

Romans 8 (Part 1): 1-17 - Life in the Spirit

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Romans, chapter 8, we're going to read through the first 17 verses, excuse me:

“¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”
(ESV)

Is that a great verse or what? If that isn't underlined or highlighted in your Bible, maybe even put on your refrigerator, it should be. In fact, we could probably just close in prayer right now and do good. Just read that one verse and say, okay, we're going home. Because that's just such a great verse.

It goes on to say:

“² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ 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.

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God

are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, oh, what glorious verses, but we really need You to open our hearts and our understanding to them, that we might gain a heart of understanding, that we might gain insight. We see the beauty instantly of these verses. Help us now, Lord God, to apprehend them and really lay hold of the message here. Encourage Your people today. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Paul begins this chapter with a verse that, for many people, is probably their favorite verse in all of the Bible. Some people like to adopt what they call a life verse. Kind of cool.

When we've been to a few graduation ceremonies at Calvary Chapel Bible College down in Southern California, when the kids go up to graduate and get their diploma, they get to share their life verse, what the Lord is usually...

This is a common one, along with a few others, but such a significant statement for Paul to make: *“¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

Why is that so significant? Well, because he's been spending seven chapters telling us that we're condemned. That's why it's so significant. In fact, he's been showing us that the law has a right to condemn us. In fact, he's been explaining the right of the law.

Not only does the law have a right to condemn us, but we prove every day that it has a right to condemn us by our actions, by my failure to keep the law. I basically corroborate the truth of the law—that you are condemned—and so forth.

When Paul now just drops this bomb on us and says, yeah, well, now there is no “*condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*” we're all like, wow! That's pretty amazing. I mean, that—that sounds like really good news.

What's that all about, that we are no longer condemned by the law? He explains why in verse 2. Look with me again there: *“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”*

Now, to understand this verse, you got to—and I know this can be confusing—but when Paul uses the word “*law*” in verse 2. He’s no longer talking about the law of Moses. Now he’s using the word, law to describe a power over you.

It would be like the law of gravity. If you jump out of a fourth-story building window, the law of gravity will have the power over you to bring you to the ground. Okay, so in that sense, he speaks of a law here—not a given law of righteousness. So you could literally put the word power in here instead of law.

Let me read the verse that way and just put that word in there: For the power of the Spirit has set you free in Christ Jesus from the power of sin and death. In fact, you know what? The New Living Translation (NLT), which I like to look at once in a while, just because it’s kind of refreshing. Actually says it kind of that way. Let me put this on the screen, the NLT says:

Romans 8:2 (NLT)

...the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

...the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

I like that because, again, we don’t often think of law when we’re doing a discussion of sin and death as something that has power over us. We think of the law of Moses. But again, that’s not what he’s dealing with here.

The power of the Spirit. The power of the Spirit. The power of the Spirit. This is going to be the focal point of Paul’s message now. We’ve been dealing with the futility of the flesh, and it’s been almost burdensome.

Chapter 7, you’ll remember—how many times did we say that Paul, in a certain number of verses, referenced himself and his own abilities? It was like 40 times in just a few verses. Forty times he made reference to me, myself, my power, my ability, and he ended that whole discussion with, ahhh, who’s going to save me from this? Now he’s going to—he’s making a drastic shift of thought in our study of Romans.

And the answer to the question of who’s going to save you and I—who’s going to bring us through, who’s going to enable us to live the life that God’s called us to live—is a very short answer. The short answer is the Holy Spirit. It’s going to be the Holy Spirit.

Are you ready? Because we’re going to talk a lot about the Holy Spirit. Paul is going to talk a lot about the Holy Spirit—the life of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit. He will reference the Spirit about 20 times in these verses, or rather in

this chapter. Let's keep seeing what abilities and blessings and benefits you and I have through the power of the Spirit in our lives.

Verse 3: "*For God has done what the law (now here, he is speaking of the law of Moses), weakened by the flesh, could not do...*" Stop there.

Now, remember, there's nothing wrong with the law of Moses, right? Paul already dealt with that question. He asked the question, so am I saying that the law is flawed or there's a problem with the law or maybe it's evil or something like that? No. No. No. Can't blame the law. The law is good. The problem isn't with the law, right?

But it was weakened in that my flesh couldn't follow it. The law came out and said, do this. Well, I couldn't. So my flesh weakened the ability of the law to change my life. The law tells you things, but it doesn't empower you. Okay?

Guys, I've said this over and over again in the last few weeks: The law and legalism doesn't work in changing our lives. But I keep repeating it because, in the body of Christ, we keep repeating the error of thinking that it can.

How many times over the years that the Christian church has been around—2,000 years—how many times have we fallen into legalism? How many times have we relied on rules to get us through? Do this, don't do that. It doesn't work. It doesn't work. It never will work. So knock it off already.

It's only through the power of God's Spirit that you and I can live a Christian life. Rules don't work. All they do is tell you what you should be doing, but can't. And that's what Paul went on to say in chapter 7, in such poignant language, when he was like, gee, the things I want to do, the things I desire to do—those aren't the things I do. It's the things I hate that I end up doing, and so forth.

Paul says here: So God has done what the law couldn't do. How did He do it? He did it through the Spirit. We'll talk about that in just a moment. But he goes on to say: "*...By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, first of all, He began by condemning sin in the flesh.*"

Now, I want you to notice something very important here. It says: "*...By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh...*" Jesus didn't come as sinful flesh. He came *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. You with me? Very important point to make. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, but He Himself was not sinful. He took on our sin, okay.

But it says that because He was sinless, God could then put the penalty of our sin on Him. Why did Jesus have to be sinless? Why did He have to be sinless?

Because if He sinned, He would have had to pay for His own sin. Because He was sinless, He was free to pay for yours.

When you don't owe the debt yourself, you can offer to pay somebody else's debt. But if you go to the bank and say, I want to pay off so-and-so's debt, they'll go, well, sorry, pal, but you got a debt of your own. And you're disqualified from paying someone else's debt because you owe a debt.

Well, that's the way it is with sin. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He looked like us, but He was not sinful. He was sinless. Therefore, He could take our sin. And it says that our sin was condemned in Him for us.

Do you guys understand? He just answered the question of why you and I are no longer under condemnation. Remember he started off the chapter saying: *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Why?

Because God just decided He didn't care anymore? God just decided, you know what, I'm tired of this whole condemning business. I've just been condemning since the beginning. Kind of tired of condemning. I'm done condemning. I'm just going to love you guys now. So you're good. You're off the hook.

No! You and I are under no condemnation because Jesus bore that condemnation. Jesus was condemned for you and for me. And when we take that upon ourselves, there is now no condemnation for us because He was condemned for you and for me.

Okay, but it doesn't end there. Remember, we're talking about blessings. It doesn't end there. Look at verse 4, why was he condemned for us?: *"...in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* Well, this is amazing. This is amazing.

You Christians, you Christians, you don't keep the law, people will say to us. They'll point the bony finger at us. You Christians, we're law keepers, us people. But you guys, you don't keep the law. The righteous requirements of the law are standing, and you don't keep them, and so forth and so on.

Here's the thing: Paul says that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit, right? I want you to notice—please notice—Paul did not say the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled by us. He said they're fulfilled in us. Very important.

See, the legalist believes that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled by their actions. We don't believe that. We believe the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us by God as we walk and keep in step with the Spirit. Okay. So they're met in us, right?

What's the point of all that? The point of all that is that it's a work of the Spirit through our lives. It is not a distinction of our own actions and obedience. You do not keep the righteous requirements of the law by your obedience. You just don't. The only way the righteous requirements of the law can be kept is by the Spirit in you, through you, and the person of Jesus living in you.

How is it that the Spirit fulfills the requirements of the law in us? Well, it all centers around something that Paul talks about here in this chapter, and it's the indwelling presence of God's Spirit.

I don't know why we Christians have gotten so far away from the Holy Spirit. It's like we're afraid of Him. Why in the world would we be afraid of the Holy Spirit?

Boy, in some churches, they have just factored Him out. He's scary to some churches. Boy, we don't want any of this ministry of the Spirit going around here, or things are liable to get out of control real fast. Pretty soon you've got people jumping up and down, acting like idiots, running all around, yelling and screaming, hopping over the pews. It's terrible.

As if that is the life of the Spirit—craziness, chaotic behavior, and disorder. Do you want to know something? The life of the Spirit is the exact opposite of those things. The life of the Spirit is peace and order and joy and understanding. That's the life of the Spirit.

You want to know what's going on in a lot of churches where they're jumping up and down and being weird and making a lot of chaotic noise? It's the life of the flesh. I'm sorry to say it, but unfortunately, in many cases, it's true.

The Spirit of God within us—the Holy Spirit within us—I want you to remember something about the Holy Spirit. Because remember, we're talking about how can we keep the requirements of the law? How does the Holy Spirit in us keep the requirements of the law?

Can I just remind you of something very important about the Holy Spirit? He is the Spirit of Jesus. He goes by many names: Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. He now lives in you.

What did Jesus do when He came and lived a perfectly righteous life? He fulfilled the requirements of the law. Guess who now lives inside of you? Jesus.

Through the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus lives inside of you through the person of the Holy Spirit.

Who is Jesus? He's the Son of God, who fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law. Guess how God looks at you now? As having fulfilled in you the righteous requirements of the law.

Why? Because you and Jesus are one in Spirit. That's a crazy idea, I know, but it says here in 1 Corinthians, that anyone who receives the Spirit is one with Him in Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:17) You are one with Christ in Spirit, and He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law perfectly. And now in Jesus, you do too. Because the One who fulfilled is in you, living in you, living through you.

Guys, I know we're all sitting here being very polite, but if this truth really got ahold of our hearts and really got ahold of our minds and really impacted our innards like it really needs to, we'd be like probably crying or rejoicing or doing something. Because the reality is truly amazing.

What you and I couldn't do, He has now done. And now He lives in us. He lives in you. He's actually inside of you. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Is that a mind-blower or what?

But there's more. He now is able to empower us as well. So it's not just that Jesus lives in us and He is the fulfillment of the righteousness of the law, but He enables us to live according to the law. And hear me, He enables us to live according to the law.

Does that mean we go around living like the Old Testament Jews? No, first of all, we're under a different covenant, okay? I mean, let's—we really need to make that distinction, guys. We're not under the Mosaic covenant, okay?

Can we just settle that issue once and for all? We've dealt with this so many times in Christendom, where we keep bringing back the law and the specific elements of the Mosaic law and trying to heap them on top of Christians. Like Sabbath-keeping and dietary laws and all these other things, women keeping their head covered, and things like that just crazy.

Anyway, the Holy Spirit, now living in you, can enable you to live the life that is in keeping with the law. How? Paul wrote about it in Galatians. Let me show you. This is great—a great verse. Galatians 5:

Galatians 5:14 (ESV)

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

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Didn't Jesus say the same thing? Didn't He? When they were talking to Him about what's the best and greatest commandment of all, He said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Yeah. Jesus said, there's another one that's no less great: Love your neighbor as yourself. And then He said this: All the law and the prophets rest on those, love God, love your neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Guess what? The power of the Spirit now has come to live inside you and me to enable us to do those things, to really do them. And as we do, we live according to the law. We fulfill the law in the essence of what it is. Because when we love God, we love our neighbor. That's the law right there, right?

That's why he says, when we walk according to the Spirit, we fulfill the law. When we walk according to the Spirit. Now, obviously, I'm not doing that if I'm walking according to the flesh. But when I walk according to the Spirit, it really is truly going on.

Now, somebody might object to this and say, yeah, but you Christians, you don't always walk according to the Spirit. You might once in a while, but sometimes you flesh out. And then you're not keeping the law. Well, what then? Now then you can't say you're fulfilling the law because you're breaking the law when you just flesh out and do dumb things.

Yeah, that's true. That's true. We do mess up. But when we do, we can turn to Jesus, who was condemned on the cross for our sake, and we can find forgiveness because the Bible says His blood keeps on cleansing us from sin. (1 John 1:7)

In fact, later in this chapter—and we won't get this far today, but let me show you this—later in this chapter, Paul is going to say this:

Romans 8:33-34 (ESV)

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—

Who's going to bring any charge against God's people, God's elect? Who's going to—who's going to—yeah, we mess up, guys, okay. But who's going to bring a charge against us? He says, who's going to do the condemning here? Is

Jesus going to do the condemning? No, He was the one who was condemned for you. He's not going to condemn you. He bore your condemnation.

Who's going to bring a charge against you? Nobody. You know why? The blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin. All sin! So yeah, we mess up, but there's this constant flow of cleansing power that comes from the cross, whereby we are perpetually cleansed.

This messes with people's minds sometimes. They'll come to Jesus on a given day or something like that and say, Jesus, I come to You, I confess my sins to You, I ask You to forgive me of my sins, and so forth. And then they say, okay, that's great, that's wonderful. But what happens tomorrow? Because I know that I'm going to sin. And then what happens the day after that? Do I got to keep getting saved every day?

No. You come to Jesus, and you put your faith in Him and what He did on the cross. And there's a perpetual spring. There's a perpetual cleansing spring that we just continue to walk in every day. I'm walking in it. Are you? I hope you are.

We're just walking through life being cleansed. We mess up. Yep, we mess up. And when we do, we confess it. Father, I'm not going to make any excuses for myself today. That was just flat-out wrong. Please forgive me. Perpetual cleansing spring. It's wonderful. It's glorious.

Now look at verse 5. He says, "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things* (or they, that means they desire—the things) *of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds* (or desire) *the things of the Spirit.* ⁶ *For to set the mind* (meaning to think continually about something) *on the flesh is death, but to set the mind* (to think continually) *on the Spirit is life and peace.* ⁷ *For the mind that is set on the flesh* (constantly thinking of ways to appease the flesh, to give pleasure to the flesh—it actually ends up being)... *hostile to God...* " Paul says. In fact, it says, "*...it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.* (Because it's just totally fixated and focused on pleasing self. And that's why he says,) " ⁸ *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*"

Listen. It is impossible to be single-mindedly focused on the flesh and to live a life pleasing to the Lord. It's impossible. You can't do that because you're not living by faith. You're living by the flesh, and you are focused on the flesh—you're focused on gratifying the flesh and so forth. And there's just no way you can live a life that's pleasing to God. You just can't do it.

But Paul says in verse 9: *“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. (And then he says,) Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”*

And that’s just pretty simple. He’s simply saying that if the Spirit of God isn’t living in you, then you’re not a Christian. You’re not a believer. Simple as that. You’re not a born-again child of God.

Why? Well, pastor Paul, how can you say that? Because it is the Spirit who makes us a born-again child of God. How do you think you become a child of God? By the Spirit. The Spirit gives you birth into the kingdom. It is by His power that you and I are born again, right? So if the Spirit isn’t living within you, you’re not born again. You are—you’re unredeemed. It’s really a simple sort of a thing.

But the converse is also true. If you’re born again, the Spirit is living within you. And if the Spirit is living within you, then you are not in the flesh. You are in the Spirit because you have the Spirit living within you.

Does that mean you can’t walk in the flesh? Oh, I wish it meant we couldn’t walk in the flesh. Oh, I’m still very capable of walking in the flesh. And you are too, so don’t sit and look at me all smug. And every so often we flesh out, don’t we? But that doesn’t negate the fact that we are children of God and that the Spirit of God lives within us. But now he says we need to fix our minds on the Spirit.

It’s interesting. This work of the Spirit, whereby the law is made real to you and I, is something—do you know that God talked about this back in the Old Testament?

We think of the new covenant and what it entails and what it offers to you and me as such a New Testament truth. But God foretold that He was going to do a work of the Spirit back in the Old Testament. It’s actually in the book of Jeremiah. Let me show you. This is just one of the greatest passages. Jeremiah—the Lord is speaking here:

Jeremiah 31:31, 33 (ESV)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: (Look at this) I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

The writing of the law on our hearts is what Paul refers to as the power or the law of the Spirit. That’s what he’s talking about when he says: The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of the power of sin and death. It’s this: taking the law and putting it on our hearts.

Guys, understand this. Moses used to carry the law around on two stone tablets. And it’s interesting that they were on stone tablets. I think it’s very interesting because—I mean, God doesn’t do anything by mistake. The fact that they were on stone tablets is quite interesting because stone is stone, and stone is hard, and stone is external to you and I.

We are flesh. We are not stone. I need the law to be flesh to me. But in the old covenant, it was not flesh. It was stone. It was cold, hard rock. And it sat there, and I could look at it and just—I could even touch it and go, wow, that’s neat. There’s the law. And it would sit there. It would just sit right there and condemn me. But it couldn’t change me. It couldn’t do anything to help me because it wasn’t in me. It was outside of me. It was external, you see?

God’s looking at you and I, and He goes, yeah, I gave them the law. I mean, He knew all along what He was going to do, but He gives man the law—the external law on stone tablets—for us to see that, you know what? This doesn’t work.

I mean, good grief. The very first time Moses came down the mountain with these stone tablets written by the finger of God, he comes down and finds this flesh pot party going on in the Israelite camp, and he throws the tablets down and breaks them.

I mean, nobody had even gotten a chance to look at them yet, and Moses broke them, symbolically showing what the people had already done. God gave you this law, you broke it already! That’s just—that’s life for you and I. That’s how it goes with the external law. It’s external. It’s stone.

Can you relate to stone? I can’t. So God says, here’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to take my law, and I’m going to put it inside of you. I’m going to write it on your hearts. I’m going to take that which is stone, and I’m going to make it flesh, and it’s going to be living inside of you, speaking to you, directing your course.

There were ten commandments that were written on those stone tablets. But ultimately, there were a lot of laws. Somebody, once upon a time, decided they were going to count all the laws that were given through the Mosaic law. There are 613 laws.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine keeping 613 laws? I can't imagine keeping 6, just because by the time you get those dialed in, there's another 6. And 613—but you know what? Even with 613 laws, they can't cover everything, can they?

And frankly, the law was written back in a day and age that didn't even include some of the things that you and I deal with as it relates to temptations. If you go through the Old Testament and you look at those 613 laws, try as you may, you will not find one single solitary law or rule about smoking marijuana. It's not there.

You can look into the law all you want, and you will not find a law that covers whether a believer should watch an R-rated movie. It's not there. It's not in there. You can look; I invite you to, but you're not going to find it.

So what are you going to do? What are you going to do in situations like that? If you're a law keeper and you're dealing with, gee, should I watch this movie? Let's go to the Bible and see what law we can find that tells us not to do that. Should I smoke some weed? Well, gee, let's get into the Word of God and find out what it says on that particular subject. Maybe I can find a law that tells me whether or not I should do that.

You're not going to find it. Well, I imagine you might do what most Christians do. They go to their pastor, and they go, what does the Bible say about... That's what they do. That's what they do.

People come to me all the time, whether by email or in person or whatever. Pastor, I have a question. Yeah? What does the Bible say about smoking marijuana? Does the Bible say anything about watching dirty movies? Well, they didn't have movies then. Well, now what am I supposed to do? The Bible doesn't tell me what to do. I don't know what to do. There's nothing in the Bible about it. What am I going to do?

My response usually to them is another question. When they ask those questions, I'll say, are you a born-again Christian? Yeah. Do you have the Holy Spirit living within you? Yeah. What's He telling you? What's He saying to you? You see, the Lawgiver is now one with you. He can apply His wisdom to anything—any situation, any circumstance, any question.

Guys, what it means to follow the Spirit—it means to listen for His voice and to obey. And also to listen for that conviction. Oh God, isn't He faithful to bring

conviction? Conviction is that still, small voice that says, don't click on that link. That one's not good, and you know what that one's going to do.

That still, small voice is the Spirit saying, this conversation that you're having with this person started off just fine, but you know what? This has deteriorated into gossip, and you know it. And you need to end it right now and move on. That's that conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The conviction that says to you personally, I love you, but you haven't picked up your Bible in days. And you are facing spiritual malnutrition, and you know it. And you know that you haven't been feeding your soul, feeding your spirit—you know it, and I love you, and I want you to be strong, and I want you to stand against the enemy. And the Lord convicts us and tells us, you know what? If the enemy attacked you right now today, he'd beat the snot out of you, and you know it, because you haven't been strengthening yourself in Me.

That's that voice of conviction when we pass our Bible and leave it sitting on the table, when we're listening or watching something on the radio or TV that we know isn't going to build us up in the Lord. And that still, small voice says, what are you doing wasting your time with this junk? This is cotton candy. All it's going to do is rot your teeth out of your head. There's no nutritional value here at all.

Do we listen? Do we respond to the still, small voice—the Lawgiver living within us, talking to us about every situation that life and sin may bring before our path? There's no law that can cover all these things, but the Spirit can. And that's why Paul wrote this to the Galatians. I love this verse:

Galatians 5:18 (ESV)

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

You know why? Because the law can't touch everything, but the Spirit can. You are not under the law. The law can't cover it, but the Spirit of God can and He does.

Do you understand that what you have in Christ is so much superior to the external law as to be mind-blowing? But don't ever think back on the Old Testament days and think, well, there was a time to live for God. Listen, what you have is so much more superior. They had the law of God on tablets of stone. You have the Lawgiver living in your heart in dynamic reality, day by day.

Paul wants to point out some other blessings. Verse 10: “...if Christ is in you, although your body is dead because of sin (the body is not going to be redeemed)...” you know that, don’t you? Right? Jesus didn’t die for your physical body. The body is going to die.

If you are fortunate enough to be living when Christ comes back, your body is not going to be redeemed. It’s going to be transformed—changed in the twinkling of an eye, the Bible says. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

Your “...body is dead because of sin, (but) the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”¹¹ (And) 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.”

Wow. Very cool. He’s talking about the fact of the resurrection, and that’s a blessing. It’s going to be God’s final work of redemption when our bodies are glorified like His wonderful body.

And then he says, verse 12: “So then, brothers, we are debtors, (but we’re) not (debtors) to the flesh, (so that we have) to live according to the flesh.” See, this is good. This is truth. This is important. He says, you know what? We’re debtors, but not to the flesh.

You understand—you know what it means to be in debt. We all know what it means to be in debt. It means you owe something to somebody. So he says, you owe something, but not to the flesh, to live according to it. But the flesh wants to tell you otherwise. You owe me, pal. You owe me. We’ve been doing this a long time. And you’ve given in to me so much that I own you, and you owe me. You owe me now. Well, I’m going to tell you what...

And Paul says, you got to break that voice. That’s a lie. We may be debtors, but we’re not debtors to the flesh anymore. Listen, people, that debt has been paid in the person of Jesus Christ on the cross—paid, done in full, the debt to the flesh. You can look at the flesh and say, I owe you nothing. I owe you zilch.

Verse 13 says, “For if you live according to the flesh (you’ll die because the wages of sin is death), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

How do you guys look at verse 13? How do you put to death the deeds of the body? By the Spirit. How do you put to death the deeds of the body? By the Spirit.

He doesn’t say, but if you grit your teeth, and try really hard to live that good Christian life like you know you should, and do all the things your mother told

you to do. No, if you put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, that's the only way you can do it. You can't do it by yourself. You can only do it in Him.

Verse 14: *"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*" That's a personal term of tenderness and familiarity and so forth.

By the way, living by the law can never set you free from fear because if you live by the law, you'll never know if you measured up for sure. People who live by the law never know. There's people who come to your door, calling themselves Jehovah's witnesses. There's a huge difference between you and them.

They have absolutely no idea if they're going to make it. None. They have no assurance. That's why they're going door to door. They're working the system. They feel like they got to work God. And if they work God long enough and impress Him, well, He might just let them in. But there's absolutely zero assurance.

Listen, you haven't been given a spirit of fear where you have to live in that constant fear of or dread that you're not accepted by God. The spirit of life in you is the spirit of peace.

The Spirit, who in verse 16 it says, *"...bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God..."* Try, just try telling that to a Jehovah's witness—that the Spirit of God in you is bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. No, it's not a burning in a bosom. That's not what we're talking about here.

It is a work by which the Holy Spirit bears witness with your spirit, your spirit believes that you're a child of God. The Holy Spirit is bearing witness that you're a child of God. There are two of you, because the Bible says, let every matter be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (2 Corinthians 13:1)

So there's these two witnesses—me and the Spirit—who know that we know, that we know, I'm a child of God. I just know I'm a child of God. How do you know? I just know! The Spirit bears witness. You know, with my spirit.

And then He says in verse 17, *"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."*