



**Unit 3: God's Power and Me**  
**Session 3: The Powerful Transformer (see pp. 150-153)**

**The Question:** How does the Holy Spirit change me?

**The Point:** The Holy Spirit will radically change your life.

**Background Passage:** Romans 8:1-17

**Focal Passage:** Romans 8:1-2,5-7,9,11,16-17

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How does the Holy Spirit change me?" and drive home this one truth: The Holy Spirit will radically change your life.

**Focus on These Points**

***From Sinner to Saint***  
***(Rom. 8:1-2,9,11)***

The word *therefore* indicates a continued thread that runs from one passage to the next in Paul's teaching. Based on the truths he discussed in one place, the implications are played out in another set of verses. Paul used the same literary technique to begin what we know as chapter 5 and chapter 12. In connecting chapter 4 to chapter 5, Paul noted that the standard of faith is what produces justification in God's eyes. In connecting chapter 12 to the chapters before it, Paul shifted from theology to practical application: "what we know" to "how we live out what we know."

Here the apostle connected our freedom in Christ to our reconciliation in Christ. Verse 1 is the only place in Paul's New Testament writings where he used the combination of "therefore" and "now." The apostle likely used this literary form for emphasis, letting readers know he was shifting direction. The new life that gives us freedom from the law in the first part of chapter 7 leads naturally into the absence of condemnation in the beginning of chapter 8.

Paul transitioned from the burden of the law to the lack of condemnation in Christ and what that means to our lives as believers. We have the assurance that we are not condemned. Because we have an established relationship with God through Christ, we do not live in fear of being rejected by our heavenly Father. Paul's implication is that the believer's life is now under new management. The Holy Spirit now indwells and controls the Christ follower.

Paul returned to the idea of being controlled by the Spirit (v. 9). If the Spirit truly lives in us, He has the right to exert control over our lives. If we genuinely belong to Christ, our desire should be to pursue what pleases Him and to avoid what doesn't. Again, this is not a reference to spiritual perfection. The heart of the matter comes down to control. The Holy Spirit's power is so much stronger than anything we could imagine. In fact, this is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection power carries over to our lives as He rescues us from the domain of

evil. He brings new life to our spiritually dead existence and empowers us to fulfill our God-given purpose in the world.

### ***From Secular to Spiritual (Rom. 8:5-7)***

While it might be easy to look good on the outside and say the right things, ultimately our lives will be driven by what's in our hearts. Paul called it a mindset. We might call it a worldview or a way of thinking. Whatever name we use, it has a direct impact on what we value and how we live. In verse 1, Paul drew a stark contrast between the law of the Spirit and the law of sin. He repeated that teaching approach here, emphasizing a distinction between the mindset of the flesh and the mindset of the Spirit. Again, the crux of the matter relates to control. Those ruled by the flesh can't help setting their minds on fleshly things. Likewise, those ruled by the Spirit set their minds on spiritual things.

But, as you might expect, different approaches to life create different results. The flesh's mindset leads to death. As in verse 2, this death is tied to the work of the law. (See Rom. 6:23.) Without the Spirit to set us free from the consequences of the law, we stand condemned. We have no spiritual life in this world, and we don't have any hope for the life to come.

The mindset of the Spirit produces a more desirable fruit. Instead of death the Spirit gives life and peace. The Spirit's life stands in direct opposition to the death of those in the flesh. Like that death it has implications for this life and for eternity. Likewise, the peace has far-reaching influence. We have peace with God because He has justified us, and we have the peace of God that leads to hope for the future and fellowship within the body of Christ.

### ***From Stranger to Sonship (Rom. 8:16-17)***

In verse 9, Paul traced a straight line between a personal relationship with God through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. Here he elaborates on the Spirit's role in confirming our salvation and our right to inherit God's blessings. Using a courtroom image, the Holy Spirit serves as the star witness on behalf of believers. The Spirit confirms with our own spirits that we are in relationship with God. But the relationship is not that of Creator to creation or even friend to friend. We are adopted into God's family. In verse 15, Paul described it as a move from captives to children. To emphasize the power of this change, he used the Aramaic word *abba*, which can be translated "Daddy." It demonstrates an intimate, yet dependent, relationship between a loving father and a relatively helpless child.

Under control of the flesh, individuals have no family to call their own. Selfish desires make it impossible for anyone to really care about another person. However, this adoption brings us into a spiritual family for the first time. Suddenly, we move from isolation to having God as Father, Christ as Brother, and other Christians as spiritual siblings. In addition to becoming a part of God's family, this adoption also confirms that we are heirs to His blessings in Christ.

The word “if” in verse 17 does not indicate doubt of any kind and could be better translated “since.” What’s more, we are coheirs with Christ. In other words, whatever claim Christ has on the Father’s blessings, we share in equal part. The foremost of these blessings is the hope of eternal life with Him. Paul did not diminish the reality of suffering. Christians—especially those living in the heart of the Roman Empire—would endure difficult and even deadly times. But the reward is our glorification with Him. (See Phil. 3:10-11.) John echoed this relationship connection in his first epistle (1 John 3:2). He affirmed that believers are children of God. And even though we don’t know exactly what that will look like, we can be sure that we will be like Christ—glorified—when He returns. This will mark the completion of our personal transformation from strangers who were hostile toward God to children who are blessed by God.