The Spirit Takes Us from Sin to Righteousness
Romans 8:1-11
45-57

Tonight we return to our study of Romans chapter 8 and I would just invite you now to take your Bible. If you happen to come along without one, there ought to be one in back of the pew there. You can look around and see if you can't find one. And we're looking at Romans chapter 8, and the first part of that chapter, one of the great chapters in all of the Bible. And as we progress through the epistle to the Romans, we are being ever increasingly enriched by the glories of these tremendous truths.

Now as we enter into this part of the eighth chapter of Romans, the Holy Spirit's ministry comes into clear focus. In this chapter alone, the Holy Spirit is mentioned nearly 20 times. So this is really His chapter. And we've entitled it, "Life in the Spirit." The richness of the chapter, by the way, is beyond calculating. It's beyond, therefore, expression and I cannot find the words to give you all of the things that are here, or even all of the things that I feel. But as I read it over and over again, and as I meditate on it and think about it, I find myself moving along in an ever ascending kind of track that culminates ultimately in the peon of praise that concludes this incredible chapter. It sweeps you off your feet eventually and carries you away to glories in the very presence of God Himself. It is a monumental chapter and when read with an open heart and understood with an open mind can be incredibly enriching. And I really don't think that if you internalize the things that are here and if you meditate on them, you can ever be the same. I think it's a life-changing chapter as so many are in this tremendous epistle to the Romans.

Now it might be well to begin with something of an introduction about the Holy Spirit. If this is His chapter and if He is mentioned nearly 20 times and if He is to be the theme of it, we ought to understand a little bit about the Holy Spirit. And so that none of us in the dark about it, let me run by a little bit of what theologians call "pneumatology," or the study of the Spirit, just some general things to keep in mind.

First of all, a way to perceive the Holy Spirit that might help you is this: The Holy Spirit is to our spiritual lives what the creator is to the physical world. Without God, the creator, the physical world would not exist. And without His continuing sustaining upholding and preserving power, the world would crash out of existence. And similarly, in terms of the spiritual dimension, without the Holy Spirit we would never have been recreated. And without the sustaining preserving upholding power of the Holy Spirit, we too would crash back into the spiritual deadness from which we came. So the Spirit of God is the very agent by which we were given life and the very agent through whom that life is sustained. And also, the very agent who will, in the end, bring that life to full consummation in eternal glory.

Now mark it that the Holy Spirit is not an influence. The Holy Spirit is a person. We never refer to the Holy Spirit as "it." We always refer to the Holy Spirit as "He." And He is the third member of the

Godhead, equal to the Father, equal to the Son in deity and in personhood, personality.

If you study the Bible, for example, you will find that the Holy Spirit possesses mind, emotion, will. He knows the deep things of God. He loves the saints. He makes decisions. He speaks. He prays. He teaches. He guides. He commands. He fellowships. He comforts. He may be grieved. He may be quenched. He may be lied to. He may be tested. He may be resisted. He may be blasphemed. And all of these things indicate that He is indeed a person.

And when you look at the Bible, you find that He has all of the attributes that all the rest of the Trinity have. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is eternal, that He is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, holy, and glorious. The Bible calls Him God, Lord, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of the Lord God, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the living God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of His Son. And He is called the Comforter.

The Bible tells us that He was active in creation. That He indwelt certain people living in the Old Testament period for special empowering. That He convicts men, that He enables men to serve God, that He is the agent by which the Scriptures were written, that in the life of Christ, for example, He was involved in His birth, in His baptism, His temptation, His anointing, His teaching, His miracles, His death and His resurrection. That in the world, the Holy Spirit is involved in convicting men of sin, in calling men to Himself, and as well, calling men into service. He is involved in witnessing to the testimony of Christ. He is involved in regenerating or bringing about the new birth.

And the Bible tells us that in the case of the believer, the Holy Spirit is engaged in glorifying Christ in the life of a believer. He indwells the believer. He fills the believer. He imparts to the believer the fruit of the Spirit. He imparts to the believer the gifts of the Spirit. He seals, communes, fellowships with, teaches, prays, wars with the flesh, comforts, prays for, sanctifies, empowers for service. It goes on and on. In every sense, fulfilling the role of God in a very special way is the third person of the Trinity.

Now all of that just went by in about thirty seconds or so to give you a little bit of a feeling for who the Holy Spirit is as we enter this chapter. Now let me give you a little bit of the flow of where we are in Romans 8 so you can understand why Paul is writing what he's writing.

In the epistle to the Romans, Paul has one major theme and that major theme is justification by grace through faith based on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is saying, in effect, the only way for men to be right with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's plan of salvation. And he outlines that plan all the way through the epistle to the Romans. It is basically his great theme.

And so, as we come to chapter 8, we would note again that he is still talking on this same theme. And you remember that when he began to introduce to us salvation by grace through faith in chapter 3, he followed that introduction in 3 and 4 with a series of results of justification by faith. And we saw those in chapters 5, 6 and 7, various things that resulted from our being made righteous in Christ. And those are carefully laid out for us. Things like peace with God. Things like freedom from the law. Things like a new life, the death of the old, the resurrection of the new. All of those elements that are results of justification have been outlined for us.

Now as you come to chapter 8, you really come to a climactic point as he talks about the results of justification. And he begins the chapter in verse 1 by saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And that is the ... That's the high point. That's the great epitome of his expressions of the results of justification. Finally, and most magnanimously and most gloriously and most wonderfully, we will never be condemned. We will never experience condemnation for our sin because we are made righteous in Jesus Christ. And this is a marvelous, marvelous reality. The only way you can understand how marvelous it is to have no condemnation is to understand what it means to be condemned. And if you reach back in your memory and go back to our study of Romans 1:18 to 3:20, you might remember some glimpses of condemnation that are given there, to think of all that God had planned for those that rejected Him,, to think of the horrors of God's condemning judgment and then to understand that we have been delivered from that. Jonathan Edwards put it this way, "The wrath of God upon the wicked is just as intense as His love is to the saints." And when you understand that, then you can relish the reality of no condemnation.

So, the truth that opens this chapter, the great declaration that we are not condemned, is so incomprehensible that it's almost as if Paul can't just say it, he's got to spend a whole chapter laying out why this can be true. And the theme of chapter 8 really is that we are not condemned. You remember verse 1. It begins "no condemnation," and it ends that way as well. If you go over to verse 34: "Who is he that condemns?" And the answer is "no one," of course, because the highest court, God in Christ, does not condemn. Who is a higher court who would condemn us? So the chapter flows from the thought of no condemnation in the beginning, to the thought of no condemnation at the end. And in between, the apostle Paul wants to convince us that this can really be true. It would be hard for one who had understood that God was a God of wrath against sin, such as the Jews, to hear the apostle Paul say there's no condemnation and it's all by grace through faith, not of anything you've ever done or could do. That would be a monumental new truth to them. And so, Paul lays down some very strong statements about why it's true. And what he's saying is, it's true because of the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit. The reason there's no condemnation is because of what the Holy Spirit of God has done and is doing in our behalf.

So, when you come to Romans 8, it isn't just an isolated chapter that you can pull out and talk about the Holy Spirit. It's in the flow of the whole book. And it's teaching us that one of the results is no condemnation. And it's so incomprehensible that it is affirmed to us by the marvelous ministry of the Spirit of God. It's almost as if in chapters 3 to 7, Christ provides no condemnation and in chapter 8, the Holy Spirit confirms no condemnation. Great, great chapter.

Now, I want you to just think with me through this chapter in the next few weeks and I really believe that this is going to be one of the great experiences of our church family. I'm trying to capture in words all the things that flood my mind when I come to this chapter. And I know it's going to take me a while to get it all out. But when we're done I think we're going to have a tremendously enriching time. What is it that the Spirit of God does to confirm to us the reality of no condemnation? I'm just going to give you a little list. And you have an outline there, you can kind of look along and we'll be looking through that in the weeks ahead.

First, He frees us from sin and death. He enables us to fulfill the law. He changes our nature. He empowers us for victory. He confirms our adoption. He guarantees our glory. And He aids our prayers. And because He does all of that, the results are given in verses 28 to 39. The reason we can praise God, the reason we can glory in that tremendous crescendo and benediction at the end of the chapter is because of all these things that the Spirit does to confirm our no condemnation status

before God.

Let's remind ourselves of the first thing that He does. First of all, the reason we experience no condemnation is because the Holy Spirit has freed us from sin and death. Look at verse 2. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Now last week we went into that in detail as we looked at the first four verses. I only want to pick out this thought. The Spirit, verse 2, has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Now what does it mean when it says in verse 2, "the law of the Spirit of life"? That's the gospel, isn't it? The gospel is a law because it commands us to respond. It lays down a requisite for us and demands our adherence and obedience. And the law of the gospel of life in Christ Jesus that came to us through the Spirit has made us free from the law of sin and death. The reason we can never be condemned is because we've been set free from the law and its just punishment, which is death. We're free from that. Because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the regenerating work of the Spirit of God has set us free from sin's power, sin's authority, sin's dominion, sin's sovereignty, sin's mastery and ultimately even sin's penalty. So we'll never know the punishment of sin because we have been set free from that because of Jesus Christ. Great and marvelous truth.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of our salvation. He is the deliverer who takes us out of the dimension of sin, out of the dominion of sin which leads to death. He breaks, as it were, open the gates of sin. He snaps the bars of iniquity. He unlocks the chains of transgression and He opens to us the way of freedom and liberty and sets us free. And so, when you think of the Holy Spirit, beloved, bless His holy name because He set you free. He made you free from the consequence of your own sin. He made you free from the power and the mastery of sin so that you need not succumb to its power.

Now there's a second thing the Holy Spirit does, and we're going to hit the first two rather rapidly because we've already discussed verses 1 to 4. And that is He enables us to fulfill God's law. He enables us to fulfill God's law. Notice verse 4, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now when you were saved, you were freed from sin and death in the sense of sin's mastery and sin's dominion, not yet from sin's presence. There's still a battle there. But no longer does it dominate us and no longer will we pay the ultimate penalty for it, because that was paid in Jesus Christ and appropriated to us by our faith and the regenerating work of the Spirit of God.

Now when that happened, we then became those who walk in the Spirit, in the terms of verse 4 as you remember. And because we now walk in the Spirit, we are able to fulfill the righteousness of the law. St. Augustine said that "Saving grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." You remember we talked about righteousness; that God ultimately is calling out a righteous people, and the reason God saved you was to make you righteous, to give you the ability to do what is right, to please Him, to do His will. And when a soul is regenerated, there is produced in that soul the ability to fulfill God's holy law.

You see, fulfilling the law for a Christian is not some kind of painstaking conformity, it's not some kind of external behavior based on some code of ethics. It's not something that's out on the edge and the fringe of who we are. Christian holiness, righteousness, obedience for the believer, is not external at all but it's internal. It is the product of the Holy Spirit on the inside. And when we become a believer

and the Spirit takes up residence, He begins to produce in us the life of holiness so that a disobedient Christian has to fight against himself. He literally has to take effort to thwart the Spirit of God. It's like holding your breath; you find it a lot easier to breathe, frankly. And so it is in the life of the Christian that normalcy is to do that which the Spirit of God generates and you actually fight against the new creation when you are disobedient.

And so, the Spirit of God produces in us the capability and the capacity to fulfill God's holy law. What a marvelous work! God not only redeemed us transactionally and forensically, God not only declared us righteous, but then He planted His Spirit within us so the Spirit could produce the fruit of the Spirit which, first of all, is attitude: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. And then His action resulting from attitude, the action of doing that which is well pleasing to God. And so, because Christ has given us His Spirit, we can fulfill God's law.

Listen to the way Paul says the same thing in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto (What?) good works." You see, that is the purpose for redemption. We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. We were redeemed to live a holy life. We were redeemed to do that which was right.

Look at Titus 2:14 for another illustration. It says there that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, then this, "In order that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works." You see, again it says we were redeemed to produce good works; we were redeemed to do that which was right in the sight of God.

There's a very interesting passage and I would call it to your attention. Turn there in your Bible to Luke chapter 1 verse 72. Luke 1:72. And in verse 72 we had the mention of the Abrahamic Covenant and then verse 73 says, "The oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life."

You know, when God even called out His people Israel, He had in mind to produce a righteous nation, a holy people. And then it says in 76, "And thou, child," and here, of course, is the statement regarding John the Baptist, "shall be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace." Redeemed for righteousness, redeemed for peace, redeemed for a right relationship to God, redeemed for the outworking of God's law from the heart.

In Hebrews chapter 5, another illustration of the same principle in verse 8, it says: "Though He were a Son," that is Christ, “yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that (What?) obey Him." In other words, true believers are therefore characterized by what? Obedience, obedience, it is the mark. A true Christian manifests righteousness. A true Christian manifests obedience. A true Christian manifests good works because he is saved unto that end.

And so we say what the reformers said and what needs to be said again and again in our day, justification and sanctification are inseparable truths. Justification and sanctification are inseparable.

If you were redeemed, there is a manifest redemption in your living. Now it isn't all it ought to be. For that we wait to our glorification. But the resident Spirit is going to produce some evidence of the fulfilling of the law.

Listen to Ezekiel, chapter 11 verses 19 and 20, for an Old Testament perspective on this same truth. And here is a promise for the future, really. "I will give them one heart and I will put a new Spirit within you," the promise of the Holy Spirit, "and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them an heart of flesh." In other words, God's going to say the day is coming when on behalf of My people, I'll give them a new Spirit, the Holy Spirit. And here's the result. "That they may walk in My statutes and keep Mine ordinances and do them." That's the essence of why the Spirit of God comes to dwell in us, to produce in us the righteous behavior that God seeks from His creatures.

And by the way, the same statement is made again in Ezekiel 36, "A new heart also will I give You" verse 26, "a new Spirit will I put within you, take away the stony heart out of your flesh, give you a heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes to keep My ordinances and to do them."

So, redemption is unto obedience. Redemption is unto righteousness and the fulfilling of God's law. So when you think about the work of the Holy Spirit, you have to begin in chapter 8 by realizing this, that the Holy Spirit has by His work freed us from the law of sin and death so that we no longer are under the penalty of that law. Secondly, the Holy Spirit by His indwelling presence enables us to keep the law of God. And what a glorious reality that is.

And so we see two things there, don't we? That we are secure by the work of the Spirit of God against any future judgment, and we are even able now in the present to fulfill the law of God as we yield to the power of the Spirit of God within us.

Let's go to a third thing that the Spirit of God does to confirm to us our no condemnation status, and this is in verse 5 through 11, 5 through 11. The Holy Spirit changes our nature; the Holy Spirit changes our nature. This is just a tremendous truth. Now we'll make it very simple. Listen carefully. There are only two kinds of people in the world, just two, no more, no less, two kinds of people in the world. Let's meet them in verse 5: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." That's far enough.

Only two kinds of people in the world: the ones that are after the flesh and the ones that are after the Spirit. God never divides people by sex, neither male nor female, never divides them by culture or education, never divides them by class or race. The only way God divides people is by their relationship to Him. And here, in the terms of this passage, there are only two kinds of people, those that are minding the things of the flesh and those that are minding the things of the Spirit.

Now granted, there are degrees within each category. There are some people who are minding the things of the Spirit and aren't minding them as well as they ought to. And there are some things...some people who are minding the things of the flesh and on the outside at least doing a better job than others of behaving themselves. But while there are degrees within each category, the categories themselves are absolute...absolute.

David Brown said, "Men must be under the predominating influence of one or other of these two

principles, and according as one or other has the mastery will be the complexion of their life and the character of their actions. The bent of the thoughts, affections and pursuits is the only decisive test of character." End quote. Very important statement.

Now I want you to look at this a little more closely in verse 5. The first word is the word "for" and it links this verse to verse 4. In verse 4 at the end it said: "There are those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." So, you have the walkers after the flesh and the walkers after the Spirit. And now when you come into verse 5, you have the minders of the things of the flesh and the minders of the things of the Spirit.

Now in verse 4, mark this, behavior is stressed. The word "walk" has primarily to do with behavior, the outworking. But in verse 5, it isn't behavior that is stressed. What is stressed? Thinking, it's thinking that is stressed. And if you'll notice it says two things in verse 5. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit (do mind, we could imply) the things of the Spirit." So we're talking about thinking process. So you have behavior in verse 4, you have thinking in verse 5; you also have something else in verse 5: "For they that are after the flesh and they that are after the Spirit." That's nature. That's nature. "After" simply refers to the nature, "minding the things," the thinking, and "walking," the behavior. And so there's a real flow here.

The reason people walk after the Spirit is because they think about the things of the Spirit. And the reason they do that is because their life is set after the Spirit. The reason people walk in the flesh is because their mind is set toward the things of the flesh and it is so set because they are after the flesh. And you can even go a step further, if you want to, You could go down to verse 9 and find out that the problem is they're after the flesh because they're what? They're in the flesh. So you have the person's nature giving rise to their thinking patterns, or their bent, or their disposition, which issues finally in their behavior. Now that is the flow of Paul's thought, that the ability to fulfill God's law comes from proper thinking, and proper thinking comes from a new nature, a new nature. And so we say then that verses 5 to 11 emphasize that the Holy Spirit gives us a new nature. And from now on, we are after the Spirit and we are bent toward the things of the Spirit. Our bent is changed, our disposition is changed.

Now let me look into that a little more deeply. Let's start with the first phrase in verse 5, "For they that are after the flesh." The Greek literally says "the ones being according to the flesh," the ones whose very being is bent toward the flesh, the ones whose very being is carnal, fleshly. It is a description of the one who is dominated by the flesh, an unsaved person habitually controlled by, dominated by his humanness, dominated by his unredeemed flesh. He is depraved. He is unregenerate. And to be after the flesh is the same as being in the flesh, down in verse 8 and 9, same idea. Being after the flesh emphasizes the determining pattern. Being in the flesh emphasizes the conditioning sphere. But it really is the same thing. And people who are in the flesh or after the flesh simply are dominated by the human corruption, directed, controlled by sin.

Now when people are after the flesh or literally being according to the flesh, they do mind the things of the flesh, a very important statement. The word here "to mind" is a very interesting word, *phroneō*, *phroneō*. And you heard... You've heard about the word *nous*, maybe, in the Greek which is the real word for "mind." The word *nous* is the common word for "mind." This is not the normal word for "mind," that is, just the thinking process, just the brain and its function. This is a word that means "disposition," or "bent." It comes from a root, *phrēn*, which is used for the seat of all mental affections and faculties. It expresses the mental activity. It means to be disposed or bent toward. And so people

who are in the flesh and unredeemed, who then are after the flesh in terms of their determining patterns are bent toward the things of the flesh. It's the same as what you have in 1 John 2 where it says that the people who love the world are not of the Father, they're bent toward the world.

And by the way, it is the same word used in Philippians 2:5 when it says that: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And Jesus was...had a bent toward humility and we're to have a disposition toward humility as well. That's the... That's the usage of this term. And so, the word speaks then of a disposition, of a deliberate set mind in another direction than that toward God. And the unsaved person is bent toward the flesh, toward depravity. As a result of that, he seeks out the things of the flesh. What are the things of the flesh? All the stuff that's useless, all the passing things, all the garbage of the world. All the inconsequential things, all the material things, all the corrupting things, all the decaying things, all the things that are in no way, or in any sense, connected with the eternal kingdom of God. And so, that's the case with all unredeemed people. They are in the flesh so they are after the flesh. Because they're after the flesh, they're bent toward that and they chase the things of the flesh. That is a classic definition of a depraved person.

In 2 Peter, I was thinking of chapter 2 verses 9 and 10, it says: "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and reserve the unjust to the Day of Judgment to be punished." Then verse 10 says: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." And that's just another way of saying the same thing. These are people who just are bent that way and that's the way they walk. They pursue the flesh.

In Philippians chapter 3 verse 19, it says: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Philippians 3:19. They're bent toward earthly things. And may I suggest to you that sometimes that can even be false religion? When you see someone bent toward false religion that is equally the flesh. And so, we don't want to let them off the hook. And if you have a question about that, read Amos 4 and 5 and find out how God indicted the false religionists there.

Now, on the other hand, look at verse 5 and let's find out what the Spirit of God has done for us. "But they that are after the Spirit," we can imply are bent toward the things of the Spirit. Those of us who have been redeemed, who are after the Spirit, who are now in the Spirit, who are now walking in the Spirit, are bent toward the Spirit, and we find that the direction of our life is toward the Holy Spirit. He is our... He is our purpose. He is our goal. And the things that He holds dear and precious are the things that we seek. And that's why you find in Romans 7 that Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after my inward man," verse 22 of Romans 7. Because that's the characteristic and that's the thrust of a regenerate, redeemed man; his bent is toward the Spirit.

And now interestingly enough, even though our bent is there we sometimes get kind of fouled up along the way, don't we? And that's what Romans 7 taught us, that though that's my purpose and that's my goal and that's the deep and true longing of my heart, I get waylaid in the process because of the fact that I still have this human body and all that goes with it. And it causes me to be unable to fulfill the things that I would desire to fulfill, to do the things I would desire to do.

Well, what are the things of the Spirit? Well, if you read 1 Corinthians chapter 2, 1 think they're all there, at least in general terms. They're the deep things of God. First Corinthians 2 says: "The Spirit searches all things." What things? "The deep things of God." Great thought. And then verse 13, spiritual things. Spiritual things. And then verse 16, the mind of the Lord. The things of God, the mind

of God, the will of God, all those things that belong to the Holy Spirit.

Now some Greek writer has felt that these are both what are called "genitives of possession." That may be true that what it's saying is that unregenerate people have a mind possessed by the flesh and regenerate people have a mind or bent possessed by the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit. But this is a wonderful truth that we who have been redeemed have been given this new direction. We have a new nature. We're no longer going the way we were going. We're going now in the direction of the Spirit of God.

Now follow very carefully because what we're going to talk about now is going to give you some very clear understanding to some careful distinctions. Let's go to verse 6: "For to be fleshly minded," same word, sometimes translated “carnally,” to be fleshly minded, death. To be spiritually minded: life and peace. Now here we go a little more deeply into this concept of the distinction between those who go after the flesh and those who go after the Spirit. One, he says, is death and the other is life and peace.

Now I want you to notice something very, very carefully. It does not say in verse 6 that to be fleshly minded leads to death. It says to be fleshly minded is death. It doesn't say to be spiritually minded leads to life. It says to be spiritually minded is life. It is an equation, not a consequence. And the point is this, that a person who does not know God, who does not know Christ, who is bent toward the flesh, lives in a state of death. That's the point. They're dead. It's the same as Ephesians 2:1 and it says it just as clearly as it can possibly say it: "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins." To be without God, to be living in the flesh, after the flesh, bent toward the flesh, chasing the things of the flesh, walking in the flesh is to be dead. To be dead! And everything you do, the Bible says, is dead works. And the Scripture also very clearly says: "She that lives in pleasure is (What?) dead while she lives." So it is a spiritual kind of deadness, estrangement from God, the absence of the life of God in the soul. You have physical life but you don't have spiritual life. The life of God is not there.

In Isaiah 59, I think it's an interesting thing to look at verse 2: “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you that He will not hear." This is spiritual death, separation from God, isolation from God, unable to respond to God. And I've always felt that the best way to illustrate this is with a corpse. If you... I remember years ago when I had a funeral of a mother and a little baby. The baby had died and the mother had lived through an accident. And the mother kept reaching in the casket and picking the baby up and pressing that little lifeless form to her heart and crying. And no matter what she did she couldn't get any response because to be dead is to be unable to respond. And that was a graphic illustration to me of what it is to be spiritually dead. It is to be spoken to, it is to be directly hit with the truth of God, the tenderness of God, the love of God, the message of God, or whatever, and totally unable to react, spiritually dead. There will be no more reaction to the things of God out of such a person than a corpse would react to a pin stuck in it, dead. And that is the kind of death that Paul speaks about. So that people who are living in the flesh are dead. They cannot sense God. They are not alive to God.

Go back to Romans 7 and I'll show you this in verse 5. "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." You see, sin so dominated us that all it ever produced was death, death, death. And so, men and women without the Lord live in a state of death. But the point is, to be fleshly is to be dead, it's an equation.

Now look at the other side of it verse 6. "But to be spiritually minded equals life." Equals life. Now

beloved, listen. When we say the Spirit of God has changed our nature, He's taken us from being dead to being what? To being alive. Alive to what? Alive to God, alive to spiritual truth, alive to spiritual reality, to understand the things that the natural man could not understand in the terms of 1 Corinthians 2:14. Now we have partaken of life. And I just want you to see this so clearly that when a person is redeemed, the result is new life.

You aren't redeemed and then remain in the same deadness. Romans 6 said if we died with Christ we'll also what? Rise with Christ. And if we were buried with Him in His death, we will rise with Him in His resurrection and we will walk in what kind of life? Newness of life. So the Spirit of God has made us alive to God and all of a sudden God's world is sensitized to us and we can feel His love and we can sense His power and we can understand His Word and He moves and we understand His movement. We sense Him there because we have life.

And not only does he say we have life but we have peace. Not only are we aware that God is there but we also have a relationship with Him of peace. Whereas before He was our enemy, now He's our friend. Before we were at war with God and now He is our constant companion. Oh, what a thought it is. We have life. And in that life is sweet communion with God. His grace is bestowed upon us. His love is shed abroad in our hearts. We have joy forever. And we are at peace with Him for eternity. Great truth, great truth.

And so, the contrast, very clear: We're not in the flesh, we're in the Spirit. We don't mind the things of the flesh; we are bent toward the things of the Spirit. And so, we pursue the things of the Spirit and we walk in the Spirit.

Now you say, "But do we do that all the time?" No. No, but you see, before we never did it, never. Look at Galatians chapter 5 and it will give you the best perspective on the struggle. Galatians 5:17, and here's the position of a believer: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit." Now listen very carefully, I'm going to pick up something we've learned in the past. We have been given the Spirit; we've been given new life. We're no longer bent toward the flesh. But is the flesh still there? Yes it is. We are not — remember what I said — in the flesh but the flesh is in us. And when are we going to lose that? When we're glorified. But until then, we have a battle.

Now does an unsaved person have a battle? No battle. Why? Only one bent, only going one way. But now that we have the Spirit of God, the flesh lusts against the Spirit. And so, we have this struggle. Now if we want to win you can back up to verse 16, all we have to do is respond to the Spirit and not the flesh. And he goes on to talk about what the flesh wants to produce, all the gross things down through verse 21 and what the Spirit wants to produce in verses 22 to 24. And so he says in 25, if we live in the spirit, then it would be smart if we'd what? Walk in the Spirit.

So, we acknowledge that there will be a struggle because of our bodies, because of our humanness. Now go back to verse 18 of Romans 7 and let's pick up that same idea. In Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me." Where in you, Paul? "That is, in my flesh dwells no good thing."

So a believer, then, really has two parts, doesn't he? He has that new creation bent toward the things of the Spirit, but he's also got to deal with the flesh that remains in his humanness, which will not be eliminated until he leaves this mortal body. And Paul's terms are absolutely consistent. He always puts the sin in the mortal body, in the flesh, in the humanness, never in the new creation. So that

when we go to be with the Lord, it is not a question of transformation, it is a question really of subtraction. We lose the flesh, which frees the new creation bent toward the Spirit to serve the Spirit and only the Spirit forever.

Now let's look at verse 7. Now here's the reason that the flesh can't serve God. Here's the reason that the flesh can't mind the things of the Spirit. Here's the reason that the fleshly mind is dead. Now watch this. It is dead because it is enmity against God. Now, you see, if you're in opposition to God, you're dead, because God's a source of life and if you oppose God you have no life. So the fleshly mind is in opposition against God. It is not subject to the law of God, now watch this one, neither indeed can it be. This is a very, very important statement. The contrast is clear. You have an absolutely depraved person on the one hand; and on the other, a person who's bent toward the things of the Spirit who is able to have victory over his depravity in the power of the Spirit.

But look at this depraved person. He is in the flesh. He is after the flesh. He minds the things of the flesh. He walks in the flesh. He is dead. And the reason he’s dead is because he is in opposition to the one who alone can give life. And if you have enmity against God, you're going to be dead. And that's why he's saying, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, that's why he's dead.

But look at this. And because he's dead, he cannot be subject to the law of God under any circumstance. You say, "Well, what about when bad people do good things?" They aren't really good things, they're things that on the surface appear to be good and humanitarian. But unless they're done for the glory of God, they're not good. Unless they're done in response to the holy law of God, they're not good. And if people are not willing to come to God and to obey His law for His glory and His purpose, even the things that they happen to do that on the outside look good aren't truly good because the only good thing is that which is done for the glory of God, right? And well meaning men may do things on the surface that appear to be good, but if they're not done for the single purpose of the glory of God and because of a loving heart response to His holy law, they in themselves are not good. Only from a human viewpoint are they good.

Now I want you to notice something here. Opposition to God is deep seated. Verse 7 says, "The fleshly." And here we go back to this *phroneō* again, or this *phronēma*, this bent. "The fleshly mind is bent against God." It's in opposition to God. Now let me tell you something. Here, beloved, is the reason unbelievers don't obey the law of God: Because they're bent against Him. They're set against God. You see, the bent is deeper seated than the disobedience, you understand that? The disobedience is a superficial outworking of the bent and disposition of the mind.

So sin is not only an outward rebellion, it is an inward spirit of rebellion. And there's no way that it can be subject to the law of God. Now listen: No way that the flesh can be subject to the law of God, it can't be.

You say, "Well, I've been redeemed. Is my flesh now subject to the law of God?" No. No, your flesh didn't get redeemed. Are you ready for that? That's right. Your flesh did not get redeemed. If your flesh got redeemed when you were saved, you would be perfect. Right? Your flesh did not get redeemed. I don't think people understand this. You've still got unredeemed flesh. That's why we say that salvation has a future tense, right? And what is the future tense? I'll show you what it is. Look at verse 23 of Romans 8. In the middle of the verse: "...We groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, that is the redemption of our (What?) of our body." The flesh didn't get redeemed. Salvation doesn't redeem the flesh. This rebellious nature can't be changed.

You say, "What's got to happen to it?" You know what's got to happen? It's got to be exterminated. That's right. It has to be totally eliminated. It can't serve the law of God, the flesh can't do it. So, our humanness has to be eliminated. You say, "Well, wait a minute. I thought when we go to heaven we're going to get glorified bodies." That's right. We're not... We're going to get different ones than these, right? You better believe it. We're going to be redeemed in a body but it won't be this one. The only thing this one's good for is elimination. So when you're redeemed, there's a new creation plated...placed in you and you become one whole new creation. But, you still are in the flesh; you're in the body, the mortal body, your humanness. And that can't be redeemed. It has to be eliminated. That's why Paul even calls it the body of this death. It cannot be redeemed.

Verse 8, "So then, they that are in the flesh, can't please God." That's the utter inability to go with the utter depravity. They're evil. They can't be subject to the law of God. And they can't do anything in the flesh to please God.

Now that's how it is in life for people who don't know Christ, can't please God. And, you see, pleasing God is what we were made for, right? I mean, that's the... That's the *summum bonum* of all of creation. Pleasing God is what everyone was created for, that we should please God, that we should be to the praise of His glory. I mean, that's the reason for being. And if we can't please God, then we have forfeited the reason for our being and that's how it is to be without Jesus Christ, you see.

It is to be in the flesh, after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, walking in the flesh, unable to subject yourself to the law of God, in rebellion against God, and unable to do nothing to please Him. And then comes the sweet Spirit of God, and by the gospel of Jesus Christ, puts in us a new nature. And because we have received that new nature, that incorruptible seed, that divine nature, as Peter calls it, that new life principle, that new resurrection life, now we can please God.

And we, out of that new nature, can keep His law. And so we're not only saved from future deliverance...rather from future judgment, but we are also saved in a present sense from the power of sin over us, thanks to the marvelous ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now the flip side of this comes in verses 9 to 11. And this is where he turns the corner. Look what he says. "Ye are not in the flesh," and all of a sudden, we go from "they" to "ye." They, verse 5; ye, verse 9. Now he's talking to believers. He says you're not in the flesh. Isn't that good news? We're not in the flesh. We're not after the flesh. We're not bent toward the flesh. We're not walking in the flesh. We're not in opposition to God. We're not unable to do His law. We're not pleasing only ourselves. Nor we're not in the flesh, we're what? What does it say? We're in the Spirit. Now that is a definition of a Christian, beloved. You're in the Spirit. You're in the Spirit. He's given you a new nature. You live and move in Him. Oh what a great thought. "That which is born of the flesh is (What?) flesh," John 3:6. "That which is born of the Spirit is (What?) Spirit." We're Spirit. We've been born of the Spirit. We're no longer in the flesh. Oh yes, the flesh is still here, but we're not in it anymore. It isn't the controlling principle of our lives, it isn't the bent. It isn't the disposition.

And what is the proof of that? Look at verse 9. "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." That's the proof. If the Spirit dwells in you, you're not in the flesh, you're in the Spirit. What a great thought. You see, being in the Spirit isn't a question of profession, it isn't a question of reputation, it isn't a question of church attendance. Being in the Spirit is a question of having the Spirit in you. And oh, I love this,

"If so be that the Spirit of God dwell," that's *oikeō*, make His home in you, make His home in you. If the Spirit lives in you as His home, and He does in every believer. Do you know that? That's what he says. Look at the rest of verse 9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of His." So, if you're a Christian, you receive the Holy Spirit and if you receive the Holy Spirit, He makes His home in you. And if He makes His home in you, you're not in the flesh. 0 bless God that the Holy Spirit has done that. Taken us out of the sphere of the flesh and its death grip and put us in the sphere of the Spirit.

You know, we have to warn, I guess, on the other side, too, that anyone not having the Holy Spirit is none of Christ's. I mean, if your life isn't giving evidence of the power and presence of the Spirit of God, if there isn't a visible sign of the evidence of fulfilling God's righteous law, if there isn't a delight in your heart for His things, if there isn't a disposition and a bent toward the things of the Spirit and a desire to walk that way even though you fail all the time, if that isn't there, then the Spirit isn't there. If the Spirit isn't there, no matter what you claim you don't belong to Him.

And so, this is a call to self-examination, isn't it? Like 2 Corinthians 13:5, which says you better examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith. And what are you looking for? When people say to me, "I don't know if I'm a Christian," you know what I say to them? "Let me ask you this. Have you seen manifestations of the Holy Spirit in your life? Have you experienced the divine sense of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control? Have you seen that out of your life has come the fruit of righteousness? Have there been times when your heart just longed to commune with the living God? Have you had a love for the Word of God even though right now you may not be having that? Have you longed to commune in prayer? Has your heart ascended in praise to God? Can you remember times like that? If you can, those were produced by the Spirit of God and He's there, if they were ever there, even though there may not be those things right now because you may be behaving in a fleshly way."

In Romans chapter 7 verses 17 and 20, Paul says: "Sin that dwells in me." He uses that phrase twice. Sin that dwells in me. He's talking as a Christian. But we not only have sin that dwells in us, we have (What?) the Spirit that dwells in us also. Oh what a great thought.

Would you notice in verse 9 He's called the Spirit? He's called the Spirit of God and then He's called the Spirit of Christ. All of those names, and many others, but they tell us that He sustains the same relationship to the Father that He sustains to the Son. Perfect Trinitarian balance. He is Himself the Spirit. He stands alone. He is the Spirit of God, the first person of the Trinity. He is the Spirit of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Great thought.

And then verse 10, "If Christ be in you, the body's dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Oh that's so good. If Christ be in you... You've got this conflict, haven't you? The body is still what? Dead. The flesh doesn't get redeemed. The flesh is still going to die. You're still going to go to the grave. And that's why when you become a Christian you're not going to escape death. The body is still going to die. It ought to die. It's got to die. It needs to be eliminated. We've got to get rid of it. We can't drag it to heaven.

You say, "What about the people who are raptured?" Theirs is going to get changed on the way up. God is not letting any of this stuff into heaven. Please, God, don't let it in. That's the point. The body of death is going to go to death. This body is stained with Adam's sin and it'll die. And it will get disease and sickness and trial and all of that stuff. It's going to get weak and decay and finally die.

And that's as it ought to be because I just want to get rid of it. And so he says, here is the duality of the believer, verse 10, "If Christ is in you," and He's the same as the Spirit, you've got them both, and you've got God, too, and it comes all together, but if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin and you can't change that, it's going to die. "But the Spirit," and I think this is both your Holy Spirit...the Holy Spirit and your human spirit. It is the presence of the Spirit in that new nature that is going to live because of righteousness.

Whose righteousness? Yours? Christ's. Christ's. Bodily death is still the wages of Adam's sin. That's why Christians die. They die because the body has to die. But you want to know something? Your birth was a sadder event than your death. You understand that? Your birth was sadder than your death for a Christian. We're not going to be able to take these bodies up because they're unredeemable. We have to get new ones. And that's 1 Corinthians 15. Boy, we'll get into that later where he says this is one kind of body, and this is another kind of body. But wait till you see the kind of body you're going to get. It's a kind of body like you've never heard of. And it's all because verse 10 says "of righteousness." Oh what a thought, the righteousness of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul said in Philippians 3, "I counted all my own righteousness as manure that I might gain the righteousness of Christ."

So, though our bodies die, our spirit lives forever, the redeemed spirit, the new nature. And then finally, verse 11, just briefly ‘cause we'll pick it up in detail later on. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." Who is the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead? It's the Holy Spirit. Who is Him that raised up Jesus? Well, the Bible says in Romans 1 He was raised by the Father.

So it is the Spirit of God the Father. If He dwells in you, then He that raised Christ from the dead shall also what? "Give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.” It's a great truth. You see, we now have a spiritual resurrection and someday we're going to have even a bodily resurrection. And we're going to get glorified bodies. That's the promise. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, yes He does dwell in us, so we fit that "if". He does, and if He does, then He will give life to your mortal bodies. If He regenerated you spiritually, He'll give you physical regeneration, physical life, as well. Marvelous, marvelous truth.

What does the Holy Spirit do for us? Frees us from sin and death, enables us to fulfill God's law, and wonder of wonders, changes our nature so that we become all new on the inside and someday we'll become all new on the outside. What a blessed Spirit.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, this has been a wonderful, wonderful time of Bible study tonight. Hasn't really been a sermon, just been a Bible study and that's the way it ought to be. We don't need to be sermonized, we need to be taught. We don't need to hear men speak; we need to hear You speak. And You've spoken through the wonder of Your Word. And we praise Your Spirit. We praise the Son and we praise the Father for what You've done for us. Thank You, 0 God, for this blessed day where we've sensed Your Spirit moving among us. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for redeeming us.

Thank You, blessed Holy Spirit, for freeing us from sin and death, for enabling us to fulfill the law of God, for changing our nature. Thank You. And, 0 Lord, we know this is only the beginning, so much lies yet at our feet. And we do look for that day when we shall lose this vile body and we shall receive a body, as Paul said, fashioned like unto His glorious body, a body that knows no tears, sorrow, sickness, pain or death, and no sin. And in that glorified and eternal body like the resurrected Christ,

we will dwell with Thee forever and ever and ever. Until that day, may we worship with true hearts. And may we obey the voice of the Spirit who leads us to fulfill all righteousness for Your glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

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