



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 8: 5-11

Romans

“Spiritual Life”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're back in the book of Romans and since it's been some two weeks since we have looked at Romans 8, why don't we begin from verse 1 on through our passage, which is verses 5-11, but we'll set the context again, reorient ourselves to what Paul is speaking of in this great chapter about our freedom in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Verse 1: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death but what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh ; but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace because The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

However, you are not in the flesh but are in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you but if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. If Christ is in you, though the body dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness but if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who

raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to you for this text of scripture and for the whole of the bible, your revealed word, your inherent word and what a privilege it is to gather together here this mornings with your people, open it up together, read it and then spend time considering its meaning, that is a great privilege. So Father, we ask you to bless us in that privilege. We pray that the spirit of whom we read this morning, who occupies such a prominent place in this eighth chapter of the book of Romans will have an effective ministry in the hearts of each one of us here, to teach us, to illuminate the page, to give us understanding of it. We're reminded in these early verses of chapter eight that in the flesh, we are unable to do anything. Paul reminded us of that in chapter seven, that in the flesh, even as a born-again man, he could not do what is right. We haven't the strength or the ability, we confess that before you, Father, to do that, which is pleasing to you but we have the spirit of God who is able to produce that, who's able to give us understanding. He is our teacher and we pray for his teaching ministry, that you would open up these things to our understanding and give us a great appreciation of your grace, of what you have done for us, what you are doing within the hearts of your people at this very moment and that we would become thankful individuals and live lives of service to you, not so much out of a sense of duty to our required obedience but as a desire to please you, out of a sense of gratitude and Thanksgiving for all that we've received and Father, we have received far more than we can comprehend.

In fact, we will spend all eternity growing in the knowledge of what you have given us and we will never come to the end of it. For all eternity, we will experience your grace and we will grow in your grace and it will never reach a plateau or a termination. Thank you for that, Father. So give us a little bit of understanding of that this morning through the spirit of God. Bless us, Father, spiritually and we pray for our material condition, our physical condition as well. We think of those who are sick, we pray that you give encouragement and healing to them. We pray for those who are out of work or who are weighed down by the cares of life for one reason or another, that you would build them up and give them encouragement.

Father, we pray for our government at a very difficult time in our history. We look for you for help, not because we deserve it, because we do not deserve anything from a good and gracious God, but we look to you nevertheless because we are a needy people. We pray for our government that you give those in authority over us, men and women whom you have placed there, wisdom. We pray for our president for his cabinet, for the military, that you would bless them with protection, safety and clear minds, good perspective and we pray for justice in this new war that we are fighting, protect our servicemen, give them effectiveness.

We pray you bless our nation, Father. Again, not because we deserve but we pray so because we need your blessing. We pray for physical blessing but most importantly, we pray for spiritual blessing and men and women throughout this land would come to know Jesus Christ and make us as your church effective to that end. Give us a desire to go forward and preach the gospel and tell others about the grace that's in Christ. So equip us with that this morning as we study and bless us this evening when we return to this place and we remember our Lord and his first coming and his death for his people and the salvation in which he obtained for us and remember that he's coming again because we've been instructed to do that until he comes and that day will come, when he will establish righteousness on the earth, establish his kingdom, we look forward to that day. So bless us now, Father as we turn to the word of God, turn to the scriptures, bless us as we sing our final hymn that our hearts would be prepared for a time of study together. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

One of our New England states has as its motto, 'Live Free or Die,' that's a good word but unless a person has the means to do it, freedom will die. It's not enough to tell slaves that they've been emancipated, they must also be empowered to live free and the same is true for the Christian. We have been liberated from the old life by the Holy Spirit. Paul stated that in verse 2 of our text, but we've also been equipped to live free and Paul now explains what the spirit has given in order that we might do that. He's given us a new mind, he's given us new life, apart from that no one is able to please God, no one is able to submit to God's law. Paul indicated that in verse four where he stated that the requirement of the law is fulfilled only in those who walk according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. In these next verses, he explains why that is so. He does that by contrasting those who live according to the flesh with

those who live according to the spirit and in that division he gives us the basic division of mankind. There are only two kinds of people in the world, the saved and the unsaved, the believer and the nonbeliever or as Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote, 'those who have been born once and those who have been born twice,' but within that category of those who have been born twice, among believers, there are also three types of people. There are mature Christians, there are immature Christians and there are carnal Christians.

Paul makes that plain in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, where he distinguishes between those who are spiritual men and those who are infants in Christ. There's nothing wrong with being an infant. Everyone begins as an infant, we all start out in a state of immaturity but in the physical realm, we must grow, we must develop physically and that is true as well in the spiritual realm. In Corinth, there was little of that so Paul tells them that they are fleshly, that they are walking like mere men. The author of the book of Hebrews does much the same thing in Hebrews 5:11-12. Christians sometimes do that, Christians fall into sin and can even continue in sin for a time. They become worldly, they backslide, they fall into this kind of condition, a condition which we're all prone to do, prone to wander and so we need to be on our guard against that. Fleshly or carnal behavior invites divine discipline and there is nothing in the word of God that would encourage that, that would tolerate that kind of life in the Christian, it is not an option. We cannot choose to advance or to be idle in the faith, the bible does not give that option to us. Indifference and carelessness about the Christian life is no sign of spiritual life.

Still, having said that, genuine Christians can and do fall into sin, they drift, they become worldly, they become what Paul calls the Corinthians, fleshly, carnal, walking like mere men. Now, I mention that because one, it's true, but secondly, to make the point that Paul is not describing that kind of individual, a carnal type of Christian, a fleshly Christian in Romans 8:5-8, when he divides between those who walk according to the flesh and those who are according to the spirit. These verses distinguish between the saved and the unsaved. In order to explain why it is that the requirement of the law is fulfilled only in those who walk according to the spirit. Paul explains this by comparing the mindset of the regenerate man with that of the unregenerate man. He explains this by contrasting the way the two kinds of

people think, verse 5, 'for those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the spirit.' In other words, a person's spiritual and moral condition determines his or her mindset.

Our thoughts, the way we look at the world, the way we think results from the condition of our hearts, the condition of our minds. So those who are according to the flesh, they think that way, while those who have been born of the spirit think according to the spirit. Now the use of the word spirit here refers to the Holy Spirit and the word flesh, as Paul uses it in this text does not refer to the material part of man, it does not refer to the tissue of our body, rather, it is Paul's word for the human nature in its fallen condition as twisted and self-centered and controlled by sin. So those who are in that condition, who are according to the flesh, are absorbed with the flesh, with self and with the things that are contrary to God. That is the focus of their minds. That would include the sensual, that would include the materialistic appetites that individuals have but it would also include such things as pride, which produces a morally upright, well-respected, cultured citizen who is self-sufficient and self righteous. That, too, is a fleshly man, a fleshly perspective, a fleshly mind, so it's not necessarily a desperately wicked or immoral mindset that Paul is dealing with here but one that is set on the things of the flesh to the exclusion of all else. Its horizon is limited to this life and to self, it's self-absorbed.

Luther described human nature in its fallen condition as curved in on itself. I think that's a good description, it's self-absorbed, it's selfish, it's inwardly looking, not outward looking, not upward looking but self-absorbed and without interest in God. Those who are according to the spirit are different. Their desires are the desires of the spirit and so they are holy desires, they have a holy disposition, they have the mind of the spirit and so they think according to the spirit and the spirit chiefly desires to glorify Christ. He has not been given in order to glorify himself and bring attention to himself, but to bring attention to Jesus Christ, the second person in the trinity, to point people toward him, to reveal him and that is the desire of those who are according to the spirit. They set their thoughts on Christ and the things of heaven. It's interesting as we look at this text, what characterizes the born again person and distinguishes him or her from the unsaved is at least not in this text, zeal or excitement or good

works or even knowledge. What sets the believer apart from the nonbeliever is affection for God. His or her mind is set on the things of the spirit. He or she desires to please God, to know God, to grow in his or her relationship with the Lord.

So that is what's characteristic of those who walk according to the spirit. Those who are born of the spirit. Now those who have that disposition, those who have that mindset as Paul describes here, will have knowledge, they will have enthusiasm for the Lord, they will have joy in the spirit, they will live lives that are lives characterized by consistent obedience. All of that is the natural response, the result of this affection for the Lord. The natural man, on the other hand, the unregenerate person does not have that and cannot have that because of his spiritual condition. He or she is dead, that's the description in verse six and the reason that his or her thoughts are on the things of this world and not on the things of the spirit, for the mindset on the flesh, Paul says, is death and death means separation. It means being separated from God and cut off from the life of God. So being dead, that person is naturally unresponsive to the things of God, just as a corpse is unresponsive to physical stimuli. It's not that the person, in an unbelieving, unregenerate state does not have mental faculties, he and she certainly does. It's not that that person does not have the ability to believe in much, everyone believes, everyone begins his or her life by faith. The secularist, the humanist, the materialist begin by faith, just as we do, as Christians, their faith is in something entirely different but we all have faith, we have the capacity for that, we have the capacity to be religious. Everyone is religious, but in regard to the things of the spirit, the word of God, the revelation of the Holy Spirit, they are unable to respond apart from the grace of God through the Holy Spirit.

Now if the word death doesn't make that plain enough, then Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:14 should because there he says much the same thing as he says in our text where he writes, 'a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.' He cannot accept the word of God because he looks at it and it doesn't make any sense to him. He thinks it's foolish, therefore he's not going to believe it, he can't believe it because, to him, it doesn't make sense and Paul explains why that is: because he can't understand them because they are spiritually appraised. So he does not accept because

their foolishness to him and their foolishness to him because he cannot understand. If your bibles are open to 2 Corinthians 2:14, than underline that statement: cannot understand, has not the ability to do it.

There's an illustration from the lives of William Wilberforce and William Pitt the younger that different commentators have cited in order to illustrate this very point. Wilberforce was a Christian man who led the anti-slavery movement in England and Pitt was a man who would become prime minister of England. Wilberforce was a Christian, Pitt was a Christian in name only but both men were friends. A preacher named Richard Cecil was prominent in London at the time and Wilberforce was enthusiastic about his ministry and he asked Pitt to attend the services with him, he asked him evidently a number of times and Mr. Pitt put the invitation off, but finally after a number of invitations, he agreed. They went and they heard Mr. Cecil at his best. Wilberforce was ecstatic. For him, it was a wonderful experience and he was particularly pleased because Pitt was there to hear it but as they were leaving, Mr. Pitt turned to Mr. Wilberforce and he said, 'you know, Wilberforce, I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about.'

Now the problem was not with that man, Mr. Cecil, it was with the unregenerate heart, Mr. Pitt. The mind set on the flesh is death and so it's unresponsive to God, meaning it does not believe. Now I say it's unresponsive to God but does mean wholly unresponsive because the unregenerate heart does respond but its response is always one of hostility. Verse 7, 'the mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God.' This is the reason that the unregenerate mind is death. This is the reason that it is separated from God, it is hostile toward him, it is by nature curved in on itself and bent away from God. There's no neutrality, there's no exceptions to that. Men are either at war with God, either hostile toward God or at peace with him and the unbeliever is at war constantly. That doesn't mean he's not religious, that doesn't mean he doesn't have some idea of God and worship and act in a very religious way, we see lots of that on our television today.

Men can be very religious but they are religious in a religious of their own making. Man, by nature, rebels against the law of God, Paul says. He rejects revelation, the God that

he submits to is not the God of sovereign grace, it's the God of works, it's the God of human merit, the God of the bible, it's the God toward which he is hostile. He will not submit to his law, Paul says. In fact, Paul writes that he is not even able to do so. He won't submit and he cannot submit. Even more, Paul adds in verse eight, those who are in the flesh, those who have not been born again, those who are in unbelief cannot please God. That is the doctrine of total depravity, which doesn't mean that every man is as bad as he or she possibly can be. It does not mean that there is no hint of good in anyone, there is a lot of good in people, as man counts goodness. We can look at a number of people and admire them for their industry, for their moral rectitude, for a number of things but that's as we compare other men with ourselves and our own standards but place them against God's standard and no one can measure up to that because all has sinned and fall short of the glory of God, universally, with the one exception of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Man is totally tainted with sin. Sin has infected every part of his being, that's total depravity. That's more obvious in some than in others as I've stated. Not everyone appears to be equally in a fallen condition but all men have been affected by sin completely, body, soul and spirit. That is total depravity, which results in total inability. Man, by nature, is hostile toward God, at war with God and completely unable to please God and I might add, without any desire to do so. Without any desire to please God and submit to him. I don't say without any desire to please the God of his mind, the God of his religion, but to please the God of the bible, man does not desire to do that, he is hostile toward him. Only the grace of God can make a person willing to believe and that happens only through the new birth caused by the Holy Spirit. Only then can a person believe the gospel and submit to the God of sovereign grace, which doesn't leave much room for free will.

Now I don't say that man doesn't act freely and that man doesn't choose to do what he does freely, he certainly does, but man freely acts always in hostility toward God but to change from that, to alter his being, to change his disposition from that of hostility to friendship and love, that's impossible. To go from a rebel to one who submits to the law of God, that is impossible. Faith, trust in God, must be given in the new birth, it is a gift of God. Now if you doubt that, ask yourself, does faith please God? Yes, of course it does, the bible



teaches that very clearly, the author of Hebrews says so in Hebrews 11:6, 'without faith it is impossible to please him' but Paul writes, 'those in the flesh cannot please God.' If faith pleases God and no one can please God, then obviously no one can have faith, no one can believe, not in his own strength. It is impossible with man, but with God all things are possible and by his grace many do believe when they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They have an illustration of how this occurs in evangelism from Mark 3 when Jesus entered the synagogue and healed a man with a withered hand. If you remember that account, he comes into the synagogue, there is this man and what he tells him to do is the impossible. He tells the man to stretch forth his hand, in spite of the fact that the man couldn't do that. Now the man might have protested and said, 'you don't understand, it's withered, can't you see? I can't stretch it forth, it's impossible.' The man didn't say that, what he did was he heard the command of Christ and he responded to it. He did stretch forth his hand and he was healed. He responded to it because the word of God came to him and it's irresistible. There's power in the word of God and he stretched forth his hand, he did the impossible and that's what happens in evangelism. We speak the truth, we seek to speak and hopefully very clearly. Biblically, we make clear the gospel, we simplify, we even speak it with enthusiasm and passion but we must know we cannot convince people by the clarity of our speech, by the logic of our presentation or by the enthusiasm of it.

We can't change men, we cannot breathe life into dead souls, but we can give the gospel and as we give the gospel, as we present the truth, God gives the ability to those he is drawing by his irresistible grace. As Warfield comments, as he describes and gives commentary on that miracle that our Lord did in the synagogue, the very desire for that ability, the very desire for forgiveness, the desire for faith to have that. Forgiveness is the evidence that God is working in the individual to give faith. Inability does not preclude faith, only faith in our own strength. All who seek find and multitudes have believed and will believe because of sovereign grace, effectual grace that God extends in the preaching of the gospel, that is what Paul is explaining here.

Naturally, man cannot do anything. Apart from the grace of God, man is absolutely incapable of pleasing God. The only reason that anyone can please God, the only reason that anyone can submit to God, submit to the law of God, the gospel of God, the revelation of God is because of the spirit of God that gives grace. Those who are in the flesh, Paul says, cannot please God. So it's not enough to declare a person free, we must be enabled to live free if freedom is to mean anything because we do not have the ability to do so in our flesh, in and of ourselves. Paul made that very clear in Romans 7:14 through the end and he tried to be obedient in the flesh, he could not do so and that's what Paul is showing here. It is the spirit who gives liberation, who gives the gifts and the abilities to live free, to live the life for which Christ purchased us, bought us on the cross and the spirit does that. He gives life, he gives faith, he gives a new mind, he gives much more.

So what do you do when you receive a gift? Do you pat yourself on the back and say, 'I really deserved it?' No, if you deserve it, it's not a gift. What you do, particularly if you understand the gift is completely undeserved is you say thank you. You say thank you and then you live a thankful life toward the person who has given the gift to you and it's important for us to know what God has given us so that we might do that, so that we might live thankful lives. How else can we live the kind of lives that the prophet Micah told Israel to live in Micah 6:8, when he said, 'he has told you, oh man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.' God wants us to walk humbly with him. He wants us to live humble lives before him and it's humbling, is it not, to know that everything you have, your faith, even your very desire to believe, is a gift of God. We are his workmanship, not our own. We need to know that, we need to know that in order to live, as God would have us to live humbly before him.

We need to know that all good things come from him so that we will look to him for the faith and desire and power to do justice and love kindness. We can only do that in the power of the spirit of God and we who have believed in Jesus Christ, by God's grace alone have the spirit of God and the power to live that kind of life. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we set our minds on the right things, on the things of the spirit because how we occupy our minds is the key to how we will live our lives.

Do you want peace in your life? Do you want spiritual growth? Do you want maturity in your life? Do you want your spiritual life and capacity to expand and increase? What you do if you're a child of God and if you want those things then you must occupy your mind with the right things, you must set your mind on the things of the spirit. That is how we enjoy his blessings. Now Paul is not exhorting believers to do that, not in this text. He does that elsewhere in Colossians 3:2, he says, 'set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth.' Here, he is stating what believers in Jesus Christ do. They live according to the spirit because they have the spirit of God and the power to live in obedience, to live free and Paul assures believers of that in verse 9 when he tells the Roman Christians, 'you are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if indeed the spirit of God dwells in you.' By adding the word 'if' Paul was not doubting their relationship with the Lord. Grammatically, this is known as a first class tradition and assumes the condition to be true, so what Paul is saying is if the spirit dwells in you and it does.

So he's not expressing doubt, he was stating his confidence in them and in doing that, he gives the nature of the believers relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is a mutual relationship, they are in the spirit and the spirit is also in them. The spirit is in us as believers in Jesus Christ and we are in the spirit. We cannot separate the two. Dr. Johnson, on more than one occasion and as I remember, in the notes that he had on this particular text illustrates this mutual relationship that the believer and the Holy Spirit have from nature. For example, he says, if you take an iron poker and you put it in the fire, the poker is in the fire but pretty soon the fire's in the poker. Birds fly through the air, they are in the air but the air is also in the bird. The fish is in the water, but the water's also in the fish and our relationship with the spirit is very similar. It is close, it is a mutual relationship, he is our element, he is our spiritual environment. We live in him and he lives in us and he determines the nature of our life and of our character and of our conduct. Without the Holy Spirit, we are without spiritual life and we are outside of Christ.

Paul says that if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the hallmark of the true believer. He lives within every child of God and he does so from the very moment of faith. That means there is no such thing as an

individual who has believed in Jesus Christ, but not yet received the Holy Spirit. We don't look for some second blessing, some ecstatic experience to have the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the gift that occurs at the moment of faith. Ephesians 1:13, 'we are sealed with the spirit at the moment of faith.' Every person has the spirit of God, who is a believer of Jesus Christ. Every person in the world has indwelling sin. Believers in Jesus Christ have indwelling sin but we also have the indwelling spirit and by the spirit, we're able to fight sin. Through the power of the spirit, we are unable to live lives that are free and lives that are obedient to God. This was the promise that Christ gave to the disciples in the Upper Room. He promised to give them another helper. They were very discouraged, he was leaving, what would they do without him? Well, he was going to send them another helper and then he says in John 14:17, 'he abides with you and will be in you.' On the day of Pentecost, that promise was fulfilled. He poured out the Holy Spirit in abundance and the spirit of God came to be in the believer. Every true Christian has received the Holy Spirit, that is the universal experience of the believer in Jesus Christ.

We grow in that relationship with the spirit, we grow in our walk with him and the consistency of our walk with him, we develop in our relationship but every believer has the spirit and the ability to walk and grow from the moment of faith. Otherwise, there'd be no growth, there'd be no development in the faith at all, it'd be impossible and because we possess the spirit and belong to Christ, we are secure both now and forever. Paul indicates that in the last two verses of our passage, verses 10 and 11. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. Christ is present in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now Paul makes a very close connection between the Holy Spirit and Christ. In fact, he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of Christ. They are not the same person, they are distinct from one another but they are of the same essence, they are the one God. God the Father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit and so because the spirit is in us, Christ is in us. The life of the second person of the trinity is communicated to us through the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit and because of Christ's life in us, we have life now and we have a glorious future. Even though our body is dead because of sin, as Paul says. Now that's the present reality of our lives; our body is dead because of sin.

What that means is we have mortal bodies. Sin brought death. Romans 5:12, 'just as through one man's sin entered into the world and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned. All sinned in Adam and inherited the Adam's guilt and Adam's sin nature and so every believer suffers from the effects of that. We suffer that in our bodies, they are subject to physical death. In fact, you and I are dying right now. You may be in the peak of health, but you're dying. From the moment we enter into this world, we are on our way out. Now that's a reality but what a frustrating and hopeless existence life is for the unbeliever. If he or she takes a realistic view on life, youth fades, strength fails as the constant creep of age continues and nothing can stop it but the grave and that's the end of all life. What a frustrating and hopeless existence. The Christian knows the frustration of age, growing old is not easy, it's difficult for all of us, but for us it's not hopeless.

With physical age comes spiritual growth and that's encouraging. In fact, that's how Paul encouraged the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:16, where he writes, we do not lose heart. In other words, we do not get discouraged, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. It's being renewed because the Holy Spirit is constantly changing us. He is sanctifying us, he is making us like Christ. He is doing so to prepare us for service in this world, worship of God in this world and preparing us for the world to come for all eternity.

Now that's what Paul is describing here in verse 10. The present change that is taking place in our inner person. Commentators are divided over the meaning of spirit, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. Is this the human spirit, with a small S or is this the Holy Spirit, with a capital S? You can tell from your version whether the editors or the translators, what position they took on that. The contrast that Paul makes with the body would support the idea that he's thinking of the human spirit here, the physical body is dying but the human spirit is alive but literally, the statement is the spirit is life, not the spirit is alive and the human spirit is not life, the Holy Spirit is life. So the view of the spirit, as the human spirit probably is not the correct view here, at least in my opinion. Rather the view that the spirit is the Holy Spirit is correct, that's consistent with its use throughout this chapter. In fact in verses 9 and 11, that is the use of the word, it's the Holy Spirit and that would be Paul's meaning in the text.

So the idea is though our bodies are dying due to sin, the Holy Spirit indwells us and he is the regenerating spirit, he is the spirit of life and he imparts life as a result of justification. Those who have been justified are being sanctified. That is life now. It is our present experience and that experience eclipses the experience of futility in our physical condition with glory that is spiritual glory, the glory of sanctification, which is far greater than anything that can be taken away by the detriment or the decay of the body.

F.F. Bruce explained the Holy Spirit's work in sanctification by stating, 'Christian holiness is not a matter of painstaking conformity to the individual precepts of an external law code; it is rather a question of the Holy Spirit's producing his fruit in the life, reproducing those graces which were seen in perfection in the life of Christ.' What he's saying there is we don't become holy by making ourselves conform to a legal standard. We can't do that. The only way we can become holy is by a supernatural work within us. The spirit of God produces life within us and changes us and produces the virtues of the spirit, what Paul describes as the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5, the law can't do that, we can't do that by our own effort. That is supernatural, that is what the spirit of God produces within us, he is the spirit of life and he gives life, the life of Christ to us, he makes us holy, so that we then become obedient, diligent, earnest in the faith and that is real glory. The greater glory is yet to come and here's why we don't despair even though we are presently dying. Death is not our ultimate destiny, the resurrection is, verse 11, 'that if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit, who dwells in you.

Our bodies are not yet redeemed but they will be and we have the certainty of that future blessing because one, the word of God promises it, we have it promised right here in verse 11 but secondly, because we have the spirit of God within us. He is the pledge of our future glory. The spirit of Christ dwells within us. Christ has been raised for us and therefore, we, too, will be raised, all who are in Christ Jesus. Not revived, not restore to our old self, the resurrection will not occur and we will have our spirits, our souls reunited with our bodies and we'll look at them and say, 'hey, this is the old body, this is what I left.' That won't happen. We will be raised to a new existence, we will be transformed into the likeness and the glory of

Jesus Christ, liberated from all weakness, all disease, all pain and all sorrow and then we will truly be free, free from the penalty of sin, free from the power of sin, free from the presence of sin, that is our future and that is the assurance that every believer in Jesus Christ has. Christ has gained eternity for us, that's our future hope but resurrection life is not something that is for the future only, we have it now, with our regeneration, the new birth, the life that the Holy Spirit gives us.

He has liberated us from the old life and in giving us freedom, he has given us the ability to live free, he gives his power, which is transforming and produces the virtues of Christ's life in us. Do you have that? Does the spirit of God dwell within you? Is your life being transformed into the likeness of Christ? Are the virtues of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness evident in your life? If not, do you desire to have that? If so, it's found in Jesus Christ, God's son and man's savior and only in him. He died in our place, he bore our sins so that all who believe in him would be saved, forgiven, forever, so trust in him. That's all God calls you to do, he doesn't ask you to do great works of penance, he doesn't ask you to accomplish great works in order to gain his approval, you cannot do that. You cannot earn your salvation with good deeds, you cannot please God, Christ has done it all. What you're invited to do, when you're invited to life is to simply receive the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ and do that by faith alone.

Now if you've listened somewhat carefully to what I've been saying and you've understood Paul's description of man and his inability in verse 5-8, then you might protest, 'but I can't do that. I've understood what you've said and you said I can't believe that I don't have it in my power to please God' and of course, that's true. You do not have it in your power to please God but it is in the power of God to do that, so look to him, ask him for faith. He turns away none who come to him. Inability in man is no impediment to the gospel. A Scottish preacher Robert Murray McCheyne was a very successful evangelist who never glossed over man's inability to believe. He said that the hard heart that cannot believe is only made more guilty by its condition. That inability doesn't relieve it of guilt, it only adds to the guilt but he made this inability a reason why people should look away from themselves and look to the savior for salvation. 'You say you cannot look nor come, nor cry for you are helpless. Hear,

then, and your soul shall live. Jesus is a savior to the helpless. Christ is not only a savior to those who are naked and empty and have no goodness to recommend themselves but he is a savior to those who are unable to give themselves to him. You cannot be in too desperate a condition for Christ.’

That is true, Christ proved that when he restored the withered hand in the synagogue. The fact is we need Christ all the more because we are unable to come to him because we cannot do the smallest thing to please God or save ourselves. So if you sense your need for the savior, if you desire the forgiveness of sins, if you desire the life of Christ and the hope of the resurrection to come, then believe in Jesus Christ. Don't lean on the excuse of your inability, that's no excuse, respond to the invitation of life, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and by God's grace, you will be saved. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, what a blessing that is to know, to know the truth, to know the truth about ourselves, of our inability, of our utter inability to please you. We cannot please you but if left with that truth, we would be men and women left to despair. The grace has come in and what is impossible for man, is not impossible with God. All things are possible with you. Inability in man is no hindrance to you, you give grace, you give life, where there is death and there is inability and we thank you for that. We thank you for your grace, we thank you for the gift of life in your son, we thank you for sending him into the world and by the spirit's power moving upon us to bring us to a saving knowledge of him. We thank you for grace and we pray that you would cause us to live lives that are pleasing to you. You would create within our hearts thankfulness, that we might live obedient lives out of gratitude for your grace. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.