

Romans Session 99

Life in the Spirit 4

The Result of Freedom, Sanctification

Romans 8:3-4 (NASB)

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,*

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.*

The believer's freedom from sin results in his present as well as in his ultimate sanctification.

The true Christian has both the desire and the divinely-imparted ability to live righteously while he is still on earth.

Because God sent His own Son to redeem mankind by providing the only sacrifice that can condemn and remove their sin (v3), **the requirement of the Law** is able to **be fulfilled in us**, that is, in believers.

Paul obviously is not speaking here of the justifying work of salvation but of its sanctifying work, its being lived out in the believer's earthly life.

Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit through the life of a redeemed person, human efforts at righteousness are as contaminated and useless as filthy garments.

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB)

⁶ *For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

But because the Christian has been cleansed of sin and been given God's own divine nature within him, he now longs for and is able to live a life of holiness.

God does not free men from their sin, in order, for them to do as they please but to do as He pleases.

God does not redeem men in order that they may continue sinning but **in order that** they may begin to live righteously by having **the requirement of the Law fulfilled** in them.

Because they are no longer under law but are now under grace, some Christians claim that it makes little difference what they do, because just as noting they could have done could have saved them, so noting they now do can cause them to lose their salvation.

But the Holy Spirit could never prompt a Christian to make such a foolish and ungodly statement. The spiritual Christian knows that God's law is holy, righteous, and good;

Romans 7:12 (NASB)

¹² *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

And he knows he has been saved in order to have that divine holiness, righteousness, and goodness **fulfilled** in him. That is his desire. He has holy longings.

Now the phrase;

Romans 8:4b (NASB)

⁴ who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Is not an admonition, but a statement of fact that applies to all believer's.

Paul explains later that no person who belongs to Christ is without the indwelling Holy Spirit (v9).

Being indwelt by the Spirit is not a mark of special maturity or spirituality but the mark of every true Christian, without exception.

In its figurative sense, *peripateo* (to **walk**) refers to a habitual way or bent of life, to a life-style.

Luke describes Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, as being "**righteous in the sight of God, waking blameless in all commandments and requirements of the Lord,**" (Luke 1:6)

Paul counseled the Ephesian believers to "**walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind** (Eph 4:17)

John declares that, "**if we walk in the light as (God) himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin**" (1John 1:7)

Paul asserts that a true believer, whether young or old, immature or mature, well taught or poorly taught, does **not walk according to the flesh.**

Just as categorically he declares that a true believer *does* walk **according to the Spirit.**

There are no exceptions.

Because every true believer is indwelt by the Spirit, every true believer will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Jesus made it clear that "**unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven**" (Matt 5:20)

Jesus said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount;

Matthew 5:48 (NASB)

⁴⁸ "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Nothing is as dear to the heart of our Lord, than the moral and spiritual excellence of those He has created in His own image and nothing is dearer to them.

He does not want them to only have imputed righteousness but practical righteousness as well. And that should also be what they want.

It is about that practical righteousness that Paul speaks about.

Listen to his opening words to the Ephesians;

Ephesians 1:3-4 (NASB)

³ ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,***

⁴ ***just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love***

It is God's great desire that believers live out the perfect righteousness that He reckons to them when they are saved, that they live like His children and no longer like the children of the world and of Satan.

Positional righteousness is to be reflected in practical righteousness.

Christ does not want a bride who is only positionally righteous but one who is actually righteous, just as He Himself is righteous and through His indwelling Spirit, He gives believer that desire.

The purpose of the Gospel is not to make men happy but to make them holy. As the Beatitudes make clear, genuine happiness comes to those who belong to Christ and are obedient to His will.

True happiness comes only from holiness.

God promises happiness, but He demands holiness, without which, **"no one will see the Lord"** (Heb 12:14)

In his book entitled *God's Righteous Kingdom*, Walter J. Chantry writes;

When preachers speak as if God's chief desire is for men to be happy, then multitudes with problems flock to Jesus. Those who have ill-health, marital troubles, financial frustration, and loneliness look to our Lord for the desires of their hearts. Each conceives of joy as being found in health, peace, prosperity or companionship. But in search of illusive happiness they are not savingly joined to Jesus Christ. Unless men will be holy, God is determined that they shall be forever miserable and damned (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1980, p. 67)

Righteousness is the very heart of salvation. It is for righteousness that God saves those who trust in His Son.

Paul said;

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

¹⁷ ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."***

Peter admonishes believers;

1 Peter 1:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ ***but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;***

We are told that practical righteousness leads believers;

Titus 2:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ ***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,***

¹² ***instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,***

Galatians 5:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ **Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

²⁵ **If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

As Augustine observed many centuries ago, grace was given for one reason, that the law might be fulfilled.

When a sinner leaves the courts of God and has received a pardon for sin by virtue of Christ's sacrifice the work of God in his life has just begun.

As the believer leaves the courtroom, as it were, God hands him the code of life and says, "**Now you have in you My Spirit, whose power will enable you to fulfill My law's otherwise impossible demands.**"

Scripture is clear that, in some mystical way known only to God, a person begins to walk by the Spirit the moment he believes.

But on the other hand, he is also admonished to walk by the Spirit as he lives out his earthly life under the lordship of Christ and in the power of the Spirit.

As with salvation itself, walking by the Spirit comes first of all by God's sovereign work in the believer's heart, but it also involves the exercise of the believer's will.

In Romans 8:4 Paul is speaking of the first while in Galatians 5:25 he is speaking of the second.

As far as the Christian life is concerned, everything that is a spiritual reality is also a spiritual responsibility.

A Genuine Christian will commune with his heavenly Father in prayer, but he also has the responsibility to pray.

A Christian is taught by the Holy Spirit, but he is also obligated to see the Spirit's guidance and help.

The Holy Spirit will produce spiritual fruit in a believer's life, but the believer is also admonished to bear fruit.

These truths are part of the amazing and seemingly paradoxical tension between God's sovereignty and man's will.

Although man's mind is incapable of understanding such mysteries, the believer accepts them because they are clearly taught in God's Word.

We know very little of the relationship between God and Adam before the Fall, except that it was direct and intimate.

The Lord had given but one command, a command that was given for Adam and Eve's own good and that was easily obeyed.

Until that one command was transgressed, they lived naturally in the perfect will of God. Doing His will was a part of their very nature and being.

The believer's relationship to God is much like that. Although Christians are drawn back to the old ways by the fleshly remnant of their life before salvation, their new being makes obedience to God the natural thing to do.

The Christian's obligations to God are not another form of legalism.

The person who is genuinely saved has a new and divine nature that is, by definition, attuned to God's will. When he lives by his new nature in the power of the Spirit, his desire is God's desire, and no compulsion is involved.

But because the believer is still clothed in the old self, he sometimes resists God's will. It is only when he goes against God's will and against his own new nature that he divine commands and standards seem burdensome.

On the other hand, the faithful child of God who is obedient from the heart can always say with the psalmist;

Psalm 119:97-104 (NASB)

97 O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

98 Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine.

99 I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.

101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

102 I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me.

103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

In our next study we will see how Paul explains the changes in our nature, and the application of God's power, empowers us for victory.