

Romans 8:5–26: The Mind of the Spirit

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Craig Keener provides an in-depth analysis of Romans 8:5–26, exploring the transition from life under the law in Romans 7 to life in the Spirit. He examines the epistemological and worldview shift that occurs under the influence of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing that the Spirit engages both the cognitive and affective dimensions of human experience. Keener unpacks the themes of divine adoption (*huiiothesia*), the intimate "Abba" relationship modeled by Jesus, and the New Exodus imagery that frames the Spirit as a down payment (*arrhabon*) on a future inheritance. The lecture culminates in an exploration of cosmic suffering and the three levels of groaning—by creation, believers, and the interceding Spirit—as birth pangs ushering in future glory and bodily resurrection.

Outline

I. Introduction and Context: Romans 7 vs. Romans 8

- A. Romans 7 as life under the law without faith and the Spirit
- B. Romans 8 as the life of the believer in Christ

II. The Mind of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-13)

- A. Defining the "mind of the Spirit" vs. "mind of the flesh"
 1. *Phronema* (disposition, frame of mind, way of thinking)
 2. Influence of God's own Spirit on human cognition and affect
- B. Dual aspect of the Spirit's work: affective and cognitive

1. Correcting the anti-intellectual separation of mind and spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15)
 2. The Spirit shaping worldview and thinking (1 Corinthians 2:10)
- C. Contrast with worldly evaluation and frameworks
 1. Pervasive culture of competition and celebrity cults in Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)
 2. Spiritual competence needed to evaluate spiritual things
 - D. Epistemic frameworks and worldview assumptions
 1. Definition of epistemology (the way we know things)
 2. Different methods for different disciplines (science vs. history/law/witness testimony)
 3. Critiques of hyper-constricted epistemologies (e.g., David Hume)
 - E. Natural (*psuchikos*) vs. Spiritual (*pneumatikos*) person
 1. Genesis 2:7 allusion: Adam as a living soul (living on his own, apart from God's Spirit)
 2. Two types of humanity

III. Rhetorical Use of Ideal Types and Paradoxes

- A. Definition of ideal types in ancient rhetoric
 1. Stoic concepts: the ideal sage vs. the fool
 2. Old Testament and Jewish concepts: wisdom vs. folly in Proverbs; righteous vs. wicked
 3. Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran): children of light vs. children of darkness
- B. Function of mixtures and paradox in spiritual life
 1. Contrast in 1 John (1 John 3:9 sinless ideal vs. 1 John 1:8 confession of sin)
 2. Believers are fundamentally of the Spirit, despite spontaneous reactions to old triggers

IV. The Mind of the Spirit is Peace

- A. Contrast with Greek philosophical concepts of tranquil minds

- B. Exegetical background: Isaiah 26:3 (mind stayed on God has peace)
- C. Practical application (Philippians 4:6-8)
 1. Entrusting worries to God through prayer
 2. Peace guarding the mind
 3. Disciplining the mind to think on good things
- D. Interpersonal dimensions of peace (Romans 12:18, 14:19)

V. Led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14)

- A. New Exodus background
 1. Led through the wilderness (like Israel, and like Jesus in Matthew 4 / Luke 4)
 2. Primary emphasis on moral empowerment (fleeing wrong, doing right)
- B. Leading for mission (Acts comparison)
 1. Prophetic power for crossing cultural boundaries (Acts 8:29, 10:19, 16:6-7)
 2. Integration of spiritual intuition/prompts with teaching and ministry

VI. The Spirit of Adoption (*Huiothesia*) (Romans 8:15)

- A. Old Testament and Jewish backgrounds
 1. Israel adopted as God's son (Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy)
 2. Davidic lineage adopted as God's son (2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2:7, 4QFlorilegium)
- B. Relational intimacy vs. bondage
 1. Slavery to sin and fear of death replaced by sonship
 2. Meaning of "Abba": distinctive Aramaic title of respect and intimacy ("Papa")
 3. Jesus as the model for intimate prayer (Gethsemane, Mark 14:36)

VII. The Spirit's Testimony and Inheritance (Romans 8:16-17)

- A. Inner witness of the Spirit
 1. Spirit associated with prophecy in early Judaism
 2. Spirit testifies *together with* our spirit (Ezekiel 36, John 3)

3. Historic emphasis on the inner witness (Moravians, John Wesley)
- B. Heirs and Inheritance
 1. New Exodus theme of inheriting the Promised Land
 2. Spirit as *arrhabon* (down payment, first installment; 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Eph 1:13-14)

VIII. Suffering and Future Glory (Romans 8:17-25)

- A. Sufferings with Christ as a prerequisite to being glorified with Him
- B. Theological definition of glory (*kabod, shekinah*)
 1. God's heavy presence on the tabernacle/temple (1 Kings 8)
 2. Future glorified resurrection bodies
- C. Sufferings compared to future glory (Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17)
- D. Sufferings as birth pangs of a new world
 1. Colossians 1:24 context
 2. Jewish expectations of end-time tribulation/birth pangs (Mishnah Sotah 9:15, 4 Ezra, Qumran hymns)

IX. Three Levels of Groaning (Romans 8:22-26)

- A. Creation groaning for liberation and restoration
- B. Believers groaning for physical resurrection and transformation of the body (2 Corinthians 5:2-4)
- C. Spirit groaning in intercession
 1. Debate on praying in tongues (*glossa*) vs. inarticulate, wordless groanings (sighing)
 2. Connection to New Exodus (sighing of Israel under Egyptian bondage, Exodus 2:23-24)