

The Marvel of Being in Christ Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:1-4

In the providence of God we once again come to Paul's epistle to the Romans. So will you take your Bibles and join me by turning to Romans chapter eight.

This morning I will begin speaking to you about the marvel of being in Christ. Let me read the first four verses that we will focus on this morning. Romans chapter eight.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.¹

We come now to a truly astonishing passage of Scripture, one that allows us to behold the grandeur and the mystery of the gospel of God, a passage of Scripture that should arrest our attention completely, one that should be one of our favorites when it comes to meditation and prayer, one that, frankly, cannot be studied without evoking both humility and praise from the hearts of the redeemed, one that in an economy of words settles forever the security of the believer, the unshakable assurance of eternal life for all who have been justified by faith.

For me personally, Romans chapter five where the Spirit reveals to us the marvelous benefits of justification is the most magnificent chapter in all of Scripture. But since Romans chapter eight is the great summary of chapter five, it must, therefore, be included in my assessment.

You might think of Romans five as a diamond studded golden ring of gospel blessing and chapter eight the dazzling gem placed atop the entire setting.

So I pray that you have come this morning starving for the greatness of God. I pray that you are here panting after him. I pray that you are longing to feed upon the riches of his grace because here in this text the Holy Spirit has laid a banquet before us.

Well, let me give you the context. Paul has made it clear thus far in this epistle that sin is the defining disposition of man's very nature. Sin is intrinsic to us. It defines the essence of our character and it is primarily manifested in our self will, the essence of all sin. And, of course, it is fueled by our cherished lies of justified rebellion against God. Sin is man's innate inability to conform to the moral character and the desires of God. Therefore all men stand guilty before God. All men are condemned by the law of God. We are unable to keep that law. Paul has made it clear that man's only hope of salvation is to cast himself on the mercy of God to repent of his sin and by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone be saved. And when this occurs, a sinner is justified which merely means

¹ Romans 8:1-4

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that that sinner is declared righteous and treated as such based upon the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ.

This is far beyond merely being pardoned and forgiven, as wonderful as that is. It is far beyond that. Instead, we are treated as if we had never committed a single sin.

You will recall that according to chapter five there are nine benefits of justification. There we read that we have peace with God. We have access to God. We have a permanent standing in grace before him. We have a jubilant hope of glory. We experience joy and tribulation. We have proof of our salvation. We have a subjective awareness of God's love. We can even rejoice in God to the degree that he becomes the unequalled source of our delight. And, finally, we are saved from the very wrath of God in an eternal hell.

And you will recall at the end of chapter five Paul gives a stunning summary state at the end of verse 20 and verse 21. There he said:

“...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”²

And then chapters six and seven elaborate on the meaning of that statement. Paul went on to explain how we have died to sin and we have died to the law. And chapters six and seven, frankly, serve as a parenthesis between chapters five and eight. And then here in verse one Paul returns yet again to his original premise and says:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”³

I believe that when we read the epistle up to chapter eight we find a momentum that is taking place and finally in chapter eight it is as though there is this crescendo and it is as though Paul is finally swept away with exhilarating worship, as though he cannot contain himself given the implications of all that has been revealed thus far. I am sure that his pen could not keep pace with his mind. Do you know what that is like when you are writing and you are just so excited and your mind is way out here and you are just trying to get it down? I am sure that he was just overwhelmed with the profound implications of the gospel of God, so overwhelmed with it that he just gets carried away with the transcendent glories of the gospel of grace.

Now may I whet your appetite a little bit by giving you a brief overview of the entire chapter? And then we are going to look closely at these first four verses.

First, you must understand that the great theme of chapter eight is the security of the believer. And it is based upon the assertion that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He is going to explain how we have been delivered from the law. We

² Romans 5:20-21.

³ Romans 8:1.

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are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, that what the law could not do is accomplished in Christ. We are empowered by the indwelling Spirit of God that gives us victory over sin.

And he is going to move from there to explain that our salvation is guaranteed by the work of the Holy Spirit within us. He is the one who delivers us from sin. That is the doctrine of sanctification. Moreover, he is the one that delivers our body from corruption and the resurrection. That is the doctrine of glorification. He will continue to explain how the indwelling Holy Spirit proves that we are his children, that we are sons of God, that an adoption has taken place. We are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Therefore, on what basis can our salvation possibly fail?

Then he goes on to explain that the sufferings that will be ours this side of glory have all been ordained by God and that he is the one who is causing all things to work together for our good and his glory which, in turn, animates the longings of our heart with the blessed hope of the resurrection and the certainty of the Lord's immanent return.

He goes on from there to explain more about these astounding truths. He would tell us how because we are sons, we are destined for glory, that we all have an inheritance waiting for us. In fact, the entire cosmos is going to enjoy a recreation. Even the Holy Spirit joins with the saints and all of creation in groaning for that day when the curse will be reversed. He explains how even the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our feeble prayers as we struggle through life's journey.

Next he will explain that our assurance of salvation is anchored in the very character of the living God. Before the foundation of the world he devised a plan of redemption to bring glory to himself. And only if he fails will our salvation fail. Therefore, to say that a man can lose his salvation is to literally impugn the character of God. It elevates the will of man over the will of God making man, not God, sovereign over salvation. Paul will make it clear that he set his love upon us. God set his love upon us. He predestined us. He calls us. He separates us. He justifies us and he moves us inexorably toward glorification. And there is nothing that can thwart that process. His plan required the giving of his Son whom he did not spare, but delivered him up for us all. Can there be any greater guarantee than that?

I ask. Would he allow this plan to fail and thereby make the sacrifice of his Son an act in vain? I think not. Would God decree and orchestrate such a glorious plan and then leave it up to the will of man to be completed? Obviously not.

So in verse 33 of chapter eight he will say:

“God is the one who justifies.”⁴

He will go on to say in verse 34:

⁴ Romans 8:33.

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“Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”⁵

And then he is going to close the chapter with one final guarantee. And this is the most astounding of all. The love of Christ.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”⁶

Nothing, no one.

You see, because of our justification there is no condemnation. And because of the love of God there is no separation. Therefore, he will say in verse 37:

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”⁷

Beloved, you must understand that our justification guarantees glorification. My what debtors we are to his grace, what hope we have in Christ, what reasons we have to find our greatest joy, our greatest delight, our only satisfaction in our glorious God. Can there be anything in life more important than living for Christ? I think not.

Now let’s look more closely at these first four verses. First we will explore the phrase “in Christ,” by examining other passages of Scripture that address this marvelous doctrine. What does it mean to be in Christ?

Beloved, we simply must grasp this marvelous truth.

And then, second, we will examine Paul’s powerful summary of being in Christ found in verses one through four. We are going to see that includes no condemnation for sin as well as, secondly, new life in the Spirit.

But, first of all, what does it mean to be in Christ? Notice verse one. He says:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”⁸

I ask you. Have you ever spent time meditating upon this truth? Have you ever spent time going through the Word of God and having the Spirit help you understand more fully the implications of that incredible doctrine?

This is a marvelous truth. To think that he not only justifies the ungodly as we are told in chapter four verse five, but then he places us in Christ. Amazing. We were once in Adam and we are now in Christ which was the theme of the first 10 verses of chapter six.

⁵ Romans 8:34.

⁶ Romans 8:35.

⁷ Romans 8:37.

⁸ Romans 8:1.

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Now understanding this mystery is crucial in order for us to grasp the doctrine of justification. So listen very carefully. Justification is not some kind of legal fiction here. God does not declare righteous those who are really guilty and wicked, but rather justification is based upon our union with Christ. Let me explain that further. God declares the believer wholly righteous because he sees that believer in his Son. Therefore that believer is, in fact, righteous in the sight of a holy God, an all knowing, all righteous sovereign.

Maybe to put it a little bit differently it is not like God takes us with all of our sin, clothed in all of our filthy rags of iniquity and hangs a sign on us and says, "Pardoned, justified." Rather, think of it this way. He takes us with all of our sin and guilt and he clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. So now when he looks upon us he sees us hidden in Christ, this inscrutable mystery that we can't really fathom. What an amazing thought.

One day Jude tells us that we are going to stand in the presence of his glory why? Blameless with great joy, not with a sign hanging around our neck. In fact, we read, for example, in what? Ephesians five that he is going to present us as his bride without spot or blemish, holy and blameless.

You will recall when Christ died in some unfathomable way we also died. In fact, our spiritual baptism united us to Christ in his death and in his burial and even in his resurrection. The ritual of baptism really pictures these astounding truths.

You will remember we have been immersed into his death in chapter six verse three. Therefore, according to verse four we have been buried with him through baptism into death in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

And then in verse eight he says:

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."⁹

So, dear friends, think of it this way. Our precious Savior is not living somehow outside of us, acting upon us. But rather he is the one that dwells within us. God redeemed us in order that he might inhabit us.

But in some inscrutable way we also abide in him.

You remember in John 17 verse 22 Jesus prayed:

"And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity."¹⁰

⁹ Romans 6:8.

¹⁰ John 17:22-23.

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And then in Ephesians chapter one and verse six Paul rejoices saying that the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed upon us is in the beloved.

And in chapter two of Ephesians verse 10:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.”¹¹

Chapter five verse 30.

“...we are members of His body.”¹²

You could go to Colossians chapter two verses six and seven. There we read:

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith.”¹³

2 Corinthians 5:17.

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.”¹⁴

You see, dear friends, our union with Christ is the result of justification. It is the very basis of our salvation and all of its blessings. And because of this God doesn't see our sin. He sees the righteousness of Christ.

On the basis of Galatians two and verse 20 each one of us who are in Christ by his grace can say with Paul:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”¹⁵

As we look at Scripture, therefore, we see that we have died with Christ. We have been buried with him. We are raised up together in Christ. We are seated together with him in heavenly places. We are members of his body.

In Colossians two and verse 10 we read that in him we have been made complete. And if that is not enough he says in Colossians three verses three and four we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life is revealed, then we also will be revealed with him in glory.”

¹¹ Ephesians 2:10.

¹² Ephesians 5:30.

¹³ Colossians 2:6-7.

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁵ Galatians 2:20.

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My. This is staggering, isn't it? We exist in him spiritually, not physically, but spiritually. Think about it. Christ came to earth not only to pay the penalty for our sin, but to establish an intimate living eternal union with us whereby we become one with him. It is for this reason Paul would say in Galatians 3:28 we are all one in Christ Jesus. And in 1 Corinthians one verse 30:

“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”¹⁶

Now the Holy Spirit helps us grasp these unfathomable truths by giving us certain illustrations, certain figures in Scripture. We see, for example in chapter seven of Romans and verse four that we are married to Christ. We all understand that dynamic. And, again in Ephesians five we see that description of the bride and we are the bride. He is the groom and so forth. The idea there is that we belong to him and enjoy the intimate spiritual oneness of relationship and everything that belongs to the groom belongs to the bride and so forth. And because of this one day, according to Ephesians 5:27:

“He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”¹⁷

We see another figure in John 15. You will recall the figure of the vine and the branches whereby the Spirit of God pictures the life giving organic bond that we have with Christ. We have the likeness of his nature. There is the eternal impartation of life that comes from being in that vine. Because of that we have the power to literally bear spiritual fruit.

We see another figure in John six where the Lord speaks about the body and food. We have life by partaking of Christ even as Christ has life by partaking of the Father. In Ephesians one we have the figure of the head and the body and the body of Christ is pictured in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. There in verse 27 we read:

“Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.”¹⁸

So this union with Christ, being in Christ means that we are part of this spiritual organism. We cannot function outside of the body as some kind of an independent organ any more than your liver could function outside of your body. We all respond to the head of the body which is the Lord Jesus Christ, but together we serve his purposes.

In John 17 verse 21 we have the figure of God the Father and God the Son and the oneness that we share with them.

Therefore, beloved, because of our union in Christ Paul can say, “There is no condemnation.”

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:30.

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:27.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:27.

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Do you get it? There is no condemnation. You are in Christ. You are free from the law. You possess the righteousness of God in him. You are complete in him. Scripture says the dead in Christ will rise.

Oh, child of God, you must etch this in the granite of your mind. I am not saying that you are hard headed. I am saying that this is something that you must never forget.

You see, this is speaking of a supernatural union that is authored by God himself. This is a living union by which Christ's life becomes ours. He does not work upon us from the outside, but from the inside where he abides. This is an indissoluble union meaning it is one that can never be severed. You can never lose your salvation nor are you ever going to want to leave your salvation. It is a mysterious union in that there is no parallel. There is no analogy in the human experience by which we can say, "Oh, I know that what is like."

You know, I am telling you these things because God has revealed them to us in his Word, but I don't really understand how it all works. None of us do. He is God. We are not.

But Paul will tell us in Colossians one and verse 26 about:

"...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."¹⁹

So literally our union with Christ is the basis of our salvation and all of its blessings. Therefore, you must understand that you cannot bypass the Lord Jesus Christ in order to get to God. You don't come to him through some other way. It is only through Christ.

Nor can you find any spiritual blessings apart from being in Christ. That is why all other religions are false.

Now I would ask you based on these doctrinal truths, do you really think you can remove yourself from being in Christ? Do you really think that you can extricate yourself from the supernatural union that was forged by God himself for his glory? Not at all.

Now notice the first marvel of being in Christ. Number one, there is no condemnation for sin. And, again, keep in mind that this is basically going to be a summary of chapter five where Paul talks about our justification.

Verse one.

"There is therefore now..."²⁰

¹⁹ Colossians 1:26.

²⁰ Romans 8:1.

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Let's stop there. Therefore now, what is he saying here? Therefore in light of what? Well, in light of chapters six and seven in which he answered the inevitable misunderstandings that he knew would arise from the doctrines revealed in chapter five. Therefore, in light of all that. In other words, because we are justified, because we have died to sin and to the law, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

As we look at the word "know" it is an emphatic negative adverb of time and it denotes complete and total cessation. No condemnation. Sometimes we say, "What is it about no you don't understand?" This is very simple. It means no, none whatsoever.

Real practically those in Christ have been forever removed from the realm of condemnation. Let me put it to you differently. It is utterly impossible for a believer to ever be subject once again to the realm of condemnation, because we are in Christ.

Will you also notice the absence of the word "unless." I don't see that there.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, unless you apostatize, unless you commit some great egregious sin."

No, we don't see that. You see, that can never happen because we are in Christ.

Now, never forget this simple truth. Justification is simply the opposite of condemnation. What is condemnation? Well, the term literally speaks of the penalty for violating God's law. And what is that penalty? It is spiritual death, eternal death.

Romans 6:23.

"The wages of sin is death."²¹

But I would add that given all Paul has just been describing in chapters six and seven concerning the enslaving power of sin, it would not be unreasonable to include those concepts as well. In fact, he is going to go on to explain in verse two that we have been set free from the law of sin and death.

So, therefore, I believe we can conclude that there is no condemnation with respect to two things: one, the penalty for sin as well as, two, we are going to have freedom from the power of sin.

Let's think about this for a moment, this penalty of sin. As we study Scripture we see that the guilt of sin has been forever removed because we are in Christ and paid the penalty for our sins. He is the propitiation for our sins meaning he is the one who has satisfied or placated the divine wrath of God upon sin, the wrath that we should have borne, that Christ bore for us.

²¹ Romans 6:23.

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So therefore when we sin, our sins are now laid upon Christ who bore them in his body on the cross. It is an amazing thing, is it not? He takes our sin and gives us his righteousness.

You will recall in the Old Testament an amazing picture all of this. The high priest of Israel would go into the holy of holies representing the 12 tribes of Israel. He would do this once a year on the day of atonement to make atonement for the sins of the people and to intercede on behalf of their sins.

And, of course, all of that was a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest that goes before the Father and makes intercession on behalf of all those that the Father has given him. We see that described in great detail in Hebrews chapter seven.

In fact, I would add that picturing the Savior bearing my sins specifically my sins the ones with my name on it, bearing my sins in his body, combined with the picture of him interceding on my behalf is undoubtedly the greatest deterrent to sin in my life.

But secondly, we not only have been forever freed from the penalty of sin, but also from its tyrannical power. We have studied this in great detail. But Paul is going to go on to explain that one of the reasons for this is because of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

Now, in our unredeemed humanness we will still sin from time to time. But sin will no longer enslave us. It will no longer dominate our life.

You see, you cannot separate justification from sanctification. They go hand in hand.

Hendrickson had it right when he said, quote, “No condemnation implies both pardon and purification.”

And Calvin also said, quote, “As Christ cannot be divided, so also these two blessings which we receive together in him are also inseparable.”

So as believers we can rejoice knowing that there is no condemnation meaning that there is freedom not only from the penalty of sin but also from its enslaving power.

Now no condemnation is not synonymous with no consequences. All right? Make sure you understand that. Paul tells us in Galatians 6:7:

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”²²

Scriptures make it clear that we can in our sin grieve the Holy Spirit. We can quench the Holy Spirit. It can lead to divine chastening.

²² Galatians 6:7.

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Hebrews 12 verse six describes how that those that the Lord loves he disciplines and he scourges every son whom he receives and so forth.

Unrepentant sin can lead to being totally ostracized from the fellowship of a church.

1 Corinthians five we read of one who was to be handed over to Satan because of sin for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. So, indeed, sin is not without consequences. But for the believer it will never result in eternal condemnation. Why? Because we are hidden in Christ. We are in Christ. We have been justified.

Therefore Paul will go on to say in verse 31 of chapter eight:

“If God is for us, who is against us?”²³

And verse 33.

“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies.”²⁴

The point is there is no higher court of appeal.

Oh, dear Christian, what a marvelous thing it is to be in Christ. First of all, there is no condemnation. Secondly, we have new life in the Spirit. And this is another benefit of justification.

Notice verse two.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”²⁵

You know, I would imagine that when Paul read this to those early saints sitting around those porticoes in Rome, I am sure that they had to have started clapping at this point. When they heard this:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”²⁶

Hallelujah.

Remember in chapter seven verse 14 Paul acknowledged that he was:

²³ Romans 8:31.

²⁴ Romans 8:33.

²⁵ Romans 8:2.

²⁶ Ibid.

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“... of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.”²⁷

Well, that is a sad thing. We all understand that. But here he can joyfully add that because I am in Christ the law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death.

You see, again, we must remember that although sin remains it no longer reigns. A very simple way of remembering that. Although we cannot live a sinless life, we have been liberated from the power of sin and the dominion of Satan.

It is amazing, isn't it? Because we are in Christ we possess the divine life of God's own Spirit.

Here Paul describes it in verse two.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...”²⁸

The law refers to a divine principle of operation, the law of the Spirit. This is speaking of a ruling force now within our life. It is now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Now may I remind you as Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is the one that imparts both physical as well as spiritual life.

Jesus said in John 6:63 that:

“It is the Spirit that gives life.”²⁹

We also read in John three where Jesus said that every believer is born of the Spirit.

You see, it is the Holy Spirit that is the supernatural agent of regeneration as well as renewal.

Titus 3:5.

And later in Romans eight and verse nine Paul is going to make it clear that the Spirit of God dwells in every believer. He says:

“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”³⁰

When we get there, we will understand more of how foolish it is to say that we need to try to seek the Spirit.

²⁷ Romans 7:14.

²⁸ Romans 8:2.

²⁹ John 6:63.

³⁰ Romans 8:9.

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If you don't have the Spirit, you are not saved. It is real simple.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit, according to Scripture, is opposed to the flesh. And there is only one antidote for this. It is walking by the Spirit. The flesh, of course, is the controlling principle of unbelievers. We grapple with it as well as believers, but according to Galatians 5:16 the antidote to the deeds of the flesh is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that dwells within those who are in Christ.

And because of that, because the Holy Spirit is dwelling within us, we can bear the fruit of the Spirit and on it goes.

So this is utterly astonishing.

Dear Christian, think of the incredible power source that you have within you. It is utterly astounding. It is no wonder that Paul will later go on to describe us as overwhelmingly conquerors. We are super invincible is the idea, upernikaw (hoop-er-nik-ah'-o). We are super conquerors. Why? Because we are in Christ. He is in us. The Holy Spirit is in us.

In Ephesians three Paul celebrate the power of the Spirit within us and in verse 16 he speaks about how that God has granted us:

“...according to the riches of His glory.”³¹

And he is praying that we would be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man.

“...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”³²

And then he can't contain himself. He goes on in verse 20 and he says that God:

“...is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”³³

Dear Christian, think of this the next time you feel defeated, the next time you want to throw in the towel, the next time you feel as though you just can't go on.

John Stott said it well. Quote, “Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit. That is to say, a life that is animated, sustained, directed and enriched by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit true Christian discipleship would be inconceivable. Indeed, impossible,” end quote.

³¹ Ephesians 3:16.

³² Ephesians 3:17.

³³ Ephesians 3:20.

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Now all you have to do is contrast life in the Spirit with unbelievers who do not have that, who live according to the law of sin.

I have been seeing on the news the occupy Wall Street mob which is basically for the most part a lot of drug crazed anarchists and communists and people wearing ridiculous hats and beating on drums like circus monkeys and committing all kinds of wickedness in private as well as in public. It is Romans one, isn't it? I mean, we just see that.

And then you see the politicians come out all dressed nice and they give you this air of integrity and wisdom and they, too, are as crooked as a barrel of snakes. And you see all kinds of examples of people that are just absolutely ruled by their lusts, the law of sin. The Holy Spirit is not within them.

And, beloved, that would be us if were it not for the grace of God. But my point is simply this. These people are acting according to the law that governs them. It is the law of sin. They have no indwelling spirit to convict them of sin and righteousness and judgment, nothing to help restrain their sin. But not so for the believer that enjoys the law of the Spirit operating within him.

Now notice how the inspired apostle goes on to describe two magnificent works of the Spirit in believers. At the end of verse two he says:

“[He] has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”³⁴

Now you will recall the old law that operated in us was the law of sin that leads to death. Paul spoke about that, for example, in Romans seven verse 23. But the new law is the one that operates in us, the law of the Spirit that leads not to death, but to life. Very simple contrast.

Oh, child of God, think of this. Think of the triumph we can now have over the corruption of sin. Think about the inward power of the Holy Spirit that brings blessing beyond all that we can ask or think. Think how all of this proves that we are, indeed, in Christ and we are thereby forever freed from condemnation.

The Holy Spirit does a second work. I would summarize it this way. He gives us the passion and power to live righteously. Not only has he set us free from the law of sin and death, but he gives us the passion and the power to live righteously. Notice verse three.

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.”³⁵

Now you will remember that the law could never justify nor sanctify, because it is impossible for us to obey it. The only thing it could do and the only thing it does is

³⁴ Romans 8:2.

³⁵ Romans 8:3.

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expose our sin and incite us to further rebellion. Ultimately the law of God condemned the whole human race and placed us all under God's curse.

This is why the gospel is such incredibly good news. This is why we should never trivialize the gospel of God by distorting it or watering it down. But what the law could not do, namely save men, God himself did. How did he do it? He sent his Son to be our substitute. He became the perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice of a holy God. He became, as Paul says here, an offering for sin. Said differently, he took upon himself our condemnation.

Why? Verse four.

“...in order that the requirement of the Law...”³⁶

Here referring to God's divine law, the Mosaic law.

“...in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”³⁷

Here is why I would say the Holy Spirit is the one that gives us the passion as well as the power to live righteously.

Notice he says we no longer walk according to the flesh. To walk means to manifest the lifestyle, to have a bent in our life. We no longer walk according to the flesh. Instead, we walk according to the Spirit. It is the indwelling Spirit of God that becomes the controlling influence of our life. And the more we respond to him, the more we bear the fruit of the Spirit.

I would like to think of this way. If I can give you an illustration to somehow summarize some of these truths. As sinners utterly dead in our trespasses and sins, completely unable to see the depth of our wickedness, the glory of God, God comes along and he gives us spiritual eyes. And in that conviction he brings us into a courtroom and in that courtroom we come before him and we cry out to him in confession and repentance. And because he has helped us see it, we cry out to him. “Yes, Lord, indeed, I have violated your law. There is nothing I can do to save myself. I cast myself solely upon the mercy of this court. I plead with you for grace.”

And what does the judge do? He grants not only pardon, he not only says, “You are forgiven,” but he does something far greater than that. He says, “I also want to place you in Christ. I want to clothe you with the righteousness of my dear Son. I want to impute and impart the righteousness of Christ.” And therein is our justification.

But when we leave that courtroom, we are forever changed. Something radical has happened here. We are different than the way we were when we first entered it because

³⁶ Romans 8:4.

³⁷ Ibid.

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at that moment before the judge, he hid us in Christ and the Spirit of God came to dwell within us so that we are now able to fulfill the very law that was once impossible to obey. The law is, therefore in some inscrutable way realized in us. The bent of our life goes in a different direction. We are a new creature in Christ. The old things pass away. Behold, the new things come.

And you see this radical transformation that grows more and more as the Spirit of God sanctifies us and makes us more like the living Christ.

And wherever we fail, wherever we violate the law as we will, the good news is that the demands of the law are already met in Christ in whom we now exist.

Some will say, "Oh, I want to experience more of the power of the Spirit of God that dwells within me."

Oh, amen to that. I do, too. And God has told us how. And that is we must walk by the Spirit, Galatians five verse 16.

And when you walk by the Spirit what is going to happen? You will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? It means to surrender yourself to the Spirit of God as he has revealed himself to us in his Word. And as we strive by his power to live obedient lives, we experience that power of the Spirit. We experience the joy and the blessing of being in Christ.

Oh, what a marvel it is. Amen? What a marvelous thing.

May I challenge you to make it a habit of your life to set aside time every day, to set aside time that is unhurried, time that is uninterrupted where you can meditate upon these great truths, the great truths of the gospel.

Beloved, we need to need to daily get lost in the marvel of what it means to be in Christ. To put it real practically, I would encourage you to spend at least 30 minutes a day. That is not much, just 30 minutes where you have your secret closet and this is what you focus on. The gospel and all of its implications. Let them animate your worship and your prayers. Think about them as you read the Word and pray the Word. And if you will do that, you will find that you will emerge from your secret place with a heart that is absolutely overflowing with thanksgiving, with a heart that is alive with power.

Your soul will literally explode with adoring praise and you will be able to express the same kind of doxology that the apostle Paul expressed at the end of chapter 11.

He is going to go on and on talking about these things and finally he is just going to utterly erupt with praise and he is going to say:

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“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”³⁸

Let's pray together.

Father, may these eternal truths so impact our lives as to change us forever from this day forward. Lord, may we become a people that spend much time in meditation and prayer, that our praise and our worship might be more complete, that we might experience the love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the power of his Spirit. Lord, give us spiritual power and blessing that we might be ambassadors of the good news of the gospel of grace. Lord, thank you for placing us in Christ. And for those that know nothing of this, oh God, would you be pleased to overwhelm them with conviction this day that today would be the day that they come before you and confess their sin and repent and experience the miracle of the new birth. We pray it all in the precious name of the one who saved us by his grace. Amen.

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³⁸ Romans 11:33.