

Paul's Letter to the ROMANS

UNIT SEVEN Life in the Spirit

The Spirit and the Flesh (8:1-13)

- There is 'now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' – this recalls the argument of 7:6.
- Divine condemnation for sin has been experienced by Christ in his death.
- There is no reason why those who are 'in Christ Jesus' should go on doing penal servitude as though they had not been pardoned.
- The power of the Spirit (8:2)
 - In chapter 7 Paul discussed how the law can bring death rather than life, but also brings a new master for those led by the Spirit.
 - "The law of the Spirit of life" appears to be a reference to the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.
 - With the coming of the Holy Spirit, sin is no longer the sole determiner of present conduct or the final determiner of ultimate destiny.

- The implicit warning of 8:5-13 is that Christians may still allow their whole lives to be dominated by the weaknesses of the flesh.
- The challenge to go on being ruled by the Spirit would be pointless if the power of the flesh was not a continuing reality for the believer.
- The purpose of the Spirit (8:3-II)
 - Paul explains how we can be released from condemnation and experience the liberating new life of the Spirit.
 - The law of God could not achieve this because of the way human nature reacts to law – God had to send his Son to the rescue.
 - He came to offer his perfectly obedient life as a sacrifice ‘for sin’.
 - God’s condemnation of sin took place when Christ experienced the full weight of God’s wrath against sin at his death.
 - God’s purpose was to free us from that condemnation and thus to fulfil ‘the just requirements of the law’ for us.
 - Therefore, there is no condemnation – through Christ we have been justified, that is, reckoned as righteous before him.
 - The gift of the Spirit to those who are justified by faith brings about that obedience from the heart which the law demanded.
 - Christians “walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”.
 - To live according to the Spirit is to conduct your life under the Spirit’s direction and control.
 - The basis of this life is setting your mind on living ‘according to the Spirit’ rather than ‘on the things of the flesh’.
 - The results of these two different minds are death on the one hand and life and peace on the other.
 - The mind that is set on the flesh must have death as its fruit because it is fundamentally hostile to God and will not submit to his rule.

- Those who have been justified by faith in Christ are indwelt by the Spirit of God and are, by God's grace, already 'in the Spirit'.
 - This indwelling brings new life in the present, even though our bodies continue to move towards physical death as a result of sin.
 - A mind set on the Spirit is one which looks back to the death of Jesus and also ahead to the day of redemption which it guarantees.
- The impetus of the Spirit (8:12-13)
 - Paul says that we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to it.
 - Now that we have been justified through Christ, all obligations to the flesh have been discharged.
 - We no longer owe any debts – Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the law for us and set us free from that 'law of sin and death'.
 - Yielding to the flesh is possible, but we have an obligation to holiness.
 - Each of us must choose between the way of life and the way of death.
 - There is no doubt about the choice that we are obliged to make.
 - The promise for those who live by the Spirit is that our mortal bodies will one day rise again.

The Spirit and sonship (8:14-39)

- A new relationship (8:14-16)
 - Those who are truly the children of God are led by the Spirit of God, both in guidance for life and specifically in the battle with sin.
 - The Spirit received by Christians brings about adoption, enabling us to share in Christ's sonship.

- The fact that we can call God 'Abba! Father!' is a result of the gift of the Spirit and indicates the reality of our adoption.
 - To relate to God as Father does not just mean calling him Father in prayer, but rather seeking with all our heart to please him.
 - The idea of being children of God leads into the subject of inheritance and the Christian hope.
 - We look forward to sharing 'the glory of God' – all that we lost in Adam will be restored, we will be raised to glory as Jesus was.
- **Suffering and sonship (8:17-27)**
 - Christians sometimes find it hard to reconcile the idea that they must suffer with the idea of God as a loving father.
 - Paul links our suffering with Christ's suffering, indicating that it is a necessary part of being glorified with Christ.
 - He believes that suffering, no matter how severe, cannot be compared with 'the glory that is to be revealed to us'.
 - Believers are already 'sons of God' in this life but that sonship will not be made public until the resurrection day.
 - The creation as we know it now is characterised by futility – not being able to properly fulfil the purpose of its existence.
 - In this environment suffering is experienced by everyone in some form, but not necessarily in proportion to their sins.
 - God's plan is for the creation to be liberated when the children of God experience the liberty of being glorified with Christ.
 - Creation is described as 'groaning' like a woman in travail waiting for God's saving purposes to be fulfilled.
 - Christians share in this, experiencing the Spirit's work as a foretaste and pledge of the full glory which is to come.
 - In this situation, 'the Spirit helps us in our weakness' – he does this by bringing the needs and longings of believers before God.
 - God understands the sort of wordless prayers that the Spirit prompts in us, and we have assurance that God will answer.

- The Spirit longs for new creation and our ultimate redemption – the mind set on what the Spirit desires is set on this future hope.
- The future is ours! (8:28-39)
 - God works all things – even suffering – ‘for good’ for ‘those who love him’, so that they might be ‘conformed to the image of his Son’.
 - Conformity will be complete until believers are glorified with Christ, but change is progressive and suffering is part of that.
 - Verses 29 and 30 indicate how God fulfils his purposes.
 - The final verses underline the certainty of the Christian hope – since God has shown himself to be decisively ‘for us’, there is no-one whose hostility we need fear.
 - Paul acknowledges that various forms of affliction may await us, but nothing can snatch us from God’s grasp.
 - Jesus’ presence at the ‘right hand of God’ is the guarantee of our acceptance by God.
 - The quote from Psalm 44 identifies the Christian experience with the suffering of God’s people through the ages.
 - It is in enduring such tribulation and being sustained by his power that we are shown to be ‘more than conquerors through him who loved us’.
 - No power will be able to separate us from ‘the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’.