

Romans

PART 12

THE NEW LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Introduction

The Christian life is sustained and animated by the holy spirit, and without it, the high calling of the book of Romans is impossible. While words like “law,” “me,” and “I” are prevalent in chapter 7, the word translated “spirit” is used 19 times in chapter 8. The transformation of being made alive with Christ enables us to think and live according to God’s will. Through the spirit, we have a new relationship with God and a new way to be a human being.

Chapter Highlights

VS 1

“Therefore” - What is being said here is in light of all Paul has explained so far about the gospel. Despite the fact that everyone was unjust, in Christ there is no condemnation. This is all the more impactful having just considered many chapters about the brokenness of the world and the punishment we all deserved. But we have been justified, meaning God will not pronounce a guilty sentence on us. We will not be disapproved by God for eternity, and though we were once condemned to death, now we never can be. We are now associated with Christ and spiritual life, as opposed to Adam and spiritual death. We need to be assured of this security in Christ.

NO CONDEMNATION!? A SIDE NOTE: There is an unbiblical notion that being grieved by sin is the kind of condemnation referred to here in Romans 8:1. However, the condemnation in Romans 8 refers to the death sentence of fallen humanity as a result of sin, not godly sorrow as a response to disobedience. It is an unhealthy coping mechanism for sin to think that remorse is unnecessary because of righteousness in Christ. Repentance is a good thing, and godly grief that inspires change does not produce regret. We *should* feel bad about sinning, but instead of being swallowed up by guilt, we can trust in the merit of Jesus Christ and grow to walk in our Father’s ways. We have been welcomed into unconditional forgiveness, but we still need to talk about (confess) and deal with our sins so that those things may be pruned out of our lives. We should not ignore sin, but recognize that we are cleansed from it. If we ignore it, it will rule us.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

I JOHN 1:8

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.

JAMES 5:16

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

TITUS 2:11-12

VS 2

We are under a new law: the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We were previously under the authority of sin and death, which the law of Moses made clear. But through Christ we died to that law, and now we are under the authority of a new kind of spiritual life. **We are not free unto ourselves, but rather we are under Christ's benevolent lordship, free to live out God's will.** And this freedom is not just theoretical, but it will be true in practice as we walk in newness of life. Note also that it's called the law of spirit of life **IN CHRIST**. It's based on his accomplishments; we could not do it on our own. It is a gift of grace!

VS 3

God did what the law could not do, in that He was actually able to condemn sin to death. The law could not do this because it was weak in the flesh. This means that because of human weakness and the inability of flesh to perform the law, the old covenant could not abolish sin. The law itself isn't bad, but the fault of the old covenant was found with the people who could not keep it, and in that way, the law was weak **(See Hebrews 8:7-13.)** However, God put His spirit in us to make inactive the sinfulness in our flesh. He did this by sending His Son to the earth in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus Christ is human, yet sinless, making him the only qualified offering for our sin. Therefore, God condemned sin in the flesh through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He provided judgment against sin so that sin no longer reigns unto death, but grace reigns unto righteousness!

VS 4

The righteousness of God's moral law is fulfilled in us because the law of the spirit causes us to walk according to God's will instead of the desires of the flesh. The gospel doesn't just make it so that we no longer "feel bad about being bad." It's for obedience to the faith, to the end that we walk in God's righteous ways. The holy spirit enables us to live as God always intended, our true humanity restored.

*"To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;
But better news the gospel brings:
It bids me fly, and gives me wings."*

We have a new heart that allows us to obey God's commandments, (see Ezekiel 36:26-27) and we can image forth God's likeness. The interests and purposes of the holy spirit lead us into God's truth. This gift of God is the power of God to live for God.

VS 5

The first part of walking is thinking, so what occupies my mind? Should my mind be set on the things of the flesh or the things of the spirit? What do my thoughts obey? Well, without the spirit, we wouldn't be able to think according to the spirit. But because we have it, our thinking processes can emanate from and be patterned by spirit. Otherwise, they will be engrossed in our own fleshly passions. This new way to think is powerful beyond "don't do that." Instead, it leads us into desiring God's way and prompts us to obey it.

VS 8-10

Sin is just death in part. It leads to eternal death, and participating in it now is like tasting dead things. Anything hostile to God is death because He is life, and because He IS. The flesh can never please God; it doesn't acknowledge him as God, (see Romans 1:21) and it cannot be subject to his laws. In contrast, spiritual thinking is life and peace with God, and partaking in the harmonious relationship with him is tasting of eternal things. The spirit is the down payment of eternal life, and we can enjoy it now. We are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, since the spirit dwells in us. We no longer only have sinfulness to obey, because it is the spirit of Christ in us, and we belong to him.

Conclusion

The greatest satisfaction for humanity comes from God and living to glorify God. Jesus sent the comforter, the holy spirit, to help us and call us alongside God's ways. Jesus tells us that having the spirit in-dwelling would be more profitable than him being here physically with us. We will continue to see how it teaches us about our sonship and how it helps us live for him in anticipation of future glory.

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