**Sunday 12th July 2020**

**Romans 8:1-17 – Life in the Spirit – Freedom from Judgment and Defeat**

On the 6th of January, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the Congress of America in his State of the Union Address about the concerns of World War II that was occurring in Europe and what America’s responsibilities were in terms of their allies and the potential threat that the war could have for the country. The address is officially labeled as the January 6, 1941: State of the Union Address, but unofficially it became known as the Four Freedoms Speech. This is because in the closing part of the address, Roosevelt states to the Congress that: “In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.” Roosevelt then proceeds to list the four freedoms as: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. With each freedom, Roosevelt makes it clear that each freedom is for “everywhere in the world.”

For Christians, Romans 8 is our ‘Declaration of Freedom’. According to the commentaries, like Roosevelt’s speech with the four essential human freedoms, Paul also declares that there are four spiritual freedoms. That being the Freedom from Judgment – No Condemnation (8:1-4), Freedom from Defeat – No Obligation (8:5-17), Freedom from Discouragement – No Frustration (8:18-30), and Freedom from Fear – No Separation (8:31-39). We will be exploring these spiritual freedoms over the next few weeks.

Verses 1-4 of our Romans 8 reading is focusing on the Freedom from Judgment. Within verse 1 a tremendous truth and conclusion is revealed, that if we belong to Christ, then there is no condemnation in our lives. This is in contrast to Romans 3:20 which state that because we cannot follow God’s laws, we are therefore condemned. To put this into perspective, through Adam and Eve’s actions by disobeying God’s word (law) we became condemned, but through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can live our lives with no condemnation.

It is to make note, however, that this verse does not mention about ‘no mistakes’, ‘no failures’ or ‘no sins’, because as Christians we can still fail, make mistakes and sin. We see examples of this throughout the Bible, such as Abraham lying about his wife, David committing adultery, and Peter trying to kill a man with his sword. Yes, they had to face the consequences of their actions, but they were never condemned for what they did. We can be condemned according to the law, but through our relationship with Christ we are from the condemnation.

In the next three verses of our Romans 8 reading, we see that Paul makes three statements about the believer and the law, which in turn equals no condemnation for our lives. Through our relationship with Christ the law cannot: claim us (v.2), condemn us (v. 3), and control us (v.4). A legalist will try to use the law to obey God in their own strength, and thusly fail to measure up to the righteousness that God demands. However, a Spirit-led Christian, who completely surrenders to God, will get to experience the sanctifying work of the Spirit in their lives. This can be further seen in Philippians 2:13, which says “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

The next section of our Romans scripture reading looks at the second spiritual freedom which is Freedom from Defeat – No Obligation (8:5-17). This particular part shows us that as Christians we can live in victory and that through Christ’s death and resurrection, we have no obligation to the old nature of the law and practices. Paul in these verses writes about three levels of life – ‘You do not have the Spirit’ (8:5-8), ‘You have the Spirit’ (8:9-11), and the ‘Spirit has You’ (8:12-17).

Verses 5-8 of Romans 8 shows us what happens if you do not have the Spirit and is shown through four contrasts between being saved in Christ and not being saved. Verse 5 shows the contrast of living in and for the flesh of an unsaved person as opposed to a saved person living in and for the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 is the contrast following a sinful nature and becoming spiritually dead, against following the Spirit and being spirituality alive. Verses 6 and 7 together also show the contrast of constantly warring with God, as opposed to being a peace with God. Verse 8 looks at the contrast pleasing oneself, as to pleasing God. These four verses show that to not be saved and not have the spirit is the lowest level of life.

The second level that Paul writes about is found in verses 9 – 11 of our Romans 8 reading. It shows how we can be when we accept God into our lives. This level is where there has been a significant conversion in our lives, we are acknowledged as the children of God and become temples for the Holy Spirit to reside in (1 Cor. 6:19-20). By accepting Christ into our lives we are opening ourselves up for new experiences and look at life, we are no longer facing a defeated existence and future, but a bright, happy and hopeful existence and future.

The third and last level that Paul writes about is that the ‘Spirit has You’. It is where we a fully and completely surrounded by and immersed within in the Holy Spirit, where we have no obligation towards the flesh/the world in any way. Our only obligation is to the Spirit. It is only then that we can share the abundant, victorious life that can be ours through Christ. By being with the Spirit, we can be empowered to obey Christ and be enabled to be more like Christ. It is through Jesus’ subsequent death and resurrection that we have had our sins removed from us so that we may live.

We become adopted as children of Christ. Full living heirs of God that will receive our inheritance from Him. The Spirit will help us and lead us through, day by day. We are no longer bound by the law. We are free by His amazing love and grace.

Where are you in your journey with Christ today? Do you have the full freedom from judgment with no condemnation in your life? Do you have full freedom from defeat with no obligation to the flesh? Are you fully immersed and surrounded by the Holy Spirit, allowing it to empower and enable you to have the best life and essence you possibly can? Or are you still making your way to that top level? I pray that in this coming week that you really focus on these questions. Look deep into yourself and ask if the Spirit has you, or do you just have the Spirit?