

God's Provision For Righteous Living

Romans 8:1-17

Intro: In our last study in Romans chapter 7, Paul described his own personal struggle with sin, and how it dominated his life. As a believer in Jesus Christ, Paul found that he was not practicing what he wanted to do, living to please God, but he was doing the very things he hated. No matter how hard he tried to live a life that was pleasing to God, he failed. He discovered the principle that evil was present in him, the one who wished to do good. He recognized that sin waged war in the members of his body, and made him a prisoner of the law of sin (v. 23). This leads Paul to cry out in verse 24, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" Who will set me free from my continual rebellion against God? I am not able to get free from my domineering sin nature. Paul's cry for help in verse 24 is answered by a prayer of thanksgiving for God's provision in verse 25, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Praise God, it is possible for a believer in Jesus Christ to enjoy victory over the dominating power of sin.

That is what Romans chapter 8 is all about. Paul is going to explain how we believers can obtain victory over indwelling sin, by yielding to the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, so we can live a joyful and purposeful life. This eighth chapter of Romans has been called the inspirational high of the Book of Romans. One writer suggests, "If Holy Scripture was a ring, and the epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel" (Spencer, *Romans*). Paul explains that God has provided His Holy Spirit as the Agent or source for righteous living in daily life.

Look with me first of all at God's provision for righteous living in Romans 8, verse 1-4

I. The Provision For Righteous Living (8:1-4)

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The opening word, "Therefore," continues Paul's train of thought in the previous verse, 7:25—"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul reminds his readers first of all that no condemnation or punishment awaits believers, those who are in Christ Jesus. Have you put your faith and trust in

Christ Jesus? Have you been placed in union with Jesus Christ by the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit? (Romans 6). If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, there is now no condemnation on you. The condemnation or punishment that awaited us as sinners has been paid by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God the Father punished His holy, sinless Son for our sins. **This is really Good News folks.** We will never be punished for our sins. Believers have been justified, declared to be righteous, made right with God, through faith in Jesus Christ. We have been saved by grace, through faith, and therefore we are delivered from the wrath of God. If you are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation for you.

Paul goes on to explain here in chapter 8, that not only have we been set free from God's condemnation against our sin, He has provided us with His Holy Spirit so we can experience deliverance from sin's enslaving power. In other words, Paul is telling us that as Christians we are not condemned to a life of perpetual slavery to sin. The fact that we have been set free from slavery to serve our sin natures is explained in the next verse, v. 2,

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

Paul identifies two laws or principals here that work within every one of us. He described "the law of sin" in chapter 7, verse 23—"I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." That sums up the principle or law of sin that we see operating in every one of our lives. Sin operating in our members causes us to do what we don't want to do, and prevents us from doing what God wants us to do. The law of sin in our members robs us of joy and victory, and leads to death. This is the law of sin and death.

There is another law, another principle operating in our lives as believers. v. 2 It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is the controlling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who provides us freedom over the controlling power of our flesh. God's Holy Spirit, this law of life in Christ, is more powerful than the law of sin and death that dwells within me.

Having explained the fact of our freedom in verse 2, Paul goes on to explain how our freedom is achieved in verses 3

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.

Paul reminds his readers that the (Mosaic) Law was powerless to provide freedom from sin. The problem was not due to any inherent weakness in the law. Paul has already shown that the law was holy, righteous, and good. The problem was not with the law, but with man's sinful human nature. The law was never intended to provide justification. The law was added to show self-righteous men that they could not keep the law. **The law causes me to sin!**

But what the law could not do, God did by sending His very own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin. God took the initiative to remedy our hopeless condition. He sent His own Son to condemn our sin through His own sinless flesh. Jesus Christ atoned for our sin, He paid the penalty our sins deserved. He could do that because He Himself was the sinless Son of God.

Paul is very precise in the use of his terms here. He says, God sent His Son, Jesus, not in sinful flesh, but in *the likeness of sinful flesh*. His human nature, inherited from his mother Mary, was protected from the indwelling principle of sin that has plagued the human race ever since Adam (Luke 1:35). Jesus took on human flesh in the incarnation, and yet He was sinless. He merely took on *the likeness of sinful flesh*, it was not truly sinful. For there was no sin in Him.

What is more, Christ was sent by God the Father to put an end to sin, by condemning sin in His own flesh. Christ became the sacrificial atonement for sin, the sin offering. **God's redemptive purpose is explained in verse 4**

v. 4 *in order that* the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Jesus Christ has provided deliverance from the law of sin and death for all who identify with Him by faith. He died for us first of all that we might be justified, declared right with God, because we place our faith in His atoning sacrifice on our behalf. He also died so that we might be holy in our daily living. This is the major point of Romans chapter 8. He has provided us with the Holy Spirit so we might live according to His righteous standards. Paul adds that the only way we can live holy lives is when we walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh.

Paul concludes in verse 4 that while Christ has provided deliverance from the power of sin through His death for sin, experiencing deliverance from sin in one's daily conduct comes through submission to the controlling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

II. The Two Ways Of Life: *The Flesh Or The Spirit* (8:5-11)

In the next section, **verses 5-11**, Paul explains that there are two distinct and contrasting ways of life: *the way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit*. The only way believers can experience victory over the indwelling power of sin is to actively set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Look at verse 5

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.

Paul states a universal principle here that those *who are of the flesh*, a description of unsaved men, keep on (present tense) setting their minds on the flesh. The unbelievers only concern is for their own sinful desires, they have no regard for God. As we learned in the Truth Project, men's thoughts are shaped by their worldview. The unsaved are influenced by society, and what they see, hear, read, and watch on television and in movies. Psychologists suggest that moral choice precedes and determines intellectual orientation. "People do not think themselves into the way they act, but act themselves into the way they think." People act on the basis of what they feed or program into their minds. Our behavior will be determined on the basis of the things we meditate on.

Sinners sin because they are sinners living in a sinful world. A world that hates and rejects God. They live life to satisfy the desires of their sinful flesh. They think a lot about money, and pleasure. They think a lot about stuff, and how to get more of it. "If only I could win the lottery," becomes an obsession for some. Many allow themselves to become totally dominated by their sinful flesh, and Satan. I think of Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and Ted Bundy, just to name a few.

The other way to live is the exact opposite. The believer places himself or herself under the control of the indwelling Spirit. They set or direct their minds on the things of the Spirit. The Christian life begins in the mind friends. We hear the Good News about Jesus Christ, because God's Spirit graciously opens our mind to the truth, and then we confess—agree with God that we are a sinner, ask Christ to forgive us and to come into our life, and He instantly fills us with His Holy Spirit.

Now, if you want to experience victory over sin in your daily life you are going to have to start programming God's Word into your mind. Keep in mind that Paul is discussing the process of Christian sanctification here in **Romans 6–8**. God is progressively moving us from sinners to saints. His end goal is to conform each of us into the image of His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul provides a powerful contrast by pointing out the consequences associated with the two different ways of thinking, verses 6-8

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

The fleshly mind of sinful man leads to death in all its forms physical, spiritual, and eternal. By way of contrast, the mind set on the Spirit leads to life and peace.

Paul provides a good overview of these two ways of life in **Galatians 5:19-23**:

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things such as these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 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.

Paul continues in Romans 8, verses 7-8 by showing that the mind set on or controlled by the flesh is hostile toward God, v. 7

7 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;

This is a description of the unsaved person. Their mind is controlled by their fallen sin nature. They lead lives totally devoid of spiritual life and ability. As a consequence, they are hostile toward God, and they refuse to subject themselves to the law of God. They are in fact, not able to do so. How could they when every part of their being, mind and flesh, have been affected by the fall.

Paul concludes in verse 8 that those who are in or walk according to the flesh cannot please God.

By way of application a believer who refuses to fellowship with God by spending time in His Word, reading and meditating on it, or spends little or no time in prayer, is giving in to his sin nature and acting like the unsaved.

Illustration: Pastor Max Lucado explains how alcohol nearly destroyed his life and ministry. Lucado says, “I come from a family of alcoholism. If there’s anything about this DNA stuff, I’ve got it. For more than 20 years, drinking wasn’t a problem for me. But in 2001, it nearly became one. You see, I lowered my guard just a little bit. One beer at barbecue won’t hurt. Then another time with Mexican food. Then a time or two with no food at all.”

One afternoon on his way to speak at a men’s retreat he began to plot: “Where can I buy a beer and not be seen by anyone I know?” He drove to an out-of-the-way convenience store, parked, and waited till all the patrons left. He entered, bought a beer, held it close to his side, and hurried to his car. He recounts that he felt a heavy sense of conviction. “Because just the night before I’d had a long talk with my oldest daughter about not covering things up.”

Lucado didn’t drink that beer. Instead he rolled down the window, threw it in a trash bin, and asked God for forgiveness. He also decided to come clean with the elders of his church about what happened: “When I shared it with the elders, they just looked at me across the table and said, ‘Satan is determined to get you. But we’re going to cover this with prayer. However, you’ve got to get the alcohol out of your life.’ And I really took that as from God.”

Having painted a frightening picture of the unsaved man’s hostile rejection of God in verses 7-8, Paul reminds his readers in verses 9-10 that they were no longer controlled by their sin-prone nature, but by the Spirit.

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed (conditional statement of fact = Since indeed) the **Spirit of God** dwells in you.

Paul was confident that the Spirit did in fact dwell in the hearts of these Roman Christians. But he remind them none-the-less, if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him. Since only the **Holy Spirit** imparts the new spiritual life in Christ, a person cannot be related to Christ apart the Holy Spirit. By the way, the interchange of the titles “Spirit of God,” and “Spirit of Christ” provides strong evidence to support the Deity of Christ.

The presence of the indwelling Christ is the believer’s guarantee of life now and forever, verses 10-11

10 If (conditional statement of fact = Since) Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Although the believer's physical bodies are subject to death, because God's curse on sin was death, their spirits are even now enjoying life because of the righteousness Christ has provided for us.

Paul goes on to explain in **verse 11** that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, and was now living in them, would give life to their mortal bodies in the resurrection from the dead.

11 But if (conditional statement of fact = Since) 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 indwells you.

III. The Believer's Obligation To Live By The Spirit's Control (8:12-17)

Paul concludes his development of the believer's sanctification by stating that every believer has an obligation to live each day in the Spirit's control (12-14).

v. **12** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—**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.

Paul uses his favorite term of endearment, *brethren*, to explain to these Roman Christians that they were no longer under obligation to live according to the flesh, because sin brings death to everything it touches. However, since by the indwelling Spirit, they were putting to death the deeds of the body, they would live. Just as death comes as a consequence of sin, so life is the reward of justification. Death is the absence of God; Life, through faith in Christ, is right standing with God.

Paul surmises in **verse 14** that believers are obligated to surrender to the leading of God's Spirit, because they are sons of God. When we continue in sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit who is in us. The fact that I am now a son of God is a profound truth. **My heart's desire should be to live to please Him!** Paul makes a final appeal in **verses 15-17** for believers to surrender to the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit based on the fact that we have been adopted into God's family, and as such we are fellow heirs with Christ.

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!”

Did you get that? When we came to faith in Christ, we were immediately adopted into God’s family. We received His Holy Spirit who carried out our adoption into the family of God. The Spirit enables us to cry out Abba! Father! This Aramaic word for “Father,” was used in the family. It underscores the intimate nature of our new relationship with God. We are no longer slaves of sin, but sons of God the Father.

Paul continues in verse **16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Imagine, God has not only adopted us as His children, He has made us fellow heirs with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Illustration

Author and Pastor Lee Strobel tells this story.

Shortly after the Korean War, a Korean woman had an affair with an American soldier, and she got pregnant. He went back to the United States, and she never saw him again. She gave birth to a little girl who looked different than the other Korean children. She had light-colored, curly hair. In that culture, children of mixed race were ostracized by the community. In fact, many women would kill their children because they didn't want them to face such rejection.

But this woman didn't do that. She tried to raise her little girl as best she could, until the rejection was too much. She did something that probably nobody in this room could imagine ever doing. She abandoned her little girl to the streets. This little girl was ruthlessly taunted by people. They called her the ugliest word in the Korean language – “tookki” – alien devil. It didn’t take long for this little girl to draw conclusions about herself based on the way people treated her. For two years she lived in the streets, until finally she made her way to an orphanage. One day, word came that a couple from America was going to adopt a little boy. All the children in the orphanage got excited, because at least one little boy was going to have hope. He was going to have a family and a home. So this

little girl spent the day cleaning up the little boys - giving them baths and combing their hair - and wondering which one would be adopted by the American couple.

The next day the couple came, and this is what the girl recalled.

“It was like Goliath had come back to life. I saw the man with his huge hands lift up each and every baby. I knew he loved every one of them as if they were his own. I saw tears running down his face, and I knew if they could, they would have taken the whole lot home with them.

He saw me out of the corner of his eye. Now let me tell you, I was nine years old, but I didn’t even weigh 30 pounds. I was a scrawny little thing. I had worms in my body. I had lice in my hair. I had boils all over me. I was full of scars. I was not a pretty sight. But the man came over to me, and he began rattling away something in English, and I looked up at him. Then he took this huge hand and laid it on my face. What was he saying? He was saying, “I want this little girl. This is the child for me.””

Lee Strobel, “Meet the Jesus I Know,” *Preaching Today Audio #211*

Conclusion:

With all our scars, with all the terrible consequences our sin has laid upon us, God still wants us. The cross of Christ is the proof. Romans 8 provides the key to freedom from daily sin in a believer’s life. **God’s provision for righteous living** is available through constant reliance on the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is one in whom the Spirit of God is constantly at work, to provide strength to overcome sin, and the desire to please our heavenly Father more each day. It is equally clear that every Christian is responsible to call upon the Holy Spirit daily to assist them in overcoming sin. “Holiness is not only the standard and goal of Christians (1 Peter 1:15-16), it is also our destiny” (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 181).

Applications:

1. Have you tapped into God’s power for righteous living? Do you commune with the Holy Spirit, and call on Him daily to help you have victory over sin?

2. What are you allowing to fill your mind each day? Remember, whatever you put in your mind will govern the way you live. The sinful anti-god philosophies of this world will cause you to sin against God.
3. Will you make a commitment to God this morning to surrender your life, your all to His service and glory? If you will, He will help you begin to experience the abundant Christian life.

Closing prayer:

Closing Song: Come Holy Spirit