace, it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul, and that life is peace; it is a very comfortable life. All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace. It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this.

Do not fool yourself. Everybody, every man and woman is controlled by his or her inward inclination. So check yourself out. What is your inward inclination?

Verse 7: The carnal mind the Bible warns is enmity to God. This is a perfect definition of sin for that is what sin is, enmity against God. This state is worse than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, which is bad, but this speaks of him or her as a devil of a man or woman. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself. It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God. It rebels against His authority, thwarts His design, opposes His interests, spits in His face, spurns at His bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy can be reconciled, but enmity cannot. This idea should humble us and warn us against, carnally mindedness.

Shall we harbour and indulge that which is enmity to God our Creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor? To prove this, the Apostle urges that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light and darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the carnal mind never can. This must be broken and expelled. A carnally minded person has no inclination to the law of God, and therefore wherever there is change wrought it is by the power of God’s grace, not by the freedom of man’s will.

Verse 8: With the previous analysis of enmity, it should be clear that those in the flesh cannot please God. Those that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God, wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ, the pleasing Mediator.

Even the very sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, Prov.15:8.

Pleasing God is our highest end, of which those that are in the flesh cannot but fall short, they cannot please Him. Faith pleases God. And remember that faith is a gift of God. To please God therefore something has to happen to take you out of the flesh and place you in the Spirit.

Verse 9: To be present with Christ and having the Holy Spirit and not having Christ are vastly different states. What the Apostle means in his statement about the flesh and the Spirit is that this expresses states and conditions of the soul. All saints have flesh and spirit in them, but to be in the flesh and to be in the Spirit are contrary to one another. It denotes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles.

Now the great question is whether we are in the flesh or in the Spirit, and how may we come to know it? Why, by enquiring whether the Spirit of God dwell in us! The Spirit dwelling in us is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual (1 John 4:16). Where Jesus said He was one with the Father and the Father one with Him, thought it not robbery to say this, in a similar fashion, by Christ Jesus, through the adoption, Christians dwell with God and God with us. The Spirit visits many that are unregenerate with His motions, which they resist and quench, but in all that are sanctified He dwells, there He resides and rules. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit after all, and God is comfortable and welcome in His home, His temple.

The Apostle subjoins a general rule of trial: If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. To be Christ's (that is, to be a Christian, one of His children, His servants, His friends, in union with Him) is a privilege and honour which many pretend to that have no part nor lot in the matter.

None are His but those that have His Spirit. Those are they that are spirited as He was spirited – are meek, lowly, humble, peaceable, patient, and charitable as He was. We cannot tread in His steps unless we have His spirit, the frame and disposition of our souls which must be conformable to Christ's pattern that are actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, as a sanctifier, teacher, and comforter. Having the Spirit of Christ is the same with having the Spirit of God to dwell in us.

Verse 10 & 11. Happiness in God should be thought of as an advancement to a life that will be unspeakable happiness of the man. If Christ be in you then, the Spirit of God dwells in us, and He dwells in the heart by faith.

Our bodies were once frail, mortal and dying bodies, once a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. The life purchased and promised does not immortalize the body in its present state. It is dead, that is, it is appointed to die, and it is under a sentence of death. This is as a result of sin. It is sin that kills the body. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin. But the spirit, the precious soul, that is life, it is now spiritually alive and it is life.

Grace is present in the soul, and life is now present in the soul, and the reward an eternity with Life itself, the Almighty God. In contrast to the sinner, life goes no further than the body, their reward is an eternity apart from God. The righteousness of Christ imputed to people like Moses' life, secures the soul, the better part, from death. The righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do not think that the body shall be cast away and forgotten. The covenant with the dust says we shall not lose a grain of it, but the body shall be reunited to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it. Vile bodies shall be newly fashioned.

The resurrection of Christ provides us with a few things. He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken. Christ rose as the head, and first fruits, and forerunner of all the saints. The body of Christ lay in the grave, under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it. It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise. The Father raised the Son, fully satisfied with the sacrifice that had been done.

The same Spirit that raised the soul now will raise the body shortly. By His Spirit that dwelleth in us, after all the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit, breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God. Hence the Apostle by the way infers how much it is our duty to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Verse 12 & 13: The thrust of the Apostle discourse leads us to the conclusion that we should not let our lives be after the wills and motions of the flesh. We should have no loyalty or favour to the flesh, neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit nor service to our carnal desires, but to clothe, feed and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are debtors to Christ and to the Spirit. There we owe our all, and all we have and all we can do, to towards God. Being delivered from so great a death by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our Deliverer. When we consider the end of the way, there is life and death, blessing and cursing set before us. If you live after the flesh, you shall die, die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving and gratifying, of the flesh, that are the ruin of the souls, and leads to the second death.

The death of the saints is like but a sleep. The saints shall live, live and be happy to eternity. That is true life. True life, if you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body, and through the Spirit, as we cannot do it without the Spirit working in us, and the Spirit will not do it without our doing our endeavour.

As we mortify our members we reject fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, covetousness and all forms of idolatry. This shows that we are dead to sin and alive unto God in Jesus Christ the Lord. This is not easy but when the deeds of the flesh appear the Holy Spirit will provide the strength to put to death the deeds of the body in order that we may live.

Verse 14: All that are Christ's are taken into the relation of Children to God. Christians are led by the Spirit of God. It is the undoubted character of all true believers that they are led by the Spirit of God. Having submitted themselves in believing to His guidance, they do obediently follow that guidance, and are sweetly led into all truth and all duty. They are the children of God, received into the number of God's children by adoption, owned and loved by Him as His children.

Those that are the children of God, have the Spirit.

We struggle and mortify the deeds of the body because of sonship. All sons and daughters of God are led by the Spirit. It is indeed a marvelous thing to be adopted by God the Father

CONCLUSION

Those in Christ can now pray as Jesus prayed In the Garden of Gethsemane, Abba Father. This reveals something about the Father as well as being a term of endearment. Being in the Spirit means that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but instead we have received the Spirit of adoption. The Spirit act as witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God and both the Holy Spirit and our spirit testifies when you come to faith in Christ that you are a child of God.

So as sons and daughters of God you're sitting pretty. You are sons and daughters, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. We can sum up by quoting one writer warns us:

“Nothing less than the Spirit's presence is genuine Christianity. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his. Not enough to have an intellectual conviction of the pre-eminence of Jesus, not enough to have decided to adopt his ethical ideals. It's not enough to say, I am going to imitate Christ. We must have the Holy Spirit. “He that hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”.

Characteristics of a Christian. His presence is the guarantee of deliverance from the power of sin, and the presence of sin, but our deliverance is a process, the Canaanites are still in the land. We are escaping. The enemies' dogs are baying at our feet, and occasionally they nip at us, but we are going to come into the presence of God because he has guaranteed it by virtue of the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. We are led. We have the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He guides and directs us, and he will one day usher us into the presence of the Lord God in heaven. What a magnificent hope we have”.