

Romans 8:1-17
(Ezekiel 36:22-27; John 14:15-21)
“Life in the Spirit”

Introduction

How do we think and act and speak differently because of Christ’s victory over sin and death? Why are we not more radically changed in our patterns of thought, conversation and behavior? Why is this world still so much with us? Why do we fear the things we fear, love the things we love, make the plans, dream the dreams, spend our lives pursuing the goals that consume us, only to sit back in moments of reverie and wonder why we never became the people we thought that we would one day become?

The apostle Paul was no stranger to such questions. In the previous chapter of Romans, he put it this way: “For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (7:19). And he cries out in distress, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:24). If all that we had were the questions and the cries of distress, there would be no particular reason for us to gather together like this in worship, to sing songs of praise and offer prayers, for we would still be as lost in our sins as the rest of the world. However, Paul does not stop there. His cry of distress turns to a shout of joy and gratitude: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (7:25).

Too often we think of Christ’s victory merely as accomplishing certain things *for* us without ever really grasping the fact that everything Christ has done for us was in order that he might do something *in* us and *through* us. If you are God’s child today, then he wants you to know in your life, not only the benefits of Christ’s death on your behalf, but the benefits of his resurrection victory. He wants you to experience through the gift of his Spirit the very power that raised Christ from the dead – giving you the multifaceted dimensions of his victory over sin and death. He wants to begin making all things new for you.

It is a good thing to care for your body, provided it does not become the most important thing for you. But your body will probably begin to break down before your mind does, and in our culture, you are far more likely to make a living with your mind than with the strength of your back or with your looks. So it is universally acknowledged that the development of the mind is more important than the development of the body. But what are we doing with our minds? Are they merely at the service of our bodies and the desires that arise from our bodies? Are we consumed with the things that bring us the fleeting pleasures of our culture, or are we seeking the things of God that bring pleasure forever?

What has Christ’s victory won for us, and what difference should it make today?

Body

1. How has God saved us?

- God's Son has freed us from *sin's guilt* and the shame that once tortured our consciences and made us afraid of God (8:1).
- God's Spirit frees us from *sin's power* that once enslaved us and made us afraid of temptation (8:2-5).
- God's Spirit frees us from *sin's curse* so that we no longer fear death (8:11).

2. How do we *experience* this salvation?

- God's Spirit enables a new way of thinking: we begin to set our minds, not on the flesh, but on the Spirit (8:5-6).
- God's Spirit enables a new way of living: rather than rebelling against God's law, we begin to fulfill it (8:7-10).
- The Spirit enables a new relationship with God: we feel his pleasure (8:8-9).

3. How do we know that we are saved?

- We recognize a debt of love to the Lord (8:12).
- We begin to put to death "the deeds of the body" (8:13).
- We begin to realize our new status as children of God (8:14-17).

Conclusion

It is not enough to know that God is the Father of his people. He wants us to experience personally that he is our Father and we are his dearly loved children. So I simply ask you in closing whether or not you know that he is your Father and that you are his child. When you cry, "Abba! Father!" do you know that you are his?

Paul will go on in this chapter to ask, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (8:31,32). Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that in him we have been given new and everlasting life, and all of the resources we will ever need to be more than conquerors in life and in death.