

The Epistle to the Romans chapter 8 vv. 1-13

Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

In our broadcasts, we aim to give sound, understandable biblical teaching on a wide range of subjects, for the help and blessing of the people of God today. You can find a full list of the subjects covered in our talks, on our website www.truthfortoday.org.uk, and you can download any of our talks to listen, or print them off to read. If you have enjoyed any of our broadcasts, then tell your Christian friends about us, so that they can benefit from them too.

As well as looking at various topics, we recognise the value in teaching the Scripture verse by verse. I would say that the careful, deliberate study of the Word of God is vital for a Christian to grow in the faith, and to be equipped to stand-fast for Christ in an increasingly godless society.

Have you heard it said that, "A good Roman can go anywhere?" As I was growing up, I used to hear godly men say that, to encourage us younger ones to make a careful, detailed study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. If in the Acts of the Apostles we have the Gospel preached, then in the Roman epistle we have the Gospel taught. I trust you are not a Christian who thinks that the Gospel is only for the blessing of the unsaved. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, the apostle Paul is teaching the Gospel to believers. It is from a position of understanding the Gospel that we can begin to understand the mind of God in the Scriptures. In the Gospel, God meets the greatest of our needs, but the blessings of His salvation are in accordance not so much with our needs, but rather according to the greatness of His heart. A good Roman will be an intelligent, triumphant Christian, one who is able to engage in spiritual warfare and in spiritual worship.

We began the studies in Romans a while ago. Talk number T1079 was an introductory outline of the epistle, and we have worked steadily through, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Today we begin a series of six talks which will take us from chapter 8 through to the end of chapter 11. Our talk today is on chapter 8 vv. 1-13 and our title is the "Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." The following two talks are on the "Spirit of Adoption" and the "Spirit's Assurance". After that we will consider the dispensational chapters, dealing with Israel's past (chapter 9), Israel's present (chapter 10), and Israel's future (chapter 11).

In the Lord's will the remaining chapters, from 12 to the end of 16 will be taken up in a future series of talks. I really would encourage you to visit our website and access the talks given on Romans thus far, as I believe what I heard as a younger man is very true, "A good Roman can go anywhere."

Our reading

As we have only 13 verses to look at today, I will read these for you, as I expect that not all of you who are listening will have your Bibles to hand. I have said a few times recently that in a society where there are so many things said which are reputedly worthy of our attention, the Christian must always give first place to the Scriptures. The apostle Paul encourages the young man, Timothy, to give attendance to the public reading of the Scriptures, and I think we are wise, if in our ministry, we can read the Scriptures to our listeners.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

The context

As we are systematically going through the epistle, and especially as this talk is the first of our new series, I should perhaps give a little background information. The beginning of our chapter reads, “There is now therefore...”, so we really need to understand what the therefore is there for. You see, chapter 8 follows chapters 5, 6 and 7. You may think that is stating the obvious, which of course it is, but I say that to point out that the opening verses of chapter 8 are in effect a summing up of what Paul has been addressing in the previous three chapters. The epistle to the Romans is the teaching of the Gospel, and so far in the epistle we have learned that the whole of mankind is guilty before God in relation to their sins. That is the doctrine (or teaching) Paul sets out some detail from chapter 1 v.18 to chapter 3 v. 20. He then sets out the teaching of the Gospel, God’s good news, from chapter 3 v. 21 to chapter 5 v. 11.

It is worth saying that the truth of the Gospel first brings before us the righteousness of God. As an observation, I hear many today preach a Gospel of God’s love. Of course, this is right and proper, “For God so loved the world...”. But we need also to preach the righteousness of God, to preach repentance and the need to acknowledge our personal sinfulness before a holy God. It is worth noting that the apostle John, in his first epistle, brings before us the fact that God is Light, and then tells us that God is Love.

Then from chapter 5 v. 12, the teaching given is concerning sin. Not sins, but sin. I don’t think we can understand the teaching of the Gospel unless we can clearly differentiate between sins and sin. Let me say this clearly: sins are the fruit – sin is the root; sins are the effect – sin is the cause; sins can be forgiven – sin is condemned. The previous 3 talks have focused on the sin brought into the world by Adam, the first man, and our condemnation as a result of being the offspring of

his fallen race. We have learned to understand the terms Paul uses in relation to our fallen humanity, “our old man” and “the flesh.” (Please don’t confuse the term ‘flesh’ with our physical bodies, this is not what Paul is calling ‘the flesh’ in this epistle. The Lord Jesus had a body of flesh, as do we, but what must be understood in these chapters is that the flesh refers to the state of fallen humanity and not our bodies). There must be a slight distinction between these terms, as we are taught that while our old man is crucified with Christ, our flesh is a constant source of trouble for the Christian.

Let me just pause for a moment and ask you this question. Are you ever troubled by the fact that as a Christian you still find yourself doing sinful things? Does this make you doubt that you even are a Christian? Well, read chapter 7 vv. 15-20, and see that the great apostle had the same struggle. Our sins are forgiven for Jesus sake (as John writes), but whilst sin (the root) has been judged and condemned by God, it still has a route into our lives as we still have the old nature (the flesh) alive in us. Yes, even as Christians we need to wage war against the flesh.

The flesh cannot be controlled, changed, cleansed, or conquered. The flesh can be educated, and refined, in the eyes of man, but it cannot be improved in God’s sight. In relation to this, it has been said, “What God could not mend, He brought to an end.” And we shall see this as we progress in our talk today. The Law of Moses, although good in itself, cannot do anything to make the flesh suitable for God. The Law cannot save us, but it does condemn us, serving only to show just how far we have fallen short of God’s exacting standards. The Law serves as a plumb-line to show how crooked the wall is, but has no power to put it right. At the close of chapter 7 Paul exclaims, “O wretched man that I am!” It’s all a bit bleak really, and then we come to the wonderful change in chapter 8.

Just before we get there, we have already said that the following chapters (9, 10, & 11) are in relation to Israel. They are a parenthesis in the unfolding of the truth of the Gospel to the Christian church, and speak of God’s dealings with His earthly people Israel. As chapters 9, 10, and 11, are a parenthesis we could put this whole section in brackets and read on from the end of chapter 8 into chapter 12. When we arrive at chapter 12, we have the practical challenge of how this blessed Gospel should change our lives. There Paul writes,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [or intelligent] service”.

Remember Paul is addressing Christians and not the unbeliever, so I say again, the Gospel should change the lives of Christians, of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our chapter

Chapter 8 is a very full chapter, so we will have 3 talks based on it, with each talk focusing on the Holy Spirit. Even the casual reader will note that the change in the apostle’s language is significant in this chapter. It is as if the light at the end of the dark tunnel has been reached, and is shining in all its brilliance. Until now, the Holy Spirit has been mentioned but once in the epistle (chapter 5 v. 5), but now He is mentioned eighteen or nineteen times (depending on which translation you are reading). Whilst it is not my task to speak on the person of the Holy Spirit, but just to say that He is more than an influence. I say this because some would fail to appreciate that the Holy Spirit is God. He is co-eternal and co-equal, with the God the Father and God the Son. We believe in 3 persons of the godhead, and although we may distinguish between the persons of the godhead (as the Scripture allows), we need to always remember that they are one God.

Verses 1-3 are a summary of the previous chapters, and contain our title, The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (v.2). Verse 4 gives us an introduction to chapter 8. Verses 5-13 give us the contrast between the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit.

What a tremendous statement opens our chapter. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And there the verse should end. We are reliably told that the words which follow in the King James Version belong to verse 4 only, and not verse 1, and that certainly makes sense to the intelligent Christian. Paul wants us to enjoy this glorious fact, which thankfully does not depend on our walk, but entirely on Christ Himself. Who is it that are referred to as being "in Christ Jesus?" The answer, of course is every child of God, every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, every Christian. Chapter 5 introduced us to the teaching of justification, of being made right before God. As believers, we are justified by faith in Christ, and by His blood and there is now no condemnation for us. God sees us as being in Christ Jesus, the One whom He has raised from amongst the dead and given the place of power at His right hand. I speak reverently when I say that if there was condemnation to be brought against a true believer, then God would have to find fault with the work of His Son, and that is unthinkable. The old hymn says, "Safe in Christ the weakest child, stands in all God's favour" and how wonderfully true that is!

In chapter 5 the contrast is between Adam and Christ, as being the heads of two races. We read,

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteousness" (v.19).

Our righteousness, then, is not in our good deeds or works, but in a Man, Christ Jesus. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and our old man has been crucified with Him, so we are free! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

No condemnation (v. 1), no accusation (v. 33), and no separation (v. 35).

The spirit of life in Christ Jesus

Verse 2 reads, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Here I want to quote from the writings of F. B. Hole (Romans 8). He writes,

'Not only have we life in Christ Jesus but the Spirit of that life has been given to us. Thereby a new force enters our lives. Coming under the controlling power of the Spirit of God we are released from the controlling power of sin and death. The greater law overrides the lesser.

The point may be illustrated by many happenings in the natural world which surrounds us. Here, for instance, is a piece of iron. It lies motionless upon the ground, held to the spot by the law of gravitation. An electric magnet is placed above it and the current is switched on. Instantly it flies upward, as though suddenly possessed of wings. A new controlling power has come on the scene which, under certain conditions and in a limited sphere, has proved itself stronger than the power of gravitation.'

In chapter 6 we read, "For the wages of sin is death..", and we are all too aware that death awaits every man, but the verse does not stop here. It continues, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Perhaps we think of eternal life as something which is in the future, and in a sense it is, but eternal life is also a present possession for the believer, now. When the Lord Jesus Christ said, "And I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish.." (see John chapter 10 v. 28), He was speaking of a life that "His sheep" already possessed. Later He says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ,

whom thou has sent” (see John chapter 17 v. 3). The law of sin and death, just like the law of gravity in Mr Hole’s illustration holds mankind down in a state of spiritual death that can never please God, but the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, just like the magnet, sets us free from under this bondage and gives us the triumphant power to live as Christ lived in this world.

I think we have already covered the summary of chapter 7 as given in verse 3. There was nothing wrong with the Law of Moses, it was “holy, and just, and good” (see chapter 7 v. 12). The fault was with mankind’s inability to keep the Law. The only answer was for a Man of a different order altogether, the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s own Son, to come in “the likeness of sinful flesh” to complete a work which would both uphold God’s holiness and deal with the question of sin.

Of course the Lord had a body of flesh and blood, but as we have already said He did not possess the sinful nature (the flesh) which we inherited from Adam. This is the wonderful truth, which must ever be guarded, concerning the Saviour being born of a virgin. Let me be absolutely clear on this, that the Lord Jesus Christ was not conceived in the natural human way, therefore He did not possess the fallen nature of Adam. Although He was a true man (body, soul and spirit), it was absolutely impossible for Him to sin.

The Holy Spirit inspired three of the main writers of the New Testament to give us a 3-fold witness to the Saviour’s sinless perfection. Paul, the apostle with a great intellect says, “Who knew no sin” (see 2 Corinthians chapter 5 v. 21), Peter, the apostle who was so practical says, “He did no sin” (see 1 Peter chapter 2 v. 22), and John, the apostle who perhaps was closest to the Master says, “In him there is no sin” (see 1 John chapter 3 v. 5).

The fallen condition of mankind could never be remedied by the Law, but in the death of Christ we have salvation, full and free. Full forgiveness from the penalty of our sins, and freedom from the power of sin. I think this little verse is attributed to John Bunyan, and describes beautifully what blessing the Gospel brings us into.

Run, John, run, the law commands
But gives us neither feet nor hands.
Far better news the gospel brings:
It bids us fly and gives us wings.

The first 3 verses as we have seen summarise the teaching learned in the previous chapters. Verse 4 gives us an introduction to chapter 8 and a lead in to the remaining verses in our passage, bringing before us the contrast and conflict between our old life (the life of the flesh), and our new life (the life of the Spirit). Whilst we are not strictly speaking under law, we read that the effect of the work of Christ is “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This is normal Christianity, to live under the controlling and leading of the Holy Spirit.

We are almost out of time, but I’m not sure how much explanation is required for the remaining verses which we have read. The language and the teaching is straightforward, the difficult part is living it out. Verses 5 to 8 challenge us as to what is occupying our minds, and taking up our energy and time, and verse 9 underlines that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We began by considering the wonderful blessings of being “in Christ Jesus”, and here we are taught that we are “in the Spirit” and the Spirit is in us. Surely this brings into focus our responsibility to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called (see Ephesians chapter 4 ESV). Our calling is a “high calling”, a “holy calling” and a “heavenly calling” (see Philippians chapter 3 v. 14, 2 Timothy chapter 1 v. 9, Hebrews chapter 3 v. 1), and it is good to be reminded of this.

I think we only find the Holy Spirit called “the Spirit of Christ” twice in the Scriptures. Here in v. 9 and in 1 Peter chapter 1 v. 11. We mentioned earlier in the talk the oneness of the godhead, and

in these verses we find the Holy Spirit called the “Spirit of God” (v. 9), the “Spirit of Christ” (v. 9), and the “Spirit of him [the Father] that raised up Jesus from the dead” (v. 10), as in chapter 6 v. 4 we read, “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.”

I trust today you have seen just how central the Holy Spirit is in this chapter. He is the One who makes living the Christian life possible. We cannot follow Christ in our own strength, we need to rely on the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This was powerfully brought home to me recently as I read in Acts chapter 4 of the bold way that Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin, the rulers of Israel. Could this be the same Peter, who only days earlier had denied that he even knew the Lord? What had changed? What had he experienced? Of course, the answer as we read was that he was now “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Dear Christian friend we, too, have the indwelling Holy Spirit in our hearts, and if we make room for Him, He will fill us to overflowing!

Just before we close, perhaps I do need to say a few words about the quickening of our mortal bodies in v. 11. In the context, I don't believe that the quickening of the Spirit is in relation to resurrection. Of course, our mortal bodies will be raised and changed at the resurrection (Paul tells us that in his epistle to the Corinthians), but here we are considering the operation of the Spirit who can empower our bodies to be vessels for the glory of God now. By the same power which was demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ from among the dead, we are given spiritual life that our bodies might not live to the flesh, but to God. I believe this is exactly what Paul prays for himself as he asks, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,…” (see Philippians chapter 3 v. 10). May the Holy Spirit so work in our hearts that this is our earnest prayer too.

May God bless you all.

Thank you for listening to this *Truth for Today* talk on The Epistle to the Romans chapter 8 vv. 1-13, on 'The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus' Talk no. T1154.

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