

**Victorious Living 6-10-01**  
Romans 8:1-16

This congregation grows every week as people from around the world sign up for these weekly messages via the internet. We have been wondering how we can reach out to share with more people and God has opened a door we weren't really considering. And you (the house church fellowship) are a part of that ministry as the messages each week come about through our sharing with each other what the Lord is doing in our lives. Having the people on the web gives me a different perspective and has intensified my desire to really hear from the Lord for the direction of the message.

I can get bogged down in wanting to see a greater affect on this town. By that I mean wanting to see more ministry that affects this city. But I know that God is the One that has the timing and the ministry assignments are from His hand. We should never underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit throughout this city, in individual hearts. We must remember that success is being faithful to obey God's leading today and leave the method and timing to God. Then we will see fruit that remains. Who would have ever guessed the web site ministry would grow so rapidly? We have no idea how it happened but we do know Who made it happen. We have to let go of the ways of man so that we can walk in the ways of God. That is living by faith and not by a formula. As we read in Isaiah 55 last week, "Listen, listen to me...Give ear and come to me, hear me, that your soul may live".

We began the Servant Songs from Isaiah but again this week I sense the Lord is leading us in a different direction. Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. This is one of those highlight chapters that is worth your time to memorize. It hits such high notes and so brilliantly that we go back to it again and again. You'll recall that in chapter 7 Paul shared his struggle of the yo-yo life – striving to do good and failing. It is the kind of life full of good intentions and even more of bad actions. He cries out in despair, "who can deliver me from this sinful nature?" And then He thanks God through Jesus that he is being delivered from a system of laws he couldn't keep. That is where chapter 8 starts.

Some Christians have never discovered the wonderful truth of what Christ has done for them. They want to please Him by doing a list of things: read their Bible daily, pray, witness to non-believers, never curse, prefer others, and the list goes on and on. Those are good things. But just like the Apostle Paul, we find we can't live up to our good intentions.

And so chapter 8 begins: 1. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

If I am in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation for me. Now to Paul, this was a very clear idea- being IN Christ. He believed that if you counted yourself dead with Christ on the cross – if you place your old nature there with Him in death, that you will be raised with Christ. Your new life will be a life of resurrected power, the life of the Son of God. And so He says, "For

me to live is Christ..." and "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me". And I live in Him and so we are free of condemnation. His perfect life is pleasing to the Father. He returns to that note later in the chapter when He says, <sup>34</sup> "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." And how will He condemn us when He has given us his righteousness?

It is not that we have arrived at some state of sinless perfection, or have no more temptations; we just know that when the Father looks upon us He sees the work of his Son. When we stumble, He is there to teach us through it. What Father would yell at his baby for stumbling as it was learning to walk? Instead He picks us up, points out what it was we stumbled over and encourages us to go again. That is living free of condemnation. Satan will try to accuse you and tell you that you are not saved, that you are too poor an example, and on and on. Don't listen to Him! Your Father accepted the work of His Son in your place. If that isn't enough then God failed, and we know that He cannot fail.

We are no longer under condemnation because we are no longer rebels. We are in His army. We were the servants of sin, but we mutinied and joined the Lord's army. Every soldier isn't perfect and some don't understand every order perfectly but we are on his side. That was a work of his grace that brought us here but don't get confused about the issue. You are the Lord's. When you stumble He will correct and teach you, not condemn you. Don't condemn yourself. See who you are in Him.

Each of these verses is so rich and full we could spend the morning on any one of them, but we are going to try to see the flow of the first section of this chapter. Verse 2 says that through Christ, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. You know the wages of sin is death. The soul that sins must die. Sin is rebellion against a holy and just God. The punishment for treason is death. That is fair and just. But Paul found a different law – one that he called the law of the Spirit of life. What is that? The Spirit gives life – the letter kills. And Paul says the last Adam – Jesus – is a life giving Spirit. In Him is life. That is the same thought as the first verse – in Christ we aren't condemned – we are alive to God and freed from the bondage of the law. In Galatians Paul compares the law to the bondage in Egypt. It enslaves – and drives you to produce. But in the Spirit of life our actions are motivated by a heart that is in a loving relationship with the One who lives in us. So we are free from enslavement to the Law. We please him not because we have to obey rules but because we share his heart.

Verse 3 – The Law couldn't do it – couldn't bring about a loving interactive relationship. Imagine a marriage where the wife's relationship to the husband was obedience to all the rules he made for her. She'll never please him because she doesn't share his heart. How frustrating that relationship would be. You see, the sinful nature within us destined us to failure. So God did the only thing that could be done and that was the incarnation. He took our likeness and died in our place – the sin offering. I like the way the NLT ends that verse: "God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins."

Verse 4 And so the righteousness of the Law is met – He met it for us and we live in Him. We don't live to serve the sinful nature like a slave, any longer. We are freed to live according

to – or following after – The Spirit. We have a new guide, master, and director. He is the One who wrote the Law. If we live by following Him how will we break the Law? Our legal system always tries to find the intent of the founding fathers. If one of them could come and live in us we would know his intent. There would be no question as to which way he believed. That is how it is with the Spirit. As He lives in us we know the intent of the Law.

God sent his Son vs3 so ... in order that... It sounds like the reason for Jesus coming was so that we could live according to the Spirit, which would meet the righteousness required by the Law. We tend to look at Jesus coming in a sense that he saved us from hell. That is half of salvation. He saved us from our sinful nature we were enslaved to so that we could be led by the Spirit and really know Life, right here right now. By that I again mean to share His heart – desire his desires – and know the intentions of the Spirit.

Romans 8:5-8 (NIV)<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.<sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by (set on (NRSV)) the Spirit is life and peace;<sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by (set on (NRSV)) the sinful nature cannot please God.

Now he points out how to tell which nature you are living in. If you are still living by the direction of the sinful nature your mind will always be on those things that it desires. But if your mind is set –fixed upon – the things of the Spirit you live in accordance with the Spirit – in Him – at his direction. What is your mind set on? The mind of sinful man is death because the wages of sin is death. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. If you dwell on rebellion against God – death is your just sentence. But if your mind is controlled by the Spirit you will reap life and peace.

The sinful mind lives in hostility toward God. It dwells on temporal gratification at the expense of anyone and even your own well being. It can't surrender to the leading of the Spirit for our own good. It is self- centered and God's first two rules are God centered and in actions of love toward others. The old nature just can't do that.

Romans 8:9-11 (NIV) <sup>9</sup> You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Verse 9 Tells us that if the Spirit of God lives in us the sinful nature no longer controls us. If Christ is in you, you died with Him on the cross – the old nature got crucified. But your spirit has come to life because you received the righteousness of Christ when you rose to new life in Him. He gives LIFE – to our mortal bodies – remember He is the life giving Spirit – we have the law of the Spirit of life. That life comes through His Spirit that lives in us. Paul is making it very plain. Either you are in dead to the sinful nature and made alive by the Spirit desiring his will, thoughts controlled by the Spirit, pleasing to God OR you are controlled by the sinful nature, living in death, not belonging to God. There is no in between.

Christians often think they are in between because they stumble and fall. Paul is not saying you are instantly mature, you are that little baby learning to walk. But you are a son! Remember whose child you are. Know you don't have to sin. We give in, miss the mark, but who is the Father looking at? The One in whom He is well pleased – who lives in you. Get up, dust yourself off, learn the lesson and next time let Jesus in you answer that temptation. You've heard about the guy who said, "When temptation comes knocking, I tell Jesus to get the door, it's for Him."

Verse 11 is a wonderful promise. The Spirit gives life (the life of Jesus) to these physical, mortal bodies! Our bodies can manifest the life of the Son of God. Listen to 2 Cor 4:10-11 (NIV).<sup>10</sup> We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.<sup>11</sup> For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

What an awesome truth! If we carry around the death to sin – the crucifixion of our old nature – dying daily – the life of Jesus through our physical bodies is seen by those we minister to. What an opportunity to touch the world. Let Jesus touch the world around you – in and through you. Grasp the reality of this clear truth of Scripture. That is what the gifts are, Christ in you. It is his fruit that you exhibit. It is His life that your gift expresses. Find the calling of Christ in your life and let the world see Him as you express it.

Romans 8:12-14 (NIV)<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,<sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

So because He has done this wonderful thing for us – liberated us from the slavery of sin, come to live in and through us – given us life in place of death, we are obligated – not to live any more under the slavery of the sinful nature. Do that and you reap death. But if – by the Spirit – you put to death the misdeeds of the body – you will live. That interjection of 'by the Spirit' is so important. If it is not by the Spirit, you end up back under the Law of sin and death. Paul sees us continually placing that nature there on the cross. Gal 5:24 (NIV)<sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Col 3:5 (NIV)<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.<sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

And verse 14 tells us the tell tale sign of a son of God – we are led by the Spirit. He leads us to live in a way that expresses His very nature, His very life. The fruits of peace, joy, love, patience, gentleness, kindness, flow in our interactions with mankind.

Romans 8:15-16 (NIV)<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

In Christ we have a different spirit. It is not one that is a slave of fear. We don't cringe at impending judgement of our shortfalls, for we are in the Judge and living as his children. He has made us his own children and so we have that wonderful relationship in which we can call out to our Daddy and know we are accepted and loved. The Spirit living within us tells us this is true. What a peace we should have knowing God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth – is our Father. The world is desperate to know it is loved and accepted. We see sad stories around the globe of people desperate to know they are loved and accepted. And IN Christ, we know we have found that very thing.

We are going to pick this back up next week from verse 17. Let me summarize what this passage is saying so we can take it home and chew on it. We need to revel in the truth of this and see it in our daily lives. In Christ Jesus our Daddy – God – is pleased with us (because He sees the work of his Son). We don't focus on rules we never could keep because Christ did that for us. Instead He lives in us and shares his thoughts and ways with us. We share our hearts. We are no longer slave to that sinful nature – we put it on the cross. Without the battle of dos and don'ts, we live out the life of Christ who lives in us. People see Jesus in us as we live in the leading of His Spirit. I've gone from being God's enemy, condemned to death, to being his son overflowing with his life.

We need to know who we are in Christ. We need to realize our obligation to continue to put to death that old nature and let the life of Christ be revealed through us to a needy world. Take time to consider how He does that through you. Give Him all the glory for it. Let the river of life flow through you to a thirsty world. Let them see Jesus in you!