

Being Led by the Spirit

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[0 : 00] So our reading is from Romans chapter 8 verses 1 to 17 and it's on page 1134 in the Church Bibles. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

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 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

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.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God.

[1 : 24] It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. 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. 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.

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 you life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh to live according to it. 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. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

[2 : 42] The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.

And by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 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. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Ruth, for reading. And if you could keep your Bibles open at Romans chapter 8, that would be a great help as we look at that together, page 1134. And if you'd find it helpful, you can find an outline inside the service sheet if you'd like to follow where we're going.

Let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for speaking to us in your word, by your Spirit, about the gift of your Son.

- [4 : 05] Lord Jesus, we praise you that you died for us, and by your Spirit you dwell in us. Holy Spirit, we pray that as we hear your voice now, that you will indeed change us, reshape us, and fashion us.
- That you will comfort us where that's needed and encourage us. That you will challenge and convict and rebuke us. That we might grow in holiness and enjoy life with you for the glory of God.
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen. I don't know whether you saw in the news, David Berry, the deer poacher in Missouri. He was given a prison sentence.
- He's illegally killed hundreds of deer. So the judge ordered that as well as going to prison, he has to repeatedly watch Bambi, the Disney movie. Well, you know where the fool's mother gets shot.
- Tragic moment in Disney movie. He has to watch it at least once a month while he's in prison. It seems quite odd to me to use a movie that reimagines that the animals have human characters to change a poacher's mind about shooting real deer.
- [5 : 20] But you can see what the judge was trying to do. He wants to change David Berry's behavior. And he realizes that just imposing a law externally isn't really going to work.
- So instead he's hoping that through Bambi, he can reshape David Berry's heart. That David Berry will feel this kind of deep sympathy for deer.
- That means he stops poaching. So I'm pretty sure that Disney is not the answer to improving animal welfare. And more generally, I think a heart that is shaped by Disney movies could end up quite messed up actually.
- But there is definitely a right principle at the heart of that new story. It's that if we want to see real change, we do have to get under the surface and change the heart.
- What we were looking at last week in Romans chapter 7 was the issue of how we change. If we've become followers of Jesus Christ, you don't have to change before you become a follower of Jesus.
- [6 : 25] We come as we are. And any of us can be made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus. It's all a gift of his grace. But now in chapters 5 to 8 of Romans, we're looking at living life in God's grace.
- And the question is, do we just carry on as we lived before? Twice in Romans chapter 6, Paul asked that question, shall we go on sinning? And the answer was emphatically no.
- By no means, Paul says in chapter 6. But in chapter 7, he described how hard it is to change in your own strength. We can't just take the commands of God and hit ourselves with them like a stick, saying, you know, stop that, stop that, do that instead.
- Don't do that anymore. It doesn't work to try and change like that. So what do we do? Well, Paul flagged up an alternative back in chapter 7.
- If you just turn back to Romans chapter 7 verse 5, it's like a headline for this section that we're in now. Chapter 7 verse 5, he says this, For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.
- [7 : 40] But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.
- So there is a new way to serve God. How does the Spirit do that? What's this new way of the Spirit? Well, the Spirit gets to work on the heart, on what the heart loves.
- There was a great Scottish preacher, Thomas Chalmers, in the 19th century, probably the most effective Scottish minister of the 19th century, Thomas Chalmers. He was the leader of the Evangelicals in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Then he was the first moderator of the Free Church of Scotland. And then he, as people broke away, and then he headed up an incredible church planting project across Scotland.

But when it came to how we change, he once preached a sermon that many people still read today, called The Expulsive Power of a New Affection. The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

[8 : 41] This was his point. You can't change just by telling yourself to change, because our hearts are still clinging to things that are not godly. The only way to see genuine change as a Christian is if a new affection so grips your heart that your desires change.

You actually want to please God. So that inner change is a transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, that the Spirit fixes our eyes on God and His Gospel so that we're gripped by a new affection.

And we prayed a moment ago, the Spirit will do that as we look at this magnificent chapter together. So our first point, we have no condemnation thanks to the law of the Spirit.

So verse 1, we hear about a new law. It means a kind of a new principle, a new guiding way of life. Verse 1, Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit, who gives life, has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Paul has described the law of sin and death. It's the law that you live by if you reject God, if you forget about God, if you don't think there's a God, you deny God, you don't want anything to do with God.

[10 : 02] The Bible's word for that rejection is sin, and ultimately, you sin and then you die. But the law of sin and death is also, the big surprise really in Romans for people, is the law of sin and death is also the law you live by when you try and please God through your own behavior.

Because we fall short of the standard of God's law, so we still sin, no matter how much you're trying to please God. And sin deserves death, Romans 6.23, the wages of sin is death.

So whether you're an irreligious person, I have nothing to do with God, or you're a devoutly religious person, every human being is spiritually dead.

And every single human being is on death row. That is that we have this sentence of condemnation hanging over us, and we're heading for a judgment day when we will stand before a good God, a just God, and he will deliver the condemnation that we deserve for the ways we've rejected him and mistreated other people.

That's the law of sin and death. Religion can't save you from that verdict. In fact, religion is the law, the law of God, and the law leads to sin and death. He reminds us of that in verse three there.

[11 : 19] He says, what the law, that is God's command, what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh. Now when Paul talks about the flesh, he doesn't just mean the bit of your body that's between your skin and your bones.

He's talking about the flesh is everything we are, what we think, how we feel, our body, our soul, when the fundamental direction of our lives is set against God.

It's away from God. And we don't choose to be in the flesh. You're born in the flesh. It comes naturally to us. I know that's hard to hear, folks, but Paul has shown us very convincingly in Romans that there is that verdict of condemnation hanging over all of us.

And we have to feel that conviction, that is right, that God thinks that of us because that's the law of sin and death. For now, there is a new law, a new principle, a new way, the law of the Spirit who gives life.

And how does the Spirit set us free from the condemnation that's hanging over us? Have a look at verse 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.

[12 : 41] And so he condemned sin in the flesh. In other words, Jesus came into our world in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was fully man, but he wasn't a sinful man.

And so because he never sinned, his death could be the sacrifice that bears God's just condemnation for our sin so that God can demonstrate his justice and God can set us free from the penalty of the law of sin and death.

So that verse 1, it needs to be the motto for our lives, for every Christian, no condemnation. Through that verdict, no condemnation, the Spirit sets you free.

If you're feeling guilty, no condemnation. If you're feeling ashamed, you feel shame for something, no condemnation. If you feel like you're a failure, no condemnation.

If you think of something you really regret doing, a decision that you regret, no condemnation. If you feel rejected yourself, you think of a time when someone's rejected you and it was very painful.

[13 : 51] No condemnation, says God, if you're in Christ. Bison Cowler was in the news this week. He was convicted of murder in Malawi many years ago and he's always maintained his innocence.

It was in 1992 that he was convicted and in Malawi at that time there was a mandatory death sentence for murder. He described the moment the judge announced the verdict like this.

Bison says, when I was told you can go now to the condemned section waiting for your time to be hanged or I felt as if I was already dead.

It's that kind of experience we should feel when the spirit convicts us of how good God is. From the good law of God we see that we stand under the judgment of God. But for Bison Cowler, remarkably three times the day came when the executioner visited him in Malawi and had a group of people to hang one after the other and he didn't get time to hang Bison.

Three times. And then years later the justice system changed in Malawi and they realized that he'd not been given a fair trial. He was brought back in court for a new hearing and at the end of it the judge told him that he was free to leave immediately.

[15 : 07] He said, it was just as if I was dreaming. I could not believe what the judge had said. His brother described telling his mother the news. She said, when he first explained it to me I couldn't believe what he was saying.

But then I jumped around like a lamb, like a young lamb. My heart was filled with joy. Well so it is with the news of the cross for every believer.

The law of sin and death says you're guilty. One day you'll stand before a holy God and he will condemn you. The law of the spirit of life says your faith in Christ means God looks on Jesus and you go free and you can go free today.

It's news that's joyful and unexpected. It's undeserved. It's freely given and it's transforming. No condemnation. If you're here at the moment if you feel this morning real stress about your life.

You feel under real pressure. Maybe there are days where you're going to wake up this week and you don't know how you're going to get done everything you're meant to get done in the day. Could you say to yourself in the morning there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

[16 : 21] When you put your head on the pillow at night and you're really angry with yourself for something that you've done or said. There is now no condemnation. When you mess up badly no condemnation.

You think about the things that make us miserable. When you forget to pay for your parking and you get a ticket and you can't believe it's such a waste of money.

No condemnation. You still have to pay it by the way. But we get so upset don't we about these things. When you leave your iPhone in your coat pocket in the washing machine.

No condemnation. Or when you look back at a relationship that you've wrecked. Somebody you treated really badly. Something you said to someone and it just tore them to pieces.

There is no condemnation for you if you're in Christ. When you miss a deadline and your university is going to throw you out you've blown it. There's no condemnation. When you cheated and you plagiarized to pass an exam and you now realize that was wrong there is no condemnation for you.

[17 : 26] If you've done time in prison and you come to a church like this and you don't feel like you fit in because you see people around you with middle class respectability and you think you know I'm different to them.

I've been really shady. Does no one else here dress like me? Does no one else here have tattoos like mine? Does no one else here have the past I've got? No condemnation.

When you suffer from depression and you feel useless and you feel like a burden to your friends and you even feel guilty for feeling so low and you feel even worse for being a Christian and feeling low there is no condemnation.

We've just got to write that down everywhere. Say it to ourselves there is no condemnation and God gave us this wonderful gift for a purpose. Did you notice that in verse 4?

He says he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who do not live according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

[18 : 33] In other words God has a great purpose for you and me that we will be a holy people a people who look like Christ. So we stand free from condemnation but with a new motivation in our lives.

It's that when we think about our saving God we shouldn't just picture him you know giving out get out of jail free cards like you get in Monopoly saying look don't worry about this until you die but just carry this card with you that you're a Christian and when you die the officials at judgment day just show them the card and you'll get through and don't worry about change for now we'll sort all of that that out on the day no rather God is ambitious for us now he is determined that he'll have a people who will live righteous lives for him.

So how does he do that? That's our second point. Secondly we have a new life thanks to the indwelling spirit. In verses 5 to 8 Paul sets up a contrast between flesh people and spirit people.

If you have a look with me at verse 5 those who live according to the flesh have their mindset on what the flesh desires but those who live in accordance with the spirit have their mindset on what the spirit desires.

So there are two kinds of people in the world. I don't know where you would put the dividing line. I found some examples of where some people put the dividing line across humanity today.

[20 : 04] Here they go on the screen. There we go. There was the first one. And we just can't understand each other can we? We just cannot understand. I just can't understand the person who has an inbox that full.

The next one that can be irritating can't it when you're out with somebody sharing chips. The next this is a bone of contention in our house where it seems nobody else has heard of a bookmark.

Here's one maybe we can relate to. And then another one that raises strong feelings in many flats.

But look whether you're a morning lark or a night owl however you like to use your ketchup the key dividing line across humanity is are you a spirit person or are you a flesh person?

Verses 6, 7 and 8 they are shocking aren't they? Look at verse 6 the mind governed by the flesh is death. Verse 7 the mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God.

[21 : 12] It does not submit to God's law nor can it do so. And verse 8 those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

You can be the best person that your friends have ever met. If you're a flesh person you cannot please God. He is not pleased with you. Because God redefines goodness.

If the God of the Bible really is at the centre of the universe goodness is not just about the things that you do for yourself for other people. It's about why you did them for his glory out of love for him.

And without Christ our natural feelings towards God are hostility. You might be someone who thinks well that's not me. You know I don't mind. I don't mind the idea of a God.

What it means is that the living God the God of the Bible the God of holiness and sovereignty the King naturally we are hostile towards him. And for some of us here that might be very shocking.

[22 : 14] But maybe we need that. Maybe we're feeling complacent and we need to be woken up. this is where we are without the Spirit. For God offers us here an incredible alternative.

He addresses Christians from verse 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 then he clarifies anyone who trusts in Christ has the Spirit of Christ. You see that? He says and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ they do not belong to Christ.

If you're a Christian you have the Spirit. You're not waiting for him. You've got him. Some of us have our doubts. Have I really got the Spirit? If I have why do I keep on sinning?

I can see other people have got the Spirit but I'm not sure I've got him. Well the reason we feel that way is in verse 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.

[23 : 18] There's this battle going on inside us because we're still in our bodies that belong to the present age that's passing away and our bodies are subject to sin and death. But spiritually a radical change has already taken place.

We look the same but we need the eyes of faith to see the reality. All that we're waiting for now is the day when our bodies catch up with what's already happened.

And that day is definitely coming. He says that in verse 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.

So if you're a Spirit person a Christian a miracle has already taken place inside of you. And that's why Paul says verses 12 and 13 and the implication.

Therefore brothers and sisters we have an obligation but it is not to the flesh to live according to it. 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.

[24 : 26] We have to read that in the surrounding context. Paul hasn't lost the plot here and gone back to a salvation by what you do system where whether you live or die depends on how you live.

That was the law of sin and death and we've left that behind. But what he's saying is you really have been made new now on the inside and so you don't have to live for the flesh anymore.

You don't have to make it happen in your own strength. The change has happened. You know it's a bit like your birthday. You know if you ask somebody their birthday what's your birthday and they say 17th of March whatever it is.

You never then say to them oh that's a really interesting choice. Why did you why did you go for that date for your birthday? You never asked that would you? Because your birthday is something that happened to you.

I don't know whether you saw it in the news that there's a guy in Mumbai suing his parents because he was born without his own consent. But you know that's complete madness because your birth is just something that happens to you.

[25 : 30] Well here's the key in the same way for every Christian the spirit has already given you new life. It's been done to you on the inside.

That fundamental change has happened already. If you don't think you've got it it might be worth just thinking of it like this. If there was a button and it was put before you and you could press it and if you pressed it you would never sin again would you press it?

Of course you would wouldn't you? I would barge everything out of the way to press that button in the cold light of day. I don't want to sin anymore.

That's because of our new life. The direction of our heart has changed fundamentally. So even though there's ongoing sin in our lives and there will be until Christ returns it's not who we are anymore.

So we do have an obligation it takes work to be godly you don't just let go and let God but we can do the work depending on the spirit. We're free from the penalty of sin versus one to four.

[26 : 34] We're also free from the power of sin. You don't have to sin anymore. If you're a Christian when you sin you do something completely out of character.

You're going against the very grain of who you are. And when you live for God when you say no to temptation when you do something godly you're being who you really are.

You're doing something that's exactly going with the grain of who you are deep inside. But what about when we do sin and it leaves us thinking I can't go on am I really a Christian?

Well that's our third point about being led by the spirit. We have a new assurance thanks to the adopting spirit. If you have a look with me at verse 14. For those who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God.

The spirit you receive does not make you slave so that you live in fear again. Rather the spirit you receive brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry Abba, Father.

[27 : 42] The spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. In other words there is a subjective experience here to assure us.

The spirit gives us a sense inside that we are God's children. Not everyone is a child of God. We sometimes hear people saying that oh we are all God's children.

It's not true. Not everyone is a child of God. But when you turn to God through Jesus God adopts you into his family. It doesn't mean life will be comfortable and easy.

Jesus made that cry once. Jesus cried Abba, Father. In the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane. We've joined a family now Christian where our big brother our leader led us in a pattern of suffering now for glory later.

Paul describes that we'll look at it next week but he describes it there in verse 17 as he says we are ultimately heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ but we share in his sufferings now.

[28 : 50] So the spirit of adoption doesn't give you a comfortable life but he does give you great comfort in the pain of life. here is something very precious the unspeakable comfort of knowing God is our good father.

It's striking how much we need a good father it's what we were made for. I was reading about Bruce Springsteen in the news recently speaking about how so much of his life has been a reaction to the mistakes of his dad the difficult relationship he had with his dad.

he looks back and earlier in his career he says that he became a stacked bodybuilding womanizer and rock star because he grew up being told by his dad that he was a weirdo sissy boy that was the language of his father.

Broken by it his whole life has been a reaction to his bad dad. Last week I was hearing about a teenage girl who is broken hearted because her dad left her mum and now has a new family with different children and she feels distraught because she feels she was abandoned by her dad.

Her dad left her. There are many of us here at St. Silas who have been disappointed by their fathers and there are some of us here who can even say I never knew my dad or I never had a dad but wonderfully the Holy Spirit testifies with us in our hearts that by putting your trust in Jesus you do have a dad.

[30 : 21] you have a perfect father in heaven and he is everything you could want for in a father. He is strong fearless dependable unchanging good kind ambitious for us wise and trustworthy he is good to his word and we walk with him.

So friends it's a wonderful section of the Bible if we want to change we need the expulsive power of a new affection. Let the Spirit open your eyes to these gifts to you from the gospel of God's grace a new law to live by no condemnation a new life Christ in you led by the Spirit so we don't have to sin anymore a new assurance that when we cry out to God in our weakness we cry out to a perfect father.

let's pray together. Our Father in heaven we thank you that you are our Father that you are a giving Father that you've given us your Son and you've given us your Spirit help us we pray in our weakness but in the power of your Spirit that we would strive to put to death the misdeeds of our bodies and be led by your Spirit for your praise and glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen.