

# NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON 16th April 2023 pm

## Series from Romans – “Life in the Spirit” Pt 4

**Text: Romans 8 verses 1-17**

**Title: “How can we be sure we are Sons of God?”**

### Scripture references from the ESV

**Romans 8:1-17** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you<sup>[b]</sup> free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>[c]</sup> he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus<sup>[d]</sup> from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers,<sup>[e]</sup> we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons<sup>[f]</sup> of God. <sup>15</sup> 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!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> 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.

The main purpose of Romans Chapter 8 is to give believers assurance. Though there are things to do that are implied, such as not walking according to the flesh but instead walking according to the Spirit, none of these are written as direct commands.

Instead, Paul describes who God has made us to be and what God has promised for us.

The chapter begins with one of the greatest statements in the Bible about believers in Christ (v1 above). Those who have put their trust in Christ are united to him. We are in him and he is in us, and because of that

**there is now NO condemnation**

No one who has truly put their trust in Jesus will ever hear God say: **Depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire**

Instead, we will hear Jesus' invitation: **Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34).**

Take note of what is promised here. When we think about salvation, we generally think about being forgiven by God and living a sanctified life. However, the Bible teaches that

**God's ultimate purpose in our salvation is actually our glorification in the life to come.**

- Forgiveness and sanctification are vitally important because they are necessary requirements for God's ultimate purpose for us – our glorification.

Paul refers to our glorification further on in Chapter 8:

- **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (v18)**
- **For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (vv29-30)**

In eternity past, God entered into a covenant relationship with his people. Before he even created this planet, he predestined those he foreknew to be conformed to the image of his Son. We will share in the likeness of Jesus.

**God himself will be glorified in us as we reflect his glory back to him.**

Everything that Paul writes here is written to assure us that **God WILL do it.**

**No matter how inadequate and sinful we might feel right now,  
we WILL come into this glorification that God has purposed for us.**

We are given all this assurance because God means us to live **now** in the light of what we will be when he brings us into this glory.

- Our problem is we focus so much on our sin and failure and our fight against it that we become self-focussed and that self-focus drives us ever deeper into despair and the sin that we are fighting.
- Scripture lifts our eyes away from ourselves, our sin and our failings and on to the triune God and all that he has done for us and prepared for us.

When God becomes our focus, sin begins to lose its power over us. Then we begin to become hopeful and God is glorified in that. Nothing is more effective in our sanctification than keeping our eyes set on what God has done for us through Christ, and the glory that he has prepared for us. So Paul gives us one assurance after another to help us

**know that we will be glorified, because God is at work in us, God foreknew us and  
God predestined us.**

One such assurance is found in **vv13-17** (above). We are children of God. We have been legally and eternally adopted into God's family as sons. When we know that we are sons of God, we can be assured that **v1** and **v17** (above) are true for us.

**Knowing we are sons of God assures us that we will never be condemned and we will  
be glorified.**

How can we be assured that we are sons of God? Paul tells us: **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (v14)**. Not everyone who turns up in church is a child of God, but only those who are led by the Spirit of God.

How do we know that we are being led by the Spirit and so are sons of God? Paul gives two evidences here.

1. **We will be putting sin to death.** When we talk about being led by the Spirit, we mostly refer to subjective things, such as the Spirit leading us to talk to someone at a bus stop or to give money to a particular cause. Those things are not

wrong, but they would never give us the kind of assurance of which Romans 8 speaks.

Paul links vv13 and 14 together to show us that the reason we can do v13 is **because of v14**.

### **The Spirit leads us to put sin to death**

The same phrase is used by Paul in **Galatians 5:16-18**: <sup>16</sup> **But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.** <sup>17</sup> **For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.** <sup>18</sup> **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

Being led by the Spirit results in desires that lead away from the works of the flesh, and go on to lead us into the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**).

**The Spirit's leading causes us to make war on the sin that still resides in these bodies of death.**

Paul tells us that if we aren't killing sin, then sin will be killing us (**v13**). It is an urgent exhortation to make war, not against our brothers and sisters who may differ from us over incidental matters, but against the sin that dwells in us.

It is the Spirit who leads us into this fight against sin (**vv4-9**), so that we find ourselves disliking the sin that we do, not because we're afraid of being caught but because we know it offends God.

**When we find ourselves seeking God's help to overcome sin, we can be sure we are being led by the Spirit.**

How does the Spirit do this leading? He leads through the sword of the Spirit, his word in the Bible.

- Through his word in the Bible, he convicts us of our sin, which leads us to confession
- Through his word in the Bible, he shows us what God has promised to do in us, which leads us to trust Christ to fulfil his plans for us

Through leading us to confession and trust, the Spirit begins to form the life of Christ  
in us.

2. **We will be loving God as Father (v15).** The Spirit of God is the Spirit of adoption. This is a legal term.

- We are no longer slaves who have to work to keep God happy, and must live in fear that we may not have done enough to keep in his good books.
- We are sons, who are eternally loved and welcomed into the family to share in the inheritance of eternal life.

Sin has distorted our minds so that we think we have to work to keep God happy. We struggle to rest in the assurance that God loves us and has adopted us, not because of our merit, but solely because of his grace to us in Christ. We sin and think we cannot go to God, and so we need this second aspect of being led by the Spirit from **v16.**

Witness is another legal term. He gives a compelling testimony for the defence so that the defendant is absolved.

That is how the Spirit of God works in us. He is an inner witness to assure us that we are children of God.

- He assures us that God loves us, has adopted us and won't ever kick us out of the family.
- He assures us that God means to bring us into our inheritance – eternal life

How do we know we have that witness? It results in the cry of

**Abba, Father**

**It is a cry of love for God that sends us running to him and not away from him even when we sin.**

If you find yourself being drawn to God with a heart inclined towards him; if you love him as your heavenly Father; if you go to him for help and forgiveness; if you seek his fatherly guidance; if you trust him even when it seems he is disciplining you then

**You can be sure you are being led by the Spirit.**

In all of this, Paul wants to assure us that, as children of God, we are not and never will be under condemnation and therefore we **will** enter into the glorification God has

purposed for us. We will never be turned out of the family for the adoption papers have been signed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Our inheritance is secure (v17 above).

- As God's children, God has given us his Spirit to lead us to put sin to death
- As God's children, God has given us his Spirit to lead us to love God

Where we can see this, even in small measure, then

**We can have assurance that God is our Father and we will be glorified.**

However, we are not to be passive in this. This is not about sitting in a quiet room and waiting to hear a whisper from God's Spirit. God has given us means of grace, including his word. The Spirit works in our hearts to

- Give us a new desire to live not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit
- Give us a new desire to set our minds not on the things of the flesh but on the things of the Spirit.

When we begin to experience those desires, we need to act on them. The Spirit is at work to enable us to act.

- We need to look to the place where we see the brightest display of God's love.
- We need to look to Christ and his cross to see how God is able to adopt us
- We need to look to Christ and his resurrection to see how God will glorify us.

So we set our minds on the word. Here is a practical way to do this. Take a verse and write it out on a piece of paper, and then spend 20 minutes or so writing down what God says to you through it. That may seem a long time, but you will be amazed at how quickly it goes by and how much you have written. Here are some suggestions as starting points:

**Romans 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

**Romans 8:11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus<sup>[d]</sup> from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

**Romans 8:15** <sup>15</sup> 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!"

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- Then pray – have a conversation with the living God over the text – marvel at the fact that we can actually do that!
- Ask him to enable you to see the truth with the eyes of your heart and to enable you to savour the truth so that it feeds your soul. You could use this prayer:

I—Incline "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain." (Psalm 119:36)

O—Open "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalm 119:18)

U—Unite "Unite my heart to fear your name." (Psalm 86:11)

S—Satisfy "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." (Psalm 90:14)

As you do this, you will begin to experience more and more the Spirit leading you to put sin to death, and leading you to love God. He will assure you that you are a child of God, and that therefore there is now no condemnation and future glorification is certain.

**The more we are assured of that future glorification, and of our adoption as children, the more we will find the Spirit leading us to love God as Father and fixing us in our determination to put sin to death.**

**This is the leading of the Spirit.**