



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

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#### Part 2

The first remarkable truth of this chapter is found in [Romans 8:1](#),

**<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

In the first three chapters of Romans all that Paul seems to talk about is “**condemnation**” and the resultant “**wrath of God**” that will be poured out on anyone who is not a part of Christ and His kingdom. It is a terrible and very frightening picture of what awaits every unbeliever. As great as the love of God for His children is, and as great as the eternal blessings of salvation will be, in like manner the wrath of God on the unbeliever is just as intense and extreme in the very opposite direction. So, this unfolding of a “**no condemnation**” status is about as good as it gets, and it is not that it is a “**no condemnation**” status that is temporary or conditional. To the contrary, it is a permanent, unending, and everlasting condition. In fact, this entire chapter is about the **eternal security** of the believer and ends in probably the greatest doxology in all of Scripture when it states that “**nothing can separate them from the love of God that has been given to them in Christ**”.

Now, the question that needs to be asked is “**how**” does the Holy Spirit actually reveal and display to the believer that they actually have this “**no condemnation**” status. There really is nothing much worse for a genuine believer than to always be doubting and questioning whether or not they are really saved. Spiritually it just drains and exhausts the individual. One day he is going to heaven and the next day he is not. It consumes people and bleeds off their spiritual life and vitality. So, from a practical perspective, it is really very important to understand “**how**” the Holy Spirit can validate this great truth to the believer – and it occurs in [Romans 8:2-3](#) which says,

**<sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,**

Now, it is important to carefully notice in v2 what Paul states that the Holy Spirit has done for the believer – He has made them “**free from the law of sin and death**”. He is called here as “**the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**”. I.e., He is a life giving Spirit, and part of that giving of spiritual life is that He frees the believer “**...from the law of sin and death**” that was always operating against them and defeating them and bringing them into a status of condemnation before God. Before salvation, every unbeliever was judicially guilty before a holy God – and there was nothing that they could do on their own to remove that guilt and condemnation. They were constantly living in sin, living in a way that dishonored God and dishonored Christ, and demeaned and ignored the things of God. It can be understood as being overpowered and conquered by sin, but never knowing that was what it was. Sin was always stronger than the sinner’s ability to resist it. They never thought that sin was sin. They never saw sin that way and yet all along it was a lethal and inoperable sickness that was simply overpowering their life in every single area. **Sin was so deceptive that it never let them see**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

**themselves the way that God saw them.** They just could not accept God's verdict of "**none righteous**". They just could not understand His verdict in [Romans 3:12](#) that "**there is none who does good, no, not one**", and so the ultimate result of that state and of that spiritual blindness is one of judgment under God that brings about an eternal spiritual death from which there is no escape once it has occurred.

Sovereignly, though, God in His mercy and grace has set each believer "**free**" from both the sin that controlled them and the spiritual death that awaited them. If salvation did not actually free the believer from the sin that was previously controlling their life, then in reality they could not actually call it salvation. Salvation by its very nature is something that frees and liberates the believer from the power of sin. The Holy Spirit sets the believer "**free**". The verb for "**set free**" is in the aorist tense which means that it happened in the past once for all. It is not something that is repeated. Paul is not describing here what can or may happen to a Christian, or what is possible to happen for a Christian. What the aorist tense signifies is that because someone is a Christian, this being set free has already and permanently happened to them. I.e., someone cannot be a Christian without this happening to them. Every believer use to be standing under the awful wrath of God just awaiting an eternal judgment in a place of indescribable horror. However, when the Holy Spirit called and birthed them into God's kingdom, immediately they were "**set free**" from that awful law of sin and death that had downgraded them to a place where they had no desire and no intent to honor God or His precious Son. He just set believers free from all of that – and now their life is intent on honoring Christ and abandoning and forsaking those things that they know to be sin against God. As [Romans 8:15](#) says, they now cry out "**Abba, Father!**"

Next, it is necessary to look at the phrase "**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**". The "**Spirit of life**" is a reference to the Holy Spirit, and just that phrase speaks of His ministry as one of giving life to the believer – physical life, spiritual life, and eternal life. He is the member of the Trinity that bestows those things to the believer. Everything that He does is unto life as opposed to being unto death. So, this phrase is referring to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that is operating within every believer right now to deliver, to free, and to liberate them from the power of sin which always leads to some form of death. It could be physical death, emotional death, relational death, or ultimately spiritual and eternal death in the Lake of Fire for the unbeliever.

So, v2 is to be interpreted in terms of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that is operating within the believer to deliver them from the realm of sin and death that controlled them all of their life before they were saved. Now, this needs to be made practical. The presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer's life is the distinguishing mark of being a Christian – and His presence means that the power of sin over the believer's life has been defeated. When someone is born again, at that moment they are liberated from their previous bondage to sin. It is important to appreciate this, as well as the practical outworking of it in a believer's life. This is a major part of God's answer to every believer's sin problem – this giving to them "**the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**". This is how God helps the believer deal with the issue of sin in their lives. The "**law of sin and death**" was and is incredibly powerful. It operates constantly and without approval. It never takes a vacation. Sin never seeks permission to



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

intrude into people's lives. However, there is now another law operating within the believer called the "**law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**", and it is much more powerful than the "**law of sin and death**". That law is God's life changing truth that has the innate spiritual ability to transform an individual's entire life. Someone hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit quickens their mind and heart to its indelible truth, and they are brought into God's kingdom. However, its ultimate effect is that it secures a "**no condemnation**" status for the believer. Believers will never face condemnation from God. They are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ at salvation, and because they are in Christ, they are in a permanent "**no condemnation**" status.

**Romans 8:3** is also a very important verse to understand. In essence it further reveals the gospel by saying that the law could not do anything for the believer and their trying to keep the law could not do anything for them - so God had to do it for them.

**<sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,**

Exactly what was it that the law could not do? Well, simply stated, it could not save anyone and it could not make anyone righteous before God. In fact, by showing the divine character of God and the divine standard of God, it could only reveal that in reality no one could ever keep it. In a sense, it condemned everyone simply because it exposed that no one could ever keep it. It is not that the law was actually bad, but rather that it identified the character and nature of God. It contained His character, His holiness, His righteousness – and no one could measure up to any of that. Believers love God's laws. They concur with the Psalmist which said, "**they are my delight**". However, even though they love the law, and even though they appreciate it and embrace it, in and of itself it cannot do one thing to actually help them. All it does is constantly remind them that they cannot keep it. And to make it even worse, it never shows any mercy whatsoever. It never reveals any of the grace of God to the individual. It never forgives the individual. It just says "*Do this, keep this*", and then condemns everyone when they do not do what it says. Here is the way that **Romans 3:20** puts it,

**<sup>20</sup>Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

I.e., the more that they read it, the more knowledge of their sin it reveals to them. The more they try to keep it, the more they fail and the more it condemns them. It is like someone trying to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. The moment they try, they realize that they cannot. And that is exactly why they need this work of the Holy Spirit within them – to help them do what only He can do, and that is to live the Christian life.

In **Romans 8:4** there is another truth that needs to be understood as well.

**<sup>4</sup>that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in them who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

What this verse states is that as they walk according to the Spirit, as they obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and as they yield their life to His divine impulses within them that the righteous



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

requirement of the law is being fulfilled in them. However, it is important to understand that the reason this happens is simply because they are “**in Christ Jesus**”. In fact that phrase is used twice in the first two verses,

**<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**

Because they are “**in Christ**”, His righteousness and His holiness have been imputed to them. What they did not have and could not attain on their own, God gave to them. He accredited to their account something critical that they did not previously have. In the words of v3 – “**God did**” something. God gave Christ the sinner’s unrighteousness and in turn He gave them His righteousness. It was not really a fair trade by any stretch of the imagination – the sinner’s filth for His purity, the sinner’s dirt for His holiness, and the sinner’s depravity for His salvation. It was all given to them – “**imputed**” being the biblical term, or credited to their account. It was not that Christ just had to die for sins, but He also had to live a perfect life. If He had not lived a perfect life, then He too would have needed a Savior. So, when they “**walk....according to the Spirit**”, the Holy Spirit is displaying the imputed life of Christ that has been given to them.

Many times they probably think of the Christian life more in terms of their being delivered from sin and from eternal punishment. They were saved and now they are new creatures in Christ and the result of all of that is that they have been delivered from the wrath of God. However, [Romans 8:4](#) tells them that much more actually happens to them. The truth of the matter is that they cannot enter into God’s presence without having God’s righteousness. The way this verse states it is that they must be able to fulfill the righteous demands of God’s law – and they all know that that is something they cannot do on their own. How could they ever fulfill God’s law? No matter how hard they may try and no matter how sincere they may be and no matter how much they may want to, they simply cannot meet the demands of God’s law. [1 John 1:8](#) expresses it this way,

**<sup>8</sup>If they say that they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them.**

So, if they cannot keep the law, in order for them to be able to enter into God’s presence something else must happen on their behalf – and thank God it does. At salvation the Holy Spirit imputes the very righteousness of Christ to them. It is like they have lived a perfect life. The Holy Spirit placed the righteous perfection of the life of Christ onto their account. The way that God now sees them in a judicial sense is that of having lived a perfect life. The Holy Spirit placed the fullness of the righteousness of Christ on their account by His act of birthing them and placing them into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. By His simple act of placing them into the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is validating that the righteousness of Christ has been accredited to their account. He gave them something that they never deserved and never could have attained on their own.

### ROMANS 8:4b

What the believer is dealing with in these verses is the supernatural and life-transforming work of the Holy Spirit as provided to them in [Romans 8](#). The primary truth gleaned so far is that they cannot



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

**live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit.** In the same way that someone cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, neither can they live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit. In a verse reviewed earlier, Paul admonished the Galatians in [Galatians 3:3](#),

**<sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

The Christian life is a spiritual life and needs a spiritual source to function properly – and that source is the person of the Holy Spirit and both His presence and His power operating within the believer. In [Romans 8:1-4a](#) it was seen that genuine believers have a “**no condemnation**” status before God. It is a permanent condition and is the reason that they have eternal security. In v2 it was seen that they have been set free, liberated from the law of sin and death that was and is always working against them, and then in v3-4 it was seen that because of what God did for them that they are now able to fulfill the righteous demands of the law, but it is through the Holy Spirit.

Now, the latter half of v4 states,

**<sup>4</sup>that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in them who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

What is gleaned from this last phrase is that the Holy Spirit has literally changed the believer’s nature. This is one of many concise descriptions of what a Christian is and does. A believer is someone who walks according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. That is exactly what a true believer does. It is very clear. The NIV actually uses the words “**sinful nature**” in contrast to “**the Spirit**”.

**<sup>4</sup>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.**

At salvation every believer’s life underwent a complete spiritual transformation, and it was the Holy Spirit who actually performed that work within them. They were eternally converted, changed, and transformed. They use to “**walk according to the flesh**”, but now they “**walk according to the Spirit**”. It is important to fully appreciate that these are two contrasting images. The two can actually be considered to be total opposites of one another. The flesh has no interest in the Spirit, and the Spirit has no interest in the flesh. They are ALWAYS going in opposite and conflicting directions. They are utterly opposed to one another, and they completely differ in their objectives for and influences on the believer’s life. One produces ungodly results and the other produces godly results. One forsakes and dishonors Christ, and the other embraces and honors Christ. **THERE ARE NO MUTUAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO IN ANY ASPECT OR CHARACTERISTIC - NONE.** And what Paul is defining in this phrase is that they have gone from one to the other. They use to walk according to the flesh, but now they walk completely different. They now “**walk according the Spirit**”. [Romans 8:5-7](#) expands **HOW** the believer actually walks according to the Spirit. The word “**for**” that begins v5 establishes the upcoming verses as part of the explanation of v4b. I.e., this is part of how the believer walks according to the Spirit.

**<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death,**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

**but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.<sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

As Paul introduced this in v2, they are now living under the “**law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**”. It is something that v2 says has “**made them free from the law of sin and death**”. What is the regulating and governing rule of the believer’s life is the controlling power of the Holy Spirit who is working within them. And so, v4 is the effect of that governing influence – they now walk “**according to the Spirit**”. It is His power and influence that is now directing their lives. Previously it was the flesh – they were all governed and controlled by the impulses and dictates of their flesh. However, now the governing influence over their lives is the Holy Spirit. By His indwelling He is able to govern their lives according to the will of God and in a righteous way.

Now, it is vital not to lose sight of what this chapter is all about. It is about living **in** the Spirit, living **by** the Spirit, and living **through** the Spirit – and here it is described as “**walking in the Spirit**”. The Christ life is maintained, sustained, directed, and enriched by the Holy Spirit. In fact, without the work of the Holy Spirit as described here, living out the Christian life would be totally inconceivable and a complete impossibility. In very simple terms, if believers walk after the flesh, it will always produce both sin and death. When the believer walks after the Spirit, it produces life and righteousness. Those are the two laws identified in v2.

It is important to appreciate that believers cannot separate their justification from their sanctification. They both are a work of God. If someone has been justified, then it is guaranteed that they will be sanctified. **Sanctification is the inevitable result of justification**. Positional righteousness is to be reflected in practical righteousness – and that desire to live a holy life comes directly from the indwelling Spirit. If a person believes that they are saved, but they do not have any real desire to live a righteous life, then in reality they most likely not saved and have been sadly deceived. It is not proper to try and separate salvation from sanctification. Sanctification is a work of God within the believer performed by the Holy Spirit with whom they are called on to cooperate. Put another way, only those who are justified are sanctified.

Everything that God defines as a **spiritual reality** in the believer also carries with it a **spiritual responsibility**. For instance, it is a spiritual reality that believers are taught by the Holy Spirit, but it is also their spiritual responsibility to study. It is the Holy Spirit who provides direction in their life, but they are told to walk according to the Spirit and according to the direction that He gives. This simple truth is part of the often misunderstood paradoxical tension that exists between the sovereignty of God and a believer’s personal will.

Next, we want to look in general at the word “**walk**”. When we previously studied [Galatians 5:16](#) and the phrase “**walking in the Spirit**”, the word “**walk**” was “*peripateō*” and it is the same word here. “*Peripateō*” comes from the word “*peri*” which means about, and “*pateo*” which means to walk. So, literally it means to walk about. Figuratively, however, it signifies all of the activities of an individual’s life. It is a word that is concerned with conduct and with how a person lives out their life.



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

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It refers to a person's manner of life, to their habitual way or bent of life, and to their life-style. An individual's lifestyle always reflect what they genuinely believe. If a believer is willing to live in sin that they know dishonors Christ, it is by choice and certainly not by coercion. The way that the Holy Spirit works within them is by teaching them to walk by faith in the light of sound doctrine and in continual surrender and obedience to the truth.

In v4, the word “**walk**” is in the present tense, active voice. The present tense means that it is to be a continual and constant activity within the believer's life. It could be rightly translated as “**walk and keep on walking**”. I.e., “**walking in the Spirit**” is to be a constant, continual spiritual activity in their life – what could be called their way of life. This is how they live. They live by walking “**in the Spirit**”, and depending on the Holy Spirit for strength, for wisdom, for guidance, for correction, and for whatever else is needed in the Christian life. The active voice means that the subject is doing the acting versus the passive voice which means that the action is being done to the subject. Remember our previous explanation: The boy hit the ball (active voice) vs. the boy was hit by the ball (passive voice). So, they are the ones doing the walking in the Spirit. It is something that they have to do. I.e., it is not a passive activity of just “letting go and letting God”. Not at all. Each believer is told to walk in the Spirit, and therefore it requires a volitional choice on their part. It is a volitional possibility dependent on the decision of the believer's will. I.e., are they willing to choose to do what God has commanded them to do? God compels His children through His Word, but each must make a choice and a decision that they will walk in the Spirit.

God has created a new life within the believer, but it is a life that requires very defined responses from them personally. He has given the believer the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And so this new life which God has created within them and of which they have become invariably conscious is **MANIFESTED, REVEALED, AND MADE KNOWN** to others by their “**walking in the Spirit**”. It is through this “**walking in the Spirit**” that other men can recognize that they are actually children of God. Invariably, the question of what represents biblical salvation is always being asked. “*Do you think that so and so is saved?*”, and for the most part, the answer should always be the same. “*Is there biblical fruit in their lives?*” I.e., is there something in the individual's life, in their lifestyle, and in their way of life that validates and verifies the evidence of genuine salvation **OTHER THAN** just mere words or spiritual declarations that have absolutely no effect in the person's life? If there is no lasting biblical fruit, then genuine salvation must be questioned. **Biblical fruit is the evidence of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in a believer.** Genuine sanctification is that which will be a normal growth in the measure that the Word of God takes effect in the believer's life. **Every child of God who is born of the Spirit will grow in the Spirit and will walk in the Spirit.** It is the effect of the sanctifying work of the “**Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**” in every truly born again believer.

Walking in the Spirit clearly involves a certain fundamental level of effort on the believer's part. God is not going to live the Christian life for any believer. He will help, He will provide His strength and His grace as needed, but the believer has to live the Christian life. Scripture clearly states this in different places. In **Ephesians 4:22-24**, believers are told to “**put on the new man**”,



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

<sup>22</sup>that **you** put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup>and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup>and that **you** put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

### Colossians 3:9-10.

<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since **you** have put off the old man with his deeds, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

### Galatians 3:27.

<sup>27</sup>For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

### Romans 13:14.

<sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

### Colossians 3:1-2 sort of sums it up for us,

<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The Christian life is a life of **daily transformation** in which the image of Christ is being formed within them. In Galatians 2:20, Paul made this simple, yet profound statement. He said,

<sup>20</sup>**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

Because the Spirit of Christ lives in every believer, they should therefore let Him live in and through them. He has made the believer holy, so they are to be holy in all of their conduct. When someone is walking according to the Spirit, it means that their conduct is being influenced by the promptings of the Holy Spirit and by the dictates of the Word of God. Scripture is not unclear in this area.

What Paul is doing here in v4b is really fairly simple. He is protecting this incredible doctrine of justification by faith from abuse. What he is saying is that if an individual claims to be united to Christ, but there is no purity and holiness of conduct in their life, then there is no real union and no real salvation. This is a highly important truth that needs to be constantly affirmed and insisted on. The life of the modern church movement is characterized by a gross disinterest in doctrine and sound teaching. It is mesmerized and almost hypnotized by pragmatic issues rather than good theology. The mantra for today's theologian is "*Does it work?*", not "*Is it true?*" The modern church seems much more concerned with what draws a crowd rather than what draws the Holy Spirit.

It is important to digress and review how Christ the Lord rules and governs His church. He does it through Scripture. Scripture is preached, taught, clarified, made relevant, and honored through simple obedience. Unfortunately, for some reason the modern evangelical church seems to often treat the Word of God as if it is optional. So, what that eventually creates is non-biblical ministries, non-





## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

expository preaching, and non-doctrinal teaching. Each of those are subtle ways of usurping the authority of Christ over His church. It must be appreciated that the truth of God's Word is always countercultural. Submission to the lordship of Christ is the defining characteristic of those who are genuinely saved. It is not about just "adding" Christ as another part of someone's life – not at all. To the contrary, Christ actually becomes their life, and that submission is worked out in very practical ways through obedience to Christ and to His Word. [1 John 2:3-4](#) says,

**<sup>3</sup>Now by this they know that they know Him, if they keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup>He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

Holiness of life is an inseparable part of the believer's union with Christ. I.e., a person who claims to be a Christian, yet consistently lives a very unholy life is not a Christian. Why say that? It is simple. It is because to whom Christ is made their righteousness, He is also made their sanctification. He who justifies also sanctifies. [Galatians 5:24-25](#) says,

**<sup>24</sup>And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If they live in the Spirit, let them also walk in the Spirit.**

Justification is not something that is just legal or judicial. To the contrary, justification produces something incredibly practical in the individual that it justifies. It produces a desire to "**walk according to the Spirit**".

What needs to be observed at this point is that Paul is giving a description of a believer in [Romans 8:4b](#). Then from [Romans 8:5-15](#), he is continually identifying the differences between those who "**walk according to the flesh**" and those who "**walk according to the Spirit**". This becomes very evident as the verses are examined.

**<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup>So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

**<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup>And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore, brethren, they are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom they cry out, "Abba, Father."**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

Everything from v4b to v15 is talking about **behavior** - how a person lives, where spiritual life comes from, those who are led, those who are spiritually minded, those who have been adopted, and those who continually “**cry out Abba, Father**”. The issue of identifying godly behavior is as practical and no-nonsense as it gets.

At this point it is important to make a very practical and important observation. Believers should constantly be studying doctrine, and the reason is because there is an unbreakable and binding link between doctrine and living. Many people say that they really want to live the victorious Christian life, but that they are not that interested in doctrine. The response to that would be simple – only those who really know correct doctrine can live the Christian life effectively. A believer cannot separate God’s doctrine from their life. In [John 17:17](#) Jesus told His disciples this,

**<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**

I.e., “*Give them the power to live a life that pleases you, Father, but do it through Your Word*”. There are absolutely no shortcuts to a life of holiness, and in order to live a holy life before God and men, each believer desperately needs to understand these incredible doctrines in [Romans 8](#).

In keeping with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it has been clearly seen that [Romans 8](#) has as much to say about living in the Spirit, or by the Spirit, or as Paul indicates here “**according to the Spirit**”, as any other passage in the New Testament. The words “**according to**” are actually just one word in Greek – “*kata*”. It is a primary preposition and could be translated as “by, after, by means of, or through”. It has many different meanings, but all of the meanings are instrumental. I.e., however it is translated, each word is describing the instrumental means by which something is accomplished. For instance, people receive an education **BY** going to school. Or, farmers plow a field **BY** using a tractor. The tractor is the instrument that accomplishes the plowing. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is the instrumental entity by which, by means of, and through which the believer lives out the Christian life. In fact, He is the only means by which the believer can effectively live the Christian life.

Obviously, the word “**walk**”, or “*peripateō*”, is a very key word in this phrase. It was seen earlier that it referred to a person’s general way of living – and it is important to emphasize the word “general”. “**Walk**” is a word that describes what governs a man’s life and what regulates his life. It represents what controls a man’s life. That control occurs in two distinct areas – his thoughts and his practice. Whatever the believer thinks is what ultimately controls what he practices and how he lives. Everybody believes something, and what they believe is what dictates their walk or manner of life. Everyone has certain principles that govern and control their thoughts, their judgments, their feelings, what they are interested in, their purposes, and their goals in life – everything. [Ephesians 2:1-3](#), for instance, says,

**<sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also they all once conducted themselves in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

Paul is describing the general tenor of the Ephesians life before salvation. They lived a certain way – according to the overall “**course of this world**”.

In the Book of Acts, Christians were often called “**people of the Way**”. They were people who were living and walking a certain **way**. So, when the word “**walk**” is used, it is a term that describes the totality of a person’s life. It is more than just their practice, but clearly represents what they think and what they desire.

The second word that is important to look at is the word “**flesh**”. It refers to human nature as the result of the Fall and human nature as it is before the Holy Spirit regenerates an individual. In the context of [Romans 8](#), it stands for an individual’s life apart from and outside of the influences and work of the Holy Spirit. In [Romans 7:5-6](#), Paul used the word this way,

**<sup>5</sup>For when they were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in their members to bear fruit to death. <sup>6</sup>But now they have been delivered from the law, having died to what they were held by, so that they should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.**

Once again, there is always this contrast between the flesh and the Spirit – always. One is always an antithesis to the other. The result in [Romans 7:5](#) of being “**in the flesh**” is that it always “**bears fruit to death**”. In the context of [Romans 7](#) it does NOT mean that everyone is a drunkard, or flagrantly immoral, or grossly evil, or an adulterer, or a murderer, and guilty of all of the incredibly gross sins of the flesh. Obviously it can mean that, but that is not the actual meaning that Paul is conveying. The contrast is that a man is “**in the flesh**” or “**in the Spirit**”. He is “**in Adam**” or he is “**in Christ**”. It is a word that is referring to the contrast between someone who is saved and someone who is not saved. The contrast is that the individual who is in the flesh is in a condition in which the Holy Spirit is not operating within them, in a condition where the Holy Spirit is not leading or guiding or even influencing them. That is the point. From that perspective, it does not matter if the individual is committing the grossest of sins or is the most respectable moral man possible. Either way, they are still walking after the flesh and according to the flesh.

When an individual walks after the flesh, it means that they view themselves in a way that is entirely opposed to God’s way of salvation in Christ **through** the Holy Spirit. Before salvation, for instance, Paul had great confidence in his flesh. In [Philippians 3:4-6](#), he wrote this,

**<sup>4</sup>though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

I.e., he did not need the Holy Spirit for salvation. He was achieving it on his own. He believed that he could fulfill “**the righteous requirement of the law**” on his own. He was proud of it and boasted in it. He was walking “**according to the flesh**”. Before salvation, Paul never understood the incredible need that he had for the work of the Holy Spirit within him. He was trying to achieve “**the righteous requirement of the law**” on his own. In his mind, he did not need the Holy Spirit, and unfortunately



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

that is where so often believers find themselves practically – living their Christian life without the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Just because someone may be saved does not mean that they are actually walking in the Spirit – not at all.

Here is their doctrinal position: they have been elected by God, called and quickened by the Holy Spirit, given grace to believe and to repent, regenerated by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and now they are in the process of being sanctified by the Spirit. [Romans 8:4b](#) is talking about every Christian. Every Christian on the planet is living under a “**no condemnation**” status. Each believer has been “**set free from the law of sin and death**”. These are all-encompassing terms that describe anyone who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. In like manner, what Paul is saying in v4 is that they are **now** walking “**according to the Spirit**”. This is a description of someone who is saved. These are all terms that represent Christian people. It is a true statement to say that all Christians are under the “**no condemnation**” status, that they have all been set free from the law of sin and death, and that they are walking according to the Spirit. It is important not to miss this connection of terms to one another. It would be a terrible exposition to do so.

It can be stated another way. Paul is not identifying two types of Christians here. He is talking throughout these verses about the **same people**. For instance in [Romans 8:9-10](#), he gives another description of a genuine believer when he says,

**<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup>And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**

[Romans 8:14](#) reiterates the same idea,

**<sup>14</sup>For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**

Someone may say “*Well, what about those areas of my life where I am not yielded to the Holy Spirit, where my life is not being guided by the Holy Spirit, or where I am not walking in the Spirit? Does that mean that I am not saved?*” Here is how Paul answers that question in [Romans 8:26-31](#),

**<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit also helps in their weaknesses. For they do not know what they should pray for as they ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. <sup>27</sup>Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup>And they know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup>For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup>Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. <sup>31</sup>What then shall they say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**

Paul is always, always defending this incredible work of the Holy Spirit within every believer. He fully recognizes their weaknesses and shortcomings and failures. He is not blind to practical issues



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

that face them all. However, at the same time he fully understands the incredible ministry of the Holy Spirit within the believer to lead them into Christlikeness, or in theological terms to “**sanctify**” them. A Christian is not someone who can just remain at justification. Sanctification is the next step, the next part of the process, and it begins immediately at justification. The moment an individual is regenerated, justified, and adopted into God’s family, the work of sanctification begins IMMEDIATELY in their life – and nothing can stop it. It is God’s work. [Romans 8:29](#) says, speaking of every born again believer, says that,

**“He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son....”**

A believer cannot just be saved. They cannot just remain at justification. Salvation is all-encompassing for their life or it is not salvation. It does not just stop with saying a prayer or with stating that something is believed – NEVER!! That is the curse of the modern church today in that it has failed to clearly identify what genuine salvation is. We see people all of the time who are like Paul in [Philippians 3](#). They think that they have done all of the right things, however, in reality they are actually living according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit. They are depending on something that they did that for the most part has no relation to the **continuous and sanctifying** work of the Holy Spirit. They know nothing of that work in their life – nothing. And yet they believe that they are saved. They have drowned the church in easy-believism, and it is the curse of this church age that will have monumental and eternal consequences. Salvation does not stop at justification. It begins there. The point in all of this is that the phrase who “**walk....according to the Spirit**” is describing every Christian. It is not just a description of certain Christians who have determined to go forward in their Christian life, but rather is a description of anyone and everyone who is born again.

Prior to salvation, every individual is in Adam and by nature alone are all “**in the flesh**” and walking after the flesh. However, at salvation, the believer is now in an entirely different realm – they are “**in the Spirit**”, in the realm, in the domain, and under the jurisdiction of the Spirit. Whereas previously the flesh was the controlling influence in their life, now the Holy Spirit is the controlling influence in their life. They **BELONG** to this spiritual realm. It is a real and meaningful environment in which they live. They are not in some kind of spiritual make believe. This is their condition. It is the state in which each believer lives and in which they walk – **AND IT IS TRUE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN**, and no matter what their current conduct and behavior may be. They have been born into the realm of the Holy Spirit. As Paul said in [Romans 8:9a](#),

**<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.**

Being a part of the realm of the Holy Spirit should be evident within every believer’s life. Once again, there is no such thing as a Christian who is only justified, who has merely “believed” on the Lord for forgiveness and salvation from hell, but continues to live in utter sin and rebellion against God and against the work of the Holy Spirit. You will **NOT** find that anywhere in the New Testament as a description of the saving work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. You will **NOT** find it. Why? It is because being born again, being “**in Christ**”, and “**having the Spirit of Christ**” make that impossible. [1 Corinthians 1:30](#) expresses it this way,



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

Part 2

**<sup>30</sup>But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption....**

**Romans 6:11** says,

**<sup>11</sup>Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus their Lord.**

That is the description of those who are “**in Christ**”. They are “**alive to God**”. Believers need to understand that this is not a description of their experience, but rather their position. As Christians, we certainly do not always feel dead to sin. To the contrary, we sense that sin is extremely active and working very aggressively against our life. Sin is very dynamic, very much at work, and certainly God wants the believer to grasp and understand that fact. What this verse has clearly stated is that they are no longer under the rule, the reign, or the dominion of sin, and even though they may sin, still they are not the slave of sin.

To the contrary, they are “**alive to God**”, and because of that reality, they are in the realm of His operations and in the domain where He works. They are now in an entirely different relationship to God than they were before they were saved. Before salvation they were under the “**wrath of God**”. **Ephesians 2:3** says that they were by nature “**the children of wrath**”. They were not only “**born in sin**”, but they were under the “**wrath of God**”. If they had died without Christ, the wrath of God would have been eternally operating against their life. That would have been their reward and their payment for the sin of unbelief, but that is no longer true of them. They have been reconciled to God and delivered from His wrath and where once they were His enemies and under His wrath, now they are His children and under His grace. Now they have access and a right of entry to God. Now He is open to them, ready to hear them, and eager to receive them. Now they are the objects and recipients of God’s love and His favor. Now they are the beneficiaries of His extraordinary care and protection. The door has been opened, and it is all there. It was not there before, but now it is all there!

The practical outworking of all of this is really very simple. God does not want a believer to take hold of any of this in just a purely academic or intellectual manner only. In a sense, what He is doing is warning them to not be like the individual who glibly declares that he believes in the Lord and all is well with his soul. If an individual has truly believed in Christ, if they have truly been born again, then there will always be evidence of that belief. So the question that has to be asked is what are some of those proofs? Well, one is that they are actually “**walking according to the Spirit**”. Their mind, their heart, their outlooks, their desires, and their entire conduct – everything is different. There is always genuine evidence of the fact that they are a new creation in Christ, and if their life lacks that visible and demonstrable evidence, then it would be best for them to re-evaluate their salvation experience. A mere intellectual belief in these doctrines has no salvific value whatsoever, yet the current church age so often communicates that it does.

If someone truly believes something in their heart then it will truly affect their life. They will know that they are in the realm of the Spirit, that they are alive unto God, and that they have been “**set free**”



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:1-4

### Part 2

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**from the law of sin and death**". They will know that and embrace it with all of their heart. They must not become content with a belief that has nothing in their life to support that belief. That is a spiritual mirage, an intellectual and spiritual illusion. No matter how much someone may desire to stop at forgiveness, or stop at what they call "salvation", the Scriptures will not allow them to do that.

Peter says that they have been given "**exceeding great and precious promises**" and "**all things that pertain to life and godliness**". This is exactly what God wants a believer to constantly be reckoning in their life, constantly remembering and reminding themselves of, and constantly holding before their life. This is not a type of Christian mental gymnastics or positive thinking where they are trying to convince and persuade themselves of something that is not true. **This is absolute truth**. This is taking hold of God's truth so that it can be theirs in experience. No matter what their circumstances, no matter what may be happening in their life, and no matter how things may appear, the truth is that they are "**alive unto God**" and right now in the realm and the sphere of His grace and love.