

THE ULTIMATE LIFESTYLE

Romans 8:1-39

(Show “Power to Change”)

Last week we looked at the struggle in every Christian’s life. We said that in every Christian's life there are two natures. There's the old nature and the new nature. The old nature is the sinful nature that always wants to do wrong. The new nature is the born again nature that wants to do right. Both natures are in a constant tug-o-war. It’s like a civil war inside you. Paul talks about this in Romans 7. In chapter 7 we saw a picture of defeat. Paul is defeated, discouraged, and depressed.

When we come to chapter 8, it is the exact opposite. This is the chapter of victory, great conquest, success. It's night and day between Romans 7 and Romans 8. What makes the difference? The difference between defeat and victory is the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 7 the key word was "I" -- 48 times in those verses he says "I ... me ... myself". But the secret of Christian living is not living the Christian life on our own, but letting the Holy Spirit live through you and the key word of Romans 8 is the word "Spirit". The word "Spirit" is used 22 times in Romans 8. You get the message very quickly that it's the power of the Holy Spirit. This chapter is called Life through the Spirit -- it describes the benefits and blessings of having the Holy Spirit in our lives. In the opinion of many Bible teachers, this is the greatest chapter on Christian living in the Bible.

Today, we're going to get a bird's eye view of what we're going to look at in the next few weeks. I'm calling this message, “The Ultimate Lifestyle”. We’re on the 20th part of this never-ending series on Romans. Just kidding. We’ll finish it someday.

Chapter 8 describes to us **the kind of life that the Holy Spirit makes possible to live**. These are the benefits of being born again. I want you to please turn to Romans 8 in your Bibles. We're not going to read it. I just want you to take a glance as I go through this chapter. Notice the key phrase in v. 1 **"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** You know, "In Christ" is Paul's favorite term to describe a Christian. Thus, this chapter is not for unbelievers. It's for believers, for Christians. The benefits we're going to look at do not apply to everybody. They apply only to those who are in Christ. If you are not in Christ, these are the things that can be yours.

I call this the ultimate lifestyle because you'll see it's the life that everybody really wants. Let me share with you how this ultimate lifestyle looks like:

1. We can live a life without condemnation. That's in the first four verses. Paul begins by first sharing the solution to the problem he raised in chapter 7. At the end of last week's session, Paul is down, depressed, discouraged, defeated. He says I'm confused, I'm trapped, I'm lonely, I'm hopeless. He says in **7: 24 "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"** The first thing he does in chapter 8 then is to point out that the Holy Spirit is the answer to all the problems he brought up in chapter 7. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to live a life without condemnation.

v. 1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law 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 first benefit of being a believer is that **God is not angry with me anymore**. What is the condition for no condemnation? There isn't any!

It's not You be perfect and then you won't be condemned or You keep all the rules and God will think you're OK. All you have to do is be in Christ Jesus. The reason why I'm not condemned or you're not condemned (if you're a Christian) is because Christ took all that condemnation about 2000 years ago. On the cross, when He died, He took all the punishment, all the pain. So the case has been closed.

John 3:17 says, *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 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."* There is no condition except for one for not being condemned -- believe in Jesus Christ. Is that hard?

Jesus says, (John 5:24) *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* We could stop right here thanking God that we are not condemned. If you have put your faith in Christ you have passed from death into life. The only requirement -- simply believe.

Friend, the reason why you get scot-free is not because you're such a great person but because all of your condemnation was taken by Jesus.

The second thing about the Ultimate Lifestyle is that

2. We can live a life without domination.

It means sin cannot control my life anymore unless I choose to allow it, to give into it. People say, "I couldn't help myself." If you're a Christian, that is not true. You have a power in you that helps you overcome sin. The next major section from v. 5 - 17 is about this. v. 5 *"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what their nature desires. But those who live according to the Spirit, have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."* Paul is talking about two mindsets -- the non-Christian mindset and the Christian mindset.

In v. 6 and following he talks about the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. v. 6 *"The mind of a sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."* Which do you want? The unsaved person only lives for himself, for his own desires. The unsaved person is alive physically but he's dead spiritually. In v. 7 he says that the unsaved person is hostile toward God. Because the sinful mind is hostile to God, it doesn't submit to God's Law nor can it do so. Like the Frank Sinatra song, "I did it my way..." that's what the whole world is saying if they don't know the Lord. I'm going to do my own thing. I'm going to be my own boss. And in v. 8, *"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."* He's saying, "The unsaved person cannot please God."

In the next few verses, he talks about the benefits of us having the Holy Spirit in our lives and we now have power to break out of that sin. (v. 9) *"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."* If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not even a Christian this verse says. It's a misunderstanding of the trinity that you get Jesus one time and you get the Holy Spirit later. Once you receive Jesus in your heart, you get the Holy Spirit as well.

The Spirit filled life doesn't mean you get more of the Spirit it just means the Spirit gets more of you. He dominates you instead of sin dominating you. **Romans 8:12-13** says, *"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."*

3. We can live a life without desperation.

Romans 8 teaches that even in our suffering we have hope. No matter what happens in your life, no matter what trials, there is hope. No situation is hopeless

if you have the Holy Spirit in your life. That's what verses 18-26 talk about. *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* Paul says, Sure we're going through some suffering. When you became a Christian did God take away all your problems? God has not promised us a problem-free, stress-free life. Christians are not exempt from suffering. But Christians have something that non-Christians don't. They have a hope that gets us through that suffering. You can't compare the glory that you're going to have with the present suffering.

What glory? *2 Cor. 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* Even the suffering in our lives, God has a purpose behind it. He's producing things in our life.

"For our light and momentary troubles." That is the understatement of all time. Shipwrecked twice, beaten five times, left for dead twice, stoned, whipped, put in jail, no food – Paul's entire life was one big trial after another. And he calls them light and momentary troubles! That's called perspective! All of us have our own set of trials that we're going through. God says those have a purpose.

As Christians, *we can hope for two things* (Romans 8:23):

1. *We have the hope of a future resurrection. "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."*
2. *We have the hope of being prayed for by the Holy Spirit. v. 26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."*

4. We can live a life without miscalculation.

God never makes a mistake. That's what this chapter teaches. v. 28-30 teaches that God does not make mistakes in your life. Everything that happens in your life there's a purpose for it and He allows it because it fits into His pattern. One of the most famous verses in the Bible is v. 28, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* God has a purpose. If you're a Christian, absolutely nothing ever comes into your life by accident. Nothing! God couldn't care less what is the source of your problems. You may have brought it on yourself. It may be brought by other people. It may be brought by the devil. God doesn't care. He still uses it. He still allows it. God uses all things. Even the things I don't like. It says He uses them for His purpose. What is God's purpose? Verse 28 makes no sense at all until you read verse 29. Verse 29 explains the purpose mentioned in verse 28. *"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."*

God's number one purpose in your life is to make you like Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit comes into your life He begins making you more like Jesus. That's the transforming process and God uses every trial, problem, grief, hassle, everything in your life to make you like Jesus Christ.

See the security you have in being a Christian? Even when I make dumb decisions, God still has a way of using it for good in my life. Isn't that great? So many people are so uptight about God's will they think if they make the wrong turn someplace, they'll have God's second best in their life. You don't find the phrase second best in the Bible. It's not there. God even saw those mistakes you were going to make before you made them. You have a free choice but it's limited. It is limited in the sense that God is greater than your choice. He takes into account His plan and even includes your choices. Even when I choose the wrong thing! It all

works together for good. God uses everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

5. We can live a life without intimidation.

v. 31 *"What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us who can be against us?"* If you're a Christian, one plus God equals a majority. Christians ought to be the most confident people in the world. If you get put down, forget it! It's nothing! v. 33 *"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."* The Holy Spirit is praying for us; Jesus Christ is praying for us. When you're criticized don't worry about it! If it's true, listen and learn from it. If it isn't, ignore it and forget it. Ultimately only God is the judge of your life. Don't be intimidated.

This life without intimidation is a life of confidence. Everybody wants confidence but you don't find it in self-help books. You find confidence in the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 13:6 *"So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"* And Proverbs 29:25 says, *"The fear of man is a snare"*. The moment you start worrying about what other people think, you're in trouble. You start being manipulated by them.

Then, in Romans 8:37a, it says *"In all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."* Folks, we're super conquerors. Romans 8 teaches that if you're a Christian don't ever call yourself a victim. You're not a victim, you're a victor. We are super conquerors! If you have the Holy Spirit in your life you can live a life without condemnation, without domination, and without intimidation. And you don't have to be intimidated by anyone or any circumstance.

6. We can live a life without limitation.

God will provide for all my needs. v. 32 *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* When God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for you, He made the ultimate sacrifice. God loved you enough to send Jesus Christ to die on the cross. Don't you think He loves you enough to make sure you have a job, have clothes, to care for other needs you have on a day-by-day basis? Those are minor in comparison. When God saved you, He solved your biggest problem, everything else is peanuts. God wants to meet all your needs. All means all. He wants you to live a life without limitation.

7. We can live a life without separation.

Nothing can ever separate me and you from God's love. Absolutely nothing. v. 35-39 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that 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."* What a great truth to realize I will never go through an experience in life by myself. No matter what happens in the future, God is going through it with me. Although I do not know what the future holds, I know who holds the future. And I know that I will not face it on my own.

You've heard the story of the man who died and went to heaven. They were showing movies of his life and he was pictured as a man walking along the beach. There were two sets of footprints up to the incidents where there were trials in his

life and there was only one set of footprints. He said, "What happened, Lord, weren't You there?" God said, "That's when I was carrying you."

Nothing can separate you from the love of God. And that is a comforting thought. You are eternally secure. **John 10:28 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."** Once you become a child of God you cannot un-become a child of God. You can sin, God can discipline you, make your life miserable, you can lose rewards in heaven but you cannot lose the relationship. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. You are in His hand securely.

Let me share with you a true story about God knowing us in a personal way. I don't remember whether I shared this with you in my sermon before but I did write about it in my blog on our church web site. How many of you have been reading my blog? If you can tell me what my latest blog is about I'll give you a free polvoron with stevia.

So, let me share with you what I've written 8 years ago. I'm going to read some excerpts.

"Do you believe in a personal God? Do you believe that he is interested in you and watching over you? My wife and I do. God has proven this time and again to us and our latest experience with our loving Father confirms the truth of that.

"On November 5, Bel and I went to New York to attend Microsoft's Cloud Roadshow held at Jacob Javits Center. Believe it or not, I've lived in New York/New Jersey for almost twenty years but I never set foot in that building and so I thought it would be nice to see it this time plus the fact that being an IT pro I was interested in this free event by Microsoft. So I asked Bel to come with me since she is an IT pro herself and I found out she herself had never been to that place, too. But there was one more motivation for her. She wanted to take a much-needed respite from a very recent heartbreaking episode in her life.

“Bel, together with her mom, had just come back from the Philippines to attend the wake and funeral of her only brother Nolie, who was only 35, and left a young wife and two children. Bong, which was his nickname, died after a motorcycle accident in the Philippines in early October. Needless to say, Bel was devastated. She loved him dearly.

“In New York, Bel tried her best to put on a brave front although obviously she was going through a difficult time. The sights and sounds of New York, perhaps, soothed her frayed emotions and made her forget her difficult experience even just for a little while. She appeared animated and smiled a lot which I noticed as soon as we arrived in New York on Wednesday night and up to the time we attended the event sessions which started the next day. On Friday afternoon, however, she somehow lost her enthusiasm. We attended our last session and I noticed her scribbling something on her notepad. She seemed uninterested in the lecture.

“After the lecture, we proceeded to the booth of one of the exhibitors who was holding a raffle. The winner gets to bring home a video drone. I dropped my entry earlier praying I’d win it and encouraged Bel to drop hers, too. She wasn’t interested so I dropped another entry under her name.

“A big crowd gathered in front of the booth. And I positioned myself right at the front to make sure that I would hear clearly as they announced the name of the winner. Bel, meanwhile, preferred to just stay in the back, away from the crowd. With bated breath, I watched as one of the guys manning the booth put his hand inside the box and pulled out a piece of paper. He called out the name of the winner and it wasn’t either of our names. I was disappointed, of course. Everybody looked around but no one came to claim the prize. The guy called again and still no one came. There is hope, I told myself. Realizing the “winner” had left the Center already, the guy picked another entry, called out the name but no one responded again. For the third time, the announcer picked another one, the name

was called and still no one responded. This went on for quite a few more times. Now, the guy, after the initial announcement, had actually been picking business cards which was an acceptable raffle entry. I was always disappointed when I saw him holding a card because we filled out a paper entry and there was no way we would win it. At that point, he must have picked seven already but no one came to the front to pick up the prize. Before he picked the eighth, someone shouted, “Try another paper entry again!” So, he did. And when he called the name of the winner, Bel said later, “It was as if God called my name”. In my excitement, I shouted, “That’s me!” I looked back and saw that Bel was in a state of surprise and I rushed to her, quickly grabbed her and finally, her face broke into a big smile as we dashed to the front and picked up the **video drone**.

“It was surreal. Unbelievable. The Lord Jesus had intended it for Bel all along. He wanted her to know that he is aware of what she was going through, that he knows her name. Personally. Lovingly. That thoughtful gesture from the Lord certainly touched Bel’s heart and lifted her spirit. The Bible says, “I **Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;**” (Isaiah 43:1b-3a)

“Later in the afternoon on the subway, on our way to Jollibee in Queens to celebrate, Bel shared with me what she wrote on her notepad earlier. She said that she was asking God questions about her brother’s sudden, unexpected death. She wasn’t even sure of her brother’s salvation although she knew when they were young he was even the one who brought his siblings to church. Afterwards, she posted this on Facebook, “I was asking God questions in my notepad during the last session ... about my brother's death, etc. I told Him, ‘God, give me a sign that

he's in your hands, then I just went with Rolly unenthusiastically to the raffle booth. Entries were picked, but no one came to the front to claim the prize. Until my name was announced as the winner. It's only a material thing. But for me it's God's personal way of confirming his love and answering all my questions. He didn't forget me.”

The Bible says that God will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). You are the apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8). Friend, take heart if you're going through something difficult yourself. God is the strength of your heart and he will always be faithful to you. To rephrase a line in Francesca Battistelli's popular song "He Knows My Name", You are famous in your Father's eyes.