

SERMON NOTES
Romans 8:1-17
“Life in the Spirit”

Intro:

- ***Are you satisfied with your Christian life?***
- **What words would you use to describe your current experience as a Christian?**
- ***Growing? Fulfilled? Joyful? Exciting? Vital? Dynamic?***
- **Up and down? Struggling? Disappointing? Frustrated? Discouraged? Defeated? Stuck? Mediocre?**
- ***Do you desire more?***

The world is filled with dissatisfied Christians

--they have tried Christianity and the church – and they have concluded that Christianity does not work

--perhaps they have dropped out of church and given up on the Christian life – or perhaps they still attend church and go through the motions for the sake of appearances – but no longer do they expect to actually experience the Life and Power of the risen Christ in any real and life-changing way

And, of course, dissatisfied Christians are ineffective witnesses for Christ

--disappointed in their Christian experience – they have nothing to say

--why would they recommend Christianity for others when their own Christian experience has been such a let-down?

- I was a dissatisfied, disillusioned, frustrated, defeated, guilt-ridden Christian at the beginning of my freshman year at the Univ. of Iowa
- *I was born-again, I believed the Bible was the Word of God, I believed I was going to heaven through faith in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior – I was very active in church and youth group activities from the age of 6 all the way through high school*
- *I was not involved in any major sins or immorality*
- **Yet I was a carnal Christian and ready to give up on the Christian life – I tried hard to live for Christ – and yet was experiencing no joy or victory or fruit in my life or service or witness**
- *I was experiencing nothing of the power of the living Christ in my life – and saw very little evidence of Christ’s Resurrection Power in the Christians around me*
- There was a huge disconnect between the dynamic Christianity I read about in the NT and the impotent Christianity I was experiencing and observing

- Before giving up on the Christian life in college, I decided to go to a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting – if nothing else, to look over some freshman girls
- *To my surprise, there I met some Christians – both students and staff – who were genuinely enthusiastic about their relationship with Jesus and loved talking about him – with other believers and with unbelievers alike*
- *I kept going to the meetings to find out what they had that I didn't have – why were they so excited to be Christians when I was so discouraged that I was ready to give it up altogether?*
- It was through CCC that I learned about the ministry of the Holy Spirit
- *One night in October I took home from a meeting a Campus Crusade booklet entitled: **The Christian and the Holy Spirit***
- An article by Bill Bright entitled “*You Shall Receive Power*” began with these words: ***Has it ever occurred to you that there could be much more to the Christian life than what you are now experiencing?***
- I was hooked – and I kept reading until I soon found myself on my knees beside my bed in my dorm room confessing my sins and asking the Holy Spirit to fill, control and empower my life and witness
- *My life changed dramatically from that day forward – and I'm in the ministry today because of that encounter with the Holy Spirit and His subsequent work in my life*
- **Romans 7 describes the experience of a carnal or dissatisfied Christian – not the kind living in willful rebellion against God – but rather the kind that is trying to please God in his own power and failing miserably – the kind that says: *I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out, and I end up doing what I do not want to do.***
- **Romans 8 describes God's provision for living a dynamic and satisfying Christian life: namely, the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit**

I. THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Romans 8:1-2 ¹So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.

- ***Humanity has three major insoluble problems:***

- (1) We stand guilty and condemned before a holy and just God because of our sin and rebellion and self-centeredness and failure to love and honor God and our repeated violations of God's moral law**
- (2) We are enslaved to the power of sin that causes us to do things we don't want to do and to violate our own values and principles and makes us impotent to break bad habits**
- (3) We are powerless in the face of death**

- No moral or religious law can solve these problems:
- *Religion can teach us right from wrong but cannot give us the power to do what is right and turn away from what is wrong*
- *Religious Law condemns sinners and law-breakers but cannot justly pardon their wrong-doing or empower them to live right*
- Religion is powerless to overcome the power of Death

- *The Gospel of Jesus Christ – and only the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers these solutions to these problems:*
- **God sent His Son to live a fully human yet sinless life and then to die on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for all our sins – bearing our full and just punishment in his own body on the Cross – so that we might be delivered from the penalty and condemnation due us for our sin and guilt, and instead be declared righteous in God's sight**
- *Because of the Cross of Jesus Christ, there is now no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus Christ*
- **Secondly, God raised Jesus from the dead as the One and Only Victor over the power of death – and through Jesus Christ offers us eternal life in a glorified body just like the resurrection body of Jesus Himself**
- *Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Death has been defeated, and eternal life is ours in Christ*
- **Thirdly, God has given us the Holy Spirit to live within us in order to empower us to live a new life of holiness free from the controlling power of sin**

- Romans 8 focuses on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit which provides us with the assurance that we are saved and eternally secure through faith in Jesus Christ
- *The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the evidence and guarantee of our eternal security as children of God and the foretaste of the life to come*

- ***There is now no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus Christ***
- ***How can we be sure that we belong to Jesus Christ?***

For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.

- ***Your liberation from the controlling power of sin is the first evidence that you belong to Jesus Christ and therefore are truly saved and need not fear any condemnation***
- ***That is good news for many of you who are living out the reality of that freedom from the controlling power of sin***
- ***You are not sinless by any means – but you have been set free from bondage to sin – you have experienced many instances of overcoming the power of sin and bad habits by means of the Spirit of God and the Word of God***
- ***But what if you are still living in bondage to the power of sin even though you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior?***
- ***That is an indication that you are living a carnal Christian life – that you are not yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit in your daily life***

II. THE SPIRIT OF LIFE AND PEACE

Romans 8:5 - 8 (NIV) ⁵Those 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. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

- ***Here Paul is contrasting living in the flesh – according to the sinful nature – with living in the Spirit***
- ***When we hear the word flesh – we often think of the meat on our bones or else sins of the flesh such as sexual sin***
- ***But here in these verses Paul uses the word “flesh” to refer to our sinful nature which issues not only in sexual sins but also selfish ambitions / power struggles / out-of-control anger / gossip / and unresolved conflicts***
- ***Our flesh or sinful nature refers to our fallen, self-centered, sin-dominated human nature***
- ***It is the inclination to seek self-satisfaction and personal happiness apart from God and His Will – to do what feels natural or seems right in our own eyes rather than submitting to God and His Will as revealed in Scripture***

Galatians 5:16-17 ¹⁶So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.

- ***All of us are subject to this internal conflict between the flesh and the Spirit – the desires of our sinful nature versus the desires of the Holy Spirit***
- ***The carnal Christian gives in to the desires of the flesh or sinful nature – doing whatever feels good – doing whatever comes naturally to him or her –***
- ***The Spirit-filled Christian sets his mind on what the Spirit desires and yields to the control of the indwelling Spirit – resulting in a life of freedom from the controlling power of sin – a satisfying Christian life that is pleasing to God***

- ***The desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are constantly waging war within us***
- ***The flesh desires to live for self – the Spirit desires us to live for God and for others // the flesh desires to rely upon self and gain glory for self – the Spirit desires us to rely upon God and give glory to God // the flesh desires to do whatever feels good – the Spirit desires us to deny self and take up our Cross and follow Christ – to gain true life by abandoning ourselves to the cause of Christ // the flesh desires to accumulate money and possessions and things of the this world – the Spirit desires us to trust God as our Provider and to give generously to the poor and to the cause of Christ // the flesh desires to nurse grievances and hold grudges and pay back those who have hurt us – The Spirit desires us to forgive others as we have been forgiven by Christ and to pay back good for evil***
- ***The flesh says: Life is all about me – and my wants and my needs and my preferences and my happiness and my ways of doing things***
- ***The flesh can assert itself at church as well as in the family or workplace***
- ***We must choose: will we live in accordance with the desires of the flesh or will we live in accordance with the desires of the Holy Spirit?***

- ***Many people in our society today believe that human nature is basically good and therefore following our natural desires is good***
- ***Therefore, our natural sexual desires are to be indulged and not restrained***
- ***If you desire to have sex with someone you are not married to – go right ahead and follow your natural desires***
- ***If you have a sexual orientation that causes you to be attracted to members of the same sex – go ahead and do whatever feels natural to you – go ahead and act contrary to God's created design for male and female***

- If your natural desires lead you to drink excessively or to indulge yourself in gluttonous overeating and unhealthy eating, or desiring to get rich and live extravagantly, or to excel in sports at all costs as your top priority, or to vent anger however you please without regard for others – *go ahead and follow your natural desires because human nature is basically good*
- If it feels good – it must be right
- **But the Bible teaches – and history and reality confirm – that human nature is basically sinful and self-centered, and we are naturally inclined toward doing what is selfish and harmful and unhealthy and unkind and dishonest and immoral and greedy**
- *If we give in to the sinful desires of the flesh – we will end up enslaved to the power of sin – and we will be dissatisfied with our Christian experience*
- **The Bible teaches that human nature is fallen – therefore, all of us are deeply flawed and naturally desire many things are unhealthy and contrary to God’s will**
- *Most men are physically attracted to many women – but God designed us to become one flesh with only one woman – our wife – and if we follow our natural desires contrary to God’s will – there will be harmful consequences*
- *Some men naturally desire sex with other men – but God designed males physically and emotionally to be able to become one flesh only with females – and there will be harmful consequences for men who follow their natural desires contrary to God’s will and design*
- **Just because something feels natural or feels good doesn’t make it right**

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

- *Setting our mind and will on fulfilling our natural desires leads to death – but setting our mind on the Spirit and His will leads to life and peace*
- ***Liberation from the controlling power of sin is not automatic even for the born-again Christian***
- **We must win the battle of the mind**
- ***The Spirit-filled life begins with our mindset***
- **To be strong in the Spirit, we must also be strong in the Scriptures – we must feed our minds with the truth of God or else we will end up believing the lies of the world and the devil**
- **What does it mean to “set our mind” on the desires of the flesh or the Spirit?**

- *It is a question of what preoccupies our thought life – what are the dominant ambitions that drive our daily priorities and choices – how do we spend our time and energies – on what do we focus our will and determination?*
- *The only time of the week that some Christians set their minds on the things of God is Sunday morning – and sometimes not even then*
- *The rest of the week their minds are preoccupied with money matters or business concerns or financial investments or politics or sports or partying or sex or pornography or physical appearance or food or a hobby or TV or rehearsing past hurts or cultivating a spirit of negativity and complaining*
- *And then they wonder why they are not satisfied with their Christian experience and why they have so much trouble overcoming bad habits*
- *How we think governs how we behave, and how we behave governs whether we experience an abundant life and peace with God – or a living death*

III. THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Romans 8:9-11 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) ¹⁰Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. ¹¹The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.

- **The Spirit of Life is the Spirit of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and who gives us spiritual life now to our spirits now and resurrection life to our bodies in the age to come**
- *We experience the indwelling Presence of the Risen Christ through the Holy Spirit who lives in all believers*
- *Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Paraclete – the Comforter – the Counselor – the Encourager – the Helper*
- *In his earthly body, Jesus was limited to being present in one place at one time*
- *Now ascended to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, He has poured out His Spirit to live within the members of His body – imparting to us His life and grace and power*
- **This gift of the indwelling Presence of the Spirit of Christ is for all believers**
- *Indeed, to have the Spirit dwelling in us is THE distinguishing characteristic of the true Christian*

- ***If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him – he is not a Christian – he does not belong to Christ – he is not saved***
- How do we know we have the Spirit of Christ living within us?
- ***First of all – the Holy Spirit makes our spirit alive***
- ***Prior to becoming a Christian, we were spiritually dead in our sins – physically alive but spiritually dead***
- ***But when we put our trust in Christ to save us from our sins – then we are born again – the Holy Spirit comes to live within us and He makes our spirits come alive with new life***
- ***With this new spiritual life come new desires: the desire to worship God with other believers // the desire to read and study the Bible // the desire to pray and to ask for God's will to be done // the desire to fellowship with other Christians and to serve others in love // the desire to give generously to the church and to missions and to the poor // the desire to tell others about Jesus // the desire to obey God and live a holy life and become more like Jesus***
- ***These new desires are evidence of the life of the Spirit within us***
- ***Of course, even as born-again Christians given new spiritual life by the indwelling Spirit – we still sin – but not in the way we used to before Christ***

Romans 8:12 - 13 (NIV) ¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For 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,

- ***As Christians saved by grace – we have an obligation to pursue holiness and to live under the control of the Spirit – we have an obligation to live out the reality of who we are in Christ – to behave consistently with the life of the Spirit within us***
- ***Living in the Spirit involves putting to death the sinful deeds of the body while also setting our minds on the things of the Spirit***
- ***We still sin – but not in the way we used to before Christ***
- ***No longer do we tolerate sin // no longer do we sin without paying attention to a guilty conscience // no longer do we give in to sin without a fight***
- ***Putting to death the misdeeds of the body means a ruthless rejection of all practices we know to be wrong – a daily turning from all known sins of habit, practice, attitude, thought or speech***

- **The only godly attitude to adopt toward the deeds of the sinful nature is to kill them**
- *Yet we cannot do so by willpower alone – only by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit can we put to death the sinful deeds of the body*
- **We must choose to say NO to sin and to pursue holiness – but we can overcome sin only by relying on the power of the Spirit**
- And it will not suffice merely to focus on putting to death the misdeeds of the body – we must also aspire to a passion for Christ-likeness
- *We cannot overcome sin merely by trying not to sin*
- **We must replace the desires of the flesh with the desires of the Spirit by setting our minds and aspirations on the things of the Spirit rather than the desires of the flesh**
- *This will involve a whole-hearted giving of ourselves to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom purposes – and will include diligence in prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, worship, giving, observing the Lord’s Supper and serving others in love.*
- **It is while we put to death the misdeeds of the body that we find life and freedom – and it is while we set our minds on the things of the Spirit that we find life and peace – and all of this is done by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit**
- **It is we who must choose and will to act and obey – but it is the Spirit who must empower us to be freed from the power of sin and to enable us to live a holy life of obedience that is pleasing to God**
- When a pilot flies an airplane, he must focus his attention in the right places and he must correctly operate the instruments – but he does not supply the power that makes the plane fly
- *The pilot utilizes the power of the jet engines and the laws of aerodynamics to fly the plane – while also being fully engaged in operating the instruments*
- **There is no autopilot for spiritual growth into Christ-like maturity – we must choose / we must act / we must put to death the misdeeds of the body and set our minds on the things of the Spirit**
- *But only the Spirit can supply the spiritual power to change us into the likeness of Christ – and we access that power by yielding control of our will and our lives to the Holy Spirit*
- **The more surrendered and yielded we are – the more empowered we are**
- *The more we practice setting our minds on the Spirit and putting to death the misdeeds of the body by the power of the Spirit – the more freedom we experience from the bondage of sin and the more we become like Jesus*

IV. THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP

Romans 8:14 - 17 (NIV) ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For 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.*” ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷Now 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.

- *How do you know for sure that you are saved and are truly accepted into God’s family?*
- *If someone raises their hand in a church service indicating that they prayed to invite Christ into their heart – can you tell with certainty that they are now saved and members of God’s family? Can you see into their heart?*
- **Who gives someone the assurance of their salvation?**
- **The Holy Spirit**

Romans 8:16 ¹⁶For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.

- *Notice: He speaks to us deep in our hearts*
- ***This is Spirit-to-spirit communication or Spirit-to-heart communication – and it is God’s chosen means of assuring us that we belong to Him as His beloved children***

Romans 5:5 ⁵ For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

- ***The indwelling Holy Spirit assures us that we are deeply loved by our heavenly Father***
- ***This is the inner witness of the Spirit***
- **This internal, subjective, deeply personal witness of the Spirit is backed up by the external, objective, historical witness of the Cross**

Romans 5:8 ⁸But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

- ***God wants us to know with absolute assurance how much we are loved by Him***

- **He gives us the witness of the Cross // the witness of the Scriptures // and the witness of the Spirit in our hearts – so that we can feel His love in our hearts as well as believe it in our minds**
- **The Cross of Christ gives us a rational basis for believing that God loves us as sinners – but the love of God cannot be fully grasped by our minds – so God pours out His love into our hearts by His Spirit as well**
- *The love of God cannot be fully grasped by intellectual understanding – and so the Spirit of Jesus living within us enables us to experience in our hearts what we cannot fully understand with our minds*
- **And as we grow in our experience of this all-surpassing love of God – a love which is conveyed from the Father’s heart to our heart by the Holy Spirit – we learn to trust the Father’s heart of love – and thus our capacity for knowing and obeying the will of God increases**
- **This is the path to holiness and Christ-likeness**
- *You will never experience consistent victory and freedom from sin while there are unhealed wounds in your heart*
- **Those unhealed wounds become breeding grounds for sins and compulsive behavior and strongholds of evil and deception in your life**
- *Those unhealed wounds must be healed by the love of God – not just a head knowledge of God’s love – but an experiential outpouring of the love of God into all the wounded places of your heart by means of the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit*
- **We grow in holiness only as we know – first and foremost – that we are loved unconditionally by God**
- *The Bible tells us so – and the Spirit tells us so – the Spirit of sonship testifies with our spirit that we are God’s beloved children*
- **The Spirit of sonship assures us that we are totally accepted, deeply loved, fully pleasing, completely forgiven, and empowered to live a new life in Christ – because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus**
- **The indwelling Holy Spirit assures us of our status as sons of God**
- *By the way, the term “sons” does not exclude women*
- **This is the Bible’s way of assuring women that all the benefits of sonship are theirs as well– including being co-heirs with Jesus the Son of God**
- *Many of you have experienced painful rejections in your life*

- Maybe you have been rejected by a spouse or a parent or a good friend
- *The experience of rejection can lead to crippling insecurities and fears of other rejections*
- **But the Gospel offers us the ultimate security – the security of being a child of God and co-heir with Jesus Christ – the security of being totally accepted and deeply loved by God our Father because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus**

Romans 8:15 (NIV) ¹⁵For 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.*”

- *Are you tuned in to hear the Spirit’s voice?*
- **And when you hear other voices telling you lies – telling you that the reason you are suffering or going through hard times is because God doesn’t love you – *are you tuning those voices out – and listening to the Spirit of sonship instead?***

Conclusion:

- **The ministry of the Holy Spirit is key to the absolute security of the children of God**
- *Our assurance of eternal salvation is based on the reality of the Holy Spirit setting us free from the power of sin, giving new life to our spirits, empowering us to put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh, testifying with our spirits to assure us that we are God’s beloved children – and His activity in our lives is the pledge and first-fruits of our eternal inheritance in glory*
- **This blessed assurance belongs to everyone who belongs to Christ as evidenced by the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives:**

Romans 8:38 - 39 (NIV) ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer

“How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” or “Spirit of the Living God”