



# #7 “Is there power to change?”

To consider that God is the one who gives his followers the power to change, and the obligation to change, by his Spirit (Romans 8:1-17).

**“A Christian person can be 100% confident that they are going to heaven”.**

Q1. What do you make of this statement?

“Romans” is a letter in the latter half of the Bible. It is believed to have been written around 60’s AD, by the Apostle Paul, to the young church in Rome (hence the name). Paul wanted to encourage the church by explaining the “gospel” to them. The key sentence of the letter is this: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...” [Romans 1:16]**<sup>1</sup>

The word “gospel” just means good news. The good news is to do with salvation – with being saved from God’s anger at humanity. It’s a solution that God himself provides in the sacrifice of his son Jesus (see session 1 on Romans 1:18-32, and session 2 on Romans 3:21-26). It’s a solution that requires trusting God’s promise that Jesus’ death is enough to pay for our wrongdoing (see session 3 on Romans 4:18-25). Two of the benefits of relationship with God are peace and hope (see session 4 on Romans 5:1-11). Jesus’ sacrificial death on behalf of others is a powerful incentive to obey God rather than indulge in wrongdoing (session 5 on Romans 6:1-14).

The normal life experience of the Christian person is an on-going struggle with sin (session 6 on Romans 7:7-25). If this is the case, then is this a battle that the Christian will continually lose? Is there any power to change?

## **Romans 8:1-17**

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh<sup>2</sup>, 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, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

<sup>1</sup> All bible quotations from HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica ®. All rights reserved worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> Sinful nature

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 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 because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 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.

**"A Christian person can be 100% confident that they are going to heaven".**

Q2. What do you think Paul would make of this statement? [hint: see Romans 8:1-4]

- *In verse 1 it says that there is "no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus". This means a not guilty verdict as been delivered. There is complete forgiveness, which means no unconfessed or secret sin will be thrown up in the future to jeopardize this verdict. That means God's future verdict on us can be known now.*
- *Further question: How do we know there is a not guilty verdict? The answer is because of the work of Christ (verse 2):*
  - *Verse 3: God' law wasn't able to save because of human sin (in the last session 5, Romans 7:7-25, the presence of the law was an incentive to our sinful natures to sin. Remember the "do not walk on the grass" sign?*
  - *Verse 3: God sent his son as a sin offering (Note: "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" refers to Jesus' humanity. Jesus was without sin, which means he was only in the "likeness" of human beings, but not completely the same).*
  - *Verse 4: The requirements of the law (perfect obedience) can be met in us, because Christ's perfect obedience gets credited to us.*
- *Do we need to contribute to this not guilty verdict in some way? Verse 4 says "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit". This could read that the righteous is only*

credited if we live in a certain way. However the background of Romans, especially Session 4 on Romans 5:1-11, shows us that the not guilty verdict is based entirely on the work of Christ. The one who has Christ's righteousness accredited to them will "live according to the Spirit" (more on what that is later!)

- So can a Christian person be 100% confident they are going to heaven? Answer: Yes! They can be 100% confident because God has declared this was enough to condemn sin (verse 3) and does not require our contribution in any way (we couldn't be 100% confident if part of our confidence rested on our own efforts, for how would we ever know we have done enough?)

Q3. Paul is contrasting 2 ways of living. We could call these "realms". What are the 2 "realms" and what characterizes them?

- The two "realms" are:
  - living "according to the flesh"
  - living "according to the Spirit"
- In the realm of those who "live according to the flesh". Life is governed by their own desires. Their minds are hostile to God, and so therefore they can't please him (verses 7,8).
- In the realm of those who "live according to the Spirit" live those who belong to Christ (verse 9).



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<sup>3</sup> [www.hollows.org.au](http://www.hollows.org.au)

- Q4. Is Paul saying that only Christians can do good things, do you think? (hint: see verses 5-9)
- *No, Paul is not saying this at all! Those in the “realm of the flesh” have minds that are hostile to God, and can’t please God (verses 7,8). So although they may do good things, it is only the believer who does good things that please God!*
  - *This is teaching by Paul is tough! We would like to think that in the end, God will look favourably on the good things that unbelievers do. While this is an understandable position to have, it doesn’t adequately deal with the problem of sin that Paul raises in Romans, or the solution in Jesus. If sin at the end of the day doesn’t really matter, then Jesus didn’t need to die.*

Q5. What help does Paul say the Christian person has in the work of the “Spirit”?

- *The work of the Spirit does many things:*
  - *Verse 2: It’s the law (or power) of the Spirit that sets someone free from sin and the consequences of sin (that is, death)*
  - *Verses 4-6: The Spirit is the one by whom Christians are to live by. This means having one’s mind set on what the Spirit desires (verse 5). Having the Spirit is life giving and peace-giving (verse 6)*
  - *Verse 10: The Spirit is the means by which a believer’s body is physically resurrected*
  - *Verse 13: The Spirit helps the believer to put to death the misdeeds of the body (that is, it is possible to say “no” to sin and wrongdoing)*
  - *Verses 14-16: The Spirit is the Spirit of sonship, which means it marks Christians as God’s children. This means they no longer fear God’s judgment (verse 15,16). It is the Spirit that reassures a person trusting in Jesus that they can be 100% confident they are going to heaven (verse 16).*

This teaching about the “Spirit” is a mind-shift, particularly for those who have grown up in rational, non-supernatural cultures. We also can’t “see” the Spirit (although we can see evidence of it in a changed life). So the place to start is what we can “see” – the historical death of Jesus. If Paul is right about this, then he is right about the Spirit.

Written by Caroline Spencer of City Bible Forum. 2012.

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