

Life in the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Romans 8, starting from chapter 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemns sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

[1 : 20] You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Good morning. Good morning. We will mostly be focusing on Romans 8 verses 5 to 11, but we will be starting with a slight recap, particularly looking at verse 4.

So if you have that passage open, Romans chapter 8, that would be fantastic. Let's pray and ask for the Lord's help. Heavenly Father, we thank you for our freedom to gather this morning to sing your praises, to bring our requests before you in prayer, to hear your word read and to meditate on it together.

Please enable me to speak clearly and truthfully this morning and may this passage of your word resonate in our hearts and encourage us.

[2 : 51] In Jesus' name, amen. Well, Australians cannot stand people who think they're better than everyone else. We value having a highly egalitarian society.

Everyone gets an education. Everyone has access to healthcare. Everyone can vote. We're all equal. And when individuals succeed, whether it's in business, whether it's in politics or sport, in whatever field it is, when individuals succeed, we expect them to be humble in victory.

We despise arrogance and elitism. We have what we call the tall poppy syndrome, that if anyone kind of rises up a bit too high, they're a bit too successful and especially if they let it get to their heads, we want to cut them down.

Now, this love of equality and kind of opposition to anyone who gets a bit too big for their own boots, all of this, I want to suggest, is part of Christianity's legacy on Australian society, part of the legacy of Christianity's influence.

Australia owes its egalitarian impulse to Christianity because the Bible contains incredible boundary-breaking declarations and ideas.

[4 : 29] Famously, Galatians 3, verse 28, There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Breaking down boundaries. Matthew 23, verse 8, the words of Jesus, But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.

There's one Lord, one teacher, one Father, and we're all brothers. We're all the same. Or think of Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of his runaway slave, Onesimus.

And Paul writes, For perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother. See, Christianity breaks down those boundaries, and says we're all equal, we're all on the same level before God.

[5 : 36] And the Apostle Paul's great Christian manifesto, his epistle to the Romans, it also contains some boundary-breaking declarations.

From Romans chapter 3, I'll read a few verses from Romans chapter 3. What then? Are Jews any better off? Not at all. For we've already charged that, that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin. But there's no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus.

Then what becomes of boasting? It's excluded. For we hold that one is justified by faith, apart from the works of the law, or is God the God of the Jews only?

Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one who will circumcise the justified by faith, I'm sorry, who will justify the circumcised by faith, who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised through faith.

[6 : 46] The Apostle Paul tore down the law of Moses as a boundary separating Jew and Gentile by demonstrating that no one's justified by works of the law.

We're all in the same boat. We're all sinners condemned by the law, and yet justified freely by faith in Christ. Now, against that backdrop, I want to suggest that Romans 8 verse 4 comes as a great surprise.

Romans 8 verse 4 comes as a great surprise. Both halves of the verse are surprising. Let's look at this verse, Romans 8 verse 4. In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Both halves of this verse are surprising. It's surprising that, having stated so emphatically that none of us are able to obey the law, Paul now speaks of the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in us.

Now, as I mentioned last week, it's possible this statement is about imputed righteousness. That is, it's possible this statement is about how the law's demand for righteousness is satisfied for us by the perfect righteousness of Christ being credited to our account.

[8 : 09] Now, that is wonderful. It's certainly true. And it's a cause of great assurance. But verse 4 is especially surprising if, as I suggested last week, what this statement might mean that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us is that the law's overall purpose of love comes to be expressed and fulfilled in the lives of Christians.

How is it possible that people who have once been condemned by the law because of our sins might now fulfil the law through love?

Isn't that claim hopelessly optimistic? Well, Jesus didn't think so. By this, all people will know that you're my disciples, Jesus said, if you have love for one another.

But that's surprising. But the second half of the verse is surprising too because in the second half of the verse 4, having so emphatically broken down the law as a boundary dividing Jew and Gentile for all alike are under sin, in the second half of verse 4, another great division in humanity is established.

There are those who walk according to the flesh and there are those who walk according to the spirit. See, it turns out, in the Bible's view, there is a great division in humanity.

[9 : 46] But it's not the divide between Jew and Gentile. It's not the divide between slave and free. It's not between law and not law. The division is between flesh and spirit.

And it's this division which explains how it is that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in believers.

Verse 5 and 6. In these verses, flesh and spirit represent two opposing dominions, to realms, to powers, to spheres of influence, to opposing dominions, someone can walk according to the flesh and be according to the flesh or they can walk and be according to the spirit.

Every one of us belongs to one or other of those dominions. We either belong to the flesh or we belong to the spirit. One or the other is the sphere in which we exist and operate.

One or the other is the power which defines our lives. Now, incidentally, this is an aside here, the word spirit occurs 17 times in Romans, the first 17 verses of Romans 8, verses 1 to 7.

[11 : 26] It's 17 times, which makes it not just the greatest concentration of spirit language in Romans, it's the greatest concentration of spirit language anywhere in the Bible.

What we have here is a passage that is describing to us, teaching us about life in the spirit. And each dominion, flesh and spirit, has its own mindset.

There is a mind set on the things of the flesh and there is the mind set on things of the spirit. And those two mindsets are completely different. Let me suggest three differences.

First difference, the mind set on the flesh is earthbound, whereas the mind set on the spirit is heavenly, transcendent.

The mind of the flesh is occupied with things here below and either denies or at least disregards heaven above. You found the mind set of the flesh whenever you find someone who is consumed by money.

[12 : 36] They live for, they pursue, what they want is possessions and money and wealth. I was running with a friend, I just met the friend, a Christian brother, he was, he is, and he was talking about someone in his family who just spends most of his day just examining, just watching his share portfolio.

That's what's on his mind all the time, money. You found the mind set of the flesh when you find someone consumed by their career. All they think about is how they can advance and that getting to the next step in their profession.

Or someone consumed by entertainment, they just think about the movies or the music or the video games or whatever it is that just occupies their thoughts constantly.

Or by pleasure or by body image or by reputation, whatever it is. When it's just their thoughts, their thinking, their preoccupation is with things of earth below.

Now, God created all things good. Everything that God has made in this world is good and to be received with thanksgiving. But he created everything good so that we might lift our eyes from the gifts while enjoying the gifts he's given to the giver, the God himself who has given them.

[14 : 13] Not so that we'd enjoy the gift and ignore the giver. One of the sports I've enjoyed is playing ultimate frisbee. And I love playing frisbee.

If you don't know the sports, it's a lot of running, a lot of jumping, throwing a frisbee around, trying to catch it and pass it between your teammates. An energetic sport. And I've had opportunity to sort of play in clubs and so on with some of the players in Newcastle who are like the top players in Newcastle.

Some of them have played for Australia and so on. And I mean, there are people who live for ultimate frisbee. You know, that's what their life's about. And that's all their ambitions, all their goals revolve around that sport.

It's not even in the Olympics. Right? You know, I mean, maybe there's a few American players that earn a living, get sponsorship off it, but you're not going to do that in Australia. And yet that's what their life's for.

That's the mind of the flesh. It's just fixed on something, whatever it is here below. With no regard for God above. Second difference, that the mindset of the flesh, likewise the gaze of the flesh, is fixed here and now.

[15 : 37] It never looks forward. Just the present, never the future, or never the eternal future, in any case. The mind of the flesh forgets that there is a day of judgment.

That people will render account, will give an account, for the lives we've lived here. The mind of the flesh forgets that there's a resurrection, that there is a life beyond the grave.

The mind of the flesh forgets that there is a coming kingdom of God. No, the way things are now, in the mind of the flesh, is the way things will always be. Temporary, rather than eternal.

That's the second difference. The third difference is that the mind of the flesh, there's a difference of character. A difference of character. Paul writes in Galatians that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Whereas the flesh, well, the flesh is filled with anger, jealousy, impurity, greed, malice, hatred, selfish ambition.

[16 : 50] There's a difference in character between flesh and spirit. The example from the previous chapter of the flesh, of the sin operating in our lives is coveting.

You might remember Paul talked about when, as soon as he hears the law, you shall not covet. Sin arouses all kinds of covetous desires within him. There's a difference of character.

So there's a different mind. Each of these dominions, spirit and flesh, has a different mind. And each also has its own destiny.

You'll see there in verse 6, to set the mind on the flesh is death. That's the destiny of the flesh, death. But to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.

There's the destiny of those who are in the spirit. Life and peace. Peace with God, that is. So two dominions, two minds, two destinies.

[17 : 58] And in verses 7 and 8, Paul goes on to unpack a bit more the mind of the flesh, what it's like to live under the power of the flesh. Verse 7, for the mind that's set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law.

Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. The mind of the flesh is in enmity to God.

This is the opposite of the peace of the mind of the spirit there in verse 6. Here there's enmity, there's hostility. And these verses 7 and 8 unpack that enmity, which is the reason that there's death.

Hostility towards God. Not only this refusal to submit to God's law, but an inability to submit to God's law. I hate God, and I disregard God.

They're equally expressions of the flesh. They're equally hostility towards God. God, God, it's just, God, I won't submit to you.

[19 : 11] I won't listen to you. I don't care for what you want. Those who are in the flesh, verse 8, cannot please God. Now that sounds extreme, doesn't it?

Someone who's in the flesh can't please God. Few people would think of themselves in these kind of terms. This isn't how people think about themselves.

But that's because people have so thoroughly expunged the idea of God from their thoughts that they don't think there's any need to please God. They imagine they can live lives that are good without God.

But that's madness. People who live according to the flesh, who are just bound by the things of this world, and of the present, and of the attitudes and desires of the flesh, people who live that way, they may go on to do all sorts of impressive and noteworthy things.

But a car's not a good car if it doesn't go where the driver steers it. And a dog's not a good pet if it bites its master and doesn't come when called and go when sent.

[20 : 24] And humans aren't good humans when we ignore our creator. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. And that's the mind of the flesh.

Hostility to God. Disregarding God. But then Paul says, in verse 9, you, however, you, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.

If, in fact, the spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. Let's unpack this a little bit. You, however, Paul is convinced that those he's writing to are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.

He makes a contrast here. You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. You don't belong to the dominion of the flesh. You belong to the dominion of the spirit.

The power of the flesh does not dominate your life. Rather, you are controlled and governed and ruled by the power of God's spirit. You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if, in fact, the spirit of God dwells in you.

[21 : 44] Now, that sounds a bit uncertain in our ears as we read it. No, like Paul's saying, well, you belong with the spirit. If the spirit dwells in you. You know, maybe the spirit dwells in you.

Maybe the spirit doesn't dwell in you. But I don't think it's supposed to sound uncertain, actually. I don't think it's supposed to sound uncertain here. The word, the Greek word that's translated as, if, in fact, it can also be translated as, since, which is exactly how ESV translates it in Romans 3, verse 30, which I read a little bit earlier.

There it is. Yes, God is the God of the Gentiles, also, since God is one. You know, there are points being made. God's not just the God of the Jews.

He's the God of Jews and Gentiles. He's the God of all people. Because God's one, there's one God. They're the same word as translated as since. And I think it's got that sense here too. You know, it's sort of context that determines whether we should translate this word as if indeed, or since indeed.

And one thing you notice here is that when Paul switches, like from verse 8 to verse 9, he switches from speaking in the third person to the second person.

[22 : 54] So verses 5 and 6, he sets up the two categories, flesh and spirit. Verses 7 and 8, he then elaborates on the flesh in the third person, that is speaking about they, them, those people who are in the flesh.

But then verses 9 to 11, as he elaborates on the spirit, he switches to the second person, you. He speaks about those who are in the flesh, but you who are in the spirit.

So Paul, as he's addressing the Roman Christians to whom he's writing, he's not trying to make them kind of wonder whether they might be in the spirit. He is assuring them that they are in the spirit.

Since the spirit of God dwells in you, Paul says. And he reinforces that assurance with the negative at the end of verse 8, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.

To put that around the other way, if you do belong to Christ, then you do have the spirit of Christ. If anyone who doesn't have the spirit doesn't belong to Christ, then if you do belong to Christ, you must have the spirit.

[24 : 09] It's impossible to belong to Christ and not have the spirit dwelling in you. There are no spiritless Christians. If you have Jesus, you have God's spirit.

It's both or nothing. Or rather, it's all three persons of the Trinity or nothing. For in verse 9, he's both the spirit of Christ and the spirit of God.

To have the spirit is to be united with the Father and the Son. And Paul reassures the Roman Christians here of their present union with God's spirit.

That God's spirit indwells in them. And notice how he convinces them. He doesn't call on them to analyse their performance.

He doesn't tell them to conduct an experiment. He doesn't say, you have the spirit in you if you can speak in tongues.

[25 : 13] He doesn't say, you have the spirit in you if you've attained a certain level of holiness or godliness. The thrust of verses 9 to 10 is if you have Christ, you have the spirit.

The spirit is the present possession of every single Christian. Now you might feel yourself to be unspiritual.

You might think there's nothing special about you. You might feel like sin has the upper hand in your life.

But God doesn't justify you on the basis of your own goodness. God doesn't justify you on the basis of your moral achievement. and neither does God's spirit indwell you on the basis of your goodness.

The spirit comes to us as Christ comes to us on the basis of God's abundant grace and infinite mercy. So brothers, sisters, you don't need to worry that you haven't received God's spirit.

[26 : 35] Receiving God's spirit isn't a separate, additional step after receiving Christ. We received Christ, the spirit, when we received Christ. If you belong to Christ, if you believe in Jesus, if you're one of Jesus' followers, you have God's spirit dwelling in you.

And verses 10 and 11 go on to two inestimable benefits of being indwelt by God's spirit. first, Paul speaks of present spiritual life in verse 10.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. Now, I enjoy frisbee, I enjoy running, I've mentioned both already.

I try to keep myself in pretty decent physical condition, but the clock keeps ticking. I remember as a, I think it was like as a late teenager sitting down with my godfather and I was a young man and I was a bit aimless in life and I remember him asking me like, what was my goal in life?

Like, what did I want to achieve? And the only thing I came up with that I wanted to run 800 metres faster than two minutes. Like, now, running 800 metres, let me just be clear, faster than two minutes, yeah, that'd be pretty quick, but that's not even going to get you into the Olympics, right?

[28 : 10] It's not that quick. But that was my goal, right? That's all I could come up with at that point in time. And, it's a pretty pathetic goal and, you know, I'm happy to say I've discovered some better goals since.

You know, but still, I would kind of like to run 800 metres that fast and yet it's not going to happen, right? I've missed my opportunity and it's not just because I've got other priorities in life, it's also just because I keep getting older.

It's just the effects of age setting in. First, it was my knees and then it was my hamstrings and then it's my Achilles and what's going to be next? I don't know what's going to be next, but, you know, I've reached the age that whenever I book an appointment to see my GP, I make sure I book a double appointment because I've never got just one thing I need to talk about.

But still, like, I'm only 47, right? And, I'm healthy and God willing, I have many more years of decline ahead of me.

but, you know, even though my body is dead or dying, right, you know, whichever word you want to use, there is dwelling in me the Spirit who gives life.

[29 : 30] The Spirit who gives life. As Paul says elsewhere, outwardly we're wasting away, but inwardly we're being renewed day by day. And this means, verse 10 means here, that the 95-year-old invalid who is bed-bound in a nursing home but has the Spirit of God dwelling in them, that person has more life than the 23-year-old Olympia.

the Spirit who gives life is dwelling in them. Present spiritual life is the first benefit of the Spirit. The second benefit is in verse 11, verse 10 speaks of present spiritual life, verse 11 speaks of future bodily life. Verse 11, if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Now just notice how beautifully Trinitarian this verse is. We see twice right there in this verse we have the Father, the Spirit and the Son.

The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus, the Father who raised Jesus, Jesus the Son from the dead the Trinity and then we get it again. He who raised Christ as the Father who raised the Son from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

[31 : 09] This is the Trinity again. The Father, the Spirit and the Son working together to do what? With what goal?

With what effect? With what outcome? To give life to your mortal bodies. Paul is speaking of the future bodily resurrection of beliefs.

Bodily resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead, bodily from the grave, that's the pattern for us, the pattern for our future.

He's the first fruits, where the harvest that is to come. What God has already done in the case of Jesus, He will do in the case of everyone who belongs to Jesus, through His Spirit who dwells in. So if you have God's Spirit in you, and you have God's Spirit if you believe in Jesus, then as your body fails and wastes away, what a hope we have that God will restore, God will raise up, God will bring life.

[32 : 14] Everything God's created is good and that includes our bodies. and it's not God's will that our bodies should rot in the ground and just our spirits depart to heaven and that's our eternal future, but rather that spirit and body be reunited and He raise us up in perishable and in glory as Jesus has been raised.

Future bodily life, life now in God's Spirit and a future where even our bodies, though they perish and die, will be raised from the dead. Why is it that we have, I mean we've seen two dominions, two minds, two destinies, why is it that we have a different destiny?

Because we have a different dominion, because it is the Spirit dwelling in us who determines, by God, who determines our future.

And why is it that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us? Because we live under a different dominion. We have the mind of God's Spirit dwelling in us, a mind that is life and peace, a mind of God's Spirit dwelling in us, enabling the renewing of our minds, which Paul will speak of in Romans 12.

Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

[33 : 58] Now if you feel, if you feel yourself trapped in patterns of thought that belong not to the Spirit but to the flesh, feel trapped in those patterns.

I want you to know, God wants us to know, there is hope, there is freedom. If you're a greedy person and you find yourself just always wanting more for yourself, you don't need to be that. you don't have to keep living that way. You can let it go. God's Spirit dwells in you and he desires something else.

If you're an angry person, if you're, you know, you're just, there's a, there's an anger in you that's just always there sort of below the surface, seething away. every now and then it erupts. You don't need to hold on to that, whatever it is that's causing that anger. You can let it go. Those things, greed, anger, impurity, whatever the pattern of thought is that you're stuck in, it belongs to the flesh.

[35 : 31] But you, you belong to the Spirit. You belong to the Spirit. So, live in the freedom of the Spirit of God.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that when we believe and when we have believed in your Son, Jesus, you've not only forgiven us all our sins and justified us, counted us as righteous, but you've come to live in us in the person of your Spirit.

You've united us with yourself, with your Son. Thank you for your Spirit already dwelling in us and with us, filling us with spiritual life.

Thank you for the mind of the Spirit dwelling in us, that he can transform our minds. Thank you that you, by your Spirit, can free us from every pattern of thought and behaviour that belongs to the flesh.

so please Lord God, continue that good work in us. Change our minds, transform us so that we might desire what brings you delight.

[37 : 13] Assure it wholeheartedly. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.