

## Romans 8A (2017)

- Tonight we reach the climactic chapter of the book of Romans
  - This is the chapter where Paul pulls everything together
    - He reconciles the effects of a sinless spirit and a depraved, sinful body
    - He addresses concerns for how our sinful tendencies might impact our eternal future
    - He answers the doubts for any who might wonder if they are truly saved
    - He even considers what our death in the body says about our relationship with Christ
  - In light of all that Paul covers in this important chapter of scripture, we need to return once more to our structure chart
    - Chapter 8 is the final part of the fifth block in this book
    - This block has been examining the consequences of our salvation by faith alone in Christ alone
    - Chapter 6 addressed how that salvation changed our spirit for the better
    - And Chapter 7 explained why, despite our perfection in Christ, we still experience sin in our body
  - Those two conflicting consequences create the potential for confusion and misunderstanding among uninformed believers
    - First, does the fact that I continue to experience sin following my salvation suggest that I am not truly saved at all?
    - Secondly, how do we tell the difference between an unbeliever playing Christian and a true believer ruled by their sinful flesh?
    - Finally, how do we understand the trials of daily life that come upon us while living in our present condition? Are they evidence of God's displeasure with us?
  - All of these issues revolve around a single concern: our eternal security

- If we were entirely sinless now, if we didn't have this sinful body, we wouldn't have this concern at all
  - If our flesh were as sinless as our spirit is now, then we would live in perfect obedience and confidence in our relationship with Christ
  - Moreover, we would live in a world without sin, where no one else's disobedience could come against us to cause us trial or loss
  - Therefore, we would have no reason to doubt that God was pleased with us or that our relationship would endure
- One day soon that's the world we will know, but until then we still live in a sinful world and we still let our sinful flesh corrupt our walk
  - As a result our confidence may be shaken at times
  - Others' sins against us, or our own disobedience, may seem like cracks in the wall of our security in Christ
  - So Paul addresses these concerns in Chapter 8, in a chapter I call the consequences for our eternal security

Rom. 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Rom. 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Rom. 8:4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- Chapter 8 opens with a powerful statement of assurance of our security in Christ
  - Paul starts with the word "therefore" because he's applying the truths he taught in the prior chapters
    - In a sense, v.8:1 is the conclusion of all Romans
    - As a result of your salvation by grace through faith...

- As a result of receiving the righteousness of Christ rather than relying on your own righteousness...
- As a result of possessing a perfect spirit and despite temporarily inhabiting a sinful body...
- There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus
  - Notice Paul's emphasis on the word "now"
    - We're free of condemnation not only at our judgment moment in the eternal age, but even now you stand without condemnation
    - Even now as you continue to experience sin because of your body, you are approved by God
  - How can this be true? Well remember, the eternal you is not your body
    - The sinful body is destined to go to the grave
    - It will pay for its sin with a death, just as God requires
  - But you are your spirit, and your spirit is sinless, made in the image of Christ
    - Your sinful spirit died on the cross with Christ
    - So even as you experience sin, you have no condemnation
- Paul describes this as the spirit of life in Christ vs. the law of sin and death
  - In v.2 Paul says that the spirit of life in Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death
    - The spirit of life in Christ refers to that new spirit we received from Christ at the moment of our faith
    - That new spirit is not under condemnation, because Christ already paid the price for our sin on the cross
  - Therefore, we were set free from the law that condemned our sin
    - That law demands death for sin, and Christ took that death in our place
    - So when we received our new spirit through our faith in Christ, we were set free from, no longer bound to, the law that called for our death

- So God has no reason to be our enemy now
  - God does what He does according to what is right and just
  - When our body dies and we're set free from it, our spirit will be the only thing that remains for a time
  - Our spirit, being perfect, cannot be condemned, for it would be unjust for God to judge us
- Paul explains this conclusion in v.3, saying the law couldn't compel us to live perfectly, which is why it only served to condemn us
  - The Law spelled out what was right, but it couldn't make our sinful flesh conform to its requirements
  - In fact, as we learned earlier, our sin took pleasure in doing whatever the Law prohibited
- Therefore, the Father sent Christ to live it perfectly for us and then to die as payment for our sin
  - By living according to the Law, Christ's spirit remained perfect and sinless from birth to death
  - By faith, His perfect spirit has given birth to our perfect spirit, and His death paid the price for our sin, freeing us from condemnation
- And so in v.4, Paul says by receiving Christ's spirit, the requirement of the Law has been fulfilled in us
  - In other words, when the Father looks upon us now, what does He see?
    - First, He sees our sinful deeds done in this body, but those deeds are the result of our flesh, not our spirit
    - But one day our body will go to the grave, which is the just penalty for its sin
  - But our body is not the eternal "us" because it's not the part of us that will pass over into the next age
    - The eternal part of us is our spirit
    - So when the Father looks upon our spirit, all He sees is Christ's perfect spirit

- Our spirit does not sin and therefore, there is no condemnation for our spirit...not now and not ever
  - Our spirit is the only part of us that carries on into the presence of the Lord
  - So our body's sin has no bearing on our spirit's standing before God
- With this argument, Paul addresses the first doubt I mentioned in my introduction
    - For the Christian who wonders if the continuing presence of sin draws our salvation into question, the answer is clearly no
      - Because the source of our sin is our flesh, which will go to the grave prior to our judgment
      - So that as we arrive before Christ, we will have already shed that part of us that remains unrighteous
      - All that will remain at that moment is our perfect spirit, made so by Christ
    - It would be hard to find a truth of scripture more important than this one
      - A Christian cannot engage in a serious and productive pursuit of God's grace, truth and godliness until he or she understands this truth
      - As long as we remain confused about this point, we will either revert to self-righteousness, trying to work for something we have already obtained by faith
      - Or we will become so discouraged or defeated by our sin that we give up the pursuit of Christ altogether...both are mistakes
    - Instead, we need to appreciate the freedom we have now to serve Christ without worry for our future
      - Because we have already been granted all that's required to be approved by God...we have Christ's perfect spirit
      - And while our flesh's sin is ever before us...and that's good, since it works to motivate us to seek for something better...

- Nevertheless, that sin does nothing to weaken our relationship with Christ
  - In fact, our concern over our sin is merely proof that we are a child of God and we have the mind of Christ

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

Rom. 8:7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

Rom. 8:8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom. 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Rom. 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

- Paul labels the unsaved human condition as living according to the flesh
  - Before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, there was no tug of war inside us
    - There was only the desire of the flesh with no counterweight to resist it, apart from our conscience
    - Paul says the unsaved mind – the way unbelievers think about life – is set entirely on the flesh's desires, which are always sinful
    - While we were unbelievers, to the extent we refrained from doing what the flesh wanted, it was only because we were avoiding the negative consequences we assumed would follow
    - But there was nothing righteous in our motives or desires
  - Notice Paul says in v.6 that the mind set on the flesh is death
    - He's saying that the mind we possessed before faith was one that knows only sin and condemnation, which Paul sums up as "death"

- And in v.7 Paul says that the mind was hostile toward God and it would not be subject to the Law of God
- In fact, as we learned, the flesh isn't even able to do so
- So the fleshly mind of every unbeliever is set against God and toward sin, to such an extent that it can't think in any other way
  - It's literally impossible to please God because what God wants is opposite of what the fleshly mind wants
  - And even when the Lord did reveal His desires to men, the fleshly mind merely took opportunity in that knowledge to sin all the more
- So under these circumstances, certainly the unbeliever gives absolutely no concern to their own sin – apart from whatever consequences arise
  - They aren't troubled by the notion of doing wrong, of displeasing God
  - They do not understand what God wants because they lack access to His thoughts
  - They do not have the internal desire to please Him
- By contrast, after we come to faith in Jesus Christ our spirit is born again and becomes aligned perfectly with the will of God
  - From that point, our mind is set on righteous things
    - Paul says in v.6 that the mind we receive following faith knows only eternal life and the peace we have with God
    - Our thinking moves 180° from opposing God to pleasing God
  - And that difference means that now we think about eternal matters and we share the Lord's concern for sin
    - Where before we had concern only for the consequences of sin
    - Now we feel burdened over the presence of sin in our life
  - And even our thoughts about the consequences of our sin have changed
    - Now we care more about the eternal consequences of our sin rather than the earthly consequences

- So concerns about eternal security, or worries about pleasing God, become chief concerns
- These are concerns unique to the believer
  - I often say that only believers worry about not having salvation
  - Unbelievers don't sit around worrying over whether they are saved, for that notion never even enters their mind
- But the believer, especially the new immature follower of Christ, may become fixated on that concern
  - Ironically, it's our living spirit that makes possible such a concern
  - In other words, *because* we are alive in Christ, we now have the capacity to appreciate what it means not to be saved
  - Which is why Paul wants us to understand that our new thinking is proof in itself that we are not under condemnation

Rom. 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Rom. 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

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- Now Paul moves to addressing the second question: if believers sin at times like unbelievers, how do we know we are saved?
  - The answer, for several reasons, is the Holy Spirit living in us is the ultimate proof of our salvation
    - The Spirit comes to every believer at the moment of salvation
    - It is the Spirit Who regenerates us, bringing us to faith
    - Our new birth in Christ is accomplished by the Spirit of God, just as Christ Himself was conceived in the flesh by the Holy Spirit
  - Therefore, Paul says if a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, then that person does not belong to Christ

- It was the presence of Christ's Spirit in you, birthing you anew, that brought you into righteousness and freed you from the condemnation of the Law
- So that even though your body remains dead because of its sin, nevertheless the spirit has made you alive
- Moreover, Paul says in v.11 that the same Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead will do the same for you
  - The fact that the Spirit took up residence in your dead body tells us He intends to bring us into a living body one day
  - After three days, the Spirit of Christ brought Christ's body back to life
  - Those three days were merely an interlude during which Christ's body was dead
- Likewise, the Spirit of Christ has made you spiritually alive now even while your body remains "dead" in sin
  - And this interlude will last for a while, but eventually the Spirit will finish the job He started
  - So one day He will bring your living spirit back into a new, eternal living body
  - As Paul says elsewhere

Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

- So the first proof that sin isn't undoing your salvation is that your spirit will one day receive a new body, and that work is promised to be completed
  - So the sin of this temporary body isn't changing God's plan
    - He knew it was a problem which is why He's promised to replace it
    - In the meantime, we can wait in confidence
  - Then Paul moves to the second reason we know that our conflict with sin isn't reason to doubt our salvation

Rom. 8:12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh –

Rom. 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Rom. 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- The language of v.12 is bit awkward in English, but we could rephrase Paul's statement this way...
  - So brothers and sisters, we are obligated by God not to live according to the wishes of our flesh
    - Because Paul says if someone is living according to the flesh, that person must die
    - At first we may wonder if Paul is talking about an outcome for believers, but the context will show us otherwise
    - As we'll see, Paul is contrasting two ways of life and what they say about a person's identity
  - On the one hand, there are people who are living according to the flesh
    - These people are controlled by their sinful flesh and as a result will know death in the end
    - Paul's describing the identity of the unbeliever
    - The unbeliever's body will die for its sin
    - And their spirit will likewise experience the second death, which is eternity in the Lake of Fire
  - If Paul was describing an unbeliever, why did he use the second person pronoun, "you"?
    - Because he's speaking parenthetically
    - Notice at the end of v.12 your English version probably has an em dash (-)
    - That punctuation choice reflects the interpreters' awareness that Paul is taking a detour in v.13
- Back in v.12 Paul explains the Christian is under obligation to struggle against the flesh

- But then in v.13 Paul takes a moment to remind us that our prior state of unbelief presented no such struggle yet it resulted in death
  - So while our new state may involve struggle, that struggle is proof to us that we will live eternally
  - So Paul's parenthetical statement simply reminds us that our current struggle against sin is better than our life lived for the flesh
  - The struggle that leads to life is better than the blissful ignorance of unbelief that leads to death
- So the Spirit of God obligates us to put to death the deeds of the flesh
  - When he says obligation, Paul doesn't mean we have a responsibility to engage in this battle
  - Paul means it literally...God obligates this battle and you can't avoid it
  - Because we are now two parts – perfect spirit and sinful flesh – we *will* wrestle with sin
  - The fight isn't optional; you can't avoid it because the Spirit in us leads us and He doesn't need our permission to prosecute the battle
- We can resist His will, but we will only be a miserable creature
  - The most miserable person you'll ever meet is a Christian determined to let their sinful body rule their life
  - Because while we might have enjoyed our sin before we were saved, we will not enjoy it after
  - The sinning believer still suffers the consequences of their sin like everyone else
  - But on top of that, they also feel guilt from the conviction of the Spirit, so ironically, they can't even be free to enjoy it
- So we don't really have a choice to fight
  - Our only choice is whether we will seek to win this battle, or to just keep losing it over and over again
  - That fight will be a slow, progressive battle that lasts a lifetime

- The process is messy and complicated and subject to setbacks from time to time
- But the very fact that the wrestling happens, is a reflection of our new identity
- We can see confirmation that Paul was speaking about two different identities in v.13, when we look at v.14
  - Paul's conclusion is to give the definition of a believer: the believer is the one who is being led by the Spirit of God
    - To be led by the Spirit means to have the indwelling of the Spirit
    - And it's the presence of the Spirit that made possible our new birth and obligates us to wrestling against the body's sin
    - It's the evidence to us that we are truly saved
  - But be careful...you can't apply this standard in measuring another person's faith, as if their good works are a litmus test of their faith
    - Paul is speaking to believers concerning our identity in Christ, not someone else's
    - That is, the work of the Spirit in our life is proof of our faith
    - So that if sin in your life concerns you, rest assured it testifies to your new birth
  - But we can't look at another person and decide for them whether the presence of sin in their life means they are believing or not
    - Because it's not the presence or absence of sin in a person's life that reflects true faith
    - It's our heart response to that sin that demonstrates our new life in Christ
    - A true believer is under obligation by the Spirit to not live in agreement with the sinful flesh, and so we will struggle when we do
    - And that struggle is not something another person can know or measure in us, nor we measure in another
- And so Paul concludes his answer to that second question with a final effect of the Spirit dwelling in a believer

**Rom. 8:15** For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

**Rom. 8:16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

**Rom. 8:17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

- Paul says the presence of the Spirit living in us eliminates our natural fear of death
  - The spirit we received from Adam was a spirit of slavery, Paul says
    - It was enslaved to a fear of death created by our sinful jeopardy before God
    - Like a poor student who stands in fear of the day they receive their report card
    - That fear burdens them all the more as the day grows closer, and in that sense they are enslaved
  - But when we received a new spirit in Christ, that old spirit that feared death went away
    - Now our new spirit, having descended from Christ, is a fellowship child of God
    - And as a fellowship child of God, we no longer fear seeing Him face to face
    - Rather, that new spirit led us to cry out to Him as a young child might cry out to daddy (*abba* in Aramaic)
  - The Spirit's arrival effected an adoption on our behalf
    - While we were natural born in the image of Adam, now we've been adopted into the family of Christ
    - As an adopted child, we have all the privileges and rights of a natural born child
    - So we have nothing to fear of God, or the day we face Him
  - We will also be an heir with Christ

- We will share in God's inheritance
- The Bible says that Christ as the Son of God received an inheritance on the occasion of His own death
- An inheritance is something a person receives on the occasion of a death
- A person's wealth is transferred to someone else at the moment they die
- When your rich uncle dies, he leaves his inheritance to his heirs
- That transfer of wealth couldn't happen until he died
- Normally when a person dies, his Last Will and Testament dictates that his wealth be transferred to a living relative
  - But in the case of Christ, He died but then He lived again
  - So at His resurrection, He received His own inheritance back
  - The irony is, Christ's own death produced His inheritance
- So Christ's inheritance will be shared among all the children of God
  - Because we are all children of God by faith, then we are also heirs who share in the inheritance of God
  - As Paul says in Galatians

**Gal. 4:6** Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

**Gal. 4:7** Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- Take note, Paul is not saying we have no reason to fear anything or that we are going to be fearful at times
  - He's speaking specifically about fearing death and the judgment that comes
    - And many times when we know fear, it's because we're letting our flesh rule our hearts momentarily
    - Because in your spirit, you have no fear of death, and therefore most of the things in life that scare you are irrelevant

- Because even something that might take your life is simply hastening your glory...who could fear that?
- So if you suffer in your struggles against sin or because of others' sins, just know that you are sharing in Christ's life
  - He suffered and He was glorified
  - You will know the same because you are also a child of God
  - These realities are no reason to doubt your salvation
  - If anything they confirm you are different
- Next time, we address Paul's third question – that is what do trials and tribulations in this life say about our relationship with God?
  - Or as some people might say, why do bad things happen to good people?