



Freedom...In Christ

Romans 8:1-4 |

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SUMMARY

During our first week in a series I like to survey what a variety of pastors and scholars have to say about our passage. In Ray Ortlund's very readable commentary, *Supernatural Living for Natural People*, he notes,

"The key word in Romans 8 is Spirit. In chapters 1-7, the word Spirit appears only five times. In chapters 9-16 Spirit occurs eight times. But here in chapter 8 the word Spirit suddenly bursts onto the scene 21 times - usually referring to the Holy Spirit of God - more often than in any other chapter of the entire New Testament.

So God's provision for weak Christians is the Holy Spirit. We do need to get tough on our sinful impulses. But our own self-monitoring cannot actually change us. God's transforming provision for sinning Christians is the sin-expelling Holy Spirit. The reason grace succeeds where law fails is that, while law is empowered by our own good intentions, grace is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We need a fresh rediscovery of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our churches today. **I am thankful for the honesty of John Stott:**

The best way to begin is to stress the importance of our subject by confessing our great need of the power of the Holy Spirit today. We are ashamed of the general worldliness of the church and disturbed by its weakness, its steadily diminishing influence on the country as a whole. Moreover, many of us are oppressed by our own personal failures in Christian life and Christian ministry. We are conscious that we fall short both of the experience of the early church and of the plain promises of God in his Word. We are thankful indeed for what God has done and is doing, and we do not want to denigrate his grace by minimizing it. But we hunger and thirst for more. We long for 'revival,' an altogether supernatural visitation of the Holy Spirit in the church, and meanwhile for a deeper, richer, fuller experience of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

We do not need more frightening punishments and more withering scoldings. We need the all-sufficiency of Jesus applied in rich measure to our deepest points of personal need. And that is what the Holy Spirit does. *He* internalizes the triumphs of Christ crucified within the depths of the human being, so that our inclinations start changing from evil to good. **The law cannot do that.** The law tells us to pump harder,

but the Holy Spirit makes springs of living water flow from within. The law tells us to pedal faster, but the Holy Spirit fills our sails. And that is the power of real holiness.”

Take some time as a group to read James 5:12-19. Then ask these questions:

1. What stood out to you as you read today?
2. What point does James seem to be making?
3. How does this portion of Scripture connect to what came before? How does it connect to what comes after?
4. What didn't make sense? What do you still wonder about?
5. Romans 8 reminds me of William Cowper's hymn "[Love Constraining to Obedience](#)" where he writes,

*To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
To hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child
And duty into choice.*

This is the work of the Spirit in us. He helps us hear God's pardoning voice. He cries within our hearts that we are children of God (Romans 8 + Galatians 4). Duty turns into delightful choice!

Is this your experience of the Christian life? Spend some time asking God in prayer to grow this mindset within you by his Spirit.