**The Spirit Empowers Us for Victory**

August 29, 2021

Romans 8:1-17

Key Verse 8:2 “because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

We continue our discussion of winning the battle against sin. In the last chapter, we saw someone who overdosed with Vitamin I. He tried to search the victory over sin in himself, where it cannot be found. The victory is found only in Jesus Christ. In this chapter, we notice right away that the personal pronouns that were so prominent in chapter 7 largely disappear, and that the Holy Spirit becomes the dominant person. The victory against sin is not in ourselves, but in the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. We are in a no-condemnation status and that is how it is for those who live in the Spirit. From there through the end of this chapter there is a celebration of the Spirit’s work in our behalf: He frees us from sin and death, He enables us to fulfill the law, He changes our nature, He empowers us for victory, He confirms our adoption to sonship, He guarantees our glory and He intercedes for us. And then the end of the chapter is a burst of praise for this great reality.

**First**, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 1. “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” From the valley of despair and defeat, Paul now climbs the heights with the triumphant shout, “There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus!” There are people who are struggling with whether their faith is real; people whose Christian experience is something like what Paul describes in chapter 7. Paul failed again and again to meet his own standard, let alone those of God. So he cried out, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” There are people who see themselves as failures because of their apparent lack of godliness, their apparent lack of spirituality. They feel that there is nothing they can do to match up to the standard they understand a Christian needing to meet. They look at others, they compare themselves to their Christian friends and they think there must be something wrong, something they are missing. Those who compare themselves with others, who ask whether they are good enough for God, are asking the wrong question. The question can never be, “Am I good enough?” The moment we ask the question, we are defeated. Of course, we are never good enough. The question we need to ask, is “Am I in Christ Jesus?” That is an important question because if I am in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation, no sense of failure, and no sense of unworthiness. We should see ourselves as God sees us, as his beloved children. There is the new life in the Spirit. Instead of being driven by sin, we are now under the control of the Holy Spirit. Our minds are set on the things of the Spirit. Even when we fail to obey, we are brought back to God in repentance by the Spirit who moves our minds. The Spirit is constantly bringing us back to God, reminding us of the things that God wants us to focus on.

Look at verse 2. “because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” Paul uses the word “law” in several different ways in Romans. Sometimes, it means Moses’ law. But here it means controlling power. The characteristic principle of the Holy Spirit is to empower believers for holy living. The characteristic principle of indwelling sin is to drag a person down to death. It is like the law of gravity. When you throw a dead bird into the air, it falls to the ground because of gravity. But if you throw a live bird, it flies away. It defies the gravity even though it is heavier than the air. The law of life in the bird overcomes the law of gravity. So the Holy Spirit supplies the risen life of the Lord Jesus, making the believer free from the law of sin and death. We can defy the gravity of sin and death, and fly away in power of the Spirit. Look at verse 4. “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” As we turn over the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit, he empowers us to love God and to love our neighbor, and that is what the law requires.

Some people ask, “How do we know whether we are in Christ? How do we know whether we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us?” We look at others who seem to be filled with the Spirit and we make comparisons. Do we pray as much or long as them? Are we having many Bible studies than they? Are we enthusiastic as others for the gospel? The problem is the criteria we use for judging our faith, namely, we judge our faith on the basis of performance. When we do that, we ignore the fact that our salvation depends in its entirety on the work of Jesus Christ, not on our performance. Then how do we know whether we have the Holy Spirit within us? First of all, Jesus promised to give his Holy Spirit to all who believe in him. John 14:16-17 says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that he died and rose again from the dead? If you can say yes to those questions, then you can be confident that Jesus kept his promise. That his Spirit is working within you already. Look at verse 9. “You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” In other words, everyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ is actually in the believer. It is amazing to think of the Lord of life and glory dwelling in our bodies, subject to death because of sin.

**Second**, the Spirit changes our inner desire to follow the things of the Spirit, namely, the things of God. When a person is born again, he is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit. He lives in a different sphere. Just as a fish lives in water and a man lives in the land, so a believer lives in the Spirit. Look at verse 5. “Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” The Spirit changes our nature from within. Because our flesh, our humanness is still there, we sin from time to time, but it is not our true nature. Our inward nature has been changed and our longings are toward God and energized by the Holy Spirit toward what is righteous and pure and holy. So if you are unsure whether you are really a Christian, whether you really have his Spirit within you, here is the first test. Are you aware of an inner desire for the things of God? Do you understand God’s hearts’ desire, namely, his desire to save all men from their sins? Secondly, are you aware of being dissatisfied with your failure to do what God desires? Do you resonate with the frustration that Paul expresses in chapter 7 at his inability to keep the law? That inner desire to obey God, that frustration at your inability to do so, may well be the work of the Holy Spirit, shaping your will to God’s.

This conflict is the evidence that you have the Spirit. The conflict exists because there is a change in our nature. When we were in the flesh — walking according to the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, and spiritually dead — there was no conflict. That is all we could do. There was no real battle going on. But when you became a believer, all of a sudden, you entered into a battle because you have been changed, because your nature has been changed. You love what is good and holy and righteous. But you find yourself doing the opposite of what you love. This is the battle. Look at verse 7. “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” The contrast is very clear. For us, we do set our mind on the Spirit. We do desire to honor God and His law. We do subject ourselves to the law of God, because that is our truest nature. But the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, does not submit itself to His law, and it is not even capable of doing it. But in the course of struggling with sin, we sometimes wonder whether we are in the realm of the Spirit. Look at verse 11. “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 because of his Spirit who lives in you.” When we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, the Holy Spirit gives us the assurance that we will be raised also in the glorious resurrection bodies later.

Look at verses 12-13. “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” Paul makes a very powerful point. He says that you owe nothing to the flesh, you don’t live after the flesh now, you don’t mind the things of the flesh now. That is your old, dead and dying life. It has never done you any good. If Christ has not saved us, the flesh would have dragged us down to hell. So why should we feel obligated to such an enemy? Notice it says that you must kill the misdeeds of the body. Now the body here stands for the flesh. Sin comes to us, tempts us through the body. The body is representative of the flesh. Someone said, “If you do not kill sin, sin will kill you.” Of course, we fail from time to time, but the Christians have desire to kill the flesh. That is a believer’s pattern.

Believers are those who are in the constant process of killing the misdeeds of the flesh by the Spirit’s resident power

**Third**, we are children of God. Look at verse 15. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” When you hear the word “adoption,” some people think that it is a kind of a second-class status. You are not a real son; you are an adopted son. Nobody wanted you. But that is not true. It may be that some people in our day think of it that way but in the first century, it was quite the opposite. In the Roman culture, if a father looked over his sons, and he didn’t see among the born sons that he had brought into the world a son that he deemed to be worthy to inherit his name, his title, his estates, he would go outside and he would find such a worthy son and he would adopt him into the family based upon his virtue, based upon his character, based upon his talent, and that adopted son would then take precedence over all of his natural sons who didn’t qualify at the level of qualification that the father had established. So an adopted son in the Roman system is a son who is chosen by the father for the purpose of inheriting the estate and of bearing the name and the title of that father. Many Roman emperors were adopted, including Caesar Augustus. So, when it says that we have become the adopted sons of God, it means that God out of all the world has chosen us to bear His name and His title and inherit His estate. He sovereignly chooses us out of all the world. We are the preferred of God. We have been chosen to bear His name. We have been chosen to inherit His kingdom.

When you adopt a person, the adopted person lose all rights in his former family. He becomes heir to his new father’s estate. The old life of the adopted person is completely erased. All his debts are cancelled on the spot. All his records are removed. It is as if he was born the day he was adopted. He is like a new person who just started his life. That’s exactly what it is depicting, this concept of adoption. All our rights to our former family and our former father, the devil, are cancelled. We gain all the rights, fully legitimate sons in our new family; we become heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ of all that the Father possesses.

Look at verse 15 again. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” There is a big difference between a slave and a son. A slave lives in fear of being sold and does not have any inheritance. A son lives in peace and will be an heir of his father. A slave is not a family member though he lives in the house but a son belongs to the family. A son calls his father, “Abba, Father.” He asks anything he wants to have from his father without fear of rejection. A son is a son no matter how he messed up his life. No one can separate a son from his father. This is our new relationship with God after we become sons of God. Once we live in fear of God’s wrath because we lived as slaves of sin and as enemies of God. Now we have become the children of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we can call God “Abba, Father.” This is like children calling their father “Daddy, Papa, I love you.” We Christians come to our heavenly Father anytime and call his name freely. Then he will listen to our cry for help. Our new relationship enables us to overcome our inner fears. When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in our hearts and drives out the spirit of fear who made us most miserable all the time.

The most remarkable thing is that through the Spirit we can have the assurance that we are the children of God, and that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. When we have this blessed assurance, nothing can be a problem to us. Look at verse 17. “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.” Here “if” is the same as “since.” Paul is not making heroic suffering a condition for salvation. He is not describing some small number of people who have endured great afflictions. Rather, he sees all Christians as being co-sufferers with Christ. In fact, all who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior will suffer. But the small amount of suffering we may experience in this life is nothing compared to the glory that God will reveal in us at the end, the glory that will be part of our inheritance. And that glory will come, not through our ability to achieve a particular level of godliness, or a particular level of spirituality, but through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, through the new life he gives us, and through the righteousness won for us by Jesus Christ.

We have the glorious truth that the Spirit dwells in us and sets us free from the law of sin and death. The Spirit changed our nature so that we put our minds on things of God, and by the Spirit’s resident power we are in the process of killing the misdeeds of the flesh. In this way, we grow in the image of Jesus Christ. We have the victory through the Spirit in us.

Big Idea: The Spirit empowers us for victory