

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Life through the Spirit, Romans 8:1-17

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INTRODUCTION: None of us really like to talk about death, especially if you came to church to be inspired this morning. But, the topic of death is very important. It's something we must talk about. One thing we can rest assured—the scripture tells us it is appointed. Everyone has an appointment with death. It is appointed to man once to die, and after that, there is judgment.

So, as I am continuing my series in Romans Chapter 8, this topic of death comes up, but it comes up in a joyful way. How in the world can we talk about death in a joyful way? Well, with Jesus, you can. I want to ask you this question: Do you all think about death, often? I have to say, it does cross my mind, but then I have to remind myself I need to live for today and leave death up to the Lord.

It's all around us, isn't it? This past week, a woman got on an airplane to travel. The engine exploded on that plane, and the woman was partially sucked out of the plane through the window. As I understand it, people hung onto her while she died. There were no other fatalities, but the pilot in a heroic effort was able to land the plane. But, for that woman in that seat on that airplane, her life was over.

I'm sure many of us have close friends, probably relatives, whose lives ended suddenly. We have to admit, we never know when life could be taken from us. It could happen today. It could happen tomorrow. We have an appointment with death. The only thing is: God's the one keeping the appointment book. We don't know the time or the date.

Since we are all going to die, and we are all going to meet our Maker and face Judgment on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need to be ready. We might shy away from thinking about death. Maybe we shy away from talking about it or taking it seriously. Maybe we are too busy to think about it. And, I think a lot of people busy their lives so much they don't have time to think about death.

ILLUSTRATION: This past week, I got a call from a friend far away asking if I would help find a pastor to lead her dad’s funeral in another state. They were able to find someone, but apparently, he had not made preparations to have someone take care of his funeral.

APPLICATION: I don’t mean to be morbid or depressing on this topic of death and the wrath of God, but we must accept the state of our death. We must accept the reality that as mortals, we will die someday. We have to accept this before we can move onto the wonderful, joyous subject this morning—that is life through the Spirit.

Today, in Romans Chapter 8, Paul discusses what it means to live a life in the Spirit of Christ. And, to review—as I’ve been preaching through Romans, Paul has put forth in his letter our desperate state apart from Christ. We are all sinners, as Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death,”* but it continues, *“but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

I have three points to the message this morning, and here they are:

1. Life through the Spirit means no condemnation for believers.
2. Life through the Spirit means a new Life.
3. Life through the Spirit means a new family.

First, LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT MEANS NO CONDEMNATION FOR BELIEVERS.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-2 ¹*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,* ²*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

EXPLANATION: Paul uses the word “therefore” to connect this message of life to what he previously wrote about in Romans. As you probably know, the chapters and numbered verses of the Bible came much later. When Paul wrote this letter, he wrote it just as you would write a letter—one long narrative. If you’ve ever received a letter in the mail that had chapters and numbers by every sentence, probably the writer of that letter was a little odd. So, Paul’s letter to the Romans has been broken up so we can find chapters and verses much quicker than otherwise. But, he links Chapter 8 to Chapter 7 by using the word “therefore.”

SCRIPTURE: He wrote just a few verses earlier, “*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! ...*” (Romans 7:24-25).

EXPLANATION: So, as Jesus has taken the punishment we deserve by dying on the cross and rising again, there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. I want you to see the word there—if it’s not underlined, underline the word, “now.” It’s important.

SCRIPTURE: *There is therefore, now no condemnation... (verse 1)... because Jesus has saved us.*

EXPLANATION: Many of us think of salvation in terms of the future. *We will be saved someday.* Many people think *we are condemned now, but because we’ve been saved, we will be spared one day.* No, that’s not what the scripture says. *Therefore, there is **now** no condemnation.* When God looks at his children, who are saved through Jesus, he sees them as not being condemned. [So, the code word for all these children is “condemned.”]

Condemnation is different than guilt. It is the final judgment of the guilty. Legally, the term includes both the “guilty” pronouncement by the judge and the punishment that follows. And, we might think of ourselves as “good” people. We might think ourselves as moral people, but as we have been reading in Romans, we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. We all fall short of the glory he intended for us from the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Because of God’s love for us, however, he has provided a way for us we could not provide on our own.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION: I can assure you, Paul knew what it meant to be guilty. He knew what it was like to feel guilt. People ask what was the thorn in Paul’s flesh. You remember, Paul asked the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh many times, and he still had to deal with it. Honestly, I’ve heard everything from Paul’s bad eyesight to other things. I’ll tell you what I believe Paul’s thorn in the flesh was—it was guilt from the past. Paul, though, had knowledge and an understanding that he was free in Christ and was guiltless before God through Christ, and he was not condemned through Christ. But, I believe Paul had this haunting memory, as we all do of the past. The enemy wants us to fail. The enemy

wants us to think we're worthless. The enemy wants to remind us of our weakness. The enemy wants to remind us of our past sins.

But, Paul, being a former persecutor of believers in Jesus—being a former murderer of Christians was now a Christian. A person who murdered his own brothers and sisters in Christ before he came to Christ no doubt had to deal with his past. Paul talks about his inability to live a righteous life according to the Law (and, he meant the Law of Moses, which he knew so well).

And, after realizing “Do not covet” was one of God’s commandments, Paul said, once he learned that, then sin seized every opportunity and produced in him every kind of covetous desire. He said, “*Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died*” (Romans 7:9).

Everything he was holding on to—his religion, his good deeds, his zeal, his outward appearance, his status, his belief his murdering of other Christians was doing God a favor, and his approval from other people had to be brought to nothing. Obviously, Paul didn’t literally die. But, who he was as a sinner, pronounced guilty—died.

SCRIPTURE: He proclaimed with power: NOW there was NO condemnation. Why? *Because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:2).

EXPLANATION: So, he makes a statement, and then he explains a statement. By the power of Jesus Christ alone, we are set free.

APPLICATION: We are not set free by our own mental ascent. We are not set free from meditation or exercise or whatever it might be. We are only set free through Jesus. Some think *we can have good enough morals. We can do enough good things.* Some people think *if we were only a little more kind.* Some people think *if we would only just try a little harder.* But, no! Knowing what we should do reveals the deeper problem within us—as Paul says, we cannot do what we know we should do, and we do what we hate even though we don’t want to do it. What I like about Paul, when he wrote his epistles, is his brutal honesty. I can relate to Paul. When I read Paul’s writings, I think, “This Paul could’ve written that. This Paul understands that. This Paul understands the apostle Paul’s struggle with sin.”

APPLICATION: What about you, believer? Do I need to remind you, you once were condemned? You once were separated from the love of God? But, now, you have been given a new life. You have been given a second opportunity. Don't for one day, take it for granted.

The enemy, satan, wants believers to believe we are condemned. The enemy wants you to believe you are a loser. The enemy wants you to believe if you compromise what you believe, then he'll help you out and you'll have a good life. He wants to walk around with feelings of guilt and shame because of past sins. The enemy wants you to feel you and I are unworthy of God's love. He wants to diminish the strength of Jesus in our lives. But, we cannot listen to the lies of the enemy. If you agree with me, say *Amen*.

So, coming to Jesus with open hands—with nothing to give—he gives us a new Spirit, our Helper. In Christ, we receive this gift through which we have—NO CONDEMNATION. And, we can only live a full life when we understand the “now” of the word “now” in verse 1.

Second, LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT MEANS A NEW LIFE.

EXPLANATION: You ever heard someone say, *I wish I could just start over*. Well, you can! Ever heard someone say, *I wish I could just go back and change what I said*. You can! You might not be able to go back and change the words, but you can say *I'm sorry*. You can repent. You can ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins. You can ask someone else for forgiveness of sins you committed against them. And, if you sincerely repent, the scripture tells us, so far as the East is from the West, so far has God removed our transgressions from us. He forgets our sins. It's us; we cannot forget our sins. But, life through the spirit means a new life. Read with me—

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:3-4 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. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

EXPLANATION: So, we have a new life—we were once too weak to live. Even when I am tempted to give up and to think *I cannot follow Jesus' plan for me*, I have to look to the cross once again and realize before, when I was condemned I certainly couldn't follow God's will for my life. But, now because of Christ and being not condemned, right now I can follow God's will for my life.

SCRIPTURE: What did Paul say, again? *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* (verse 3).

EXPLANATION: God accomplished defeat of sin on the cross because he was perfect. And, now what do we have to live by? His Spirit!

If we do not live according to the flesh anymore, we should live according to the Spirit. But, we have this fight between the flesh and the Spirit. And, if you want to learn more about it, go back and read Romans 7, and you'll learn about that complicated relationship we as humans have with sin as long as the soul remains in this body. But, one day the soul will be set free from this body, and we will no longer have a complicated relationship with sin.

Paul explains the difference between those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit. He starts with our minds. Continue now with me in verse 5—

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:5-11 ⁵ *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.* ⁶ *The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.* ⁷ *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.* ⁸ *Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

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 if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.* 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.* 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.

EXPLANATION: We see this word “flesh.” It has two meanings. The word is used numerous times in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to our physical bodies, and that word “flesh” in the physical sense doesn’t have any negative connotation. But, in this verse, “flesh” is negative. It refers to making decisions according to one’s self—apart from faith. [According to HELPS Word-Studies], it is “unaided human effort that originates from self or is empowered by self.” So, in this sense, the word “flesh” is negative.

Unbelievers set their minds on the fleshly desires. They make decisions based on what they want. It might not always look bad. In fact, many times, it might be disguised as good.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION: And, Paul, when he wrote his letter to the Galatians, warns against even using spiritual teaching in a fleshly manner. Be careful not to use the scripture in this way. If you’re watching a TV preacher who is manipulating the scripture to try to get you to do something to benefit him, change the channel. Paul warns against people using the scripture to fulfill fleshly desires.

But, those who believe in Jesus, resting upon his Spirit, set their minds on what the Spirit desires. The greatest example we see is Jesus, 100 percent man and a 100 percent God.

SCRIPTURE: He prayed at the time of his approaching death: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42).

What is the result of fleshly desires? Fleshly desires, while alluring and pleasurable at first-sight, lead to death. They are actually hostile to God. A mind like this cannot be in relationship with God and cannot please God. On the other hand, a mind led by the Spirit leads to life and leads to peace. It yields to his will—which is full of life and peace. It is the same life that raised Jesus from the dead. You now belong to Jesus, and in him, your life is held forever by him in his righteous right hand—upholding you forever, and no one can take you from his hand. If you agree with me, say *Amen*.

Next, LIFE IN THOUGH THE SPIRIT MEANS A NEW FAMILY.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:12-17 ¹² *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.* ¹³ *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.*

¹⁴ *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.* ¹⁵ *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.”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.* ¹⁷ *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.*

EXPLANATION: As believers, we have a new family. We have a new Father, who is God. And, according to the scripture, we have a new brother, who is Jesus. Jesus is our Savior. He’s also our brother, which almost sounds like heresy because it sounds as if we’re equating ourselves with Jesus. But, look what the scripture says: We are joint-heirs. We are co-heirs with Christ.

APPLICATION: As children of God we have nothing to fear. We can call him Father, just as Jesus did. This is what the Spirit reminds us—we are his children. “Abba, Father.” Do you know what it means? It means “Daddy.” We cry out to our Daddy when we are afraid.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember being a little boy and being afraid at certain times. And, who would I call? I would cry out to my daddy.

EXPLANATION: Verse 17 says we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We according to the scripture, are adopted into the family. An adopted child has all of the rights of a blood family member. Think about it. We are adopted out of the family of condemnation, and through Christ, we are brought into the family of no condemnation right now.

Heirs of God... why?—because we are adopted. If you’ve ever inherited something, you did not get it because you deserved it. You got it because you were the heir. So, as heirs of God, we get not what we have earned—because the scripture is real clear

we can't earn it. We get what we have not earned—which is eternal life—merely because we are adopted children in the family God.

Even though we are adopted, it makes no difference at all. We are joint heirs with Christ. In other words, we are brothers and sisters to Christ. He is our Savior. He is also our brother. We inherit heaven and eternal life like he inherits heaven and eternal life. In God's family, there was one sinless child and billions of sinful brothers and sisters to that sinless child. The completely sinless child of God paid the price for us. He is our Savior and our brother, yet we receive the same inheritance. Why?—because we are family, because our Daddy loves us. It sounds like heresy to equate ourselves with Jesus, but the scripture is clear believers are joint heirs with Jesus. You'll have to think about that one for a while to let it soak in.

APPLICATION: When you have God as your heavenly Father, you'll want to live to please him. You will not want to live as a rebellious child. And, even more, when you understand what Jesus did for you on the cross, you will not want to take your sin lightly. You'll be convicted of sin, and you'll repent of your sin because children of God are called to a life of holiness.

We have as an obligation, in verse 12, to follow the Spirit of God. And, we know this Spirit of God leads us to follow him—to follow his will for our lives. He said to go into all the world, make disciples, baptizing people in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION: I want to ask you today:

- Are you following God's Spirit?
- What's it like with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- What's it like with God as your Father who has an inheritance coming to you? What is that relationship like?
- How about this condemnation issue?
- Do you wake up every morning and just feel defeated?
- Do you just go throughout the day being reminded of past sins?
- Do you find yourself daydreaming into the past feeling guilty yet once again and finding yourself in that cycle you seem to not be able to break out of?

You're going to have to learn verse 1 by heart. Let's go over it again.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-2 ¹*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,* ²*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

You know a defeated Christian is not leading any one to Christ. A defeated Christian, walking around, living the past, continuing to revisit old sins and old guilt, is a completely powerless Christian and will never bring anyone to faith in Christ.

But, the Christian who realizes, *"I'm not condemned. In fact, I'm not condemned right now,"* can say, *"Therefore, I can live a victorious life in Christ. And, while I may not understand it all, I do know that Jesus is my Savior. I do know that Jesus has forgiven me of my sins, and I can share that Good News with other people."*

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