

Romans 8:1-11, “Holy Spirit Freedom”, 10/4/20

I’m not sure if preachers are allowed to have favorite chapters in the Bible, but if they are, this chapter is no doubt my favorite. I’m not alone in that- many theologians have called Romans 8 the crown jewel of the Bible. In fact, we flew through chapter 6-7 so that we could slow down in chapter 8 and bask in its beauty for a few weeks. It is an anthem of victory for the Christian. I will throw out a challenge to anyone who will accept. Dinner on me to anyone who memorizes the whole chapter by October 31. The bookends of this chapter are two of the most amazing rally cries of the Christian- **No condemnation and No Separation**. No matter what happens in the twists and turns, the ups and down of life in between, we know we have these two rock solid truths to live between- No condemnation and No Separation¹. **The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of power** in Romans 8, He is referenced 19x in this one chapter. Throughout this chapter we are going to encounter the roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. So whatever you do, don’t miss these next few weeks because they are life changing. Today, we are going to talk about **Holy Spirit Freedom**- Or a subtitle of one way we are going to apply this truth today: **the secret to getting spiritually unstuck**.

I grew up in Molino Village, in Schuylkill County, PA. It’s so small it couldn’t be called a town. Molino was just one road by the train tracks with a handful of houses and a trailer park at the end of it. RD2 Box 2190. There was a dirt road in Molino that we used as a short cut to get into town that would save you about 10 minutes, but the only problem was that there was low point on that dirt road that would regularly flood. Most people would only take that road if they had a truck...I had a 2-door stick shift, 87 Ford Tempo. But I was always in a hurry and I liked to take risks. I can’t tell you how many times I would get my car stuck in the mud. And rarely could I get myself out. No matter how much gas, forward, backward, turning the wheel- I could just never seem to get myself out of the mud.

Have you ever felt stuck in life? Going back to the same bad habits, the same patterns, the same fights in your marriage, the same mistakes in your life over and over? Just stuck in a rut and you can’t seem to get out? You are in good company because that’s where Paul was last week in chapter 7- describing that constant struggle with sin that can characterize seasons of our spiritual lives. And it led Paul at the end of the chapter to cry out- “Oh wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body subject to death?” But there was hope for Paul because Romans doesn’t end with chapter 7, there is Holy Spirit Freedom in Chapter 8. There is a way to get unstuck.

You know how I got my car out of that rut almost every time? A man named Irv. He lived near that road. And it was like Irv lived for these moments because as soon as he saw you struggle, Irv would get on his boots and head out...He’d walk up to your door with just a slightly condescending look that said, “Listen rookie, get out of the car and let me show you how it’s done.” And he’d get in my car, and with just a twist of the wheel and some careful application to the gas pedal he would be out in no time. He just made it look so effortless. All my spinning

¹ Observation from Skip Heitzig sermon

shifting and effort just got me deeper into the rut. I had to get out of the way, out of the driver's seat and let someone else do the work.

Paul is going to show us that the way to get unstuck. The path to consistent victory and spiritual grow and freedom is NOT through applying more effort, through more determination, more white knuckling of the steering wheel but rather getting out from behind the wheel altogether and allowing someone who has the power to drive for us. And that someone else is the Holy Spirit. Today we will learn 3 Truths of Holy Spirit Freedom to help us get unstuck in our spiritual lives. But first, let's get some of the context.

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us.

Here Paul rehearses the same gospel story that he has been preaching since chapter 1. Have you noticed how Paul never strays too far from the Gospel? Neither do we... The Gospel is the reason Paul can say so emphatically "No Condemnation." No condemnation means that for those in Jesus Christ, God will never condemn us an eternity apart from Him. We are eternally secure. It also means that none of the acts of God in your life are ever condemning. Let me just say, if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, don't ever say he's punishing you. He may like a good father be disciplining you in love for your benefit, but never condemning. Also, don't ever believe the lie that you can fall back into condemnation if you sin. No condemnation means never, ever, ever!

Now, how is that possible that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus? Look what Paul says, Jesus took our condemnation on Himself (the just punishment for our utter failure to obey God's law) to the cross and he paid the requirement of the law for sin- which is death. That's why there is no condemnation- because Jesus was condemned in our place. The justice of God was satisfied. But that's not the end of the gospel of Jesus. The gospel does not only save us from sin's penalty but gives us freedom from sin's power. Did you notice that little phrase in verse 2 *law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free*? Law here is probably better understood as principle of the Spirit- what principle is that? Here's the principle. The Spirit is the agent of the Trinity that brings life. Paul says it explicitly in verse 11

¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

The same Spirit who breathed life into the first humans is the same Spirit who breathed life into the dead body of Jesus and Paul says He is the same Spirit who indwells us and breathes life into us. Not only eternal life but life to overcome, life to conquer sin, life to see real change.

#1 The Only One who can get you Unstuck... Lives in You!

Take that in for a moment. God's Spirit lives in you. The third person of the Trinity has moved in permanently, and he comes with power. The Spirit, according to verse 2 sets us free from the law of sin and death. Do you know that the Spirit lives in you? I believe if we really grasped just how powerful He really is to overcome sin it would transform our lives. So why is it that we so often find ourselves stuck in the mud...and we are like- "I got this. I can get myself out and try harder." Or why do we get despairing and think we will never get out when the Spirit in us is saying, "You don't got this. Would you just move over and let me handle this?" The reason is...

#2 There is a Fierce Struggle for the Driver's Seat

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; But those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

What is the flesh? Your fallen, corrupted nature inherited from Adam. It is governed by **5 Selves²:**

Self-Will- I want to be in charge, not God. Even if that leads to misery, drama, addiction, self-hate I would still rather have control of my life. The flesh hates accountability and submission and loves control.

Self-Glory- I want the credit, not God. The flesh hates humility and loves pride.

Self-Gratification- I prioritize my pleasures and comforts on my terms over pleasure in God and his terms. The flesh hates to wait on God and face conflict and loves impulsivity and avoidance.

Self-Sufficiency- I have what it takes to overcome and succeed apart from God. The flesh hates dependence on God and others and loves independence from God and others.

Self-Justification- I know what is right and how to live, I can earn my own status.

The flesh hates to be proven wrong and loves to be right. It's that part of me that if I'm ready to leave the house and I'm waiting for my wife to get ready, that whispers to myself, "She's going to be late. I just know it. She's going to make us late." And then actually WANTS her to make us late in order to justify myself...And then I'm secretly disappointed when she isn't late and I'm wrong. That's the flesh...

There is a fierce struggle in us vying for control of the driver's seat of our lives between the flesh who wants to please self and the Spirit who wants to please God. Paul says it like this in Galatians 5

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

The Spirit wants to produce the exact opposite of the flesh.

God's Will, God's Glory, God's Gratification, God's Sufficiency, God's Justification.

² From J.D. Greear Sermon on Romans 8:1-11

Do you realize the inner struggle between the flesh and the Spirit to be in control of the driver's seat of your life? Do you know that every time you think about going to that website, or picking a fight on social media, or are tempted to lie to impress someone that was it actually happening is a struggle between the Spirit of God and your flesh? These two drivers fight for your mind because whoever controls our mind control's what we believe, how we act, how we feel, and how we respond to impulses.

#3 The Driver Determines the Destination.

⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

When drones were just coming out, I got one for our boys...OK, let me be honest, I got one for me. And so I would be in the back yard with the boys and learning to fly it and the boys would be like...let me try, let me try. And I would say, "No it's mine!" No, I said OK, but the controls are really sensitive so just slowly increase the speed. And so my son said, OK- and then proceeds to immediately smack into full speed into a tree, parts flying off...so I fix it and then again he starts asking...and so again I say, OK- just be careful and go slow and he says, "OK" And he this time he didn't hit a tree, but instead it just went straight up in the air so high we couldn't control it. We had to get in the car and drive to see where it landed. It was in a neighbor's yard several streets away.

And this is sometimes us...we keep trying to drive but we are really bad at it. Every time our flesh takes the controls we crash into trees, we get off course, we end up so far from where we planned. And that makes sense because Paul says the destination of the flesh is death. Spiritual, emotional, physical destruction. But the Spirit leads to life and peace. There is no neutral in the Christian life. You are either moving toward life and peace with the Spirit or toward destruction with the flesh in the driver's seat. Either continued dead ends, setbacks...back into the same sins over and over again, back into the ruts and stuck in the mud or you will experience victory, freedom...life and peace.

#1 The Only One who can Get you Unstuck Lives in You.

#2 There is a Fierce Struggle for the Driver's Seat.

#3 The Driver Determines the Destination.

I believe most of us know this, not only theologically, but experientially. We feel the struggle, we get stuck in the mud, we have crashed our lives into some trees. So let me ask the obvious question, **Why do we struggle to give up the driver's seat to the Holy Spirit?**

I **believe deep down it is fear and unbelief.** What if He takes me somewhere I don't want to go? What if he fails me? What if I'm not happy or miss out? What if my life gets more difficult? I know I should be more generous but what if I don't have enough money to retire, or to buy the bigger house, or car? I know I should spend more time pursuing spiritual growth in the Word, community, prayer or with my family but I'm afraid I won't get promoted or move up the ladder. I know I should give up this porn habit or sexual fulfillment but what if my longings go unfulfilled and I'm miserable or lonely?

OK, be honest- any of you have a fear of flying? I used to be really nervous and unsettled on airplanes when there was turbulence. The plane shakes, or hits air pockets and you go up and down really fast...I look out at the wings and they look like they are about to fall off...at least to me. But if you speak with a pilot and ask them about turbulence, they will have a totally different perspective. Do you understand how many hours of intense flying a commercial pilot needs to have under his or her belt? I mean most of these pilots are retired fighter pilots, they are used to maneuvering through all kinds weather, danger, all kinds of conditions. Ask them about turbulence and they will tell you that's the fun part of flying! They know exactly how to navigate through it. They know exactly what the plane is capable of and how to make sure they keep their passengers safe.³

The Spirit knows how to fly, he knows how to navigate, he knows what we need and what leads to true life and peace. He's not trying to rip you off, he's trying to free you! **Would you give the Spirit control of the driver's seat of your life?**

What does that look like? Yield. Surrender. Wave the white flag. Give him the steering wheel. When you are tempted by your flesh in any of the 5 Selves: Pray and confess that you are weak and tempted. Confess what is true that you know that brings death and you want to pursue life. Then ask the Holy Spirit to take over and empower you.

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³ Illustration from Jonathan Pokluda on Romans 8 Sermon