



Sermon Notes | Life in the Spirit | Romans 8:5-11

INTRODUCTION

Last week we opened the central chapter in the Letter to the Romans, and the Word at large also, having arrived at the mountain top after our climb through chapters 1-7. And this is how we should approach and access chapter 8, having first worked through chapters 1-7 verse by verse. No shortcuts. No cherry picking the Scriptures. No haste in dealing with God's Word. Only then do we see, understand fully and rightly, and gain comprehensively, thus reaping the fruit. Only then are we able to extract the gems and riches from the chapter.

We recall that Paul has now turned to our 'sanctification' in this mid section of Romans, having first outlined in chapters 1-5, both 'justification's need', (our 'justifying need' due to our fallen nature in Adam, and warranted, if we are to dwell eternally with God), and then 'justification's source' in Christ Jesus. Then Paul steers on to matters flowing out of our 'new position' in Jesus Christ, that is, to how 'justification' is lived out. This is our 'sanctification', out being progressively 'set apart' for full devotion unto the Lord, meaning, being 'slaves to Him'. This is holiness, life set apart fully, ongoing conformity to Christ. This is Paul's focus in chapter 6, 'ownership transfer' from being 'slaves to sin' to being 'slaves to righteousness'. In chapter 7 we looked at the 'struggle' of being 'out of Adam' but still harbouring a 'piece of Adam'. And then in chapter 8 we come to 'sanctification's foundation', that being Christ, not just Christ theoretically, but also Christ practically and positionally. The reality of Christ bookends this chapter. Christ Alone is the very foundation.

Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:38-39

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is through Christ. Chapter 8 opens with this in the first verse and closes with this truth.

Romans 8:9

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

We are not just 'associated' with Christ. We are not just 'talking about Christ'. We are not just interested at times about Him. No. This is transformative reality. In Christ is the 'realm of our identity'. If you 'believe' in Christ, your 'identity' is in Him. It is no longer in 'Adam' or living in 'sin'; you now 'live in Christ'. The governing truth of this is found in Romans 8:1.

Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

In Christ there is 'no condemnation' because He took 'condemnation' on. He bore the very 'condemnation' that we deserved. He bore our 'condemnation' for His 'righteousness'. This is 'The Great Exchange'. When Christ said, 'It is finished', He bore and paid the price for our 'condemnation'.

'His righteousness' was not only 'valid atonement', but in Christ we now have the fuel for living, for we can now live out that 'righteousness'.

Romans 8:4

"In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

In Christ we are now 'not guilty' and can live out that 'not guilty' minute by minute. We now walk according to the Spirit.

Thus Paul sets up another layer of groundwork for 'sanctification', turning to our 'location' position in Him. In verses 1-4 we saw the bedrock, which is our Life in Christ.

Romans 8:1-4

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

The next strata which flows from Christ is 'Life in the Spirit', the Holy Spirit, verses 5-11; the Holy Spirit being the means for 'spirit living', the engine for living out 'life in Christ'. There is no 'Life in the Spirit' to live without Christ first.

Romans 8:5-11

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the

flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

Thus is the pattern seen through Scripture, the pattern being, Christ giving way to the Spirit.

John 14:1, 3, 15-17

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ... If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

The omniscient Christ is with His disciples. He explains that He must go away, but that they will not be alone, for a Helper, the 'Holy Spirit', will be coming to be with them.

John 15:26

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."

John 16:7

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

The Helper, 'Holy Spirit', is yet to come, Jesus explains, but 'He will come'. It is necessary for Christ to leave, but a Helper is to come and will be with them. And so the pattern is established. Christ called His disciples. He instructs and teaches them. He leaves them. But He leaves them with The Holy Spirit. The same basic pattern is likewise left for us today. Christ calls us. And He leaves us with His Spirit. Hence, it has always been this way, this Life in Christ, the same for Rome, the same for Peter, and the same for every Christian. Christ calls us, and then He leaves us with The Holy Spirit. Life in Christ, is therefore, Life in the Spirit!

Now, back to Romans 8, picking up where we left off, at verse 5.

Our prayer, Lord, is that You will give us eyes to see these 'Words of Life', minds to understand them, and hearts to receive them, so that we might live out these truths and give you glory in them. Amen.

Romans 8:5-11

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law, indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

These verses make a plain statement, a contrast between the 'life of the believer' and the 'life of the unbeliever'. These words are not a charge to 'live in the Spirit'. Paul speaks to that in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16-25

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

So, no, verses 5-11 of Romans 8 are not a charge to 'live in the Spirit', but are a charge to those who are already living 'life in the Spirit' to walk in 'the power' of the Spirit. Yes, there will be 'struggle' as Paul has identified and dealt with in chapter 7, but Paul has moved on from that, and now Paul is addressing 'sanctification'. And foundational to 'sanctification' is the matter of 'identification', that being, that 'sanctification' is only possible because of 'Spirit identify'.

I. SPIRIT IDENTITY: (vv. 5-8)

Romans 8:5-8

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Paul's 'contrast' in verse 5 between 'living in the flesh' and 'living in the Spirit' makes the difference so plain.

Romans 8:5

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of Spirit."

Note the order of events in the verse. Paul does not say that those who set their minds on the flesh live according to the flesh, or that those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit live according to the Spirit. We must take care to note that Paul's message is actually saying the opposite. It may well be true that from day to day thinking rightly will result in acting rightly, and actions can flow from thinking, but this is not Paul's point, not what he is teaching. In the case of the Galatians, who were straying saints, it was his point, as he questioned their striving to be 'perfected' by the flesh.

Galatians 3:1-3

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

But this is not Paul's same message to the Roman saints. No. To the Roman saints Paul is teaching the 'plain Gospel' of God.

Romans 1:1

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."

Different group; different message. Paul, addressing the Romans, is laying out gospel implications.

Having laid out and 'underpinned' the foundations of 'salvation' and 'justification' in the earlier chapters, Paul has now 'moved on' to talk about 'sanctification'. Therefore, these verses are not a call to 'live rightly'. 'Sanctification' cannot be talked about before 'contrasting identity' is understood. Before you can think and walk 'rightly' you must have 'ability'. The basis for 'Spirit Living' is 'Spirit identity'. Without first having 'Spirit identity' there is no thinking. Thinking 'rightly' only comes by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no 'right' thinking.

The bottom line is this: Living flows from one of two ways, that of 'Adamic Living' and that of 'Spirit Living'.

1. 'Adamic Living'

Living in the flesh: Cain had it. Korah declared it. Saul hid behind it.

2. 'Spirit Living'

Christo-centric living. Looking to Messiah. Moses considered it. David was 'robed' in it.

Living that produces 'thinking'. Identity-position that produces 'thinking'.

Psalm 1:1-2

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."

Blessed is man who 'thinks rightly' and then 'walks rightly'. His delight, his mind, rests on the Law of the LORD, which drives his thought. This is his 'identity', 'position', and 'place', which drives 'thought' every time.

Paul's point then: Your 'living' flows from your mindset, and even more so, your mindset flows from your identity. Let us be clear on the truth of this reality.

Contrary to modern perversions, only a cat can think truly like a cat. A person cannot be a cat and cannot think like a cat, contrary to current high schoolers declaring they are cat. Nothing changes that their 'identity' is human. Those whose minds are set on flesh are 'of the flesh'. Their identity is human. This is binary. You are either 'in the flesh' because you are of the flesh, or you are 'in the spirit' because you are of the Spirit. Paul's point then in Romans 8 is 'identity'. It is not a matter of choosing how to live. We cannot choose to have a 'flesh day' one morning and a 'spirit day' the next. No. We do not flip between the two. We live according to who we are, what our 'identity' is. If you live according to 'the flesh' then you are not of 'the Spirit'. That is the point of the text. This is behaviour stemming from being; practice coming from position. This is Paul's argument.

Romans 8:4

"... in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Those 'of the Spirit', with the mind set on the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit, and they have 'peace'.

Romans 8:6

"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

Conversely, Paul argues, if one is walking 'in the flesh', with the mind on the flesh, then your loyalty is to the flesh, and your terminus is 'death'.

So then, this is not a command to action. It is a statement of fact concerning how a mind is set. It is the 'reality' based on who you are, based on your 'identity'. One's true nature is not chosen, it is given to you. If you are in God, then it is a 'new mindset', given by Christ at 'salvation', whole and consuming with absorbing interest. And how a mind is

set determines one's true nature. Either one's mind is set 'on the flesh', or 'on the Spirit', and however the person's mind is set, he lives accordingly.

Romans 8:5-6

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

I Corinthians 2:16

"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Only those 'in Christ' have this 'new' mindset. It points to 'union in Christ'.

Romans 8:6b

"... but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

Romans 5:1

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

A 'new life' filled with peace, peace with God because one is no longer 'guilty' before God. Only then, with a 'new identity', a 'new nature', and a 'transformed mind', does one have freedom to live accordingly by 'the Spirit'. It is the 'only way' and only comes by God, is only given by God. We cannot gain this on our own.

In contrast, a mind that is set 'on the flesh' does not submit to God, is in fact 'hostile' to God, and cannot please God. This 'hostile mindset' is opposite to God's given 'peace'. One cannot slip back and forth between the two mindsets from day to day. The mind 'on flesh' is an 'unregenerate mind', is an 'Adamic' mind out of Adam, is hostile to God, has no peace with God, and does not submit to God's Law. Why? They cannot. They are 'still in the flesh', still in their old nature, still in Adam, still in sin, and thus have no good affections for God. Their mind is still 'on flesh'.

Romans 8:7-8

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law, indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Only the true believer fears God and can please God. Only the true believer delights in God's Law and desires to obey it.

Romans 7:18

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."

Romans 7:22

"For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being."

The point is then, one of realm, location, and identity. Those who are 'in the flesh' and not 'in Christ', the unregenerate, and who are many, plainly cannot please God. And you, feeling shocked by such a statement say, 'But what of my kind neighbour? What of my loving and generous relative?' No. The kind, but unsaved neighbour, and the dearest of unsaved relatives, cannot please God. Why? Because God says so. Those devoid of the Spirit cannot please God, and therefore, cannot enter His presence at death. No one in displeasure of God can enter His presence. In truth, God morally is not pleased with any of us, forget the good neighbour and loving relative, but the 'good news' is that there is One who does please God, that being His own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ, who came 2,000 years ago. Following His early years, Christ embarks in a ministry of obedience and fulfillment.

Matthew 3:13-17

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased'."

God declares that He is pleased with His Son. God's pleasure is only in His Son, Jesus. This is noted in Matthew 3, and put with Romans 8, the conclusion is that pleasing God can only be possible when people are in Christ. Thereby, in order to please God one must be pleased with His Son, Jesus. And to be pleased with His Son, means that one is 'in the Son', united to Him. God is pleased no other way. No amount of good deeds or good behaviour will suffice. If you are not 'in Christ', God cannot be pleased. It is impossible. Why? It is because our minds are 'in the flesh' without Christ. Our 'identity' is wrong. Our 'mindset' is 'on flesh' not on the Son.

Our 'minds' are most revealing. What is your mind on? Is it 'fleshly' things? Is it 'temporal things? Worthless things? Consider your mindset. What absorbs your thinking?

'Identity' is the first point of our 'sanctification' that Paul focuses on. There is yet another.

II. SPIRIT GUARANTEE: (vv. 9-11)

Romans 8:9-11

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

Paul directs his focus back to the believers of Rome. You believers are contrasted to those 'of the flesh', those who are 'hostile' to God. And 'we' also are in the 'domain and realm' of one of two locations, either that 'of Spirit', or that 'of flesh'. A person cannot have one foot in the Spirit and one in the flesh. There is no 'getting there' situation, no grey area, no 'fleshy' specimen of Christian. The matter is distinct. One is either 'of the flesh', that is completely in Adam, or one is 'of the Spirit', that is, completely in Christ. And so, if in fact the Spirit dwells in you, let Paul's 'readers' reflect. Stop and examine yourself. Apply the text to yourself. Spirit maintenance is called for.

How do we know if we are in Spirit? Does the Spirit dwell in you? What is on your mind? What is your mind set on? Is your mind on this passage? Are you tracking the passage? Do you really want to be here today focusing on this sermon? Or, is your mind set on other things? Is your mind set on Christ and pleasing Him? Or, is your mind on what others are thinking? Are you seeking favour, compliments, pleasure? Are you behaving correctly, saying the right things? What is your mind set on every minute, second, hour, day, week? What absorbs your thinking? What determines where you are? What identifies your 'location' and your 'identity'? Without the Spirit you don't belong to Him. This is bigger than 'identity'. This is 'possession'. This is 'spiritual guarantee'.

Romans 8:9

"You, however, are not in the flesh but the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

Are you His 'possession'? Is your mind on Christ? Is Christ the absorbing object of your mind? That is how you know. You may say, 'I don't think Christ 24/7.' It does not mean that. But every thought, big or small, that is carried out should be filtered in and through the 'Spirit of Christ'. Christ is your every moment consideration, whether changing a tire, cooking a stir fry, coming to church, or interacting with others. Everything, from motives to output, and why you do what you do, should be done 'in the Spirit'.

To belong to God is to possess the 'Spirit of Christ', and therefore we are to be walking in Christ, gate and step. This is the Spirit's guarantee: Your steps are backed by the Spirit.

Romans 8:4

"... in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Paul does not close here. He does not just give us the 'already'. He could, but does not. He goes on to show us the 'not yet'. Paul reminds us it is a progression.

Romans 8:10

"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

1. Christ is in you. The Spirit is in us, as believers. The body is dead, due to sin. But the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. As we wait for the 'not yet', the Spirit is our fuel for living. And so Paul proclaims 'Christ in us' which is the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

"To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In order to present everyone 'mature in Christ', the output aim is 'progressing actions' which is our 'daily hope'.

2. The body is dead due to sin. Yet we carry around the body. We carry around a corpse, a body of death, and it frustrates us to do so, because we are also a Christian 'living' in our walk. Paul feels the 'struggle', the dichotomy. He laments about this very thing.

Romans 7:24

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

But the Spirit helps us. The Spirit's righteousness helps us. This reality facilitates our walk.

We live according to our 'identity'. It is not an aimless walk. He gives us life.

Romans 8:11

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

And so Romans 8 provides a foundation concerning 'life in the Spirit' which also sets a foundation for Paul's writing to the Galatians, encouraging them to stand firm and rightly on this foundation, not giving into 'the flesh'.

Galatians 5:16-18

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposite to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

The Romans 8:9-11 verses lead to three 'if' statements; conditional, yes, but designed to point to plain realities and guarantees about 'life in the Spirit'. It was Paul's way to say, 'if this is true, then you will see this.' Like, for example, if there is a bear, you will see it hibernate. If it is that, you will see this.

If Holy Spirit, who raised Christ from the dead, dwells in you, has come in and regenerated you, taken permanent residence in you, and sealed you, rewired your mind, then verse 11 holds true also. And Scripture lays forth this to be true.

Romans 8:1-4

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Titus 3:5

"...he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 1:13-14

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

Ephesians 4:30

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

Romans 8:11

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

And 'if' that same Spirit raised Christ from the dead, and yes He did, then He will raise those in Christ from the dead also. Those 'living in Christ' are promised deliverance for our mortal bodies. That we will rise again is sure, and that we will rise again in a 'renewed body' is assured. This is Spirit guaranteed.

Thinking of our body, 20th Century bishop of Durham, Handley Moule, stated: "Wonderful is the deep characteristic of the Scripture: It's 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."

In Christ the body is different, more than mere vessels or containers, more than soul containers, more than packaging to be disposed of. 'If' the body is more than the residence of the Holy Spirit. How so? In Christ, Holy Spirit dwells there now. Verses 9-11 say so. So then why do we treat our bodies so poorly? Sadly, we do this. We ill-treat our bodies. We the Body mark them up, beat them up, burn them up, with little thought of Romans 8:11.

Romans 8:11

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

It is not just about our soul, but also about our body. Christ will bring life to our 'mortal body'. This is not 'replacement', it is 'renovation' through the Spirit, in glory. We have the engine for living out 'life in Christ'.

Life in Christ, which is 'life in the Spirit', is our hope for the body.