

**POWERLIFTING**  
**ROMANS 8:1-9**  
**UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

- Senior year of high school I had a lot of electives left to take
- So both semesters I took Advanced PE and “Weight Lifting”.
- And, you’ll be happy to know, ***I got straight A’s!***
- Weight lifting is one of those things that isn’t rocket science.
- If you put your time in...in the gym...you will get stronger.
- It’s just how our bodies work. Here’s what I observed.
- In order to lift heavier weights...you have to lift heavier weights.
- You’ll never bench press 225 if you only work out with 135.
- To gain muscle power you have to lift heavier weights.
- And the same is true in our Christian lives.
- If we never tackle the heavier truths of Scripture we’re destined to be weaklings in the faith.
- If want access to the transforming power of God’s Word, we have to spend time in the ***heavier things*** of God’s Word.
- It’s not rocket science. If you put the time in...***in the Scripture*** ...you will grow stronger in your faith.
- Read the Word of God, listen to the word of God, study it, memorize it, cram it into your head and heart.
- I even put a worksheet in your bulletin...one side is my notes and on the other side it’s blank and that’s your homework this week.
- Some questions for you to answer...small groups
- To read it, wrestle with it and mark it up.

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

-There is so much to unpack in this passage!

-As you read this passage you immediately see the comparison between those who live their lives "Under the Influence" of the Holy Spirit and those who live their lives under the influence of their sinful nature.

-In your notes today we are contrasting life in the Spirit with life in the flesh/sinful nature.

**8:1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. (our memory verse this week)**

-The word "now" should immediately grab our attention.

-It signals that something has changed.

-There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

**-THAT'S WHAT CHANGED!**

-And to really understand the magnitude of that statement you have to realize what condemnation is.

-Condemnation (*katakrima*) means damnatory sentence.

-Condemned doesn't mean waiting for judgment it means the judgement has already been handed down.

-Condemned means guilty as charged, case closed and awaiting sentence. And **before** we met Jesus we were condemned.

-That's not always how people view the change Christ makes in us

-They say before I started coming to church...

- I was lonely and I found friends.
- I didn't have a lot of direction in life.
- I believed in God but didn't know the Bible very well.

-Those maybe **some** changes in you but they aren't the big one

- Before you met Jesus you were condemned and **NOW** you're not
- And the reason people don't like this teaching...maybe you don't like it...is because we always underestimate the severity of sin.
- Sins are not bad habits, or mistakes or lapses in judgment.
- Our sins condemn us. My sins aren't that bad. God says they are.
- And if you were a condemned person...your hope, your prayer, is that someone will rescue you.
- Until the final hour, your hope...maybe a hope beyond hope...is that somehow, someone would act on your behalf!
- In the 1940s there was very controversial case involving a man named Caryl Chessman.
- He was convicted of robbery, kidnapping and rape and was awaiting his death sentence inside San Quentin.
- Chessman maintained his innocence all along and started a campaign for his release by writing letters and even publishing 4 books from prison.
- Through a series of appeals his execution was delayed a number of times over the course of a few years.
- And on May 2, 1960, the day of his scheduled execution his lawyer got a federal judge to issue yet another stay of execution just one minute before the cyanide pellets were dropped into the gas chamber.
- But when the judge's secretary called San Quentin, she misdialed the number...yeah...and Chessman died.
- Hollywood is great at portraying the person who is in an impossible situation...and at the last minute is saved!
- But that's Hollywood. Condemned people seldom escape their punishment.
- There is condemnation for those who do not belong to Christ.
- But **NOW** there is **NO** condemnation for those who do belong...
- We are no longer condemned! Jesus saved us from our death sentence!
- But it's not just a change in our sentence. This is where so many people get it so seriously wrong.
- They see Jesus as a "get out of jail free" card.
- And they want to take that card and run right back into the life of the condemned.
- People in Corrections call this **recidivism**...repeat offenders.

-Belonging to Christ isn't just a change in our penalty; it's a change in our person.

-A person who is condemned and then set free...is likely to go out and do the very same things!

-**Unless**...there is some kind of key change in that person.

-Vs 1 tells us that belonging to Christ cancels our death sentence.

-But the change that happens...the change that prevents us from going back to that condemned way of life...that's in verse 2.

2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

-See the difference? People who belong to Jesus are now under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

-Someone caught me driving the other day while rocking out to K-love! I looked just in time to see them laughing at me.

-Driving under the influence...of the Spirit!

-Those who belong to Jesus are under the influence of God's Spirit...and people who don't belong to Jesus are under the influence of sin. And both are powerful influences.

-They are so powerful in fact, that one leads to life and one leads to death and there is no middle ground.

-The power of Spirit is drawing us, calling us, pointing us to Jesus!

-The Holy Spirit is calling us away from destruction and leading us to eternal life!

-The power of the sin deceives us, misleads us, and draws us to destruction.

-Before I climbed Mt. Hood the first time I took a glacial mountain climbing course.

-Our instructor was a grizzled-old mountain climber.

-He pulled out a very old compass and showed it to us.

-He told us that it would save our lives on the mountain.

-And he proceeded to explain that on Mount Hood there are many climbers who get lost in the fog and snow.

-“Follow that compass due South and you'll hit Timberline lodge.”

-But in blizzard conditions, with low visibility and **without** a compass the mountain's terrain naturally funnels people Southwest toward a cliff where many have gotten lost, stuck and some have died. And that's how it goes with our...

-Our sinful nature misleads us. Our sinful nature tells us:

- We don't need God (step)
- We don't need to care about what God says (step)
- We should do whatever makes us happy (step)
- What I want, think, what I know is best for me. (step)

-And step by step that sinful instinct draws us to death.

-With each sin we inch farther and farther away from our God.

-Hell will be filled with people who ignored the pleas of God's Spirit that was calling them to life.

-For those who are lost God's Spirit is calling you to salvation in Christ! And for those who are saved the Spirit is calling you deeper into the way of life; life in the Spirit.

-The Bible lays out two categories of people; those who are lost without Christ and those who have been found in Christ.

-Those under the influence of sinful, and those under the influence of the Spirit. Those are the two paths.

-Americans tend to think we can just fix ourselves.

-I'll just be extra good and skip all that churchy, Jesus stuff.

-Here's why that doesn't work.

**3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.**

-MBT... "What does the Law of Moses have to do with me?"

-The OT was the period in time where God showed his people, and all people, that we can never measure up on our own.

-Have you read Leviticus and asked yourself, "How could anyone follow all these rules?"

-That's precisely the point of the law.

-God wanted to show people that trying to be righteous by way of rule-keeping just doesn't work.

-Why doesn't it work? Romans 8 says it's impossible because of our weakness. The weakness of our sinful nature.

-In other words, we're horrible at keeping the rules! We're horrible at being righteous in our thoughts, word and actions.

**-If our salvation was dependent on our own righteousness the Bible says we're toast! (condemned!)**

**So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.**

- God did for us what the Law could not do.
- He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.
- Have you ever sent your kids out to do some chore?
- And in the back of your mind, you're kind of thinking "Maybe I should do that myself."
- You might be thinking "they'll never pull that off. "
- But they go and try. And eventually they come sheepishly back to tell you, "I can't do it"
- And what happens then? You go and do it for them.
- That's what verse 3 is telling us.
- Christ was able to save us, the Law was unable to save us.
- No matter how you slice it, we're the problem and Jesus Christ is the solution.
- God sent his son to do for us what we could not do ourselves.
- Jesus came to earth in a human body. A body just like we have.
- And he offered his body on the cross for our sins.
- And when Jesus died on that cross "he declared an end to sin's control over us."
- 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who **no longer** follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.
- Some of you have had to be a co-signer on a loan before.
- Why does someone need a co-signer when applying for a loan?
- Because you went in. They looked at your finances; your savings, debt, work history and assets and said, "You don't qualify."
- But then your dad/mom/grandparents steps in and with **THEIR** signature...suddenly you're qualified!
- When God evaluates our track record with sin and righteousness he's like the banker that says, "Sorry, you just aren't qualified."
- But then Jesus steps in and with his signature the requirements of the law are fully satisfied.
- The debt of our sin is too great for us to overcome.
- And so God sent his Son Jesus, to be our co-signer.
- And notice how we **NOW** live. We...**no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.**
- Do you see the contrast?
- Those who live by the Spirit follow the spirit and those who live by the flesh follow the flesh.

-This raises a pretty obvious question for us:

**Question 1:** Am I following the Spirit?

-How do we know if we're following the Spirit?

**-Ask yourself:**

-Does the Spirit lead me? Do I listen when he speaks?

-Do I respond when he points out sin in my life?

-Do I act when he prompts me to act?

-Do I do what he compels to do?

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

-That's pretty clear. The Holy Spirit calls us to do the things that please the Spirit of God.

-Are you thinking about pleasing the Spirit or pleasing yourself?

-This is where we must make an important distinction.

-Sin does not dominate those who belong to Christ.

-Sin must not control those belong to Christ.

-And yet, all Christians continue to sin.

-So, what are we to think when we see Christians struggling in sin?

-Does it mean that we don't have the Holy Spirit?

-This is **really** important to understand.

-Christians ask this. Why can't I fix this struggle I have with sin?

-Non-Christians throw this in our faces. "You're a Christian, why are you doing that? Isn't that sin?"

-Vs 3 says God has "**declared an end to sin's control over us**"

-Vs 4 says we "**no longer follow our sinful nature**"

-Vs 5 says we're no longer dominated by the sinful nature

-And yet; there are days when we are absolutely struggling with sin. Right? So how do we explain that?

-Most of us have computers. And with that computer we do a lot of things. WE can stick a USB drive into it to copy files.

-We can look at email and open documents and files people send

-We can visit websites and click here and click there and you bring all these outside influences into your computer.

-And the viruses, malware, clutter starts slowing your computer

-And at some point, all that can crash your computer.

-Which is why they invented security software and it is always running in the background.

- It's giving you warnings, alerting you of problems, risks, and viruses that may be affecting your computer.
- It attacks the viruses. Eradicating corrupt files and malware.
- It is defending the integrity of your computer to keep it operating in good condition.
- It's impossible for you to surf, email, click & download and not have outside influences affect your computer.
- And Christians, it's impossible for us to live in the world we live in, to be subjected to all the influences of our culture, and our society, or our media and our peers...it's impossible for us to live this sinful world and not be infected and influenced and afflicted by the sin around us.
- And so God sent his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always working in the background. Giving us warnings. Alerting us to problems.
- Identifying key issues in our lives and seeking to eradicate them!
- Attacking the residue of our sinful natures and our sinful habits.
- And notice where the battle is? The mind.
- One of the commentators says, "The mind is the strategic battleground where the flesh and the Spirit fight." (Guzik)
- As Christians, we believe that every day that we're alive we're torn between the flesh and the Spirit.
- I grew up watching Warner Bros cartoons.
- And often you'd see the cartoon character with an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other.
- Both were competing for the mind of the character.
- Because how you think determines what you do; who you are.
- Prov 23:7 "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: (KJV)
- Your nature determines what you think about.
- What you think about reveals your true nature.
- So, what are you thinking about?
- Question 2:** How is my mind a battlefield for my faith? What am I currently battling?
- And this could apply to everything. All kinds of things.
- 6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.
- The flesh (our old selves) were headed for death.
- But our new self (controlled by the Spirit) is leading us to Leads to life. But that's all abstract...let's make this practical.

- Am I trying to serve my family or being selfish?
- Am I trying to forgive or am I nursing a grudge?
- Am I loving my neighbor or finding fault with my neighbor?
- Am I guarding my eyes and heart or giving into lust?
- Am I filling up on God's Word or just watching TV?
- Am I thankful for all that I have or bitter about what I don't have?
- Do I look for the good in every situation or find the cloud inside every silver lining?
- Am I gracious with the people around me or easily angered?
- Am I working for peace or stirring up trouble?
- Am I encouraging other people or tearing them down?
- Am I emboldened by my faith...or enslaved to my fears?
- Am I repenting of the sin I find in my life, or rushing into it?

-All these things...and thousands more...are examples of how we battle each day between flesh and spirit.

-And it's so important that we don't play this down.

-It's not as simple as having good days and bad days. **Listen to this**

**7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.**

Hostile to God...Americans are sincere when they say "I'm basically a good person" but they are sincerely wrong."

- That word **hostile** (echthra) means "hateful and enemy"
- The basic human nature (our sinful nature) isn't indifferent to God...it's an enemy of God.
- Our sinful nature cries at God, "Don't tell me what to do!"
- You're not the boss of me...you're not my god.
- And because it's so hostile to God verse 7 says that sin nature.. Can't please God...
- People take this to mean that God disapproves of everything.
- Like a child can't please their parents while they're disobeying, so we can't please God while living in hostility towards him.

**Question 3:** Is my life pleasing to God?

-I am living my life...AM I TRYING TO LIVE MY LIFE...in a way that is pleasing to God.

-To answer that you may need to first ask...

**Question 4:** What does life "in the flesh" look like?

What about life "in the Spirit"?

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

-Now you might read all this and think...I gotta get the Holy Spirit.

-But if you have given your life to Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit.

-It's not a question of how to **GET** the Holy Spirit.

-The final study question for you today is:

**Quest 5:** How much influence does the Holy Spirit have in my life?