

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (19)

Freedom in the Spirit: empowered by God

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the nineteenth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures. A short summary of today’s message:

God wants us to know true freedom in all its fullness. However, this is developed progressively in different areas. There are greater depths and higher levels of freedom in the Spirit that we can enter into in our experience of being empowered by God.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

We have seen that at the heart of true freedom is the power to be and to live as we should. We have seen that God is the only One who in the absolute sense has absolute freedom.

If we want to know true freedom, we need to come to God that we may receive from Him the life, the power, to live that way.

However, we know in experience that many Christians, while longing very much to live by the power of God, to be free in Him, they find themselves struggling, failing, miserable, distressed while going through this life in this world. So what basically is the problem?

Consider: If you build a house, a very beautiful house, and you place within the house many significant electrical appliances and you set up a very elaborate electrical system for your lighting so that the house can be bright and beautiful and it can function well. You are very happy because you have made provision for the best quality in all these areas and so you turn on the switches... and there is no light; there is no power in your appliances; they all do not work! You try again and again, getting more and more frustrated, but there is no power, there is no light. Well, your friend came along and he helped you to find the problem. As he traced the electrical connections, he found that all your electrical wires have not been connected to the cable that leads to the power station, the electrical power station. So while there is a lot of electrical power in the power station, it has not reached your house. There is no power.

In life, often, we may think that we do not need God; we can do all these things ourselves. Before we repented, we managed our lives in the way we thought was sufficient. Yes, we may have built a nice house, we have a lot of electrical appliances – the things that we do in our lives. But we realize as time passes by, that there is no life in it.

There is no meaning in the things that we do because there is no life, there is no power: We are not connected to God; the life of God has not come to us.

We think we do not need God but in reality, our very life is sustained by God and if we do not consciously, deliberately, and by choice want to depend on Him then there will not be spiritual life that comes to us, even if we have made all the provisions that we think are necessary.

So we have seen that for a Christian, he becomes a Christian because he comes to recognize his need of God. He has come to realize that there is something wrong with his life, he needs forgiveness; and we saw this in the area of being justified by faith.

We were under condemnation because we went our own way, because of the wrong path we have taken: the path of wickedness, evil, self-centredness, though at times it may not appear to be very evil. But at the heart of it, self-centeredness, going our own way, not depending on God brings about conflict, negative outcomes in our lives and in the lives of others.

So when we repent, we come to God, we acknowledge our need, we ask Him for forgiveness, we thank Him for the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross for us: We acknowledge Him as our Saviour, we want to follow Him. So in that state, the Holy Spirit having worked in our hearts, brings about the new birth; we are born of the Spirit; spiritual life comes to us. And so we find freedom from condemnation as a result of having sinned against God and the judgment of God being passed on us.

And as we go on, we come to realize that we need to present ourselves to God. **Romans 5** tells us how we can have peace with God in being justified through Christ. **Romans 6** tells us that we need to present ourselves to God and our members as instruments of righteousness to God: We should not let sin continue in our lives. So we make the choice, we make the commitment: we now want to serve God.

However, the man who decided to connect his cables, his electrical wiring to the source of power from the power station and finally found light for his home may one day suddenly find that the light goes off, the appliances no longer work. And he called his friend again to find out what has happened. And the friend again did his work and told him, "The connection between your house and the power station has broken down. It is no longer functioning. Sometimes intermittently, you may get some electricity but basically, it is not working well." And so he has to repair it, he has to do something about it in order for the electricity to flow again.

In the spiritual realm, many of us, when we first come to know God, may find life so joyful. We know the presence of God, we experience His life and it is so meaningful.

But as time passes by, our lives are corroded with the cares of this world, with the attractions of this world and the connection between us and God is no longer what it should be. And so gradually, we find the life diminishing in us; we can no longer function as we ought to. The joy of the Lord is no longer our strength; the things of the world become increasingly attractive to us; we do many things for God but not by His power.

And so we need to learn how to increasingly experience the power of God in our lives so that we will be able to constantly find meaning in life and manifest the power of God and the life of God in us.

We saw that there are two kinds of condemnation that we need to be free from if we want to live a life of freedom in the Spirit.

The first kind of freedom from condemnation is that which arose because of sin leading to the judgment and punishment from God.

In that area, we are free from that condemnation when we are genuinely repentant and when the Lord Jesus Christ has become our Saviour.

But we need also to know freedom from condemnation because of continued failure to live a righteous life. This will lead to condemnation within our own hearts: we know we are not what we ought to be; we can recognize what is good but we are not living by it.

We are miserable because we have come to appreciate what is good, we want to follow the Lord, yet we find ourselves moving in the direction of the world.

Why is it so? What is the solution?

Romans 7: 18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

The apostle Paul here explains a very important principle that many people may not appreciate sufficiently. He says, "I know that nothing good dwells in me". This may bring to our remembrance what the Lord Jesus said: "**Apart from Me you can do nothing**". But we may not realize that. We think that we can: we can do many things without God, without His life. The apostle Paul tells us: "...nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh".

The "flesh" basically refers to man living by his natural abilities without dependence on God and especially in following the inclinations of the natural body.

We are dwelling in a body, which has various inclinations that can lead us far away from God, and we can take delight in these things. The apostle John tells us what is in the world: the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life; this is what is in the world.

People of “the flesh” live by what is in the world. There is nothing good in that. We need to see this sufficiently.

The apostle Paul here explains: “...for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not”. That means you can will, you can choose – that part is present. You have come to recognize what is good: You know what is the will of God, you see it, you can will it, you can choose it – “I want to be holy; I want to be pure in heart; I want to live for God.” Yes, you can choose that; you want that kind of life, you want to live that way; you recognize that is good. But he says, “...the doing of the good *is* not”.

Why is that so?

There is no power. There is no spiritual power to live the life of goodness. You can will it but you cannot live it. This is a very important principle that we must appreciate deeply and we have to learn it over and over again in ever increasing measure. The Lord Jesus says, “**You have no life in yourselves.**” We do not seem to appreciate that. We think we have: Can’t we do many things? Can’t we serve God and walk in righteousness? Can’t we choose it and live it?

As we try to do that, if we are honest, we will realize that very often, even in many situations of good intentions, we recognize that even our motive is very often tainted: a self-seeking spirit is often present even in the various things that we do.

We need the power of God to transform us; we need to live by His power so that His life flows through us. It is only in the context of His life, His power, that we can be good, we can do what is good. The doing of the good must come from the power of God.

“...nothing good dwells in me”. This is a lesson that is very difficult to learn and we may learn it progressively with time: With many, many failures, we may appreciate more and more what this means.

“...the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not” – so we will fail again and again.

The apostle Paul then goes on to elaborate: **Romans 7: 21-25**.

Romans 7: 21-25

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

“Wretched man that I am!” is an expression of the sense of condemnation as a result of constant failure to be what we ought to be. The apostle Paul expressed it this way to help us understand how wretched we can be if we do not live by the power of God.

He says, “I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.” So here is a picture of someone who has appreciated **Romans 6**. He has presented himself to God and his members as instruments of righteousness. He wants to live for God; he gives himself to God. It is possible for us to make that choice to give ourselves fully to God and yet live by our own natural power. That is what it ought not to be but very often we may not recognize it sufficiently.

A truly giving of ourselves to God should, ought to, include dependence on God. It should be part of it. When we give ourselves fully to God, it should be with the recognition that we do not have life in ourselves; we need Him, we need His power to live that way.

But very often, we do not appreciate this part. We can recognize the need to give ourselves to God, so we offer the best that we have, but not in accordance with God's provision and instructions.

Saul kept the best of the animals and he said he kept that to offer to God, but God had instructed him to destroy all that and yet he disobeyed God and still claimed to be obeying God.

So too, it is important for us to recognize: If you want to properly present yourself to God and your members as instruments of righteousness, it must be accompanied by the recognition: you cannot serve God by all that you have and all that you present to Him without the power of God enabling you to live that way.

He says, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man". He has decided he wants to live by the power of God, he wants to live by the way of God, the will of God but he has not come to appreciate the importance of the reality of the power of God in his life.

So he says: "...evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good". Why is that so? Why is there this conflict? He wants to do good and yet he finds that evil is present in him.

So he says, "I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."

God wants us to recognize that we cannot live by the natural inclinations of this natural body. If we do that, then this will lead us in the path of sin. There are many, many inclinations in this body that we have which we may not be very conscious of, but they can very readily lead us away from God, either in the sense of self-sufficiency or the enjoyment of this world.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life are all expressions of the natural body and basically, when we do not live by the power of God, we will tend to move in this kind of direction.

Our natural abilities and inclinations are very much associated with this natural body.

And so he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" That means: this death that resides in this body or you can also translate it as "this body of death".

This body that the apostle Paul talks about, in **Romans 6** he refers to as "the body of sin". Here, he refers to "the body of... death". Basically it is the same thing. Sin leads to death and when we continue in the path of evil, it will lead to death – this body of death.

So how can we be set free? In **Romans 6**, he tells us we must be identified with Christ so that the body of sin will be rendered powerless. Here he tells us that if we are not set free, we will be wretched men.

So "Who will set me free?" The answer: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" So the answer to that wretchedness is power through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is centred on who He is and what He has done for us through the cross. It is through the cross that we will find the freedom and the power to live as we ought. We cannot do it ourselves; we do not have that life and power. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And our bondage to this kind of life, to this body of death, will be broken when we learn to abide in Christ and He in us.

So he says, "So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." There are these two principles operating at the same time in the same person.

He says: "...with my mind... serving the law of God". That means he can recognize, he appreciates the law of God; he wants it and he is prepared to make a choice in that direction. But he says, "At the same time, with my flesh I will be serving the law of sin."

And this describes the kind of life that many Christians are living. At times they live by the law of God when they are conscious of depending on God. They look to God, they pray, they seek God for His help and then they find themselves free: They live by the law of God. At other times they forget. They depend on themselves and with their flesh, they serve the law of sin. And so it is a life where we are not satisfied and we are not totally free.

Progressively, hopefully, if we persevere, we seek God, we will understand more and we can experience increasing freedom.

So then what is the underlying principle? The apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 8: 12-14** the approach that we need to take.

Romans 8: 12-14

- 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--
- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So the answer to this problem of being wretched is found in the Lord Jesus Christ but transmitted to us by the power of the Holy Spirit: If we are led by the Spirit of God, then we are sons of God who will manifest the character of God.

He says: "...if you are living according to the flesh, you must die..." We are not under obligation to live according to the flesh; we must put that to death.

“...if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

“The deeds of the body” can also be translated as “the practices of the body”: the inclinations of the body – the body has tendencies to move in a certain direction – some of them are neutral but there are various aspects that will lead us away from the path of righteousness.

So we must by the Spirit put to death the practices of the body. This includes natural thinking; it also includes natural desires in the body – which we allow in our lives – that are in line with the spirit of the world. So the degree to which we live by the power of the Spirit to put to death the practices of the body, to that degree we will find freedom. And so the apostle Paul describes that freedom in **Romans 8: 1-4**:

Romans 8: 1-4

- 1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
- 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,
- 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

He says: “...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”. The condemnation he refers to here is the freedom from condemnation arising from a life of spiritual failure. He is not here referring to condemnation of the judgment of God because of our sins.

He explains this in **verse 2**. He says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” This is a reference to spiritual living: a life of freedom from sin and of death in our daily living. So if we are not free from that, there will be condemnation in our hearts. We will know that our lives are not pleasing to God; we will know that we are not moving in the right direction – if we are prepared to be honest and we come before God to face what He has to say to us.

But if we live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus then there will be no condemnation because we will be free from the law of sin and of death.

He explains: "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*". The Law tells us, "You must be good" but the flesh says, "I cannot and I will not." When we live according to our own power, we will not fulfil the requirements of the Law. So we fail. And God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. "*...as an offering*" is in italics and we can say, "and concerning sin": "... concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh..."

The Lord Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh: He dwelt in a body like ours; He experienced all these inclinations in the body but He never sinned. The reason is: He never gave in to these inclinations. He did not allow these sinful inclinations to be part of His life.

Yes, there are other neutral inclinations in the body: He was hungry; He was thirsty; He was tired. Those were neutral.

But the inclinations in the direction of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life, in those areas the Lord Jesus put them to death. The evil one tempted Him in all these areas. The evil one asked Him to convert the stones to bread, to eat when He was hungry. He said, "No," He would fulfil the will of God. The evil one brought Him to see all the kingdoms of the world; he said, "I will give them to You if You fall down and worship me." He said, "No, you shall only worship the LORD your God." He did not give in to any of these things. So, He overcame.

He condemned sin in the flesh. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and He shows to us how it is possible while dwelling in this body, to overcome and to be free.

If we learn to abide in Him and He in us, we will experience that victory. If we learn the meaning of being crucified with Him, we will experience the path of being risen with Him. The life of freedom and power comes about as a result of our being united with Christ.

“...so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” ... the requirement of the Law, which is good – what God wants of us – it can be fulfilled in us, and the only way we can do that is: we do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

We recognize that the freedom comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, yet in practice, in living out, we need to know the meaning of walking by the Spirit. We need the life of the Spirit constantly, enabling us each moment that we live – on the basis of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ – to be transformed to become like Him, to live as He lived, as the perfect Man before God, a life of righteousness. If we do that, we can be free from that condemnation, free from the law of sin and of death.

We look at what happened to the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul was a man of great learning, respected, determined, disciplined. In terms of the things of the world, boasting in the flesh, He said, “There is much for me to boast in the flesh” – in his natural accomplishments, in his status, in his heritage – but he came to recognize that all that was like rubbish to him. He gave that all up in order to live by the power of God.

We see the apostle Paul preaching, teaching, overcoming evil, casting out demons, healing the people, manifesting the power of God. But do we see in him a man of such great confidence in himself, by himself? No. He said he gave up confidence in the flesh.

So how did he live his life?

1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

- 1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,
- 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The apostle Paul had much knowledge. He could “come with superiority of speech or of wisdom”. He knew much. He knew the Scriptures, he understood the Law; he was familiar with many things in life. We could say he was wise as far as the world was concerned. But he said, “...when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God”. He gave that all up. That was not his approach; that was not his basis.

The problem is that many people are depending on superiority of speech and of wisdom in proclaiming the testimony of God. This is a danger that we must be on the lookout for; we could learn from the apostle Paul that we no longer trust in our own natural abilities, knowledge and what we have accomplished.

But he says, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”. Instead of natural wisdom and power, he concentrated ON Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

His whole focus was on the Lord Jesus Christ, not on himself – his knowledge, his abilities, what he had achieved – and not just on the Lord Jesus Christ as a very general term but the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him crucified: the centrality of the cross.

Without the cross, we have no Saviour.

If the Lord Jesus Christ had come just as a Man to dwell among us to show us how we should live our lives, we will all still be condemned, we will still be sinners: there is no hope for us. It is because He was crucified, He overcame at the cross that we can now in Him not only be forgiven, be justified, but also be empowered to live a life of righteousness.

So he says, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling". The apostle Paul surely must have been a man of great confidence but here he tells us he had no confidence in himself. That does not mean that he had no confidence at all. He had great confidence in His oneness with God. In the context of dependence on God, the apostle Paul was very confident. He knew he was on the right path; he knew that how he lived his life was the most meaningful way. He was prepared to give everything for that. So in that sense he had full confidence: this is the right way and he depended on God, he was fully confident in Him. But in himself, he knew he had no power.

So he was with them in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. He was concerned that he might walk in the flesh. He knew that if he were to walk in the flesh, his ministry would be gone - he could not help others. He recognized his weakness. As the hymn writer says, "I need Thee every hour". We need Him every moment of our lives, in all situations. We need to recognize our helplessness and our weakness so that we can live by His power.

And so he says, "...and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power". It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that he preached and he served. Why did he say, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"? He could have stopped at "in demonstration of the Spirit".

It is the same principle as “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”. There are many aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit but a very primary aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit is power: the power to be what we ought to be and the power to do as we ought to do; the power to live as we should, the power to serve God in the way that we ought to. So he says: “...so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God”.

If we want to help people to come to God in the right way, to establish a right relationship with God, we must help them to appreciate the power of God through ministering by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we use our natural wisdom with all our cleverness and all the imaginations and plans and schemes of men, we may be able to convince many people to follow what they think is the Christian faith, but there may be no power: it is only the wisdom of men. So the apostle Paul lived his life by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why his ministry was so effective.

I now want to go on to look at the whole picture of the path of freedom that God wants to bring us to.

Romans 8: 31-39

- 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?
- 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;
- 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
- 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
- 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."
- 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.
- 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
- 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is a beautiful passage that is very encouraging if we are prepared to follow God all the way. He says, "What then shall we say to these things?" He had written **Romans 5, 6, 7** and now **Romans 8** (and prior to that, **Romans 1-4**). After all that he had said about the gospel and what we can experience as a result of God's grace to us, he says, "What then shall we say?"

In summary, he says, "If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?"

How wonderful it is! "If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?" It does not mean that nobody can be against us. Certainly, there will be many who will be against us, but "who *is* against us?" in the sense who can be against us and prevail? No one can prevail if God *is* for us.

So this is the wonderful thing about freedom in God. When we know the power of God in our lives, when we live by His will, God will be for us. Then who can really be against us? The evil one cannot overcome us when God is truly for us.

But can we ensure that God will be for us?

So he tells us, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Here he is saying that for those who truly love Him, who have come to appreciate the Lord Jesus and what He has done, we can see that God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all. He loved us so much, He gave His own Son for us, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things – if we fulfil the conditions.

If we are prepared to go with Him then God is prepared to give us all things freely, all things that are really good for us. He did not just bring the Lord Jesus Christ into this world to die on the cross for us just that our sins may be forgiven.

No, He wants to give us much, much more than that. He wants to freely give us all things that pertain to life and godliness for time and for eternity.

So then he says, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies". So if we talk about condemnation, who can condemn us? God is the one who justifies. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are now justified; our sins are forgiven. God is the one who justifies through the Lord Jesus Christ. "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." He is our Saviour; we are forgiven, we are justified if we come to Him. If we are repentant, we are prepared to follow Him then we can know this freedom from condemnation.

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" We can experience all kinds of situations in this world, whether from people or from powers of darkness or from natural happenings in this world. There can be many problems and difficulties and he describes some of them: "Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Will all these things separate us from the love of Christ?

He says, "Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.""

This describes the kind of attitude that we ought to have if we are to benefit from all that God wants to give to us. "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG" – are we prepared for that kind of life?

Do we want to preserve our life, hold on to our life, or are we prepared to give it up to God, present it to Him, be prepared to be PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG... be CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED?

This is something that we all need to ponder about again and again: Is it true of our lives, or are we clinging on to our lives and the things of this world – there are so many things that we want, we are not prepared to give up? If we live like that, we cannot benefit from all that God wants to give to us. We will not be able to overcome.

But if we are prepared to give of ourselves to God and in that context to trust Him and to live by His power, then he says, “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us”.

We overwhelmingly conquer – that means it is a very great victory. It is not just scraping through, just passing, but is far beyond a distinction.

We will overwhelmingly conquer – how? “...through Him who loved us”: It is by the power of God that we can overcome, not by our own abilities. We can never overcome on our own; we do not have that life.

So are we prepared to acknowledge that, to live by that? If we do, then in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer by His power.

And so he says, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If we are not separated from the love of God, what does it mean?

It means we abide in His love; it means His love is showered upon us; it means we benefit from His love. The goodness of God, the life of God, the meaning in Him will be our experience.

So he says: “...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God”.

Basically what he is saying is that there is no created thing that can separate us from the love of God. But we may not quite appreciate that and so he lists some of these things. He says, “death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth...” There are all kinds of things we may encounter which we may at times feel very afraid they may separate us from the love of God. Many of these things can be very difficult to go through and we may be fearful. But he says, “No, all these things...” and he says, “more than that, any other created thing...” – so all those things he mentioned are created things. And he says, “any other created thing...” There is no other created thing that can separate us from the love of God.

So God wants us to find full freedom in Him, to experience that freedom in every aspect of our lives, so that not only will there be no condemnation but also, there will be life and power to live as we ought to live.

As we live in this world, we will face many difficulties. There will be times when we feel totally inadequate, weak and helpless: no strength, no might. But God has promised that if we wait for Him, if we abide in His will, if we trust Him then He will grant us that life, that power, that strength, to go through whatever situation that may confront us. We have read this passage before; it is good to read it again. It is a very beautiful passage and it is very encouraging.

Isaiah 40: 28-31

- 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.
- 29 He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.
- 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,
- 31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

God is The Everlasting God, the LORD. He is the Creator of the ends of the earth. He is the almighty God, the all-powerful One, the Source of Power and Life. And so He does not become weary or tired. He has all the life and power and strength for every situation, for whatever is needed.

His understanding is inscrutable. How wonderful that is: the wisdom of God. Very often we may not understand why God does things that way; it does not seem to be the best course of action. Bear in mind: His understanding is inscrutable, unfathomable. There are times when we may not be able to recognize yet until He reveals to us, He shows to us, but we can appreciate it, that God is the all-wise God. Whatever He does is perfectly good and wise.

And so, He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power. This refers to those who wait for Him, those who trust Him, those who seek to walk with Him. This is in contrast to those who do not.

Youths grow weary and tired... vigorous young men stumble badly. All our natural powers cannot cope with what life may bring to us. There is no man that can go through this life meaningfully without the power of God; we do not have the life and the power to do so. Men are filled with struggles, distresses, fears, anxieties and condemnation, bondage. We cannot live this life by our own natural abilities. We will grow weary and tired, we will stumble badly in the course of life; we cannot cope with it.

But those who wait for the LORD will experience a different kind of life: they will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

This must apply first and foremost in the realm of the spirit. If we wait for God, if we trust Him then in our spirit, we can know His strength, the power of the Holy Spirit.

We will be able to cope with whatever situation that may come our way. God will enable us to do and to go through situations in a meaningful way.

In the physical realm, the principle will also apply. That does not mean that physically we will be as strong as Hercules or others like that, but we will have enough strength to do what God wants us to do. Whatever is meaningful in the eyes of God for us to do, we will have that strength to do so. He will enable us; He will strengthen us to go through that situation.

In the time of the Old Testament, the people faced many enemies they could not cope with but when they trusted God, God saw them through the physical situation and they overcame in resounding victories. But that does not mean that they would always overcome: It is in the context when they trusted God and God wanted them to overcome in accordance with the will of God. So, when we walk with God, we seek to do His will, we are committed to His commands and instructions... we can trust Him. He will enable us to fulfil His will in whatever way that is suitable, appropriate and meaningful.

So then, as we seek to know more about the life in the Spirit, the freedom that we can experience in the Spirit, let us recognize that there are progressive levels that we may experience. Let us not be discouraged just because at times we fail, we have not reached that level that we think we ought to.

If we are perseverant, if we are prepared to learn, if we are humble before God, God will teach us and we will rise to a higher and higher plane in our development. And God wants us to know the fullness of that freedom.

So whether it be in the area of being justified, or in the area of presenting ourselves to God, or in knowing His power, there are different levels that we can experience it. Let us not be satisfied just to have a taste of it, but let us go on to perfection; let us go on to maturity. Let us go on to the highest level that God is calling us towards. Let us learn to be perfect as He is perfect, be holy as He is holy: be pure in heart that we may see Him and know the fellowship with Him.

The Lord willing, we will consider this area of freedom in the Spirit with regard to being transformed: a life that is transformed by God. What we have considered so far is with reference to our experience of these different areas that will bring us freedom, but ultimately God wants to bring us to a very wonderful level of life: a life that is constantly manifesting the power of God, the freedom of God consistently.

Let us look to Him, that He may help us to appreciate what that should mean, how it can be real in us and how we can then honour Him as a result, and we can contribute meaningfully to the lives of others.

Let us come before the Lord and ask Him to teach us His ways and to search our hearts, to help us recognize if there are areas that we have gone astray that we will come to Him, seek His forgiveness and seek to give ourselves more fully to Him and ask Him to come to empower us to live for Him as we should.

And let us thank Him for the cross of the Lord Jesus, that through the Lord Jesus we can find that true freedom as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.