

The Christian Manual: Study 10, Romans 8:1-17

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Christians are the only people on the planet who get to choose to live holy lives. The question is, will we?

Chapter 8a The Flesh or the Spirit

Section 1: Romans 8:1-4 Holy Living

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us,

who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Read Romans 8:1 over again. Wow! This is marvelous! Because of the realities that are true of us in Chapter 7 (that we are dead in Christ's death and alive in Christ's resurrection) there is now no condemnation for us. Condemnation comes through the Law. The Lawgiver uses the Law to condemn those found guilty of breaking it. But we are not under the Law. We have died, the Law no longer applies to us. When we appear before God for judgment, He will see in us the righteousness of His Son. He will welcome us into his heavenly kingdom forever.

This is the ground floor for Christian functioning. It is the basis for our heartfelt thanksgiving to God. We have been released from our justly earned condemnation—from hell. When I first heard the gospel, I told the Christian sharing with me that I knew I deserved hell, that if I was God I would send me to hell. What a revelation when she shared that this was true, but that God had provided for me another path through His Son.

Again, the Law is not the problem. The Law perfectly shows the character of God. It is holy. The problem is that the old life inherited from Adam, the flesh, is incapable of performing it. We might as well try to teach whales to fly.

Let's understand the word, flesh. A wise Bible teacher once told me that the best way to understand this term is to drop the H and spell

the word backwards. The flesh is the self. It is everything we were outside of Christ. It is our being and our family background and the roles and relationships we have acquired in this world. It is our self-definition outside of Christ. Paul considers all this as dung so that he can live according to the Spiritual realities that are now true of Him in Christ (see Philippians 3:4-11).

Why did Jesus die? Partially, it was to save us eternally for God. But it was also for the purpose that Paul gives here—that the requirement of the Law might be fully met in us. In other words, we were saved that we might live righteously now, in this life. We do this by walking according to the Spirit and not by the flesh.

Section 2: Romans 8:5-8 Mind Control

⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Paul explains the two realms Christians can choose to live in—the flesh or the Spirit. Whichever realm we choose controls our minds.

If we live in our flesh, in what we are outside of Christ—our worldly family context, identity, roles, traditions, etc.—then our minds will be set on the things that the flesh desires. These things include high position, praise from others, possessions, admiration, and the like. We will seek all the things that bring about popularity and success in whatever world we identify with. We will be wrapped up in pleasing ourselves. The end of this is death, Spiritual separation from God and hostility to Him. We cannot walk in the flesh and please God.

If we live in the Spirit, our minds will be set on what the Spirit desires. What is this? Things like lifting up Jesus, revealing the Father, being His child, and bringing others into Christ. The Spirit wants to see Christ manifest in His church, His body. The Spirit wants to bring us into God's holiness and to help us bear His fruit. When we walk in the Spirit, this is what we think about, what we care about. The result is life and peace—the life of Christ, resurrection life, and peace with God, reconciliation to Him.

Notice, there is no common ground between the flesh and the Spirit. We cannot live according to both. We are either in one or the other. We can walk in the flesh and do religious things. We can sing worship songs, go to church, even read the Bible as the person we were in Adam, in our flesh. When we do this, we are not pleasing God but ourselves. Or we can walk in the Spirit and consider the flesh as dung (Philippians 3:8). We can walk in Christ and the new identity that we have in Him. When we do this, the things of God are delightful to us, for they are delightful to the Spirit. We look at

our old lives for what they are—the past, that part of us that we have walked away from in Christ.

Section 3: Romans 8:9-11 Spiritual Life

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹And 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 because of his Spirit who lives in you.

When someone asks us, “What sets Christians apart from other religions?” The answer is not that we have a particular set of beliefs. It is not that we have churches or that we try to live good lives. It is not that we have a rich religious history. The one thing that sets Christians apart from everyone else, the only thing that really matters, is that we are people inhabited by God. We are people in whom the Holy Spirit takes residence.

Look at how the church started. In Acts chapter 2 we read:

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4). The church started when the Spirit came.

When Paul was on his journey through Ephesus, he saw a group meeting in the name of Jesus. But there was something wrong. He didn’t sense any power in them. The presence of God was not there. This baffled him and he asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:1-3) They had not. Paul laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. I wonder, sometimes, what Paul would say if he visited us.

So there are three possibilities for every person. Firstly, s/he might not be saved. The flesh may be his/her only option. Unsaved, enslaved to the flesh and sin, his/her end is death. This person may attend church, but for him/her it is more like a club, a social experience, than anything else. This person needs to repent of his/her sins and come to Christ for salvation. Secondly, this person might be saved, s/he might have the Spirit of God, but s/he is giving himself/herself over to the flesh. In this case s/he is a backslidden Christian who is putting his/her Christian life in jeopardy. This person also needs to repent. S/he needs to put off his/her old self

and put on Christ. Or, thirdly, this person is in the realm of the Spirit, inhabited by Christ, and receiving life because of righteousness.

The last thing Paul deals with is the physical body. Although we are inhabited by God, our bodies are still of this realm and are infused with sin. Because of this, the Christian must strive to control his/her body and not give it the chance to lead them away from Christ and into sin. We must make it our slave, or become enslaved to it (1 Corinthians 9:27). Because this body is infused with sin, it will die. But the God who raised Christ will also raise us. He will do this because of the Spirit that lives in us.

Section 4: Romans 8:12-17 Therefore...

¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if

we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Paul says we have an obligation. The word means, "debt." When I take on a debt, let's say from a loan, I am obliged to pay it back. My finances are attached to this debt until I pay it off. In the same way, the Christian is indebted. What Paul is saying is that in light of these things (therefore) we are not neutral. We can't make these things merely academic. We can't stand back and think about this choice between the flesh and the Spirit as if it were merely an interesting concept. We cannot separate ourselves from it. We must be all in.

Knowing our options between the flesh and the Spirit, we must now choose. Knowing what we do now, to choose the flesh would be stupid. To live according to the flesh is to live in death. It is to separate ourselves from God, to turn our backs on Him. It is to submit to our sinful bodies and to do the things God hates.

The better option is to live by the Spirit, to put to death the sins of the body, and to live—to experience the presence of God now and forever. So what does this look like? I wake up in the morning and I greet God. I spend devotional time in worship, prayer, and Bible study. I consider myself dead to my self, my flesh, and alive to God in Christ. I give myself over to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to fill me and live the life of Jesus through me. Then I face the day. As I go through the day, I am mindful of Christ and His Spirit within me. I ask God to show me the divine appointments He has made for me to share the gospel. I work as unto the Lord and for His pleasure. I

guard my tongue and my actions, attempting to live as Christ lived, treating every person (even those difficult to love) as Jesus would treat them. The purpose of my life is that Jesus would be known through me.

Paul ends this section with a revelation of the amazing things that are ours now in Christ. Those who live this life in the Spirit are the children of God. They are born again, a new race of men, a new species, who are born of God's seed (1 Peter 1:23). We are no longer of the race of Adam, but of the race of Christ. The Spirit within us assures us of this family relationship with God to the point where we look to Him and cry out, "Daddy." This is not just a word, it is what is true of us in Christ. We are now Christ's brothers and His co-heirs. All that is His is ours. This is an inheritance that will remain when all the riches of this world have passed away. It is an inheritance that is a gift from God, not earned by us or given to us because of anything worthy in us. This is a position of honor far beyond anything we could ever have possibly imagined.

The last thing Paul says here will sting us. We are co-heirs with Christ if (such a big word!) we are willing to share in His suffering in order that we might share in His glory. The word translated, "in order that" is a connecting word. It creates a direct relationship between these two realities. Paul is saying that we must accept the suffering of Jesus if we also want to accept His glory. What does this suffering entail? It could be anything as small as being rejected by friends or as big as being tortured and brutally killed for our faith. When we read the book of Acts, we see that those who were filled with the Spirit and were united with the church and spoke boldly for Christ were persecuted. Paul suffered many abuses because of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:16-33). The book of Acts is one

persecution after another. In the early church Christians were often martyred. There are still many Christians today that are persecuted in our world.

We need to be serious about this. We cannot stand up for Christ unless we are willing to pay the price to do so. We must be all in. We must stand for God and Christ even though it costs us. Only when we are willing to share in Christ's sufferings will we be assured that we will receive His glory. His glory must be worth more to us than anything—really, anything.

Back in chapter 5 Paul wrote: "but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5). The kingdom is worth any price.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Paul has been building an argument. He showed in chapters 1-3 that all were under condemnation and needed a savior. He showed in chapter 4 that righteousness was given through faith. In chapter 5 Paul explains that we now have peace with God. He goes on to contrast man in Adam and in Christ. In chapter 6 he takes on sin and our attitude toward it. In chapter 7 he shows that the way out of the Law and judgment is through death. We have died with Christ and are raised with Him. We are now free to be wed to Christ and to bear His fruit. Now, in this chapter he challenges us to make a choice, to live according to all these realities. He calls on us to accept our death to the Law and to be freed from judgment. He encourages us to leave behind the flesh, which surrenders to sin and produces death, and to put ourselves under the authority of the Spirit of God and to produce life and peace. When we do this, when we walk by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will confirm to our Spirit that we are God's children and heirs with Christ—if we take on His sufferings we will receive His glory. Lastly, Paul admits that sin still dwells in our physical body, but declares that if we walk by the Spirit we can put to death the sin in our bodies. This is an ongoing battle. Lastly, he calls us to share in the sufferings of Jesus. He was persecuted for the faith—we will be also.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

On April 2, 2015 147 Christian students at a Kenyan university were killed by Muslim extremists, simple because they admitted that they were Christians.

Christians have always been persecuted—they still are under attack in many places in the world. There are no guarantees that sometime in the future Christians will not again suffer severe attacks.

The Roman emperor Nero was particularly brutal to Christians. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* tells us: "He had some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made still with wax, fixed to axel-trees, and set on fire in his garden."¹

How will you react to this if and when it comes? What can we do now to ensure that we are ready to stand up for Christ when these attacks come? Come up with two things you will do to prepare yourself for persecution. Share your ideas with three other individuals.

¹ *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, pg. 13



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 8:1-4

Those who live by the Spirit reach the holy requirement of the Law. This is possible because Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh and offered Himself as a sin offering. Living the rich requirements of the Law was not possible because of the flesh. We are free so that we can now fulfill the Law. There is no condemnation in Christ.

Section 2 Romans 8:5-8

Here the contrast is made between those who live according to the flesh (our old life outside of Christ) and the Spirit (our new life in Christ). The flesh leads to distance from God. It is hostile to God and cannot submit to Him. It cannot please God. Only those in the Spirit can hope to please God. Why? Because God is pleased when we live according to His character (which is described in the Law). God is never pleased with sin—never. He is never pleased with our flesh.

Section 3 Romans 8:9-11

Without the Holy Spirit we are not Christ's. It is vital we have the Spirit. So many people are walking around thinking they are saved because they believe the right doctrine. It is not doctrine that makes a person a Christian—it is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Section 4 Romans 8:12-17

Those with the Spirit are sons and heirs. If they share in the sufferings of Christ they will share in His glory.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 8:1-4

1. What is the condition of those who walk in Christ? What does this mean to you?
2. What are we set free from the Law for? Is it possible to be a Christian and to continue to live in the flesh and in sin?

Section 2 Read Romans 8:5-8

1. What is the flesh? How will we know when we are living in the flesh? How can we stop living in the flesh?
2. Is it possible for us to please God? How? What can we do to ensure that we please God every day?

Section 3 Read Romans 8:9-11

1. How important is the Holy Spirit? Do we hear about the Holy Spirit enough? How do you know that you have had the Holy Spirit? If this is the litmus test for being a Christian, wouldn't it be important to be sure He was in you?

Section 4 Read Romans 8:12-17

1. What is true of those who walk in the Spirit?
2. What does it mean to be a co-child of God with Christ?
3. What is the inheritance that we have with Christ?
4. What kind of suffering is Paul talking about here? What do we receive when we suffer?

Big Idea: Christianity is being inhabited by God through His Spirit and walking in His Holiness



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

This chapter should put to rest any thoughts that Christianity can be lived in a shallow casual way. Currently our churches are flooded with cheap grace that offers eternal salvation to all who will call themselves Christians—as if the label was a ticket to heaven. Many Christians feel that they can continue to live in sin and in their flesh (in their non-Christian identity and lifestyle) with no consequences. God might not be terrifically pleased with them, but they will still be saved. This is not what Jesus died for.

Paul explains Christianity as a great freedom from sin and the flesh. It comes about when I recognize that I have died with Christ in His death. I was also raised with Him and am now the habitation of the Holy Spirit. And now, as I choose moment-by-moment to put aside my flesh and to walk by the Spirit, I can fulfill the requirements of the Law—in other words, to be holy like the Spirit within me.

This is Christianity, but it is rarely practiced today. How often do we discuss the continuous battle with our flesh? How often do we identify with our death in Christ, to be freed from sin and the flesh?

“Much of His preparation in our lives consists of setting up this struggle—our seeing self for what it is, and then attempting to get free of its evil power and influence. For there is no hope of consistent abiding in the Lord Jesus as long as we are under the dominion of the self-life in which ‘dwelleth no good thing’ (Romans 7: 18a).”²

² *The Green Letters*, by Miles J. Stanford, pg. 30