

Paul Describes Living by God's Spirit

Romans 8:9-17

To understand what the Apostle Paul says in today's passage, it's important to look back at what he said just prior to this. In the latter half of Romans 7, Paul talks about the difficulty of being true to the good things we want to do when our sinful nature is set on doing the things we don't really want to do. At the end of the chapter, Paul summarizes the struggle: "So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (Romans 7:25).

Fortunately, he doesn't stop there. At the start of Romans 8, Paul points out that what we are unable to do on our own in defeating sin in our lives, God did for us by sending Jesus to die on the cross. We have been set free from the sin and death that rule humanity! We are no longer condemned by our sin, and we are free to live our lives in accord with God's Spirit (see Romans 8:1-4).

Then Paul launches into a description of living by the sinful nature—which ends in death (Romans 8:5-8). That's where today's passage picks up: Paul describes what it looks like to live according to the Holy Spirit. He begins by making it clear that Christians have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, living in them. And with that Spirit within, we can resist the pull of the sinful nature (Romans 8:9).

In Romans 8:11, Paul points out that the Holy Spirit not only helps us keep from sinning, but also brings us resurrection from the dead—eternal life. If God raised up Jesus, and God's spirit is dwelling in us, God can raise us up as well!

Paul changes gears somewhat in Romans 8:12-13, turning from what God does for us through the Holy Spirit to what our responsibility is in response to what God has done for us.

If we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives rather than our sinful nature, we will live. The death to sin that God has accomplished for us doesn't mean that we don't have to worry about sin in our lives; instead it makes it possible for us to turn from sinning, and even obligates us to do so!

Romans 8:15-17 turns back to what God has done for us. When we live by God's Spirit, not only are we able to turn from sin and be cleansed from sin through Jesus' sacrifice, but we also are adopted as children of God himself! And in first-century culture, an adopted child wasn't in any way inferior to a natural child. In fact, the adopted child was deliberately chosen by a father for the purpose of carrying on his name, which was a great honor.

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: There is a great freedom that comes when, after every effort imaginable, you realize nothing you do on your own can win right-standing with God. It can be found only by accepting a gift with humility and gratitude. The gift? A relationship with Jesus. Find relief in knowing him.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Pray this prayer today: "God, you did more than forgive me. You accepted me. I can hardly believe you think of me as your child. Make this so real to me that I am changed through and through." How can you face each day as one given a second chance?