

New Life: In the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Father, I thank you so much for the, particularly the songs we were just singing, that we can say together that before the throne of God above we have a strong and perfect plea.

Lord, that's the wonder of being able to sing that surpasses anything that we can do to express it or to really capture it, but we thank you for it.

And Father, because we have a strong and perfect plea before your throne right now, we also know that we can boldly ask to be in your presence right now. And so we ask that your presence would be very strong now as we look at your word, as we look at this wonderful passage that, again, surpasses anything that we could really say about it.

But we ask that your power would be here so that you would grant that these words become a reality in our souls, that we would taste and see that you are good tonight.

That's what we pray. We pray this in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Hi, everybody. Go ahead and sit down. And open your Bibles to page 944.

[1 : 29] We're continuing our series in Romans, and we're looking at Romans chapter 8, as was just read for us by Chris. Like I said, page 944. Please keep it open.

The first 13 verses. This is one of – Chris mentioned that Dr. Packer calls this the summit of Scripture. And it really has to be one of the most precious passages in the Bible.

I mean, you can't – you know, every now and then you hear somebody say, oh, this is the greatest passage in the Bible or something like that. It's kind of weird to say that. You really can't say that about any particular passage.

But it's hard to imagine a passage of Scripture that is more precious to the Christian soul.

It is hard to imagine a passage that is more filled with comfort and strength and assurance than this passage is. And so it's hard to imagine any passage out of all of the pages of Scripture.

[2 : 36] It's hard to imagine a passage that Christians just again and again come back to these verses and find within them precisely the truth that they need and the strength that they need and the untold joy that the Lord promises.

It's just a remarkable passage. And part of the reason that this is a remarkable passage is that when you read these verses, you've got to see that this passage just quivers with confidence.

This passage just – it just overflows. It's like a fountain. It's just overflowing with confidence and assurance about who we are before Jesus as Christians and before the Lord.

I mean, just look at verse 1 for a moment. Paul writes, 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. Now, right there, just no condemnation.

[3 : 46] You've been set free. I mean, you can just hear the confidence in those words. And it's a remarkable confidence. If you've been with us over the past few months, right, you know that we've been walking through Romans.

Do you remember Romans chapters 1, 2, and 3? Do you remember what it was like to go through them? I mean, if you were here, you know, week after week, Paul, the writer of Romans, was convincing us again and again, because apparently we needed to hear it again and again.

He was convincing us again and again that everybody, everybody, absolutely everybody in the world deserves God's condemnation and judgment. Do you remember that?

It doesn't matter if you're religious. It doesn't matter if you're irreligious. It doesn't matter if you're well-behaved. It doesn't matter if you're very, very naughty. All of us, all of us deserve the condemnation and the judgment of God.

That's what Romans 1, 2, 3 are all about. And, you know, I mean, it was mildly disheartening as we went through it. Do you remember? Remember? And it's as if Paul took us right to the bottom of a valley.

[5 : 04] He took us right to the bottom of the valley of hopelessness. I mean, he says, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And now, just in wonderful contrast to that, now, verse 1, he says, Friends, there is therefore now no condemnation.

No condemnation. I mean, it's as if in Romans we've been to the depths of the valley, and now, just like Chris said, that Dr. Packer said, now we're at the top of a mountain, and the air is crisp, and it's fresh.

It's like the sky is blue. It's like Vancouver has been the last few days. And in this passage, friends, Paul wants to convince us. The condemnation and judgment and fear of God's punishment and shame, all of those things are absolutely banished from the Christian life.

I mean, can you imagine that kind of confidence, that kind of assurance? I mean, you can see why, you can appreciate why this passage is so precious to people. And let me tell you part of why this passage is so important for you.

The kind of confidence that Paul wants to instill into our hearts, that kind of confidence is absolutely essential equipment if you want to live a fruitful Christian life.

[6 : 36] Remember last week, Aaron preached through Romans chapter 7. And in Romans chapter 7, you know, Paul talks about how most Christians feel like failures a whole lot of the time.

Right? We want to follow God. We find that we regularly fail to follow God. And at times, we get so discouraged that we're tempted to lose hope. Friends, Romans chapter 8 says, Christian, Christian, in your own strength, you are an absolute failure.

You're right. But God's not a failure. God's not a failure. And he has done and is doing and will do absolutely everything necessary to ensure that you're never going to be contemned, that you're never going to be judged by God, and that you're never going to be put to shame.

And friends, when you and I as Christians can grasp that reality, when you and I can gain a sense of that confidence and assurance in God, not in ourselves, but in God, it will propel your discipleship.

It will propel your discipleship. It's essential equipment if you want to be fruitful. Okay. What I want to show you is that this passage gives us two massive reasons why we can have deep and profound confidence in God and absolute assurance of no condemnation.

[8 : 13] Two reasons. First of all, Jesus shares his destiny with us. That's the first one. Second one is that he shares his spirit with us. First of all, Jesus gives us his destiny.

I am the youngest child in my family. And one of the things that that means is that I know how to irritate people. I know how to make people very, very angry very, very quickly.

And it's, I mean, as a youngest child, it's either a science or an art. Depends. Depends on your perspective. And partially because of my place in my family, I know that if I want to make you angry right now, there's several ways I could do it.

But one of the quickest ways that I could make you angry right now is to make you feel like I'm judging you. So if I could make you feel like I'm condemning you or looking down at you or judging you in some way, that would be one of the quickest ways that I could provoke you to get angry at me, switch me off, be offended, that whole thing.

Now, here's a question. Why is that? Why is it that almost all of us are really, really, really sensitive about being judged and condemned by other people?

[9 : 37] Have you ever thought about that? I mean, it's such a common experience. I mean, it's just obvious. Well, of course we would be offended if somebody judges us or something like that. But why? Why are we so concerned about that?

Now, undoubtedly, there's a bunch of reasons. But it seems like all of us as human beings, or at least almost all of us, we're really insecure. We're fundamentally insecure creatures.

And there's some sneaking suspicion within us, within most of us at least, that we are flawed, that there's something wrong with us. And for some reason, almost all of us in some respect are a little ashamed of ourselves.

And because of that, we have a phobia. We are absolutely afraid of being exposed or being shamed or being judged or being condemned by other people.

We're desperately afraid of it. And so we try to do our best to hide. And if somebody gets through that, if somebody, it seems like, is going to judge us or condemn us, what we usually do is we strike back and we judge them or we condemn them or whatever.

[10:49] We try to, we protect ourselves by striking out in retaliation. Now, earlier in Romans, in Romans chapter 2, what we found out, this was in the chapters that are fairly difficult, what we found out is that our worst nightmare, this is when the bad news comes in, our worst nightmare is true, is going to come true.

In Romans chapter 2, verse 16, Paul says that God will judge the secrets of men's hearts, which is an absolutely frightening prospect for all of us.

What he's saying is that when we die, after we die, all of our sins and all of our flaws will be exposed and judged before an absolutely pure and righteous and holy God.

And that's part of the reason as human beings, when we stare down death, it is so utterly frightening because death stands before all of us as a kind of monument and a reminder to us that condemnation is part of our destiny.

that there will be a day in which we will be judged before God. It's really encouraging, isn't it? Now, look back at this passage, though.

[12:16] And this is where you see the beauty of this passage. Just don't miss it. According to this passage and according to the New Testament, there was one man, one human being, who had a totally different destiny.

There was one human being who had no flaws, no sin, no shame, no fear of condemnation, nothing that he was hiding behind. And, I mean, obviously I'm talking about Jesus.

And in this passage, it says that he came and swapped destinies with us. Look at verse 3. Paul writes, For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do.

By sending his own son, he means Jesus, by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.

Okay, now, what does that mean? It means at least this. The perfect, flawless son of God became one of us. He took upon himself our human nature.

[13:21] And when he died, when he died upon the cross, in that moment, God was judging and condemning all sin in him.

Now, what does that mean for you? Here's what it means for you. If you're a Christian, it means all of your worst flaws, all of your worst failures, all of your sin, all the things that you want to keep secret and that you are absolutely petrified that they would ever become public, all the things that make you ashamed, all of that has already been condemned and judged at the cross.

It means that Jesus lived your kind of worst nightmare on your behalf. He suffered our destiny of condemnation so that we never have to.

And it's more than that. Not only did he take upon himself our destiny of condemnation, but he gave us something in return. He gave us his own destiny of eternal life.

Look at verse 11. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

[14:42] Now, that verse, verse 11, is the reason Christians don't need to be afraid of death. It's why death no longer is a monument of condemnation for us anymore.

Why? Because that passage says that the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, the same spirit that breathed life into the dead body of Jesus on Easter morning 2,000 years ago, that same spirit is going to do the exact same thing for every single Christian who dies.

And you've got to see the switch that has taken place. Our destiny was condemnation and death. Jesus' destiny was eternal life.

And Jesus swapped the two. He took upon himself our condemnation and he gave us his destiny of eternal life. Now, do you see, friends, why when we come to this passage, why we can be so absolutely wonderfully confident before the throne of God above?

Because there is now no condemnation because all the condemnation that could possibly ever assault you has been vanquished at the cross of Christ.

[16:03] And your future is, if you're a Christian, your future is absolutely assured. Your future will be won after you die and God raises you back to life.

You will spend eternity eternity before God without any fear, without any shame, without any need for secrets, without any need to hide from other people, without any fear of relationship with other people.

Isn't part of the reason we're so afraid to get into close relationships with other people is we're afraid they're going to condemn us. Isn't that why? That'll be gone. And friends, there are people here you've been Christians for a long time and yet you have lived tortured by condemnation.

Friends, listen to the word of God. The word of God that was so powerful that it created the universe. Genesis said that God spoke creation into existence.

And this word, the word of God says to you there is now no condemnation for you. Not in Christ Jesus. There is freedom.

[17 : 26] Okay, the first reason we can have such confidence before God is because Jesus has given us his destiny. It's ours. If you belong to Jesus, your destiny is certain. There's a second reason we can have confidence and assurance in this passage and it's because Jesus gives us his spirit every day.

Look at verse 5. 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. Okay, what does that mean?

What does it mean to live according to the flesh? What does it mean to live according to the spirit? What does it mean to set your mind on the things of the flesh, set your mind on the things of the spirit? I want you to think to try to understand these verses, I want you to think about the way we use the word orientation.

This may be a little odd. I don't know if it'll work, but let's try. In popular usage, when we say that somebody is athletically oriented, or we say that somebody is academically oriented, or we say somebody is mechanically oriented, what do we mean by that? Usually what we mean is that we're talking about that somebody has a deep, fundamental intention or preference in a particular direction. They're kind of attracted in a particular direction, attracted to academics, or attracted to mechanics, or attracted to athletics, something like that. And that attraction within them then motivates their desires, their interests. It motivates their decisions, you know, what job they might go into or something like that, what sorts of things they study. And it motivates their actions. When Paul talks about flesh and spirit, he's talking about something very similar. When Paul talks about the flesh, he's talking about a deep, fundamental preference to live, not close with God, but the opposite, independently from God, autonomous from God.

And because we have this deep, fundamental preference to live independently from God, that preference then motivates our desires, it motivates our decisions, it motivates our actions. And that's why verse 7 says, that the flesh, this deep orientation to reject God and live for ourselves, the flesh is always hostile to God. It says we, you know, if you're in the flesh, you can't submit to God because you're oriented away from God. You can't please God because you don't want God. You don't want to please God, you want to run away from him. Okay, according to the book of Romans, this, the flesh is our default orientation.

[20 : 23] You're born this way. And there was one exception, though. And one exception, again, is Jesus. Jesus is the one person who was born with the absolutely opposite orientation. Instead of having a deep, fundamental orientation away from God, Jesus was born with a deep, fundamental orientation towards God. He was always attracted towards God.

And that preference for God, above all other things, is the thing that motivated his desires, it motivated his decisions, it motivated all of his actions. Now, here's the question. What caused that motivation, that orientation within Jesus? You say, well, I mean, he's Jesus.

It's just, isn't that obvious? Well, particularly if you look at the gospel of Luke, it becomes, it becomes pretty clear that it was the Holy Spirit in Jesus that was giving him that deep orientation towards God and away from sin.

Now, watch this. According to this passage, the Holy Spirit's job is to give Jesus' orientation toward God to us.

The job of the Holy Spirit is to give us a deep, fundamental preference for God above all other things, and it's that preference for God above all other things that motivates our, again, our desires, our decisions, and our actions.

[21 : 57] Let me try to illustrate this. If you're a Christian, see if you can identify with this. You may not be able to, but if you're a Christian, have you ever noticed that when you sin, you know you're

not supposed to do something, you do something, and right the minute after you sin, whatever it is, have you ever noticed that you feel sick about it?

Now, it's not just that you feel guilty. It's not just, I mean, when a little kid gets caught with a hand in the cookie jar, the little kid might feel guilty, but he's not sickened by the cookie.

Okay? Something happens when a Christian sins. Quite often, it's not just that we feel guilty. It's that we feel sickened by the sin. It's that all of a sudden, the minute after you sin, you look at it, and it just looks ugly to you, and you hate the sin.

Why does that happen? Why does your stomach turn? Why do you hate the sin? Why does that happen? The reason is that the Holy Spirit is in the process of giving you a new orientation.

The Holy Spirit is working inside you, making sin increasingly vomitous. I don't know if that's a word, but you know what I mean. And making God increasingly attractive.

[23 : 31] And in our experience, as the Spirit is making that change of fundamental orientation, we increasingly, we're still tempted by sin because the process is still going, and we fall into it, but the minute we do, we despise it.

It's not just guilt. And it makes us want to run back to God. No, we don't want to stay in our sin. We don't want to. Now, friends, the presence of the Spirit in your life, doing that work should fill you with utter confidence before God.

Why? Think about it with me. If the Holy Spirit was powerful enough to see Jesus through his temptations, and through his sufferings, and through his death, then the Holy Spirit is absolutely strong enough to see you and I through our temptations, through our sufferings, and through our own death.

The Holy Spirit in you as a Christian is more than powerful enough to see you through to the end. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians that he who began a good work in you is faithful to bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

And Romans chapter 8 is saying the Spirit will get it done. You can trust the Spirit to get it done.

Okay, I need to stop, but I want to point out one last thing.

[24 : 59] I said at the beginning that this passage is absolutely quivering with confidence. It's just overflowing with assurance. And Paul wants us to be confident about our future destiny, that there is no condemnation for us.

He wants us to be confident before God, and he wants us to be confident each day as we walk along the Christian life, because the Holy Spirit is giving us a new orientation towards God, away from sin and towards the Lord.

But do you know why Paul wants us to be so confident? It's partially because of this. Christians who are confident are Christians who are most fruitful.

Why do I say that? Friends, the Christian life is really hard. Okay, we saw that last week in Romans chapter 7. It's really hard. And Paul, in verse 13, in chapter 8, he says that we have to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

He says you've got to execute the deeds of the flesh. He uses really strong language there, because putting to death the deeds of the flesh, it's hard. Sometimes it feels violent to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

[26 : 14] And in your Christian experience, much of the time, you will feel like a failure. You will feel, as you grow up and become a more mature Christian, so often, in that process, you begin to see your own sin more clearly.

And sometimes, it seems like the longer you're a Christian, the more sin you have to deal with. It's not the case, but it seems that way often, because you can see your sin more clearly. And friends, at those moments, when you are tempted to be hopeless, and you are tempted to despair, those are the moments that you need confidence.

Not confidence in yourself. I mean, that's stupid. Not confidence in your ability. Confidence in Jesus. Confidence in Jesus, because he's shared his destiny with you, and he doesn't share his destiny.

It's not empty words. He's going to see it done. And you need to be confident that the Spirit is at work within you. And the Spirit doesn't take up a project and then drop it aside.

The Spirit starts a project and he sees it done. And even right now, the Holy Spirit is reorienting your heart. He's rewiring your heart so that you hate sin and love God more.

[27 : 30] And if you have that sort of confidence, then you will have hope when the times are hard to keep going. Friends, confident Christians, assured Christians, are fruitful Christians because they're persevering Christians.

And friends, that's why this passage is so precious to us. That's why I want you to come back to this passage a lot. I want you to read this passage a lot.

I want you to come back to... Forget I want you. God wants you to read this passage because He wants to minister it to your soul so that you hear Him say, there is no condemnation before me. There's no more condemnation and I will see it done. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. when I say Lord in your mercy you can respond with your prayer dear God we thank you for this weekend we thank you for the sunshine and the beautiful snowy mountains we thank you for the full moon and the clear nights we had Lord it was just beautiful and we thank you for it we thank you that we can come here to cap off our weekend we thank you for the freedom to meet and to worship you and to learn your word Lord we thank you for the message of your word tonight we thank you that we can have confidence before you we thank you that Jesus has taken our sin and our condemnation upon himself and he's taken it upon the cross and Lord we thank you that he's not only done this but that he's given us your eternal life

[29 : 57] Lord we pray that you send us your spirit to help us be oriented towards you to help us turn from our sin to help us be like Jesus Lord in your mercy hear our prayer Lord we thank you for St. John's and we thank you for all the ministries that run out of here Lord please sustain these ministries help them to continue doing your work help them to continue drawing people closer to you Lord we think especially of of the Romans day coming up next week we thank you for for Dr. Packer and for David and for the teaching that they're going to be doing and the access that we have to that Lord it is fantastic help it to be a real fruitful day and help us to learn from your word Lord we also pray for the upcoming forum service and and the visitor and the visitor service in in the church coming up in the next few weeks we pray that that we would be able to invite people to them and that many would come to know you through it

Lord in your mercy Lord we pray for Vancouver this is a city that is really spiritually thirsty God and Lord many Vancouverites look to the wrong place to quench the spiritual thirst dear God I pray that this week that someone will look up to the mountains that we have in Vancouver and see that that you're the majestic one who created those mountains and that you're the only thing worth hoping in or pursuing in in this in this world Lord help us to be ready to be used by you this week help us to further your kingdom through our conversations with our friends Lord in your mercy Lord we lift up your world to you the governments of the world are on your shoulders and you alone are the prince of peace Lord we especially lift up Egypt to you we pray that you raise up a government that will represent that country well and that you will turn the state of uncertainty and turmoil into a state of order freedom and peace

Lord we pray the same for other countries at war or suffering from natural disaster or famine or people in poverty or under an unjust government Lord in your mercy and now will you join me as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us our father in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done on earth as in heaven give us today your daily bread forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen thanks Colin let's stand together let's stand and sing a last song two things are going to happen during the song one offering basket is going to go around and two people will be available to pray with you if you are having at ISery put it forth you you