

Rebuilding the Foundations - Romans
Part 15
“Living in the Spirit”
Romans 8:1-17
Pastor Charles Price

“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. 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. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 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. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you. 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, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but

you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

I think freedom is possibly an overworked word in a North American continent, but this chapter is a chapter about freedom. Romans 8:21 talks about the glorious freedom of the children of God. And in Romans 8:2 “We have been set free from the law of sin and death”.

Now in 1863, on January 1st, the United States government, led by Abraham Lincoln, issued its proclamation of emancipation, and they abolished slavery in America. The word spread from Washington down to the valleys of Virginia and the Carolinas, to the plantations of Georgia and Mississippi and Alabama, where there was so much slavery and the headlines read, “slavery abolished”. However, history tells us the great majority of slaves in the South went on living exactly as they had done before, as though there had been no emancipation, as though they had never been set free. And apparently, when one Alabama slave was asked what he thought of Abraham Lincoln, he replied, “I don't know nothing about Abraham Lincoln, except they say he set us free and I don't know nothing about that either”.

Well, a war had been fought and won, a legal document had been signed. Slaves were legally free. Yet most continue to live out their years without knowing anything about it, in experience, they kept serving the same master. And the reason why I tell you that is because that is the great,

great danger of many, many believers. We're going to see in this passage he talks about Christians who are still enslaved and Christians who are enjoying freedom and liberty.

You see, freedom is a great theme of this chapter. In fact, the whole book of Romans is the great liberation document of the New Testament. But it comes to its climax here in Romans 8. In fact, I see Romans 8 as the pinnacle of the message of the Book of Romans.

And he talks about this freedom that we come into, the glorious freedom of the children of God. And yet the tragedy is that there are Christians who know this, who hear this. But to paraphrase the slave in Alabama, I don't know much about Jesus Christ, except they say he set us free, but I don't know nothing about that neither. I wonder if that is your experience this morning. When you have been here, we've looked at Romans now for a number of weeks. You've been very, very patient, but to deal adequately with this book takes a bit of time.

And as we have looked at some of these wonderful truths and all have to do about liberation from sin primarily. I wonder if you're as much steeped in sin today as you were a year ago. It's very important we distinguish between what the New Testament teaches about our position, our standing in Christ and what it teaches about our condition, that is our experiencing, an outworking of our position.

Now the early part of Romans has a lot to say about our position that we have before God. We are justified, we have looked at that. We are declared righteous, we talked about that. We have been crucified with Christ and the compass event, we have talked about that. We have died to sin, we have talked about that. All of that is about our position.

But in Romans 8, he begins to talk about how that position becomes a condition, how it becomes experience. You see, there's been a conspicuous absentee in the message of Paul up until now. Do you know who's missing in the Book of Romans up until now? But I'll tell you, it is the Holy Spirit. Paul just makes four brief passing references to the Holy Spirit prior to Romans 8. And now here in Romans 8, he becomes the central theme of this passage. There are about 20 references to the Holy Spirit in this chapter. In fact, there's more about the Spirit in this chapter than any other chapter in the New Testament.

Because now to make experiential, to make a condition, what has been declared to be our position, our standing before God; we need to understand the work, the ministry, the enabling of the Holy Spirit. You see the work of Christ for us, that's a theme that's gone in the early chapters, is in order to make possible the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The work of Christ for us is to make possible the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

That's why justification, wonderful as it is, liberating as that is from the guilt and consequences of our sin, is only the way in, to what God has for us. It's not the end purpose. Jesus Christ did not come into this world simply to clean us up, that would have been marvellous, but that wasn't His purpose.

We are cleansed, in order that having been cleansed, we have become the dwelling place and the workshop of the Holy Spirit, to operate in us and to function through us. And it's the indwelling presence and fullness of the Spirit of God that is the most crucial issue in Christian living. And I

want to talk about that this morning, from these verses. There are three things I want to talk about.

1. The Spirit and the Flesh

First of all, from the first four verses, Paul talks about the spirit and the flesh, that's the contrast he sets up in the spirit and the flesh. Now let me, if I may be so bold, let me take issue with the NIV translation at this point. It's the NIV I've been reading and using. There is a word in the Greek text, from which this is a translation of course, and it's the word "sarx", which literally translates; flesh.

Now it's used in two ways in Paul's writing, it's used of the human body. That is true, the human flesh. But the second way and the way in which Paul uses it in this particular passage, is of the corrupt human nature. All that I am, in myself, apart from the presence of God and the working of God within me, all that I am, naturally, that's the flesh.

Now the NIV has translated the word 'flesh' in different ways. 'Sinful nature' is a frequent one, that may be OK. That's an Augustinian term. He coined that phrase in the fifth century. It's not actually there in the original text. Or sinful man, we understand the idea of that.

But it's the natural me, the natural self and in this passage, in the first four verses of Romans 8, the flesh is set in contrast with the spirit and is condemned utterly and completely as powerless,

corrupt and capable only of hostility towards God. Now that's the diagnosis of you and me naturally. We've talked about that earlier, of course.

Now, here's the key, it's in Romans 8:2 where we finished last week; “through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” There's this law of sin and death, which I described last week as being like gravity. If I hold this pen in the air and let it go, it's going to fall. Not because I give it a push, there's a law in the heart of the earth called gravity, which says if something goes up, it'll come down. Invented as I'm sure you know, by an Englishman called Sir Isaac Newton. When an apple hit him on the head, at least he gave it a name; gravity.

There's a natural law now, says Paul. We talked about this last week. There's this natural law in me, the law of sin that's pulling me down. Which is why it's far more easier and usually more fun to do what is wrong than to do what is right. That's the work within you and me.

But there's another law, he calls the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets me free from the law of sin. And I likened that last week to the law of aerodynamics, which sets an aircraft free. I'm due to preach at 6.30pm tonight at the beginning of a conference in a place called Boca Raton, I think it's called, in Florida. I don't know how to pronounce it. Now Florida is a long way from here. How am I going to get there in time to preach the 6.30pm?

Well, I can go to the centre and leap in the direction of Florida, but of course, that won't work. The law of Gravity says of course it won't. So, I'm going to the airport straight after this service.

In fact, before it finishes, before I finish speaking, hopefully. I'm going to get out because I'm late. It leaves at 1.45 and I've got to check in. But that law of aerodynamics, which is the operation by which the aircraft flies, will cause me to break the law of gravity and fly down to Fort Lauderdale, which is the airport to which I'm flying, I think. I'll check that.

Now, says Paul, this is the first liberation he talks about; the law, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Spirit of Christ, sets me free from the law of sin. But what does that mean? What is the purpose of being set free? Set free to what?

Well, the next verse tells us, Romans 8:3-4. It says there, “for what the law was powerless to do”, that law there is the moral law, the Ten Commandments. “What the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man” that is likeness of human flesh “to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, in order” this is the purpose “that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.” The reason why the Holy Spirit sets us free is that the requirements of the law, what God demands in the law, might actually be fulfilled and work in us. You see, he says, in the beginning of that verse, there are things the law was powerless to do.

The law can tell you what is right. The law can say you shall not steal. The law can say you shall not commit adultery. The law can say you shall not covet. The law can say you shall not bear false witness. But it has no power to bring that about.

But the purpose of the Holy Spirit's presence is that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us. So, when the law says you shall not steal, you don't. Why? Because that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And what that means is this; though what were commands in the Ten Commandments, when they were given on tablets of stone, now become promises when given by the Holy Spirit in the heart. He fulfills them in our hearts and our lives.

Let me illustrate this. I told this story here three years ago, I mentioned the Toronto Spiritual Life Conference well, three years ago, I was the speaker at that, before I had ever had any thought of my coming here to be the pastor. And you've probably forgotten it even if you were there. But I want to tell you that story again. It's a true story, and it illustrates this point about a man who has converted to Christ in prison. He was in prison for stealing, he was a thief. And while he was there some Christians had visited him. And in the course of time that led him to Christ, he'd become a Christian. And when he had finished his prison sentence, he was released and the first thing he wanted to do was to visit a church.

He didn't know which church to go to, he picked any old Church. And he went and sat in the back row, looked up to the front and there on the front wall of this church were written the Ten Commandments. There were five down one side and five down the other. And he thought to himself, that is the last thing I want to see. I know what I'm like. I know my weakness. I know my failure. I know my history. The last thing I want to do is to sit and read those laws, which will only condemn me. But as the service progressed, he began to read them. And as he began to read them, he discovered he was reading them very differently to any way he'd read them before.

Previously, when he read them, they said things like this, 'you shall not steal'. It was a command. But this morning when he read it, it said, 'you shall not steal'. It was a promise. He said, thank you, Lord. And he used to say, 'you shall not bear false witness'. It was a command. This morning, it said, 'you shall not bear false witness'. It was a promise. Thank you, Lord. And he used to say 'you shall not commit adultery'. It was a command. This morning when he read it, it said 'you shall not commit adultery'. It's a promise. He said, thank you, Lord.

And he discovered that all the commands that he knew by himself he could not fulfill, have become promises. That's why it says in the book of Jeremiah God promises with a new covenant; "I'll put my law in your minds and in your heart". Previously it's been on tablets of stone, now it's going to be written in your hearts. Ezekiel 36:27, God says there, "I'll put my spirit in you and I'll move you to follow my decrees and keep my laws".

What's the purpose of my spirit being in you? That you begin to fulfill the law of God. Because you see the law of God reveals the character of God. And the character of God is the image in which we were created and to which we're being restored. When you grasp this, you've got a Bible full of promises you didn't know of that before. Because everything God commands, by the Holy Spirit's enabling, He now promises.

When you read the book of Exodus 20, which is where Moses was given the Ten Commandments, you discover as you read them, you've got a whole new set of promises that used to be commands. That is, Paul says here the law was powerless, what the law is powerless to do is weakened by the flesh. That is, the human response could not equal the demands of the

law. But now you read them, and you discover they become promises. Because the purpose of the law of the Spirit of life, setting you free from the law of sin, is that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.

Somebody here with a problem with stealing? I got a promise for you, if the Holy Spirit lives in you and you allow him to fill your life, you'll find it next to Exodus 20, it used to be a command, but now it says - you shall not steal. Nobody living in the fullness of the spirit steals. Some of you, here this morning, and you're greedy. I've got a promise for you. You'll find next to Exodus 20, it used to be a command written on tablets of stone, now it's a promise written by the Spirit in your heart. It says you shall not covet. Isn't that fantastic? You don't need to be greedy; you can be at peace, you can be content.

Somebody here facing sexual temptations you find difficult to cope with? Here's a promise. It used to be a command. It's next to Exodus 20. It used to be on tablets of stone. Now it's written in your heart, by the Spirit of God. It says you shall not commit adultery. That's a promise, if you live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Some people who find that things become too important, and they dominate your life, your priorities get all mixed up. Here's a promise, used to be a command written on tablets of stone, now it's a promise written in your heart by the Holy Spirit. It says you will have no other gods before me. That's a promise. You'll get your priorities right. You seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, everything else falls into place.

And you see the very things that were commands under the old covenant, now with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, become promises under the new Covenant. Isn't that exciting. Maybe you don't think so. But it is exciting because although the human nature is corrupt and left to our own resources every one of us would fail in any of these areas, when we live in dependency on the Holy Spirit of God, we discover the righteous requirements of the law are fully met in us. But that's not the whole story. If that's what Paul says about the spirit and the flesh, he says more, but that's all we have time to talk about.

2.The Spirit and the Mind

We need to understand what he says next about the Spirit and the mind from Romans 8:5-11. Because you see it would be a false conclusion to think, well, that means that's just the Holy Spirit working in me and I just sit back somehow and say, well, it's not me, it's the Spirit of God. Go ahead - hope something's going to happen. A pacifism or a quiet-ism that sometimes has been spoken of. There is action as well. Now in verse 5, it talks about two kinds of Christians. There are those who live according to this sinful nature. That's one kind, they live according to the flesh. They're Christians, but they live according to the flesh. And the other kind is the one who lives according to the spirit. Now they're both Christians, they're both justified. They both stand righteous before God. They're both indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But one lives the way he used to live, still in his bondage to sin, and the other is liberated. What's the difference?

Well, let me read you the whole verse, Romans 8:5. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their mind set on what the nature desires. But those who live in accordance with the

Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful mind is hostile to God.”

Now, notice what it says about the mind there, the mind is important. The difference between the who Christian lives according to the flesh, and the Christian who lives according to the spirits, is their mind is set on one or the other of those two things. Now we must understand our minds are crucial. In Romans 12, a little later on, Paul says, ‘be transformed by the renewing of your minds.’ That’s a process. We’d all prefer a verse which says be transformed by a sizzle down your spine. That’s it - all changed now.

Now there are moments, of course, when God intervenes, and God comes to indwell us and fill us. Those are moments that you remember. But there’s a process. It’s a renewal of the mind.

In Proverbs 23:7, it says there “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he”. As you think, so are you. I once saw a slogan, some years ago now, it was outside a church in England and it said this’ “you’re not what you think you are, but what you think you are”. Do you understand that? You’re not what you think you are, but what you think you are.

You are what you eat, we know that. Everything you see of me, I originally ate. If I know nothing else about myself, I can tell you I taste good. That’s how I became who I am. I ate myself. You are what you eat. That’s why you count the fat content. Some of you don’t, obviously, but some of us try to. And you, you, you are what you eat.

But more importantly than that, you are what you think. More importantly than that. And he talks here about your mind set on the things of the Spirit. Not because this is some psychological process. But because I want to show you when your mind is set on the things of God you understand, and you work together with His agenda and His purpose.

Now the word repent is the word we're familiar with. The word repent literally means "to change the mind". It's a combination. The Greek word is "metanoia", a combination of two words; "meta" to change, "noia" the mind - to change the mind. Now repentance is the act whereby you become a Christian. You change your mind about God. You change your mind about sin. You change your mind about yourself. But I want to suggest to you, that in order to live the Christian life, there must be an attitude of repentance - an attitude where the mind is being conformed to the things of the Spirit.

You see, repentance is changing your mind after the event, which is better than nothing, but the damage is done. Whereas having your mind set on the things of the Spirit is changing your mind in advance of the event. It's what I'd like to call pre-emptive repentance. In other words, if your mind is fixed on what the Spirit desires, there are a lot of issues that are already settled.

For instance, if your mind is fixed on the things of the Spirit, you will say I will not steal. Now, you may be tempted, of course, when there's nobody around and something's hanging loose, you say, well, they won't miss it. But your decision is already made. If your decision is not made, if the issue isn't decided in advance, you struggle every time you have the opportunity to steal something, you'd like.

If your mind is fixed, I will not commit adultery, you will still be subject to sexual temptations. But the decision is already made in advance. Because your mind is in touch with the things of the Spirit, and I will not commit adultery. When you have the opportunity to be greedy, your mind is already set. I will not covet. Because I will learn to be content with what I have.

We are still subject to all the temptations that may come to us but our mind is already conformed to the Spirit of God and the word of God. How does our mind become conformed to the Spirit of God? It's through the word of God.

David asks the question in Psalm 119. "How shall a young man keep his weight pure?" That's a very good question. Here's his answer. "By guarding it according to your Word, your Word, have I hid in my heart" By the way, not my head, he can memorise it, but that isn't being in your heart. "That I might not sin against you." It's in the centre of my personality. "Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you."

That's why it is imperative. And I repeat this, we've said it several times recently, it's imperative if we're going to grow in the Christian life, that we spend time in the Word of God. There is no shortcut. Because it's the Word of God that reveals the mind of God. And it's knowing the mind of God that enables us to live in conformity with the Spirit of God.

See all we know about God, we know through His Word. I know God reveals Himself in creation and other ways. But what we know with authority is what he's revealed to us through His Word.

That's why you need to read it because it becomes the source by which we live a life that is holy and pleasing to God.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, you remember those 40 days in the wilderness, and the devil came and said, “turn this stone to bread”. Then he came back and said, “jump off the temple and instead of being crushed and your body hits the ground, he'll send, your Father will send angels to catch you and land you gently on your feet”. Then he took Him up a mountain and said, “if you bow down and worship me, I'll give you all the nations of the Earth”.

Do you remember how Jesus responded to all those three temptations? He did so in the same way. He said, “it is written”. And on all three occasions, He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. He quoted from within three chapters, Deuteronomy 6,7,8. And this is my speculation only, but I wonder if Jesus didn't have those three chapters with Him in the wilderness and was reading them, meditating on them, chewing them over, and they became His means of combating the attack of the devil.

Do you know the result of your mind being set on the things of the Spirit? Well, Romans 8:6 tells us ‘the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace’. And by the way, the ‘mind controlled’, I suggest to you, it's not that somehow the Spirit is pulling strings and we move to His strings, but that His truth controls our minds and the result is peace. He says there is life, there is order, there's security, there's a sense of peace, you can go to bed at night and you can sleep. That's a result of a mind controlled by the Spirit.

But, do you know, the result of a mind that's occupied with the things of the flesh, a Christian mind. Romans 8:7 tells us the sinful mind is hostile to God. The response will be hostility. And hostility towards God expressed itself in hostility towards people and the things of God. And we find ourselves with a troubled conscience. We find ourselves easily angered. There will be a sense of discord. There's no peace. You see these things have real repercussions in our day to day living.

3.The Spirit and the Will

But there's a third thing that Paul talks about here, not only the Spirit and the mind, but he talks about the Spirit and the Will. In Romans 8:12-16, “therefore”, he says in Romans 8:12 that word therefore links what's gone before. Because the mind that is set on the Spirit will live according to the Spirit.

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation”. Now I've underlined that verse, that word heavily; obligation. It's not advice and it's not an option, it's an obligation, he says. “But it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.” And he goes on to say ‘it is an obligation to the Spirit.’ You see. This is something deliberate and willful. As he says in Romans 8:13 “by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body”.

Now it's by the Spirit. This doesn't suddenly become human now, and this is what you do. It's not 50-50 . He does a bit. We do a bit. We're working together with the Spirit of God. And it's “by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body”.

Now what does that mean? We've talked a lot in Romans 5-6 about dying. We are crucified with Christ. And all of this has to do with that position, I mentioned just now, the distinction between our position and our condition. We are crucified with Christ. We have died to sin in that sense, as we've already mentioned. But now, he says, you need to actually put to death certain things. You need to put to death the misdeeds of the body. You see legally before God, I was crucified with Christ. I don't stand accountable to pay for my sin, the consequence of which is death, Christ has done that for me. But if I am still living in sin, I'm still being corrupted and I lack that peace and that purpose, that this life is intended. To experience what we're intended to experience in this life.

That instead, what we must do, he says, is put to death these misdeeds of the body. Now this is the condition; we have to do something. Let me try and explain the difference between our position and our condition in this regard.

When a baby is born, it receives at birth all the life it is ever going to have. You don't top it up with a bit of life every six months or so. And if you look at a baby, maybe six hours old in its crib, you can say to that baby; you are alive, you have a name, your name is Fred Bloggs. I don't know who would call their baby Fred, but obviously some people have done. Your mother is, your father is Sam Bloggs. Your mother is Frederica Bloggs. You're a citizen of Canada. That sets a position that will not change. It has life, it has a name, it has a family, it has citizenship, it has rights. But the condition of the baby is going to change and change rapidly. It's going to learn to sit up and to crawl and to walk and to run and to jump and to talk and to read.

And so it is with us. We are justified. We are declared righteous the moment you come in true repentance and you are cleansed of your sin, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We're already then certain of the future. We don't need to receive more of Christ. We already have Him. But we need to grow, and it's the growing process that's talked about here, your mind fixed on the things of the Spirit and your will committed to dealing with sin.

When he says put to death the misdeeds of the body, he means knock them on the head. And the best way to deal with sin is at its source. That is, we are told in the book of James and James 1:14. It says "each one is tempted when by his own desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when its full grown, gives birth to death."

There's a process about four stages in it. He says, as your natural desire, when that desire is awakened, it becomes conceived. That you say, this is a great idea, I like this idea. And you allow it to become conceived. When it's conceived it gives birth to sin. And eventually sin gives birth to death.

Now, the best way to handle sin is at the source; the natural self, recognizing my own corrupt nature and when I face temptations to deal with them then. The problem with most of us, at least I speak for myself, is that a temptation comes along and temptation is always attractive, as I've said to you last week. By definition, it's attractive. And I say, man, that's a nice idea, I won't do it, of course, but it's a lovely idea. Let me just think about it instead. Oh boy, that's really good.

And before long, the thing has begun to control you. It gives birth, it doesn't stay static, it begins to grow. And like a baby conceived in the womb, it's going to come, it's going to be born one day. You can be sure of that. It's going to come out. You can see sin is going to come out. You know that things which awaken within you, temptation that you then struggle with - deal with them at the source.

This is an extreme case, but it makes the point; I was preaching in Missouri on one occasion, a man asked if he could meet with me. He'd not been a Christian very long. In his late twenties, we had lunch together. He said I've not been a Christian very long, but I struggle enormously with sexual temptation. So I said well that means you're human to start with. But then he said to me this, he said, do you think I should cancel my subscription to Playboy? I said I think that'll help. Well, of course, I mean, that's an extreme case. But of course, if you're going to allow yourself the luxury of dabbling with the idea of sin, but of course I won't do it. Of course, you're going to struggle and you're going to fall.

It's what you feed your minds with, it's so crucial and so important. But we have an obligation, says Paul. And listen, if you are serious about Jesus Christ and you're serious about spiritual growth and you're serious about holiness of life and if you're not, well I've got nothing to say to you, but if you are - you have an obligation that you've got to work out in your life.

Now, I can't tell you how to work it out in your own personal life, because you and I are different. And I know how I'm supposed to work it out in my life, because I know the things where I'm especially vulnerable. But we have an obligation. Obligation, emphasize the word. It's

an obligation, says Paul, not because the Spirit is inadequate, He is in us. But if He's going to be at work in me, I have an obligation. And that is to work in harmony with Him and to put to death the misdeeds of the body, to deal with them, knock them on the head, I think is the phrase I use. You see, if you're going to grow spiritually, you better take seriously the conflict in the flesh and the Spirit. Your flesh will be your enemy until you die, your old nature. Sorry about that, there's no release from that in this life. It's the best thing about dying, it is.

A friend of mine died one day very unexpectedly in England, and his wife asked me to conduct his funeral. And everybody was upset, and I thought well, what do we talk about? So I talked about what's good about dying, there must be some good things about dying. And people were so responsive. At the end of the service, when I turned to the coffin and I said to my friend, his name was Frank, I said, Frank, I think you've got the best deal of anybody here. They actually applauded. I mean, you don't do that in the funeral normally, with his wife and his two children sitting in the front row in tears. But I said, Frank we'll be there shortly, sooner or later. But one of the best things about dying is you're free from your sinful nature. You're free to be fully, the biblical word is glorified, restored into the image in which you were first created.

Let me ask you as I close, how serious are you about this? I mean, serious about this. You can be casually interested, that's why you come on a Sunday, but forget it for the rest of the week. How serious are you about this? So, I'll tell you something, you can be like the slave in Alabama. Yeah, I've heard about Christ, that He set us free. I've heard all that, but I really don't know much about it.

Or you can come in repentance again and say, 'Lord, I want to bring my mind into conformity with Yourself. I want to believe You. I want to act on what You have taught me.' And you'd enjoy what Romans 8:21 calls the glorious freedom of the children of God. And there is no freedom that compares to it or all equals it, and it's yours. The emancipation declaration has been made. You've simply got to act on it. And live it. And enjoy it.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You this morning that Your word doesn't put our heads into the clouds, it puts our feet on the ground, enables us in the real world, with all its traumas and all its temptations, to live a life that is godly and Christ-like.