



Sunday School Lesson for April 3, 2005.
Released on: March 31, 2005.

"Life in the Spirit"

PRINTED TEXT: Romans 8:1-16

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 7:1-6

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-17

GOLDEN TEXT: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14 NIV).

LESSON DIVISIONS

- i. The Law of the Spirit-Romans 8:1-7
- ii. The Power of the Spirit-Romans 8:8-11
- iii. The Witness of the Spirit-Romans 8:12-16

HOW TO SAY IT

ABBA. Ab-uh.

ARAMAIC. Air-uh-may-ick.

LESSON AIMS

FACT-to examine a portion of Romans 8 that reveals the promise of victory in the Spirit.

PRINCIPLE-to reveal the power of the Spirit that makes it possible to live the victorious Christian life.

APPLICATION-to help believers understand their struggle and to encourage them to take advantage of the power that is available to them by the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

Paul's Epistle to the Romans could not be more accurate wherein it he describes there being a "struggle" within himself between doing that which is right to do, and that which is not. Every Christian can attest to this daily condition. But, we can not identify it as a true dilemma, because as followers of Christ and having the Holy Spirit alive within us, we are convicted of doing those things that are wrong to do.

A struggle, yes. A hopeless situation, no! Justification by faith transfers the believer into a new realm of existence. Formerly God's enemy, the justified individual is now at peace with God. A struggle continues, however, between the flesh and the Spirit. This week's lesson text explains this struggle and points the way to victory. Romans 8 elaborates on the deliverance offered to us by Christ Jesus.

LESSON BACKGROUND

On his third missionary journey, Paul came to Ephesus, where he found twelve men who said they were believers. The apostle asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they had believed. They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2).

Paul knew that something was deficient in their understanding of the Christian faith. Christians know that there is a Holy Spirit who indwells all believers. Those who come to Christ with genuine repentance and obedient faith are promised the presence of God's Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9).

Are you being "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:14)? Are you "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18)? Are you producing the "fruit of the real tests of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22)? These are the real tests of the Spirit's presence in a person's life. Too many base their claim to the Holy Spirit merely on a feeling instead of on the truth of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 8:1-16

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.

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, 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.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 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, 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. 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. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 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. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 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, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 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." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

QUESTION 1--Why is there "no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1) for believers?

God has solved what we cannot solve. God has paid a price that we cannot and could never pay. His Son took the *condemnation* that we deserved because of our sin. Even though our past is shot through with inconsistencies and failures, even though our present practice is imperfect, and even though we can count on facing Satan's "fiery darts" in the future, there is... *now no condemnation*-because we are *in Christ Jesus*.

QUESTION 2--How is the word "flesh" used in the Bible? How did Paul often use this word?

While the word "flesh" can mean the literal skin of the body or humanity in general, many times it refers to the sinful or earthly nature of mankind; which is the source of sinful desires and "fleshy lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). We are not guided by these desires; because we are in Christ, we are guided by the Spirit's desires. Paul uses this word to describe the whole man in his distance from God or in his weakness.

QUESTION 3--What was the "law of sin and death" (vs. 2)?

This expression refers to the Mosaic Law. While the law could make people aware of their sin (3:20; 7:7), it could not deliver them from its penalty or power (8:3). Paul writes in Romans 6:23 that, "the wages of sin is death." This refers not only to physical death (5:12), but also to eternal death (Rev. 20:14). But, thanks be to God, Jesus Christ paid a debt that He did not owe-it was the same debt that we could not pay.

QUESTION 4--What is the "carnal mind" (vs. 7)? How does the carnal mind view the law of God?

In a nutshell, the "carnal mind" is the mind of the flesh; it is a physical or worldly mind that will always by nature be hostile towards God--who is Spirit. The worldly mind will never desire to submit to a Heavenly God, nor to His law.

QUESTION 5--If we do not have the "Spirit of Christ" (vs. 9), what does this mean?

Terms like "Spirit of Christ" (vs. 9), "Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:17), "Spirit of God" (Matt. 3:16), "Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38), and "Holy Spirit" (Luke 11:13) are used interchangeably in the New Testament. They all refer to the Third Person of the Trinity-God's Holy Spirit, who lives in believers and enables them to be victorious over sin's grip. To not have the "Spirit of Christ" simply means to not be a part of God. Just like a new car that has no gas, a person operating without the Holy Spirit has no power.

QUESTION 6--What will the Spirit do for our bodies in the future?

This is a question for which the answer should excite great joy in believers. The Holy Spirit, who allowed Jesus Christ to return from the dead, also enables God's believers to be raised from the dead... now, spiritually, and later physically.

QUESTION 7--What does it mean to "mortify the deeds of the body" (vs. 13)?

The word "mortify" means "to put to death." Just because we have come to know the Lord does not mean that Satan will not attempt to use the old fleshy desires that still reside within us. Were this not the case, there would be no instruction to continue to put to death the deeds of the flesh (see Eph. 4:21-32; Col. 3:5-10). It is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit to "kill" the desires of the body.

QUESTION 8--How is it revealed that the Holy Spirit lives within us?

The Holy Spirit wants to lead us to glorify Christ (John 16:14) and to produce the "fruits of the spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). This reveals that we truly know God and that His Holy Spirit lives within us. Our desires to be like Christ are aided by the Holy Spirit. We can not think that we can do anything good for the Lord without His help through His Spirit.

QUESTION 9--What does "Abba" (vs. 15) mean?

My brother and I had a running joke from childhood that stemmed around the word "Abba." A minister at our church would always pray what we heard as being, "Ou-va Father. Ou-va Father." And we would laugh each time because we thought he was trying to say, "*Our* Father." It was not until many years later while studying God's Word that I realized that this minister knew *exactly* what it was that he was praying! And of course I called my brother up and told him what I had discovered. Oh, the joy of studying God's Word for oneself and being enlightened by its truth!

The word "Abba" (Rom. 8:15; also Gal. 4:6) is Aramaic, and was the word commonly used by Jewish children for their father within the family circle. Such an intimacy exists between the heavenly Father and His children. Christians can thus pray in

confidence, knowing that the Spirit enables their prayers to be answered in accordance with God's will (Rom. 8:26-27).

QUESTION 10--How does the Spirit's leading relate to the Scriptures?

A further indication of believers' "sonship" is that the Holy Spirit "bears witness with" their spirits. When we cry out to the Father in prayer, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. The inner testimony of the Spirit is experienced by all true believers. God speaks to our hearts and assures us that we belong to Him (1 John 3:19-20).

CONCLUSION

This week's lesson has dealt with the opposition of the flesh and the Spirit. It has identified those outside of Christ as of the flesh, while reaffirming that those in Christ are of the Spirit. The law could not empower anyone to be righteous; it could only reveal how unrighteous people really are. The Holy Spirit, who lives within the believer, can enable those saved people to live lives that are pleasing to God.

PRAYER

Forgive us, Father, when we boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept our joyful gratitude that comes from knowing that He has paid the debt we owed. Help us understand what it means to live as debtors to the Spirit, and not to the flesh. May we do away with any interference that keeps the Spirit's signal from being heard. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. When we believe in Christ, God frees us from the law's condemnation. (Rom. 8:1-4).
2. Living in the Spirit means we reflect God's love and peace (vss. 5-8).
3. As Christians we are assured of the Spirit's indwelling presence and power and are not controlled by sin (vss. 9-11).
4. Sin loses its appeal to us when we depend on the Holy Spirit (vss.12-14).
5. Knowing we are God's adopted children gives us confidence and security in Him (vss. 15-16).

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Salvation is the theme pursued in Romans 10:5-17 ("Salvation in Christ"). Prayerfully consider these verses are you prepare for this important lesson.

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