

Freed from death by the indwelling Spirit (8:1-39)

After we are freed from sin (both the guilt and the power) we still have the problem of death in our bodies. Chapter 8 explains how we are being freed from (decaying) death, the redemption of our bodies, and become more than conquerors. The power of the indwelling Spirit makes our mortal bodies alive. The whole creation, and ourselves, are groaning for that redemption, for life. We can see this as the last part of the victory, the sanctification (or: redemption) of our bodies. This work is done and completed by the work of the Spirit. Our part is to live by the Spirit (Cf “the new way of the Spirit”; 7:6).

- Notice that (apart from a clear reference in Rom 5:5) this is the first time that Paul names the ‘Holy Spirit’ – and does this many times in this chapter! The Holy Spirit completes the redemption work. Without the Spirit, we cannot fully understand nor live the full impact in our lives.⁷⁸

The Spirit of life makes Christ’s work complete – v 1-4

(v 1) *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

- People who see in the last part of ch. 7 a description of Christian life, our (hopeless) struggle with sin, may have difficulties with this conclusion. They may find it too positive after the pessimistic expressions of the former chapter.
- But our relationship with Christ makes us totally free from condemnation; we are justified and even free from feeling condemned. Continued from Rom 7:6, who “serve in the new way of the Spirit.”

(v 2) *“The law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death”⁷⁹*

- Free from the enslaving power of sin and death. Compare 7:23, 25; this is the answer.
- The power working according to the one law is stronger than the power according to the other law, life stronger than death. *Example: law of gravity and law of aerodynamics.*
- Paul does not explain how the Holy Spirit comes in the lives of Christians, he just assumes they have received the Spirit (Cf 8:9B, 15; Gal 3:2; Eph 1:13).

(v 3a) *“For what the law [of Moses] was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh ...”*

- The law could condemn the sinner, but could not break the power of the sin. The ‘flesh’ was not strong enough to keep God’s commands, Cf 8:7, 8 – the law even led to sinning.

(v 3b) God sent his own Son *“in the likeness of sinful⁸⁰ man to be a sin offering”*

- Remember also Jn 1:14, The Word became flesh – generic, neutral.
- The word ‘offering’ is not in the original,⁸¹ but Paul’s use of the extra word ‘sin’ is unclear.
- God condemned sin (not the sinner) in ‘the flesh’. God condemned the power (or spirit) behind it.
- Jesus was able to live in the flesh without sinning.
- The law could not overcome sin, but Jesus did. Jesus in his human nature (in the ‘flesh’) broke the power of sin. And for us *in him* (united with him; 6:6) this power is also broken.

(v 4a) *“... that the righteous requirements⁸² of the law might be fully met in us ...”*

- When the power of sin is broken and we live in the Spirit, we should be able to meet its requirements.

(v 4b) *“... in us, who do not live according to the [flesh] but according to the Spirit.”*

⁷⁸ The ‘Spirit’ is also referenced a couple of other times (2:29 “circumcision of the heart”; 7:6 “new way of the Spirit”)

⁷⁹ Paul uses the word ‘law’ in Romans in different ways: as a general principle or controlling power (here and in 3:27), as God’s law (2:17-20; 9:31; 10:3-5), as the Pentateuch (3:21b), the OT as a whole (3:19).

⁸⁰ Literally: “in the likeness of the flesh of sin”; note the addition “of sin” to differentiate from the generic use of ‘flesh’.

⁸¹ Another word “sin” was added to the sentence, which addition is not clear, often translated as ‘sin offering’. However, compare the more literal translation of the English Standard Version: “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, ...”

⁸² Gr. *dikaïoma* = right (singular), or, righteousness. Cf. Young’s Literal Translation: “the righteousness of the law”.

- The word 'flesh' is used here as contrary to Spirit. This is conditional or a natural implication; 'being in Christ' should lead to 'living according to the Spirit'.
- This cannot be done by works of the law but only under the power by the Holy Spirit – Cf Gal 5:22-23; Ez 36:26-27; Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10.

Life by the Spirit is contrary to life by the 'flesh' – v 5-11

(v5-8) This is explained in these verses. Living has to do with the setting of your mind ('flesh', Spirit). The mind set on the 'flesh' brings death; the mind set on the Spirit brings life and peace. Compare Gal 5:19-25.

- The mind set on the 'flesh' (v7-8) is hostile to God, does not submit to God's law, cannot do so and cannot please God. Cf:
 - Rom 12:2 *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world ..."*
 - Eph 4:22-24 *"...put off your old self ... put on the new self, created to be like God ..."*
 - Col 3:2 *"Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things."*
- Mindsets in 'flesh' or Spirit: death, or life and peace – Cf. *Spirit of life*.

(v9-11) NASB *"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."*

- Self-examination: you can only be in the Spirit, if the Spirit is (dwells) in you.

(v9) *"If anyone does not **have** the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."*

- The 'Spirit of Christ' is the 'Holy Spirit'.⁸³ *Some questions:*
 - Does it mean that every Christian is Spirit filled?
 - Does it mean that you are not a Christian if you are not Spirit filled?
 - Is there a difference between 'having' the Spirit and 'being filled with' the Spirit?
 - Is it so normal for Paul that all Christians are Spirit filled that Paul does not make a clear distinction?

In the next two verses (v10-11), however, Paul makes a distinction (or explanation) related to the Holy Spirit:

- (v10) *"If Christ is in you ..."*
 - ... *your body is dead because of sin;*
 - ... *yet your spirit is alive*⁸⁴ *because of righteousness*" (by faith).
- (v11) *"If the Spirit is living in you ...":*
 - ... *he will also give life to your mortal bodies*" (just as he raised Christ from the dead).
- N.B. Jesus starts with raising our spirits from the dead (dealing with sin in our personal lives) and then, by his Spirit, he will make our dying bodies alive (dealing with death), the logical next step. Paul comes back to this point in v 19-23. See also 1Cor 15:54-57.

Christian living

(v12-14) Our obligation is **not** to live any longer according to the 'flesh' – if you do this you will die. Our obligation is (to live according to the Spirit) to put to death the 'misdeeds' of the body; then you will live.

- (v 13) *"if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live"*
 - Our obligation is to kill all the enemies; if you do not kill them, they will kill you.
 - **Read** Gal 5:16-18, 24; 6:8.
 - Comparing this to Israel's enemies in Canaan: Num 33:55-56 (& Josh 23:12-13).
- Wordplay: ... if you live ... you will die ...; against: ... if you put to death ... you will live!

(v14) *"... those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* This is the true mark of sons of God!

- For 'sons' see 8:15; Gal 3:26; Gal 4:6. Or, 'children of God': John 1:12.⁸⁵

⁸³ Used interchangeably in: Acts 16:6-7; Gal 4:6; 2 Cor 3:17.

⁸⁴ Literally: *"life"*.

⁸⁵ For the (literal) expression 'sons of God' for Israel see: Rom 9:4; Deut 14:1; Hos 1:10.

(v15-17a) Not a spirit of slavery and of fear⁸⁶ but the Spirit of sonship (adoption⁸⁷). By him we cry 'Abba'. The Spirit testifies this with our spirit; a father-son relationship is the mark of the Christian. No fear, no doubt, but a stable relationship with our Father. We are children and heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs⁸⁸ with Christ.

Redemption of the body

Christian living does not save us from suffering.

(v17b-18) You cannot compare the present sufferings with the coming glory.

- “... **if indeed we share...**” (v 17). Sharing in his sufferings means sharing in his glory.
 - 2Cor 4:17 “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all”
 - Phil 1:28-29 “it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him”
 - 1Pet 2:21 “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps”
 - 1Pet 4:12-13 “do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”
 - 1Pet 5:10 “the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast”

(v19-22) The creation:

- was subjected to frustration (NASB futility); by the will of the one who subjected it (Adam? God?);
- in hope that it will be liberated from its bondage to decay (NASB slavery to corruption) and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Therefore the creation:

- waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed;
- is groaning as in the pains of childbirth.

(v23) We too⁸⁹ are groaning, eagerly waiting for the redemption of our bodies (our adoption as sons). We already have the **firstfruits** of the Spirit, but the final harvest is the final deliverance of all the consequences of sin - which includes the redemption of our body from corruption and death.

This is called adoption as sons because this victory is the supreme manifestation of the sons of God (see v19).

- When our freedom is complete, all creation can be liberated to our glorious freedom (v21).
 - 1Cor 15:26 “*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*”
 - 1Cor 15:53-54 “*For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”*
 - 1Cor 15:57 “*Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
 - 1Thes 5:23-24 “*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
 - Also, 2Cor 5:1-4 (earthly tent ... heavenly dwelling).

⁸⁶ Cf 1 Cor 2:12 “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” 2 Tim 1:7 “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

⁸⁷ Literally ‘Spirit of adoption’ – Cf Gal 4:5. Gr. *huiothesia* = adoption. We were not always children of God (Eph 2:3, “by nature objects of wrath”).

⁸⁸ The word ‘co-heirs’ refers to the future glory we will have, with Christ.

⁸⁹ (V 23) “Not only so, but we ourselves ...”

(v24-25) *"In this hope [the complete redemption] we were saved."* We cannot see it yet, otherwise it would not be hope, but we wait eagerly for it.

God's work in us

(v26-27) We may still feel weak, but the Spirit helps us. Also the Spirit is **groaning**, interceding for us. We do not know what we ought to pray.

- Note that **'groaning'** is done by: 1. the whole creation; 2. we ourselves; 3. the Holy Spirit.

(v28) In all things God works for the good of us. All things also include the bad things, the things originated in the devil. God turns them for the good. So everything is in God's hands. The final outcome is victory for:

- those who love God;
- those who have been called according to his purpose.

(v29-30) God:

- foreknew;
- predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, the firstborn among many brothers;
 - (Rom 5, Christ: head of a new order of mankind)
 - (Rom 5:14 'Adam' a pattern of the one to come)
 - (1Cor 15:45, 47 last Adam, second man)
- called;
- justified;
- glorified.

Triumph (more than conquerors)

(v31-39) God is fulfilling his plan. Nothing and nobody can withstand him.

- God is for us, who can be against us?
- He gave his own Son (the major part of the deal already), so there is no reason to hold back the rest.
- He has chosen us, who will bring any charge?
- He justified us, who will condemn?
- Christ Jesus himself is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (He died and – more than that – was raised to life).

(v35-39) Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. In all persecutions and sufferings we know that we are more than conquerors. It will unite us with Christ and his victory.

(Phil 3:10-11) That is also why Paul wanted to share in the sufferings of Christ:

- ◇ he wanted to know Christ;
- ◇ and the power of his resurrection;
- ◇ and the fellowship of sharing his sufferings;
- ◇ to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(Phil 3:21) Bringing 'everything under his control' also includes transforming 'our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.'

- This triumphant section is very well known and ending in a great praise.
- Though this section seems to conclude the previous section, explaining the gospel message, it seems logical and right to bring up issues concerning the Jews in this respect.

Chapters 9-11 cover the issues in particular to the Jews:

- Are they still God's 'chosen people'?
- Is there a special way of salvation for them?
- What is their position in the end-times?