

Our Situation has Changed  
Romans 8:1-17  
5-3-2026

**When James Montgomery Boice preached on Romans 8, he referred to it as the greatest chapter of the Bible. After the service a friend stopped him and pointed out that in one of the books he had written he had said the same thing about Hosea 3. To this, Boice quote Martin Lloyd Jones words that the greatest book of the Bible should always be the one being studied or taught at the moment.**

And this morning we come to Romans 8 which has been called the greatest chapter of the greatest book containing the greatest verse in the Bible.

**The 17<sup>th</sup> century theologian Philip Jakob Spener put it in a more poetic fashion when he said, if the Bible were a ring, Romans would be its precious stone and Romans 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel.**

What has caused many to consider this passage so significant is, as Charles Trumbull put it,

**The eighth chapter of Romans begins with the words no condemnation, ends with no separation, and in between no defeat. This wondrous chapter sets forth the gospel and plan of salvation; the life of freedom and victory; the hopelessness of the natural man and the righteousness of the born again; the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body and blessed hope of Christ's return; the working together of all things for our good; every tense of the Christian life, past, present, and future; and the glorious, climactic song of triumph, no separation in time or eternity from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**And NT scholar Robert Mounce called Romans 8 the inspirational highlight of the book of Romans. For here the apostle is swept along in a wave of spiritual exaltation that begins with God's provision of the Spirit for victory over the old nature, breaks through the sufferings that mark our present existence, and crests with a doxology of praise to the unfathomable love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. He then says, "Nowhere in the annals of sacred literature do we find anything to match the power and beauty of this remarkable Paeon of praise...We are not dealing here with mere theology. As Paul wrote, his pen gave evidence that he was caught up in an experience of profound worship and spiritual adoration."**

And all of that is contained in just one chapter of 39 verses!

A chapter which beings, **THEREFORE**  
**In light of everything he had written up to this point**

In light of Paul's emphasis in chapters 1-3 that that no matter who we are or how good we try to be, we are all sinners in need of grace  
apart from Jesus, 3:23 states that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

**as one commentator pointed out, to admit that we are a sinner is not a moralistic judgment meaning we are all bad or wicked.**

**Rather admitting we are a sinner is a theological designation meaning there is something fundamentally wrong in our relationship with God, it's broken and we are separated from Him**

And we are helpless to do anything about it

**Therefore, our situation and circumstances need to change**

as the later part of chapter 3 through chapter 5 indicates, in light of the fact that we cannot save ourselves through our own hard work and efforts, we need help!  
Just as death and judgement and condemnation are the result of our sin,

**Therefore**, in Jesus, our situation and circumstances have changed

God's grace and righteousness and life itself are now available  
He has provided a way for us to be justified and our relationship with Him made whole.

To illustrate in chapter 6 Paul uses baptism to show just how significantly our situation has changed  
In salvation we have died to sin and are raised with him in newness of life.

And using the illustration of marriage in chapter 7, he says not only have we died to sin, we have died to the law.

Our relationship with God is not based on keeping rules but faith in Christ  
Sin and the law no longer have power over us, we have been set free to follow Jesus Christ

Living in freedom from sin and the law doesn't happen overnight.

**Therefore**, since our situation has changed, we need to learn how to begin to live in that newfound freedom.

At times we will struggle and fall and Paul spends the last half of chapter 7 sharing his own struggles with sin and efforts to live for God.

**As someone has written about this passage, "flip through the ads in any current magazine and you'll see temptations toward lust, greed, envy, and pride that makes sin downright appealing. Like farm pigs, we enjoy a good wallow in the mud..."**

**Harvard biologist Edward O Wilson performed a rather bizarre experiment on ants that may supplement Paul's illustration. After noticing that it took ants a few days to recognize one of their crumpled nestmates as having died, he determined that ants identified death by clues of smell, not visually. As the ants' body began to decompose, other ants would infallibly carry it out of the nest to a refuse pile. After many tries, Wilson narrowed down the precise chemical clue to oleic acid. If the ants smelled oleic acid, they would carry out the corpse, any other smell they ignored. Their instinct was so strong that if Wilson daubed oleic acid on bits of paper, other ants would dutifully carry the paper to the ant cemetery.**

**In a final twist, Wilson painted oleic acid on the bodies of living ants. Sure enough, their nestmates seized them and marched them, their legs and antennae wriggling in protest, out to the cemetery. Thus deposited, the indignant living dead cleaned themselves off before returning to the nest. If they did not remove every trace of the oleic acid, the nestmates would promptly seize them again and return them to the cemetery.”**

**The author said, “I think of that image, dead ants acting very much alive, when I read Paul’s illustration in Romans. Sin may be dead but it stubbornly wriggles back to life.”**

**As Martin Luther put it, even in baptism, the old Adam remains a frightfully good swimmer.**

After stating the hold sin continues to have on us even though our situation and circumstances have changed, Paul cries out in verse 24, “who will rescue me from this body of sin and death Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

God’s provision for living the new life is the subject of chapter 8  
Where sin and the law brought death and condemnation, Paul now says that because of Jesus,

***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1–4)***

We are not only saved from the power of sin and no longer prisoners to the law, Paul now says that in Christ we are also saved from the penalty of sin.

**Therefore,** to be in Christ means there is no condemnation.  
since we are made right with God, we no longer have to fear his punishment for our sin

**Eugene Peterson said it was like we had a constant low-lying dark cloud hanging over us, but now in Christ it has now been removed**

**our situation and circumstances have changed!**

That phrase to be “in Christ” is an extremely important one  
To be in Christ means we don’t just identify with him but are now united in him  
The resurrected Christ becomes an actual part of our lives, living in and through us as His Spirit takes up residence

To be, “In Christ” means there is no condemnation but it also means so much more.  
Paul uses it over 100 times in his writings to refer to what it means to be a follower of Jesus and just how much our situation and circumstances have changed in Him.

To be “In Christ” is Paul’s favorite term for what being a Christian is

In various places he states that to be **“in Christ”** means we have now become alive to God. Being in Christ means we possess eternal life, that we are now free from sin and death. In Christ we become members of his spiritual body coheirs with Christ and now share in his work. To be in Christ means we are sanctified, forgiven, saved and alive. In him we are recipients of God’s grace, secure in death, and have become a new creation. To be in Christ means we are now free and justified and declared righteous. In Christ we are children of God, recipients of His blessings, and become one regardless of our race, gender, social position, education, politics or anything else. In Christ we are created for good works, brought near to God, partakers along with the Jews in the promises of God.

**In his various writings Paul said to be in Christ means all this and so much more because to be in Christ means, as he says in chapter 14, “We no longer live for ourselves alone nor do we die for ourselves alone. If we live, we now live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord, so whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”**

And it all starts with no condemnation for he says the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death which keeps us from every other blessing that is ours in Jesus Christ

our situation and circumstance have fundamentally changed because, as Paul says in verse 3, what the law was powerless to do, God in Christ did for us by taking our place and our sin on the cross therefore there is no longer any condemnation.

because Jesus was condemned for us, he fulfilled the punishment which the law required

**as Isaiah 53 put it, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)**

and if our situation and circumstances have truly changed, why would we keep trying to do things and control sin in the same way as we did before we knew Christ or keep living and behaving as if nothing has changed?

It’s like that old definition of insanity, why would we keep doing things in the same way over and over again yet expect different results

We cannot overcome sin through our own efforts, trying harder, being good and doing better

We need help

along with our change in situation and circumstance must come a change in our life orientation as well Paul now says we are to no longer live according the flesh, but according to the Spirit

21 times in this chapter Paul mentions the Spirit who is now to become the driving force in our lives

We no longer set our minds, our thoughts, our desires, or base our actions on the things of this world and what it tells us is important, but the things of the Spirit which means the things and ways of God

**So he says, “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.**

***Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”***

This passage reflects that being in Christ means with the Spirit’s help, we are to now begin to cultivate an entirely new life orientation and mindset

Since we are now dead to sin and free from the law and therefore face no condemnation, we need to stop trying to manage our lives the same way we did before, trying to control and manage our sin rather than put it to death

**It’s like the man who had a bad mole problem on the mainland. He tried everything he could think of to get rid of the moles in his yard but nothing seemed to work. He tried poisons, traps, noisemakers, in frustration he even sat on his porch with shotgun in hand determined to shoot any mole that stuck its head up. But it seemed the more moles he killed the more he had. Finally, his neighbor, who had no mole problem, saw what was happening and told him that he was working on the wrong problem. He was the only one in the entire neighborhood with a mole problem because he was the only one who grew a particular plant which moles love to eat. As soon as he got rid of the plant, he had no more mole problem**

Under the old way of the law, we were like that man, dealing only with the symptoms rather than the problem itself

Our lives and minds were controlled by human effort and good intentions and human desires rather than the Spirit.

So we try to be good, to live up to the law, to manage our behavior, control our sin, and be good people, but we always failed because our problem runs much deeper.

We will never have the strength to manage or defeat sin on our own.

Our flesh or old nature will never be strong enough.

If living this way was simply a matter of doing our best, there would have been no reason for God to send his Spirit to help us.

just as we need Jesus because we cannot save ourselves, so too we need the Spirit because we cannot live as we should without Him.

Our situation has changed and through His Spirit who lives in us, we now have access to new resources for living out our faith as well.

This is why throughout this chapter Paul keeps emphasizing the need to reorient our lives, to stop living according to the flesh and start living for God by the Spirit's power

For the Spirit-filled life is not just one aspect of the Christian life, it is the Christian life

Which is why one author wrote it is impossible for any Christian to be effective either in their life or service unless they are filled, or led by the Holy Spirit who is God's only provision of power

Too often people equate the work of the Spirit, His presence and filling, with a certain style of worship or the gifts of the Spirit and things like tongues and miracles rather than the faithful Christian life

**But in his book *Baptism and Fullness*, British author and teacher John Stott asks, "what then is the evidence of the Spirit's indwelling and fullness? As with the baptism, so with the fullness, the chief evidence is moral not miraculous. It consists of the fruit of the Spirit not the gifts of the Spirit. In support, he then points to the church in Corinth which gave much evidence of the gifts but little of the fruit or the filling."**

So too, here in Romans 8 Paul points to the evidence of the Spirit being a new orientation with our minds now set on the Spirit not the flesh which will be seen in our changed behavior, learning to live for God and His ways not the flesh.

**a church once had a clock on its back wall that was always either too fast or too slow. Finally, the preacher hung a sign on it which read, Don't blame my hands—the trouble lies deeper.**

There is something fundamentally wrong within each of us we cannot fix on our own.

The law can't help because the trouble lies deeper

We have to get to the root of the problem and for this we need an entirely new nature, one in tune with God and His ways

And so God sends His Spirit to live within us and make us His child

In Christ our situation and circumstances have changed, with the help of His Spirit, we develop a whole new orientation in life with our minds set not on the things of this world but the things and ways of God

Because of the Spirit in our lives, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:16, we are to have the mind of Christ

Now we need to start listening to Him instead of the world around us.