

Venture LifeGroups
Eight
Session 2: Living by the Spirit
Romans 8:5-13

Main Point

We now learn to live righteously through the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

Introduction

1. When you were young, who had the most power over your behavior? Why were they so influential, either positively or negatively?
2. Who or what influences you the most today?
3. Have you ever known people who said the Holy Spirit directed them to take some specific action? What does that mean? How does the Holy Spirit direct a person?

Last week, we discussed who we are in Christ—children of God declared righteous and free from condemnation. This week, we will see what Paul has to say about how we live in light of this truth.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Read Romans 8:5-8.

1. What characterizes a person who lives according to the flesh?
2. What characterizes a person who lives according to the Spirit?
3. How would you describe the role of the Holy Spirit?
4. How did Paul see the Spirit impacting our position as “sons”?
5. What are we taught about the unbeliever’s mind in verses 6-8? Why is it impossible for them to please God?

| Read Romans 8:9-13.

1. What are the benefits of life in the Spirit discussed in these verses?
2. Why is knowing the constant presence of God’s Spirit a powerful deterrent to giving in to the temptations that come with our struggle with sin?
3. Why does having the Spirit guarantee our future bodily resurrection?
4. What is our obligation as Christians, according to verses 12-13?
5. How does the Spirit help us fight our battles? Give an example.

Application

1. In what way have you recently sensed the Spirit leading you? Have you gone in the Spirit's direction?
2. How can you be more aware of and sensitive to the Spirit's presence and power?
3. Even though you live by the Spirit, what areas of your life most often tempt you to live in the flesh? What are some practical ways you can fight against that tendency? How can you rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you in the fight against the flesh?

Commentary

Romans 8:5-13

8:5. Paul often contrasted ideas in order to clarify the point he was making. Here he contrasted two opposing ways of living: flesh and Spirit. The lower nature (flesh) is in constant rebellion against the higher nature (Spirit). To live according to the flesh means to think about the things of the flesh. Thinking precedes action. A sinful mind-set inevitably leads to sinful living.

8:6. The contrast continues in this verse as Paul noted the difference between the consequences of living in these two ways. Death is the experience of someone who has the mindset of the flesh. Notice Paul did not write death will come, but rather death is the present experience of anyone apart from Christ. Separation from the source of life means death. The consequence for those of us who adopt the mindset of the Spirit is completely different. Life is precisely what we expect and what we receive as a result of having the source of life within us. The second benefit for those of us guided by the Spirit is peace. This refers primarily to the state of our relationship with God.

8:7-8. Additionally, the mindset of the flesh is hostile toward God. It is not willing to submit to God but insists on its own way. The original sin of Adam set a pattern for all sin. It is a basic mistrust of God and a selfish desire to resist God's way. For this reason this mind-set leads to the death described in the previous verse. Our sin creates a chasm that remains regardless of how many times we may attempt self-renovation. This verse essentially repeats the substance of the previous verse but at the same time gives an important conclusion. To be in the flesh describes a life that is determined by the flesh in the same way the Spirit determines the lives of believers.

8:9. After describing the futility of life in the flesh, Paul returned to the theme of life in the Spirit and directly addressed his readers. He reminded them they were not in the flesh. We have been fundamentally changed and are different people. We are no longer in the flesh. This is a statement of fact, not an illustration or analogy. The reason we are in the Spirit is not because of anything we have done but because the Spirit of God lives in us. Notice Paul did not say the Spirit moves in slowly. Neither did he say the Spirit comes and goes. Once we have accepted Christ, God's Holy Spirit enters our lives and never leaves. The Spirit of Christ is another way of identifying the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. There is no interim period between confession and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

8:10. Christ indwells the believer. In this and the previous verse we have seen the phrases Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, and Christ in you. This does not represent a confusion of phrases for Paul or an identification of the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit. The meaning is that the presence of Christ is mediated to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. One consequence of Christ in you is that the body is dead because of sin. Sin ushers in the death of the body, that is, we die physically as a result of the corrupting presence of sin. Death is still a reality, but it is not the final disposition of a Christian. The presence of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of a person) is the assurance that life is our final destination. Physical death is not the end of life for a Christian.

8:11. Once again, the word if is not intended to imply uncertainty or a condition. As is true of verse 10, this too introduces a statement of fact. The Spirit of Him is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, and this Spirit is in you. The action of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is essentially the same as it was in Jesus' tomb. The Spirit will bring your mortal bodies to life. Here is the promise of the resurrection. We are never without a body. We are never disembodied spirits.

8:12-13. Paul's concern here, however, was to stress that we must avoid behaviors that reflect "the mind-set of the flesh." Through the Holy Spirit's work in believers' lives, sin's power has been broken.

The Spirit also leads us to live in a manner that honors God. Paul included another warning against living according to the flesh, probably because he knew the struggle would be so great. You are going to die is as stark a pronouncement as we find in Romans. The second person plural you makes this warning especially strong. The end of the life of a person who lived according to the flesh is death in every sense of the word, physical and spiritual. By the Spirit, or with His power, we are able to put to death the deeds of the body. The tense of the verb for put to death is present, and in Greek the tense refers not only to the time of action but more importantly to the kind of action. In this case the present tense verb means we are to consistently engage in putting to death the deeds of the body.