

A Sermon for Day Spring
by Steve King
Now in Christ
Romans 8:1-11
July 16, 2023

Good morning, Day Spring family and friends. Mae Belle and I have enjoyed being a part of the Day Spring family this past year, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share God's word with you this morning. I have a double delight this morning – one, I am delighted to wear this bow tie for Mae Belle, and two, I am delighted to preach on one of my all-time favorite passages of Scripture – Romans 8.

The truths of Romans 8 become even more beautiful and impactful when we place them in **the context of the book of Romans**. Paul made clear in **chapter 1-3** that we are all equally sinful, selfish, and separated from God and deserve his judgment. However, the good news in **chapters 4-5** is that God in his love and grace has provided salvation for us through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Chapter 6** lets us know that when we place our faith in Christ for salvation a transformation takes place – we are permanently united with Christ and his death and resurrection which begins to shape our lives. Yet, in **chapter 7**, Paul confronts us with a reality – even though we are new in Christ we still struggle with sin and still have a bent to earn God's favor by self- effort. The battle between wanting to obey God and yet failing can lead us to misery. Then in **chapter 8**, Paul pulls the threads of truth together and says something amazing, it electrifies me. He says, for those who are in Christ Jesus, there is now (the ever present now) no condemnation before a holy God. He helps us ***understand who we are in Christ and how to live it out in the power of the Holy Spirit.***

Romans chapter 8 springs forth with greater light when you contrast it with Romans chapter 7. Did you know that in **Romans 7** Paul refers to himself (I, me, my) fifty times, which is obviously self-focused. He refers to the Holy Spirit only once in the chapter. The chapter ends with, “wretched man that I am.” Yet, in **chapter 8** he refers to God seventy times. I would call that a theme. He refers to himself only twice. Do you see what has happened? In Romans 7 he is a believer in Christ, but his focus is on me trying, me seeking and yet failing. Then in chapter 8 he shifts to focusing on what God has done for us in Christ and ends the chapter by praising God for his love for us in Christ. The stark contrast of Romans 7 and 8 help us see that what moves us from misery to joyful hope is our mindset – were we focus our faith – on ourselves and what we DO or on God and what he has DONE for us in Christ.

Now I am well acquainted with the misery of Romans 7 and have tasted the joy and hope of Romans 8. How about you?

I came to faith in Christ at the age of nine and from the age of 9 to 21, I loved God and wanted to serve him. Yet as time passed, I became increasingly defeated, frustrated, and discouraged in my walk with God. Paul's struggle in Romans 7 described me perfectly. My mindset was built on some assumptions, one true and the other false. I assumed correctly, that through faith in Christ

I was secure and going to heaven, but I also assumed, incorrectly, that God was saying to me, “Son, between now and heaven you better get your act together! It is up to you!” As a result, being a Christian was like living in a straitjacket – I could not enjoy God because I believed I could never measure up – he represented “you ought to, and you should” – a treadmill of try and fail. Yet, I could not enjoy the world because I felt guilty when I did. I could not enjoy people because I was comparing myself to them and feeling either prideful or less than. I became increasingly self focused, insecure, and frustrated.

It all came to a head one night at two in the morning one weekend as I was at my post in my fraternity at the University of Georgia. Now a little background, because I went to church and did not drink, smoke, curse or chew or go with girls that do, they made me the chaplain. One of my jobs at weekend parties was to sit on the stairs leading up to the bedrooms in our large fraternity house and help the drunk brothers make it safely to their beds. I was at my post when a brother named John Piper, not the famous preacher, approached me. He was definitely not a follower of Christ and intoxicated. He sat down beside me, looked me in the eye and said, “King, you are the most miserable man in this house, I hope you find what you are looking for!” and walked off. His words shattered me. I felt, I died a thousand times. I thought, how can Christianity be true? How could he look at me as a Christian and make a correct assessment, you are miserable?

In despair, I went home for the summer and was captured, by the radical change in my younger brother Andy. He was joyful, full of purpose, read his Bible and God spoke to him. He had discovered a new life in Christ. He had what I desperately wanted. So, I did the only thing I knew to do – went to church and rededicated myself to try harder! After the service five men in our church approached me and said, “We have been praying for you and have collected money and want to send you to California (with your parent’s permission) with eight hundred other college students for training at the headquarters of Campus Crusade for Christ.” Those two weeks changed the direction of my life. For the first time I began to understand who I am in Christ and how to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. I learned how to study and apply the Bible to my life, and how to share my faith in Christ. I had the joy of leading five men to Christ on the beach and heard dozens of others share the same kind of experiences. Something went off inside of me! My focus shifted away from myself and trying to earn God’s approval to God and what he had done for me in Christ. I began to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, love others and join God in his work in the world.

In the fall, I returned to my fraternity house, resigned as Chaplain, and became the Vice President. Over the next two years twenty-two of my fraternity brothers came to Christ and six of us became ministers of the gospel. My relationship with God went from being a drudgery of self-focused trying and swinging from pride and despair to a love relationship with God which I began to see as a great adventure in daily joining God in his work in the world. The core truths I learned that summer, have blossomed and grown through the years, but they have shaped my life and ministry for the past forty-six years. The essence of those truths is in Romans 8:1-11.

Aim

Romans 8:1-11 first helps us **understand who we are in Christ** (8:1-4) and tells us **how to live it out in the power of the Holy Spirit** (8:5-11). We will work our way through the passage and an accompanying tool (The four-fold praise) I developed and used for years which has made the truths of Romans 8 real in my daily life.

Body

Understand who you are in Christ Romans 8:1-4

Therefore, refers back to the core truths in the book of Romans and the conclusion of Romans 7 where Paul looks to Christ to deliver him from his battle of wanting to serve God with his mind yet failing to do so with his flesh. The therefore connects us to our desperate need to **understand who we are in Christ and how to live it out in the power of the Holy Spirit**.

The next key phrase in **verse one** is in Christ Jesus mentioned twice – no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Understanding who you are in Christ is what ushers you into a mindset of knowing and experiencing no condemnation before God – now, tomorrow, and forever. Why? Because of what God has done for us in Christ – **Read verses 3-4**. Jesus Christ as God added sinless humanity to himself for a purpose – to die for our sin and thus condemn sin in the flesh. What does this mean? God is holy and can never overlook sin and condemns it yet we who are in Christ have no condemnation. Why? Because Jesus was condemned in our place. **2 Cor 5:21** says, “God, made Him (Jesus Christ) who never sinned, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.” What a great exchange! Jesus paid for all of my sins and then took all of his righteousness and puts it on my account. By grace through faith, we stand before God in Christ as righteous.

But wait, there is more! The **second part of verse one** says in Christ a power is released in you by the Holy Spirit who sets you **free from** the law of sin and death – no longer focused on you trying and failing but on what God has done for you in Christ. He has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell you forever and empower you to fulfill the moral principles of the law.

Years ago, I realized that my problems begin the moment I wake up – my mind set sets the tone of the day. Self or God? So, I developed a spiritual discipline that has been extremely helpful to me. I call it the **Four-Fold Praise**. When I wake up, I make myself think and praise God in four areas. The second part is to praise God for who I am in Christ. **Look at part 2 – praise God for who you are in Christ. Read the paragraph to explain it.**

Daily review, study, and meditate on who you are in Christ until the truth begins to shape the way you see yourself before God.

It is important to know that God is not looking for perfection from you but progression. Keep growing and being shaped by who you are in Christ.

It is vital that we understand who we are in Christ because it shapes our view of God and our relationship with him. We are to discipline ourselves so that we learn and understand who we are in Christ. Yet, we are not left on our own, we have been given the Holy Spirit to empower us and illuminate our minds to understand these truths.

We see this in verses 5-11.

Live out who you are in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit Romans 8:5-11
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In 8:5-11 Paul makes a stark contrast of living according to the flesh and living according to the Holy Spirit. Look how he describes living according to the flesh in **5-8**. **READ the passage.**

Flesh does not mean your physical body but your sinful nature. It is our attempts at self-justification. We think if I could only be, own, have, or accomplish then I am somebody. Flesh is a self-salvation project. This is why Romans 8:5-8 describes the flesh as being hostile to God and unable to please him. When we are in a “flesh” mindset, we are self-consumed, and trying to be our own savior and lord. The flesh mindset believes the lie that we can find life apart from God. It leads to separation from God and others and turns us in on ourselves.

The only other option is to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes a wonderful shift in focus in Romans 8:9-11 to the Holy Spirit living within us. **READ Romans 8:9-11**

Three times he mentions that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. The passage declares that the whole Trinity dwells in us – the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and the one who raised Jesus from the dead (God the Father).

Now here is where the problem comes. The Holy Spirit is *dwelling in* every Christian but not every Christian is *filled with* the Holy Spirit. You never get more of the Holy Spirit than the day you were born again, but the Holy Spirit gets more of you. This is why Paul commands us in **Ephesians 5:18**, to be filled, controlled, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” A drunk person is under the influence of alcohol and the results are obvious to all. In contrast, we believers in Christ are to be filled, under the influence of, the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it is vital that we know who the Holy Spirit is and what the role in our life is. So please look at section three of the **Four-Fold Praise**.

The Holy Spirit is God, not a force or ghost. The Holy Spirit is co-equal with God the Father and Son. There are twenty things the Holy Spirit does in our lives, and it is so helpful to know what these are. The Holy Spirit has a “job description” and we are to know it and cooperate with him every day.

In other words, do not try to apply for the job of the Holy Spirit, it is already filled! He is eager to work in your life every day if you depend on him.

We had a men’s retreat this weekend and it reminded me of three things that if present in our lives daily will enable us to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. The three are the word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God. Our connection with God and his truth became more real when we shared with each other.

So here is how we can tie it all together. Every day of our lives we are shaping a mindset, playing a mental record. If it is not built on the word of God, Spirit of God, and people of God, it will be built on flesh. God is saying to us, I want you to know who I have made you in Christ, feed on this, it is true. I have given you the Holy Spirit to be your helper and companion. I have given you promises, and I am totally committed to you. Filter your life through this mental grid.

So, will you join me, as a church family, in growing, feasting on, and reminding each other of who we are in Christ and living it out in the power of the Holy Spirit? We can be lights in a dark world and go from drudgery and defeat to victory and joy because of the work of Christ. Amen!