

Free in Christ

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Free in Christ' explores the transformative power of faith and the Holy Spirit, emphasizing freedom from condemnation and the importance of living according to God's Spirit.

Duration: 26:52

Scripture: Romans 7:22, Romans 8:1-2, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:31, Romans 8:39

Topics: "Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not just knowing the word of God, but also living it out. He uses the analogy of being on a diet and resisting temptation to illustrate this point. The speaker then focuses on Romans 8, stating that it is the most important chapter in the New Testament for Christians. He highlights the idea that through faith in Jesus, believers are set free from the law of sin and death, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

Romans 8, for a Christian, once you're a Christian, this is the most important chapter of the New Testament, to me, without fail. All Scripture is inspired, all Scripture is needed, but there are some parts of Scripture that are heavier, duty, more important, more applicable to us than other parts of Scripture which are true and important, but this chapter, Romans 8, from beginning to end, oh my goodness, you could write a 900-page book just on Romans 8. Now, earlier, as you hopefully, you've been watching, Paul is, in the book of Romans, trying to show that God, through the law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, and through conscience, God has left no one with an excuse. Everyone is without excuse because they know about God, and he says that the creation has turned away from God, and then when they turned away from God and started worshiping things that men create, then God gave them over.

That's a very, very awesome part, right? God gave them over to their own lusts and to perversion, to do things that are unnatural with each other. So, he then says to the Jew who felt superior to the Gentile, yeah, well, you look down at the Gentiles, and they don't have the law, but you who have the law, do you obey the law? Uh-huh. You have the law, and you quote the law, but do you obey the law? And then he proves that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that God wanted it that way.

He wanted every, this is only found in Romans, he wanted every mouth stopped, everybody quiet, so no one can say one peep of, but I did obey, or I have an excuse. God quiets everyone. Why? Because until you get quiet and run out of excuses, you can't understand the mercy of God.

You gotta stop talking so that you can receive mercy. As long as you're talking, making excuses, as long as you're justifying yourself, you don't know how I grew up, and my mama didn't love me, and all that, then you can't understand the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. So, then he goes in to show in this book of Romans that the only righteousness that people know about in the world is the righteousness of the law.

What does that mean? It's the righteous we know that if you obey, you get a reward, and if you obey enough, you're considered a righteous person. In other words, you obey, and you're called righteous, but he just goes to show that there's none righteous, not even one. There's not even one person in the whole world who ever lived who's righteous.

Why? Because once you break one commandment, you break all the commandments. The commandment is like a big glass vase. You can't just break a little piece of it.

The whole thing is coming apart. He shows that another righteousness now has been revealed early on in the book. Another righteousness.

What other righteousness? The only righteousness we know, or being right, is by getting it right. If you get 100 questions right, you get 100. If you get 90, you got 90.

If you get 40 or 50, then you're not very right. Did you know in college one time, I played a basketball game and scored 18 points, and that same day, they gave a surprise quiz, and I got a 14 on it, and my roommate laughed for a month and said, you're the only human being who ever scored more points in a game than you got on a test on the same day. Hey, I wasn't prepared.

There's my excuse. So now Paul says there's another righteousness that's revealed from heaven, a righteousness that no one understands, the righteousness that comes by faith, not by performance. We only know righteousness by performance.

You do good, you are good. You're considered good. But Paul says nobody's done good, not even one.

Oh, you've done better than your neighbor, but compared to God, we're all lost. I mean, say amen. So he said another righteousness has been revealed without a spiritual, without the Holy Spirit helping you understand this.

Now, this is going to go right by you. Another righteousness has been revealed, the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ, where God takes your faith and credits it as righteousness. He takes your faith in Jesus and says, that's as good as you obeyed every commandment your whole life.

I proclaim you righteous, not because you have been righteous, but you have faith in the righteous one. That's called grace. How many are happy for God's grace that I and you are accepted by God through faith, the just shall live by.

So our righteousness has nothing to do, our acceptance with God has nothing to do with, were you nice yesterday? How'd you, you know, whatever has nothing to do with that, because then your righteousness will be going like this all up and down. Some days right to the hope Jesus and come today because I'm having a bad one, right? No, we have the righteousness that is imputed to us, imparted to us, counted to us. And he says, this is true, goes way back before Moses, who got the law.

God just added the law to make sin more sinful. Very few people understand that. Most of us are like Elizabeth in school.

You know, if the kids do good, she puts little stars on their paper. No, God says in Romans that hundreds of years before Moses got the law, Abraham, it says, believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. What was counted? His faith.

By believing in Jesus, God counts that as if you and I, he gives us the righteousness of Jesus as if we're perfect in his sight. Is that amazing? Now the natural mind can't believe that natural mind says, no, you didn't do good. How could you be good? No, I'm good because God says I'm good because I had faith in Jesus Christ.

Oh, let's put our hands together and just say amen to that. So then Paul says, now some people say, if that's the case, then let's do extra sin because then extra grace will be given to us. He said, anyone who says that their judgment is just because God's grace isn't a license to immorality or sin.

And then he goes in in chapter six and seven and mostly seven. And he goes into this dilemma. Now, it seems to me that he's speaking as a believer and he says, here's the dilemma I have.

There's a law in my mind that says this is right and this is wrong. And in my mind, I say, don't do the wrong, do the right. He says, but when I look at that law in my mind, I see another law working in my body or another principle.

Law here is like the law of gravity. It's a principle rather than a law on the books. And he says, I see another law, the law of self gratification that runs right over the law of my mind.

So my mind says, don't lie. But at the spot, my body tells me or my flesh tells me, lie or you're going to get in trouble. Lie.

And I lie. But I just told myself it's wrong to lie. And I didn't want to lie.

How could I lie? Then he says, I want to do something good. And I find myself not doing the good that I want to do. But I find myself doing the bad I don't want to do.

So he said, this is a trip. The good I want to do, I don't do. And the bad I don't want to do.

I end my. He says, now I see there's another principle in me. It's not even me.

My mind is assenting to the law of God. But in me, I see another law that just runs right over that baby, just goes right over, you know, just runs over. And we all have known in our lives that principle.

We know something is wrong. He says even I delight in the law of God in my mind. That means he must have been speaking as a believer because no sinner I don't think could say that.

So he delights in all of that. But he says, I keep doing, you know, like I don't want to lose my temper anymore and hurt my wife. And then she does something and then I lose my temper and I hurt my wife.

And then I say, sorry, honey, and I go to God. I'm so sorry. But then I do it again the next day.

So I see another principle working in me says that's stronger than the law in my mind that says thou shalt not do this. Thou shalt not do that. And he says, man, I'm really a mess.

This is Roman seven. Now, in Roman seven, there's no mention of the important part of salvation, which is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is never mentioned hardly in the book up till now.

It's mentioned, I think, twice chapters four or five, maybe. But seven, it's never mentioned. It's just what some of us know.

And maybe that's why you're here today. I want to do this, but I don't do it. I'm not going to do that.

And I do it like being on a diet. Oh, that that's a good parable, right? You know, I resist those Oreos or whatever your thing is. And why did you just put them in your basket when you went to the supermarket and you just read all this book about what carbs do and all of that? So it's one thing to know.

It's another thing to do. Right. So now Romans eight comes.

Let's just look at the first few verses. We'll take time, go through the whole of the chapter in the next weeks to come. I don't want to go long on this.

I wanted to set it up. Therefore, there is now no condemnation, no feelings of guilt for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit, capital S, who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. Therefore, because of what God has done in sending his son and because we put our faith in Jesus, notice the two things that are happening here.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Later on the chapter, he says, if God is the one who forgives, who can condemn you? Who can go and judge you, sister, and say, you know what? You're not what you ought to be and you're not ready to meet when God is the one who says, no, she's my daughter. She put her faith in Jesus.

She's my daughter. So God's word is the final word. This is the chapter I have is God before us who can.

OK, so because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit. Now there's a new law, not the law of the flesh, not the law given on Mount Sinai. The law of the spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Now, some people believe that that last law before sin and death is the law that God gave to Moses, because here's the trouble with the Ten Commandments. Are they holy? Yes. Are they perfect? Yes.

Are they good? Yes. The only thing is the law can only do one thing. Command.

Don't do that. Hey, honor your mother and father. Just all I can do is command.

But the way selfishness is, Paul tells us the way sin works in us is the law. Those commands actually stir up sin. The more you hear, don't do it, the more it actually serves you to do it.

Is that not a mystery? I remember as a kid, I didn't want to see anything in the kitchen until my mother, she was leaving, saying, don't go in the kitchen and look at what's on the stove. She wasn't even out the door. I was in the kitchen looking on the stove.

Her command made me want to do it. Okay. So now there's another law here, and this must be very well the commandment of Moses.

Why? The law doesn't help us, not because the law is not good, because of us, this thing in us called sin, self-seeking, selfishness, the flesh. The law can only do one thing, like a New York State law that Pastor Johnson used to enforce as a detective. The law just commands.

The only thing is, the flesh can do only one thing when it hears law, rebel. You give me any law, flesh is going to rebel. And then the law can only do one thing when you rebel, condemn, because the law condemns.

You do the crime, you do the time. So here's the whole problem with the law. The law can only do one thing.

Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not, thou shalt not. And Jesus added a lot more on the Sermon on the Mount. When we hear that, just by ourselves, we can only do one thing, try to obey, but it just stirs up sin.

And then once you break that, the law can only do one thing. It has no mercy in it. There's no mercy in the law.

The law says this, the soul that sinneth shall surely die. You're doomed. You're gone.

It's all over. Three strikes and you're out. Remember that law? Or what was that law about, named after someone about, he carried a gun, if you got caught with an unlicensed gun, what was that law called? If you got caught with a gun in New York years ago and it was not licensed, you, yeah, Rockefeller, whoever passed it, you had to do time.

That's what the law said. No mercy. The law says you got to do it.

So now that sounds strange that the holy law that God gave Moses ends up being the law of sin and death. And here's the next verse, which seems to prove that that's what that law is for what the law, the moral law that God gave was perilous to do because it was weakened by the flesh. God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

And so he condemned sin in the flesh. When he died on the cross, he punished. He not only bore sin, but he condemned sin as sin and made a way for us not have to live under the guilt of that sin because of his offering his sacrifice in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us who have put our faith in Christ, who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

So look up here at me as I kind of wrap this up and we get to the most important verse for me tonight. So God is saying here, Paul is saying here, you don't have to live in that bondage because God has wiped away your past. And now, instead of being bound by the law of sin and death, hear the command, promise to obey, break it, feel condemnation, promise to do it again, try even harder, violate it again, feeling guilty again.

God has abolished all of that because I am a child of God and you don't stop being a child of God when you sin. You're just a sinning child of God and God will deal with us. Amen.

How many have sinned? I'll close my eyes because I don't want to lose respect for you, but how many have sinned at least once and you've been a Christian, just lift your hand. Okay. My, my, my.

So Paul says, now that's been set free, but wait a minute. How about that dynamic of that other power, that law, that, that flesh where he says, I see another law working in me. How do you defeat that? You've taken care of the past.

You put your faith in Jesus. He's washed away all your past, but he said he did all of that. And the other part of the parcel is that we can live holy lives being like Jesus, but how? And he says, now in order that the righteous requirement of law might be fully met in us who do not, here's the characteristic of the healthy Christian who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, capital S. So now for the first time, there's not only pardon, there's power, not your power.

When Moses gave the law, no power was imparted from that law. Law only says one thing, do it or die. But now by receiving Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and we don't have to follow the dictates of the flesh.

We can follow the leadings of the spirit. So listen to this. The law brings you in bondage.

The spirit gives you freedom. The law, the commandments, if you start just looking inside who, what you obeyed, what you didn't obey, that is total bondage. I do not want to have to answer for my tracker record.

How many are with me? I want Jesus to be my righteousness. He is my righteousness. But now he says there's another law, either a law that when you get saved, you get the spirit, which everyone does.

This is the chapter that says if anyone doesn't have the spirit living inside of them, the spirit of Christ, he's not a true Christian. But he goes to Brooklyn tab every Sunday. Doesn't make him a Christian.

You must be born again. The spirit lives inside of you. But here's what I want to leave with you tonight so we can pray.

A lot of us aren't utilizing the power that God has put inside of us. We're still struggling in our own strength to be like Jesus instead of yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice this, how it works.

Those who live according to the flesh have their mind set on what the flesh desire. When you live by the dictates of your flesh, well, guess what? The flesh sends ideas and thoughts into your head and you're going to end up following those and being influenced by them. Look what it says there.

Notice how the flesh works. Those who live according to the flesh have their mind set. One translation, which is so helpful to me, says this.

Those who walk in the flesh have their thoughts shaped by the flesh. There's a coloring to your thoughts, your desires, what you think about tends toward impurity, tends toward sin, tends toward indulgence. The very thoughts in your head are shaped by that flesh, that sin in us, that self-seeking.

But those who live in accordance with the spirit have their mind set on what the spirit desires. That same translation says, but those who walk in the spirit have their thoughts shaped by the spirit. You get thoughts like I want to read the word today.

I want to love somebody today. I cannot help that person. That thought's not coming from you.

That thought has been shaped by the Holy Spirit living inside of you. That's what makes you a new creation. So like Paul says in Galatians, now in another place, are you going to start in the spirit by being

born again and now try to work out your life in the flesh? And that's what some of you are doing right now as they play.

That's what some of us are doing right now. And I did it for so many years and I still stumble back into it because this is a lesson not easily learned. You start out in the spirit, you know you're born again, and now you start making promises and you're going to try even harder to be like Jesus.

And what do you end up with? The same failure that you had before you became a Christian. Okay, don't say amen. I didn't know it was going to be that way.

All right. No, I'm not intimidated by you. How many know exactly what I'm talking about? Lift up your hand.

We go back the other way. We go back the old way of the law, making promises. I'll never do that again.

Oh, yes, you will. Which leads me. Well, let's just get the last verse in there.

Now, the mind governed by the flesh, if you walk in Jim Simbala, it means death because the thoughts in Jim Simbala will be shaped by the flesh. But the mind governed by the spirit, capital S, is life and peace. So this goes together with another one of Paul's teaching.

If we walk by the spirit and let him lead us and guide us, we don't have to think about the commands, except when we violate one and we catch ourselves. And the law says, no, you weren't being led by the spirit there. That was the flesh.

But he says, no, the one. Listen, most of my life when I was growing up, I thought of one thing every morning. What are the commands of God? And let me try to obey him.

And for a lot of people, that's what Christianity is. What did God say? Let me try to obey it. And that is not the Christianity Paul's talking about.

He says, when you wake up in the morning, say, thank you, Holy Spirit, that you live inside me and you were sent to give me power over rotten Jim Simbala, who wouldn't know how to do good if his life depended on it. So spirit, lead me, shape my thoughts. Holy Spirit, come control me.

And he said, if you do that, there's no law that you'll ever violate because the love of God will fill you. And the love of God, love is the fulfillment of the law. If you're filled with God's love and being directed by it, will you ever steal something? We ever curse someone out where you get angry and hurt them.

Never. It's impossible. It's impossible.

My mom's coming to church on Sunday. It's impossible for me to sin against her. It's impossible.

I might make a mistake, but sin against her. Impossible. Why? I love her so much.

I'm going to walk. I walk around her and I talk to her and so careful because I love her. I don't want to hurt.

I want to just help her. I call her yesterday. I said, Mom, are you doing good? Yeah, I'm coming to church on Sunday.

I want you to be there. And then, you know, I can say hello to the people. I said, so what time did you get up this morning? Six.

I said, but the lady wasn't there who's watching you. No, it's OK. I get dressed on myself.

I put on my sneakers. She got got some bad little Nike she puts on there or whatever. I said, Mom, what are you doing? She said, yeah, I went in the breakfast with my in the kitchen with my walker and I made breakfast.

I said, Mom, you're 100. You broke your hip. No, it's good now.

God is helping me. And I said and then the lady came. She said, yeah, we're happy.

We're fixing up the apartment. She said, you know, Jim, what else I did? I saw some dust and I thought I need to dust today a little bit. And she's dusting when I'm around that lady.

I love her so much. You couldn't get me to sin against her. And that's what God is saying to us.

Don't try in your own strength. Let me fill you with my spirit. So your thoughts, your words, everything will be colored and shaped by the Holy Spirit.

When you drink a lot of alcohol, when you drink a lot of vodka, you drink a lot of wine. Guess what? Your thoughts and your actions are shaped by what you drink. A lot of cerveza.

You start acting cerveza beer. But guess what? The Bible says don't be filled with wine. We're in this excess, but be filled with the spirit.

I thought last night. What stops us? Is it's hard for us to get the end of ourselves and give up. And the spirit can't lead me and fill me if Jim's symbol is still in there fighting.

You got to just say adios, Jim. Come on, Holy Spirit. He won't change your personality.

It'll still be you still be me. But coming to the end of ourselves, haven't you ever gotten as a Christian just sick of being like the way you are and you want to be so much more like Jesus? Anybody feel like that? What I've gone through in my life is the problem is I'll make a promise. Oh, I'm going to read more of the word every day.

And it's just all the minute I comes in instead of just say that's why I love that song. I told Israel Houghton, he wrote that song. I said, Israel, your songs are good.

I like your songs. But his best song was this one. Come, Holy Spirit.

Oh, how I need you. Freddie needs the Holy Spirit. I need the Holy Spirit.

Who can be like Jesus except the Holy Spirit? He's the spirit of Christ. So everybody, how many are ready to give up trying to be like Jesus and turn it over to the Holy Spirit? How many are ready? Right. That's what we want to do.

Let's close our eyes. Anybody want to come up here and say, Pastor, that word was uniquely for me because of what just happened in the last 48 hours in my life since Sunday night, I've been reminded, oh, I need to be conformed to the image of God's son, Jesus. And the spirit is the only one who can do that.

I want my thoughts shaped by the Holy Spirit. I'm too tired of trying to be religious, trying to be good only to break down. Lord, teach me to get to a place of surrender where hour by hour, moment by moment, the

spirit keeps me, the spirit guides me, the spirit leads me.

The spirit inspires me to pray. The spirit gives me a hunger for the word. No, no more trying to change Jim symbol.

He's unchangeable. It's a rascal. But Holy Spirit come.

If you feel that way, get out of your seat, come up here. I'll linger with you. I'll pray with you for a season.

Just ask the Holy Spirit to reveal himself to you in a new way. Ask him to flood your life, not little drips and drabs, but rivers. Tell him that's the promise Jesus gave out of your belly will flow rivers of living water.

You won't just eat by, you're going to be victorious and strong through the power of the spirit. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his spirit. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespassed against us.

We thank you for the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin.

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