

introduction

Most people know what it feels like to want change in their lives but to keep falling into the same patterns. We make promises to ourselves, adjust our habits, and redouble our efforts, and yet certain fears, desires, and sins keep resurfacing. Romans 8 shows us that the Spirit has a sin-crushing power: a Christian can put to death their sinful nature through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul reminds followers of Jesus that the gospel is not only about forgiveness for the past but also about freedom and transformation in the present. Through Jesus, there is “no condemnation” for those who belong to him, and through the Holy Spirit, Christians are given real power to resist sin and live differently. This discussion invites us to wrestle with both the comfort and challenge of Romans 8: If we are truly free from condemnation and alive by the Spirit, what might it actually look like to live that way day by day?



What’s one habit, mindset, or fear that used to have a strong hold on you but has weakened considerably in its power over your life now? What helped change that?

read **Romans 8:1-13 (NIV)**

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For 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, ⁴ in 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.

⁵ Those 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.

⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, 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. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And 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.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For 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.

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

context

Romans 8 is a wonderful, rich, dense passage. While the Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times in this chapter, the focus is less on the Spirit himself and more on what the Spirit does for the Christian: assuring them that they belong to Christ and have a secure future life with God. In Romans 8:1-13, Paul moves through three interconnected sections. First, he recapitulates what he has written in the letter thus far: that those in Christ are under no condemnation and can live in freedom (vv. 1-4). Second, he contrasts two kinds of people: those living in the flesh and those living by the Spirit (vv. 5-11). Finally, he calls those living by the Spirit (i.e. Christians) to do just that by putting to death their sinful nature (vv. 12-13).

no condemnation for those living by the Spirit

Paul begins with one of the most comforting statements in the Bible: “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Condemnation is a legal word that means absorbing punishment that is due to you based on laws broken or debts owed. Paul is saying that Christians are not merely tolerated by God or given another chance; they are fully justified, exempt from all punishment and judgment because they are in Christ Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law on their behalf, and his perfect record is credited to their account. In Christ, the verdict over the Christian’s life is settled forever.

This freedom comes because God has done what the law (in this case, the Mosaic law) could never do. The law could reveal sin but it could not provide anyone with the power to obey the law. Human beings apart from Christ could only experience the law as revealing their sin and condemning them to death. Those who are in Christ Jesus, however, are now freed from the burden of relating to the law as a way to save themselves, and are now enabled to be ruled by the Spirit.

Paul contrasts two kinds of people: Christians, who are governed by the Spirit, and people who are not Christians, who are governed by the flesh. The “flesh” is not referring to our physical body in distinction from our spiritual dimension; rather, it refers to a life oriented around self-rule, self-absorption, and self-love. By contrast, Christians are people whose entire lives are animated by and lived under the governance of the Spirit. As a result of what Christ has done, the Spirit comes into the lives of those who belong to Christ, awakens and directs their desires to live for Christ, and is the guarantee of their future bodily resurrection.

“The end God had in view when sending his Son was not our justification only, through freedom from the condemnation of the law, but also our holiness, through obedience to the commandments of the law.”

—John Stott

discuss

1. **What does it practically mean for a Christian’s day-to-day life that they are free from all condemnation? What would it look like for you if you lived as if this were really true? How would your relationship with God change if you deeply believed that the verdict over your life was already settled in Christ?**

2. The “flesh” and the “Spirit” are two ways of being or living. How would you describe these two ways of being? How do each of these two ways manifest themselves in our lives?

putting sin to death by the Spirit

The believer’s new relationship to Christ and the Spirit has consequences for their day-to-day life. They “have no more obligation to the flesh, to live according to it, to follow its desires or obey its will.... [Like] freed slaves who might, out of habit, obey their old masters even after being released — “legally” and “positionally” — from them, so we Christians can still listen to and heed the voice of that old master of ours, the flesh.” (Moo)

Rather, since the Christian is indwelt by the Spirit, they are to live in accord with that same Spirit rather than the flesh. The aspect of living by the Spirit that Paul highlights here is “putting to death the misdeeds of the body.” The *misdeeds of the body* refer to any thought, action, inclination, or behavior that centers the self in the avoidance of loving God — or in other words, *sin*. So to live by the Spirit means ongoing “mortification,” or putting sin to death. This is not about earning salvation, but about living consistently with the new life we have already received in Christ.

Although believers will always wrestle with indwelling sin on this side of glory, they can nevertheless live by the Spirit in such a way that dramatically lessens the effects of sin’s destructive power in their lives. This hard work of mortification is the way to life and peace (v. 6). “Only as we submit to the Spirit’s control and direction, turning away from the ‘fleshly’ life-style, will we be able to *live*.” (Moo)

Mortification goes deeper than behavior modification. Our presenting sins are often more deeply rooted in our hearts as idols, and the discipline of mortification involves identifying our deep idols. For example, overwork is often much more than a scheduling issue, but a craving for approval (what a boss or colleague will think of me) or control (the more accomplished I am, the more power I’ll have to control my life) or security (if I work hard enough then I’ll have enough money to have a secure future). To address “overwork,” then, requires more than simply changing one’s schedule, but the deeper work of identifying our idols and discovering the ways that the gospel truly provides what we’re seeking after in our idol. Jesus is not just

beautiful in the abstract; he is beautiful in ways that are personal to our own ongoing temptations and struggles.

“The life, vigor, and comfort of our spiritual life depend much on our mortification of sin.”

—John Owen

discuss

3. How is mortification of sin (“putting to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit”) different from modifying our behaviors or changing our habits?
4. Are there recurrent sins or struggles in your life that might reveal deeper idols, fears, or desires underneath? How does the gospel — the beauty and wonder of Jesus and what he’s done for us — specifically address what our hearts are longing for in these instances in your life?
5. What does it practically look like to “put sin to death by the Spirit” rather than through guilt, shame, or willpower alone? In other words, how does the Spirit practically help us in daily resisting the power of sin?

upcoming

- Saturday, May 16 | **Young Adults: Salsa into Spring, 6:30-9 pm**
All young adults (21+) are invited for an evening of Latin rhythm, food and fun! Limited spots are available; register by May 9 for early bird pricing.
redeemerws.com/salsa
- Sunday, May 17 | **Quiz & Tell: A Trivia Event, 3:30-4:45 pm**
Facts - food - fun! Bring yourself, bring some friends if you want, just don't forget to bring it on because there will be prizes! Let's celebrate all the random knowledge we've tucked away and can finally justify storing.
redeemerws.com/trivia
- Sunday, May 17 | **Membership Class, 1:15-2:30 pm**
This is a pre-requisite class for becoming a church member. This class is the last opportunity to get started on membership until the fall.
redeemerws.com/membership