

96-08-02b

Okay, we're back from our break and ready to resume, and we've once again had a lively discussion during the break and thinking about some of the things having to do with the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. What we want to do now is look at the Holy Spirit as he is talked about here in chapter eight. He has become, he's come to the central focus of Paul's argument here, and the point really begins right at the beginning of the chapter in Romans chapter eight.

One of the things, and some of these are going to be points that we have already noted, but the things that Paul emphasizes here are the fact that first of all the Spirit imparts life, and in Romans chapter eight verses four through six, we have recently studied what kind of life this is. We know that, for example, that this is not just talking about physical life, nor is it talking about resurrection life. The Spirit that is in us now, we haven't died yet, so we don't need resurrecting.

We're not in our glorified bodies. It's not our eternal life before God. This is life in the sense of production, life in the sense that we have an existence that counts.

Our decisions, our actions are bearing fruit in God's plan, and the reason that Christ died, part of his work on the cross, it says in verse four, was in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. What is the just requirement of the law? It's righteousness. It's not just the absence of sin.

It's to have the righteousness of God, to be productive, and that requirement can be met in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. What I'm going to do here is draw a line down the middle of the board so that we have two columns, and on the left, we're going to have a column dealing with this walking according to the Spirit. On the right, we'll have a column walking according to the flesh.

Everything that Paul is going to say in the next few verses here in Romans chapter eight falls into one of these two categories. So, for example, he says the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. So, the first thing is we know that the requirement for righteousness can be met over here in the left-hand column when we walk according to the Spirit.

We know that in verse four next to that. We know from verse five, those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. We know over here on the left, those who walk according to the Spirit have their mind on the things of the Spirit.

Verse six says to set the mind on the flesh is death. To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Verse seven says the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God.

He goes on to say it does not submit to God's law. And verse eight tells us that it cannot please God. So, we're beginning to get a set of characteristics here in our two columns, aren't we? Verse

eight says that there's no way to please God, and yet verse four tells us when we walk according to the Spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is met.

Verse nine says you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you. So, walking according to the Spirit, the Spirit is at home. We saw that with Oikos in our first session.

The Spirit is at home in us when we're on this left-hand column side. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we are not of Him. Some of these translations say we don't belong to Him, but this is just a simple genitive in Greek, and the genitive associates two things in a close way.

It can be possession. It can be an association of any sort, but I think possession is a little bit strong for this context. If we don't have the Spirit, meaning we don't have the Spirit dwelling in us, at home in us, walking according to the Spirit as believers, we're not of Christ.

We don't reflect Christ. We don't have the life of Christ, the joy and the peace. We don't reflect His character.

We don't reflect His glory. We're not of Him. It doesn't mean we've lost our salvation.

It doesn't mean that we don't have salvation or that we don't have the indwelling of the Spirit and the sealing of the Spirit, but in practical terms, looking at the walk, which is what the subject is here, we're not of Christ. Paul said, I tell you even weeping, that some of these people are enemies of the cross. Someone who's an enemy of the cross can be a believer, but they're not of Christ.

You see no link. You see no association in the practical world. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, at home in him, is not of him.

But if Christ is in you, and notice this is where we have our parallel, Christ in you. Paul says, Christ in you, the hope of glory. That's the expectation that we're going to please God at the judgment seat, that we're going to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ throughout eternity by walking according to the Spirit.

So that certainly goes in our left-hand column. But notice what he says. This also goes in the left-hand column from verse 10, your body is dead.

Now if there was any doubt about what kind of life and death we're talking about here, in terms of physical life, our bodies are not dead, are they? And yet we trust that we are walking according to the Spirit and we are in this left-hand column. So what does he mean by your body is dead? Our body still partakes of this earthly realm. We still have the corruption of nature.

We still have the inherited corruption that is the heritage of everyone in the human race. We're still going to experience physical death unless the rapture happens first. Nothing changes about our physical body when we accept Christ as Savior, does it? We don't suddenly lose our wrinkles

or hit the fountain of youth or anything.

Our body still partakes of this earthly world. However, our spirits are alive. And what this means is that we have a life, we have an opportunity in the non-material realm.

This world is going to be decaying and corrupt all through human history. It's a mistake and misdirected effort for believers to try to fix up the world and make it into the millennium. It's a dead world.

It's a corrupt world. And the only thing that will fix it is Jesus Christ coming and renewing it. And Paul goes on to talk about that here in Romans 8. But this world is the way it is.

The God of this world is in control of a lot of it, i.e., Satan. And our bodies partake of this world. And our primary effort is not in the physical world.

What difference does it make if you help someone correct a bad habit if nothing has happened in the spiritual realm? They were a kleptomaniac and you worked with them and prayed with them and agonized with them and now they don't shoplift anymore. Instead, they're psychopathic in some other area or they have some other way that they are corrupt. Or maybe they got rid of that bad habit.

But is God glorified? Has divine good been produced? Has divine fruit been born because a bad habit got cleaned up? God is looking for the righteousness that He creates, the transformation that He produces through His Word and through His Spirit. And conditioning someone to have a different behavior in this world is not divine righteousness. And that's a big distraction in our culture where we think that someone has a sorrow and if we can get rid of the sorrow, we've done a good.

Or someone has a bad situation, if we can make that bad situation better, we've done a good. Those things can be true, but it's in the context of what's happening in the spiritual realm. What's happening in the soul? Who is glorified? Whose power is at work? What agency brought about the transformation? Was it peer pressure? Was it coercion? Was it browbeating? Or was it transformation from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God? If we produce a change in someone's life, if we impact someone's life, that doesn't count.

The only impact that counts is God's impact, and God's impact comes through the Holy Spirit when we start to walk according to the Spirit. So this body is dead because of sin, and it stays dead even after salvation. This body doesn't suddenly become immortal at the point of salvation.

It's still corrupt, it still decays, and it still dies. And efforts in this world are just as useless after salvation as they were beforehand. It's only when something happens in the spiritual realm.

Now, things can happen in the material realm as a result, but we don't make them the goal. They are an outgrowth of what God does in the Spirit. So we're dead in the body, but our spirits are

alive because of righteousness.

And that's the realm of righteousness, is in the Spirit, not in the flesh. So then he says in verse 11, if the Spirit of essentially the Father, Him who raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in you, He will give life to your mortal bodies. Now, here is our quiz question for the day.

He says, your body is dead because of sin, your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And then he says, if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you, the same One that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal body. Now, this body is going to decay and go into the ground.

And once again, we can get off into details. Well, what about the Apollo astronauts that were incinerated? How can their life be given to their mortal body? It was burned up. What about all the bodies that have decayed and turned to dust? What about the molecules that were in some ancient saint's body that are now in somebody else's body? How can God reconstruct those bodies and give life to them both? Because we've got molecules that belong to other people and so forth.

Well, this is not talking about resurrection per se. This is talking about the extraordinary power of God's Spirit. When we're saved, but we begin to grow in Christ, and we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, we walk according to the Spirit, we have our mind on it, we have that life and peace.

The Spirit is at home in us. Christ begins to be in us. Our spirits are alive because of righteousness.

We are going to start to see an effect in the material world. He will give life to our mortal bodies. And as a result of this spiritual life and this spiritual walk, our earthly mortal physical existence is going to start to make a difference.

We can have production in this life as an outgrowth of what God has done in our spirit. Because this mortal body, through the Spirit which dwells in us, is motivated in a way that brings glory to God. Now, instead of saying, well, let's get together and put pressure on each other to do divine good, when God the Holy Spirit is superintending, when it's God's Word and God's Spirit that's in us, the things that we do in the body start to count.

And it's a result and it's life. It does count when under the influence of God the Holy Spirit and under the influence of the Word of God that we know and the understanding of God that we have, we witness or we minister or we do something in the physical realm. But it's a result and it comes after our spirit begins to live, after Jesus Christ begins to be in us.

And see everything on this left-hand column. What have we been talking about? It's the walk. It's the pattern of life in the Spirit.

When we walk according to the Spirit, we begin to fulfill this requirement for righteousness, which is on the inside. Our mind is changed. We have life and peace.

The Spirit is at home in us. Christ, His presence and His power is in us. And even though our body is dead, our spirit is alive.

And once our spirit is made alive, the Spirit can then give life to our mortal bodies. It doesn't say give life to an immortal body that we'll have after the resurrection. It's saying give life to this body, this corrupt body, this dead body that we start with here.

He can give life to this body. We can function in the world in ministry, if you will, with acts of kindness, with spreading the Gospel, with prayer, with exercising the spiritual gifts that minister to others in the body of Christ and so forth. But that has to be a result of all of these other things.

And when we have made it a priority to get our spiritual life in order and set our mind on the things of the Spirit, that's when we don't enliven our own bodies. God gives life to our bodies. God puts our bodies to use in a way that brings fruit and reflects His righteousness.

So I find that very significant, that this comes at the bottom of this left-hand column here in verse 10 and verse 11. And that's why he brings his conclusion up in verse 12. And he says, So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh to live according to the flesh.

If you live according to the flesh, you will die. And you can put that over in the right-hand column. And this, again, is not talking about physical death.

And it's not talking about... Look at the context. If we thought that this was resurrection life here in verse 11, then we would have to say that verse 12 here and verse 13 mean that we wouldn't be resurrected. If you live according to the flesh, you won't be resurrected.

You won't get life in your mortal body. But that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about, Does your physical existence here and the things that you do in the body, does it count in God's plan? Does it reflect the life of God? If it's going to reflect the life of God, it has to start with life in the Spirit.

It has to start with the ministry of the Spirit on the inside and not the other way around, either implied or explicitly stated. Much of Christianity thinks that if you can get people doing what they're supposed to do, just get them started going to church. Just bring them along when you evangelize.

Bring them along when you do the urban inner-city ministry. And it'll work its way in from the outside in. And they'll just kind of form a habit of going to church.

And they'll form a habit of ministry. And they'll get comfortable sharing the gospel. And this is the way to do it from the outside in.

And this passage tells us it's just the reverse. There's nothing that we can put on the outside to work righteousness in and work life in. Life springs from the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life.

He gave actual physical life to Jesus Christ at the point of his birth. He gave him new life and resurrection life when he was raised from the dead. He gives us spiritual life at the point that we were saved.

He gives experiential life, practical life to our souls and our spirits as we set our minds on the things of the Spirit. That's where life and peace come from. Walking according to the Spirit, setting our mind on the things of the Spirit, we begin to have a meaningful life on the inside.

And that same Spirit that gives life in all of those other places will give life to these mortal, corrupt bodies. And the things that we do really will count. There is a place for ministry.

There is an important place for evangelism and for exercise of spiritual gift, whether it's helps or hospitality or teaching, administration, prayer, whatever it might be. But it's only reflecting real life when it's a result of all of these other things. So if you live according to the flesh, you will die.

Your life, whether it's your physical life in this world or your spiritual life in this world as a believer, will be completely non-productive. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, and this is in verse 13, those in this left-hand column put to death the deeds of the body, which is basically sin, those things that serve our own interests instead of the things of God. All of us want to know, I've got this besetting sin, or it seems like I always fail in this area.

How, where does the power come from to achieve victory? All of us, I think, have faced this at different times. I've had people come up and say or write letters or whatever that I just can't seem to prevail. I thought God said we would have victory in Christ, and why is it that I keep failing? How is it that we put to death the deeds of the body? This is how.

We have to make it a priority to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. That's why we're working our way through the Book of Romans. It isn't always easy.

It takes concentration. It takes dedication to show up and to listen and to concentrate and to meditate on it and think through it and stick with it. And that's the way God designed His plan.

It isn't easy. Remember what He says here in Romans chapter 8, that if we are willing to suffer with Christ in order that we may also be glorified with Him, the Christian life isn't handed to us on a platter. It requires us to make decisions.

It requires us to set priorities. It requires us to decide what's important. What goal do we want to achieve with this life? What do we want to have written as our epitaph when this mortal body finally does die? What's going to be on our headstone? He was a great computer guy.

He was a great this or that or the other. She was a good housekeeper. She was a great

gardener.

She was a wonderful cook. What is going to be the end result of this life? If it matters enough to us, the end result of our life can be fruit, reflecting Christ's glory, reflecting God's righteousness, being a place where God did His work. And if that's our priority, we're going to set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

We're going to think about the things that we hear from the Word of God and what difference does that make? Shouldn't my life be different today than it was yesterday because I've been exposed to the Word of God. I have the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit. Something ought to be different.

There's an area of my life where I can improve, where I can see God make a change in me. There's an area where I can apply this love of God I've been learning about. Here's a person that I do and have had.

It's been so long I've almost forgotten to think any other way. Here's this person that I have this bad attitude toward and this is a place where I need to be looking for the love of God shed abroad in my heart. It ought to make a difference.

And it requires us to act and it requires us to persevere. And that's why one of the fruits of the Spirit is endurance, forbearing, bearing with, bearing up under. So that's what Paul is talking about here.

And that's why the Holy Spirit is so prominent in chapter eight, because it's His power. It's the power of God in our soul that makes this happen. We can't do it with willpower.

We can't do it with peer pressure. We can't do it with step programs or good books or films or radio programs or chemical therapy or any of the other things that are being passed around in Christianity today. God's Spirit is more than adequate to raise Christ from the dead.

I think He can handle transforming us and giving us the power to put to death the deeds of the body and to live in a way that pleases God. Notice what He says here in verse 14. He says, All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Now, this would give us pause for thought if we had reached this point in Romans and were still thinking in terms of salvation, because now you've got perseverance of the saints. Well, it's only if I'm putting to death the deeds of the body. It's only if I'm concentrating on the things of the Spirit that I'm a son of God.

And if I'm not a son of God, I'm not saved. And it all depends on me. My salvation depends on what I do and whether or not I'm pursuing a Christian life.

And if I fall off the wagon, well, then I'm not a son of God and I have no life and I'm going to

perish. And I will tell you in all fairness that if it wasn't clear in Romans that he's talking about the Christian life, we would be most consistent by understanding it that way, that there is loss of salvation and that our salvation does depend on our perseverance, because that's about the only other way you can take these scriptures and make any sort of sense out of it at all. If you believe that this life that is over here in the left-hand column is eternal life and is resurrection life, then it depends on walking according to the Spirit.

And if you walk according to the flesh, you have to say, well, you were never really saved or you were saved and lost it. But it doesn't, thank God, that's not what it means. And we've seen through context, we've seen through countless points and illustrations and parallel passages, that Paul's point here is not to rehash salvation with the Romans.

He's talking to them about the choice they have to make about their life as believers. They are already saved. And he's talking about do you want your life to count or not? Do you want to be operationally dead or do you want to bear fruit for God? And if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live and you will be led by the Spirit of God and you will be a son of God.

And this is sons in deed. And we know the difference in that status just from looking around us. There are people in Israel whose children come to Jesus Christ and they say, you're no longer my son.

You're no longer my daughter. We're going to have a funeral. You're dead.

And we don't consider you to be a son anymore. Well, now you have a dual situation. In one sense, they are still a son or a daughter biologically, historically, for legal purposes, they are a son or a daughter.

But in practical terms, in operational terms, in terms of relationship, in terms of fellowship, in terms of how they view each other, they're not. We can have a standing before God of being a son of God by virtue of faith in Christ and salvation and yet not be taking advantage of that. We can be like the prodigal son who went away and was living in the hog slop.

He is a son technically speaking, but he's not living like a son. He's not acting like a son. He has none of the privileges or benefits of being a son.

He's gnawing on corn cobs and living in the hog pen. And a lot of us as believers, that's what we do. If we get over here in this left-hand column and walk according to the Spirit and set our minds on the things of the Spirit, there are so many benefits that come our way.

It makes us wonder, why would we ever live any other way? This is life and peace and fulfilling the plan of God and pleasing God and being called a son of God. Remember in John chapter 1 where he says, as many as received him, to them he gave the authority to be called the sons of

God, even to them that believe on his name or those who are trusting in his name. He gave them the authority to be called the sons of God.

Well, you can be a son and have the right and the authority to go in and act and be a son and yet not do it. And a lot of us don't. But if we do these things and let ourselves be led by the Spirit of God, we are sons of God.

We did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Over here in the right-hand column, this is fear. This is slavery.

This is what Jesus Christ died to deliver us from. But we don't have that spirit. Instead, we have a spirit of sonship that enables us to cry to God in a familiar way as Father.

And then in verse 16, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. The Holy Spirit bears witness. He communicates a truth and affirms a truth in our soul and in our conscience that we are sons of God.

We know that we're walking and living as sons when we're pursuing this path. We don't ask the question, well, I wonder if I'm on the right road. I wonder if God's going to hammer me now.

I wonder if God's going to hammer me. We always do a healthy check to make sure that we're in the faith, but we don't live in fear and we don't feel like we're enslaved by sin or that we're in bondage to our emotions or our passions or some besetting failure. If we're living the way we're supposed to, we are sons of God and the Holy Spirit bears witness and we can cry in a familiar way to our Heavenly Father.

And we have confidence that we are sons and heirs and that we will share the glory of Christ even as we now share his sufferings in this life as it tells us in verse 17. So I think this is a very helpful comparison to put the things of the Spirit on one side and the things of the flesh on the other. We could add to this that great passage that says, he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Of course, that's talking about believers. Our salvation isn't involved in what we sow or what we do. Salvation is a result of faith.

But as believers, if we sow to the flesh, we will reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, what do we reap? Life that partakes of the eternal, life everlasting. So this is the choice that each of us faces and we face it every day.

Are we going to take advantage of the presence of the Holy Spirit, his unique ministry in this age to renew us, to give us life, to give us peace and joy, to sustain us, to bring to our mind the truth, to affirm the truth in our conscience, to give us that perspective that focuses us on the return of Jesus Christ and the future with him in the millennial kingdom and in the eternal glory? Or are we caught up in daily life? Are we not submissive to the will of God, not pleasing God, not reflecting

Christ, not having a life that reflects nothing in terms of the eternal, that leaves us in bondage to our own desires, leaves us in bondage to sin, and from which we simply reap corruption? It's our choice. God has put everything in place. He's given us access to his own power.

And what a wonderful thing it is. And you can tell that Paul is emphasizing the positive side of this. He's made far more points on the side of walking in the Spirit than he has the contrast of walking according to the flesh.

Well, we will continue our study in Romans next time.