

Romans 8

1. Read Romans 8: 1-11

It begins with another “therefore...” thus, referring back to the arguments of chapter 7.

You will note in the opening section that Paul makes a big distinction between the flesh and the Spirit. Each word is repeated over a dozen times. Paul uses the word, flesh, in 3 different ways:

- 1) Literally - referring to physical circumcision
- 2) “according to the flesh” = looking things from the human point of view
- 3) “in the flesh” = meaning human nature in all its weakness - our sinful nature, our tendency to sin

Thus, it is both physical and spiritual meaning, including such things as idolatry, hatred, wrath, strife, heresies, envy and murder (from Galatians 5). It is what humans are without God and Christ.

Paul’s use of the word spirit always refers to a divine power. In the OT, the word refers either to a ghost, or to wind. With wind, it contains the idea of power, like a mighty rushing wind.

So for Paul, there was a time when we were at the mercy of our own sinful human nature, and the law moved us to sin. Thus, the law revealed our guilt, leaving us defeated and frustrated. How to get right with God? When we became Christians, the surging power of the Spirit came into our lives, allowing us to enter into victorious living over sin.

In vv. 1-11, Paul is drawing a contrast between 2 kinds of life:

- 1) The life dominated by sinful nature, whose focus is the self and whose only law is its own desires. Thus, some people may be passion-controlled, or lust-controlled, or pride-controlled, or ambition-controlled.
- 2) If your life is dominated by the Spirit of Christ, pleasing him becomes your main goal. You live for him.

Read Romans 8: 12-17

Now Paul introduces us to a new metaphor for being controlled by the Spirit and not the flesh: we are adopted into the family of God. We are God’s children, and thus, heirs.

2. Read Romans 8: 18-25

Paul now writes as a poet, painting a picture of future glory that any Jew would understand. Jewish thought divided time into 2 sections - the present age and the age to come. The present age was wholly bad, subject to sin, death, and decay. On the coming Day of the Lord, the world would be judged and shaken to its foundations, but out of it would come a new world.

Read Romans 8: 26-30

Here are 2 of the most important verses in the NT about prayer. Scholar CH Dodd defines prayer in this way: “Prayer is the divine in us appealing to the Divine above us.” We can’t always know our real need, and we can’t with our finite minds know God’s plan. So we leave it up to God to know what’s best for us. The Spirit will translate for us.

“All things work together for good” - for those who love God. Although we cannot know the plans of God, we know that God is good and accept what God sends to us and part of his plan for us.

3. Read Romans 8: 31-39

This is one of the most lyrical passages Paul ever wrote. Not even any of the terrible things Paul lists can ever separate us from God’s love. Of what, then, shall we be afraid?