

## The Life You're Designed to Live

2/22/15

We take our text this morning from Romans 8:1-17. I am reading from the New International Version.<sup>1</sup>

Rom 8:1-17

*8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

*5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

*9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

*12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.<sup>2</sup>*

During the last few weeks we have been laying foundation for what God is saying to us in Romans 8. We talked about the great exchange that occurred at the cross.<sup>3</sup> There God placed our sin on Jesus so that He could justly give to us Christ's righteousness. That right standing before God is given to all who will receive it by faith as a gift of grace. Eph 2:8-9, "For it is by

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<sup>1</sup> The NIV communicates more clearly than some of the other versions in this chapter. The NIV uses "the sinful nature" whereas the KJV uses "the flesh" to translate the Greek term *sarx*. *Sarx* is used in this context to refer to the natural human nature with its carnal frailties and passions. The presence of sin remains in the believer's physical body until the day of resurrection. At the resurrection, the body will be raised incorruptible, without the presence of sin. Although a believer's spirit has been made alive (Eph. 2:5; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:16) at the new birth, the propensity toward sin still remains in the body and the mind needs to be renewed (Rom. 12:1-2). Therefore, believers must choose in their daily lives to yield to the Spirit of God within, rather than the desires of their sinful nature (Rom. 6:13; Gal. 5:16-17).

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> See "The Cross: Absolutely Essential" preached Feb. 1, 2015 (Part 1) and Feb. 8, 2015 (Part 2).

*grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

The Judge of All the Earth has ruled on the matter and we read from His decree in Romans 6:14 *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”* That is the Good News of the gospel: Not only that you have a home in heaven, but you are made a new creature in Christ, you are righteous in the eyes of God because of the great exchange that occurred at Calvary, and in the here and now you can live in victory.

But appropriating all of that into our daily lives proves more challenging than we thought. As a new creature in Christ we passionately want to please our Heavenly Father. He has shed His love abroad in our hearts and we set out to do the will of God in our lives. Then we find ourselves in Romans 7. We encounter a struggle that takes us by surprise. Romans 7:15 *“For what am I doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate I do.”* Can anybody here relate to that experience? The more sincere you are, the more intense the struggle seems to be. People who have no desire to please God do not have this struggle. It’s people who want to do right who experience the frustrations we read about in Romans 7. All this culminates in a cry for help at the end of the chapter. Rom 7:24 *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* I am so glad for the answer that comes in the next verse, *“Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* I said this last week, but it is so important I want to say it again. It is not God’s intention that any of us stay in the Romans 7 experience. Unfortunately, that is where most Christians live.

Why do we go through this struggle? Paul gives the reason in Rom 7:18 (NKJV) *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”* Experientially, how is this done? How do we come into a place of successful obedience to God’s will? If trying hard would have done it, I would have already succeeded. But there is something I have to learn to make this work.

What do I need to do to live the life I was designed to live?

### I. Acknowledge that only Christ can make it happen!

Grace is not just for being born again. God’s grace (divine influence) is essential for the whole journey. So the answer to the cry for help is Romans 7:25 *“Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* The fundamental mistake is to think you can bring all this about; that you will live holy for God by trying very, very hard. And going about it that way ends in a whole lot of frustration. But the frustrating experience is designed to teach you dependence on the Lord—not just for your initial experience but for every step of the way. *“For”* (Eph. 2:10) *“we are God’s workmanship....”* God has to bring it about.

What do we need to do to live the life God designed us to live?

### II. Recognize the right standing you have before God because of Jesus.

Romans 8:1, *“Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

The Greek word translated “condemnation” means an adverse verdict. Those who receive Christ by faith are declared not guilty by God, because Jesus bore the punishment for our sin on the cross.

Rom 4:7-8 *“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

A key weapon Satan uses against believers is accusation. Rev. 12:10 calls him *“the accuser of our brethren.”* God has declared you “not guilty.” Satan will tell you that God’s decree doesn’t

count. You have not performed well enough, so you are condemned. We overcome those lies by “the blood of the Lamb.” We don’t try to argue our goodness. We declare Jesus’ goodness and the free gift of His righteousness.

It’s important to distinguish between the condemnation that Satan tries to put on us verses the conviction of sin that the Holy Spirit works in our lives. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, He is very specific about what was done wrong and how to correct it. When the Devil is condemning you with his accusations, he speaks in generalities and does not point you to the blood of Jesus as a solution. He wants to leave you in a mental state of torment with no way out. When he has us in that mental state, we have a hard time exercising faith in God. That’s why the old timers would tell a Christian to “plead the blood.” It meant to put your faith in Christ’s death on the cross as the only basis of your justification before God, as the only basis of victory over Satan.

It is unfortunate that the KJV added this statement to Romans 8:1 “...who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” The best manuscripts do not have that qualification and most scholars agree that it is not included in the original text.<sup>4</sup> The statement God makes in Romans 8:1 one is simple and straight forward, “*Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” That declaration is not qualified by our good performance. Even if a Christian is indulging his sinful nature, he is not under the condemning judgment of God that the unbeliever is under. He is under the consequence of his disobedience. He will reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7-8). He will experience correction from God (Heb. 12:5-8). It never pays to sin! Those in covenant with God through Christ are not under condemnation.<sup>5</sup> When a Christian does not recognize that, he is severely hampered in his walk with God and in his ministry. Learn to use Romans 8:1 as a sharp sword against the Accuser, “*Therefore, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*” Period!

What do we need to do to live the life God designed us to live?

### III. Rely on the influence of the Holy Spirit in you for victory.

Romans 8:2 “*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*” The confusing thing about that sentence is that Paul had previously used the word law (Greek word: *nomos*) to refer to the Law of Moses and does so in Romans 8:4. But that is not what he is referring to here. Here in Romans 8:2 he uses the word *nomos* or law to mean a principle of operation.<sup>6</sup> So he is saying “There is a principle of sin that you have to contend with. But a greater principle has come into your life: the influence of the Holy Spirit in you. Let me illustrate what Paul is saying this way. The law or principle of gravity would normally cause this Bible to fall to the ground. But the principle of my strength in operation offsets gravity and renders it ineffectual concerning this book.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For example, Greek (Nestle-Aland) reads: Ouden ara nun katakrima tois en Christo lesou. See Rom 8:1 Analysis in Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, (Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

<sup>5</sup> The one qualifier in Rom. 8:1 is the phrase “in Christ Jesus” which is based on the covenant relationship with God the person has come into by faith. Being “in Christ” we are justified (Rom. 3:22-26; 5:1; Gal. 2:16) and accepted by God (Eph. 1:3-5).

<sup>6</sup> Rom 8:2 “the regulative principle” (from Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

<sup>7</sup> I heard this illustration from a message by Derik Prince years ago. I have heard others illustrate the point with the law of aerodynamics overcoming the law of gravity so that an airplane stays in the air. It is essential that God’s people understand this point so that they rest their faith on the Spirit of Christ to overcome sin.

The principle of sin is present to pull us down, but the life of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit makes us free from its dominance.

So rely upon the life of Christ<sup>8</sup> in you to overpower the power of sin. In everything we do, a crucial question is what am I relying on? Jesus told the disciples, “*Have faith in God*” (Mark 11:22). My problem in Romans 7 was too much reliance on my own ability and resolve. The answer in Romans 8 is reliance on the life of Christ in me (the influence of the Holy Spirit) instead of self-effort.

Jesus illustrated this in John 15:5 when He said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*” (NKJV). All the usefulness, all the fruitfulness of a branch is dependent upon the life it draws from the vine/trunk. If you disconnect that branch from the life flow of the vine, it fails in its purpose; it dries up and dies. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, we are nothing. The expression of His life in us is the key to victory.<sup>9</sup>

Romans 8:3 “*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did....*” Now here he is referring to the Law of Moses or any effort to attain righteousness through human effort. What was the weakness of the Law? Paul has already said in previous chapters that the Law is good and holy (Rom. 7:12, 14; Gal. 3:21-25). There is nothing wrong with the commandments of God. The problem is this: human flesh is not able to do what it requires. The natural man is powerless to obey the Law. So no one can be justified by keeping the Law, because no one can keep it. That’s why God sent His Son to die on the cross and provide a way of righteousness by faith that is effectual.

But notice the outcome (end objective) of God’s plan of grace. Romans 8:4 “*in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*” Here is the prevalent error in the Church today. You’ve got the vast majority of Christians living in Romans 7, being overcome by their sinful nature. Instead of reaching the point of desperation and breakthrough that Paul talks about at the end of Chapter 7, they justify the state of defeat. They look around and the others seem to be in about the same state. So they accept this as the normal Christian life. They are assured that they are saved by grace and it will all work out some day; but they are not adequately challenged to move into their inheritance and victory now. In the mean time they live defeated lives. But Romans 8 says the life of Christ in you has freed you from the law of sin and death. You have to live in it, but it is there for the taking. The righteous requirements of the law can and should be fulfilled in us. We can live holy lives pleasing to God.<sup>10</sup>

What are the righteous requirements of the law? Jesus summed up all the Law and Prophets with two simple commandments. “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Matt 22:37-39

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<sup>8</sup> When Christ ascended to the Father after His resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit as His representative on earth (John 16:7). It is the Holy Spirit who comes to us in the new birth (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13), and comes to us with empowerment for service (Acts 4:31; 8:12-17; 1 Cor. 12:7-11). Christ lives in the believer through the third person of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit).

<sup>9</sup> The issue of what we are relying on becomes particularly important when we talk about the means of grace, such as prayer, fasting, worship, meditation, communion, etc. because what is done outwardly may appear the same—but if we do these trusting in the efficiency of our own efforts, it becomes dead works. If we do these in obedience, trusting in the Spirit of God then grace (divine influence) flows in our lives.

<sup>10</sup> 1 John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Titus 2:11-12.

NKJV). The end objective of the Law is love. Rom 13:8-10 states this as well, “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"*” (NKJV).

“...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.” Yes, salvation is by grace from beginning to end. We don’t begin in the Spirit and then finish up in our own strength.<sup>11</sup> We depend upon the life of Christ for our justification and for our sanctification, for our initial experience and for our whole journey. But that grace is not a cover for living in sin;<sup>12</sup> it is empowerment to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law.

So how do we experience the daily victory that is provided for us by this great salvation?

I. We acknowledge that only Christ in us can bring it about. Romans 7:25 “*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*”

II. We recognize the right standing before God that He has provided to us as a gift. Romans 8:1, “*Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” We “recon” (Rom. 6:11) that decree to be true and reliable.

III. We rely on the power/influence of the Holy Spirit in us to be greater than the influence of sin.

Romans 8:2 “*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*”

Notice all this requires faith in God and what He does for us. This is counter-intuitive for our natural thinking. We have been program to depend upon our own efforts, our own resolve. So God has to reveal these principles to our hearts. And He is faithful to do that!<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Galatians 3:1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Rom. 6:1-2; Jude 4.

<sup>13</sup> The next message is scheduled to deal with Romans 8:5 and how our thought life affects our walk with God.

## The Life You're Designed to Live

2/22/15

Intro:

A. Text: **Rom. 8:1-17** (NIV)

B. Review: Exchange at Cross

Journey from Rom. 6 toward Rom. 8

Struggle of Rom. 7:15 to desperation (vs 24) to answer (vs 25)

C. What do I need to do to live the life God has designed me to live?

I. Acknowledge that only Christ can make it happen!

(Rom. 7:25) "*Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Not through trying harder)  
Grace (divine influence) not just for being born again—but for whole journey.

II. Recognize what God has already done!

(Rom. 8:1) "*Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

- Condemnation (from Accuser) v Conviction (from Holy Spirit)
- Best manuscripts no qualifier ( is simply "in Christ Jesus)

III. Rely on influence of Holy Spirit (life of Christ) in you.

(Rom. 8:2) "*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*"

A. Law = principle of operation

- Sin is present to pull us down,  
but rely on life of Christ in you to overpower operation of sin.
- Gal. 2: 20 "...*Christ lives in me....*"

B. Crucial Question = What am I relying on? (Rom. 7 problem) (John 15:5 solution)

C. Weakness of the Law (works approach, esp. Law of Moses)

(Rom. 8:3) "*For what the law was powerless to do  
in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did....*".

D. Outcome of God's plan of grace in our lives:

(Rom. 8:4) "*in order that the righteous requirements of the law be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*"

- Prevalent error of church today: Keep living in Rom. 7, everybody else is.
- What are "*the righteous requirements of the Law*"? Matt. 22:37-39 & Rom. 13:8-10