



# Lesson 9

## *Freed to Walk in the Spirit as Sons* *Romans 8*

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*Every person who belongs to Christ has been transferred into this new domain in which the Spirit rather than the flesh rules. The present possession of life by the Spirit will lead to the enjoyment of physical life through the resurrection of the body. This will be accomplished through the power of the Spirit, who now indwells us and empowers us through trial, trouble and suffering. (Adapted from D.A. Carson)*

### Summary

From Romans 1 through Romans 7, the Holy Spirit is mentioned only twice. Here in Romans 8, He is referred to twenty two times! While we have a decisive deliverance from sin's power through the cross of Christ in Romans 6 and a frustrating futility from sin working in us in Romans 7, we have a freeing liberation through the work of the Spirit as we walk in the Spirit in Romans 8.

“There is no reason why those who are in Christ Jesus should go on doing penal servitude as though they had never been pardoned and liberated from the prison house of sin.” (F.F. Bruce) Romans 8 shows us how we live in the freedom and power of God's Spirit while yet groaning and suffering. While we walk in the Spirit, we do so in the world until the Lord comes.

## **The Service of God's Spirit (v.1-17)**

We now have a present indwelling that enables godly living. "The fundamental contrast in the whole passage is between the inability and weakness on the one hand of the law to renew and reorder life so long as sin is in control, and the effectual life-giving power of God's own presence in the Spirit on the other. The outcome is to open the way for the fulfillment of God's holy and just commandment."<sup>1</sup>

Godly living begins with the truth that there is no condemnation for us (v.1) and ends with our personal testimony that there is no one to condemn us (v.34).

## **To Change us by God's Righteousness (v.1-8)**

### **Because of Spiritual Truths (v.1-4).**

We who are in Christ are not condemned. Why? The law of the Spirit of life set us free from the law of sin and death. What does he mean by this? He explains it in the next verse.

**The law of sin and death is this:** weakened by the flesh, the Law could not bring nor produce righteousness with the consequence that we are controlled by sin and condemned to death.

**The law of the Spirit of life is this:** God sent Jesus in a human body into the realm of the flesh to condemn sin and complete the Law for us.

### **Through Changed Mindset (v.5-8).**

"Through these contrasts Paul explains why it is that the Spirit, and not the flesh, brings life. People 'in the flesh'—that is, those who live in the 'old regime' where sin and death reign—have mind-sets dominated by ungodly impulses (v.5); they cannot *submit to God's law* (v.7) or *please God* (v.8) but are under sentence of death (v.6). On the other hand, Christians, 'in the Spirit', who have been transferred into the new regime where grace and righteousness reign and who have therefore been given a new mind-set focused on the Spirit, enjoy *life and peace* (v.6)." (Carson, *NBC*).

Here is the primary function of the Spirit in practical terms of changing us: He gives us a new mindset that transforms us. Notice, those who mind the flesh, live according to the flesh, are hostile to God, do not and cannot submit to God's law, do not please God and all this is death, God's judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> James Luther Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996, c1988).



### **To I n d w e l l us as God's Life (v.9-13)**

If the Spirit is in us, then we are in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We will be characterized life, the life of Christ. The indwelling of the Spirit imparts the character of Christ so that we will live the righteousness of Christ. Further, this life is God's gift by the Spirit as opposed to sin's wages of death and judgment.

The present possession of spiritual life in dying and mortal bodies anticipates the possession of spiritual life in a living and glorified body at the resurrection.

Notice that Christ is in us *by the Spirit*. The second person of the Godhead sits on the right hand of God in heaven. The Spirit indwells us in such a way that it is Christ in us. While maintaining the uniqueness of each person, Paul underscores the unity of the Godhead. The Father sent the Son to do what those who were in the Spirit needed (v.3-4). And now, the Spirit is in us as an extension of the Son (v.9-12).

"Here we are called by faithfulness to the Scriptures to hold in tension two clear truths: that the indwelling of the Spirit infallibly secures eternal life, and that a lifestyle empowered by and patterned after God's Spirit is necessary to inherit eternal life. The Spirit is given to empower our activity in righteousness." (Carson, *NBC*).

### **To A s s u r e us as God's Sons (v.14-17)**

Since this is so, we have a new obligation and a new identification. We are obligated in how we live. We are not to live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Why?

#### **His work affecting us in the p r e s e n t .**

Because a ministry of the Spirit is to assure us that we are God's sons. The being led by the Spirit is not in terms of making personal decisions, but rather of being under the Spirit's control. Those whom the Spirit controls, He helps to recognize their sonship, and bears witness in them that they are God's sons. He therefore functions as the Spirit who makes our sonship real to us. Adoption here is not the idea of being brought into the family, but that of being recognized as sons. (See also Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

Teacher: It is possible that someone will bring up Lloyd-Jones' view that this is a special, not universal experience of God's children. This work of the Spirit to highlight our being placed as sons and witnessing in us our sonship so that we have an assurance of our sonship *is the universal experience of all true sons*. Yes, there may be a time of special awareness and assurance, but this text is pointing us to a ministry of the Spirit to all those who are God's children.

#### **His work aiming us toward the f u t u r e .**

Our adoption into God's family, however amazing and comforting, is not the end of the story. For to be children is also to be *heirs*: to be still waiting for the full bestowment of all the rights and privileges conferred on us as God's children (v.17). As *the* Son of God had to suffer before entering into his glory (1 Pet. 1:11), so we sons of God by adoption must also suffer 'with him' before



sharing in his glory. Because we are joined to Christ, the servant of the Lord 'despised and rejected by men' (Is. 53:3), we can expect the path to our glorious inheritance to be strewn with difficulties and dangers. (Carson, *NBC*)

Verse 17 is a transition from 1-16 to 18-30. We have this amazing privilege and glorious reality of being God's sons, and thus His heirs. Yet, we must suffer now. If we suffer now, we will be glorified later.

TEACHER:

May pause here to address questions before going on the next section:

1. Since we are not under Law what does that mean for obedience or obeying the Lord?
- 2.



## The S t r u g g l e of God's Children (v.18-30)

We are now experiencing present suffering while longing for a future glory. What we have here is groaning and glory. There is groaning and glory for creation, in the Christian, by the Spirit for our good and God's glory.

You must never minimize the fact nor the severity of suffering for the Christian in this age. The key words here for you are *wait eagerly* (v.19, 23, 25) and *hope* (v.20,24-25). Your evaluation of the present sufferings in the light of the future glory is shaped by:

### **Its E x a m p l e in the Creation (v.18-22)**

The creation is now subject to the curse because of the fallenness of man.

Deliverance from the curse awaits the time when the children of God will receive their glorified bodies. So, creation groans, while standing on tiptoe anxiously anticipating the day of glory for God's people. The world we live in now is subjected by God to the futility of fallenness. And it is awaiting the day when it will enter into the glory of radical transformation of the material universe when all will be made new.

### **Its E x p e r i e n c e in Ourselves (v.23-25)**

We share in creation's groaning and hope.

We are groaning now. We have the *first fruits* of the Spirit – an assurance of our adoption – but we are awaiting the fulfillment of the Spirit – our eventual adoption as sons. The fulfillment of being placed as God's sons is in the reception of a glorified body. But we don't have that yet. Here it is: we groan waiting for glory. We are assured and adopted, but not yet.

Most errors concerning the v i c t o r i o u s or the v i c t i m i z e d Christian life flow from not understanding verses 23-25. You are delivered, but not yet. You are adopted, but not yet. You have the Spirit, but not fully. You groan now in suffering and struggling because there is a splendor of glory to come.

### **Its E x p r e s s i o n by the Spirit (v.26-27)**

How do we have hope then in the midst of this present groaning? Through the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit. He helps us in our weakness. The weakness here is that we don't know what to pray for, so the Spirit Himself, who knows the mind of God and the purposes of God, prays in us and for us. This intercessory work is characterized by groanings too deep for words. He is not here alluding to some inarticulate or ecstatic speech that the Spirit produces in us. Rather, the Spirit groans deeply because of our own sufferings and sins as well. This intercessory work is aligned with God's will.

Need to check this paragraph carefully for a clearer heart orientation.

### **Its E x p e c t a t i o n due to God (v.28-30)**

In the midst of groaning, in the midst of struggling with sin while walking in the Spirit, we know that God is at work in all our situations to transform and conform us into the likeness of Christ.



When we say that God is at work for our good and His glory, we had better understand this in terms of God being at work to change us. It is not merely *for our good*, but that we might be different. When someone says, “I cannot see the good in this,” that is a misunderstanding of this text. The good that God is always working toward is your becoming like Christ. So to not see the good in it is to not see how God is at work to change you.

Why is this so? On what is this grounded? It is grounded in the personal and providential sovereignty of God. Those whom God loved and chose (foreknew) He has determined beforehand that they will be like Christ. Then He moves in time and in those people’s lives to make it so: He calls them, He justifies them and He glorifies them. These are not potential outcomes, but assured future realities.

**We lean towards the glory to come in the present experience of groaning now because God is at work to mold us to be like Christ.**

What are we to learn from this? How does this fuel hope and shape affections? God has a glorious purpose for His people and creation at large. But that purpose unfolds through the struggle with fallenness. But God is at work to for our good to display His glory. So, we are free from the power of sin, but not completely until that day. So, there is groaning now until the glory later.

## **The Surety of God’s Love (v.31-39)**

We are now inseparable from God’s love while experiencing no condemnation and becoming more than conquerors.

This is how we respond to all these truths in Romans 5-8.

### **In our Answers (v.31-36)**

We are gloriously sure of God’s love because there is no condemnation.

Since God is for us, who can be against us? God’s enemies, the fallen world, our sins, Satan – yes. But because God is for us, none of these is against *successfully*.

Since God graciously gave us His Son, will He not give us all things? Absolutely. The gift of God’s Son not only obtained all God intends for us, but it also makes it sure. As Stott puts it, “The cross is the guarantee of continuing, unfailing generosity of God.” (Stott, p. 255)

Since God has justified us, who can *CHARGE* us? No one. Our right standing before God means there is no lesser court to charge us.

Since Christ has died and risen and intercedes, who can *CONDEMN* us? No one. Jesus stands to answer any and all accusations with His perfect and completed sacrificial work.

Since all this is so, what persons or circumstances can separate us from God’s love? None. Yet the brutal reality is that like Christ, our sacrificial lamb, we are set for suffering as well.



We will have an ever greater experience of the s u r e t y and r e a l i t y of God's love *in the midst of all the groaning circumstances outlined here.*

**In our Affirmations** **(v.37-39)**

We are gloriously sure of God's love because we more than c o n q u e r s.

In all these adversities (cf. "all things" in Rom. 8:28 and "all things" in v. 32 with all these things in v. 37), rather than being separated from Christ's love, believers are more than conquerors (pres. Tense), "keep on being conquerors to a greater degree" or "keep on winning a glorious victory") through Him who loved us. Jesus Christ and His love for believers enable them to triumph. Consider 2 Corinthians 2:14; But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

Here is our conviction and our c o n f i d e n c e - we are more than conquerors – over sin, law and self.

We have an abiding confidence in God's love for us. Stott wrote, "We need these assurances today...when insecurity is written across all human experience. Christian people are not guaranteed immunity to temptation, tribulation or tragedy, but we are promised victory over them. God's pledge is not that suffering will never afflict us, but that it will never sever us from His love." (Stott, *Romans*, p. 259).



## Lessons for Living