



## Growth Group Curriculum Week 1 – April 18, 2021 – Romans 8:1-11

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at [connect@ljpres.org](mailto:connect@ljpres.org). Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

Today we start a new six-week sermon series on the eighth chapter of Romans, often considered the greatest chapter in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul moves through important themes of the faith and encourages his listeners to place their hope in Jesus. The letter of Romans has often been used to speak to churches in difficult times.

As the Roman Empire was fading, St. Augustine utilized the letter of Romans to talk about how humanity, and the God who created humanity, is bigger than any Empire. Martin Luther and John Calvin preached through Romans reminding their people that the church should be structured in such a way that the lordship of Jesus would be seen. Karl Barth used Romans to speak to the cultural shifts that were happening during his time.

As we begin the eighth chapter, we find Paul wrapping up what was begun in chapter 7, where he had talked about the sinful life that overtakes each one of us and how we cannot get out of that, apart from Christ. Thus, in verse 1, he makes the point that there can be no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. Paul wants to make it clear that the law and commandments of the Old Testament cannot save. Paul had tried those same things himself when he had been a Pharisee and had realized that he could not be perfectly obedient. The law cannot save us from our sinfulness.

In Romans 6:23, Paul writes that the wages of sin is death. We cannot escape sin on our own. When Paul talks about life that is lived in the flesh, he is describing a life that is lived under the power of sin. Until the power of sin is broken, it will continue to dominate our lives. We will not be able to do the good that we hope to do. We continue to live a life that is not pleasing to God. We are stuck!



Yet, as Paul reminds us in verse 2, there is hope because of Jesus. The law and commandments could not save us and could not set us free, but Jesus has accomplished what the law could not do. When we receive the gift of Jesus, everything changes. A new life and way of living is possible. We are free because of Jesus and we now have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. The mind/life that is governed by the Holy Spirit finds peace.

Paul also says that because of the action of God and because of the work of Jesus, the law gets grafted onto our hearts. This is the new covenant that Jeremiah talks about in chapter 31, when he says that God will write his law on our hearts. This law does not save us, but it does show us how we are to live, and we can live that way because the Holy Spirit has transformed our lives and it is at work in our lives.

## Exploring the Text

### **Romans 8:1-11**

**8** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For 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 flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> 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>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

- 1) Romans is perhaps Paul's most comprehensive letter. If the apostle Paul were alive today, do you think he'd be active on social media? Why or why not?
- 2) We all get stuck at times in our lives. Share about a time when you felt stuck and you felt like Jesus helped you get unstuck.
- 3) Why did God set up a law for the people of Israel that He knew they could never keep?
- 4) Why do you think God didn't send Jesus at an earlier time in history to set things right?
- 5) What does it mean to be in the realm of the flesh and the realm of the Spirit (verse 9)? How do you make sense of this? Do you find it strange that those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God?
- 6) What does it mean to you that you have been set free from the law of sin and death?
- 7) What does it mean that the Holy Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies? Is this talking about the present? Future?



- 8) If there is no condemnation in Jesus and if you have been set free, what do you think you have been set free for? Where has God been calling you to move out in faith and trust?

