



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 12: Romans 8:1-17

As we begin chapter eight, we are entering the heart of this epistle. In chapter six Paul detailed how we must connect with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ by dying to our old lives through baptism in order to become a Christian. Chapter seven described the freedom Christians experience because we are no longer slaves to sin. Now, in chapter eight, Paul will begin to focus on what our new life should look like. In the first 17 verses he focuses entirely on comparing and contrasting living according to the flesh and according to the spirit.

Within these 17 verses we find “flesh” 13 times, and “spirit” 17 times. It is important to remember the definition of “flesh” that we discussed in our last lesson: living in rebellion to God and his word. There are also several things it is vital to understand about the word “spirit” before entering into this study:

1. We must remember that in Koine Greek, the original language the New Testament was written in, they did not use upper and lower case letters. In fact, everything was written in uppercase. As you read through this text you may notice that sometimes “spirit” is capitalized, and sometimes it is not. Any time “spirit” is

capitalized, this is an addition by a man based on his opinion of what the text is talking about. Be very cautious about assuming this requires that the text is referring to the Holy Spirit.

2. Every time the word “spirit” is found in this text it is the exact same Greek word, “pneuma.” This is Strong’s #4151 and can have a variety of meanings: breath, life residing in a man, the rational mind or element of life, the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God.
3. Because of the variety of meanings attached to “pneuma” it is vital to allow the context to determine whether the text is referring to the spirit of man or the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the text will make this clear, sometimes it will not.
4. Verses nine and 16 show definitively that both the spirit of man and the Holy Spirit are being discussed in this context, as both verses refer specifically to both usages.
5. Paul’s purpose in this text is not to provide us with a treatise on the work of the Holy Spirit, but rather to emphasize the differences in those who live according to the flesh and according to God’s will.



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Before you begin read Romans 8:1-17 and mark any key words or phrases.

Read Romans 8:1-2

Chapter eight verse one is one of the most beautiful, comforting passages in all of Scripture for those who bear the name of Christ. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. No matter what sins we have committed in the past, when we stand before God at the end of time all he will see is the perfect sacrifice of his son. However, Paul is one again utilizing an if/then statement. If we are in Christ, there is no condemnation, yet the converse is equally true; if we are not in Christ then we will stand condemned. How do we ensure we are in Christ? In chapter six Paul stated that this happens in the act of baptism.

How is there no condemnation for those in Christ? Because the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from sin and death! This act of setting us free was a one-time redemptive act at the cross that will continue eternally for those who live according to the law of the Spirit. This language refers back to the freedom from sin and its consequences we saw in chapter seven.

Take a few minutes and commit Romans 8:1 to memory. I encourage you to think on this verse when you are feeling down or discouraged.

Read Romans 8:3-4

Verse one began with a brilliant statement of hope. In verses three through four Paul explains how that hope came to be. God has done what the law could not do by fulfilling (through Christ) the righteousness that the law demanded. Paul, in previous chapters, has spent a lot of time emphasizing the total goodness of the law. If it was so good, why could it not justify us? According to verse three it is because we are too sinful to keep it perfectly. It was not the law that was flawed, it was our ability to follow it.

Jesus, as God made flesh, was able to conquer all of the temptations that come with being human. He was able to fulfill the righteousness of the law by living a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15). Not only has he fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, but he extends that righteousness to those who have been baptized into his death, burial and resurrection and are living in obedience to him.



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What would be involved in walking according to the spirit?

What is the difference in living in obedience and earning our salvation?

Read Romans 8:5-8

Oftentimes we focus on right actions, however here Paul reminds us that the real battlefield is our mind. What is the primary difference in those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the spirit? It's where they focus their minds. Verses seven and eight tell us plainly that we cannot focus our mind on the things of the world and be pleasing to God.

So, what does this mean for our daily lives? First of all, it means that we cannot depend on two hours a week at worship services to set our minds on the things of the spirit (meaning that which is spiritual in nature.) This takes intentional, daily effort on our part.

Second of all, it means that we need to do some soul-searching and ask what our minds are truly set on. Many years ago, when my husband was a baby Christian, he was asked to teach a middle school Bible class. He was excited about his faith and actively growing and studying, and he was thrilled for this

opportunity to share what he was learning. Despite his excitement, it wasn't long until parents were going to the deacon of education to complain about my husband's classes. What was their complaint? He was assigning weekly homework to his students, and there was just absolutely no way they would have time to do Bible homework with their various extra-curricular activities and school homework. The hard truth is that these parents had their minds set on the flesh, not on the spirit.

As a homeschool mom, I take the education of my children very seriously. I have been blessed and my children have worked diligently; thus far my two oldest children are in college and doing well. At the same time, several years ago my oldest was frustrated and discouraged, struggling with her math. My response was that I was proud of her and how diligently she was working on something that was difficult for her, but that ultimately Jesus will not care how good she is at Algebra. (Ironically, she's now an accounting major.) While I wanted her to work hard and do her best, I also wanted to make sure that her priorities were straight in the grand scheme of things.

How much time do you spend, both individually and as a family, studying God's word each week?



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In your home, what do you spend the most time talking about? Things of a spiritual nature, or of a worldly nature?

Do you put more emphasis on your children's academic performance than their spiritual growth? If so, what changes can you make to correct this?

Read Romans 8:9-11

Paul begins this section by building off his last sentence: (Verse 8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Verse 9) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." In this text Paul tells us exactly who he is talking about the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. With this phrasing Paul emphasizes the unity of the Godhead, he who is the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ.

In the Greek the word "dwells" is "oikeo" (Strong's 3611) and it means, "to inhabit or dwell in." Regarding this, there are three conditional statements made in verses 9-11:

1. If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you
2. If Christ is in you
3. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you

Because of sin, outside of Christ we are all condemned to die. Yet if the Holy Spirit dwells within us he will raise us just as he raised Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit is who determines whether we are of the flesh or the spirit. He is the seal and guarantee of our faith (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Read Romans 8:12-13

Sisters, we are debtors. We are morally obligated to live by the spirit because of all that God has done for us. We can never be "good enough" for God to owe us salvation. In fact, no matter how "good" we are, we will always be in debt to Christ because he was willing to die for us while we were still his enemies (Romans 5:10). We must put to death the deeds of the body. It is not optional for those who wish to be in Christ.

How can we put to death the deeds of the flesh?

Read Romans 8:14-17

Here Paul draws an amazing analogy: that of those who are being led by the Spirit as adopted sons of God, and heirs with Christ. In his commentary on Romans, Barclay provides some interesting information regarding the process of adoption in first century Rome:



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- An adopted son gained a new father in an entirely binding and legal way.
- An adopted son became heir to his father's estate, regardless of how many other children the father had.
- Any debts the son might have incurred were thoroughly wiped out, and legally he was considered a brand-new person.
- The adopted son was so thoroughly considered to be a part of his new family, that when Claudius adopted Nero, Nero had to gain special permission to marry Octavia, Claudius' daughter, because in the eyes of the law Nero and Octavia were brother and sister.
- The adoption was required to occur in the presence of seven witnesses, to ensure the adopted son's right to inherit in the event that some of the witnesses were to pass away.

For our adoption as daughters of the King, the Holy Spirit himself is our witness! If we live for Christ, when we gain our inheritance, we will be heirs alongside him, and we will be glorified with him! If (our little big word) we suffer with him. How do we suffer with him? By putting to death, the deeds of the body (13).

Take a moment to think about having been adopted into the family of God! Make a list of the blessings that come with being joint heirs with Christ.

Throughout this section, we have seen a stark comparison between living by the flesh and by the Spirit:

Flesh:

- Weak (v. 3)
- Sinful (v. 3)
- Condemned (v.3)
- Mind according to the flesh (v. 4)
- Death (v. 10)
- Hostile to God (v. 7-8)
- Cannot submit to God (v. 7-8)
- Cannot please God (v. 7-8)
- Death (v. 13 & 17)

Spirit:

- Free in Jesus (v. 2)
- Mind set on the Spirit (v. 4)
- Life and peace (v. 6)
- Life (v. 10)
- Righteousness (v. 10)
- Sons of God (v. 14)
- Adopted (v. 14-15)
- Heirs with Christ (v. 17)
- Glorified with Christ



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Sisters, we have two choices set before us:
we will either live by the flesh, or by the
spirit. There is no gray area, no third option.
The choices are clear, which will you choose?

*Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1975). The letter to the Romans.
Philadelphia: The Westminster John Knox Press.*

*Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study
dictionary: New Testament (electronic ed.).
Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.*