



21.
'Freed to live'
Romans 8.4-13

Background

The theme running through the whole of this chapter is that of *freedom*.

Our plight lies in the fact that, ever since the 'fall' of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, humanity has been enslaved to sin.

It's that bondage which Jesus has broken, through His incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Sin no longer reigns in the lives of those who are in Christ: there are still the pockets of sin within – J I Packer described sin as “a blind, anti-God, egocentric energy in the fallen human spiritual system, ever fomenting self-centred and self-deceiving desires, ambitions, purposes, plans, attitudes, and behaviours” – but while sin is not yet destroyed it has been de-throned in the life of the believer.

The true King, our Lord Jesus, has come to reign in our lives, and He has taken up residence in the hearts of His people by His Holy Spirit. He now calls the shots; our minds have been re-calibrated to seek His will, and our will has been freed to do His will. It is in that way that believers are set free to do the will of God and to live at last in righteousness.

It's that, in large measure, with which these verses are preoccupied: the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as those who have trusted in Christ. The gift of the Spirit is the birthright of every believer: indeed, you cannot be a believer but by the regenerating work of the Spirit whereby He comes to dwell within you, in line with the promise God had made. It was the prophets of the exile in particular (Jeremiah – [Jer.31.33](#): and Ezekiel – [Ezek.36.24-27](#)) who both recognised most clearly, and articulated most eloquently, the need for God Himself to effect that recalibration in the lives of His people through the work of the indwelling Spirit.

This passage is in some ways a brief manual for the believer on what's involved in that 'recalibration' – what it means to live now 'according to the Spirit' and to have your mind 'set on what the Spirit desires'. The most helpful little book you will find in working through the conclusion to which Paul drives in vv.12-13 is that by John Owen, ['The Mortification of Sin'](#). It's an enduring classic and well worth reading – J I Packer spoke of it as 'a spiritual gold mine'.

Read the whole passage, and if short of time start with **'days' (3), (4) and (7)**.

1) Monday 17th June – keeping the law

Read [Romans 8.3-4](#)

“.. that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us ..” (Rom.8.4)

While ‘the terrors of the law no longer hang over our heads .. the directives of the law are to be under our feet as a rule and guide for our lives’ (Rob Ventura). We don’t keep the law to be saved, but because we’re saved we’re at last able to keep the law.

If Jesus has satisfied ‘the righteous requirement of the Law’ on our behalf, why do believers need to bother with keeping it?

What have you found to be the biggest challenges in seeking to keep the Law of God?

Prayer: I delight in Your Law, O God, for Your ways are good and true. May my living show forth the beauty of holiness, not out of a sense of duty, but through that delight.

2) Tuesday 18th June – dead or alive?

Read [Romans 8.5](#)

“.. their minds set on what the flesh desires ..” (Rom.8.5)

The gospel is always and essentially binary. We live either according to the ‘flesh’, or according to the Spirit. We are either lost, or saved; dead, or alive. And the primary indicator of your spiritual condition is your mind. On what is your mind set?

Try making an ‘audit’ of your mind through the course of a day: what are the things which occupy your thoughts?

What will characterise a mind that is ‘set on what the Spirit desires’?

Prayer: Help me to fix my eyes on You, Lord Jesus, moment by moment through each day! May my conduct and speech today reflect Your grace and truth.

3) Wednesday 19th June – ‘influencers’

Read [Romans 8.6-8](#)

“.. the mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God ..” (Rom.8.7)

Who influences your mind? Social media .. advertising .. television .. books .. your peers .. all of them are ‘influencers’. Who dictates (‘governs’) what you think? Is your mind being carefully submitted to and shaped by the Spirit of God? Or by them?

What aspects of contemporary society are expressions of ‘the mind governed by the flesh’?

What's involved in your mind being 'governed by the Spirit'? How can we help one another cultivate and maintain such mind?

What does Paul mean by the 'life and peace' which accompanies a mind governed by the Spirit? How does that find expression in your own life and in the life of a fellowship?

How can you guard your mind against the constant bombardment from 'the mind governed by the flesh'?

Prayer: *Turn my heart towards Your statutes, Lord, and not towards selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to Your word* [[Ps.119](#)]

4) Thursday 20th June – the Spirit of God

Read [Romans 8.9](#)

".. if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ .." (Rom.8.9)

The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer. The living God is pleased to come and take up residence by His Spirit in all who have entrusted themselves to Jesus as Lord ([Jn.14.23](#)). If you're His (Christ's), then you have Him (the indwelling Holy Spirit).

How conscious are you of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

What would be clear evidences of the Spirit living in a person?

If there's an absence of such evidences in a person's life, should the inference be that the person doesn't belong to Christ (despite their profession)?

What aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as a believer are you least clear (or most confused!) about?

In what ways does the knowledge that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit serve to encourage and help you in your daily living?

Prayer: *Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son and leaving Your Spirit, 'til the work on earth is done. May I live in the power of Your Spirit, for the praise of Your glory*

5) Friday 21st June – living rightly

Read [Romans 8.10](#)

".. the Spirit gives life because of righteousness .." (Rom.8.10)

There may still be pockets of (sinful, and death-bringing) resistance within the 'city' of your life as a believer, but the King has come and rules by His Spirit in you: He enables you now (despite the presence of those 'pockets' of sin) to live rightly before God.

Paul states that as a believer 'your body is [still] subject to death because of sin': in what ways do you experience that?

How in practice does the Spirit “move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws” ([Ezek.36.27](#))?

Prayer: Your mercy towards me is so very great, my Lord! You made me alive when I was dead: my desire is to live each day for You. Help me to live today for Your glory.

6) Saturday 22nd June – resurrection guaranteed!

Read [Romans 8.10-11](#)

“.. He who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies ..” (Rom.8.11)

The Spirit of God has a great track record already in raising the dead! He’s done it before: He’ll do it again! Your body may be mortal, but as a believer you have dwelling within you the mighty Spirit of God – your resurrection at the last is guaranteed!

In what ways does the assurance that, as a believer, your body will be raised to life at the last affect the way you live here and now?

How might you counter those who see death as so very final that they can’t countenance the possibility of there being a resurrection?

Prayer: Thanks be to You, O Lord, for You have triumphed over death and have given that victory to Your undeserving people. Help me to encourage others with that hope.

7) Sunday 23rd June – living for the Lord

Read [Romans 8.12-13](#)

“.. if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live ..” (Rom.8.13)

‘These two verses are the most important statement with regard to the practical aspect of the NT doctrine of sanctification in the whole of Scripture’ (Lloyd-Jones). With privilege comes responsibility. If God dwells in you, you’re to live for Him.

What is the ‘therefore’ there for? Why is it, according to Paul, that we have an ‘obligation’? And what is that obligation?

What does Paul mean by ‘the misdeeds of the body’?

How do you ‘put to death’ those ‘misdeeds of the body’?

What practical steps might you profitably take as a result of your studying this passage?

Prayer: How worthy You are of our praises, my Lord! You have made us alive and set us free to live, by Your Spirit, for the praise of Your glory. Grant me grace to live thus!