

Who's In Control? (Part 1)

Romans 8:1-17

Thought for the Day: A spiritually healthy Christian is a person who is living under the control and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. A Christian who is controlled and empowered by the flesh (the sinful nature) is spiritually unhealthy and abnormal¹.

Romans chapter 8:1-17 raises a very thought-provoking and important question: Who's in control of your life? There are two and only two possible answers to this question. Either we are being controlled, empowered and led by God the Holy Spirit as we seek to do those things that are pleasing to Him, or we are being controlled and empowered by our own sinful nature as we seek to "gratify the cravings of our sinful nature and follow its desires and thoughts" (Ephesians 2:3 *NIV*). If we are being controlled and energized by the Holy Spirit, the result will be the enjoyment of life and peace. Or, on the other hand, if we are being controlled and energized by our sinful nature, the result will be death—separation from God, broken fellowship with Him and the spiritual corruption and erosion that is produced in our lives when we give in to the evil desires of our sinful nature.

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

- This promise is a blessed comfort and a powerful assurance for us in the midst of the struggle between our fallen sinful nature and the Holy Spirit described in chapters 7 and 8.

2 because through [in] Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

- What is the law of sin and death?
 - Romans 7:5 (*NLT*) – "When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law [the O.T. Mosaic Law] aroused [or stimulated] these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death."
 - The law of sin and death is the overwhelming conspiracy between the evil desires of our fallen sinful nature on the inside and the unrelenting temptations to sin on the outside that lead us to disobey God, making us slaves to sin and ultimately producing death in our lives.
 - The law of sin and death is the overwhelming inclinations we have to indulge our sinful desires and destroy our fellowship with God.
- For those who are in the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, we have been set free from the law of sin and death and we now have the capacity to live under a new law called the law of the Spirit of life.
 - The law of the Spirit of life: When we live in submission to the control of the Holy Spirit, when we live in dependence on Him, we will experience the blessings of the eternal life that Jesus came to give us.
 - The law of the Spirit of life is "The controlling power of the [life giving] Holy Spirit." (*NIV Study Bible, p. 1891*)
 - The Holy Spirit "gives us the power we need to live the Christian life." (*Life Application Study Bible, p. 2419*)

¹ Abnormal = living contrary to the teachings of Scripture.

- When we live under the control of the Holy Spirit and appropriate His power in our daily life, we experience God's blessing on our life.

3 For what the law [i.e., the Mosaic Law of the O.T. summarized in the Ten Commandments] was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man...

- The Mosaic Law is powerless:
 - To save us from the penalty of our sins.
 - To set us free from the power of our own sinful nature.
- The Law is holy, righteous and good (7:12) but our sinful nature prevents us from being able to obey it—either for salvation or for sanctification.
 - The Law can point out our sin; it condemns us to death because of our sin; and it actually stimulates sin in our lives because of our sinful nature.
 - But the Law cannot pay the penalty for our sins; it cannot break the power of sin in our lives; and it cannot remove or overcome our sinful nature.
 - It is our own sinful nature that prevents us from being able to fulfill the requirements of God's Law.
- Thankfully, God graciously took action on our behalf: He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering for us.
 - Jesus was both the sacrifice that paid the penalty for our sins and the Great High Priest who entered heaven on our behalf to offer His own blood so that we might be forgiven of our sins and become acceptable in God's sight. (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 1:18-19)
- Does the fact that Jesus came in the likeness of sinful man mean that He was also guilty of sin?
 - Absolutely not! (Hebrews 4:14-16)
 - If Jesus was not fully human, He could not die; and if He was not fully God, His death would be no more effective in achieving our forgiveness than the death of any other man. (Ephesians 1:7)

And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 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.

- Now that we have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ, do we have to try to fulfill the requirements of the Law?
 - In Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God has declared an end to sin's control over us; the demands of the Law have been satisfied and the power of sin has been broken.
 - Sin no longer has the authority to rule over and dominate us—unless we let it!
 - As we submit to the authority of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives and learn how to appropriate His empowerment, we will actually fulfill the requirements of the Law.
 - All the requirements of the Mosaic Law can be summarized by one word: LOVE! (Matthew 22:36-40)
 - The first and primary evidence that a person is living under the control and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is... LOVE! (Galatians 5:22)