

# The Believer's Joy and Security

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## Summer School

*January 18-21, 2010*

### Session 2: Led by the Spirit (Romans 8: 9-17)

To live as a Christian has never been easy but it has always been our responsibility and our calling. This excerpt from Mission Praise 428 is a prayer that must be on our lips if we are not to be disobedient disciples.

Lord, for ourselves;  
in living power remake us –  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.  
(Timothy Dudley-Smith Mission Praise 428)

To live for Christ alone, joyfully, consistently, patiently, means we need to know who we are, what God has done for us and where we are headed. Romans 8 helps us answer all of these questions, with an assurance that is nurtured within us by the Holy Spirit who dwells within the believer.

Yesterday our focus was upon that objective work of Jesus who perfectly kept the law in His sinless life and who by His propitiatory death on our behalf dealt with the penalty of the law that rightly stood against us. This meant *no condemnation* (8:1) and *a new mindset* (8:5-6) for the believer who is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Two big themes: (i) Controlled by the Holy Spirit (ii) Adopted by God

*Romans 8: 9-17*

*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

This section contains very clear teaching about the Holy Spirit and the believer.

**Verses 9-11** We learn that God the Holy Spirit dwells within the believer. This is the subjective fruit of the gospel (cf Acts 2:38) and the consequence of our forgiveness, justification and no condemnation through Christ's work. We observe:

- (i) It is put negatively in v9. Since this is the flow on from v8 the Christian is able to please God because we have a new mindset brought about by a new Person. A new control (motivation, power, influence, presence) now dwells within us that, whilst not removing our sinful nature, enables us
  - a. To subdue it
  - b. To put to death its desires
  - c. To overpower it
- (ii) So important is His presence that if He is not present we do not belong to Christ (9b) This is so because:
  - a. We were dead in our sins – new birth from above, from the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-50) is essential *“God doesn't just throw a life preserver to a drowning person. He gets to the bottom of the sea, and pulls a corpse from the bottom of the sea, takes him up on the bank, breathes into him the breath of life and makes him alive. That's what the Bible says happens in our salvation”* RC Sproul
  - b. Thus the new covenant Ezekiel 36:26 and Isaiah 57:15
  - c. Jesus promise of John 7: 37-39 leads to chapters 14-16 (another Counsellor - John 14:15 and 16:7ff) Rom 9c He is the Spirit of Christ in you.
- (iii) One clear mark that we have the Holy Spirit is that when we fail, we do not despair, we do not simply try harder, but we go to Christ for pardon and strength. In other words, the Spirit magnifies Christ and promotes holy living (cf John 14:25-6, 15:26, 16:14)
- (iv) The spirit brings life v10 and He does so to dying men. Notice the contrasts:
  - a. the deathly consequences of sin remains
    - i. We still die physically (John 11: 25-26)
    - ii. We still wear out (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
    - iii. We still live in a world under judgement (Rom 8:20ff)

but wonderfully, we are alive to God because of righteousness – the righteousness of Christ (8:4 and 1:17) We are alive to God because the Spirit of Christ within keeps reminding us; there is **no condemnation** (8:1) and that we are **adopted sons** (8:15-17) and so we pray to God (not in fear but joyful trust)

- b. You consider yourself dead to sin – as when you repented. NB 6:11 and Galatians 2:20. And so you live for righteousness eg: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

- (v) The Spirit brings life and confidence v11

Paul knows we need encouragement and assurance because of the world, the flesh and the devil conspiring to defeat and deflate us.

Note the promises of 8:11

- a. The Spirit within is no wimp! He raised Jesus from the dead
- b. Because of His living within, God will also “give life to your mortal bodies”

- A new resurrection shaped body free from death. V10 leads to v23, so we wait expectantly and patiently.

We need to be clear on the promises of the gospel, “we have been ...we are being...we will be...” We cannot expect reversal of death in our body here, but we wait till then. We cannot expect perfection now, but we wait patiently and work with the Holy Spirit to overcome death and promote life.

This heavenly promise of Paul is to promote realism (keeping us from self depreciation, self loathing and impatience concerning our progress) and to nurture hope. (One day I will be perfect, one day I will be free from the temptations caused by my human frailty, wasting body, Satan, groaning) which in turn will cause me to want to promote, work for and display heaven’s completed agenda now (keeping me from laziness, arrogance and nervousness)

- The Holy Spirit will enable us to live now in life-fulfilling ways (John 10:10) and to have eternal life – quantity **and** quality.

So to give you an example and to whet your appetite for reading further in Romans, the Holy Spirit within will

- a. Help transform our minds (12:2) by focussing them away from the world’s thinking/pleasures/goals to God’s – Bible
- b. Being humble (12:3) – not being selfish at church  
= belonging (church is not a club) 12:5  
= using our gifts (12:6) and allowing, receiving, encouraging others to do likewise (12:6-8)
- c. Having God’s attitude toward good and evil (12:9)
- d. Acting like Jesus in regard to persecutors (12:14) and enemies alike (12:17ff)
- e. Simply thinking of others (12:15-16). Why are we so self absorbed? This will lead to death for us, our church, and our community. Remember practice makes permanent  
i.e. Holy Spirit works through well practiced habits and means:

*“We need to remember two things here, both of which sometimes get forgotten. The first is that the Spirit works through means – through the objective means of grace, namely, Biblical truth, prayer, fellowship, worship and the Lord’s Supper, and with them though the subjective means of grace whereby we open ourselves to change, namely, thinking, listening, questioning oneself, examining oneself, admonishing oneself, sharing what is in one’s heart with others, and weighing any response they make. The Spirit shows his power in us, not by constantly interrupting our use of these means with visions, impressions, or prophecies, which serve up to us ready-made insights on a plate, so to speak (such communications come only rarely, and to some believers not at all), but rather by making these regular means effective to change us for the better and for the wiser as we go along. Holiness teaching that skips over disciplined persistence in the well-doing that forms holy habits is thus weak; **habit forming is the Spirit’s ordinary way of leading us on to holiness.** The fruit of the Spirit itself is, from one standpoint, a series of habits of action and reaction; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control are all of them habitual dispositions, that is, accustomed ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. Habits are all-important in holy life, particularly those Biblically prescribed habits that we find it difficult and even painful to form.*

*The second thing to remember balances the first and is just as important. It is that holy habits, though formed in the natural manner I have described, by self-discipline and effort, are not natural products. The discipline and effort **must be blessed by the Holy Spirit**, or they would achieve nothing. So all our attempts to get our lives in shape need to be soaked in constant prayer that acknowledges our inability to change ourselves, and in thanksgiving recognizes that, as Harriet Auber put it:*

*‘Every virtue we possess, And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness, Are his (the Spirit’s) alone.’*

*Holiness by habit forming is not self-sanctification by self-effort, but is simply a matter of understanding the Spirit’s method and then keeping in step with him.” (JI Packer Keeping in Step with the Spirit)*

This leads us to Paul’s appreciation of this most glorious truth and privileged (almost overwhelming) experience described so eloquently, yet so simply “who lives in you” v11 (Spirit of Christ v9 Spirit of God v9 and v11, who is otherwise described as the Holy Spirit). But just **two comments** need to be made before we move on:

*i. To know Christ and to have His Spirit is the same thing.*

Bishop Handley Moule was to write that *“there is no separable, ‘Gospel of the Spirit.’ Not for a moment are we to advance, as it were from the Lord Jesus, to a higher or deeper region, ruled by the Holy Ghost”* (Stott quoting Moule 225) We have the Spirit because Christ died and we are in Christ because the Spirit gave us new birth, so we continue looking to Christ whose own indwelling Spirit invigorates us as we go.

*ii. We do not separate our body from our spirit.*

This is why Paul is so down to earth and frankly believable in Romans 7 (especially 7:25) and gives us his exhortation in 12:1-2, along with the warfare analogy of Galatians 5. So in 8:10-11 he is dealing with us as whole people; body and spirit.

I quote from John Stott and Handley Moule

*The same Spirit who gives life to our spirits (10) will also give life to our bodies (11)*

*This does not mean that our dead bodies will be revived or resuscitated, and so restored to their present material existence, only to die again. No, resurrection includes transformation, the raising and changing of our body into a new and glorious vehicle of our personality, and its liberation from all frailty, disease, pain, decay and death. It is ‘not that the spirit is to be freed from the body – as many, under the influence of the Greek way of thinking, have held – but rather that the Spirit will give life to the body’ (Stott 215)*

*‘Wonderful’, writes Bishop Handley Moule, ‘is this deep characteristic of the Scripture: its gospel for the body. In Christ, the body is seen to be something far different from the mere clog, or prison, or chrysalis, of the soul. It is its destined implement, may we not say its mighty wings in prospect, for the life of glory.’ Already we express our personality through our body, especially by speech, but also by posture and gesture, by a look in our eyes or an expression of our face. We call it ‘body language’. But the language which our present body speaks is imperfect; we easily miscommunicate. Our new body will not have this limitation, however. There will be a perfect correspondence between message and medium, between what we want to communicate and how we do so. The resurrection body will be the perfect vehicle of our redeemed personality. (Stott. Bible Speaks Today: Romans 227)*

In 8: 12-17 we see two complementary applications of the Spirit's work in us (which both flow out of Christ's work for us). The first is our obligation and the second is our adoption. The "therefore" indicates that it follows as a consequence.

**Verses 12-14** Our obligation.

(i) This is fairly straightforward. Since God has worked to save us from death and bring us life [through Christ (3) and His Spirit (11)] then we owe Him a debt, an obligation to respond – firstly because we want to promote the Spirit's work vv12-14 and secondly because we want to honour our Father vv15-17

(ii) This sense of obligation is entirely consistent with God's grace. Whilst it is true that we cannot merit or earn God's grace, we can show it, experience it and grow it OR sadly we can betray it, quench it and lose it.

Paul's obligation was to preach the gospel (1:14), ours is to extend forgiveness (Matthew 6:12 same word) and to live, not for our sinful nature, but for God.

Obligation is found throughout scripture eg: Mark 8:34 Romans 12:1-2 and is found earlier in Romans 6:11ff

It is a sign of our failure to understand grace as grace FOR (as well as FROM – Titus 2:11) and how we have taken the worst from our culture (laid back, no commitment, selfish etc – but not the best eg: discipline, hard work) and allowed it to mar our discipleship.

(iii) v13 is true. Sin is serious and to be put to death (so 12:9). *Death* is real and awful (hell means separation from God and all that is of God). *Life*: God's way is good, best and better than our own or the world's way.

The Spirit helps us put to death the 'misdeeds of the body', that is, "*every use of our body (our eyes, ears, mouth or feet) which serves ourselves instead of God and other people*" (Stott BST 228)

These include Jesus' list in Mark 7:21ff, Paul's in Romans 1:21ff ...and sins we tolerate eg: Jerry Bridges' *Respectable Sins* (whinging, discontentment envy, gossip and thoughtless words, worldliness...)

*How will He help?*

- Convict (just as at our conversion) i.e. conscience conformed
- Remind us of scriptural truths (eg: 10 commandments, attitudes, the company we keep)
- Teach us to repent by not denying, rationalising or comparing. 1 John 1: 8-9 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
- Help us to say 'No' and 'Yes'. Titus 2: 11ff
- Enable us to resist temptation Ephesians 6: 10-20
- Help us be wise enough to understand the spiritual principle of Galatians 6:7-9 (there will be no growth, progress, usefulness, joy without firstly understanding this and then habitually implementing it) eg: *lack of contentment* – don't read House & Garden, Mills & Boon, engage in retail therapy but rather practise

thankfulness, read scripture, missionary biographies. *Lust* – don't watch (most) movies, get rid of the internet if necessary, walk away from crude jokes, rather learn to be thankful, read scripture, serve. (1 Corinthians 6:18 the Spirit's presence should make us feel out of place)

- By praying for the godly replacement.
  - *"If you are fighting a bad habit, work out before God a strategy for ensuring that you will not fall victim to it again, ask God to bless your strategy, and go out in God's strength, ready to say 'No' the next time temptation comes"* (JI Packer)
  - *I remember reading years ago of a visitor to the mountains of southern California. He met an old mountaineer, whose two dogs were continuously fighting. The visitor asked him which dog usually won. The mountaineer chewed his tobacco for a while in silence, and then replied: 'The one I feeds the most.' Just so, our new nature will gain the victory over the old only in so far as we feed the new and starve the old."* (J Stott)

(iv) v14 is both a statement and a promise.

- The statement: being led by the Spirit of God (among other things means putting to death the misdeeds of the body 13) describes the Christian – if we're not, we are being disobedient (13a)
- The promise: the Spirit leads Christians, thus affirming our sonship.

### *How will the Spirit lead us?*

- ❖ Galatians 5:18 He will help by focusing us on Christ's work for us (cf 8:4b)
- ❖ Ephesians 6:17 He takes us to scripture.
- ❖ Ephesians 5:18ff Allowing us to encourage ourselves and our fellow Christians to be filled with the Spirit. (cf Eph 4:30)

Douglas Moo *"To be under the dominating influence of the Spirit"* (New Bible Commentary 1140) Not so much every decision.

CB Cranfield *"the daily, hourly putting to death of the scheming and enterprises of the sinful flesh by means of the Spirit is a matter of being led, directed, impelled, controlled by the Spirit"*

Godet *"there is something like a notion of holy violence; the Spirit drags a man where the flesh would fain not go"* (Stott BST)

M Lloyd Jones notes how the Spirit works: *"there is no violence in Christianity...what the Spirit does is to enlighten and persuade...because he is a gentle, sensitive Spirit. He can easily be grieved...the Holy Spirit never browbeats us...the impulse can be very strong, but there is no 'driving', there is no compulsion"* (Stott 231)

We can be certain that He will lead. We are wise and prove ourselves to be so by

- Putting our self in the way of the Spirit (Bible, teaching, fellowship, prayer)
- Listening to and obeying His leading
- Testing to see if it is from God, by scripture, and by the faith (12:6 NIV margin note)
- Practising obedience, listening, proving God's goodness (12:2 and Galatians 6:7)

- Praying for his leading, our understanding and obedience.

*In summary thus far:*

- We must not be passive vv13, 14.
- We are not alone (we are indwelt. v 10 leads to v 14). In vv15-17, Paul expands further by introducing us to **the blessing of adoption**; “the Spirit of sonship or adoption” v15b

This is a rich truth; the most wonderful blessing of the gospel (Packer Ch 19 of *Knowing God* has a superb explanation). He goes so far as to summarize the NT in three words as “adoption through propitiation” (194) and puts it above justification as a fruit of the gospel. He writes “*to be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is a greater*” (188)

His purpose in introducing this great truth is partly because we need to know who we belong to if we will persevere in the face of our own weakness and the world’s opposition and disappointments, and partly because it is a great reason to show the family likeness, and primarily because the Spirit wants us to glorify both God as our Father and Jesus as our Lord and dear brother.

**Accordingly Paul reminds us**

**Verse 15** that our relationship with God is not legalistic (fear of failure to please) but familial. We are sons and daughters by grace, not performance (secured by Jesus’ performance 8: 2-4 on our behalf) Abba is a word used in the family and of Christians to God, and whilst not ruling out reverence, awe and wonder, it highlights grace and is inviting and full of assurance. (Something not known or experienced in religion)

**Verse 16** The Holy Spirit gives us an inner testimony. Stott comments that this testimony is “*a direct and sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, that brings a heightened love for God, an unspeakable joy, and an uninhibited boldness in witness.*” (237). It comes as a consequence of our believing and flows out of the great objective truth of Christ and our being born again. It grows, like any relationship, through trust, listening, speaking and obeying. It is in my experience especially found in praying, in worship (i.e. preaching, communion, fellowship, encouragement), in Bible reading and reliance upon God.

**Verse 17** Unexpected blessings belong to the child of God; adopted children are chosen by their “*adoptive father to perpetuate his name and to inherit his estate...*” (Stott 232). Could anything be more surprising and more wonderful? The gospel is full of rich surprises (2 Cor 8:9) and paradoxes.

And there is one more; **sufferings**, like Christ’s, must be willingly borne if we are to share in His Glory (part of which is to be heirs)

**Verses 18ff** This prepares us for life in a groaning creation but also for the glorious truth that God uses these sufferings for our good.

Barclay sums it up magnificently:

*We see then that every step of Roman adoption was meaningful in the mind of Paul when he transferred the picture to our adoption into the family of God. Once we were in the absolute control of our own sinful human nature; but God, in his mercy, has brought us into his absolute possession. The old life has no more rights over us; God has an absolute right. The past is cancelled and its debts are wiped out; we begin a new life with God and become heirs of all his riches. If that is so, we*

I am a child of God.  
God is my Father;  
Heaven is my home;  
Every day is one day nearer.  
My Saviour is my brother;  
Every Christian is my brother too.  
(JI Packer)

*become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, God's own Son. That which Christ inherits, we also inherit. If Christ had to suffer, we also inherit that suffering; but if Christ was raised to life and glory, we also inherit that life and glory.*

*It was Paul's picture that when a man became a Christian he entered into the very family of God. He did nothing to deserve it; God, the great Father, in his amazing love and mercy, has taken the lost, helpless, poverty-stricken, debt-laden sinner and adopted him into his own family, so that the debts are cancelled and*

*the glory inherited. (Daily Study Bible)*

To remind ourselves of this wonderful gospel blessing with its implications of joy and responsibility, is a good thing for us to do, for ourselves and our fellow Christians. (especially when we find the going tough and are depressed, lonely, tempted, discouraged and opposed)

Conclusion:

We started with "no condemnation" (8:1). We conclude with our adoption into God's family, and have been guaranteed both through faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. This is a gift initiated by God and brought to life by the Holy Spirit who, as He dwells within us, can be trusted to assure us of our adoption and to enable us to make progress in conquering the sin that, though totally forgiven, remains.

Peter Brain. January 2010.