

Week of August 20 - 26

Living Life in The Spirit (Romans 8:1-18)

Paul says, "There is no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus. The power of the life-giving Spirit – and this power is mine through Christ Jesus – has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing God's commandments because we can't and don't keep them, but God has provided a different plan to save us. He sent His own Son in a human body like ours – except that ours are sinful – and destroyed sin's control over us by giving Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us. Following after the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death because the old sinful nature is against God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their old sinful selves, determined to follow their old evil desires, can never please God."

Paul continues, "But you are not like that. Your new nature controls you if you have the Spirit of God living in you. Yet even though Christ lives within you, your body will die because of sin, but your spirit will live, for Christ has pardoned it. And if the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you, He will make your dying bodies live again after you die, through this same Holy Spirit living within you.

"So, you have no obligations to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do. If you keep on following it, you are lost and will perish, but if through the power of the Holy Spirit, you crush it and its evil deeds, you shall live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

"We should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of His family, and calling to him, "Father, Father." His Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are His children, we will share His treasures. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering."

Our Future Glory (Romans 8:19-28)

Paul explains that we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will give us later. All creation is waiting patiently and, hopefully, for that coming day, when God will resurrect His children. Thorns and thistles, sin, death, and decay — the things that overcame the world against its will at God's command — will all disappear, and the world will share in the freedom from sin which God's children enjoy. Even we Christians also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as His children, including the new bodies He has promised us – bodies that will never be sick again and will never die.

The Holy Spirit helps us with our daily problems and in our praying. We don't even know what we should pray for nor how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit prays for us with such feeling that it cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows our hearts knows what the Spirit is saying as He pleads for us with God's own will.

Living Life in The Spirit (Romans 8:28-39)

We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed

to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

Who will bring any charge against God's elect?" Or rather, how can anyone bring a real charge against someone who obeys God's law? Because if we are God's elect, then by definition, we are ones who have been reconciled to God, repented of our sins, and returned to obeying God.

If we don't steal, don't murder, etc. then what real charge could anyone bring against us?

Paul concludes by saying that nothing can separate us from the effects of Jesus' sacrifice for all who believe, repent, and obey. He is telling his audience not to fear or be discouraged by persecution because nothing that happens to them will separate them from God's promise of eternal life.

Has God Rejected Israel? (Romans 9:1-29)

Paul returns to speak about those who are Jews by birth, wishing he could do something so that they might be saved. They are the ones to whom God gave His law and everything that came with it; however, Paul says, "But not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants." He is referring to the fact that a Jew is a Jew by spiritual means, not physical.

God selected, Isaac and not Ishmael, Jacob, and not Esau. The selection was based on an underlying purpose of God, which the apostle calls "the purpose of God according to election." The underlying principle of the action of God is His mercy and His compassion.

Paul makes a very powerful statement about God, having just spoken about the Pharaoh of Egypt who opposed God and Moses, "So then He has mercy on whomever He chooses, and He hardens the heart of whomever He chooses."

This statement of absolute power and sovereignty is hard for many to accept. To look at it personally, if we hear the truth of God's salvation, and we feel in our heart the humbling pull to repentance, then God has chosen to show mercy on us and is calling us to be part of His chosen people. However, if we feel a hardness in our hearts, a rejection of God's truth of salvation, and a desire to continue on sinning, then God has not chosen us (like Pharaoh) because of our rebellion. For some, God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to impurity because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, then worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

Then Paul immediately elaborates on the powerful sovereignty of God, stating, "But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Has the potter no right over the clay?"

The Gospel is Offered to the Jews (Romans 9:30-10:21)

Continuing, Paul says he wishes those who are Jews by birth (but who are not believers) would be saved, but since they believe they can be righteous through their efforts, they reject righteousness through God's efforts.

The issue is that many Jews by birth misunderstand that they are made unrighteous by the law, because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and only one sin makes us a lawbreaker.

Paul argued that only a remnant of Israel ever believed. The only way of acceptance before God was faith in Christ and was (and is) within reach of all who are called. Those who believe in their heart and confess with their mouth "Jesus is Lord" will be saved. People cannot believe unless they can hear, and they cannot hear without a preacher. Though Israel heard, they still rejected God's message.

The Remnant of Israel (Romans 11:1-36)

Paul immediately returns to explaining his mini-argument, "Has God rejected the majority of the Jews by birth? He explains, "No! Those who were truly Jews in – Spirit did obtain God's promise, but that God may yet soften the hearts of more Jews who are Jews by birth.

He says, "Not all Jews have turned away from God; a few are being saved as a result of God's kindness in choosing them. And if it is by God's kindness, then it is not by their being good enough. In that case, the gift would no longer be free – it isn't free when it's earned. Most of the Jews have not found the favor of God they are seeking. A few have – the ones God has picked out – but the eyes of the others have been blinded. This is what the Scriptures refer to when they say God has shut their eyes and ears, so they don't understand what we're talking about when we tell them about Christ. And so it is to this very day. Does this mean that God has rejected His Jewish people forever? Of course not! His purpose was to make His salvation available to the Gentiles, and then the Jews would be jealous and begin to want God's salvation for themselves."

Paul moves on to explain that in reality, all of Israel will be saved because, by definition, an Israelite is one who is one spiritually no matter if they are Gentile or Jew by birth. The Gentile believers must come into God's family, "so all Israel will be saved," because part of the true people of God are people who were born Gentiles but are Israelites spiritually.

Paul's overall main point here is that the hardening of someone's heart is not necessarily permanent and that he hopes for the salvation of the Jews by birth.

Conduct with God, the Church, and to men (Romans 12:1-21)

Paul challenges the Romans by saying, "Dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy – the kind He can accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how His ways will satisfy you.

"Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you. Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. We belong to each other, and each one of us needs all the others.

"God has given us the ability to do certain things. If God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can, as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do an excellent job of teaching. If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are healthy and helpful. If God has given you money, be generous in helping others with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.

“Don't just pretend you love others: love them. Hate what is wrong and stand on the side of good. Love each other with brotherly affection and honor each other. Don't be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

“Be glad for all God plans for you. Be patient in trouble, and prayerful always. When God's children are in need, you are the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need a place to stay, for the night.

“If someone mistreats you because you're a Christian, don't curse him; pray God will bless him. When others are happy, be happy with them. If they're sad, share their sorrow. Don't try to act big or try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks. And don't think you know it all!

“Never pay back evil for evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest. Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone, as much as possible.

“Lastly, never avenge yourselves. Leave it to God, for He has said He will repay those who deserve it. Don't take the law into your own hands. Instead, feed your enemy if he is hungry. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, and you will be "heaping coals of fire on his head." Don't let evil get the upper hand, but conquer evil by doing good.”