

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:24-27 & Romans 8:1-17) 28-April-2024

Ezekiel 36:24-27

²⁴ “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Romans 8:1-17

Life Through the Spirit

8 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. 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.

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.

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.

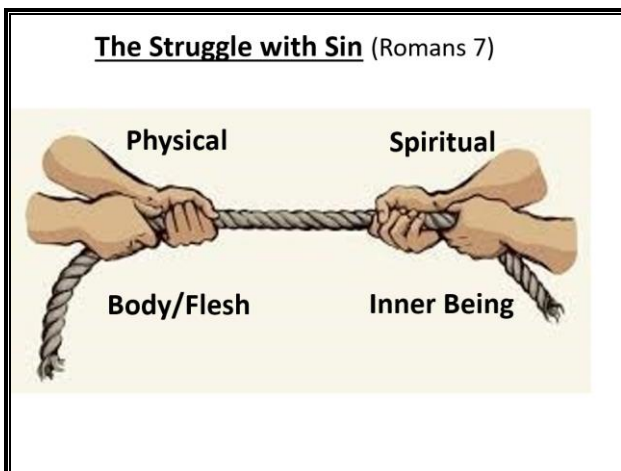
Sermon: Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Please have your Bibles opened at **Romans chapter 8** – starting at verse 1 – that’s going to be our focus this morning – and **I’ll very briefly refer to Ezekiel 26**. There is an outline if you would like to take down some notes!

Let me **pray** first...

Recap/Intro (v1)

[Slide-tug-of-war]



Just a recap from last week – and Romans chapter 7 – we said that **we have this struggle with sin in our lives** – and we said this struggle is a bit like a **tug of war between two** – the physical and the spiritual – our physical flesh **struggles to keep God's Law and commits sin** – whereas our inner being - which has received the Holy Spirit - when we first believed in Jesus – **wants to obey God's law**

In amongst that struggle with sin – there was a hint that we don't **have to remain** in that struggle

[Slide-Hint]

The hint is in - 7:6 – end of verse – the Apostle Paul says – ***we have been released from the Law – and have a new way of the Spirit***

[Slide-Not Surprise]

This **new way of the Spirit** should not come as a surprise for Paul's readers if they knew their Old Testament well enough.

In our Old Testament reading this morning from **Ezekiel 36:24-27**

God promised His people:

- He would **cleans** **them from all their impurities** – pointing to our Lord **Jesus' death** cleansing them from their sins
- He would give them **a new heart** and a put **a new spirit** in them
- And He would put **His Spirit in them** – and move them **to follow His decrees** and **keep His laws**

And it's this new heart and new Spirit – that Paul is talking about – and so as we hit Romans chapter 8 - Paul expands on this new way of the Spirit – and talks about the ministry of the Holy Spirit...

[Slide-No condemnation]

And straight way we have an amazing promise – in v1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

The use of “**therefore**” here – tells us that **Paul is drawing a conclusion** from his teaching in the first seven chapters

And so, it's like Paul's saying “**therefore ... because of what I've told you about being on Jesus' team now...**”

It means - as a Christian – you're “**not condemned**” - because you're **IN Christ Jesus**.

In other words – because we belong to Jesus – **we won't be punished for our sins!**

The Greek word for condemned here - is usually used in a court-room setting – and means ***a verdict of guilty which requires punishment for that guilt.***

But because of Jesus – it doesn't matter what sin - a believer in Jesus commits – **past, present or future** – that sin won't be held against them, they won't be punished - because the penalty/punishment for a believer's sin has been paid for by Jesus!

Application: This is so encouraging – it means - no one is too bad – that they can't come to Jesus – say sorry for their sins – and believe Jesus died for their sin – and be forgiven – and **they will not be punished** – but are saved for Heaven.

It also means – **our past sin is dealt with** – **God will not bring it up and remind us** – other people might bring it up – Satan might bring it up – we might bring it up - but as far as God is concerned **it's dead and buried** – and so - **we shouldn't beat ourselves about our past** – and we shouldn't take any notice of others beating us about our past either!

(pause)

The privileges of being a Christian – don't just stop at - ***being saved for Heaven*** – and - ***not being punished for their sin*** – though.

From verses 2 to 17 – Paul describes what we **receive** because we are in Christ and **now** have His Holy Spirit

The Freedom of the Spirit (vv2-4)

1st then – we receive the ***Freedom of the Spirit***

[Slide-Freedom]

See V2 - ***We are set free from the law of sin and death***

It means we give up this impossible idea that **we can somehow be right with God by keeping His Law perfectly** – and give up this impossible idea of **saving ourselves** – and come to the only one who can keep God's Law perfectly – that's **Jesus** – who gives us – beginning of v2 – **the law of the Spirit** – better to say "***the principle***" or "***the power***" of the Holy Spirit.

V3 – explains how this freedom came about. It says **God's law was powerless to save us** because of our weak sinful flesh – and so God sent His Son and made Him human flesh like us – and **allowed Him to be the perfect once and for all sin offering (sacrifice)** – and Jesus got rid of (condemned) sin and death – **so sin and death are not a problem for us anymore.**

In doing so – v4 – Jesus satisfied the requirements of God's law for us – and so - **we are freed up to live according to the Spirit** – which amounts to us **obeying the Spirit - instead of - us obeying our own desires.**

So, in our new way of life in the Spirit – we must live - **according to the Spirit** - and not - **live according to our sin-dominated self** – which Paul calls **the flesh!**

Application – So it's a bit like we've been in jail – bound up in this prison of trying to keep God's law but can't – and Jesus has released us from prison – and **given His Spirit** – and **given us a life of freedom living according to God's Spirit** – why would we go back to jail again?

The Mindset of the Spirit (vv5-8)

Which brings us to 2nd thing we receive - because we are in Christ and now have His Holy Spirit

And that is – we have – ***The Mindset of the Spirit*** – which is in vv5-8

What Paul describes in vv5-8 is **two categories of people**

[Slide-Mindsets]

People living according to the Flesh (Unbeliever)	People living according to the Spirit (Believer)
Mindset on what the <u>flesh</u> desires (v5)	Mindset on what the <u>Spirit</u> desires (v5)
A flesh mindset leads to <u>death</u> (v6)	A Spirit mindset leads to <u>life</u> (v6)
A flesh mindset is hostile to God & does not submit to God's Law (v7)	<u>Implies</u> a Spirit mindset is friendly to God and wants to follow God's Law
A flesh mindset cannot please God (v8)	<u>Implies</u> a Spirit mindset wants to please God

What will it look like if we have – ***the Mindset of the Spirit***?

Here's some examples:

Imagine a person who is driven solely by material desires and pleasures. They prioritize accumulating wealth, seeking physical gratification, and pursuing selfish ambitions without regard for anyone else. Their decisions are solely based on immediate gratification and self-interest. Whereas, consider someone who lives with a focus on spiritual values such as compassion, empathy, and selflessness. They prioritize love, kindness, and service to others. Their decisions are guided by a sense of God's higher purpose and they align themselves with God's moral principles, even if it means sacrificing personal gain [Either self-centred or other person-centred!]

Picture another scenario where - someone holds onto grudges and seeks revenge when they are wronged. They harbor resentment, bitterness, and anger, which often lead to destructive behaviour and broken relationships. Their **thoughts are consumed by negativity and hostility towards others. Whereas, a spiritually minded person - **practices forgiveness and reconciliation.** They **let go of past grievances**, choosing to **respond with understanding and grace** instead of seeking retaliation. Their mindset is characterized by **peace, reconciliation,** and a **desire for healing and restoration in relationships.****

Another scenario - consider an individual who is driven by ego and pride, constantly seeking validation and recognition from others. They **boast about their achievements, compare themselves to others, and **lord it over people.** Their identity and self-worth are **tied to external factors such as wealth, status, and appearance.** Whereas, think of someone **who embodies humility and authenticity.** They acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses without arrogance or pretense. They **find fulfillment in serving others** without seeking recognition or praise. Their sense of self-worth comes from a deep understanding of their inherent value as a human being, irrespective of external accomplishments.**

I pray we **can see the difference** in the two mindsets in these scenarios!

[Slide-Phil 2:5]

Paul says it simply – in Philippians 2:5

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus

The Rule and Power of the Spirit (vv9-13)

[Slide-Rule and Power]

Which brings us to 3rd thing we receive - because **we are in Christ** and **now have His Holy Spirit**

And that is - we have – ***The Rule and Power of the Spirit*** – that's in verses 9 to 13

V9 tells us – we're not ruled by our flesh anymore - but ruled by the Spirit of God living in us – **God is King of our life now** – we're not our own King!

And because we're ruled by the Spirit – v10 & 11 – tell us even though our bodies must die because of our sins - because the Spirit lives in us – **we are alive** – and God has accepted us because of Jesus – and - just as God raised Jesus to life – **God will also raise our mortal [destined to die] bodies to life one day!**

The logical conclusion of us now being ruled by the Spirit – Paul says – in v12 & 13 – is that - **we then have an obligation** – in how we live.

It's a life-or-death obligation.

We're not to live to satisfy our desires – **that just leads to death and separation from God**

No! We have the **Power of the Holy Spirit** – to say “**No**” to our desires – and live by the Spirit – and “*put to death the misdeeds of the body*” (v13)

A posh word for “*put to death the misdeeds of the body*” - is mortification!

What Paul means is that any use of our body (whether it be our eyes, ears, mouth, hands or feet) – any use of our body - which offends God - or hurts others - or serves ourselves ahead of serving God and serving other people – **is to be put to death!**

How do we do that – still in v13 – it’s done – by the Power of the Spirit – living in us!

It’s like the Spirit inside us – gives us the desire, determination and discipline to reject evil – and “pull it out, look at it, denounce it, hate it for what it is – and really deal with it – and say No! It’s not happening!”

This mortification sounds like an **unpleasant and painful business** and it is!

And it **runs counter to our natural tendency** to be soft and lazy and self-indulgent.

So WHY should we do it?

Paul’s already given us one reason – because **we have an obligation to Jesus.**

But there’s another reason – we need to put to death the misdeeds of our body through the Power of the Spirit. And that is – at the end of v13 – **so that we live!**

We’d need to be careful here – though – Paul is not contradicting himself – from earlier in Romans 6:23 – where he said – *eternal life is a gift from God through Jesus – and not something we earn!*

Paul's not talking about us getting eternal life by putting to death the misdeeds of our body - here in v13 – No! **He's talking about an authentic fulness of life that Christians can have now - led by the Spirit. He's saying we can have a rich, abundant, satisfying life – now – if we put to death the misdeeds of the body!** You see - what the world calls life – is an attractive self-indulgent life – which leads to **alienation from God**. Whereas a Christian life – lived in the Power of the Spirit - putting to death our misdeeds – is the way to an authentic life that pleases God!

Living by this Power of the Spirit – brings us to

4th thing we **receive** - because we are in Christ and now have His Holy Spirit

And that is – **We are *children of God* and *Co-Heirs with Christ*** – that's is in vv14-17

[Slide-Child of God]

We are Children of God and Co-heirs with Christ (vv14-17)

Look at v14 – Paul **declares *those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God***.

And being - now - children of God – Paul lists some benefits

V15 - God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of God. Instead, we become God's children and call God, Abba – Father!

I've shared with you before I'm sure – not long after I became a Christian – my Dad died – I was devastated – but in the quiet of the night – I heard God's gentle voice – saying – “Paul, you have a Heavenly Father – now – who will never leave you!”

That's what it means to be a child of God!

God is our constant companion – and He proves it – by giving us His indwelling Spirit – and so, we don't have to be afraid of ANYTHING!

Paul continues with the benefits of being children of God

V16 – God's Spirit inside us - **communicates with our spirit** – assuring us we are **HIS forever**.

As we pray – God through His Spirit - **speaks to us** – either audibly – or in our thoughts.

As we read God's Word – God through His Spirit – **gives us understanding of His Word** – and helps us apply God's Word to our lives

As we go about our day – God through His Spirit – **rebukes us when we're going wrong** – **directs us on the right paths** – **moves us to make that phone call** – **to help that person** – **to visit that friend or relative** – **to make the right choice** – **to gain wisdom!**

(pause)

There's one more benefit of being children of God – and it's in two parts – there's joy and there's suffering

Look at v17 – the joy part - is that - **we are heirs of God** and co-heirs of Christ Jesus

In other words – **whatever God promised Jesus** – He promises us

We share in Jesus' glory – now – and – later in Heaven – **we have Heavenly glory to look forward to** – **when we spend eternity with Jesus**

But before we experience that joy of Heaven – we have the suffering part - we have to share in Jesus’ suffering – in order that we share in His glory.

Paul’s not saying we have to suffer crucifixion like Jesus – and be a sacrifice for sin – Jesus did that once and for all. Paul’s point is - just as Jesus’ suffering was the road to the glory of Heaven – so our road to glory in Heaven – will also include suffering.

We might not see suffering as a benefit – but it is – if we realize that whatever difficulty we face – our loving Heavenly Father is at work to make us stronger Christians and more useful ambassadors of Jesus.

(pause)

Conclusion

To finish up then - as we reflect on this ministry of the Holy Spirit described by Paul

Let’s us leave this place - this morning – encouraged by the truths:

- We’re no longer condemned for our sin
- We’re released from sin and death – and have a new way to live in the Spirit
- We have the mindset of the Spirit
- We have nothing to fear – we have God’s Spirit living inside us - to help us and teach us and guide us

So, let's go forward from today – **secure in our identity as beloved children of God!**

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, we thank you that there is now no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus!

We thank you for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – which communicates with us and helps us and guides us. Help us to keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

Help us in all our relationships with one another to have the same mindset as Jesus.

We thank you that we are your children and co-heirs with Jesus – and we can look forward to the glory of Heaven to come.

In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen!