

2:42LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Life Group Study Guide

God Succeeds Where the Law Fails

Introduction

Since Romans 5:1, Paul has been putting forth a series of assurances for those who “have been justified by faith.” Now in Chapter 8, he introduces our ultimate assurance—the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned 19 times from verse 2 to 27, so it is not surprising that this outline of Chapter 8 focuses on the Spirit’s role in our lives.

- 8:1-13 The Spirit grants us new life
- 8:14-17 The Spirit guarantees our adoption
- 8:18-30 The Spirit gives hope for future glory
- 8:31-39 A celebration of our assurance

In our last study (Romans 8:1-2), we discovered that believers in Christ are no longer under condemnation. This is because God’s Spirit (“the law of the Spirit of life”) has set us free from the authority (“law”) of sin and death.

This study picks up the question of how this freedom from sin and death is possible. How can God free us from the law of sin and death—*without* relaxing his standards of righteousness? The answer comes in the work of Christ on the cross and the ongoing work of the Spirit in our lives. “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).

The main idea of this passage is that *God succeeds where the law fails*.

The following outline helps us see the order of thought in these verses.

1. The Law’s Failure (8:3a)
 - a. What the law failed to do: end sin and achieve righteousness (7:7-14)
 - b. Why the law failed to do it: the law was “weakened by the flesh” (8:3)
2. God’s Success (8:3b-4)
 - a. The means of God’s success: condemning sin in the flesh (that is, in Christ’s body as he died on the cross, 8:3)
 - b. The outcome of God’s success: fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law (8:4)

Discussion

1. Suppose someone thinks that being “free in Christ Jesus” means being free to do whatever one wants. Describe what such a person’s life and mindset might look like.
2. It is possible to think that—in contrast to the Old Testament—in the New Testament, God has relaxed his standards of righteousness or somehow lowered his standards. What does Jesus say in Matthew 5:17-20 that destroys that notion? How does Jesus actually *intensify* the requirements of the law (see Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 38-48).
3. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. What is true about human nature that requires a radically *new* heart and *God’s* Spirit? Can you remember what it was like to try to obey God’s law without his Spirit? If so, describe what that was like.
4. Paul tells us that “the righteous requirement of the law” may be “fulfilled in those who walk . . . according to the Spirit.” Think about what it takes to *walk*. What is true about *walking* that is also true about living in the Spirit? (See Galatians 5:16).
5. According to Galatians 5:22-23, what will we see in a person’s life who is “walking in the Spirit”? Consider three of those “fruits,” and discuss why it takes a supernatural work of God’s Spirit to bring about in a person’s life.