

Series: The Reign of Grace  
Today's Message: You, However, Are in the Spirit  
Jeff Kennedy / Oct 30, 2022

Romans 8:9–11 “You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.”

**Introduction: I have a friend who is missing his arms and his legs and bound to a motorized wheelchair.** He lost his limbs because he used to own a Billboard company and one of the tools they would use to change out messages on billboards was a long metal rod. Normally, he was a safety freak, but one day he was in a hurry and he got careless. He didn't see the powerline right above him, he went up on the scaffolding with the metal rod and when he hit that powerline it literally blew his legs and arms off. I remember sitting and asking him about the experience and how a person could even survive it. He said to me, “It's a miracle that God allowed me to live through that. *I'm not angry at God and I'm not angry at the power company or even the situation—it is what it is and this is my new reality.*”

***Power is normally a good thing.*** When disaster strikes and we suddenly find ourselves without power for a week or more we quickly learn its value.

But raw, scorching, knocking on your backside power can also be deadly.

The same fire that warms us can burn our houses down.

The same electricity that powers our homes can cause untold damage.

**Transition:** We must make no mistake about it—the subject of Romans 8 is the difference that God's Holy Spirit makes in the life of the believer and the church—the Spirit is ***God's power to enable us to live a sanctified, holy, joyous, abundant life in Jesus.***

But we must understand that we are not here dealing with a mere power *source*, voltage or currents of power measured in watts. We are here dealing with God's very Spirit who has now invaded the Christian life with his transforming presence.

**Main Idea Today:** Paul is going to tell us how it is that we can walk in the newness of life—that the law's requirements are fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit. In today's message we're going to see three things in verses 1–13: (1) The Reality of our Christian freedom; (2) The Reason for that freedom; (3) The Results of our freedom; (4) and next week we'll

look at the Response to the liberty that we have experienced in Christ. To this point, Paul has only mentioned the Holy Spirit four times (Romans 1, 2, 5, 7). But Paul uses the word “Spirit” 20 times in chapter 8 alone. Who is the Spirit? Is he a mere power source or a person?

**I. The Holy Spirit is God.** Remember our working definition for God a few weeks ago—***God is the infinite, personal, creator of the Universe.*** God transcends the created order in that he is eternal, uncreated and uncaused, possessing all the attributes of deity and personhood. Now, if the Spirit is God then the Spirit must equally possess all of those essential attributes.

- **The Spirit’s Attributes of Personhood:**

- the capacity for love and compassion—Romans 15:30 “the love of the Spirit”
- expresses comfort and advocacy—John 14:16-17, 16:7-15 “another Counselor”
- communicates and speaks—Acts 13:2 “the Holy Spirit said”
- intervenes on behalf of believers—Romans 8:26 “the Spirit also helps us... the Spirit himself intercedes”
- emotional states such as being grieved or bringing joy—Ephesians 4:30 “don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit”; Romans 14:17 “for the kingdom of God is...joy in the Holy Spirit”
- as the object of betrayal or deceit—Acts 5:3 “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?”
- the object of human blasphemy—Matt 12:31-32 “blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”

**Illus. It’s been a few weeks since hurricane Ian brought unimaginable devastation to the Gulf coastal towns and islands of Florida.** For those who lived on those coastal towns hit the hardest, who’ve literally lost everything—no flood insurance, no hurricane insurance—there has been an ***exceeding sadness*** which has ***morphed into intense anger*** at people in the halls of Florida’s government and there has been anger at those who live inland toward the beach house communities because they don’t want to keep spending their tax dollars to rebuild these island and coastal homes. Politicians are furious, at each other’s throats and there’s lots of blame going around in an election year.

***But no one is angry at the storm itself.*** Why? Because it's just weather. A killer hurricane just is a force of nature that does not possess a will or intention and therefore cannot express malevolence or mercy. 150 mile an hour winds and surging waves cannot be appealed to, assuaged, or bargained with because it's just an impersonal force of nature.

People who crash in airplanes cannot be angry with gravity.

People who suffer loss at the hands of the elements cannot take those elements to court and seek justice for wrongdoing—or appeal to nature's conscience because the world and the cosmological constants and forces that govern it are just *stuff*—inanimate, impersonal, indifferent, dispassionate *material stuff*.

But the Holy Spirit of God is a person—with all the attributes of personhood, all the faculties of a mind with a will, expressing love, speaking the truth, advocating for believers, capable of being offended by our sin and insulted by our rebellion. ***Folks, we are clearly dealing with a person here when we talk about the Holy Spirit.***

But remember, we said, God is by definition the *infinite, personal, uncaused creator of the universe*.

• **The Spirit's Attributes of Divinity:** These are the qualities or characteristics that qualify Him to be equal with God.

The Scripture clearly affirms:

- His knowledge of God's mind—1 Corinthians 2:11 “No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God”
- His eternal nature—Hebrews 9:14 “through the eternal Spirit?”
- His agency in creation (Genesis 1:1–2) Psalm 104:30 “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created”
- His agency in giving life—John 6:63 “The Spirit gives life”; 2 Corinthians 3:6 “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”
- He is the Lord—2 Corinthians 3:17-18 “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”
- God's essential nature is Spirit—John 4:24 “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”
- When Yahweh speaks the Spirit speaks

We must understand that when Paul tells us here, in Romans 8 about this new reality that the Christian lives in which is life in the Spirit vs. being in the realm or under the dominion of the flesh, we are talking about the third person of the Trinity—God the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at what God's Spirit now does in the life of the believer.

## II. The Holy Spirit is God's Transforming Presence.

**1. The reality of our freedom (8:1–2).** “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

**What is the believer's new reality?** If Chapter 6 describes our new reality?

**8:1a “Therefore, there is now...”**—Paul continues his contrast between “that was then but this is now.” In light of the aforementioned dilemma of knowing the law, delighting in it, unable to keep it, and put to death by sin which weaponizes the law against us to enslave us in our minds to the law, and enslave us to sin in our flesh...how does God resolve this dilemma?

**8:1b “no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”**—he reminds us how he started this book—the opposite of justification is judicial condemnation in God's court.

And the believer in Christ is no longer condemned—***there is NO condemnation—not a hint, not even a shadow of possibility*** that the believer who has justifying faith, who has been united with Christ in Spirit baptism—died to sin and the law and raised to life in the Spirit—there is no sense in which that believer is or will be condemned before the bar of God's justice.

**8:2 “because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.”** The new law overrides the old law. **Illus. An unjust law is a legal code that is not consistent with the moral law of God. The evil and injustice of “Black Code” which later became Jim Crow laws, which institutionalized post-Civil War system of indentured servitude and oppression were eventually overturned and ruled illegal by The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.** One set of laws had to be overturned in favor of laws that supplied a guarantee of freedom, fairness, and equality.

**Paul is here telling us that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**—overturns and nullifies the law of sin and death. God's decree that those who sin will die is now reversed for those who believe. He calls this “the law of the Spirit.”

**So the believer must now live in this new reality of freedom in Christ Jesus.**

**Paul then recounts...**

**2. The reason for our freedom (8:3–4a).** “For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, <sup>4</sup> in order that the law’s requirement would be fulfilled in us”

**8:3a For what the law could not do...**This is what scholar Doug Moo calls, “a tidy summary of the basic message of Romans 7.” Despite its origins in a good God, the good and spiritual law could not rescue us from captivity to the flesh. Again, we said that the law only had the ability to diagnose our condition of unrighteousness before God and exacerbate the problem by becoming an instrument through which sin worked to bring death to us.

Remember Romans 7:10 “The **commandment** that was meant for life resulted in death for me.”

Galatians 3:21 “For if the **law** had been granted with the **ability to give life**, then righteousness would certainly be on the basis of the law.” The law by itself simply lacked the potential or the capacity to deliver life to the dead. This is why we need the Spirit. Our new reality is life in the Spirit in place of the law of sin and death.

So how did God do what the law could not?

**8:3b-4a He condemned sin in the flesh...**

- By sending his own Son in the likeness of human beings: The incarnation of Christ—the Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God. Whereas Adam was once our federal head, Jesus is now our new human representative before God. He is the last Adam, the new Israel, God’s new image-bearer succeeding where both Adam and Israel failed. A proper and fitting human representative.
- As a sin offering: Jesus atones for our sins as the spotless, sinless lamb of God whose sacrifice appeases God’s wrath toward sin, and expiates or discharges our guilt—offering us now a free pardon for sin and its judgment—death.
- v. 4a states that the law’s requirement would be fulfilled in us... Since we have been united with Christ in baptism, his obedience now becomes our obedience. The law required perfect, unerring compliance—and Jesus did just that. And if you are in Christ God sees his obedience when he looks at you.

**The reason why we enjoy freedom from condemnation is because God did something about our dilemma.**

Having recounted the reality of our freedom from sin's condemnation, the reason for our freedom he then summarizes...

### 3. The results of our freedom.

- A change in lifestyle: life in the Spirit vs. life in the flesh.  
Rom 8:4b in order that the law's righteous requirement might be met "in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." The word "walk" here can be taken metaphorically to describe a path taken. When Jesus says in John 8:12 "I am the light of the world! The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" he simply means a mode of living. The presence of the Spirit brings the ability to walk according to the Spirit's desires vs. those of the flesh.

#### **But this change in lifestyle is made possible by...**

- A change in mindset: setting our minds on Spiritual matters vs. worldly matters.  
Rom 8:5a–6 "For those who live according to the flesh have their **minds set** on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their **minds set** on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Now the **mindset** of the flesh is death, but the **mindset** of the Spirit is life and peace. The **mindset** of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so." The reason why a believer can live according to the Spirit's leading and direction is because their "mindset" has been changed.

**Remember how Paul began this book.** He painted a picture of human beings whose minds and thinking have become hopelessly corrupt and altogether worthless...

Romans 1:21, 28 "For though they **knew** God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their **thinking** became worthless, and their **senseless hearts were darkened...** <sup>28</sup> And because they did not **think** it worthwhile to **acknowledge** God, God delivered them over to a **corrupt mind** so that they do what is not right." We can see now that we've come full circle. The idolatrous sinner who refuses to acknowledge God's existence or show gratitude for creation is given over to a depraved mind and a darkened heart—resulting in a worthless thoughtlife.

***Now, the believer who has been set free from this hopeless state has a new mind set on things of the Spirit.*** Able to worship rightly, see the truth for what it is, and dwell on whatever is pure, lovely, praiseworthy—now empowered by the Spirit to think on these things.

**This change in mindset is due to...**

- A change in our position: in the realm/dominion of the Spirit vs. the dominion of the flesh.  
Rom 8:8–11 “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.” As we argued last week—the believer has now gone from the enslavement to sin under the dominion or in the realm of the flesh, and is now positionally in the realm or in the domain of the Kingdom of God by the Spirit.

**Illus. Driving your rental van from South Minneapolis to the inland Northwest is an experience in extremes, especially mid-summer.** I can’t imagine pioneers in wagon trains making that long, punishing trek. The trip begins in the muggy and sweltering Lakeland of central Minnesota, moving eventually into the barren and dusty flatlands of South Dakota that seem to go on and on as the vast horizon stretches out before you; miles of hot pavement pass under your wheels—and there is absolutely nothing to see except the occasional bent tree and abandoned shack tilted in the direction of South Dakota’s unrelenting wind. It is, in a word, ***monotonous***.

By the time you reach the other side of South Dakota, your anticipation has been long nourished by hours of seeing nothing in all directions. You reach the other side of the state and finally see the Badland’s—magnificent in beauty—but still a picture of death and barrenness.

You know when you’ve arrived in Rapid City—it is unmistakable. You feel as though you have crossed into a different state. What awaits you is one of the nation’s most intriguing and fascinating monuments—Mount Rushmore. Groggy and eager and ready to be blown away you step up to the edge of the viewing area, and there they are—forever enshrined in stone:

Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt. You stand there for thirty minutes, warming in the sun and marveling at that feat of engineering.

But you have not yet arrived at your destination. As marvelous as it is to see green grass, and trees, and people and towns—you're not yet in the Pacific-inland Northwest. You press on driving through Montana over a spectacular mountain pass, at the bottom you begin to see all that the Northwest has to offer—clean, cold rivers, blue lakes, green mountains, sleepy little towns, and most of all, Wallace, ID where mom and dad live. You've made it to the promise land.

Paul's letter has taken us quite the journey—through some difficult terrain. It started in the arid flatlands and the spiritual badlands of our bondage to sin in Adam, along the way giving us glimpses of hope (Rom 3, 6) and leading us to the wilderness of Romans 7 painting a depressing picture of a life enslaved to the bondage of sin through mere knowledge of the law. And just as all hope began to fade, we arrive in Romans 8—the greatest chapter, in the greatest letter, in the greatest book ever given to man.

And we discovered that the God who made us, called us and loved us—has come by the Holy Spirit to invade our lives with his transforming presence. No longer condemned, we are set free from the law of sin which brings death. That God has done what his good law could never do—by sending his one and only Son in human form, to die in our place, not annulling the law or setting it aside, but fulfilling it. And this has resulted in a new reality—a change of lifestyle, walking according to the Spirit, a change of mindset, setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, and a change of position, we belong to Jesus not the world.

We made it to Mom's house. And life is different here in this new regime of Spirit-enabled sanctification and we're never going back.

Next week, we'll look at vv. 12–17—what is our response to our Christian freedom in Christ?

### **Communion/Worship Team**

This table is a family meal. We come now to the holy table of the Lord as Jesus instructed in saying “do this in remembrance of me.”



We remember all that Christ has done for us: That God demonstrates his love for us in this...

- He was sent into the world according to the promises made in the Old Testament.
- He was embodied in a human life—Jesus of Nazareth.
- He bore the wrath of God on our behalf, freeing us from everlasting death.
- He lived in perfect obedience to divine law and imparted to us his righteousness resulting in the promise of everlasting life.
- He took the curse of sin upon himself so that we would inherit God’s blessing apart from the demands of the law.
- He confirmed the new and eternal covenant of gracious reconciliation by the shedding of his blood and the affirmation that “It is finished” thereby inaugurating an enduring Kingdom that will never end.

Though the invitation of this meal is to all who believe, we cannot approach this table flippantly. Jesus Himself dismissed Judas from the table before instituting the ordinance. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that some in their community were sick and had died because they partook in an unworthy manner. It is good and right to self-reflect and see if we have, by our sin and selfishness, divided the body of Christ. If we have, let us turn to confession, repentance, and reconciliation with our brothers and sisters before we partake in the meal.

As symbolic of our unity as the family of God, we hold on to the communion elements until all have received and then we take them together. If you need a gluten free option please hold your hand up and an usher will bring one around to you.