

FREE AT LAST

"WINNING THE WAR WITH SIN" ROMANS 8:1-17

When we believe in Jesus, we become God's children, that is, we are born of God (Jn 1:12). And what a privilege it is! John writes: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1Jn 3:1). What's more, we who believe are "sons of God through faith" (Gal 3:26). In other words, we are adopted into God's family and have a relationship with the Father as sons, like Jesus (Gal 4:4-5; Ro 8:29). And as sons, we enjoy the liberty of sons. "The child of God is not a slave who obeys out of a sense of bondage or compulsion. Slaves live in fear of the consequences should they fail to carry out their obligations. But Paul points out that as God's children we need not fear the consequences of failing to live up to the law: 'For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children' (Rom. 8:14-16). A similar thought is expressed in Galatians 3:10-11. We are free persons" (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3:963-64). Now we look to the Spirit rather than to the law for guidance.

Living in awareness of our belovedness is the axis around which the Christian life revolves.

– Brennan Manning

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Included in the doctrine of salvation is the doctrine of adoption. The Holy Spirit makes us members of God's family when we believe. The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of adoption" in Romans 8:15, indicating that he is the agent in adoption, that is, the one who makes us sons and heirs of God—not slaves to fear. Under his influence we relate to God as "Abba, Father." On this profound expression consider the remarks of one author:

"A central theme in the personal life of Jesus Christ, which lies at the very heart of the revelation that He is, is His growing intimacy with, trust in, and love of His Abba.

"After His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus was raised in Nazareth by Mary and Joseph, according to the strict monotheistic tradition of the Jewish community. Like every devout Jew, Jesus prayed the Shema Israel, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God' (Deuteronomy 6:4), three times a day. Jesus was surrounded with the Absolute, dominated by the One, the Eternal, the 'I AM WHO I AM.'

"In His human journey, Jesus experienced God in a way that no prophet of Israel had ever dreamed or dared. Jesus was indwelt by the Spirit of the Father and given a name for God that would scandalize both the theology and public opinion of Israel, the name that escaped the mouth of the Nazarene carpenter: *Abba*.

"Jewish children used this intimate colloquial form of speech in addressing their fathers, and Jesus Himself employed it with His foster-father Joseph.

cont. pg. 2

As a term for divinity, however, it was unprecedented not only in Judaism but in any of the great world religions. Joachim Jeremias wrote, 'Abba, as a way of addressing God, is *ipsissima vox*, an authentic original utterance of Jesus. We are confronted with something new and astounding. Herein lies the great novelty of the gospel.' Jesus, the beloved Son, does not hoard this experience for Himself. He invites and calls us to share the same intimate and liberating relationship.

"Paul wrote, 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry 'Abba,' it is that spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Romans 8:14-16)" (Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child*, 61, 62).

On the practical implication of the fact you are Abba's child, the same author advises, "*Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. God's love for you and his choice of you constitute your worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life*" (51). And then he comments, "Living in awareness of our belovedness is the axis around which the Christian life revolves. Being the beloved is our identity, the core of our existence. It is not merely a lofty thought, an inspiring idea, or one name among many. It is the name by which God knows us and the way He relates to us" (52, italics added).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 8:1-17

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of

Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation-but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in vv. 1, 12.
- * Underline "no condemnation" in v. 1.
- * Bracket "the law of the Spirit who gives life" and "the law of sin and death" in v. 2.
- * Circle "the law" in v. 3.
- * Highlight "flesh" in vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13.
- * Underline "likeness of sinful flesh" in v. 3.

- * Bracket "condemned sin in the flesh" in v. 3
- * Circle "righteous requirement" in v. 4.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 5, 6, 13.
- * Circle "realm" in vv. 8, 9.
- * Box "if" indicating *condition* in vv. 9, 10, 11, 13.
- * Circle "live" and "die" in v. 13.
- * Circle "heirs" in v. 17.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. "There is now no *condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). Put what that means in your own words.
2. Does "law" in verse 2 have the same meaning as "law" in verse 3? Explain.
3. *What* was the mosaic law powerless to do and *why*?
4. Jesus appeared "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh" (v. 3). Does that not mean Jesus was a sinful man? Explain.
5. In verses 5-8 Paul contrasts two kinds of people. *Identify* and *describe* them in your own words.
6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 9.
7. The Spirit who lives in us gives us hope (v. 11). Hope of *what* and *why*?
8. If salvation is by grace, how can the way we live (v. 13) be a matter of life and death?
9. Describe your experience of the inner testimony of the Spirit (v. 16).
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what sharing in his suffering has to do with sharing in his glory.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

"If Holy Scripture was a ring, and the Epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel" (cited in James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 134). Paul opens Romans 8 with *no condemnation* and closes with *no separation*. He begins "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" in verse 1, and ends, "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" in verse 38. Such confidence can only be accounted for by what Philip Yancey calls "the atrocious mathematics of the grace of God" (*What's So Amazing about Grace*, 59-72).

A one-page exposition of Romans 8:1-17 can hardly do justice to the passage; one commentator burns thirty-five pages in his treatment of the text! That said, in the first paragraph (vv. 1-4), Paul assures believers that we have been set free from the penalty and power of sin in our lives. Based on all he has said in chapters 3-7, the apostle more or less repeats what Jesus said in John 3:17, 18. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." A person who stands condemned has been declared guilty; a person who stands condemned awaits the execution of the penalty for his crime. Neither of which is true of believers. We have been freed from the guilt of sin as well as the power of sin. There is no condemnation for us because through Christ the certainty of life from the Spirit (lit., "the law of the Spirit of life") has set us free from the certainty of death and damnation from sin (i.e., "the law of sin and death").

Paul goes on to say that the law of Moses was not able to save us since we were not able to obey it. Our human nature with its inclination to sin explains why. Ironically, given our nature the law turns out to be an incentive to sin rather than a deterrent. And unfortunately, it is unable to do anything to help us. It makes demands and condemns us when we do not meet its demands but that's all. So God had to intervene and do what the law could not do. He sent his Son "in the likeness of sinful man" to die for us. Paul puts it

that way to indicate that while Jesus was truly human, he was not sinful. Christ 'was made sin for us' (2Co 5:21) and God executed his judgment against sin by pouring out his wrath on him.

God did this in order that we might be righteous both *positionally* and *practically*. The first pertains to *penalty* of sin. Christ died for us and we no longer stand condemned. The second pertains to the *power* of sin. The Spirit lives in us and we can now do what is right and pleasing to God through his enabling power.

In the second paragraph (vv. 5-8), Paul contrasts two groups. On the one hand, there are those focused on living the way they want to live as mere human beings (i.e., "according to the flesh," or "sinful nature"). On the other, there are those focused on living the way the Spirit of God wants them to live (i.e., "in accordance with the Spirit"). The first way is death; the second is life. The first group is hostile to God and does not submit to God because they can't. Unbelievers who do what comes naturally simply cannot please God; they are "in the realm of the flesh." Believers, however, can please God, not because they are better human beings, but because the Spirit of God lives in them, that is, they have the Spirit of Christ; they are "in the realm of the Spirit."

In the third paragraph (vv. 9-11), Paul assures his readers that they are in the realm of the Spirit. ("If" implies a degree of uncertainty that doesn't suit the context; "since" suits it better.) He makes this theologically obvious by saying they are "not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (ESV) since the Spirit of God lives in them. What's more, since they have the Spirit of Christ, they clearly belong to him. And even though their dying bodies don't show it, the Spirit in them has vivified them spiritually and will ultimately vivify their mortal bodies as well. Throughout this paragraph and the prior one Paul is speaking in positional terms, and from what he says in verse 9, we can only conclude that "no Christian can be 'in the flesh'; and all Christians are, by definition, 'in the Spirit'" (Moo, 489).

In the final paragraph (vv. 12-17), Paul concludes that "brothers" have an obligation to live according to the Spirit, that is, to live as the Spirit dictates, and not according to the "flesh," that is, not as their sinful nature dictates. Put

differently, they have an obligation to make their positional reality a practical reality. If they live as the Spirit wants them to, they will fully experience the life and peace (v. 6) that comes from the Spirit. They will be alive to God and his work in their lives and experience his presence—for "those who are led by the Spirit of God are mature sons [Gk. *huiioi*] of God" (v. 15) and not children [Gk. *tekna*] (v. 16). Put differently, they will be trees planted by the water (Ps 1:3), branches abiding in the vine (Jn 15:5), fruitful plants deeply rooted in good soil (Mk 4: 8, 20). If, however, they live as mere human beings, their experience will be little different from those unbelievers who are "in the flesh." They will

remain immature and be "dead" to God, his work in their lives, and the experience of his presence.

How awful would this be given that they are God's children and as such are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ! The Spirit whom they have received, "the Spirit of sonship," the agent in adoption, not only makes them sons but also makes them aware of their sonship, so that they cry, "Abba, Father" (cf., Gal 4:6) as did Jesus (cf., Mk 14:36). "In crying out, 'Abba, Father,' the believer not only gives voice to his or her consciousness of belonging to God as his child but also to having a status comparable to that of Jesus himself" (502).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

There is no condemnation to you who are in Christ Jesus, who live in the realm of the Spirit rather than in the realm of the flesh, so fulfill your obligation to live by the Spirit so that you enjoy the fullness of the life he gives you as sons of your Abba and co-heirs of Christ.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

Describe how you approach living by the Spirit.

Paul calls living by the Spirit an "obligation." Describe how serious that obligation is.

Women who believe also receive "adoption to sonship." What do you infer personally from that?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Therefore** "If the apostle is thinking merely of freedom from the guilt of sin and from the condemnation which guilt entails, then we should have to find the basis of the inference in that part of the epistle which deals particularly with that subject (3:21-5:21). But if there is included in freedom from condemnation not only deliverance from the guilt of sin but also from its power, then the 'therefore' could be related quite properly to what immediately precedes (6:1-7:25) as well as to the more remote context. It is this latter alternative which the evidence would appear to demand" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 274).

v. 1 **no condemnation** "If 'condemnation' were simply the opposite of 'justification', Paul would be saying that those who are in Christ Jesus are justified; but that stage in the argument was reached in iii. 21 ff. The word *katakrima* means 'probably not "condemnation", but the punishment following the sentence' (Arndt-Gingrich)—in other words, 'penal servitude'. There is no reason why those who are 'in Christ Jesus' should go on doing penal servitude as though they had never been pardoned and never been liberated from the prison-house of sin" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC, 159; cf., Renald E. Showers, *The New Nature*, 109).

v. 2 **law of . . .** "These laws refer to the certainty and regularity—the fixity—that characterize the operations of 'the Spirit' and 'sin'" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 118, planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes).

v. 3 **the law** Here the referent is the law of Moses. "The law makes demands, and it condemns when those demands are not met, but it cannot overcome sin" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:87).

v. 3 **flesh** Or, "sinful nature" (cf., NIV 1984, NLT); or "sinful disposition" (Showers, 109).

v. 3 **likeness of sinful flesh** "Observe with what care the incarnation is stated. Paul does not say 'in sinful flesh,' lest the Son's sinlessness be compromised, nor 'in the likeness of flesh,' which would convey a docetic idea and thereby deny the reality of the humanity of our Lord, making it only an appearance of corporeality [i.e., having a physical body]. As it stands, the terminology is in full agreement with Philippians 2:7: 'being made in human likeness'" (Harrison, 87).

v. 3 **condemned sin in the flesh** God executed his judgment on sin through the offering of his Son (Showers, 113). "As our substitute, Christ 'was made sin for us' (2 Cor. 5:21) and suffered the wrath of God, the judgment of God upon that sin (cf. *hilasterion* [one who propitiates or turns away God's wrath] in Rom. 3:25; Gal. 3:13). In executing the full sentence of condemnation against sin, God effectively removed sin's ability to 'dictate terms' for those who are 'in Christ' (v. 2). The condemnation that our sins deserve has been poured out on Christ, our sin-bearer; that is why 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 481).

v. 4 **righteous requirement** "Here the thought is not so much that what the law requires is righteous, as that what the law requires is righteousness. The law tells us that God has the right to summon us to his court, and that he requires that we be found righteous" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC, 157).

v. 5 **flesh, the Spirit** "'To walk according to the flesh,' then, is to have one's life determined and directed by the values of 'this world,' of the world in rebellion against God . . . To 'walk according to the Spirit,' on the other hand, is to live under the control, and according to the values, of the 'new age,' created and dominated by God's Spirit as his eschatological gift" (Moo, 485).

v. 8 **realm of the flesh** Lit., "in the flesh" (ESV, NET). "To be in the flesh, as the word is used here (v.8), is to be in the unregenerate state" (Harrison, 88). The contrast between "in the flesh" and "in the Spirit" is a contrast between belonging to the old age of sin and death and belonging to the new age of righteousness and life. "In this sense, then, no Christian can be 'in the flesh'; and all Christians are, by definition, 'in the Spirit'" (Moo, 489).

v. 13 **die, live** I.e., temporal death versus abundant life. "This cannot be eternal death, separation from God forever, in view of specific promises to the contrary (e.g., vv. 1, 31-39) . . . Sin produces death in many forms, for example, separation of the body from the soul (physical death that may be premature for those who follow the flesh; cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16). It may be separation of the person from others (death in social relationships), or separation of the person from himself (psychological alienation and disorders). Conversely, believers who follow God's will with the enablement of the Holy Spirit, and put "the deeds of the body" (i.e., the flesh; cf. 6:6; Col. 3:5) "to death," will experience abundant life . . . will experience their eternal life to its fullest potential. This fullness of life involves psychological and social wholeness, as well as physical wholeness, under normal circumstances" (Constable, 123).

v. 14 **heirs** "In line with current legal provisions that enabled even a slave, once adopted, to inherit his master's possessions, Paul teaches that the Christian follows a similar course: a slave (to sin), a child, then an heir (vv.15-17; cf. Gal 4:6, 7)" (Harrison, 93).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

When my daughter was a toddler, she was a bit strong willed. Being a firstborn, only child at the time, she was determined to get what she wanted when she wanted it. I was always amazed at how quickly she could change from a sweet happy toddler to a fit-throwing mini-monster and back again in a matter of seconds. To encourage you, she did grow out of it, only to have the behavior resurface as a young teenager! Those of us who have trusted Christ are in a similar battle. Our hearts belong to Jesus, but we battle the flesh that so desperately wants control. When my kids have struggled with sinful behavior I love to remind them of verse 11 in our passage today. "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Imagine that! The power of the resurrection lives in me! If your kids have trusted Christ as Savior, he lives in them too! Knowing this truth will help them overcome temptation. They have everything they need to say no to sin and yes to obeying God. It doesn't necessarily make deciding to do so easier, however we are assured that God will lead us through as our loving Heavenly Father. I'm praying for you as you train your kids to listen to His voice!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 8:1-17

1. What does it mean that there is no condemnation for those in Christ?
2. What do those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on?

What Do You Think

"Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." (v. 5) How can you keep your mind set on what the Spirit desires?

What R U Going To Do

Our memory verse for the next 3 weeks is Romans 8:5. Write it out on a piece of paper or poster board and hang it up somewhere you will see every day. You will have it memorized in no time!

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:5 - Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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