

## Romans 8:1-11 Living in the Spirit

(Opening)

Up until last week, we've been looking at the vision of Grace City.

Grace City is a gospel-centered community. (Identity)

Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace. (Vision)

Our mission is, through faithful Bible teaching and worship, to see people's lives remade, to help restore our communities, to contribute to the renewal of culture, to respond to the suffering in our society, and to bring an evangelistic gospel movement from Tokyo to the world. (Mission)

Grace City's vision is like a big painting of a dream. How will we be able to materialize this vision? It seems like an impossible task for us sinners. But according to Scripture, even though it is impossible for us, God will guide us through the Holy Spirit.

So starting today, over the course of four sermons, we're going to take a look at Romans chapter 8 to see how we can walk in accordance with the Holy Spirit, and the marvelous things that God is trying to accomplish through us.

### Romans 8:1-11

<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, I could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because

of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> 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.

As we have just read, our focus today is what it means to walk according to the Spirit. Firstly, we'll take a look at the grace of forgiveness in how there is no condemnation to the life whose driving force is the Spirit. Secondly, let's delve into the secrets of the life that walks according to the Spirit. Those secrets aren't based on your actions or works, but rather acquired when your heart is entirely focused on the Spirit.

Finally, thirdly, we'll see how the Spirit ties you and your faith to Jesus Christ. The Spirit enables us to become one with Christ, and you will become fulfilled in every aspect. Driving force: the grace of forgiveness, Secret: your heart is engrossed in the Spirit, and then the Spirit enables you to become one with Christ.

### **1. The driving force of dwelling in the Spirit: The Grace of Forgiveness.**

The first verse of Romans 8 is a bold statement about forgiveness. Right before in Chapter 7, Paul confesses being troubled by his own sinfulness. So here, absolute forgiveness of sin has to be made clear.

This is the focal point of a life that walks according to the Spirit: Absolute forgiveness. God never condemns you, nor does He accuse you. He never declares you guilty. Rather, He loves you as His sons and daughters. He will never leave or forsake you.

What it says here isn't that only your sins prior to knowing Christ will be forgiven. It's not that kind of partial forgiveness. So many people think that forgiveness is just for your past or present sins. They think that because the future is unknown, there is no way to be sure about forgiveness of future trespasses.

In other words, they believe that those who express their sins and try to lead a good life no longer have to worry about forgiveness or condemnation up to that point. However, they think that if they commit a sin thereafter, they are liable to be condemned until they confess of their sins and repent.

If that's the case, then Christians will constantly have to volley back and forth between being forgiven and being condemned, never being at rest and constantly being unstable and uneasy. If you feel that way, that your heart is constantly gripped by unrest, and you can't be sure of God's love or forgiveness and are constantly fearing God's wrath and judgement, please take a look at the Scripture once more.

Paul is declaring thoroughgoing and absolute forgiveness. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is no longer such a thing as being declared guilty. Therefore, as soon as you came to Christ and started believing in Him, judgement toward you was completely banished. You were accepted by God, welcomed and loved by Him.

Accordingly, a majority of our life problems come from forgetting this truth that the Scripture tells us, not fully understanding this truth, or not accepting this truth wholeheartedly. What happens when we forget this truth?

Most certainly, we start feeling guilty immediately. We think we are bad, so we try to prove that we are good and worthy people through our works. Not only that, we become really sensitive to even the smallest criticisms from those around us, become quick to make excuses, and become defensive, and even offensive.

We follow God out of fear or obligation, because we don't want to be criticized. We're always thinking of selfish gains because we end up living self-centered lives. There is no joy in prayer and worship, and we become lethargic, losing our motivation to lead holy lives.

However, no matter what state you may be in, it says in Scripture that we are completely forgiven and loved by Jesus Christ. According to verse 2, we are freed from the law of sin. Verses 3-4 confirm that absolute forgiveness comes through the Grace of God. God's one and only Son, Christ, became man (came in the form of flesh), and was sacrificed on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

Absolute forgiveness through the Gospel of Christ is the very and only driving force that enables us to abide by God's laws and walk the great walk in the Spirit.

## 2. Secret: The heart becomes engrossed in the Spirit

Then with this absolute forgiveness as our driving force, how are we to walk in the Spirit? Is there a secret to it? In other words, how can we defeat sin through 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.*

According to verse 5, the secret is in having our minds set on the Spirit. It seems Paul is telling us that what's important in how we live our lives or our lifestyles, is focusing the thoughts of both our hearts and minds on the Spirit. Certainly, the Bible tells us, our actions and how we lead our lives stem from our hearts. If we look at Proverbs 4:23, it says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." (This is a verse my mother gave me when I became a college student and began living by myself).

Jesus also says that sin and evil come from a person's heart. Even in the "Seven Daily Habits of effective people," which is referred to as the Bible for business, it says that an inside-out approach (paying attention to how your inner self affects your actions) is very important.

With this approach, you can only really change yourself by changing who you are at the core: your fundamental paradigm, character, and motivations.

Walking a life and defeating sin through the Spirit requires constantly thinking about the Spirit. This isn't just passive thinking. Rather, it is to deliberately meditate and be absorbed, with your intelligence, will, and emotion intertwined. Also, in Greek, it means to be on one person's side and think as if you're their friend (Cranfield vol.1, 385-6). According to Tim Keller,

It means to focus intently on something, to be preoccupied with something, to have the attention and the imagination totally captured by something.  
( Keller, vol2, p.13 )

Our lives are truly shaped by things we are engrossed in.

For example, when I was in college, I was really into tennis and surfing. When I was into tennis, I spent a lot of time practicing so that I could become better at tennis. Even the way I dressed resembled a tennis player. When I began surfing, I always went to the beach, and I even got a car just so that I could carry my surfing board. My lifestyle then resembled that of a surfer.

That is why a lifestyle that can defeat sin through the Spirit starts with our hearts and minds. Only when our hearts are attached to the Spirit can we experience victory against sin. Yet, what does it mean to “become of the Spirit” and focus willfully on becoming engrossed in the Spirit? The Spirit is the God of the Trinity, a helper rich in love and truth. And what the Spirit Himself thinks about and is absorbed in is Christ himself. The Spirit's mind is captured by the truth which Christ brings to us. Jesus called the Spirit a helper, and said in the Gospel of John,

*John 14:26*

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

*John 16:13*

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

The latter part of Romans tells us that the Holy Spirit makes us children of God, helps us, interferes in our matters, and keeps us in the love of Christ. In other words, when we are guided by the Spirit, constantly meditating and being engrossed in him, and our hearts are seized by the Spirit, we walk in the presence of Christ. What I want you to be careful of is that if we don't think of the Spirit, we are thinking and mindful of what belongs to the flesh. According to Paul, when human beings think of something, their hearts naturally turn to it. There is no being neutral. We either belong to the Spirit or to the flesh; we either lead lives leading to death, or life everlasting and peace. This is how important it is that we be in accordance with God.

### 3. Being in accordance with the Spirit and walking with Christ

Finally, brothers and sisters, let's take a look at how to please God by being in accordance with the Spirit and walking with Christ. If we look at verses 9-12, they tell us that such is a life that is inseparable with the Spirit and Christ.

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life [d] because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>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.

This Scripture is showing us what our futures will look like, whereby we will be resurrected. However, that's not the only thing. A person who dwells in the Spirit will also be walking with Christ in reality.

Many of us are frustrated, as we lost our jobs or our salaries have been reduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I think about this when I pray about Grace City and when we'll actually be able to physically gather again as a church. I'm conflicted and worried as there is no concrete answer at this point. When will we be able to return to KDDI Hall? I was hoping we could return by December of this year, but nobody knows what the situation will be like then. I ask for all of your prayers so that we could reconvene in person soon.

This kind of worry and unrest are life's realities and there is no way to avoid them. However, if we become lethargic from too much worry, or even get annoyed and angry or depressed, we are forgetting about the Spirit. The Spirit reminds us of the Gospel of Christ, of God the Father who loves us as His children, and who has power over the entire universe, and how truly great of a blessing that is.

Perhaps you're feeling worthless or unworthy, like you're someone whom nobody appreciates, and you're letting negative thoughts take over. If that happens, then we start getting into many unnecessary activities, such as doing things to win the approval of others, and expending too much energy along the way. On

the surface, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. However, in our endeavor for approval, we grow weary. And without someone for support, we may let out our anger on the wrong people and ruin relationships.

Even in such times, we are forgetting that we belong in the Spirit. We think according to the flesh, and try to escape our dooms, not by relying on our Savior, but by trying to acquire happiness on our own without God. We try to raise our own prides and become our own gods by trying to save ourselves. As a human being, there is no greater means of self-denial than doing this, however.

There is no state of neutrality in your heart. If you're not thinking of the Spirit, you are engrossed with the flesh and have turned against God. Brothers and sisters, let's turn back to Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit Himself will help you, and little by little the Spirit will nurture a Christ-like character in you.

*<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*