

Life Through the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Romans 8, we read it whole, deliberately. It's the great, well, God's Word, of course, inspired, inspired of God, by God. This is a great chapter that focuses on the life, or life lived in the Spirit, in the Holy Spirit.

And really following on from this morning in our communion services, we were thinking latterly of the confidence that the believer has in the Lord, the confidence that the believer has through the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

I think we can move on and think this evening on the confidence that the believer has through being filled with the Holy Spirit. So I sometimes think that, you know, we omit or contend to omit the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

Especially at communion time, we focus on the giving of Christ Jesus for sinners, and quite rightly do so. We think on the gift that the Father has given to us of the Son, but I think sometimes we forget the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing work in the life of the believer. And, you know, when we think of being a Christian, being converted, living for the Saviour, being nourished by the Word to go out into the world, then you do it as Christians who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, given that power to live for Him.

[1 : 35] Because Christians aren't at a standstill. There's that process going on in your life, in your heart, so that you are enabled to be more like Christ.

And we speak of that process, that development, we speak of it as sanctification. And it's that being sanctified, that being made more like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

That's really what we want to consider this evening. It's our Shorter Catechism tells us of the Holy Spirit, it's He who sanctifies the believer, who renews us, who enables us more and more to die, to sin, and live, and to righteousness.

And we see that great work that Paul expresses here in Romans chapter 8. This freedom, this spiritual freedom that the Christian has through the work of the Holy Spirit.

And you'll see here, the Spirit even referred to as the Spirit of Freedom. And it's really that freedom again that we want to dwell on this evening.

[2 : 46] And if you're a Christian, if you've made that profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, and you abide in Christ, then it's for you to consider that freedom, and rejoice in that freedom.

Because you have been given life in all its fullness. And really it's that life lived to the glory of God by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

That freedom, that freedom to live for God, that freedom from the power of sin, that freedom to serve your Lord and Saviour. It's that freedom that we want to focus on this evening.

That freedom that God has given you to enjoy life in all its fullness. It's a freedom, it's a joy that no one can know and fully understand unless he, unless she is in Christ by faith.

And three things then to focus in on in this first section of Romans chapter 8. We want to look more specifically at what Paul tells us about the spirit of freedom.

[3 : 52] And then verses 5 to 8, to look at what we might consider of the spirit, the spirit of true desire. Maybe something we don't generally relate to in relation to the spirit, but the spirit of true, pure desire.

And then verses 9 to 13, the spirit of life. So we're focusing on the work of the spirit, the Holy Spirit, in the life of the believer.

And what does Paul tell us in verse 1? He says, Therefore, there's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We're thinking of the spirit of freedom, no condemnation.

And he begins, in fact, in the original, the first word actually is therefore. And you know, of course, every time you see the word therefore, it's connecting with the teaching that's gone before.

And so that word therefore is linking what Paul's already been speaking about when he's been writing about the salvation through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

[4 : 57] And Paul's already been teaching that all fall under the condemnation of God. You know, we've got that knowledge of God.

Every single person has a knowledge of God, a sense of God. And yet, because of our sinful nature, God is rejected.

It's that failure to receive God as Lord, that failure to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, even as we were seeing this morning, the unrepentant thief on the cross.

He refused to receive Jesus as Lord of his life. And that sinful nature that we all inherit, we've all inherited from Adam, that sinful nature condemns us.

And we'd remain condemned were it not for the grace of God, were it not for the saving grace of God and sending his one and only Son, so that he took our place in being condemned.

[6 : 02] He faced the condemnation of God. He, as we were saying last night, he was our substitute. And if you trust in the Lord Jesus, you who have that spirit-gifted faith in the Lord Jesus, remember you've been made right with God.

You've been, you're declared right before God because Jesus has made that possible when he took your place, in my place, condemned, he stood.

And you can appear before God. And you can appear and be with, before him as right before him because of what Jesus has done for you.

You've been made right with God through Jesus. There's no condemnation for anyone who's in Christ Jesus. You who are united to the Lord Jesus by faith, you're safe eternally.

and in Christ, you know that he loves you and you love him. You're united to him by faith. And you will not be condemned.

[7 : 13] You have that assurance, you have that, again, that word that keeps appearing in our thoughts, you have that confidence to know that you're not condemned. Yes, there is a righteous judge, but the righteous judge, the Lord Jesus will not condemn any who are united to him.

And so let's be reminded, you know, continuously be reminded of this great truth that when you're united to Christ, you're not condemned. And it's the work of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that's made it possible to assure you that you're not condemned.

You're declared not guilty. And being declared not guilty, you're free. Free. You've been set free. Free to live for God.

Free from the power of sin. Free from the clutches of Satan. And it's a freedom, that freedom that's a privilege, it's a gospel privilege that certainly Paul speaks of from verse 2 to verse 4.

As verse 2 begins, for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free. Free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

[8 : 27] You know, all, you see it so often, so frequently, particularly from, you know, those who despise Christ, despise Christians, and sometimes even Christians ourselves.

We can so often equate the Christian faith with some kind of, you know, repression or oppression, suppression, or many Christians you want to add, but, you know, so often, following Jesus is considered to be something that, you know, really sort of restricts you, prevents you, sort of gives you a kind of a joyless, heartless life, a life that traps you and keeps you from some kind of true contentment, true happiness, and true fulfillment.

But, of course, the Christian life is anything but oppressive or repressive or suppressive or restricting in the sense of that freedom that we have in Christ because true faith, true, truly being united to Christ is liberating.

That's what Paul tells these believers there in Rome because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of life has set you free, set you free from the law of sin and death.

Now, we do need to explain this and we do need to concentrate on our explanation with what, try and understand what Paul's saying here about the Holy Spirit as our liberator, the one who brings that freedom to the believer.

[10 : 03] How can we understand this? We have to go back to the Old Testament and the time when the law was given by God to God's people through Moses.

You notice the people of Israel, the Israelites were on that exodus away from Egypt and God gave the people his law. That law that was to be kept in its entirety.

The law that was to be kept so God's people be holy so that they be set apart from their pagan neighbours or godless neighbours.

sinners. But, of course, sinful nature in the people and the Israelites, that prevented them keeping the law. The law was given to be kept.

But sin prevented the people from fulfilling all the requirements of the law. So, the law condemned the people. And, of course, the punishment for breaking God's law was death.

[11 : 03] And, you see, God's law set that standard. They set the standard for perfect, perfect obedience. It was given to the people to show how they must live.

But the law was powerless, powerless to save. But it must be kept. It could, but it wasn't kept by the people. So, the law condemned, the law condemned the people because no one could keep the law perfectly.

but one did keep the law perfectly. One did keep the law perfectly. Jesus. Jesus came to set his people free by obeying fully the law so that you don't look to the law to make you right with God. The law doesn't bring salvation. No matter how hard you try to keep the law, the people of Israel failed, we fail, I fail, because of our sinful natures, but only the sinless Son of God, only Jesus satisfied the demands of the law.

And we say this with thanksgiving and joy in our hearts that you are considered, you who know the Lord Jesus, you who are united to him by faith, you are considered by God to fully meet the law's demands.

[12 : 29] because of what Jesus did for you on the cross when he took the condemnation that you, that I deserve, that we all deserve. And so you're free, you who are in Christ are free from condemnation, God's condemnation, because Jesus has fully, fully fulfilled the law on our behalf.

only he was able perfectly to keep every demand of the law. He came as our substitute, he came in our place, he came to take the place of sinners, so that sin might be punished in the Son, the Son of God.

So in Christ, rejoice, if you're in Christ, rejoice that you're free, that you're free and right with God. What about the role of the Holy Spirit in this freeing, in this freedom?

Again, we go back to verse 2, when you see Paul speaking of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of life, the law of the spirit of life has set you free from the law of death. We can put it like this, before you were converted, you would have thought, you thought, well I could do things to make myself right with God.

But that's a deception, that's a deception. But it's something that so many still cling to as some kind of passport to heaven. You know, let's just tick the boxes that we think are going to make God pleased with us.

[14 : 07] You know, let's earn our salvation and God will see us right. But salvation has got nothing to do with that way of thinking. Because if that were the case, you'd be a saviour of yourself.

Jesus wouldn't need to have come to die for sinners if you could save yourself. And the Holy Spirit would be redundant.

Because you see, the work of salvation involves the Holy Spirit in unity with God the Father and God the Son. He completes the work of redemption in your soul.

He convinces you of your sin. He leads you to Jesus. He sets you free from that trap of thinking that you can work your own way to heaven.

And the Holy Spirit has freed sinners from the curse of sin. He's freed you from the power of sin. He's freed you from the power of Satan.

[15 : 11] The Holy Spirit is the spirit of life. He's the spirit of freedom. He's given you life in all its fullness. He's given you freedom so that you're no longer under the dominion, the power, the spell of sin.

You no longer live according to your sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. As Paul tells us at the end of verse 4, you've been released from the power, the dominion of sin.

It means that you're no longer a slave to sin because the Holy Spirit has worked that work in your life that united you to Christ. You have a new heart.

You've got a new life. Yes, sin's still there as we were saying last night. Sin's still there, but you're not under its management. You're not under its power.

You're under new management. You're made holy by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to earth to make you right with God by his death.

[16:19] To bring you into that right relationship with God by faith. To enable you to be set apart from sin. Set apart from the world. Set apart from the world's values.

You are free to live a life that glorifies God. God. You've been given that freedom to obey God, to do what God requires of you.

You have that power, that freedom within your heart. And you've got a zeal, a new zeal for the gospel. Before you were converted, you had no zeal, no desire to tell others of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now you've got that freedom to live for God, that freedom to tell others of the God who loves you and has given his son for you. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, then you've got a new affection.

You've got that freedom to please God, to live to please God. You've got that freedom to live to imitate Christ. You've got that freedom because of the spirit of freedom.

[17:32] You've got that liberty. But remember, liberty isn't license. It's not as if all of a sudden you can do whatever you want, never mind whether it's to honour God or not.

Not at all. You've been given that freedom to live for God, to be right with God, to have that right relationship with God, to die, to sin daily, and to live for righteousness.

You can't just do what you want. I can't just do what I want to do and sin, you know, thinking, oh well, God's going to forgive me anyway. Not at all. You are being forgiven because you are in Christ.

Christ has died for you and you have the spirit within you. God's acquitted you. He's declared you're not guilty because of Jesus.

he took the guilt upon himself and you who seek to honour him, to live for him, to imitate him, then do it as the Holy Spirit enables you to do that, to exercise that power within you, that power that's replaced the principle of sin with a new principle in your life to honour and glorify God.

[18:57] And so you've been given a new morality, you've been given a new freedom, you've been given that freedom to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. It's a freedom that draws you to love him the more and more and yes to love one another the more and more.

And so bring this all down to a practical level. You know that freedom, you who are in Christ know that freedom, that freedom to live for the Lord Jesus.

But live knowing that you're not condemned. Live knowing that you are free from the curse of sin. Live knowing that you're free to live for God and free to live for God in your home, in your place of work and whatever you do in your leisure time, every aspect of your being.

Remember you've been set apart for God, set apart from the world, set apart to live by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. And God's working in you, actively working you through His Spirit to live for Him, to enable you to be holy.

It's not a matter of feeling, how you feel at a particular time in your life, whether at this moment you feel Spirit-led or not, no. God has saved you in Christ.

[20:19] You've been gifted the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's working in your heart, working in your life, enabling you the more to be like Christ and rejoice and live knowing that there is now no condemnation for you who are in Christ.

But what else do we find here in this passage about living according to the Holy Spirit? We see here the Spirit of true desire from verse 5 to verse 8.

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, and so on.

You know, true desire is something that we don't readily associate with a Spirit-filled life. But, you know, we'll see this as the case as Paul directs us when he speaks of the life of the Christian who truly honors God as opposed to the life of a person who's got no love for God.

And where true desire isn't to honor and glorify God, but to honor and glorify self. And, well, what do we see here as Paul brings out?

[21:33] Well, first of all, we see the description of those who don't have the Spirit in their lives, who've got no desire to honor God. How does Paul describe that kind of person?

He says, those who live according to the flesh, according to the sinful nature, that corrupt human nature controlled by sin.

The person that doesn't have the Holy Spirit. The person who's always looking to self, who's always looking to gratify self and to please self and to live for self.

And the governing principle in his heart and her heart is sin, controlled by sin. And so the mind, the mindset of the person that doesn't have the Holy Spirit is focused on what the sinful nature desires. It's not true, pure desire to honor God and to glorify God. It's to honor and glorify self. And the things of the world predominate in that kind of thinking, thoughts that aren't God word but self word.

[22 : 49] The corruption of the human heart takes away from any desire, any true desire to honor God. But if you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit and your mind is elevated above self to glorifying God, God.

In fact, if you want to be more precise, as you see there in verse 5, those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set in what the Spirit desires. And here's true desire.

I mean, what does the Holy Spirit desire? The Holy Spirit desires the glory of Christ. The Holy Spirit desires, his desire is to show you Christ and all his beauty and all his glory.

the Holy Spirit's desire is to make you Christ-like so that each day you are dying to sin and living for righteousness. And so Paul tells us here that those who are indwelt by the Spirit, you who have the Spirit within you, you have a mind that's in tune with the Spirit in your desire to glorify God and glorify the Lord Jesus.

Because it's the Holy Spirit who drew you to Christ. The Holy Spirit who drew you to see the grace of the Lord Jesus so that you might embrace the Lord Jesus.

[24 : 15] And the Holy Spirit's continually drawing your mind to the Lord Jesus so that you have that desire, that's the Spirit's desire, to live for Jesus and to direct your mind to our Lord and Saviour.

How does this work out in practice? Well, you ask yourself, what's preoccupying your mind even at this moment? What's the overwhelming desire of your mind?

What's uppermost in your thinking? What's driving your life? Is it first and foremost to glorify the Lord Jesus in your words and your actions?

Or is it to glorify self? Ask yourself this, is your mind fixed in the Lord Jesus so that it's your true desire to love Him more, serve Him more, glorify Him more?

Or is your desire simply for the things of the world? Because the way that your mind is will tell you whether indeed you are indwelt by the Spirit with that desire to live for the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 25] Or whether indeed your sinful nature's dominating your life. Yes, as we said, we still sin. But many times when we allow sin into our lives and it's by our own stupidity, our own foolishness, you can allow your mind to drift and to wander and it happens.

It happens so often. It happens even particularly at communion time. The temptations of Satan to drift you away from that one true focus on the Lord Jesus.

you know that spiritual warfare that's going on in your heart. But as we think of the Christian believer, the one, you who have that new birth, remember you have a new allegiance.

You've got a new guiding principle. You've got that desire in your heart that directs you to seek to honour and glorify the Lord Jesus and not live according to your sinful human nature, but according to the Spirit.

And you see the difference that this section gives us and the difference that the Holy Spirit makes to your mind. Because it's not just for the present.

[26 : 45] It's not just got present consequences. There are eternal consequences. You see there in verse 6, to set the mind in the flesh is death, but to set the mind in the Spirit is life and peace.

You see, without the Spirit in your life, the Holy Spirit, your mind's set in what's going to gratify the sinful nature. And the consequence of that isn't just for this life.

The consequences are eternal. Minds that are fixed on sin in this life have no concern for life to come. God's God's God's God's mind.

That mind that's hostile to God. The mind of sinful man that's so hostile to God that there's no thought in honoring him. The one, the person who has the mind that's controlled by the Spirit is a person who seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus.

and he has that assurance, he has got that confidence to know that he has eternal life and eternal peace.

[28 : 00] That life in the kingdom now, life to be fully realized in the glory of heaven with Jesus. So you who know the blessing of God and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you know that life and that peace in this life and you will know it in all its fullness and eternity.

That life that's opposed to death. And it's really for the last few moments, it's really this life, the whole matter of life that Paul goes on to in this next part of the letter.

We won't spend too much longer on it, but if you look at verses 9 to 13, for example, just look at the number of times that Paul speaks of life in relation to the Spirit.

You go to verse 10, for example, you see the Spirit referred to the Spirit, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. You go to verse 11, again you see the word life, who is raised in Christ from the dead, will also give life, the Spirit will give life to your mortal bodies.

again, verse 12, we're debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh, but if you live according to the flesh you'll die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

[29 : 24] You see the connection between the Spirit and life, true life, real life, life in all its fullness. You see, you know, how Paul speaks to you.

Verse 9, you, you're not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. You. And as you read these words, even from verse 9, these are words directed to you, to you who are in Christ, you who know the Spirit in your life, you who've been given life, true life, full life.

But what about that life, that life that you know now, that life that's promised for all eternity, it's that life that every single Christian believer knows, that life lived in the Spirit.

No Christian does not have the Holy Spirit in his life. In other words, the Holy Spirit isn't a stranger to you as a Christian. He's involved in every aspect of your life.

life. As someone said, he's the most important reality in our lives. Why? Because he indwells you. He's within you. Yes, the Spirit is in you, the Spirit of Christ within you.

[30 : 52] The Spirit abides in you as you abide in God. You are a spiritual person in every sense of that word. You have that unbreakable, eternal relationship with God made possible by the work of God and the saving of your life.

So you're a spiritual person. You're a person in whom the Spirit lives. And as you see there, as Paul says, of the Christian, he's got the Spirit of God and then the Spirit of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, of course, dwells in you. And then verse 10, we're told, Christ is in you. The Holy Spirit, yes, the Holy Spirit and Christ are separate, distinct persons, but of course they share the same divine substance as God.

So to have the Spirit is to have Christ within you. You who are a Christian, you live according to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who gives you life now and promises that life for all eternity.

Yes, a Christian just like any other person in sense. You have a human body, one day you will die. That's the consequence of original sin.

[32 : 15] But the great difference, the eternal difference between a person who is a believer in Christ and a person who is not that believer is that you have that promise.

You who are in Christ have that promise of eternal life. and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life and not, as verse 11 tells us, the Spirit of death.

He's the Spirit of resurrection, the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead. And God will give you that eternal life through His Spirit who dwells within you.

And that surely again is a word of assurance for you, that word to give you confidence. Because if the Holy Spirit is within you, He's your guarantee of your future resurrection and eternal life.

So what's your response to this great truth of the Spirit within you, the Spirit within every believer? Well, there of course has to be a response, there has to be an active response and Paul tells us that in verses 12 and 13.

[33 : 27] Well, first of all, if you like a negative, don't live according to the sinful nature. You know, probably the greatest danger to the church of Christ isn't from outside the church, it's from inside the church.

The greatest danger is the Christian who's the contradiction, the Christian who actually seeks the more to live according to sinful nature rather than living according to the Spirit.

It's the person who claims to be the Christian and yet by his lifestyle, by his words, by his actions, by his character that shows that he's not living according to the Spirit but living according to the flesh.

And that sinful nature, that's such a denial of the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Jesus. And you know, whenever you think, as we each and every one of us has to come to this point, when you think there's too much of the world in yourself, then seek by God's grace to expel that world from

your very life.

It's the responsibility that every Christian has, as Paul tells us in verse 13, that to put to death the deeds of the body. As Jesus said, deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me.

[34 : 56] And that act of seeking to remove anything that's going to compromise your faith, anything that's going to make you to be a worldly Christian. What did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount?

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out, throw it away. It's better for you to lose one of your members than your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away.

It's better that you lose one of your members than your whole body goes into hell. And we do so not in our own strength, but as Paul tells us in verse 13, we do it by the strength of spirit within.

As if by the spirit you put to death all that's gratifying your sinful nature, you've got this wonderful promise in verse 13, you will live.

You'll live knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll live knowing the one who was dead and is alive again. And you'll know that having been led by the Holy Spirit to know the Lord Jesus and to serve him and to live for him with that life abundance.

[36 : 12] life. So, live now. Live in the fullness of life that the Lord Jesus brings. Live in that freedom, that freedom from the power of sin and live knowing that you have that power through the Holy Spirit.

You know, what the world calls life, really it's temporary. It's just temporary, it's just fleeting, it's passing by. But the life that you know in the Spirit, that life is eternal.

That life fully satisfies you. So, I pray that each and every one of us will know that life lived by the Spirit, in the Spirit, for the glory of God, for the glory of his name.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, you have given your people life. May we live that life to your glory. May we know the freedom that is ours by the Spirit.

May we not to quench the Holy Spirit in our lives, but rather Lord, may it be that we truly live according to the freedom of the Spirit, the Spirit of freedom, and that we will do so honoring and glorifying you.

[37 : 32] Lord, forgive all that has been said amiss. Forgive all that has been contrary to your word and your will, but help us, we pray in our weakness, so to honor and glorify you.

Hear us as we come to the closing part of the service. May even there you be glorified, even in our praise. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. And let's close in Psalm 102 on page 368.

Psalm 102, the second version, page 368, we'll sing from verse 16 down to verse 20, just three stanzas. God in his glory shall appear.

When Zion he builds and repairs, he shall regard and lend his ear unto the needy's humble prayers. Psalm 102 to God's praise.

[38 : 33] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.