

# **Romans 5 – 8: The Believer's Sanctification**

*A Commentary with Help for Living the Christ-life.*

Thomas W. Finley

## **Romans 5 - 8**

### **The Believer's Sanctification**

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## Table of Contents

Foreword .....	vi
Preface.....	viii
Acknowledgments .....	x
Abbreviations.....	xi
Introduction.....	1
Outline of Romans 5 – 8 .....	5
Chapter One: Romans 5:1-11 .....	6
Life Application .....	13
Chapter Two: Romans 5:12-21 .....	17
Chapter Three: Romans 6:1-11.....	28
Life Application .....	37
Chapter Four: Romans 6:12-23.....	41
Life Application .....	42
Life Application .....	50
Chapter Five: Romans 7:1-6.....	55
Life Application .....	60
Chapter Six: Romans 7:7-25.....	63
Life Application .....	71
Chapter Seven: Romans 8:1-7 .....	75
Life Application .....	81
Chapter Eight: Romans 8:8-17 .....	87
Life Application .....	96
Chapter Nine: Romans 8:18-30 .....	99
Chapter Ten: Romans 8:31-39 .....	113
Life Application .....	117
Appendix A.....	123

Law and Grace Principles.....	123
Appendix B .....	124
“Soul Nourishment First” .....	124
Appendix C .....	127
The Believer’s Conscience .....	127
Appendix D .....	130
The Birthright .....	130
Appendix E.....	134
The 1,000 Year Kingdom in God’s Plan.....	134
Appendix F.....	138
Eternal Security .....	138
Two Great Principles of Truth .....	153
About the Author .....	161

## Foreword

The Christian landscape is littered with confusion about how a person is saved (“gets to heaven”), how to live as a Christian, the meaning of eternal life, the role of works in the believer’s life, the role of the Holy Spirit in one’s life, and the security of the believer. Sometimes, the confusion arises because of adherence to certain systems. Sometimes, the confusion arises by poor interpretation methods. And sometimes the confusion results from, well, from confusing teaching.

The book of Romans is Paul’s *magnum opus*. In it, he first lays out the universality of man’s sinfulness, the amazing doctrine of justification (salvation) by faith alone in Christ alone, and sanctification (living as a believer). Then Paul answers the question “what about Israel” and gives specific commands for his readers (and for us).

This book addresses the middle section of Romans: The sanctification of the believer. Tom Finley works carefully through the text with enough detail to support his interpretive conclusions while, at the same time, writing in a way the “average” reader (whoever that may be!) can follow and understand what he wishes to convey. And in doing so, he clarifies the areas of confusion mentioned above – plus a few more!

Finley teaches in international settings and wished to provide a resource for that context about this passage. I, too, have traveled to many countries to teach. Good resources are often difficult to find. Sometimes, the students speak or read English as a second language; sometimes translators are required. A concise, readable resource is invaluable. And when translation is needed, such resources are again invaluable. Tom Finley has provided such a resource.

I won’t give spoilers about the book, other than these two. Firstly, the book provides a clear, coherent understanding of this vital section of Romans which not only clarifies the reader’s understanding but also addresses difficult passages as well as those that we may be predisposed to understand in a certain “traditional” way. Secondly, true to the context of Romans and all of the New Testament, Finley emphasizes grace. Grace is a term that most Christians use, but often fall short in their understanding. He concludes the book with these words:

God has now placed us under the regime of grace (Rom. 6:14). That grace is nothing less than the Holy Spirit experienced by us in our walk here on earth. Paul learned

that such grace was fully sufficient to meet his need in suffering (2 Cor. 12:9-10). God has made this grace available to us.

Read the book. It's worth it. Reread the sections that teach something different about a passage than you might have understood it to teach. Whether or not you will agree with Finley's conclusions, you'll find he sticks to the text and carefully concludes the context!

I appreciate what he has provided to the Christian community with this work!

Roger S. Fankhauser, DMin  
Retired pastor, Burleson Bible Church  
Past President, Free Grace Alliance

## Preface

The origin of this book is twofold. Firstly, for a number of years I have been focused on helping believers in developing countries with the truths of the Bible. So, it is only natural that I would desire to teach something on this critical passage in the New Testament. Over the years I have actually taught some of these truths here and there, both in conferences and in writing. Secondly, the specific impetus to write this commentary came after I read the wonderful book by Dave Anderson and Jim Reitman, titled, *Portraits of Righteousness: Free Grace Sanctification in Romans 5 -8* (published 2013). Not only were the insights of Dr. Anderson and Dr. Reitman helpful to me on these chapters, but I saw the specific need to produce a book on these important truths for those outside the western church.

Having had the privilege to travel overseas a number of times to preach and teach on Biblical themes, I have developed a deep sense of responsibility to help the believers there with the truth. The fact is that those in North America have an overabundance of Christian literature. In contrast, there is little literature available in the very places where the church is growing rapidly (notably Africa and Asia). Also, what literature is available there is mostly not of good quality. So, I have sensed a spiritual urging from the Lord to help these dear hungry believers with quality literature.

These chapters in Romans focus on how the believer can live a victorious Christian life. Christians are really hungry for this victory, which is most often elusive for them. Amazingly, there is actually a rich history of practical teaching on the truths of these chapters that can render real help for believers in their walk with God. In 1875 the Keswick Convention began in England. It has continued for over 100 years. This week-long series of meetings was attended and taught by Christians from different denominations and backgrounds. In the early decades, the convention focused on knowing and applying the truths related to living the Christian life. Much of the teaching was based on Romans 6-8, and that teaching has been foundational for the experience of the life of Christ. Some of the truly spiritual men of God who taught there in the early years were Evan Hopkins, A. T. Pierson, Andrew Murray, Handley G. C. Moule, F. B. Meyer, Hudson Taylor, and W. H. Griffith Thomas. The Keswick meetings had a profound effect upon the lives of many believers. Its influence upon the missionary efforts of that era was astounding. Amy Carmichael, the selfless missionary to India, was greatly affected regarding her service to Christ. Hudson Taylor reckoned that two-thirds of the hundreds of missionaries who served in the China Inland Mission were on the field as a direct result of Keswick. Yet, the expositional and practical teaching developed from those early decades of Keswick seems to be mostly



unknown in the churches in developing countries. Sadly, it also seems mostly untaught and unpracticed in the churches in the west.

This book on Romans 5-8 aims at combining the best practical teaching for vital Christian living with clear and careful exegesis of the text. For help with the exegesis, I have used a number of commentaries for guidance. Among these are the modern commentaries by Zane Hodges and René Lopez, along with the book by Anderson and Reitman. These particular works provide new insights into the Greek text that many have missed. It is only by accurately understanding the text that we can most accurately apply truth to our lives.

This book covers the matter of the believer's sanctification—his or her growth into the likeness of Christ in their spiritual walk and life. Nothing could be more important, as it is pointed out in Romans 8:29 that God's purpose for us individually is to be conformed to the image of His Son. My prayer is that all believers worldwide may benefit both from their knowledge of these Scriptures and from the very practical help provided here for their Christian life.

Thomas Finley  
Oakboro, North Carolina, USA  
January, 2020

## Acknowledgments

I am indeed thankful for several people who have assisted in the production of this book. Roger Fankhauser, Norman Young and Donnie Preslar reviewed the manuscript for content and provided helpful input for improvements. John Reid undertook the tedious work of checking the accuracy of certain details in the manuscript. Others prayed for this work and I have certainly sensed the spiritual support of their prayers.

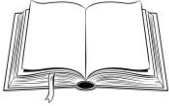
It is always satisfying to see the body of Christ sacrificially work together for the sake of the kingdom of God. All believers who benefit from this writing should know that this is not just the effort of one person, and each person who labored in the Lord for its completion will be recompensed by our Lord in the Day of Christ.

Finally, I desire to give my thanks to God whose grace has enabled me to work on this book over many months. He has answered my constant prayer for its completion. My prayer has been, "Father, please complete this work of faith by Your power." This prayer is based upon the very encouraging words of 2 Thessalonians 1:11: "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power."

## Abbreviations

OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
BAGD	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)





## Introduction

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### *Introduction to Romans 5 – 8*

A brief introduction to this significant section of Scripture is needed in order to understand its message. The book of Romans is a letter to the believers in Rome, but it is also much more. It is a well-organized and profound theological essay written by Paul the apostle. He was a chosen vessel of God and a man of great learning and experience in the Lord. The commentator Fredrick Godet called the epistle “a cathedral of the Christian faith.”

Two ideas in particular in the earlier chapters of this book give us a solid foundation for understanding this great section of the epistle. Firstly, many commentators rightly claim that the theme of Romans is found in Romans 1:16-17. More will be said about this theme shortly. Secondly, we should see that Romans 1:18-4:25 covers the problem of mankind's sins before a holy God, and God's solution to this problem through His Son. That solution is termed “justification” by many theologians and involves the blood of Christ's sacrifice for men in order to satisfy God's righteousness. The Greek verb for “justify” comes from a base word that means righteous or just. Justification is God's declaration that the one who simply believes (trusts) in Jesus is righteous in God's sight. Justification gives man forgiveness of his sins and imputes God's righteousness to him, thus bringing him into a right relationship with God. The sinner is justified simply by faith in Christ. Such faith is totally apart from man's efforts to resolve his sin problem with a holy God.

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man

against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” (Rom. 4:5-8)

Therefore, Romans 1:18-4:25 covers the great matter of *justification*, often described as God's dealing with the *penalty of sin*. Such “justification” is a theological term that describes only one aspect of righteousness for persons. There is also the practical righteousness of persons as indicated by their actions. We may say that the penalty for man's sin is eternal death or eternal separation from a holy God. Justification removes that penalty for anyone who trusts in Christ.

The theme of the epistle is found in Romans 1:16-17:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’” (NASB)

The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” The good news tells us of Jesus Christ and His work, and thus it has the power to save, or deliver, a person who believes this gospel. The word for salvation in the original Greek language has no specific theological meaning. It simply means a deliverance of someone from some type of peril or negative situation to a positive and secure situation. It is used sometimes in Scripture for a physical deliverance, such as from disease, death or danger (like shipwreck). It is also used to describe spiritual deliverance, as in justification described above.

The theme verses declare that the righteousness of God is revealed in the good news, and this happens through the faith of the one who believes. The first aspect of this revelation of God's righteousness is through justification: “It was to show his [God's] righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Yet, the gospel we see in Romans covers more than justification. The good news in Romans is not only about release from the *penalty of sin*. It is also about being set free from the *power of sin*. Our initial faith in Jesus sets us free from the penalty of sin and gives us peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Yet, Romans 5 – 8 show us that through our faith we can be *set free from the power, or domination, of indwelling sin* which still resides within a believer. This process is termed *sanctification*, whereby we become increasingly holy in our daily living.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek word for sanctification means “to set apart.” It speaks of being set apart from all that is unholy to God and His holiness. The words translated “saint,” “holy” and “holiness” are based upon the root word for sanctification. Some Bible teachers distinguish three different aspects of sanctification: (1) “Positional Sanctification” describes our being set apart to God in our eternal standing before Him based solely upon the work of Christ on the cross (Heb. 10:10, 14); (2) “Experiential Sanctification” describes the condition of a believer as he is increasingly set apart to God's holy character in his actual experience, his living (1

sanctification, we reveal the righteousness of God *in our living*.

Thus, we can understand Romans 1:17 in this way: “For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from [initial] faith [in justification] to [ongoing] faith [which reveals the righteousness of God through sanctification]; as it is written ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”<sup>2</sup>

Bible teachers also speak of the third phase of salvation as *glorification*—freedom from the *presence of sin*.

The following page displays a chart summarizing the gospel in Romans. These matters will be explored more in depth as we lay out the important truths of Romans 5-8 in this commentary.

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Pet. 1:15-16); (3) “Ultimate Sanctification” points to the future complete transformation of the believer into the image of Christ. Romans 5-8 deals with “experiential sanctification,” the process in which a believer becomes increasingly holy in his living.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:17 has been explained in various ways by commentators. I credit Dr. David Anderson and Dr. James Reitman for this explanation, which certainly captures the scope of the good news in Romans. Their book titled, *Portraits of Righteousness — Free Grace Sanctification in Romans 5-8*, provided great help on a number of points in this book.

The gospel in Romans: A Summary

Scripture section	Phase of salvation	Means	The revelation of God's righteousness
Rom. 1:18-4:25	Justification: Freedom from the <i>penalty of sin</i>	By faith in Christ	God counts our faith as righteousness
Rom. 5 – 8	Sanctification: Freedom from the <i>power of sin</i>	By faith with obedience	Through our daily living
Rom. 8:17-25 (subsection in Romans 8)	Glorification: Freedom from the <i>presence of sin</i>	By faith in Christ  By faith with obedience	God is glorified through His children being heirs of God (8:17a). Includes receiving redeemed bodies (8:20-23). Includes glorification into Christ's image (8:29-30).  Glorified with Christ as fellow heirs in His coming kingdom—a special <i>reward</i> for obedient believers, who are mature sons (8:14, 17b-19).



## Outline of Romans 5 – 8

Romans Chapter Five: Saved by His life

Romans 5:1-11 - *Justification opens the pathway to sanctification.*

Romans 5:12-21: *Through Adam, sin and death reigned, but through Christ grace may reign through righteousness unto eternal life.*

Romans Chapter Six: Buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life

Romans 6:1-11: *Participation with Christ for a new life*

Romans 6:12-14: *Present your new selves to God*

Romans 6:15-23: *Slaves of righteousness*

Romans Chapter Seven: Freed from law

Romans 7:1-6: *Released from law to serve in newness of Spirit*

Romans 7:7-25: *Paul's struggle with the law*

Romans Chapter Eight: God's provision and purpose for the believer

Romans 8:1-17: *The provision of the Holy Spirit for victory over sin*

Romans 8:18-30: *God's work in suffering for future glory*

Romans 8:31-39: *God's love for us*



## Chapter One: Romans 5:1-11

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### Romans Chapter Five: Saved by His life

Romans 5:1-11 - *Justification opens the pathway to sanctification.*

***<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. <sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.***

5:1-2: *Marvelous spiritual results of justification for the believer:*

- Peace with God. We have been justified, declared righteous by God, by our faith. This justification occurs at the moment of belief and is a permanent reality of our relationship with God (John 5:24; Rom. 4:1-5; Eph. 1:13-14). Therefore, those who were sinners under God's wrath (1:18) are now fundamentally at peace with Him through faith. Such peace is a logical result of all that Paul has argued in Romans 3:21-4:25. Thus, the verse begins with "therefore."

- Standing in grace. Our justification has introduced us into a realm of grace. We now stand in this grace and have permanent access to God and His resources. This is where we can receive an ongoing supply of God's Spirit to lead us and empower us to live holy lives. (Rom. 6:14; 8:4-6, 13-14; Gal. 3:2-5). Our access to this grace is a vital key for our sanctification. Sanctification is the process of becoming more holy or Christ-like in our daily lives. After being justified, sanctification should take place in increasing measure over our lifetimes.

- Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. We rejoice in the hope, or expectancy, of one day being in full union with Christ, apart from the presence and power of sin. The Greek word for "hope" (*elpis*) in this verse likely expresses the idea of "expectation" (certainty) according to Greek lexicons. This glorification is an absolutely sure result of our justification. Romans 8:29-30 gives us the "golden chain" of this certainty. All believers will one day be fully conformed to the image of Christ, thus perfectly glorifying or expressing Him in their lives.

*5:3-8 - Rejoicing in tribulations which can produce sanctification.*

In verses 1-2, Paul gives us the results of justification. Using an introduction in verse three of "not only that," Paul signals that he is adding another step beyond justification and its results. Paul now moves into the experience of our sanctification, namely how we can become more Christ-like in our daily lives. In verses 3-5 the apostle outlines the important role that tribulations should play in our sanctification. This is a significant theme in the New Testament (among other passages, note 2 Cor. 4:16-18, 12:8-9-10; Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7, 4:12-14). Paul uses three words to describe our growth unto mature Christ-likeness. The first word is **endurance**. It means to remain under and endure suffering and hardships. Yet, we should know that such endurance of hardships is not to be carried out with a bad attitude towards others or our environment. Rather, endurance includes compliant acceptance of hardships that God allows in our lives, seeking to be pleasing to Him during such times of trial. The same Greek word here for endurance is used in Hebrews 10:36, where it is linked to doing the will of God in trying circumstances. *Thayer's Greek Definitions* gives a primary definition of this Greek word as follows: "in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings."<sup>3</sup>

The idea of "rejoicing" in one's tribulations is not natural to humans. But, here the Scripture holds up the expected ideal for believers. A few translations translate the phrase as "let us also exult," taking the Greek mood of the verb as "volitive subjunctive," meaning it is a strong

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<sup>3</sup> *Thayer's Greek Definitions*, electronic e-sword edition.

encouragement for the believer to follow this action. In any case, the parallel passage in James 1:2-4 shows us clearly that this attitude of rejoicing is a choice taken by the believer, something that may or may not happen. In James 1:2 the verb in “count it all joy” is imperative, being a command given to the believer.

The second word in this short passage is **character**, or **proven character**. Here it pictures the idea of being approved after passing through the test of tribulation.

The final word is **hope**. We saw in verse two that the hope here is our expectation of a future day when we will no longer experience the awful presence of sin. This same hope is echoed later in Romans 8:23-24. There, the future “redemption of our body” is seen as the final stage of salvation for which we hope and expectantly wait. We will not be disappointed in this hope according to verse five. Why? Because verse five explains that the love of God for us has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The effect of God's pouring out of His love into our hearts is real. It gives the believer great hope that God's promise of future glory for the believer is true and is coming—there will be no disappointment concerning this hope. In fact, the Holy Spirit has sealed us and is given as a pledge of our future inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). The story of Jesus and His death on behalf of us helpless and fallen sinners is also a constant objective witness to the love of God for us (Rom. 5:6-8). We are encouraged by the Spirit and the truth of Jesus' sacrifice for us that such a love will see us through to the end, even when times are dark and difficult. It is most fitting, therefore, that such love is noted here at the end of this short passage concerning the path of sanctification through tribulations. This same thought concludes this section of Scripture on sanctification at the end of Romans 8 (Rom. 8:31-39).

#### 5:9-11: *Saved by His life.*

Here Paul is declaring that *after* we have been justified and reconciled, it is expected that we will *then* experience marvelous salvation or deliverance. Paul is making a declaration here that once our salvation from *the penalty of sin* is settled and over, then deliverance from *the power of sin* is anticipated.<sup>4</sup> Thus verses nine and ten may be said to act as a

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<sup>4</sup> Some Bible commentators point out that the verb translated “shall be saved” in verses nine and ten are in the future form. Yet, they explain that here the future verb form does not specifically indicate a deliverance at some future point in time. Rather, it is considered the “logical future.” That is, the salvation here means that such deliverance is anticipated as an immediately following result of the prior action. In verse nine, being justified from sin logically anticipates a sanctified life to follow in the believer. And, a sanctified living means we are not under God's displeasure (wrath) against sinful living. In the same way, being reconciled to God (verse ten) anticipates that such a reconciled believer would now live by Christ's

bridge, showing us the connection between two great themes in this epistle: Justification (Romans 3:21-4:25) and Sanctification (Romans 5-8). This deliverance is described in two ways in verses nine and ten, and these two ways really mirror one another: “saved by him from the wrath of God” and “saved by his life.” Note that verse ten begins with the explanatory word “for” (*gar*, Greek) showing us that verse ten is a further explanation of verse nine. The strong message from these verses is this: *When we live by the life of Christ, we are also saved from the wrath of God.*

Now some may wonder what this “wrath of God” means. After all, it seems clear from Paul’s writing here that this wrath is something that *the believer* is expected to avoid *after* he is already justified. The subject of God’s wrath has some complexities to it, but the primary idea we should understand is that God’s wrath is His constant attitude of holy indignation against sin. An early church father named Lactantius wrote about this characteristic of God in a respected treatise called “*De ira Rei.*” Sin is absolutely contrary to God’s holiness, so He has righteous anger against it. But, God’s anger is not fitful like human anger. This anger is often held back from taking actions of judgment by God’s forbearance or His mercy, especially in dealing with His own people. We see this in the OT in God’s dealings with the Jews. At times throughout history, we can see visible demonstrations of God’s wrath. God gave the city of Jerusalem over to the Babylonians because of His wrath against Judah’s sins (Jer. 32:28-37). God poured out utter destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah for their abominations (Deut. 29:23).

Earlier in the epistle, we have an initial mention of God’s wrath with important details about it:

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup>For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup>For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Rom. 1:18-21)

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life, thus experiencing a deliverance from the power of sin. Although these outcomes are logically anticipated, there is no guarantee of such a sanctified living in the life of a believer. That outcome is dependent upon the believer’s actions of faith and obedience, as chapter six makes plain.

Firstly, we see here that God has given men a *revelation* of His *wrath against ungodly and unrighteous behavior* (v. 18). The text immediately following gives us more information on this “revelation” to men and their reaction to it. People choosing to live unrighteous lives suppress the truth that is revealed to them (v. 18). This is despite the fact that such knowledge of God has been made plain to them by God (v.19). God’s supreme position and attributes as the Creator are seen from the creation around men, making them without excuse (v. 20). This is because although they had this instinctive knowledge of God they refused to honor Him as God or give Him thanks. Thus their thinking became futile and their hearts were darkened. The rest of Romans chapter one shows how the awful depths of sin are reached as men resist the truth of God. The passage in Romans 2:14-15 further testifies that men also have a basic knowledge of God’s moral law through the function of their conscience. Men also have the testimony of history showing God’s judgments upon sin in events like Noah’s flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. The last verse in Romans chapter one tells us plainly that men have an intuitive knowledge that God condemns sinful living with severe judgment: “Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32).

So verses nine and ten tell us that when we live by Christ’s life, we will be delivered from God’s wrath against sin. This makes perfect sense as when we live by His life we are not practicing sin. Of course, every believer will have some sins from time to time, and these he must confess to God with an attitude of forsaking them so that fellowship with God may be restored and cleansing from unrighteousness may take place (1 Jn. 1:9; Prov. 28:13).

On the other hand, whenever we believers are living in sin God’s wrath is towards us. This may result in some discipline or judgment in the life of a sinning believer (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:27-32; Heb. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Jn. 5:16). It is important, however, that we never confuse our eternal standing with God (by grace) with our life on earth under the exercise of God’s moral government.<sup>5</sup> We are eternally saved and secure

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<sup>5</sup> The most prolific writer among the Plymouth Brethren in the 1800s was C. H. Mackintosh. Mackintosh made this significant observation: “Now, to be merely a subject of God’s government is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and to refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it, would demand a volume: we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the Word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government and man under grace. In the one case he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal

with all of our sins forgiven (John 3:16; 5:24; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 10:10). Such truth means that a child of God can never suffer the *eternal* consequence of separation from God as a result of his sins. Yet, while on earth we are accountable to God and under His government. He may discipline us and bring us under His temporal judgment. And, eventually, we will have to give an account to Christ at His Judgment Seat. There we will be recompensed according to our deeds, whether good or bad (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:4-5; 5:10; Eph. 5:5-8 compared with Col. 3:22-25).<sup>6</sup>

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security.” C. H. Mackintosh, *The Mackintosh Treasury – Miscellaneous Writings by C. H. Mackintosh* (Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), p. 650

<sup>6</sup> The believer’s recompense can be positive or negative at Christ’s Judgment Seat. Second Corinthians 5:10 states: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Any believer who practices an unrepentant sinful lifestyle is certainly going to face disinheritance in the coming millennial kingdom of Christ. This truth is seen as a warning to believers in Ephesians 5:1-6. God’s wrath is against those who are “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:6), which is an idiom meaning those who are characterized by disobedience. More will be said about the matter of inheritance in the kingdom age when Romans 8:17 is discussed.

Summarizing the truths about God’s wrath in relation to a believer, we may break it down this way: 1) God’s “present wrath” (in this life) is against any Christian practicing sin by not walking in the Light of God (Rom. 1:18; 1 Jn. 1:5-7); 2) God’s future wrath is exercised in righteous judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ upon those who have lived in unrepentant sin (Rom. 2:3-11; Eph. 5:3-7). The passage in Romans 2:3-7 refers to principles of the coming Judgment of God upon *every person*—believer or unbeliever—according to their deeds (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 22:12). Believers will appear for such judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). This judgment for believers will involve a certain recompense for deeds but will *not* determine eternal salvation. Our eternal salvation is a free gift apart from our deeds and is permanent (John 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9). The “eternal life” mentioned in Romans 2:7 is not the free gift of eternal life that we now inwardly possess (Jn. 3:16; 4:10-14; 5:24; 6:47; 1 Jn. 5:11-12). Rather, the “eternal life” in Romans 2:7 is a special portion of eternal life given as a reward to the seeking and faithful disciples in the “age to come,” the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ (Mk. 10: 28-30; Lk. 18:28-30). More information on such reward is found in Appendix F in the booklet, *Eternal Security*; 3) Scripture also mentions an unconditional deliverance from “the wrath to come” for every believer (1 Thess. 1:10). The context of First Thessalonians is the end-times and especially the “day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2; Zeph. 1:14-15). At some point in the last seven years of this age, God will pour out His wrath in various dramatic judgments upon sinful men living upon the earth (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19, 19:15). Yet, God promises that all of His believers will not experience this wrath, but be delivered from it (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). This deliverance is likely through rapture. Although there are several views on the timing of any rapture, all of these views see First Thessalonians 1:10 as promising an escape from the divine wrath of the end-time. Finally, we may conclude that the clause in Romans 5:9—“much more we shall be saved by him from the wrath of God”—refers to our deliverance from

Although we must have some understanding of God's wrath, the stress here in this passage is quite positive—*saved by His life*. God has given us Christ to be our life and this is certainly the key to being a victorious Christian. Zane Hodges was a well-known seminary teacher while he lived, having taught both NT Greek and Bible exegesis for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary. I like what he wrote in his commentary on Romans. In his own translation of Romans 5:10, he translated the latter part of the verse as “we shall be delivered by His life.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, his commentary goes on to say that the preposition shown as “by” (*en*, Greek) is quite commonly translated as “in.” He states this on the verse: “But in the light of the subsequent discussion about the Christian life (chaps. 6-8), it is likely that its extremely common meaning of *in* comes to the fore here. In that case the sense can be paraphrased as follows: **we shall be delivered in the experience** of His life. Paul will develop this concept in the following chapters.”<sup>8</sup>

Romans 5:11 brings us again to the matter of rejoicing or exulting in God, which was previously seen in verses two and three. In Romans 5:2, such rejoicing is in hope of our future sharing the glory of God. In 5:3 the rejoicing is something we should experience in our tribulations, knowing that such tribulations can help bring about our conformity to the image of Christ. Romans 5:11 tells us that we can “rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:11). Such rejoicing is tied to the deliverance we experience by His life (v. 10), a deliverance from the power of sin. The Christian who is seeking and experiencing such deliverance will know inner rejoicing over the victory that Christ brings into his life. The reconciliation he has already received by faith is made even more real as he lives a life pleasing to God.

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the present and future wrath (items 1 and 2 above). This deliverance is conditioned by verse ten—“shall we be saved by his life.” It is through experiencing Christ's life in order to live an overcoming Christian life that we shall be saved from God's wrath. Such an overcoming life does not mean that we never experience any discipline from God, or that we never sin. Rather, it means that a believer living a “godly” life and practicing confession of his sins will not be under a cloud of God's wrath.

<sup>7</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath* (Corinth, Tx.: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013), p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> Hodges, p. 144.





## ***Life Application***

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In only 11 verses this chapter has given us a compact, yet significant view of our Christian life. If we desire to live in light of this view we will surely be blessed. Our faith is greatly strengthened as we are assured that through God's justification of us we already possess peace with God through Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. We also have access into a realm of God's grace which allows us to draw upon His grace in order to live godly lives. Of course, this is a learning process for us, and as we learn we can live more in line with God's desires for us. We also find that we have hope—a hope that one day we will be completely free from sin's presence. We need to lay hold of this promise of hope as we pass through the challenges of life.

Most significantly, we find here that the troubling and often puzzling problem of suffering is not without meaning. Rather, we must believe God that it is His intention that all suffering in our lives offers an opportunity for our growth in Christ-likeness. *This is a great secret in the Christian life.* We humans are so easily troubled by the various sufferings of life and there is a temptation to grow bitter about our circumstances. But, if we walk by faith we can *know* that God has a plan for us to grow spiritually in times of suffering. Then, we can seek God's will and grace during our times of trial and rejoice at the spiritual gain that comes from following God in such times.

Perhaps you have heard of Corrie ten Boom, a famous Christian lady from the Netherlands. During World War II, Corrie's family hid Jews in their home in the Netherlands while the country was occupied by the Nazis. They hid these Jews in order to keep them from being sent to Nazi concentration camps where most of them would die. Eventually, the Nazis found out that the ten Boom family was hiding Jews and the Nazis sent both the Jews and the ten Boom family, who were not Jews, to the concentration camps. During this time Corrie and her family suffered unbelievably in the camps. These camps were a place of hard labor, cruel treatment, torture, sickness, starvation, and death. Many Jews died at the hands of the Nazi soldiers in the gas chambers at these camps. Corrie was the only one in her family who made it out of the camp alive. She was released as a prisoner through a bookkeeping "error," under God's sovereignty. After her release, God sent her out to many countries as His ambassador, telling people of God's love and forgiveness, as well as His keeping power under suffering. One of her great messages was the need

to forgive our enemies. She was even able to personally forgive a cruel camp guard whom she had seen mistreat numerous people at her camp. He had become a believer.

Corrie herself became a “message” as well as being able to speak a message. Her life exhibited dedicated care for the spiritual well-being of others. Her life was changed immensely through the process of suffering. During her time of imprisonment, she learned to depend deeply upon God and learn from Him. In her ministry after the war, she would always carry a small tapestry with her in her purse. She used it as an illustration of how God works in our lives, especially through suffering. She would show someone the underside of the tapestry, which appeared to be simply a meaningless tangle of various colored threads. This, she would say, is like the many experiences we go through, which seem random and meaningless. Then she would turn the tapestry over to reveal the upper side. There one could see a beautiful woven crown. This was her illustration of how God can use all of the events of our lives, even unbelievable suffering, for His glory. But, of course, we must learn endurance through our trials, and such endurance is marked by trusting God and obeying Him even in the darkest of times. On the next page is a meaningful poem describing God's work in the believer's life through suffering:

*The Weaver*

My life is but a weaving between my God and  
me,  
I cannot choose the colors, He works so  
steadily.  
Oft' times He weaves in sorrows, and I in foolish  
pride,  
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside.  
Not till the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease  
to fly,  
Will God unroll the canvas and explain the  
reason why.  
The dark threads are as needful in the Weaver's  
skillful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern  
He has planned.

~ *Grant Colfax Tullar*

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Also, this passage shows us that our knowledge of Christ's sacrifice for us as sinners, and our experience of God's love poured out into our hearts, give us assurance that our coming hope of glory is real. Such love can carry us through the darkest valley.

What has been described here is the process of sanctification, the growth in Christian character through the path of suffering. The final two verses of this section assure us that after God reconciles us He has another great work He seeks to accomplish in our lives—our deliverance from being dominated by the power of sin. Before we became Christians,

our lives were deeply marked by sin. We found ourselves doing many things over which we had no power to stop doing. But, now God wants us to know victory over sin and self and the world. For this victory, He has planted within us the life of Christ. As we learn to live by that life, then we can be delivered from the power of sin, and we can be under God's approval, not under His wrath against sin.

Probably most believers think that being a Christian is all about being saved from going to hell and being destined to go to heaven someday. However, although eternal salvation is important, the emphasis of the New Testament is upon the spiritual growth of the believer, not his eternal salvation. This is because God's purpose for our lives is to conform us to the image of His Son—to have a character like His (Rom. 8:29). This means God is supremely interested in our sanctification—our growth into mature Christ-likeness. For this to happen, we need to be saved, or sanctified, in the experience of Christ's life.

May we pray? Here is a suggested prayer: *"Dear Lord, I thank You for Your plan for my life. I thank You that I have not only been justified by Christ's death but now You desire for me to be sanctified, growing in the character of Christ. I truly desire to be saved from the power of sin in my life and avoid Your displeasure, Your wrath, against such sinfulness. So, Lord, I am asking You to show me how to experience Christ's life in my daily life. I also want to trust You in every circumstance of life. By faith I choose to believe that You intend all events in my life, even suffering, to work for Your plan as I seek to learn of You and follow You. Remind me, Lord, of this plan whenever I encounter trials and difficulties in my life. Thank You, Lord. I believe Your love for me at all times and place my trust in You."*

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## Chapter Two: Romans 5:12-21

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Romans 5:12-21: *Through Adam, sin and death reigned, but through Christ grace may reign through righteousness unto eternal life.*

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—<sup>13</sup>for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. <sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup>For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup>For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup>Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup>so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul gave an overview of the Christian experience. Then in Romans 5:12-21 he provides the reader with an amazing history of two men, Adam and Christ. Each of these men is described according to their key actions and the results that flowed from their actions. The comparisons and contrasts of the two men are astounding. All the sin and

death that flowed from Adam's disobedience is shown to be more than overcome by what our Savior did. This section shows us that through Adam's fall mankind is under the dominion of sin. Yet, due to Christ's obedience, those who belong to Christ can now reign in life. This passage in Scripture provides us with a highly informative introduction to living the Christian life victoriously. Romans 6-8 will then unfold for us the truths we must believe and the practices we must follow for living such a life

This passage contains some ideas that are variously understood by commentators. And, over the decades and centuries, a significant number of commentaries have been written on the book of Romans. In my study of this section, I have been greatly aided by some present-day commentators who I believe have looked more closely at certain Greek words and phrases than have most others. The results of their scholarly efforts make the ideas more readily understandable in my opinion.

In order to begin the study of this passage let me present a paraphrase of this passage of Scripture. This paraphrase will bring out the significant meanings and nuances of certain Greek words and phrases. The paraphrase should help us see key ideas that are missed in most translations. After the paraphrase, we will work through the text carefully to support the understanding given in the paraphrase.

***<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as the sin principle came into the world through one man (Adam) and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sin <sup>13</sup>for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not written down against someone where there is no law code. <sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned over men from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam—a purposeful sinful act in violation of a specific command of God. Adam was a type of the one who was to come. <sup>15</sup>But the free gift (through Christ) is not like the trespass (of Adam). For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded in richness for many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like what happened through one man who sinned. For the judgment decision came for one offense to produce a sentence of servitude to sin (a penalty of enslavement to the principle of sin). But the free gift brings release from many offenses to produce righteous action. <sup>17</sup>For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned-as-king through that one man (Adam), much more will those who continuously receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign-as-kings in life through the one man Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>So then, just as through one trespass judgment came to all men to produce servitude to sin, so also through one righteous action there resulted an acquittal that brings life for all men. <sup>19</sup>For as by the one man's disobedience the many have been made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many shall be made righteous. <sup>20</sup>Now the law***

***came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,<sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to the experience of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

I will move through the text and make detailed comments in order to bring the truth of the writing to light. At times I will quote some of these commentators or give them credit for their thoughts. Each of these commentators is highly qualified to make expert opinions on the Greek text. The comments on these verses may get somewhat technical due to the need to look closely at the real meaning of the original Greek language. My hope is that every reader will be able to follow these ideas as I attempt to carefully explain them.

Verse 12 begins with “Therefore, just as.” This grammatical phrase anticipates the following phrase of “so also” (or something similar) in order to introduce a comparison. However, Paul’s thoughts go onto a sidetrack of explanation concerning sin and death. As a result the “so also” phrase needed to complete his comparison is not picked up until verse 18. (Verse 18 shows the comparison: “Therefore, as one trespass led . . . so one act of righteousness leads”). Verse 12 continues to explain how the problem of sin came into the world—it came through the first man, Adam. Verse 15 states the more specific cause as being Adam’s transgression. The Bible clearly also teaches here that death is a result that follows sin. In fact, death spread to all men through Adam’s sin. The death noted here consists not only of physical death (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:14) but also of spiritual death (Gen. 3:8-10; Eph. 2:1), a separation from God.

Now, one might wonder why the sin of Adam is noted as the cause and not the sin of Eve who sinned first. The Scripture explains that Eve was deceived when she sinned, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:14). Eve did not consciously rebel against God, but Adam committed a fully conscious and willful sin against God. Such a sin is described as a deliberate sin against knowledge in Hebrews 10:26. In the OT this type of sin is described in Numbers, where it is noted as doing something “with a high hand,” that is in willful defiance against the commandment of the Lord: “he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment” (Num. 15:30-31). So serious was such a defiant offense that the offender was to be “utterly cut off” (Num. 15:31). This likely signifies both ex-communication and death.

Verse 12 has been the source of various views concerning the important theological question of how man’s sin problem and guilt have come about. Two commonly taught views involve Adam’s “headship” of the human race. These theories indicate that *all men were involved in Adam’s sin*. The “Federal” view sees Adam as the federal head of the human race and that he acted as a representative of all humanity. So, when Adam sinned, his action of sin and his guilt were imputed or attributed to all men. This “Federal Headship” view grew out of the earlier

view of Augustine (A. D. 354-430), whose writings have greatly affected the theology of the Christian church. Augustine's view might be termed the "Natural Headship" view. This teaching claims that the whole human race was seminally and physically in Adam when he sinned. This idea is supposedly supported by the example of Levi paying tithes while he was present "in the loins" of his ancestor Abraham (Heb. 7:9-10). Augustine taught that all mankind *sinned "in Adam"* and thus Adam's sin and guilt were imputed to everyone in the human race.

However, these headship views have significant problems. They violate God's principles for dealing with men, whereby God deems that every person is responsible solely for his own individual sins, not for sins personally committed by others (Ezek. 18:1-4, 20). Also, Augustine's view that "all sinned in Adam" was derived from the Latin Vulgate Bible, which wrongly translated Romans 5:12 (see the footnote).<sup>9</sup>

Although there is certainly some mystery to the transmission of sin and death into the human experience through Adam's sin, verse 12 is not as complicated as the headship views make it out to be. The first part of the verse tells us plainly that "sin came into the world through one man" (Adam)—specifically through his transgression as later verses note. "Sin" here means the principle of sin, also called "the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23) or "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The verse also tells us that sin is inevitably followed by death: "and death through sin." The final clause of verse 12 reads: "and so death spread to all men because all sinned." This is simply saying that death is a universal experience *due to* sin being a universal experience of man.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine was a Roman who knew and read Latin. His learning of the Greek language, however, was very limited. Dr. David Anderson and Dr. James Reitman make the following comments: "Augustine (d. 431) explained this 'passing down' of Adam's sin with a theory of *inherited guilt* in Adam . . . [this view] is based on an inaccurate Latin translation of two little Greek words in 5:12 (*eph hō*). Instead of the normal meaning of *eph hō* (*because* all sinned), it was translated *in quo* (*in whom* all sinned) in the Latin Vulgate Bible, the only ancient translation in the history of Christianity to translate these two Greek words in this way. But this translation has influenced English translations of the New Testament and it is how Augustine justified his view of how we all sinned 'in Adam' . . . However, this would end up condemning infants or others who have *not yet sinned intentionally*—not yet committed *personal* sin; that is, who have not yet *consciously* sinned like Adam (5:14)." David R. Anderson and James S Reitman, *Portraits of Righteousness: Free Grace Sanctification in Romans 5-8* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University Press, 2013), pgs. 31-32.

<sup>10</sup> Zane Hodges also takes the position that the "headship" theories are not warranted by Romans 5:12. He writes, "Indeed the entrance of sin and death into mankind's experience has become universal. *And so* (*kai houtōs*) the result of its entrance through one man is that **death came to all men because all have sinned**. This statement is plain and direct. Yet in one of the strangest turns in the exegesis of Romans, this straightforward statement has been made to teach that



The tense of the verb in the last clause (“because all sinned”) is the aorist tense. It does not strictly equal a “past tense” in English, but often speaks of something past. It can even be used to describe a future event. Anderson and Reitman greatly help the real meaning of the text by translating this clause as a gnomic aorist—“because all sin.”<sup>11</sup> The “gnomic aorist” is one use of the aorist that denotes a universal or timeless truth and thus has no specific time designation. This is the universal truth about sin and death here: “and so death spread to all men because all sin.” Anderson and Reitman also make these helpful comments:

Sin began with Adam and was passed down to and through each generation. Some hold that we die because of the *personal* sins each of us commits. Yet it must encompass *more* than personal sin, as Paul goes on to elaborate in 5:13-14. For example, many children die before they have yet committed any personal sin, so it must be a more “direct” effect of Adam’s sin. This is implicit in the notion of *original sin*, a “genetic” defect of some sort: spiritual or physical or both.<sup>12</sup>

Verse 14 uses the phrase “not like the transgression of Adam.” The Greek word here for “transgression” (Strong’s #3847)<sup>13</sup> usually means a violation of the law (see Rom. 2:23; 4:15). In Adam’s case, there was a breaking of God’s specific command. In verses 13 and 14 Paul is explaining that sin and death had their grip upon men, even during the period from Adam to Moses when men did not have a definite code or command to violate. The last phrase of verse 13 states: “but sin is not counted when there is no law.” This means that a specific violation cannot be recorded, or put down on an account, when there is no law code.

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all mankind has sinned in Adam as its seminal head. But no such idea is found here or anywhere else in the Bible. Paul’s meaning is quite uncomplicated. Death became a universal experience precisely *because all human beings have sinned*.” Hodges, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Anderson and Dr. Reitman are well qualified to propose that the gnomic aorist fits here. Dr. Anderson earned Th.M and Ph.D degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). He was also an adjunct professor at DTS teaching New Testament Greek and Systematic Theology. He is currently President and Professor of Biblical Languages and Systematic Theology at Grace School of Theology. Dr. Reitman is a teaching pastor who is an M. D. and holds an M. A. from DTS.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Strong’s numbering system uses identifying numbers for virtually all Greek and Hebrew words in the Bible. It was originally keyed to the King James Bible text. The numbered words are recorded in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, first published in 1890.

Verse 14 then begins with the strong contrasting connective word *alla* (Strong's #235) in Greek. This word is often translated here as "yet" or "nevertheless." In other words, *in spite of the fact* that sin could not be itemized with specific violations of certain commandments, "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam." These two verses make it plain: sin was in the world and death reigned during the period from Adam to Moses. A law code is not needed for sin to be a genuine sin. Further, death, a result of sin, is evidence that sin was in effect.

Even in the absence of an expressly defined law code, men are still accountable to God and can be guilty due to actions of sin. This is because God has placed within man a conscience that can register at least some actions of sin against God's standards of righteousness. Zane Hodges writes in his commentary on Romans: "As he has already told us (in 2:14-16), Gentiles without the law will be judged in terms of their conscience as this is manifested by their discussions about right and wrong among themselves. Though badly defaced, the law is nevertheless written on each conscience in a way that permits God to judge individuals as individuals."<sup>14</sup> Although all persons are conceived in sin and have a sin nature at birth (Ps. 51:5), their lives and their consciences must develop in order for them to recognize right from wrong in their choices and actions. The Bible implies that small infants, therefore, cannot be condemned for the simple possession of a sinful nature. The accountability of persons seems based upon sins they commit against their conscience and their response to the light they have from God concerning Him (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-16).

Verse 14 states: "Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." The similarity noted here between Adam and Christ should only be taken in the broadest sense. According to the context, that would mean that as the *one man* Adam's single *act* (of disobedience) produced a monumental effect upon *all* men, so also Christ's single act (of obedience) produced a monumental effect upon all men who would respond to God's grace.

Romans 5:15-21 takes up the idea of two men, Adam and Christ, and compare and contrast their actions and impact upon men. It is important to grasp the overview of these verses. There are *two significant contrasts* here in this section: 1) *Slavery to sin versus freedom to live righteously*; 2) *The reign of death versus the reign of life*.<sup>15</sup>

Verse 15 starts with "but," because the writer is about to explore the differences between Adam (as a type) and "the one who was to come [Christ]." The free gift, along with all it brings, is in contrast here with the

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<sup>14</sup> Hodges, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> Observations from teaching notes by Dr. Robert Wilkin, President of Grace Evangelical Society.

trespass and its ruinous results for mankind. The “free gift” here is a translation of the Greek word *charisma* (Strong’s #5486). This word *charisma* is found in verses 15 and 16. Another word for gift (*dorea*, #1431) is also used in verses 15 and 17. *One great contrast here in verses 15-17 is death coming through Adam and life coming through Christ.* Death came through Adam’s trespass (v. 15). In contrast, is the life we have in Christ. The last verse in chapter six makes this contrast in a simple way: “For the wages of sin is death, **but the free gift [*charisma*] is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

Paul declares in verse 15 that “much more” has grace and the gift by grace abounded to many. The idea of abounding points to a rich and plentiful supply related to this gift—a richness that more than meets the need. The abundance of God’s grace has richly met the desperate need brought in by sin and death to mankind.

Romans 5:16 is an important verse. To really grasp its meaning, we need to see that some of the Greek words should have been more accurately translated into English. Here is an excellent translation by Zane Hodges: “And the free gift is not like *what happened* through one *man* who sinned. For the judgment *came* for one *offense* to produce servitude to sin. But the free gift *brings release* from many offenses to produce righteous action.” Hodges comments on this translation: “In this verse once again, Paul’s Greek is succinct. My translation expands his statements slightly for the sake of clarity, and italics are used where English words are supplied that are not present in (though implied by) the Greek.”<sup>16</sup>

Hodges’ translation of 5:16 is very informative and accurate. The first part of the verse sets up the contrast between the free gift and what occurred due to Adam’s sin. The next statement speaks of a judgment that produced servitude to sin. Here we see two significant Greek words used in the text: “For the judgment [*krima*, Greek, Strong’s #2917] *came* for one *offense* to produce servitude [*katakrima*, Greek, #2631] *to sin*.” Drawing upon top scholarly reference works of ancient Greek language and word meanings, Hodges demonstrates that *krima* means a judicial decision (a guilty verdict here), whereas *katakrima* refers to the sentence pronounced upon a criminal stemming from the verdict. Such a sentence was the punishment of “penal servitude”—meaning the compulsory service with which the prisoner is punished (such as time in jail).

In summary, Hodges writes: “*The judgment* passed on Adam led to (*eis*) a *penalty*, i. e., *servitude to sin*.”<sup>17</sup> Most translations use the English word “condemnation” for *katakrima*. Although “condemnation” can mean punishment in English, many English readers may not pick up this idea, but rather may simply understand it as a negative decision. The idea of

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<sup>16</sup> Hodges, p. 151.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

servitude to sin, or slavery to sin, is much more precise here. This is borne out by the context. If we look at the context here, both in the preceding verses and in chapters 6-8 that follow, we can see that the punishment that came through man's fall consisted of servitude, or bondage, to sin, with the accompanying result of death. Note Romans 5:12, 15, 17, 19, 21; 6:16, 17, 20-21; 7:13-14, 23, 25; 8:2. These verses clearly show this bondage of sin and death.

The contrasting picture in Romans 5:16 of Christ's work reads: "But the free gift *brings release* from many offenses to produce righteous action" (Hodges' translation). The free gift produces "righteous action." The Greek word for "righteous action" is *dikaïoma* (Strong's #1345). It is unfortunate that most Bible translations translate this word as "justification." The word *dikaïoma* can mean a righteous act or action, and is so used in Romans 5:18: "so one act of righteousness". In Romans 5:18 the phrase "act of righteousness" is the translation of the single Greek word *dikaïoma*. The translation of "righteous action" in Romans 5:16 makes perfect sense when one considers that the verse is purposely contrasting the results of man's fall through Adam's transgression with the results of the free gift through Christ. Man's fall resulted in men *living in bondage to sin*. The free gift from God produces *righteous living* (the opposite of sinful living).

Verse 17 paints the picture of death or life reigning in human experience. Such a reign stems from either Adam or Christ as its source. Because of Adam's sin death "reigned-as-king" over men. William Newell uses the descriptive translation "reign-as-king" since he points out that the verb for reign here is *basileuo* (Strong's #936) and it means royal rule, as of a king.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, believers can have a marvelously different experience as they themselves can "reign-as-kings" in life. The life in which they may reign is indeed the life of Christ. The condition for such a reign-in-Christ's life is the believer's ongoing reception of "the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" available to him. The Greek text indicates a continuous receiving (a present participle) of this abundance of grace.<sup>19</sup> This grace and this free gift are not two separate things but really describe just one "package" according to Hodges, who views the construction of the language in this way (technically a "hendiadys"). Hodges says the phrase means "*the abundantly gracious*

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<sup>18</sup> William R. Newell, *Romans, Verse-by-Verse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), p. 128. Accessed 12/2019 at: [https://archive.org/details/Romans\\_Verse\\_By\\_Verse-NewellWR](https://archive.org/details/Romans_Verse_By_Verse-NewellWR). (In the public domain)

<sup>19</sup> "The present [participle] λαμβάνοντες [receiving]. . . signifies that the reception is not *one act* merely, but a *continued process* by which the περισσεία [abundance] is imparted." Henry Alford's *The Greek Testament* (e-sword edition).

*gift of righteousness.*<sup>20</sup> This gift is dynamic in its power to transform a life into one that reigns in all the tests of life. William Newell challenges us this way: “Let us refuse to be content with a Christian existence that cannot finally be summed up as ‘He *reigned* in life through Jesus Christ,’—over sin, Satan, the world, difficulties, adverse surroundings, and circumstances.”<sup>21</sup>

In verses 18 and 19, Paul sums up the contrast between the two men and their actions. This contrast began with verse 12, but, as noted earlier, verse 12 did not complete the contrast by offering a comparative explanation of Christ’s action. Here Paul now completes the thought as indicated by the italicized words shown here: “*So then* as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, *even* so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.” (Rom. 5:18, NASB)

The result of “condemnation to all men” was servitude to sin. In contrast, Christ’s one act of righteousness (going to the cross) brought in “justification of life.” This last phrase has been translated and understood in slightly different ways. However, given the context of this contrast, the phrase is considered by many to have a stress on *the result of life* (Christ’s resurrection life) brought about *through the justification* made available to men by Christ’s substitutionary death. The Greek word here for “justification” is *dikaiosis* (Strong’s #1347). Some Greek lexicons also list this word as meaning “acquittal”—a judicial ruling clearing one of guilt. A highly respected Greek lexicon renders the phrase “justification of life” as “*acquittal that brings life*.”<sup>22</sup> So, as Adam’s sin resulted in men being in servitude to sin, Christ’s act of obedience also had a result—an acquittal for men, which brings in life.<sup>23</sup> In “*Portraits of Righteousness*” Anderson and Reitman write: “The preposition *eis* [“resulted”] in front of *dikaiōsin zōēs* [“justification of life”] indicates the intended goal of our justification/acquittal: ‘absolution *with a view* to righteous living.’ The reversal secured for us by Christ’s work in 5:18 thus achieves our Sanctification: *a righteous life* for believers that leads to Glorification.”<sup>24</sup> This life is Christ’s life, a life which lives righteously. This “life” here reflects back to the principal idea of Romans 5: “we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10).

Verse 19 continues to explain this same line of contrasts with slight additions. In this verse, Paul uses the term “the many” instead of “all

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<sup>20</sup> Hodges, pp. 154-155

<sup>21</sup> Newell, p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> BAGD, p. 198.

<sup>23</sup> Christ’s work on the cross is for the benefit of *all men* (1 Jn. 2:2), but *only those* who actually receive the free gift by faith can actually experience this acquittal with the potential for righteous living.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 39.

men.” “The many” refers to the group of people that are actually affected by each of the two men. In Adam’s case, “the many” would equal the entire human race. In Christ’s case, “the many” would be those who receive the free gift of righteousness. All humans affected by Adam’s sin were made sinners. That is, they became persons *who sin*. In contrast, “the many” who belong to Christ “will be made righteous.” Again, we see here the use of the future tense as being the “logical future.” That is, believers are *expected to live righteously* after receiving the gift. However, what is anticipated is not guaranteed. As verse 17 makes clear, the ongoing reception of grace is needed in order for believers to live victoriously. “Will be made righteous” speaks of our progressive sanctification (growth in holiness) and this calls for living by faith coupled with obedience, as the following three chapters show.

Verses 20 and 21 continue to reflect elements of the basic contrasts from prior verses but in a way that highlights the super-abounding power of grace that can overcome the damage done by sin and death. In verse 13 Paul had mentioned the fact that sin was a reality in the world even before the law. But, during that era sin could not be recorded in a list of specific violations of a holy code of conduct. Now we see that God actually brought in the law to bring to man’s attention his transgressions against God’s standards. Not only so, but the law actually incites the sin nature of man to sin more (Rom. 7:5, 7-11). Thus, God brought in the law that man’s sin would increase. “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” The effect of grace super-abounds over the damaging power of sin. Verse 21 begins with “so that,” which in the Greek text introduces a purpose clause. The purpose of super-abounding grace over sin is that instead of sin reigning-as-king in death in man’s experience, grace might overthrow sin’s reign.

In verse 17 we saw that the believer’s reception of the abundantly gracious gift of righteousness enables the believer to reign in life. Here we see another way of saying the same thing—it is also considered the reign of grace. This reign is manifested through righteousness, namely the believer’s righteous living (note the context of verses 16, 18, 19 which all point to righteous living, not positional righteousness). Such a righteous living actually is our experience of eternal life. Eternal life is not about the length of life primarily, but about the quality of life. It is the experience of Christ’s life as our life or the experience of our union with Him. (See John 17:2-3; 1 Jn. 5:11). The final phrase in the chapter tells us that all the reality of verse 21 comes “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Chapter six will expound how such a reign of grace is made possible through our union with Jesus Christ our Lord.

The explanation of this section (Rom. 5:12-21) has involved a good deal of technical analysis of the text. I wish I could have simplified it, but then the reader would be left without an accurate explanation of this passage. Unfortunately, in my opinion, there have been many inadequate

expositions of this portion of Scripture and thus there is the need for an accurate analysis. Yet, to simplify the contrasts here between Adam and Christ, the following chart may be helpful.

Adam and Christ Contrasted (Romans 5:15-21)

	ADAM	CHRIST
Rom. 5:15	One man's trespass – the many died	The grace of God and the free gift by grace - abounded for many
Rom. 5:16	One trespass – judgment producing servitude to sin	The free gift - release from many trespasses to produce righteous action
Rom. 5:17	One man's trespass – death reigned-as-king	Through one man – believers (who continually receive the abundantly gracious gift of righteousness) reign-as-kings in life
Rom. 5:18	One trespass – led to servitude to sin for all men	One righteous act – led to an acquittal that brings life for all men (offered freely to all men)
Rom. 5:19	Disobedience of one – the many were made sinners	Obedience of one – the many will be made righteous
Rom. 5:21	Sin reigned in death	Grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life



## Chapter Three: Romans 6:1-11

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### Romans Chapter Six: Buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life

Romans 6:1-11: *Participation with Christ for the new life*

***<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup>If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

In chapter five Paul has given us a broad view. In Romans 5:1-11 Paul gave us a brief outline of God's plan for our sanctification. Then in Romans 5:12-21 he pulled back the curtain to unveil human history, as well as man's potential, in more broad strokes without giving much detail. Now, beginning in chapter six, Paul writes to give us details describing how sanctification can become a reality in our lives. He starts with a question that most of us would have never considered. "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" The thought is this: seeing that man's sin provided an opportunity for God's grace to greatly abound (Rom. 5:20-21), should we then conclude that we should continue in sin in order for grace to abound more? This seemingly preposterous idea apparently could arise because some had already been



slanderosly saying that Paul taught this kind of principle (see Romans 3:5-8). The apostle strongly rejects the idea of a purposeful continuance in sin: “May it never be!” (6:2, NASB). Further, Paul supports his refutation by an amazing declaration: “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” What Paul is declaring here is not the impossibility of a believer living in sin, but the glaring inconsistency of a believer living in sin. After all, Paul sees the spiritual truth that our sharing in Christ’s death equals our own “death to sin.”

Now we come to the very essence of how a Christian can live a Christian life. *He can live it because he spiritually participates in the very death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* I would like to approach this critically important topic by telling you about a man named Frederick J. Huegel (his name is usually shown as F. J. Huegel). Huegel was genuinely converted and served as a chaplain in World War I. He was a missionary to Mexico for 25 years. He also taught at Union Seminary in Mexico City. However, his spiritual journey as a Christian was not easy. Of his service as a chaplain, and of his earlier years as a missionary, he wrote, “but in my secret soul I wept in shame, for there was a great lack. I was not victorious. I was a victim of a thousand things which I loathed.”<sup>25</sup>

God permitted a great trial to enter Huegel’s life. In the midst of this trial Huegel seemed overwhelmed by assaults from dark forces. Yet, it was through this trial that Huegel learned the secret of the cross applied to his self-life. He learned and applied the truths of Romans six and our participation in Christ’s death and resurrection life. He could then write: “Oh! the blessedness of the deliverance. My old world with its secret ‘self-centeredness’ was gone. A new world came into being, and in this world God is the center. He is absolutely supreme. Christ is now my life. . . . I find that the deeper I sink my life into Christ’s death, the more I have of his life.”<sup>26</sup>

Huegel went on to write a number of books and had a notable speaking ministry. He penned a classic book, largely based on our participation in Christ’s death and resurrection as outlined in Romans chapter six. That book is titled, *“Bone of His Bone—Going Beyond the Imitation of Christ.”* I will include a number of quotes from this valuable book as we proceed with this commentary.

In verse three Paul goes on to explain the fact that we “died to sin.” He asks the believers—especially those who might suggest that we could continue in sin that grace may abound—“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death?” We must first seek to understand the meaning of “baptism” in this

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<sup>25</sup> F. J. Huegel, *The Cross of Christ—The Throne of God* (originally published in 1936). Quoted at <http://earthenvessels-donbiro.blogspot.com/2011/09/f-j-huegels-testimony-of-exchanged-life.html> (Accessed on 3/18/2019).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

passage. The verb for “baptize” in NT Greek is *baptizo* (Strong's #907). It is known that the ancient Greeks used this word to mean “to dip” or “immerse.” It was a word common to the textile industry where a piece of cloth was dipped completely into a vat of dye. If the vat contained blue dye, then the cloth would be completely blue after being dipped. Therefore, the cloth from then on would have taken on a new identity, always being blue thereafter. So, it certainly pictures a change of identity.

The two most common two schools of thought on baptism in this verse are: 1) it refers to our water baptism after we believe; 2) it refers to our spiritual baptism, our union with Christ accomplished by the Holy Spirit when we believe. Most believers are familiar with water baptism, which is a visible *symbol* of our salvation and our union with Christ (Acts 10:44-48). We must keep in mind that water baptism itself does not save us in terms of regeneration or forgiveness of sins. The public witness of baptism by the obedient believer constitutes “an appeal to God for a good conscience,” demonstrating that the believer wants to separate from his old life lived in a corrupt world under judgment (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

On the other hand, there is a spiritual baptism which produces a spiritual reality and a union that is not simply symbolic. A verse that strongly shows a spiritual baptism is First Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (NASB). In this verse, we see the work of the Holy Spirit in baptizing us (immersing us) into the body of Christ. One may also see a spiritual baptism in Colossians 2:11-13. Romans 6:3-4 points to the *reality* of death to the old life, not a symbolic display (water baptism). The reality of this death is so that as Christ was raised to life, we might also live in the reality of newness of life, not just a symbolic rising up out of water. One confirming verse is Galatians 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Putting on Christ speaks of the reality of our union with Him, not something accomplished by water baptism. Thus, along with other commentators, I believe that the baptism here is Spirit baptism.<sup>27</sup>

We should note a few significant things in verses two and three. Verse two states: “we who died to sin.” In chapters three and four of Romans the Scripture spoke of specific acts of sin. But here the Scripture clearly speaks of “sin” as a principle. It is the indwelling principle and power of sin within fallen mankind that causes him to commit sins. This shift in terminology in Romans confirms to us that in this chapter the

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<sup>27</sup> Some commentaries that take this view of Spirit baptism in Romans 6 are “*Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*” (Zane Hodges); “*Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver*” (René Lopez); “*Portraits of Righteousness*” (David R. Anderson and James S Reitman); “*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*” (Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck); *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Editor, Robert N. Wilkin).

apostle is addressing the matter of sanctification, which entails overcoming the power of sin.

Paul sheds light on a great secret of how we can overcome sin. He unfolds to us a *spiritual fact*: we have died to sin. How could this be and what does it mean? Verse three explains that “all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.” In other words, through our spiritual union with Christ, brought about by spiritual baptism, *we share in His death*. Later, in verse ten, the Scripture tells us a fact about Christ’s death: “for the death he died he died to sin.” We have died to sin because Jesus died to sin; we fully share in His death. We will explore in more detail later what “His death to sin” means. Yet, we can say this much now: when Christ was on the cross He was identified with sinful humanity and sin was judged there. *When He died, He broke His identification with sinful humanity*. His death was fully confirmed as He was buried. *We died in His death* to our former relationship with sin. Formerly, in our old life, we were under the penalty of *servitude to sin*. But, we have been fully immersed into His death: “we were therefore **buried with him** by baptism into death” (v. 4).

We will shortly see in the context that this “death to sin” is a matter of our *relationship to sin*, not an absolute absence of sin. Hodges writes: “Paul uses the metaphor of death, not to indicate that all sin has been eliminated from our lives, but (as we shall see) that we are no longer in bondage to it.”<sup>28</sup> We must admit, and the Bible admits, that the sin principle is still within us and is very active with its desires and temptations. William Newell tells us in his commentary: “This perplexes many, this announcement that we died to sin,—inasmuch as the struggle with sin, and that within, is one of the most constant conscious experiences of the believer. But, as we see elsewhere, we must not confound our relationship to sin with its presence. Distinguish this revealed *fact* that we died, from our *experience* of deliverance.”<sup>29</sup>

Newell’s advice here reminds us of a very important principle all Bible readers must keep in mind if they are to properly understand and apply the truths of Scripture. Some truths relate to our *position* in Christ. These are unchangeable spiritual facts concerning who we are in Christ based upon what Christ’s work has accomplished for us. For example, the fact that we have died with Christ, have been raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places are *positional* truths, absolutely true of us “in Christ” (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 2:5-6). Yet, these truths are not always realized in our actual *condition* upon the earth—how we are living. At any particular moment, we may not be living a triumphant life that reflects this raised and ascended *position*.

The Bible says we “have been sanctified [made holy]” through Christ’s

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<sup>28</sup> Hodges, p. 165.

<sup>29</sup> Newell, p. 142.

work (Heb. 10:10). This is the truth of our *position* in Christ. According to our *position* in Christ, we are already holy people. But, in our actual living, in our *condition*, we may or may not be living in a holy manner at all. So we must always distinguish between our *position* in Christ and our *condition*. The objective of our Christian lives is to bring our character and living (*condition*) more and more in line with our *position*. Romans chapter six has marvelous statements about our *position*, such as “we who died to sin” (v. 2); “one who has died has been set free from sin” (v. 7); “you are not under law but under grace” (v.14); “having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness” (v. 18). But these truths are only realized in our experience, our *condition*, as we believe and act upon the truth. We will see this as we develop the thoughts in chapter six. In summary, our *position* describes who we are “in Christ” and what we now possess in Christ, based upon what Christ has accomplished for us by His work. Our *position* is perfect, and it is unchangeable from the first moment of belief. Our *condition* describes how we are actually living our lives. It is changeable in accordance with our Christian maturity and the exercise of our faith and obedience.

Now we come to a very significant verse, Romans 6:4. It reads, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” This verse moves us from the matter of our death with Christ to our resurrection life with Christ. The phrase “in order that” is a translation of the Greek word *hina*. This word is commonly used to introduce a “purpose clause.” So, what is the purpose of our baptism into Christ’s death? It is so we might now experience the new resurrection life. Christ was raised from the dead to a new life. This verse tells us that since He was raised, we might also now *walk* (live) in the newness of His resurrection life.

Paul’s writing indicates that we are *already raised* with Christ in His resurrection (vs. 11, 13). Verse five confirms this. In verse four he is indicating that the *purpose* of our identification in Christ in *position* (died with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him) is that we should now live His resurrection life—a matter of *condition*. Such a “walk” by the believer is not automatic. The English translation states that “we too *might* walk in newness of life.” The verb here is in the subjunctive mood and indicates a possibility, not a certainty. The whole of chapter six makes it clear that for the believer to live Christ’s life there must be faith and obedient action on the part of the believer. The word for “newness” in Greek indicates the quality of superiority of life and certainly defines the new life in Christ, in contrast with the old life we lived as unregenerate people. The new life is Christ living in us and through us (Gal. 2:20).

Verse five begins with the introductory “for” (*gar* in Greek). So verse five further explains the fact of this new resurrection life for believers. The verse basically tells us that since we were united with Christ in His death,

then it follows that we are also united with Him in His resurrection. Some versions use the word “likeness” in this verse: “If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death” (NASB). The Greek word for “likeness” here (*homoioōma*, Strong’s #3667) in some contexts would indicate a copy or representation of something else. However, in this context it seems to mean identification with His death, not a copy of His death (note v. 3 – “baptized into his death.”).<sup>30</sup> However, some commentators see this “likeness” as referring to a death like Christ had, in terms of being a “death to sin” (note v. 10). The whole passage does affirm both truths: we died with Christ and we have died to sin. The second half of this verse indicates that we also share in His resurrection (just as we share in His death). Some commentators think that the resurrection here refers to the future bodily resurrection of the believers. They likely take this view because the verb is in the future form (“we shall certainly be”). René Lopez rightly corrects this idea when he writes: “The future tense *esometha* should not be understood as a strict-future but a logical-future (cf. 5:9-10). Paul does not refer to the eschatological resurrection of believers at Christ’s resurrection. That is foreign to the context. His idea is this: Since believers, by faith in Christ, share in Christ’s *death*, so they also, by faith, logically share in *His resurrection*. This refers to the power believers presently possess in order to overcome the power of sin in their lives (vv 6, 11, 13).”<sup>31</sup>

Romans 6:6 is a key verse. Some of the significant words in this verse are variously translated by different Bible versions. I choose to use Zane Hodges’ translation of this verse, which reads as follows: “since we know this: that our old man has been crucified with *Him*, in order that the body of sin might be nullified, so that we might no longer serve sin.” This verse continues the thoughts of the previous verses three through five. Those prior verses have shown us that when we were baptized into Christ, we shared in His death, and we were raised with Him in order to walk in newness of life. In line with the truths of the prior verses, we should hold to certain spiritual knowledge, namely “that our old man has been crucified with Christ.” The “old man” is who we were in our *unregenerate* inner self, sinners in the fallen race of man. When Christ was crucified we were crucified with Him. Of course, we were not there physically almost 2,000 years ago. But, we were there according to spiritual truth in the spiritual realm. When we were baptized into Christ—at the moment of belief in Him—we were then joined to Christ and His history in death, burial and resurrection. These are spiritual facts that must be known and believed by us. Our crucifixion together with Christ is a truth of *position*—a true

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<sup>30</sup> An authoritative Greek lexicon states this about *homoioōma* in Romans 6:5: “in the likeness of his death (= in the same death that he died),” BAGD, p. 567.

<sup>31</sup> René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Press, 2005), pp. 128-129.

spiritual fact according to our *position* in Christ, our union with Him. This truth is an accomplished fact and is unchangeable. We can count on it.

The next clause of verse six begins with the Greek word *hina*, translated above as “in order that.” The word *hina* introduces a purpose clause, showing us that a purpose related to our co-crucifixion with Christ was so “that the body of sin might be nullified.” The “body of sin” does not mean that the human body is sinful, but is an expression picturing a person under the dominion of sin with his sinfulness manifested through the actions of his body. This clause is focused on our *condition*, how we will actually live. The fact of our crucifixion with Christ (*position*) has a purpose—that our former life, with its living (*condition*) in sinful ways, would be nullified or rendered inactive. The purpose is that we would no longer live out the kind of life we lived in our old man, our unregenerate self. Our *position* is forever true, but our *condition* is changeable in this life. That is why the translation reads “that the body of sin *might* be nullified.” The word “might” is used to show possibility, not certainty, as the verb mood is subjunctive.

Our *position* should be transferred into our actual living (*condition*), but this depends upon the faith and obedience of the Christian. It may or may not happen in a believer's life. Such a transfer into our experience means here that *the cross* (crucifixion) becomes something real in our lives to put to death the sinful desires of the old man. This can only happen when the disciple yields to the working of the Holy Spirit, who is working to *put to death* any uprising of the sinfulness of the old man.. This kind of cooperation with the Holy Spirit is shown later in Romans chapter eight, as well as other places in the NT (Rom. 8:4,12-14; Gal. 5:16-18). Colossians 3:1-8 shows us the *position/condition* connection regarding our death on the cross of Christ. Note that Colossians 3:5 begins, “put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, [etc].” The presence of the word “therefore” shows us that this command to put to death such sinfulness is based upon what preceded in the text. What preceded was the truth of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. So, here we see the command “put to death” is a command to put into practice (*condition*) what is true of us in our *position* (*we died with Christ*). The concluding result of the crucifixion of the old man in Romans 6:6 is this: “so that we might no longer serve sin.” Our crucifixion with Christ means that we no longer have to live in bondage to sin.

Romans 6:7 reads: “For the one who has died has been set free from sin.” The idea of being set free from sin certainly goes along with verse six, where we learned that since our old man was crucified with Christ we no longer need to be enslaved to sin. It is of interest to note that the verb for “set free” here is literally “justified.” The ASV renders it quite literally: “for he that hath died is justified from sin.” The fact is that we are freed from any legal claims of sin upon us because we stand justified from sin. We should recall that Romans 5:18 declared: “one act of righteousness

[Christ's death on the cross] leads to justification and life for all men." Christ has paid the penalty for man's sin on the cross—the ultimate penalty of death. The argument in verse seven connects a man's death to justification. As an example, a man under a death sentence for a crime is no longer under the legal claim of that penalty once he has died. As those who have died with Christ in His justifying death, sin has no claim upon us. We are no longer under any claim to its rule. We have been fully released from its bondage! Sin has no right to make us obey its demands any longer. We can refuse its demands. William Newell goes on to say that being "justified from sin" also means the believer can live without any sense of guilt or condemnation because of the *presence* of sin within him (see the footnote).<sup>32</sup>

I would like to use an illustration describing our freedom from the bondage to sin. Suppose there was a man who rented a house from a landlord. And, the landlord happened to live next door to the tenant. There was a very long term rental agreement with the landlord that was legally binding. The renter was bound by the conditions of the agreement. Now, due to the fall of man, all of us are born as sinners. We are under the bondage of sin, which was the penalty that fell upon sinful men following Adam's sin. So that bondage is like the rental agreement. Now man has an evil master, SIN, which is like an evil landlord. Sin urges men to do evil and men are powerless to overcome its bondage. Sooner or later, as humans grow up, they will give into sin and do some evil that makes them personally guilty in God's eyes. Suppose the evil landlord has many burdensome requirements. He requires the tenant to do all kinds of things every week, and the landlord continually comes over to the tenant's house from next door to enforce the requirements of the agreement. According to the rental agreement, for example, one requirement is that the tenant must never have his children's bicycles out in the yard.

Yet, let us also suppose that the agreement has an option for the tenant to be released from the agreement. The one way the tenant can be released from the agreement is if he pays \$200,000 cash for the house. Then, the agreement is over and it is canceled. The problem facing the

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<sup>32</sup> Newell writes: "It is the consciousness of being sinful that keeps back saints from that glorious life Paul lived. . . . He knew he had been justified *from all guilt* by the blood of Christ; and he knew that he was also justified, cleared, *from the thing sin itself*. . . . He knew he was as really justified *from sin itself* as from sins. . . . We are justified, accounted wholly righteous, with respect to the thing sin itself! This, therefore, is infinitely beyond any state whatever of *experience*. It is a newly-established relationship to sin, which the saints have because they died with Christ: in which they stand in Christ as *He is* toward sin. . . . Their old relationship to sin is over *forever*. . . . But they do not say sin is gone from their flesh: but that they, having died, are declared righteous from it; that they are *cleared*, before God, of all condemnation because of sin's presence in this unredeemed body; and delivered from all sin's former rights and bondage over them." Newell, p.150.

tenant is great. He does not like the evil landlord and hates his constant reminder of requirements. He is in real bondage. He has no way to pay for the house and cancel the agreement. But, in the case of the believer, the Lord Jesus has paid the price on the cross to cancel the penalty, the bondage to sin. This is similar to someone coming in to pay the \$200,000 to release the tenant from the agreement with the evil landlord. When we are born again, the penalty of the bondage of sin ruling over us *is canceled*. We are *no longer under its obligation* in any way because we are *legally no longer* under that relationship to sin.

After the agreement is canceled suppose the landlord next door sees bicycles in the yard. He may come over and start yelling at the former tenant, telling him that those bikes must be removed immediately! However, the man who was formerly a tenant must stand his ground and refuse this order. He must declare: "I am not under your authority any longer. You have no legal right to tell me anything." The old evil landlord is like sin which lives right inside of us, a very close neighbor indeed. Because sin formerly ruled over us and we had no ability to overcome it, we may be fooled into thinking that we must follow its demands. However, our relationship with sin has changed. We have died to sin. Although we still sense its presence, it no longer has any authority over us! We can legally refuse its demands because we have been *justified*, and we are *no longer under any penalty of bondage to sin*! We stand justified because Jesus paid the price for us to be set free from sin! Hallelujah! We will see in Romans chapter eight, though, that we need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to overcome the power of indwelling sin even though we have been legally set free from its rule.

The passage in Romans 6:8-11 constitutes a conclusion from what has already been presented in 6:5-7. Since we have participated in Christ's death we also naturally participate in His resurrection life. This participation, shown as "we shall live with him," points to our present experience of His life as seen by the context (v. 4-5, and especially 8—"consider yourselves . . . *alive* to God in Christ Jesus."). "We believe" (v. 8) describes the confidence of a Christian who *knows* the truth of our sharing in Christ's death (v. 6). This believing is also connected to our *knowing* the truths of Christ's experience in verses nine and ten. The verb for "believe" is in the present tense here and most likely indicates a continuous believing, in order to share in continuous experience of resurrection life. To believe here means to trust, to have confidence. This belief means we have ongoing confidence in Christ's once-for-all death and His ongoing life in resurrection, and *we believe that we share in that resurrection life with Him*.

Verses 9-10 inform us that Christ died once and He was raised to life, never to be under death's sway again. What does it mean that "Christ died to sin?" In His human living, Jesus was without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Jn. 3:5). Yet, in order to redeem man Christ had to be identified with fallen



mankind and thus He was “made to be sin” for our sake. “For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). All the sins of the world were placed upon Him (Jn. 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Jn. 2:2). In this way, sinful mankind could be judged by God in Christ as our substitute (Isa. 53:5; 1 Cor. 15:3). Moreover, sin itself—the principle of sin within man—was condemned by God at the cross (Rom. 8:3).

When Christ died on the cross, He died to the sin with which He had become identified on the cross. At His death, the relationship He temporarily had with sin was broken. Now, Christ lives, never to die again, and “the life he lives he lives to God.” His life in resurrection is one that is completely focused on and aligned with God.

We now arrive at one of the most critical verses in Romans chapter six. In a real sense, it brings to a conclusion the whole argument of Romans 6:2-10. The fundamental thrust of 6:2-10 is that we believers have been baptized into Christ and therefore *we participate in His death and resurrection*. This is the key to how we may indeed be “saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). Verse 11 calls for us to do something based upon the prior verses. In fact, the main verb in this verse is “consider” (*logizōmai*, Strong’s #3049), and it is in the imperative mood—a command. The verse reads: “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” The first word of the verse here shows us a connection with what has been written just before. The word “so” here (in context) carries the idea of “after the same manner as Christ.”<sup>33</sup> Just as Christ has died to sin and lives to God in resurrection, *we must also consider the same thing to be true of us!* This is because all believers are spiritually united with Him in these momentous events! This verse is commanding us to continually *consider ourselves* as absolutely dead to sin as a master over us, and fully alive to God by virtue of our union with Christ. We are to *appropriate* these truths as true *for our own lives*.



### ***Life Application***

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F. J. Huegel rightly argues in his book *Bone of His Bone* that believers are those who should live victoriously by their spiritual participation in Christ, in His death and in His resurrection life. We are not called to try to act like Christ as an actor would play a role, but by faith we are to walk in our real spiritual union with Him. Romans chapter six is

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<sup>33</sup> Henry Alford's *The Greek Testament* (e-sword edition).

considered the foundational chapter in the NT for our Christian living, so we will spend some time here in seeing its "life application."

F. J. Huegel writes: "We have conceived of the Christian life as an Imitation of Christ. It is *not* an imitation of Christ. It is a participation in Christ."<sup>34</sup> "We are not what Christ would have us to be; the Sermon on the Mount does not find expression in our attitudes; sin as a principle is still rampant in our lives; we are not free from envy, pride, self-love, and lust for pleasure . . . there is little joy, so little freedom of spirit . . . We agonize, and bleed, and struggle—but failure dogs our footsteps. What is the answer? *We are proceeding on a false basis.* We are attempting to do what the Savior Himself never expected us to do. The Christian life is *not* a life of imitation. For, what is impossible to me as an imitator of Christ becomes perfectly natural as a participant of Christ. Only when Christ nullifies the force of my inherent 'self-life' and communicates to me a divine life does Christian living in its true sense become at all possible for me."<sup>35</sup>

In Romans six we see *the fact of our participation* in Christ's death and risen life in verses 1-11. Then, we see the commands in 6:12-19 to put these truths into practice in our lives. Our *position* in Christ is that we died with Him and were raised up with Him in order to live His resurrection life. But, what is true of our *position* should be brought into our *condition*, our actual living. Bible teachers have noted that this section of Scripture has some key verbs which help us see how all of this is worked out in our lives. Some break these verbs down this way: "know" (v. 6); "believe" (v. 8); "consider" (v. 11); "present" (v. 13); "obey" (v. 16).<sup>36</sup> The first three steps (know, believe, consider) have to do with our being persuaded of the truths that our old man was crucified with Christ and that now we live with Him in His resurrection life.

These are tremendous truths of our *new identity* in Christ! But, how can we believe them when we so strongly sense the presence of sin and are so keenly aware of our failures? The way of victory is to *continually focus* on the truth of our union with Christ (*position*) and not on our *condition*. One of the outstanding spiritual movements of God in the past two centuries was the Keswick Convention. That was an annual gathering that began in 1875 in England. It was a non-denominational gathering for believers seeking after a deeper life in Christ. Unlike other Christian conferences, its emphasis was not on Bible knowledge or inspiration but on how to actually have a spiritual walk with the Lord. The usual format of five days of meetings was designed to help believers deal seriously with

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<sup>34</sup> F. J. Huegel, *Bone of His Bone – Going Beyond the Imitation of Christ* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2006), p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson and Reitman use this verb sequence to show the path from "slavery" to "freedom." (*Portraits of Righteousness*, p. 73).

sin and all aspects of the self-life, be restored to fellowship with the Lord, and learn how to live a sanctified and dedicated life by faith. The early decades of this convention had a tremendous impact on many Christians in various Christian groups. One of the notable early leaders was Evan Hopkins. He often taught on Romans six, which was a well-used passage in the convention. Mr. Hopkins used an illustration when telling people about our need to focus on the facts of the Word of God. He spoke of three men walking along in procession: first, Mr. Fact; second, Mr. Faith; and third, Mr. Feeling. As long as Mr. Faith was focused on Mr. Fact ahead of him all went well. But, if he turned and looked back at Mr. Feeling to see how he was doing, his eyes would be off Mr. Fact, and then he would fall down, and Mr. Feeling would fall down also.

In the same way, the renowned Bible teacher William Newell emphasizes our need to *focus on the facts of our union with Christ* and appropriate them as true for us, disregarding all feelings that seem to contradict such faith:

Lay to heart the very words of the eleventh verse: **Reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but living to God, in Christ Jesus.** . . . And so we are not told to die to sin: because we are in Christ who did die to it; and therefore we also are dead to it, in His death; and reckon it so. This should make the believer's task simplicity itself. The only difficulty lies in *believing* these astounding revelations! That we should be dead to sin, and now alive unto God as risen ones . . . is at first too wonderful for us. We see in ourselves the old self-life, the flesh—and straightway we forget God's way of faith, and turn back to our "feelings." . . . Nevertheless, we are to *reckon* ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God. Not dead to sin, notice, through prayers and strugglings, nor dead to sin in our feelings or consciousness; but *in that death which Christ went through on the cross*, and which we *shared*, and in that life which He now lives in glory! . . . It is hard to reckon and keep reckoning that we shared Christ's death to sin, and that we are alive unto God *in Him*. Yet, *there is no establishing of our souls along any other line.*<sup>37</sup>

So we see our great need is to constantly focus on the facts of our union with Christ. The best way I have found to do this is to memorize the verses that speak of our union, such as Romans 6:1-11, Galatians 6:14, Colossians 3:3-4 and others. Then I use these verses in small personal prayers to God affirming their truth to my life. In fact, I use such verses

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<sup>37</sup> Newell, pp. 156.

many times each day and have been doing so for over forty years. When temptation comes, I often use verses such as these. For example, when a temptation to sin arises I might pray, "Thank You, Father, I am dead unto sin, but alive to You in Christ Jesus." "Thank You, Lord, I have died and my life is hidden with You in God. Thank You, Jesus, that You are my life." We must always remember: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). So focusing and meditating upon the word of God is our key to having a living faith.

Romans 6:1-11 gives us *the only solid foundation* for serving God or following Christ in obedience. If we try to serve God without employing our position of sharing in Christ's death to sin and Christ's life in resurrection, we will fail. We will just be dedicating our *old life* to God and it simply does not have the power to serve or follow Him. Anderson and Reitman spell out this very important reality well in their book, *Portraits of Righteousness*:

In laying a foundation for dedication (Rom. 6:1-11), Paul says nothing about love or gratitude for what Christ has done; these are noble motives but not sufficient for dedication. This passage affirms that the only sound, lasting basis for Christian service is our new Position and Identity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The believer who presents himself for service on any other basis is begging for trouble, for he is still under bondage to the Sin Nature. In his own efforts to serve he finds himself in a prison of hypocrisy, frustrated by his inability to deal with his own life, let alone help others with theirs. *Dedication before Emancipation = Incarceration*. Only when we *admit*, *believe* and *count on* the reality of emancipation are we then equipped to *appropriate* this reality (apply it to ourselves) in dedication. This is just where Paul's argument is headed.<sup>38</sup> Knowing our Position/Identity in Christ equips us to be released from domination by our Sin Nature in Adam. Our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ are among the very first facts a new Christian should learn. If he does not he may lose years, never knowing that although the Sin Nature is still present in the flesh, he is free from its rule and does not have to obey it. When he realizes this and appropriates it then he is ready to present or dedicate his life and his members to the Lord, but not before."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Anderson and Reitman, pp. 61-62.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 67.



## Chapter Four: Romans 6:12-23

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Romans 6:12-14: *Present your new selves to God.*

***<sup>12</sup>Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup>Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.***

The apostle now moves from the truth of our union with Christ to the application of this truth. Now that we are new persons in Christ we must live out this new life. The first commandment here is to deny sin its reign within our bodies. This does not mean that sin is limited to the wrongful fulfillment of the physical desires of the human body. Recall that in Romans 6:6 our old man (our former unregenerate self) was crucified with Christ in order that the “*body of sin*” might be annulled, or inactive. The “body of sin” there is an expression for the whole person under the domination of sin, with various sins manifested through the body. The sinful desires spoken of here are those of the sin nature that still dwells within us. Only some of those desires are related to wrongful physical lusts. Many are related to other sinful actions, including strife, greed, jealousy, idolatry, evil speaking, anger, etc. The instruction here is for us to deny sin its reign through us by not fulfilling its passions.

The verb translated twice here as “present” is the Greek verb *paristēmi* (Strong’s # 3936). It means to place one’s self at someone’s disposal. We should cease presenting ourselves to sin for its use. Instead, we should present ourselves to God “as those who have been brought from death to life.” This presentation of ourselves will naturally include all the members of our body as “instruments of righteousness.” Zane Hodges notes: “That means that they [believers] are to employ their eyes, arms, legs, hands, and all their other *members* for the will of God.”<sup>40</sup> The first time “present” is used here it is in a verbal form that suggests that

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<sup>40</sup> Hodges, p. 175.

the person should stop doing what they have been practicing. Therefore, the NASB translates it as “do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin.” The second time the verb “present” appears here it is in a verbal form that suggests (in context) that the believers need to begin a new habit, namely of serving God.<sup>41</sup> Verse 14 explains the fundamental reason why believers can live righteously. It is because according to our *position* in Christ we are under the principle of grace, not of law. Life under the law principle arouses sin into action (Rom. 7:8), but grace affords the ability to truly reign in life (5:17). The clause, “for sin shall have no dominion over you” uses the logical-future form to express the *expected* result in the life of a person under grace.<sup>42</sup> This result is made actual when the believer does indeed present himself to God as one alive from the dead.

A few more comments will be made concerning living under law or grace later in this book. The reader should refer to Appendix A for details on these two principles.



### ***Life Application***

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In the application of the instructions in Romans 6:12-14 we must take care to fully understand what God is telling us to do. He is firstly commanding us to stop letting sin reign in our lives. But, right here we have a problem we must address. Most Christians have certain ideas concerning what sin is. Most believers think of “sins” as moral failures like immorality, lying, stealing, cheating, etc. What we need to realize is that sin is much broader than these types of failures. Basically, sins in the believer’s life consist of anything that does not conform to God’s character or will. Such a sin can be a wrong attitude, a wrong mediation in the heart, words spoken that do not reflect God, or actions taken that are contrary to God.<sup>43</sup>

For many decades, the first day of the Keswick convention stressed “the exceeding sinfulness of sin.” You will recall that the Keswick

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<sup>41</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> “The future here does not function as a promise or a command but as a logical-future stating what is naturally expected.” Lopez, p. 135.

<sup>43</sup> The believer should always distinguish between a wrongful desire (or a sudden evil thought) and actual sin. A *temptation* to sin that arises from our old sinful nature is itself not sin. But, when a child of God responds to the desire, letting it develop into a meditation in his heart or an outward action, then the believer has sinned. See Galatians 5:16 and James 1:13-15.

meetings were aimed at bringing believers into the reality of deep and meaningful fellowship with God. It has been described as a sort of "spiritual clinic" to heal spiritual ailments. Therefore, the first order of business was to bring believers into a deeper awareness of the many aspects of sin in their lives. Besides the sins specifically spelled out in the NT, the ministers at Keswick explained the need for believers to deal with all aspects of the "self-life" and "doubtful matters." Indeed the first great failure of the church in any era is to treat sin lightly, for its members to become tolerant of sins in their lives, and to hold a shallow view of what sin is. Those gathered at Keswick were urged to spend time alone with God to have their hearts open to the Spirit of God and His word in order for His holy light to shine upon their sins.

Dr. A. T. Pierson (1837-1922) was an internationally known and respected American Presbyterian minister. He was active with Keswick in the early years. He wrote a booklet on the Keswick Movement titled, *The Keswick Movement: In Precept and Practice* (1903). The following excerpts from his booklet give us some information about the matters of sin and how these were dealt with at Keswick.

Hence, the first great definite step urged is the *immediate and final abandonment of every known sin* and of every weight that hinders advance. Nothing which is revealed in the Word of God to be evil in God's sight can be indulged with impunity. Known sin is not only damaging but destructive to all spiritual life and growth. It is allied with death and not with life. It stops communion, makes peace impossible, and robs us of our testimony. It is destructive of all true assurance of salvation, not because salvation hangs on our merit, but because disobedience clouds our vision of Divine things. Obviously sin indulged blocks all true service to souls; for how can one lead others into a new life of purity, peace, and power which he has not himself found, or help a sinner to an assured sense of salvation when he has lost his own assurance?

#### MATTERS OF DOUBT

It is felt also that whatever is doubtful as an indulgence should be surrendered *because of the doubt*. In matters open to question, God and not self should have the advantage of the doubt. To continue in a questionable employment, amusement, or pleasure brings condemnation, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And because evil things are hurtful, they are unnecessary—there is no fatality about continuance in sin or in injurious

habits. *God's commandment is His enablement.* Whatever is believed or suspected to be opposed to His will and our well-being should be renounced, and *can be* abandoned at once and forever, because it *should be*. This is essentially Keswick teaching. It is an appeal to faith, to claim victory in Christ. And thousands have put such teaching to the test, and found it true and God faithful.

The self-life is here held up as needing constant watchfulness in all its seven forms: self-trust, self-help, self-pleasing, self-seeking, self-will, self-defense, and self-glory. The only way successfully to overcome it is to have a new, practical, personal Center, about which all else is to revolve. We all need to learn "the expulsive power of a new and mightier love," displacing the old.

The real difficulty with that large class of indulgences which do not bear the brand of positive sin [Pierson may mean here: not specifically noted as sin in the NT] lies in their tendency to give undue prominence to self. To consult self-gratification and self-glorification is in itself an unwholesome and an unholy habit. The lusts of ambition, avarice, appetite, however refined their forms of indulgence, all give self the supremacy. Ambition grasps after place, power, position, and feeds the pride of life and self-glory; avarice seeks by heaping up treasure to promote self-indulgence and self-display; appetite makes the pleasure of eating and drinking an object, an end rather than a means to a higher end, and so ministers to self-pleasing and self-seeking. Many other forms of self-life need guarding, few of which are more subtle than the disposition to court human applause by catering to carnal tastes, and to avoid separation unto God by conformity to the world.

As to doubtful amusements, it may be safely contended that it is not enough to settle the fact that they have no necessary and inherent sinfulness. *Moral tendency* must always enter into any candid weighing of such matters. Several forms of popular amusement bear a distinctly worldly stamp, such as the theater and the opera, the dance and the card-table, the wine-cup and the race-course. For some reason these are not found associated with an advanced type of piety or of fruitful service. Some churches have made indulgence in them a ground of



discipline. Whatever may be said in defense of any or all of them, this is unquestionably true: that wherever disciples find their way into the deeper experience of Christ's presence and power, the abandonment of them either precedes or follows such experience.

In all our attendances at Keswick we have seldom, if ever, heard these matters directly mentioned; the teaching deals with great general principles rather than specific practices; yet, as a fact, from the very beginning until now, those who have attended these gatherings have found themselves asking whether such things have not hindered holiness and service. Whatever is done primarily to please one's self puts at risk pleasing God, and hence a high standard of holy living always and in everything involves obedience to two simple, practical rules:

- (a) I will seek to please Christ as my Master and Lord, the Sovereign of my life;
- (b) I will seek to please my neighbor for his good unto edification.

Paul, led by the Spirit, has left, as to all things "lawful"—that is, all doubtful indulgences not distinctly forbidden—three great modifying principles: "All things are lawful for me," but

- (a) "all things *edify* not;" [or, *build up*]
- (b) "all things are not *expedient*;" [or, *profitable*]
- (c) "I will not be brought under the *power of any*." [Note: 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23.]

Even after the question of lawfulness is settled there yet remain, therefore, three questions to be answered, namely: is this expedient [profitable] for me? is it edifying to others? is its tendency to enslave me? A heart set on pleasing God will soon fence off all debatable ground on these principles and get free of bondage to questionable indulgences.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> From *The Keswick Movement: In Precept and Practice* by A. T. Pierson (originally published in 1903). These excerpts are from the [www.TruthfulWords.org](http://www.TruthfulWords.org) 2017 edition. The reader should note that Pierson's personal assessment that certain amusements he names "bear a worldly stamp" does not mean, as he states, that they are expressly forbidden by God's moral law. There should be no legalistic "rule" among believers against a certain amusement that is not expressly

Perhaps the greatest revival of the modern era was the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905. It is estimated that perhaps 100,000 people were saved during that revival. God's main instrument in this movement was a young man named Evan Roberts. God carefully prepared him for this work. Returning to his home town he attended a prayer meeting where he shared with a small group of young people that revival was about to break out. However, he noted that they must be prepared to meet four conditions in order for the Holy Spirit to do His work. Here are the four conditions that marked the revival from the beginning and afterward:

- 1) Confess all known sin to God.
- 2) Is there anything in your life that is doubtful? Anything you cannot decide whether it is good or evil? Away with it!
- 3) Be totally yielded and obedient to the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Confess before men publicly.

Notice item number two. Again the matter of "doubtful" things is addressed as was also noted by Pierson in his Keswick booklet. We should abandon any matter in our lives about which we have some sense of uncertainty as to whether it pleases God.

May I suggest that you take some time to seek God and ask Him to reveal to you any sins which should be confessed? Also, ask Him to enlighten you about any doubtful matters that should be abandoned. I also recommend that you tell the Lord that you desire to have the self-life exposed by God's light as you live your life day by day. If we are open to die to self and live to God then we will discover how readily the self-life is alive in its various expressions. Taking these steps of being honestly open to God about our sins and shortcomings is a critical step to our living in deeper fellowship with Christ. Anyone who desires to be an overcoming Christian must practice this openness before God every day.

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Romans 6:15-23: *Slaves of righteousness*

**<sup>15</sup>What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God, that you who**

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sinful on Biblical grounds. What Pierson is trying to do is to urge the conscientious believer to consider the moral tendency of any activity. How will participation in such an amusement tend to affect our Christian life and testimony? Each believer must decide this for himself in his own walk before God. There can be no universal rule. Pierson does give us valuable principles by which we can gauge things.

***were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,<sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.<sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.<sup>21</sup> But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.<sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

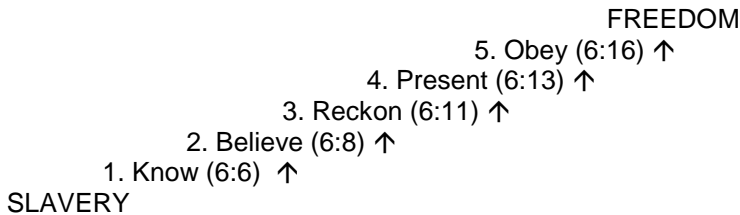
Verse 15 raises a question that in theory might be raised by someone. It is somewhat similar to the question raised in verse one in that it basically asks this: does God's grace give us the freedom to sin? In verse one we saw that someone might strangely argue that since sin gives an opportunity for God's grace to abound, why not keep sinning? In verse 15 the idea is that since we are no longer under a restrictive written code of law, can we then sin? Unfortunately, man's tendency since the fall is to find a way to justify sinful behavior, and this tendency still lies in the sin nature resident within us believers. Paul's answer is definitely "NO." It may be that Paul does not actually anticipate such a thought among the Roman believers, but he does want to make it clear to everyone that grace does not give any of us "a license to sin."

Paul's response to the idea that we may sin under grace is simple. If we choose to sin, we will be under the slavery of sin. Thus our freedom from sin's slavery is nullified. Further, the bondage to sin leads to death. The context here speaks of the current experience of the Christian: either of obedience leading to practical righteousness in the life or of sin, leading to a death experience consisting of broken fellowship with God. It is a dangerous thought for a believer to think he can get away with a little sin. If he presents himself to obey sin, then he becomes the slave of sin as his master. It is not unusual for a Christian to be tempted and deceived into trying out some sin for a while. But, the disaster that awaits him can be very great. A person's life can readily descend into a downward spiral of increasing sin. Once entangled by the cords of sin, it is most difficult for the believer to escape them. "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22).

The famous preacher R. G. Lee made this true observation: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go; keep you longer than you want to stay; and cost you more than you want to pay." I have seen Christian lives ruined because they thought they could play with a little sin. But, sin again

became their cruel master and the consequences of their choice turned out more disastrous for them than they ever imagined. Let us all be warned.

In verse 16 we see an important step for the believer who wants to be fully free from the slavery of sin. It is the step of *obedience*. This is the final step on the pathway to freedom from sin for the believer. He must not only present himself to God but also obey God. Anderson and Reitman in their book, *Portraits of Righteousness*, use the following diagram for this pathway to freedom.<sup>45</sup>



The thoughts of verses 17 and 18 are best understood when looked at as a whole. These verses picture a complete change in a person's identity: from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness. This presents a contrast of our former identity as sinners under the dominion of sin to our new identity in Christ as those have become slaves of righteousness. Such language portrays *positional* truth as it describes our new identity in union with Christ. It obviously does not describe the constant ongoing daily *condition* of believers. As is often the case in the NT epistles, our *position* in Christ becomes the foundation to then exhort believers to live out such truth in their lives. We see the exhortation that follows in verse 19: "so now *present* your members as slaves to righteousness."

This change in status took place in the Roman believers in this way: "you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching" (v. 17, NASB). It seems the best way to understand this phrase is to assign this change in their lives to their response of belief to the gospel of grace. To "believe in the Lord Jesus" is the obedient response to the gospel (Acts 16:31). Upon belief, the Romans who responded in faith were set "free from sin" and became "slaves of righteousness." A number of commentators take this "form of teaching" to be basically equal to the gospel. Although this has some truth, very possibly the verse uses "form of teaching" (v. 17, NASB) instead of "the gospel" to indicate something fundamental in the gospel. That fundamental element is grace. Anderson and Reitman make these comments:

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<sup>45</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 73.

The word for 'form' in v. 17b is *tupos*, from which we get the word 'type.' Paul is directing his readers' attention to the new 'type' of teaching which salvation brought them . . . Formerly we were under the *law* principle with all its demands (performance-for-acceptance); in our *new* realm we are under a different governing principle, the principle of *grace*. . . . When we heard the gospel of grace in Christ's death on the cross, we obeyed [through believing] and were set free from the old realm . . . to become 'slaves of righteousness,' a statement related to our New Position in Christ.<sup>46</sup>

Verse 19 begins with an unusual clause: "I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations," or, more literally, "because of the weakness of your flesh." Paul is trying to explain why he uses the imagery of "slaves of righteousness" in the prior verse. We can surely understand our former condition as "slaves of sin," being enslaved by sin's power even when we may not have wanted to sin. It was a servitude in which we had no free choices. Paul again uses the term "slaves" for the practice of righteousness because the fact is that our human design is geared towards being *dependent*, being under the influence of another power or person. Although man often desires to "captain his own ship and chart his own course" he is actually incapable of doing so as respects moral choices and living. The human nature of man is such that man cannot truly operate independently, but will serve another person or thing.

As God's children, we are not forced to follow righteousness; we do have a choice to obey or not obey. Yet, our dependent nature allows us to be under God's empowering grace if we choose, and we are thus enabled to live righteously. So the apostle goes on in verse 19 and exhorts us that just as we once presented our members as "slaves to impurity" we should now voluntarily present these members to follow righteousness. When we were "slaves to impurity" our lives degenerated into further lawlessness and evil. In contrast, as we continue to present our members as "slaves to righteousness" this leads onward to progressive sanctification. Such progressive sanctification is marked by our living being set apart more and more unto God Himself and His will. Thus, His righteousness will be increasingly manifested in our lives!

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<sup>46</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 76.



## ***Life Application***

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This is one of the key chapters in the New Testament for Christian living, so there are still lessons to be applied based on these Scriptures. Once again I want to refer to the writings of outstanding believers who discovered vital keys for living the Christian life.

In his book, *Bone of His Bone—Going Beyond the Imitation of Christ*, F. J. Huegel points out that it is our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ that is the basis of living the Christian life. Yet, he goes on to add a key idea: we must be *willing* to die to self. The truth is that these “identification truths” will not work for us if we are not willing to die to self. We can memorize the verses and “claim” them by faith for our lives, but that is to no avail if we are not willing to die to our self-life. I offer the following quotes from Huegel’s writings to bring light upon these ideas:

“It is both a *position* once and for all taken by an act of faith, in which the believer commits himself to the place God assigns in the death of His Son, and a *process of growth* in which the believer appropriates according to his need an ever-deeper life of communion with the Savior’s death. Even Paul said that he longed to know Christ and the power of His resurrection . . . being made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:10). It is all summed up in the great paradox of the gospel: ‘He who loses his life shall find it.’”<sup>47</sup>

“But, I repeat, we must choose. If the Christ spirit is to blossom out in us in its fullest splendor so that we shall attain the stature of the Perfect Man, we must, by an act of the will, choose what is already potentially our position before God: identification with the cross of Christ. We must, on the basis of the cross, and our oneness with Christ in death, refuse the ‘old life.’ ‘The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent’—those who are bold and determined—‘take it by force’ (Matt. 11:12).

We must not only refuse the ‘old life’ in a sublime moment of surrender but we must do it consistently, every time nature would reinstate itself. We must do it as consistently and as habitually as we would hold our noses from the stench of some filthy alley which daily we must pass. In a sense, you have it once for all in a position you intelligently take, for you are grafted into the trunk of the Eternal Christ whose death and resurrection you share, but in another sense it is all held in divine trust so

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<sup>47</sup> Huegel, *Bone of His Bone*, pp. 36-37.

that you may as a free moral agent choose, and choose again, and again—and continue to choose.

Which will you have? The divine life which flows as a great river of life from the throne of God and the Lamb? Then you must refuse your own life. It has been corrupted by sin. Cut yourself off from it by standing in Christ's death! Receive a heavenly life moment by moment."<sup>48</sup>

**"To share the Christ-life we must partake of Christ's cross."**<sup>49</sup>

"The next step we would consider is our participation in Christ's resurrection. Not only did we die in Christ—in Him we arose. Our death to self is but the gateway to a larger, fuller life—the more abundant life. As we sign our death warrant and consign the 'old life' to the grave, it is only to find that we are recipients of a life infinitely more wonderful—the Life of the Ages"<sup>50</sup>

"I realize now that I cannot really have Jesus without His cross. As Dr. Mabie says, the resurrection was in the death and the death in the resurrection. They are one. He is right in speaking of the 'death-resurrection-mid-process.' Shorn of a theological garb, it simply means that all that Calvary generated in a moral sense is in the Resurrection, and that one cannot participate in the latter without participating in the former. My Savior is a Crucified-Resurrected Savior, and if He is to be my life, it is to be a Crucified-Resurrected life."<sup>51</sup>

There was another servant of God who helps us in our understanding of presenting ourselves to God and in our willingness to die to self. F. B Meyer (1847-1929) was considered to be the outstanding Baptist preacher of his day. Born in England, Meyer was a friend of D. L. Moody and active in ministry in both England and America. He was very involved in the Keswick Convention and its "higher life" message. He tells the story of when he was a minister in a congregation but not really happy. One day he got a visit from Hudson Taylor, the man God used to bring the gospel to much of China. Taylor was accompanied by two young students. One of the students was C. T. Studd, a champion cricket player who later gave up fame and fortune as a famous athlete to labor as a missionary in difficult lands. Meyer noticed that Studd seemed to be strong and joyful. Meyer asked him about the difference between their two states and Studd challenged Meyer about giving up his whole life to God. Meyer was

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<sup>48</sup> Huegel, *Bone of His Bone*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>49</sup> Huegel, *Bone of His Bone*, p. 43.

<sup>50</sup> Huegel, *Bone of His Bone*, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> Huegel, *The Cross of Christ*.

unsettled by this because there was something in his life he did not wish to let go of.

That night F. B. Meyer got on his knees and gave Christ his will, which he pictured as a key ring with all the keys to the rooms of his heart. However, there was one little room in his heart for which he felt he could not give Christ the key. He wrestled with the Lord about yielding up the key for this one "little cupboard" in his heart. Finally, he had a breakthrough with the Lord when He gave the Lord some ground by saying, "I am not willing, O God, but I am willing to be made willing." Within a month's time, the Lord was able to fully gain this area of Meyer's heart and he went on to be an outstanding and effective servant of God.

The truth is that many of us have some keys to rooms in our hearts that we are unwilling to turn over to God. Some of the rooms may not be secret immoral sins, but worldly desires or habits, pleasures or worries. One room may be labeled "My Future." Another tightly locked room might be labeled "My Money," or "My Possessions." Another may be "My Leisure Time Pleasures." Another might be "My Plan or Desire for Success." Maybe a room is labeled "My Plans for Ministry." Perhaps a room is labeled "My Social or Economic Status." Another might be "My Comfort." Each of the keys of these rooms, as well as other rooms, must be yielded up to the Lord in order to die to the self-life.

We can surely learn from this story how to be willing to die to self when our stubborn will seems to be against the Lord. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6). If we humble ourselves before the Lord seeking His grace to yield to Him, He will supply us.

In the pathway to freedom from sin we see the pattern of know, believe, reckon, present and obey. When we reckon (or consider) our death and resurrection with Christ to be true of us, we are appropriating this truth for our lives. We then by faith present our new selves to God to be at His disposal, to carry out His will. In this attitude of presenting ourselves we are *agreeing to die*—to be dead to sin's appeals and alive to God's will. We are agreeing to hand over all the keys of our will to Him and hold nothing back. This is where the test of faith comes. Our old flesh life will often beckon us with a suggestion or a temptation to sin or act according to the interests of the self-life. When we walk in close fellowship with God, then we will be aware of the desires, attitudes, motives, and actions that *need to be put to death* in us by the working of Christ's cross through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4-6, 13-14; Titus 2:11-12). That is when we need to obey by *allowing* the cross of Christ to work in our lives by faith. The Christ-life is one lived by full trust in Him, and His word (Gal. 2:20). If we do this, we will experience victory as we are freed by the cross from self in actual experience and supplied with His resurrection life.

I suggest that you spend some time with the Lord praying over the points covered in this Life Application.

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The final three verses of this chapter speak clearly of experience. Verses 20 and 21 describe a person's life before his regeneration. Then, verse 22 describes the life of one who has become a believer and presented his new self to God. Verse 23 then summarizes the two different lifestyles and results.

Verse 20 states that when we were slaves to sin, then we "were free in regard to righteousness." This simply means that we had no way to produce righteousness because we were in complete bondage to sin. While living as slaves to sin the only fruit we produced was our shameful deeds which led to death. Death here should not be understood as physical death, which is already guaranteed to happen to our physical body due to the results of the fall. Also, many great sinners have lived long lives. In addition, the death here does not refer explicitly to spiritual death, as meaning the realm of total separation from God, as is the case of unbelievers. This is because all men are actually born spiritually dead due to sin (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).<sup>52</sup> Anderson and Reitman write: "No 'death' here refers to a state of being. It refers to a life in corruption in which everything is in a state of decay. Children languish as their families disintegrate; marriage decays as two people live totally separate lives in the same house; one's labor in life as a man or woman only wears them out. They are the living dead (1 Tim. 5:6)."<sup>53</sup>

Every believer in Christ *should* experience eternal life and experience it abundantly (Jn. 10:10). However, the NT certainly testifies that believers can sin and live in the flesh, living out their old life as they did before they were saved. Romans chapter 8 makes clear the possibility of a believer living in the experience of death. "For to set the mind on the flesh is death" (Rom. 8:6a). "For if you live according to the flesh you will die" (Rom. 8:13a). The principle in verses 20 and 21 is clear: whenever anyone (believer or unbeliever) lives as a slave to sin, the outcome will be an experience of death. As respects the believer who lives in sin, although he has eternal life, he will not be living in vital fellowship with God and enjoying this life.

The believer can *act* on his new identity in Christ by presenting his members as slaves to righteousness. If he chooses to do this day by day, then he will bear fruit characterized as righteous living, which leads to increasing holiness (sanctification), as noted in verse 22. The outcome of such living is "eternal life." This means that the believer is actually experiencing eternal life in a vital and abundant way. We possess eternal life once we are born again. But God's desire for us is that we experience this spiritual life in an abundant way. Jesus said, "I came that they might

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<sup>52</sup> When a person believes in Jesus as his Savior, then he passes from the realm of eternal death to eternal life (Jn. 3:16; 5:24). Romans 6:13 states that believers are "those who have been brought from death to life."

<sup>53</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 79.

have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10; also see Jn. 17:3; 1 Tim. 6:12).

Romans 6:23 is a verse often used in evangelism, but in context, it is talking about the experience of death or life in a person's life. It is not a verse written to explicitly describe the final state of a person in "heaven" or "hell." This verse is very similar to the last verse in chapter five. "So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Romans 6:23 actually is a final verse describing in a summary way some principal ideas in the whole chapter. "The wages of sin" means the ongoing payment of living in sin—which is the experience of "death." In contrast, there is the "free gift" or the "gracious gift" of God which is given to us in our union with Christ Jesus our Lord. What is this gracious gift? It is eternal life, which is the life that the Son of God has in Himself (1 Jn. 5:11-12). It was freely given to us when we believed and were placed into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). When we voluntarily present ourselves as slaves to God and yield fruit to holiness, then we experience this gracious gift of eternal life abundantly. This experience of eternal life also foreshadows the life to come.



## Chapter Five: Romans 7:1-6

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### Romans Chapter Seven: Freed from law

Romans 7:1-6: *Released from law to serve in newness of Spirit*

***<sup>1</sup>Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup>For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup>Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. <sup>4</sup>Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup>For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.***

The truths of chapter seven are very critical for the believer to grasp or else face defeat in trying to live a godly life. In chapter six Paul has set forth the great truth that we have been freed from the bondage of sin through participation in Christ's death. Further, he has shown that we participated in Christ's resurrection so that we can now walk in newness of life. Such blessed participation and living are captured by the phrase "under grace" (Rom. 6:14). But now Paul desires to explain the other phrase in Romans 6:14: "you are not under law."

Most commentators agree that there is a direct connection between Romans 6:14 and Romans 7:1. Romans 6:14 states, "you are not under law." Romans 7:1 states a principle related to law: "the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives." The section in Romans 6:15-23 is a

parenthetical thought related to verse 14. So, Paul picks up the truths of 6:14 again by saying, "or do you not know." He means by this that either the readers agree with his statement about "not under law" in 6:14, or, if they do not, then they must be ignorant of the principle laid out in 7:1. The point that Paul wants to demonstrate is this: *we are "not under law" because we are those who have died and therefore the law is no longer binding upon us.*

The apostle lays out the problem of law and sin in this way in the chapter: 7:1 shows the foundational principle; 7:2-3 gives an illustration showing the principle; 7:4-6 explains the application of this principle for the believer; 7:7-25 vividly describes Paul's own experience with law and sin.

Verse one is addressed to "brothers." The previous mention of "brothers" is in 1:13, where all the Roman readers would be indicated. The 6:14 statement would also have been understood by the readers as applying to all of them, Jews and Gentiles. Since 7:1 is connected to 6:14, the statement in 7:1 should be understood in this way: "brothers [all those in Rome, both Jews and Gentiles] – for I am speaking to those who know the law . . ." The context of the early verses of chapter seven would indicate that "the law" in verse one means the OT law, not law in general. Surely all the saints in the church in Rome would have some knowledge of Jewish law since those who had studied the OT would have made it known to others. Also, some scholars believe that a number of Gentiles in the Roman church would have been those who had previously accepted Judaism and were instructed in the synagogues.

It seems best to understand the connection between 6:14 and 7:1 as respects "law" in this way: Although Paul's reference to "not under law" in 6:14 means not under the "law principle," he uses the OT law in particular in 7:1-6 in order to validate the truth of "not under law." The OT law is certainly a prime and readily understood example of the law principle. Thus Paul uses the OT law in the first few verses of chapter seven, as well as in his recounting of his own experience (7:7-25), in order to make certain points about man's relationship and struggle with law and sin.

Romans 7:1 reveals a primary principle: *law has authority over a person only so long as that person is alive.* This statement is, of course, true for any law in the human sphere. However, since verses 2-3 allude to OT law, the OT law is brought to the forefront here. This primary principle has everything to do with what Paul is concluding in 7:4-6: Jewish believers (used as an example of all believers) have died to the OT law (and by extension, the law principle) and now live in union with Christ. Indeed, such truth also has its basis in chapter six—our death with Christ and our union with Him in His resurrection life. It is most important that we keep this primary principle in our minds as we go through the first few verses of chapter seven.

Verses two and three are an illustration of the principle and introduced as such by the connective word "for" (*gar* in Greek). The

marriage analogy here is based upon general principles of the OT law, which permitted only the husband to initiate a divorce, forbade adultery, and allowed remarriage after the husband died (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 24:1; 25:5). These marriage regulations were different from those of Roman law.<sup>54</sup> Numerous commentators, even from the early days of Christianity, have tried to analyze verses two and three as an allegory and assign meanings to the “husband” or the “wife.” One common explanation is that “the husband” really equals “the law” and “the wife” equals “the believer.” Such commentators take this type of view because verse four seems to continue some elements of the illustration, such as dying and entering into a new union. However, as many have pointed out, such explanations have real difficulty because in the analogy it is the *husband* (as “the law”) who dies, but in verse four it is *the believer* (“the wife”) who dies to the law. Also, verse two differentiates between the law and the husband. Another, more complex explanation of the supposed allegory takes the husband as “our old man” (6:6) and the wife as the true self of the believer.<sup>55</sup> While intriguing, this explanation also has problems in that both the husband and the wife represent the believer and both die. Yet, the illustration declares that only the husband dies.

It seems entirely reasonable that if Paul had intended the marriage analogy to be interpreted allegorically he would have given us some clear clues or plain statements about the meaning (as he did in Galatians 4:21-31). Otherwise, not only would later commentators find themselves guessing, but *even the original readers* would be confused and unsettled as to the meaning!

A less confusing, yet logical, explanation has been presented by some highly respected commentaries.<sup>56</sup> Simply put, the marriage illustration is given only to support the primary principle in verse one: death dissolves a legal obligation or claim. Then, verse four gives a conclusion, showing the result to be drawn from this truth for those under law. Verse four is not intended to be an explanation or an extension of the details of the illustration.

In looking at verses 4-6 as a whole, it is clear that Paul is now addressing his converted Jewish brethren in particular. Notice how he begins verse four: “Likewise, *my brothers*.” Paul uses the term *my brothers* again in Romans 9:3 in this way: “my brothers, my kinsmen

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<sup>54</sup> See the *Word Biblical Commentary* for an explanation of these differences..

<sup>55</sup> This explanation is found in a well-known older commentary: Sanday, W., and Headlam, A. C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the on the Epistle to the Romans* (International Critical Commentary), 1895.

<sup>56</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary: Romans*; James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8*; John Murray, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*.

according to the flesh.”<sup>57</sup> In chapter nine Paul is clearly speaking about those born as Jews. Notice also in verse five that Paul describes the pre-conversion experience of Jews trying to live according to law, and he includes himself with those addressed: “For while we were living in the flesh, *our* sinful passions aroused by the law, were at work in *our* members to bear fruit for death.”

So, in verse four Paul is addressing his Jewish brothers and he is telling them this: Because of the principle of *death breaking a legal claim upon men* (verses 1-3), you Jewish Christians should now realize that you have also *died to the law*. This death happened “through the body of Christ.” “The body of Christ” here can only refer logically to Christ’s body on the cross, for believers died with Him there (6:3, 6). So, verse four is telling us that Jewish believers—used as an example for all believers—have ended their connection to the regime of law by means of their death with Christ. This is a great truth of our *position*. Our former position in the unregenerate state was under the law principle. Man was made by God as a moral being. His inherent tendency in the fallen state is to attempt to respond to God’s moral standards by his own efforts (the flesh). By using his own human resources he tries to carry out particular requirements of law, whether OT law as a Jew or the work of the law in his being as a Gentile (Rom. 2:14-15).

Thankfully, verse four tells us that not only has death taken the Jewish believers out from “under law,” but now they (and all Christians) are joined to Christ, who has been raised from the dead. So, our new *position* is one of being joined to the living Christ. This is the position of “under grace.” Verse four ends with a “purpose clause” in Greek, beginning with Greek word *hina*, translated as “in order that.” The purpose of this monumental change of *position* is “in order that we may bear fruit for God.” The purpose is so that our actual living, our *condition*, will be such that we will bear spiritual fruit for God. The proper translation of the Greek verb (in the subjunctive mood) into “*may* bear fruit for God” indicates that such fruit-bearing is a possibility, not something guaranteed or automatic. Such fruit would be good works, righteousness and holy living (Jn. 15:8; Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:10).

In Romans 7:5 the apostle continues his explanation of these truths to the Jewish believers. It is clear that he is identifying with them (by using the pronoun *we*) as those who tried to live according to the OT law. Their former living was “in the flesh.” The “flesh” can carry differing connotations in Scripture, but here it surely points to living in the unregenerate state, where the lives of these Jews were dominated by their inner sinful passions. Such passions were actually stirred up by the prohibitions and

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<sup>57</sup> The same term—“my brothers”—is used once again in Romans 15:14, but the context there makes it very clear that Paul is using the term in that verse for the entire Roman church.

requirements of the OT law. Paul will elaborate more on this problem later in the chapter. The result of such living in this unregenerate state was the bearing of “fruit for death.” Those who walk in sinful living undergo a “death” experience even while physically still alive. This death is alienation from God, the light of His truth and the working of His Spirit. Such a death experience can be a progressive and deepening experience, marked by the callousness of conscience and a darkened and debased mind (Rom. 1:18-28; Eph. 4:17-19).

In verse six we see a marvelous summary of the truths Paul has been teaching in verses 1-5. The first main point is: “Now we have been released from the law.” The verb for “released” has been variously rendered as “discharged,” “annulled,” “delivered,” “ceased,” “ended our relation,” etc. The point in the clause is that the former relationship the Jewish believer had with the law is absolutely ended. The Jewish Christians should know that they are no longer responsible to produce righteousness by following OT law. They have been released from the regime of law.

The main clause in verse six is modified by the next phrase: “having died to that which held us captive.” This phrase tells us that the release from the regime of law came through death, which echoes the very principle of verse one. This death of the believers was their death with Christ on His cross (v. 4). The word “that” in the phrase “died to that” is taken to refer to “law” by most commentators (note the parallel in verse four—“died to the law”). So, we have been released from the law, having died to its “captive” or “holding” power. The understanding of this is that the law confined the Jews in sins, or “held them back” from performing righteousness. Such restraint was due to the law actually provoking the inherent sinful desires within fallen man. Paul writes of this problem succinctly in First Corinthians 15:56: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”

The concluding clause of verse six tells us the expected outcome of this release from the regime of law: “so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (NASB, a more accurate translation here). When these Jewish believers were in their unregenerate state, they attempted to serve God by focusing on the OT law and trying to carry out its commandments. That way of serving God is described as the “oldness of the letter.” That way of service belonged to another realm, the realm of the old life without Christ. It was the realm of “the flesh,” using man’s natural efforts to be righteous. However, now these believers have been joined to Christ (v. 4) so that by participating in His life they may spontaneously serve God in “newness of the Spirit.” Paul will expand on the theme of living according to the Spirit in chapter eight.

It has taken several pages to present the significant truths of Romans 7:1-6. These verses are not easily understood and commentators take somewhat differing views. Seeing that we are truly released from law in

living the Christian life is not easy for believers to grasp. Indeed many preachers today still preach that we need to follow the law or legal principles. Perhaps the following summary of the points presented will help the reader grasp the truth of this very important section of Scripture.

*Key Ideas for Understanding Romans 7:1-6*

6:14 – “you are not under law.” All believers (Jews and Gentiles) are no longer under the legal principle, with an obligation to fulfill requirements of any moral code.

How did we get released from law?

7:1 Law is binding upon a person only as long as he lives.

7:2-3 illustrate this truth from OT law. The legal obligations of the wife remain until the death of the husband. Only through death is she released. The illustration shows that *death releases from a legal obligation*.

Paul's uses the experience of Jewish believers to further support his point:

7:4 Thus, Jewish believers are released from OT law. *They died to law* in Christ's crucified body. The result: they can enter into a new relationship—joined to Christ (*under grace*).

7:5 This verse shows that the former lives of the Jews in the flesh (unregenerate state) were not helped by law. Rather, the law provoked sinful passions and these Jews bore fruit for death.

7:6 Recap: Jewish believers (as the example) are released from law, having died to it and its binding or restraining effect. We may now serve in a different way—the newness of the Spirit (grace).



***Life Application***

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In chapter six we saw how important it was for us to believe that we have died to sin and are alive to God, reckoning it as true. This truth is a spiritual fact of our *position* in Christ. It only comes into our experience (our *condition*) when we reckon it to be true and act upon it. Just as important is the spiritual fact that we have “died to law.” Without placing



our faith in the truth that we are now joined to Christ as our life, we will revert to using our efforts in trying to live up to some commandment, standard or principle.

The problem is, however, that whenever we pick up the way of law we will fail. Paul will go over this problem in some detail later in chapter seven. To believe and act upon the spiritual fact that we have died to law and are now joined to Christ, who is our life, is not easy. This is because the natural human tendency is to respond to rules and set one's self in motion to carry out the "rule." Unfortunately, we will fail many times at this. It is a long and continual "learning curve" in the Christian life to drop our efforts to accomplish something for God instead of living simply by faith, drawing upon His empowering grace. Nevertheless, we must keep practicing this way of walking by faith in our Christian life.

In the material on chapter six, I highly recommended the memorization of key truths present in that chapter. Meditation upon key truths that have been memorized is a proven way to help bring them into one's experience. In the same way, we should memorize verses related to the spiritual fact that we have died to law. I urge you to memorize Galatians 2:19-20. By committing these to memory, and using them in your daily walk with the Lord, you will be reminded and encouraged about the way of living by Christ's life, not by law. These verses will build your faith in the truth that we have died to law and can now live the Christian life in a new way.

"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:19-20)

Some readers may wonder about our responsibility to obey NT commandments. When we obey these commandments, is that not a response to "law"? God is looking for our obedience, but not in the way of focusing on commandments. We will cover more on this matter in chapter eight.

I close this Life Application with a quote from William Newell:

The great lesson which each of us must lay to his own heart, is, that those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are not under law as a principle, but under grace . . . And the life of the believer now is (1) in faith, not effort: as Paul speaks in Galatians 2:20: "The life which I now live in the flesh, *I live in faith*, the faith which in is the Son of God"; (2) *in the power of the indwelling Spirit*; for walking by the Spirit has taken the place of walking by external commandments; and (3) exercising ourselves to have a

good conscience toward God and men always:  
particularly, not wrongly using our freedom.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Newell, pp. 178.



## Chapter Six: Romans 7:7-25

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Romans 7:7-25: *Paul's struggle with the law*

<sup>7</sup>*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."* <sup>8</sup>*But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. <sup>9</sup>I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. <sup>10</sup>The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. <sup>11</sup>For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup>So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

<sup>13</sup>*Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. <sup>14</sup>For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup>For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup>So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

<sup>21</sup>*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup>but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this*

***body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.***

This passage has been interpreted quite differently by various commentators. Often their views seem determined by their particular theological bias rather than a natural reading of the text. This section is sometimes interpreted as a portrayal of general human experience, not the genuine experience of Paul personally. However, a normal reading of the text indicates that this section of Scripture is speaking of Paul's personal struggle with the law and sin. The question arises then: Is this an experience Paul had with the law before his conversion or following it? Although some Bible teachers and commentaries take the view that this section could not be the experience of a believer, there are others who declare these verses portray Paul's experience as a believer. We will look at the details in the verses here in order to present a case that this struggle with law and sin came after Paul became a believer.

In assessing whether or not this portion (7:7-25) presents Paul's experience as a believer, we should first look at the overall context. The big context of this section—Romans 5-8—concerns the believer's sanctification. Further, it is evident that Paul's writing in this section has a goal to help the believer live in the freedom of Christ's work and person. This being true, the idea that this passage speaks of Paul's experience only as an unconverted Jew would not fit the context or purpose of Romans 5-8.

Why has the Holy Spirit included this lengthy experience of Paul at this point in Romans? May I suggest that Paul's actual experience as a believer attempting to keep the law is recorded here to instruct us about living the Christian life. This passage tells us the real function of the law, yet it also warns us that the believer's effort to use the law for sanctification is a dangerous mistake—leading to failure and great despair for the misguided believer. It shows us that the law is good, but due to our problem of indwelling sin, it is not useful to us for sanctification. We need power beyond the power of our will and self-effort to "do good." We need a focus on Christ, not a focus on rules and standards, no matter how "right" they are.

I believe we may reverently say that God allowed Paul's desperate failure of using the law as a teaching tool for him and for us. For him, this "wretched man" failure (7:24) helped prepare him for a new revelation: that he *died to law* and now must live victoriously by faith alone in the person and victory of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. As for us, we can avoid the mistake and the depressing depth of Paul's failure if we take this lesson to heart and learn how to live by the Holy Spirit and not by law (7:6; chapter 8). In his commentary on Romans, William Newell titles the section of Romans 7:7-25 this way: "*Paul's law*

*struggle—before he knew the Gospel-revelation, that he had died to the Law.*<sup>59</sup>

Now let us look at the specifics of the verses in this section. Paul begins in verse seven by asking if we should equate the law with sin. He does this because he has just described in verses five and six how the old way of a written law helped produce sinful actions (“fruit for death”). So, Paul needs to explain to his readers that even though the law works to initiate sin, we should not equate the law with sin. The explanation that follows helps the readers sort out the relationship between law and sin in the life of a person, illustrated by Paul’s own experience. According to verse seven, the law gives definition to sin. That is, it clearly defines what actions are sins in God’s eyes (cf. Rom. 3:20).

Paul’s writes: “I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’” This commandment from the law is taken directly from the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:17). What is so interesting about this experience of Paul is that this commandment spoke of an inward sin of the heart—a forbidden desire. The working of this commandment upon Paul revealed to him that he possessed a real sin problem deep within his heart. Perhaps he could have kept many commandments regarding outward doings by his own will power. In contrast, this one “caught” him and even stirred the sin within him. It seems probable that Paul became more intensely aware of his sinfulness through this experience with covetousness because of his regenerated state with a newly enlivened conscience.

Paul’s analysis of his experience continues in verse eight. He clearly states that the root cause is sin (the sin principle within his fallen humanity), which “seizing an opportunity **through** the commandment” produced in Paul “all kinds of covetousness.” This is because the sin principle within man very naturally rebels against God and His standards. Notice that sin works **through** the commandment. Just as a fire poker stirs up smoldering embers into a blaze, so our sinful lusts are enflamed by the law.

Verse nine is a key verse, which helps us understand when in Paul’s life this struggle took place. Paul says, “I was once alive apart from the law.” When we consider the context of Romans we see that being “alive” means having a new spiritual life because of our baptism into Christ and His resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5, 11, 13). When Paul was born again at his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he became spiritually alive. Further, he says that he was “alive *apart from the law*.” This means that he was living in a vital spiritual fellowship with God. Such fellowship had nothing to do with law, that is, it was without any conscious effort on Paul’s part to follow the law. Paul was alive to God, walking by the Spirit. Then, when Paul became very aware of a specific

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<sup>59</sup> Newell, p. 182.

commandment (“when the commandment came”), sin became activated in him, stirring up lust. Then, when Paul responded to the commandment by attempting to obey it he died experientially—that is, he lost the living fellowship he had with God.

Verse ten speaks of the commandment of the law promising life, but yielding death. The law promised the Jewish people that the commandments would bring them life *if* they would do them (Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:11). However, when confronted with the commandment not to covet Paul found that he could not obey it, and this effort to obey actually brought in an experience of death. In Romans 7:11 Paul summed up the problem by proclaiming that sin deceived him by making him think that he was capable of living a godly life by his own efforts. But, the result of his efforts was an experience of death.

In verses 12-13, Paul concludes what this experience taught him about the law and sin. The law is holy and the commandment is indeed holy and righteous and good. The whole cycle of failure leads Paul to see that the real problem is the sin principle dwelling within him. This problem of indwelling sin was demonstrated to be sinful beyond measure by producing death through that which is good (the law). The result for Paul is that he sees he is helpless through his own best efforts to be holy. He needs deliverance beyond himself (7:24). Through this experience, Paul is being taught that he needs the power of God to live a sanctified life.

So, when did Paul experience this intense struggle with the law and sin, and how long did it go on? The best explanation seems to be that this struggle began sometime early in Paul's Christian experience. Paul probably met the Lord and was born again in 34 A. D. After his rebirth, there was a time when he was “once alive apart from the law” (v. 9). Following that, he went through this intense struggle with the law for some time until he received the revelation from God that he had “died to law” and was “alive to God.” Through this experience, he discovered that he was not to live the Christian life by focusing upon commandments and attempting to obey them. Rather, he was simply to let Christ live through him by faith.

Paul likely wrote his epistle to the Galatians around 49 A. D. and there he stated: “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:19-20). After learning the right way to live the Christian life Paul was able to write to the Galatians, arguing that the way to live the Christian life is not by trying to keep any law through the effort of the flesh, but by receiving the power of the Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:2-5).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> William Newell writes on Romans seven: “Even the fact of deliverance through Christ from the Law (described in the fourth and sixth verses), is most

The apostle *continues* the explanation of his experience with the law and sin using the conjunction “for” (*gar*, Greek): “for we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold under sin.” The law has spiritual quality due to its origin and its reflection of God’s morality, but Paul is fleshly. Paul’s conclusion about himself in verse 14 is a bold statement about his *condition*—the way he has been living during this struggle experience. He has been living in defeat, with his old nature being manifested. There is no doubt that genuine believers still have their old nature (or disposition), the flesh, resident within them. Although their old humanity was crucified with Christ (6:6), believers can still live out the old life.

Some expositors say that verse 14 proves that this whole experience describes Paul as an unbeliever since it conflicts with the glorious revelation of who we are in Christ in chapter six (6:2-7). However, we must be careful to rightly handle the Word of God. The truths of our *position* in Christ (who we are in the new creation in Christ; 2 Cor. 5:17) must be carried over into our *condition* by faith with obedience (6:11-13, 19). The “struggle” verses in Romans 7:7-25 reflect Paul’s experience—his attempts to live the Christian life by self-effort. Our living is a matter of *condition*, not *position*. The context of verse 14 shows us that Paul’s statement, “I am of flesh,” is one describing how he finds himself in this struggle, not one describing who he “really is” in his deepest identity in Christ. He finds himself as a man of flesh, a natural man without a living witness of Christ in his life. He is living according to the old nature, “walking according to the flesh” (note Rom. 8:4, 13).

René Lopez makes the following comments regarding this passage:

While chapter 6 spoke of the person from the standpoint of his new nature in Christ, chapter 7 speaks of the person from the standpoint of his fallen nature (termed in many passages as *flesh* or *carnal*; cf. 7:5, 18, 25; 8:1, 3-5, 7, 12-13; 13:14; 1 Cor. 3:1, 3; 2 Cor. 10:2-3; cf. v. 18) that he may still try to control incorrectly through the law.<sup>61</sup>

There is an interesting feature in the Greek text in verses 14-25. Whereas Paul’s struggle in 7:8-13 has been described as a past event, using “past” tenses, the amplified portrayal of this struggle is described in 7:14-25 in the present tense. Some Bible teachers have tried, therefore, to split Paul’s experience between the past and the present. Others contend that this defeated experience continues into the present. However, as

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evidently not known during this conflict with the flesh. (This fact itself marks the conflict as one that preceded the revelation to the apostle of his being dead to the Law, not under law: for such knowledge would have made the struggle impossible.)“ Newell, p. 183.

<sup>61</sup> Lopez, p. 152.

shown above, Paul could not be living this defeated life in the present as he now lives Christ's life on a consistent basis (Gal. 2:19-20).

In examining the various explanations I have read concerning this tense change, it seems to me that the most plausible explanation is the use of the "historical" or "dramatic" present tense here. Such a usage describes a past event using the present tense in order to make the event more vivid. Such use also occurs in English occasionally, but the use of the present tense in this way in the Greek language was more common, per William Mounce, a leading expert on NT Greek.<sup>62</sup> So, Lopez explains the passage this way:

Whereas Paul previously used the aorist and imperfect ["past"] tenses, from vv 14-25, Paul will consistently use the present tense to indicate vividly the struggle the infant Christian has with sin in light of using the Law for sanctification. One should not understand this section as the normal Christian experience, but the experience of a struggling Christian who tries to control sin by inappropriate use of the Law.<sup>63</sup>

Romans 7:15 begins with "for," (*gar* in Greek), showing us that it is a continuation in Paul's description of the very struggle outlined since verse seven. In this verse, Paul confesses that he does not understand his own actions. He desires and chooses to do what is right, but ends up doing the very thing he hates! Then verse 16 shows us that Paul's wrong actions, being contrary to his real desire, prove he agrees with the law. The conclusion is: "So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (v. 17). Paul concludes that the real cause of his failure is the indwelling sin principle. He is taken over by its power even when he chooses "to do what is right." In context "to do what is right" means to obey a commandment of the law. In verses 15-17 we see a real conflict within the Christian. Once again, I believe René Lopez has a good understanding here:

The personal pronoun "I" [in these verses] should be viewed as the whole person. Yet within the person there are two competing dispositions (i. e., the *flesh* against the *Spirit*; Gal. 5:16-17; cf. v. 14) warring to gain mastery over the Christian. . . . The personal pronoun "I" does not refer to the body as opposed to a new spirit. Instead, the "I" here refers to the whole person functioning either under

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<sup>62</sup> William D. Mounce, *Greek for the Rest of Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), p. 153.

<sup>63</sup> Lopez, p. 152.



the new disposition or under the fallen human disposition  
 “I” of vv 15-16 (cf. vv 19-20).<sup>64</sup>

Verse 18 concludes: “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” As we saw in verse 14, the “flesh” here means the fallen human nature that all men are born with, and which is still resident in born again believers. Believers can live according to their “fleshly,” fallen nature, and that is exactly what Paul has discovered even as his will is set to do what is right. He continues to practice evil, and thus he realizes it is not his own doing (his choice), but sin dwelling within him drives him to do evil (vs. 19-20).

Romans 7:21, translated literally, reads: “I find then the law, *when* I desire to do the right, the evil is present with me” (LITV). Bible interpreters have differing ideas about the meaning of “the law” in this verse. Many commentators have thought that “the law” here must refer to the OT law, which has been prominent in this section of Scripture. However, this interpretation of the verse involves a forced rendering of the actual Greek text.<sup>65</sup>

Two other options seem much more suitable. Some commentators and translators see “the law” here as a principle that operates in a consistent manner. For example: “I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good” (NASB). In other words, as soon as Paul set out to obey the commandment, a counteraction was set off by indwelling sin to rebel against this choice. This could be the meaning here of this verse. Another valid option that has been presented is that Paul has “discovered” a law within him when he wished to do good. That law is equated by some commentators as the same as “another law” in verse 23, a law within his members that is the “law of sin” (also in verse 23). Both interpretive options have strong points, and, in the person’s experience, the end result is the same.

In Romans 7:22-23 the apostle continues to describe his agonizing internal battle with sin. Paul delights in “the law of God.” In context, the “law of God” must mean the moral standard of conduct presented by the OT law (such as “You shall not covet.”). He agrees with that standard of right conduct in his “inner being.” The term “inner being,” or more literally “inner man,” means his inner renewed spiritual constitution, which is according to Christ. The same phrase in Greek is used in 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Ephesians 3:16. It must include our reborn human spirit as well as the mind, insofar as the mind is enlightened and renewed by the Holy Spirit (Prov. 20:27; Rom. 12:2). Such delight in the law of God (v. 22a) would certainly include the faculties of our mind (v. 23). We see here that

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<sup>64</sup> Lopez, p. 153.

<sup>65</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans, Volume I: The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd, 1975), pp. 361-362.

the “inner being” (v. 22) is closely linked to “the law of my mind” in v. 23. The “law of the mind” here speaks of the mind’s ability to discern and agree with the right moral choice. In context, it certainly involves a willingness to obey what is discerned as morally right (v. 25).

The inward battle Paul describes is one where “another law,” in his members (of his body), wages war against “the law of my mind.” This “another law,” which fights Paul’s godly choice, is probably the law or principle of the fallen flesh of man, which constantly opposes the desires of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-17).<sup>66</sup> This “another law” makes Paul captive to the “law of sin.” The law of sin is the forceful power of the sin principle deeply embedded in fallen man, in his human body. The law of sin is more powerful than man’s will power to do right, and thus the battle is lost as the person is captive to sin’s desire. The problem is that *one cannot win this battle through the power of his will—a choice he makes to follow God’s standard (7:18b).*

Paul is desperately trapped in defeat and cries out: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” “This body of death” must be the body Paul experienced as under the dominion of sin (7:14, 20-23; cf. 6:6), and such sin leads to death (6:16, 21, 23; 7:5, 9-11). The Greek word for wretched has the meaning of enduring great effort in affliction and hardship, thus producing exhaustion. Paul’s great struggle to overcome his sinful nature by self-effort left him in despair and utter defeat. We can see that his conclusion indicates he finally gives up on *himself* for victory, saying, “Who will deliver me?” The problem is that he is trapped in a body that houses the fallen nature with the power of sin and he cannot escape its power.

Suddenly, Paul triumphantly declares that God has provided deliverance through Jesus Christ: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” This declaration tells us that Paul eventually was delivered from his defeat through the revelation that Christ Himself, and Paul’s union with Him, provided all that Paul needed. Newell writes on this verse that it is only when the soul, “struggling unto despair to find victory over sin by self-effort, look[s] outside himself to Christ—in whom he is, and in whom he died to sin and to law,” does rest and victory come. “Paul was not delivered *by* Christ, but *through* Him; not by anything Christ then or that time did for him; but through the revelation of the fact that he had died with Christ at the cross to this hated indwelling sin, and law of sin; and to God’s Law, which gave sin its power. It was a new vision or revelation of the salvation which is in Christ—as described in verses 4 and 6 of our

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<sup>66</sup> Anderson and Reitman explain the law this way: “‘**Another Law in my Members**’—a ‘flaw’ inherited from Adam that opposes the Law of my Mind and enslaves me to the Law of Sin; it is the **Law of the Flesh** (7:24, 25b), and only the **Law of the Spirit of Life** can release us from this slavery (8:2).” Anderson and Reitman, p. 126.

chapter [7].”<sup>67</sup> Then, in chapter eight, Paul goes on to explain how such victory is realized through the Holy Spirit.

In the final verse of chapter seven, Paul provides a summary of the struggle he has described in 7:7-24. In the first clause, Paul says “I myself serve the law of God with my mind.” The Greek phrase (*autos egō*) for “I myself” is found only here in Romans. This phrase “probably carries with it the overtones of an expression like ‘the real I’ or ‘the true I,’” per Zane Hodges.<sup>68</sup> It describes Paul’s new identity, his true person, in Christ. In other words, according to his new disposition Paul sought to serve God’s law. The second contrasting clause reads: “but with my flesh [my old Adamic nature] I serve the law of sin.” As we know, the law of sin overcame Paul as a person. He succumbed to sin in spite of the desire of his new “I” to please God by obedience to the law.



### ***Life Application***

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In this chapter, we have seen the problem of the believer trying to please God by attempting to keep “the law.” When we think of such “living by law” we should realize that this pattern is certainly not limited to trying to keep OT rules. Rather, it involves focusing on any rules or standards and trying to keep them. It could even involve NT commands. We will say more about that shortly. The problem with this approach to living the Christian life is that it is contrary to God’s basic design of how man is to live before Him. God designed man to be totally *dependent* upon God, living by God’s life in spiritual fellowship with Him. The idea of man “obeying rules” involves *independence* from God. The basic “law” arrangement calls for man to know the rules or the standards and then proceed to obey them. Such an arrangement brings out man’s own efforts to “do works” for God.

God’s design is for man to be *directed and supplied* by God Himself in a living fellowship. One of the clearest places in Scripture we see these two ways contrasted is in Galatians 3:1-5. The Galatian believers were being plagued by legalists—teachers coming in among them telling these Gentile believers that they must now know and obey the OT law in order to be proper Christians. Paul saw the problem clearly and said: “Are you so

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<sup>67</sup> Newell, pp. 195..

<sup>68</sup> Hodges, p. 202.

foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" . . . Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal. 3:3, 5). This passage shows that we are to be supplied by the Spirit through faith. In contrast, "works of the law" are paired with the "flesh," meaning here the effort of man to obey the law.

The lesson from chapter seven is clear: when we focus on a commandment (law) and try to obey that commandment, self-effort is put into play. Thus, man is operating independently of God. This is the *principle of independence*. In contrast, the *principle of dependence* means we are living by faith—faith in Another, not in ourselves and our efforts. When we live in dependence upon God Himself, we are supplied with the power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life. This is "grace living," not "law living."<sup>69</sup> This is living by Christ's life. The verses just prior to Galatians chapter three make this clear: "for through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God . . ." (Gal. 2:19-21a). We will see more about the role of the Spirit in chapter eight.

I would like to give an illustration. Of course, most illustrations are not perfect and that is true in this case. Suppose you have a personal laptop computer. Since some readers may not have one I might explain a little about the computer. The computer itself is "hardware," being a case with internal electronic and mechanical parts. Further, it can be "loaded" with "software programs" which are designed and coded to perform many complex tasks, such as creating documents or designs, running games, or solving problems of some type. Every laptop computer has a built-in battery for power. Also, the computer will come with an accessory called a "power supply cord" which can be used to power the laptop by plugging this cord into an electrical outlet. When the power supply cord is used then the computer gets its power from the electrical outlet, an external power source. Then the battery is not needed. On the other hand, one can run the computer from the battery and not use the cord. In our illustration, the computer is like us humans, capable of doing many things in our living. Concerning our spiritual life, our character and our service unto the Lord are of great importance. Such character and service can be our "computer output."

Now, let's say our battery is like *our will power*. For the purpose of living out a proper life and service, our will power is like a bad battery, producing only low and uneven power. When a bad battery is used, perhaps the programs may not work well or at all. Thus, when we run on

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<sup>69</sup> See Appendix A for a table presenting the contrasts between the law principle and the grace principle.

our *internal* battery (use our own will power) to produce a proper Christian life, the results will be poor. On the other hand, we may *depend* upon an external power source, something outside of ourselves, to energize us, just as the power supply cord does. The Holy Spirit is our external power source and when we let Him supply us through the exercise of faith, then we will perform as designed. We may have all the right intentions and desires to live for God, but *we do not have the power within ourselves* to carry such desires out, even though we have a new nature in Christ (similar to having great software).

To live the Christian life victoriously, we must keep our focus on Christ Himself, seeking to know Him, hear Him, and draw spiritual life from Him. This is like using the external power source. To think that the Christian life is lived by paying attention to rules is a mistake. The focus of our attention on the rules or requirements sets our own will power into play. Paul stated, “when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died” (Rom. 7:9). Paul focused on the commandment and his needed obedience to it, and he “died.”

The way of the Christian life does not mean we ignore obedience to NT commandments, as Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15). The key is how we realize those commandments and how we keep them. In the NT era, the way of obeying God is altogether involved with the Holy Spirit, not independence and human effort. Remember our text in Romans seven: “so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code” (Rom. 7:6b). Several statements about loving Christ and keeping His commandments were made in John 14 and 15. It is in these chapters where Jesus promised to give us the Holy Spirit as “another Helper.” In John 15 we see an allegory of our relationship with Christ as a vine with its branches. It is by our spiritual abiding in Him that we bear fruit and keep His commandments.

As we seek Christ and the things above we are focusing on Him (Col. 3:1-4). As we abide in Him and live by Him, many NT commandments will be very naturally fulfilled in our lives (Rom. 8:4). As we walk according to the Spirit in fellowship with Christ, we will be in step with the directives of the Spirit, which are often quite subtle (Rom. 8:13-14). In such a spiritual fellowship with God, He may also remind us of a specific commandment which we need to heed at that moment. It is then that we need to *maintain our focus* upon Christ, inwardly looking to Him and drawing grace from Him to walk in obedience. Such action is by dependence and faith towards Him for the obedience, not by any self-effort. It is, of course, true that we must be those “abiding in His word” in order to know His commandments so that He can bring them to our remembrance (John 8:31-32). The Bible is so often the “language” God uses to speak to us.

There may also be times when we are being disobedient that the Lord that He will bring to mind a commandment in order to give us an

opportunity to repent and obey. For example, if a believer has been neglectful of gathering together with the saints, the Holy Spirit may bring to mind Hebrews 10:25: "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some." If we repent and agree with God concerning our sin, then we can walk in obedience by depending upon His grace to obey. Sometimes our obedience may include a faith-building prayer, such as "Thank You, Lord, that You are my life. My trust is in You."

We can see that such "fellowship obedience" (as a branch abiding in the vine) is something altogether involved with the Holy Spirit and His power. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God [the Holy Spirit] who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). Our obedience comes by means of the working of the Holy Spirit in us, enabling us in our desire to obey and in the outworking of obedience.

Finally, let us try to understand the role of our human will. We have already seen that we do not simply use our will power to obey a commandment. So, we might say that we don't use our will "to achieve for God." That would violate our design of dependence upon God. We don't want to employ our faulty battery! However, this does not mean that we just lie down and do not use our will at all. The Christian's use of his or her will is absolutely critical in order to live victoriously. Firstly, we use our will to seek God and the things of God. We will say more about this in chapter eight. It is through seeking Him that we access the power coming from the external power source. Then, we also use our will to humbly receive from God all that He desires to work in us. Such reception means that we also "agree with God." This last aspect of our interaction with the Spirit of God would include the cooperation of our will in obedience to Him. Here is a little slogan: "We do not use our will to achieve for God, but to seek Him, receive from Him, and cooperate with Him."

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## Chapter Seven: Romans 8:1-7

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### Romans Chapter Eight: God's provision and purpose for the believer

Romans 8:1-17: *The provision of the Holy Spirit for victory over sin*

8:1-4: *The law of the Spirit of life for victory*

***<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>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.***

These four verses give us a marvelous revelation! We do not have to live in defeat as Paul did in chapter seven! In chapter seven Paul was fighting the battle against sin by himself, trying to win the battle by using the law. Paul used the word "I" numerous times in the story of his battle (7:7-25), but the Spirit is not mentioned once. Yet in chapter eight we see the Spirit noted time and again as our provision for victory.

Now let us look at some of the details of this victory, which is possible for every believer. Note the words, "therefore now." These words point back to a *prior statement* that is about to be explained. The *prior statement* concerns the One who could deliver Paul: "Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord!" (7:25). The *explanation* is plain: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

There are two key things to note here in verse one. Firstly, we must fix the meaning of "no condemnation." Unfortunately, this is one of those verses that has been widely misinterpreted. Most preachers will say that this means that the believer now has no guilt assigned to him since he is in Christ Jesus. There are two fundamental problems with this explanation. The first problem is the exact meaning of the Greek word used for "condemnation." The second problem is the context, which does not lend

support to the idea of no guilt. Let us examine these things further, using good Bible interpretation skills.

The reader may recall that in Romans 5:16 we discussed the difference between two Greek words related to judgment upon an individual. The Greek word *krima* (Strong's #2917) means a courtroom *verdict*, such as the verdict of "guilty." The other word is *katakrima* (Strong's #2631), which describes the *sentence* handed down due to a guilty verdict.<sup>70</sup> Such a sentence was the punishment of "penal servitude"—meaning the compulsory service with which the prisoner is punished (such as time in jail). In the case of sinful mankind, the "penal servitude" put upon him was bondage to sin, leading to death. That is man's condition in the flesh. So, the meaning of "condemnation" in verse one is not guilt, but bondage to sin.

Also, in looking at the context of the verse, both the preceding context in chapter seven and the context following verse one, the meaning is clear: Paul is talking about his living—either in bondage to sin (chapter seven) or in a release from bondage to sin (chapter eight). Zane Hodges translates verse one as follows: "Therefore there is now no servitude *to sin* for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk in relation to the flesh but in relation to the Spirit."<sup>71</sup> (The words "*to sin*" are shown in italics because they are not in the Greek text but are implied by the context.)

Verse one is stating that by virtue of *our union with Christ Jesus* there is no more condemnation—no more servitude to sin. But wait a minute! Was not Paul experiencing this servitude to sin as a believer in Christ Jesus (chapter seven)? Do we, as believers, also not experience this when we are living "in the flesh," trying to keep the law, or even willfully disobeying God? Unfortunately, yes. The release from penal servitude is something that Christ has won for us in His victorious work on the cross and in the resurrection. This release from servitude is a matter of *positional* truth, what we possess in our *position* by virtue of our spiritual union with Christ.<sup>72</sup>

Yet, our *condition* is different than our *position*. Our *condition* (our actual experience) does not automatically match our *position*. To live in a *condition* that is aligned with our *position* requires steps of faith by the disciple. As we saw in chapter six, we must take certain steps of faith and obedience to be free from the power of sin. And, in chapter seven we saw

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<sup>70</sup> The meanings of these two Greek words are confirmed by the most authoritative dictionary of Greek NT words available. Here is the reference: Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 518, 567.

<sup>71</sup> Hodges, p. 206.

<sup>72</sup> The reader may review a fuller explanation of *position* and *condition* in the comments under Romans 6:3.



that we cannot live victoriously over sin if we try to do so by using the law. So, victory is available, but not automatic!

The thought that such victory is not automatically experienced by the believer is certainly brought out in the text of 8:1-4. Unfortunately, though, this is one of those texts where there is some discrepancy among the ancient manuscripts we have of the Greek NT texts. One group of texts, relying on a small group of older manuscripts, shows verse one exactly as shown above in the ESV version. Another group of texts, which were available for translation work before some of the older manuscripts were discovered, was used to translate the King James Version. So, the KJV and NKJV (New King James Version) add another clause to verse one giving the following rendering: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (KJV). This difference in ancient manuscripts causes good and conscientious scholars to differ in their translation of this verse. However, the presence or absence of the second clause in verse one is not at all critical, as this same exact clause appears in verse four. Anderson and Reitman point out this truth as follows:

That debate [among scholars as to which rendering of verse one is correct based upon manuscript preferences] is beyond the scope of this book, but even if we accept the oldest manuscripts as more reliable, and the qualifying clause above is not present in 8:1, the truth of 8:1 is tightly argued all the way through v. 4 and therefore depends upon the same condition as in 8:4, that we walk according to the Spirit, and not the flesh.<sup>73</sup>

So, the point is this: for us to *experience freedom* from this penal servitude (a matter of *condition* for us), we must be those who walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh.

The idea in verse two is evident in the context. The context is Christian sanctification—living a life freed from the dominion of sin and one that glorifies God. We will see how verse two is connected with verse one and also with the following verses in this regard. A “law” in this verse means a principle acting in a uniform manner. The “law of sin and death” refers to that powerful force of the sin principle deeply embedded in the

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<sup>73</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 135. The reader should note that there are slight differences among the 5,800+ ancient manuscripts (of varying lengths and portions of Scripture) of the Greek NT. However, most of these differences are small and of little consequence, caused by slight mistakes when the texts were copied by people. There are no differences which create a discrepancy in doctrine. The original manuscripts penned by the NT authors were “God-breathed” or “inspired” (2 Tim. 3:16) and absolutely without error. Conservative Bible scholars agree that the modern translations we hold in our hands are absolutely reliable.

nature of fallen man. It is the source of sins, just as an apple tree is the source of apples.

This law of sin and death is the great obstacle to our living. Here in verse two we see some really “good news.” There is a more powerful law that can free us from the law of sin and death within us. That is the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Note that the phrasing I am using here for this victorious law is somewhat different than the ESV phrasing. Almost all other modern versions place “in Christ Jesus” immediately after “the law of the Spirit of life.” This law is nothing less than the principle of the risen life of the Son of God, which life includes all He passed through in death and resurrection (note how our baptism into Christ includes the experience of His death and resurrection; Rom. 6:3-5).

The law of sin and death within us is constantly acting to pull us downward towards sinfulness just as the law of gravity acts to pull objects downward toward the earth. Yet, the law of gravity can be defeated! A balloon filled with helium gas can *rise* from the earth. This happens due to the “law of buoyancy.” When an object is lighter than the air around it, the air will make it rise. This is an illustration of what some Christian teachers many years ago described as “counteraction.” The law of sin and death is counteracted by the law of the Spirit of life, which is stronger and victorious in its counteraction. The teachers at the Keswick Convention (mentioned earlier in Romans chapter six) often used the term “counteraction” in connection with Romans 8:2.

Note how verse two states that the law of the Spirit “has set you free” from the law of sin and death. Such translation makes this seem like a past event. However, the verb here is in the aorist tense, which can hold various meanings other than a reference to a past event. I believe Dr. Anderson makes a good case for the aorist here having a “*gnomic* sense, expressing a rule or principle or law of life.”<sup>74</sup> Translating the verb here as a *gnomic* aorist would yield a translation like this: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets you free from the law of sin and death.” Considering that the context here is the *experience* of our daily walk with Christ in sanctification, this seems quite fitting. As we walk according to the Spirit we are being spontaneously set free from the power of the law of sin and death that is still active within us. This is “counteraction” played out in actual experience.

Romans 8:3 continues with “for,” giving us key additional information about why we can walk free from servitude to sin in our lives. It begins by telling us that God did what the law could not do. The law could not free us from the power of the law of sin and death. The law had no ability to sanctify us. This is because the law is weakened by the flesh, meaning that our flesh, with its deficient willpower and bent towards sin, cannot obey the law. But, what the law could not do about the sin principle within

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<sup>74</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 137.

man, God did. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus was a real man with human nature but was without sin. He had true humanity but did not inherit the sinful nature within, being conceived by the Holy Spirit. Verse three also states that God sent His Son “for sin,” or better rendered, “concerning sin” (LITV). God had to do something about the evil sin principle within man if man was to be free from its dominion. William Newell’s comments on this verse are very helpful:

God’s purpose, as revealed in this passage, was to *get at sin as connected with human flesh*, and deal with it at the cross in the way of righteous condemnation, so that sin would no longer have rights in human bodies. The preposition ‘for’ [Greek, *peri*] . . . refers here . . . not so much to atonement for sin’s guilt before God . . . [rather] . . . the question here (and in Chapters Six to Eight entire) regards the thing Sin itself rather than its guilt.<sup>75</sup>

On the cross, Jesus became identified with sinful humanity and their sin as a principle and power was judged by God (Rom. 6:6; 8:3). It no longer has any right to rule over man. Jesus accomplished a great victory over sin and its power at the cross. Now the Spirit can apply that victory over sin to us—“for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death.” The ground of the victorious “walk according to the Spirit” is the work of Christ on the cross. We saw this in chapter six and we see it again in chapter eight.

Verse four begins with “in order that” (Greek, *hina*), indicating a purpose clause is to follow. The purpose of God sending His Son to judge sin at the cross was *in order that* the requirement of the law for a righteous life might now actually be fulfilled. It is fulfilled *in us* (NT believers), on the condition that we walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. The term “walk” refers to our conduct, our living. Because of Christ’s death on the cross dealing with the sin principle, we now have the possibility of living according to the control of the Holy Spirit within us. We no longer have to be under the control of the flesh, the fallen human nature with which we were born. We should note, however, that although the sin principle within us has been judged, it has not yet been removed. Still, it remains for us to learn how to live in accordance with the Holy Spirit. That is the very next point which Paul covers in the following verses.

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<sup>75</sup> Newell, p. 204.

8:5-7: *Two practices and two results*

***<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.***

This verse defines *the practice* of those who live according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Our practice is critical. An unbeliever automatically lives according to the flesh. But, a believer does not automatically live according to the Spirit. It depends upon his practice. He must not be passive. Key for our understanding here is the Greek verb for "set their minds." This verb in Greek is *phroneo* (Strong's #5426). The NT Greek scholar Marvin Vincent gives this meaning to the verb in Romans 8:5: "*To direct the mind to something, and so to seek or strive for.*"<sup>76</sup> Other expositors add that the word involves more than the mind of a person, but also includes the emotions and the will. (See its usage in Matt. 16:23; Phil. 3:19; Col. 3:2.) Thus, the "mind set on the things of the flesh" involves directing one's attention and pursuit to the realm of the flesh, the fallen Adamic life.

A person occupied with the flesh realm will be absorbed into its views, values, and aspirations. He will pursue life along such lines. Such a person's mindset will be "conformed to this world," the present world system, with its way of thinking and its lusts which reflect fallen mankind (see Rom. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). Included in this mindset are thoughts on how we should serve God. In chapter seven Paul thought he should serve God by his best effort to keep a set of rules, a way very natural to the flesh. He did not understand the NT way of serving by living in fellowship with Christ and His supplying grace. The practice of minding the things of the flesh will naturally result in living according to the flesh. To "walk according to the flesh" means to have one's living governed by the flesh, the natural life apart from God.

The practice we need to follow is to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. This means we are to *focus upon* and *pursue* the things of the Spirit of God. We will examine this pursuit in more detail in the next Life Application. Those who set their minds upon the things of the Spirit will have the marvelous result of walking, or living, according to the governance of the Spirit.

Verse six gives a further result of the two practices. Verse six uses the noun form, "mind-set," instead of the verbal form. The mind-set of the

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<sup>76</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, D. D., *Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 90.

flesh results in death. Since Paul is speaking here of two contrasting experiences for the believer, the death here is not eternal death as one's final fate. "Life" and "death" here are terms belonging to the *condition* of the saint, not his *position*. The believer who focuses on the things of the flesh will live according to the flesh (the old disposition inclined to sin), and this will result in a death experience (Rom. 6:16, 21, 23; 7:10-13, 24; 8:13).

Note the passage concerning Christian widows in 1 Timothy 5:5-6. There the godly widow who lives in communion with God (v. 5) is contrasted with the widow who is focused on living for the pleasures of this life (v. 6). This latter widow is described as: "she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives." In the death experience of Romans 8:6, the activity of God's Spirit, with His strengthening, comforting, and enlightening life-giving grace, will be absent. Such a death experience may also be marked by doubt, disillusionment, inner turmoil, depression, or a sense of purposelessness or hopelessness. It may also lead to an early death due to one's sinful living.

In contrast, the believer who practices minding the things of the Spirit will find the experience of "life and peace." The life experience here comes from the Spirit of God, being the fulfilling life of God in all of its life-giving aspects. The peace of God is the peace of God Himself, the peace He constantly experiences regardless of circumstances. Note John 14:27 and 16:33. There Jesus promises that He has given us His peace in a world that contains tribulations. And these things Jesus spoke as He faced crucifixion within a few hours. Even in the midst of the deep valleys, trials, and disappointments of life, God can minister to us His life and His peace as we set our minds upon the things of the Spirit.

Verse seven states a clear and undeniable truth. Any person (believer or unbeliever) who has the mind-set of the flesh is under the sway of the fallen flesh, which is hostile toward God and rebellious towards His moral law. Such opposition towards God is the fixed condition of the fallen flesh of man.



### ***Life Application***

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Romans 8:1-7 contains wonderful truths that should encourage us in our walk with God. In Romans seven we see the struggle of a believer trying to live up to God's standard of righteous living by using his own efforts to follow certain commands or standards. But, such endeavor ends in defeat and disillusionment. Thank God that in Christ He made the way

for us to live in victory. God sent His Son to judge sin in the flesh in order to strip it of its rights to rule in our lives. We no longer have to follow the desires of the sin principle within us. We have been set free from its power. However, in order for us to live in this victory, we cannot be passive. We must learn to practice setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, not the things of the flesh.

It comes naturally to fallen human nature to set the mind on the things of the flesh, seeking after them. Unfortunately, since we still have the old disposition within us, *there is a tendency within all of us* to seek after the earthly and fleshly things—to be occupied with these things and make them our priority. Since we live in a human body and a human society, we have definite needs and responsibilities. The problem is how to properly take care of our human needs and responsibilities *without becoming occupied with them*, without making them *our priority and pursuit*.

Please allow me to point out how subtly we can become occupied with the pursuit of the things of the flesh. This occupation and pursuit could be for physical things related to the body, such as a focus on food, sex, slothful rest, or pampering of the body in various ways (dress, or even an over-focus upon health or exercise; see Phil. 3:19). Or, it could be an occupation with things related to the realm of the soul (the mind, emotion, and will). There are many desires of the soul which belong to the flesh and can be out of balance in a believer's life. Some examples would be mental and emotional delights (entertainment in all its forms, things of culture and the arts, hobbies, etc.), Another category would be the desire of the soul to be appreciated, or to be noticed either in man's worldly sphere (recognition through "success" or talent) or in the realm of religious achievement (Matt. 6:1-5).

Man can also set his mind upon the things of the flesh through being absorbed with the worries of this life (Lk. 8:14; 21:34). We can spend much time worrying about how we will feed our families, or how our children will turn out. There is also the ever-present danger that we can slip into legalism in trying to live before God. Such legalism is the natural way to live a "holy life" for the person placing his mind upon the things of the flesh. In legalism we use our efforts to obey rules or standards, rather than living by dependent fellowship with Christ, drawing upon His life as our life by faith (Gal. 2:19-20).

The sole solution to not being occupied with the things of the flesh is to pursue the things of the Spirit. Such a pursuit will result in us walking according to the Spirit. When we walk according to the Spirit then we will have the proper balance in our human life. We will not abandon legitimate human needs or human responsibilities, but we will fulfill them according to God's will at our present stage of spiritual maturity. As we grow in spiritual maturity, we will continually adjust our thinking about how we are to live our lives.

The following simple chart shows some Scriptures that speak about setting our minds on the things of the flesh or the Spirit. Some of these verses do not use the Greek verb for “setting the mind on,” but use the word “seek” as an equivalent.

Setting the mind on the things of the flesh	Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit
<p>“For many . . . walk as enemies of the cross of Christ [the cross of discipleship, not redemption] . . . Their end is destruction [ruin], their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with <i>minds set on earthly things</i>.” (Phil. 3:18-19). Believers who <i>value and pursue the enjoyment of earthly things</i> as their priority will experience a loss in the coming kingdom of Christ.</p>	<p>“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way.” (Phil. 3:14-15a). Mature believers are instructed to be those <i>seeking to know Christ fully</i> for the reward in the coming millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6). This reward is a magnified enjoyment of Christ and co-reigning with Him in His 1,000-year kingdom. (See 8:17 for more information on rewards.)</p>
<p>“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. 3:5) The desires of the flesh related to earthly things are sought after by carnal believers. Covetousness, a strong desire for more material goods, is equated here with idolatry.</p>	<p>“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:1-3) Seek the things which are above—Christ Himself.</p>
<p>“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” (Matt. 6:31-32). A focus upon meeting the basic needs of human life involves an occupation with the things of the flesh.</p>	<p>“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33) God calls us to seek and prepare for Christ’s coming kingdom. The word “first” is an adjective meaning that which ranks as most important. Such a pursuit includes the priority of living a righteous life.</p>

To live a victorious Christian life we must not be passive. We must actively focus upon and pursue the things of the Spirit. A seeking believer should inwardly focus upon and *pursue* the real things of God and the Spirit such as: Christ and God Himself (Jer. 29:13; Heb. 11:16); the Spirit's working and leading within us (Rom. 8:14; Phil. 2:12-13); the truths in God's word; the supply of grace from God (2 Cor. 12:9; Heb. 4:16); the way of self-denial and discipleship; the maintenance of a good conscience (including confession of sins); an attitude of dependence upon God; righteous and godly living before God and men; service and love towards others by spiritual sensitivity to the Spirit's prompting; fellowship in spirit with the saints; prayer that seeks to join together with the Holy Spirit for His prayer; and the real longing for Christ's return, with a consciousness of our need to be ready for His return and our evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Certain Scriptures also outline how we can pursue the things of the Spirit (Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 6:11; Heb. 12:14).

"To set the mind on the things of the Spirit" does not mean we abandon human duty, such as our obligations to raise and care for our family, to care for our household affairs, and to earn a living. Yet, in the midst of all these activities, we must learn to set our minds upon Christ and learn how to join ourselves with Him, being under His headship and keeping our affections directed towards Him. Those who direct their hearts towards the things of the flesh will be those who live according to the flesh, the old Adamic nature. Those who use their will to direct their hearts towards the things of the Spirit will be those who live according to the Spirit. The proper use of our human will in this matter is critical. You will recall this little slogan describing the correct use of our will: "We do not use our will to achieve for God, but to seek Him, receive from Him, and cooperate with Him."

I add these thoughts about the use of our will from Bishop Handley G. C. Moule, one of the Christian leaders involved with the Keswick Convention.

The Scripture doctrine of Sanctification teaches no effortless passivity. No will is so fully constituted for work as the regenerated and surrendered will. And in this matter of inner sanctification . . . the will has abundant work to do, in watching and prayer, in self-examination and confession of sin, in diligent study of the divine Word, in the spiritual use of sacred ordinances, in holy contemplation of Christ, in attention to every whisper of conscience. But these works will all be done with a view to maintaining and deepening that sacred practical contact with Christ by faith which is the one ultimate secret of spiritual success. They will be helps and guides to faith,



not substitutes for its divine simplicity. The temptation of the hour will be met less by direct efforts of the will than by indirect; through, and “in, Him who enableth.”<sup>77</sup>

I conclude this Life Application section with a challenge to you regarding setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. The best starting point of application is spending time in the Word of God. This is because our faith and our spiritual life are built up primarily through the Bible, the Word of God (Matt. 4:4; Lk. 8:4-15; 10:38-42; Rom. 10:17). I strongly urge you to establish a consistent daily habit of being in the Bible.

There are three basic ways I suggest to you for a time in the Bible. The first way I term as meditation upon the Word of God. This way is described in Appendix B, which contains an article titled “Soul Nourishment First.” This article was written many years ago by George Müller, a well-known and widely admired servant of God who lived from 1805 to 1898<sup>78</sup>. Müller’s article describes how he learned to spend time in the Bible first thing each morning reading and meditating upon the Word of God. He mingled his meditation with prayer and communion with the Lord. He felt that this habit was a vital key for preparing his life each day for Christian living and service. In applying this daily morning meditation on the Word of God, I find it helpful to read and meditate consecutively through a book of the New Testament. That way the thoughts from the text can build upon prior verses to strengthen my understanding of God’s Word. Meditation upon verses can also take place throughout the day as we consider verses in our hearts, going over them thoughtfully and even using them for spontaneous prayer.

The second way to be in the Bible is by reading, and just as we need food daily to sustain us, so we need daily Bible reading. There are many reading plans available and I recommend that you choose one (or create one) that gives you both OT and NT readings. I like a plan that takes the believer through the whole Bible so one becomes familiar with every passage and story in Scripture. So, if you meditate on a Scripture passage in your morning time, you can read the Bible later in the day. We should

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<sup>77</sup> Handley C. G. Moule, *Outlines of Christian Doctrine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), pp. 193-194.

<sup>78</sup> George Müller founded a large orphanage in England, which was supplied financially solely through his prayers and prayers of his co-workers. They never asked the public for money, but only made their requests known to God. He was known as a man of great faith who had over 10,000 recorded answers to prayer. He also established The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for publishing and distributing Bibles and tracts to help believers. Additionally, he was a co-elder in a local Christian assembly who regularly ministered the word of God. In his later years God sent Müller out from England on ministry trips across the globe to many countries. He was sent out to teach and encourage the body of Christ how to live by faith and receive answers to prayer from God.

be careful, though, to read in a way that brings us into living touch with God, not in a way that simply gathers information for our minds. We see this approach to the Word of God in 2 Corinthians 3:14-18 and James 1:21-22.

Thirdly, there is Bible study. A believer may not do a serious study of a passage or topic in the Bible every day, but one should be doing this on a regular basis. This study can be done on an individual basis carefully analyzing Scripture. In this discipline, one should look closely at the context, grammar, historical background, and related passages. Many other aids can be helpful as resources, such as commentaries, original language dictionaries, and Bible software tools (much is available free on the Internet). Of course, some readers of this book will not have access to all of these tools and some may not have the education level required. Nevertheless, we can learn much as we depend upon the Holy Spirit as our teacher and be diligent to use sound Bible study methods.

Another excellent approach is to have a Bible study group where a small number of people gather together with the intent to study the Word of God together. A few years ago I was part of a Bible study fellowship that studied all of the minor prophets of the OT. There are twelve OT books called the "minor prophets" (example: Joel, Amos, Hosea, and Haggai are some of them). This study was so profitable as each person brought their own insights to share with the study after looking at the text for learning and application to our lives. A good and edifying discussion of the Bible took place as we gathered together.

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## Chapter Eight: Romans 8:8-17

8:8-11: *The contrast of those in the flesh and those in the Spirit*

***<sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.***

The passage in Romans 8:8-9 uses the phrases, “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit.” This is a change from the description in verses four and five, which read as: “according to the flesh,” or “according to the Spirit.” Verses four and five are speaking of our “walk,” which is our *condition* (our living). The phrases in verses eight and nine describe our *position*. Verse eight clearly tells us that anyone who is “in the flesh” (an unregenerate person) is unable to please God.

Verses 9-11 present some brief but profound truths. These truths are focused on the effects of the Spirit and Christ in the believer’s life. These three verses are outlined as follows;

8:9 — *Declarations concerning believers and unbelievers:*  
You are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you.  
Anyone not having the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

8:10 — *Overview of the situation of believers:* The believer’s natural body is dead because of sin. The believer’s human spirit is life because of righteousness.

8:11 — *The working of the Spirit in the believer:* The Spirit will give life to the believer’s mortal body.

Verse nine is very straightforward. The distinguishing factor of believers is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The next two verses go on to explain more about believers.

Verse ten is the most debated verse in these three verses. While the first part of the verse about the body is not as complicated, the second clause clearly divides both translators and commentators. The problem in translation concerns the word “spirit” here. Is it to be capitalized, meaning the Holy Spirit, or to begin with a small “s,” meaning the human spirit? I looked at 25 English translations and found that 10 capitalized Spirit and 15 did not. I also found heavily divided results among commentators.

The reader may end up disagreeing with me on this contended point, but my interpretation is that what is meant here is the human spirit. Here is how I arrive at that conclusion. Verse nine begins this set of three verses and simply tells us that there are two categories of people, which are divided by the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit. Then, it seems that verse ten simply gives us *an overview of the situation of every believer*. It does this by setting up a contrast between two aspects related to the life of the believer.

In fact, the Greek text actually uses a well-known set of correlative conjunctions that help bring out the contrast or difference between two ideas or thoughts. These conjunctions are “*men . . . de*” in Greek. This construction is commonly understood in the Greek language as meaning, “on the one hand . . . but on the other.” However, these conjunctions are often translated in a way that only suggests some difference or contrast. In his expanded translation, Greek expert Kenneth Wuest translates this verse as follows: “But, assuming that Christ is in you, on the one hand the body is dead, but on the other hand the [human] spirit is alive on account of righteousness.” (Rom. 8:10, Wuest; this translation inserts “human” in brackets since the word for human is not actually in the text, but added for understanding).

So, there is a distinction here between the human body being dead and the spirit (or Spirit) characterized as life. A contrast between the human body (and its condition) and the Holy Spirit (and His condition) does not seem fitting. However, a contrast between the human body and the human spirit does make sense.

Secondly, I have not found an explanation in commentaries of the second clause that makes any sense if the word there is “Spirit.” What would it mean that “the Spirit is life because of righteousness?” In order to make this idea fit into this verse, some commentaries read into the verse the notion that the Spirit *gives* life, and this He can do in light of the person’s acceptance through justification. The problem with this view is that it reads something into the text that is *not* there. The Greek text simply reads “the spirit *is* life” with the verb understood as “is” in such a construction. There is no mention of “giving” life in the text. The statement of contrast is between a *body being* dead and a spirit *being* life.

Some commentators object to the idea that a noun is used for “life” and not an adjective (alive or living). However, this is a rather weak objection and commentators who support the use of the human spirit here provide reasonable explanations of the word “life.” See the footnote for some commentators’ views on this verse.<sup>79</sup>

To complete the exposition of verse ten, we should note that “the body is dead because of sin.” The body is under the reign of death because of sin and the human body will eventually die (Rom. 5:12, 17). The sin principle also brings in death in the sense that when our bodies are under its dominion we are kept from being obedient to God and lose vital fellowship with Him (Rom. 6:12-13, 16; 7:24). On the other hand, “the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The righteousness here is the imputed righteousness which leads to life—the life of God implanted into our human spirits in the new birth (Jn. 3:6-7; Rom. 4:2-5; 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23).

Whereas verse 10 gives us the general status of our body and our spirit, verse 11 goes on to speak about the working of the Spirit in our lives to overcome the reign of death in our bodies. Romans 8:11 echoes the work of the God in Romans 6:4, which reads in part: “in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans six tells us of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Here in 8:11, we see that the Spirit is the enlivening agent who can actually bring forth this newness of life in our living. I like that way Zane Hodges states this truth: “Thus the Spirit can overcome the death that characterizes the fallen state of our present mortal bodies (v 10) and can make them vehicles for expressing the divine life within us.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Alford writes: “**the** (your) **body indeed is dead on account of sin** . . . **but the** (your) **spirit** . . . perhaps he uses *pneuma*, regarding our spirits as possessed and penetrated by God’s Spirit) **is life.**” (Alford, Henry, *The Greek Testament*, e-sword edition). *The Cambridge Bible*: “*the spirit*”—Here the context seems to give the sense of the *human* spirit; that which now ‘liveth unto God’ in the regenerate man; . . . ‘*is life*’—A powerful phrase. [compare] ‘ye are light,’ Eph 5:8. The spirit is not only ‘alive’: life is its *inmost characteristic*.” (*The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, e-sword edition). *Robertson’s Word Pictures*: “**The spirit is life** (*to de pneuma zōē*). The redeemed human spirit. He uses *zōē* (life) instead of *zōsa* (living), ‘God-begotten, God-sustained life’ (James Denney, Scottish theologian), if Christ is in you.” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*, e-sword edition). Some other modern commentaries which take the meaning as the human spirit here are: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, and *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*.

<sup>80</sup> Hodges, p. 218.

8:12-17: *Being led by the Spirit for a full inheritance*

**<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**

Verse 12 is a conclusion to verses 9-11. Paul begins this section by saying we have no obligation to the flesh (our old lives), to live by its desires. Our position is now “in the Spirit” since our old man was crucified with Christ and we have shared in His resurrection. Believers can choose to live according to the flesh, but if a believer makes this choice there will be a consequence. The consequence is termed here as, “you will die.” The verb form here carries with it the idea of “about to die,” or being at the point of death. As we have seen, such a death experience means the loss of life-giving fellowship with Christ, and sinful living may also produce other negative psychological and physical effects in a person’s life.

On the other hand, verse 13 presents a positive alternative: “if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.” The statement “you will live” simply means that those following this practice of putting to death the deeds of the body will enjoy the experience of the eternal life of God. The Spirit’s desires are against the desires of the flesh, so there is a conflict between the two (Gal. 5:17). If we agree with the desire of the Spirit, trusting in Him to win the victory, then we put to death the deeds of the body. The body is the instrument that the flesh uses to carry out its desire (Rom. 6:6; “the body of sin”—under the domination of sin). Paul writes in Galatians, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify [carry out] the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). And, he writes in this section of Romans: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions” (Rom. 6:12).

Verse 14 begins with “for,” giving us a further explanation of the final clause of verse 13. Those believers who are being led by the Spirit of God (v. 14) are the ones who are cooperating with the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13). Further, such victorious ones are termed here “the sons of God.” This reference is to those who are mature sons of God, following and living according to the Spirit. This understanding is in accordance with the context of the prior verses in Romans chapter eight. We should also note that this has to do with the *condition* of these

believers, not their *position*. In understanding 8:12-17 we must keep in mind the key ideas of living according to the Spirit (vs. 12-14); the adoption, or placement as adult sons (v. 15); and the matter of heirship (v. 17). All of these ideas fit together to form a complete picture here.

This class of believers who are living victoriously is to be distinguished from all believers in general. Verse 15 shows us that “you”—*all* the readers of the epistle (representative of all believers)—“have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” The “sons” in verse 15 are all believers, who are *born* as sons of God into the family of God by faith. The use of the word “adoption,” with its modern meaning, is not the best choice for translation because it implies a birth into only one family, and then placement into another family. The Greek word often translated “adoption” is *hyiothesia* (Strong’s #5206). This word literally means “placed as a son.” A much better translation is by Kenneth Wuest: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery again with resulting fear, but you received the Spirit who places you as adult sons, by which we cry out with deep emotion, Abba, [namely] Father” (Wuest). The truth is that we are indeed born into God’s family by the Spirit of God and are also placed as adult sons by the Spirit.<sup>81</sup> The person so placed may not yet be mature in his condition but has all the privileges of an adult son in the family. The same basic idea is in Galatians 3:26, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

Being a “son of God” has two aspects in the NT. One aspect has to do with simply becoming a child of God through faith. In this aspect, every believer is a “son of God.” As such he or she is also “placed as an adult son” into God’s family. Note that in both Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:4-7 we see this intimate relationship with the Father belonging to every believer: all are sons who can cry “Abba, Father,” We may say that certain privileges belong to us because of our *position* as (adult) sons. However, our actual spiritual maturity is another matter.

The second aspect of being a “son of God” goes beyond our placement as a son and describes our actual maturity as a son of God, a matter of *condition*. This maturity is demonstrated in those who are being led by the Spirit (v. 14); these are “sons of God.” This aspect of a “son of God”—based upon our living—is noted in Matthew 5:44-45: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so *that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.*”

Both the passage in Galatians 4:1-7 and the passage here in Romans 8:12-17 also mention the matter of being heirs. This idea is crucial to our understanding of Romans 8:17 and gives us confirming light on the two aspects of “sons of God.” The background to this matter of inheritance is seen in the OT. If a father had five sons, for example, each of them was

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<sup>81</sup> For 8:15, the Revised Standard Version reads, “you have received the spirit of sonship.”

guaranteed an inheritance. However, the estate was actually divided into six parts, with two parts belonging to the firstborn son and one part each to the other sons. This “double portion” of heirship for the firstborn was his right as the firstborn son.

The eventual inheritance of this double portion for the firstborn was conditioned, however, upon his behavior as a son. The firstborn son could be disinherited of this right and receive only one part of the estate, not two parts. The Bible shows examples in the OT of those who lost the special right of the firstborn due to their behavior. One example is Reuben, who was the firstborn of Jacob. He lost his birthright due to his sexual sin (1 Chron. 5:1). Another example is Esau, who despised his birthright and sold it to his brother Jacob due to his desire for temporal pleasure (Heb. 12:16). With this Jewish background of the matter of inheritance in view, we can now better understand the whole passage (Rom. 8:12-17). See the footnote for important information about the birthright as respects NT believers.<sup>82</sup>

Throughout this passage, we see the two aspects of the “sons of God.” In 8:14 we see the sons of God as *mature believers* who are willingly being led by the Spirit. In verse 15 we get a view of *all* believers who have been placed into God’s family as sons. These have received a Spirit who places them as adult sons, not a spirit of [connected with] slavery. A spirit of slavery marked our old life under the bondage of sin (Rom. 6:17). In verse 16 the Spirit bears witness together with our spirit in prayer to God (“Abba, Father”) that *we* (all believers) are *children* of God. The witness is that we indeed are His children, belonging to God in His family. The term here “children of God” is in contrast to the mature “sons of God” in verse 14. All of God’s people are His children, but not all are the mature “sons of God” (v. 14).

Romans 8:17 is a very important verse. This verse highlights the idea of heirs, but it does so in a way that also incorporates the two aspects of the sons of God and the matter of being led by the Spirit. Indeed, this verse is packed with significant theological truth. Although many translations do not show it, the Greek text clearly provides a contrast between “heirs of God” and “fellow heirs with Christ.” In 8:10 above the use of the “*men . . . de*” construction in Greek was explained. These two Greek conjunctions are usually understood as showing a contrast or difference between two ideas or thoughts. So, “*men . . . de*” is considered as meaning “on the one hand . . . but on the other hand” when comparing two units of thought in a sentence. Unfortunately, the ESV translation

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<sup>82</sup> See Appendix D titled, *The Birthright*, for more detail on the rights of the firstborn and its application to NT believers. This principle determines the possible, but not guaranteed, reward of being co-heirs with Christ in the coming Messianic (1,000 year) kingdom.



does not bring out the contrast intended by the Greek here. Here is an excellent translation by NT Greek teacher Zane Hodges:

8:17. And if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—heirs, on the one hand, of God, and on the other hand, co-heirs with Christ if we suffer together *with Him* so that we may also be glorified together *with Him*.<sup>83</sup>

Hodges also comments as follows:

But in the text before us, Paul has *two forms of heirship* in mind. This double heirship is clearly signaled by the *men . . . de* construction that we have rendered as **on the one hand . . . on the other hand**. Not only are God's children *heirs of God*, but they may also become **co-heirs with Christ** on the condition that they "co-suffer" with Him.<sup>84</sup>

In this verse, we see the two aspects of the sons of God. The first aspect concerns all those who belong to God, labeled in this verse as "children." "Children" here is a reference to verse 16 where all believers are children of God (equaling the adopted sons of verse 15). This idea of heirship is also noted in Galatians 4:7: "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." What is the inheritance for every child of God? It entails their completed redemption with a new and glorified body, and an eternity with God (8:23, 39). These things are promised to all who simply believe (Jn. 6:40). But the other heirship costs something. To be a co-heir with Christ means we must suffer with Him. Exactly what does it mean to "suffer together with Him," and what does it mean to be a "co-heir with Christ"?

The idea of suffering with Him and thus becoming a co-heir with Christ is basic to the idea of discipleship, which leads to reward. We should remember that the word "disciple" simply means a "learner." In the ancient Middle East, a disciple followed the teachings of a teacher and also followed his lifestyle (Matt. 10:24-25). Jesus taught that to truly follow Him in discipleship had these terms: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). The idea of taking up one's cross mirrors the way Jesus took up His cross. When Jesus prayed to His Father in the garden about going to the cross, He laid aside His own will and yielded completely to the Father's will—the cross. He prayed: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). The

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<sup>83</sup> Hodges, p. 224.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

terms of discipleship show a willingness to fully die to one's own self-interest and become absolutely obedient to God, regardless of the cost.

Throughout His life, Jesus experienced suffering because of His obedience to the Father's will (Heb. 5:8). That suffering was climaxed at the cross, and so the cross became the supreme symbol of His suffering through obedience. Therefore, to "suffer with Him" in Romans 8:17 means to be willing to bear the cross as He did. The reference to the cross as the particular "suffering of Christ" is seen in Acts 1:3 and Luke 24:46 and other places. In Philippians, Paul writes: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). Then Paul goes on to share his desire to follow Christ in His suffering: "that I may know him . . . and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10). To share in Christ's suffering then means to die completely to self and our will, and to follow God's will at any cost. The path of discipleship calls us to take up our cross daily (Lk. 9:23).

The outcome of following Christ in discipleship is a positive reward. This reward is granted to the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Rewards (meaning recompense) are based upon our works, our doings, not our initial faith. Our initial faith brings us justification and peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Yet, our following of Christ in discipleship brings future reward following the Judgment Seat. We see something of this reward in verse 17. This verse tells us that if we suffer with Him (follow Him in the path of discipleship), then we will be "glorified with him." The glorification here speaks of our sharing in the glory of His coming kingdom, the Messiah's kingdom of 1,000 years. When Jesus returns, He will bring in His earthly kingdom, which He has received from the Father and in which He will be glorified (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Lk. 19:11-12).

When Jesus returns, He will come as "the firstborn into the world" (Heb. 1:6). As the Firstborn—the preeminent One with special privilege and honor—He will rule from His throne. Those who follow the Lord in discipleship will reign with Him in His kingdom for 1,000 years (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21; 20:4-6). Thus, these faithful disciples will share in the privileges of the Firstborn. This sharing with Christ in His glory will also include a magnified experience of eternal life in "the age to come," which is the coming kingdom age of 1,000 years (Mk. 10:28-30; Lk. 18:28-30).

A confirming reference to the reward of ruling with Christ (based upon discipleship) is 2 Timothy 2:12. "If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us." *To endure means to continue in obedience, even under difficult circumstances* (see Heb. 10:35-36). To deny Christ in this verse means to deny His Lordship in our lives by disobedience (Lk. 6:46; Tit. 1:16). If we do this, He will deny us the reward of reigning with Him in glory in His kingdom. In summary 2 Timothy 2:12 is contrasting two ideas: endurance (continuance in obedience) rewarded with sharing Christ's reign, contrasted with denial (lack of

obedience to the Lord), resulting in Christ's denial of reward. The following chart may be helpful:

Romans 8:17	Heirs of God	Fellow heirs with Christ
Who are the heirs?	Children of God – all believers	Believers who “suffer with Him”
Qualification of heirship	Having received the Spirit of adoption (vs. 15-16).	Following Christ in His suffering of the cross – the pathway of obedience. (Phil. 2:8; 3:10; Lk. 9:23.)
Phase of salvation	Justification; regeneration.	Sanctification; discipleship.
Believer's responsibility	Faith alone.	Works: obedience that accompanies faith. Being led by the Spirit. (8:13-14)
Inheritance	A glorified body; eternity with God (Rom. 8:23, 29; Phil. 3:20-21; Jn. 3:16; 6:40).	Reward. Ruling with Christ in the glory of His coming kingdom. (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21; 20:4-6). Gaining a magnified experience of eternal life in the age to come (Mk. 10:28-30; Lk. 18:28-30) . <sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Rewards are a significant topic in the NT. Appendix F contains a booklet titled, *Eternal Security*. The latter part of that booklet has a section with the heading of “Two Great Principles of Truth.” The Reward Principle is explained there and contrasted with the Gift Principle (the gift of eternal salvation). For further information on rewards, visit the author's website ([www.seekersofchrist.org](http://www.seekersofchrist.org)) and see the articles under the section titled, *The Judgment Seat of Christ, Rewards and the Kingdom*.



## ***Life Application***

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The passage in Romans 8:12-17 tell us who we are in Christ, and how our new life in Christ is to develop. We are now children of God and sons who have been placed into the family of God. Since we are children of God, we have no obligation to live the old life of the flesh. The old life may beckon us with its desires, but we do not have to live that way any longer. The Spirit of God within us is resisting the old fleshly desires and the Spirit's actions within us summon us to agree with Him, through faith in God. In this way, we put to death the sinful deeds that arise within us from the old sinful disposition. If we are thus "led by the Spirit," then we "live"—experience the fellowship of eternal life with God. One the other hand, if we do not follow this leading of the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body, then we will have the death experience of living according to the flesh. It comes down to a matter of "life or death." If we follow the leading of the Spirit and reject the fleshly desires, we will experience Christ's life. If we do not follow we will be cut off from the experience of His life.

I would like to mention a few key things which will help us in this matter of following the Spirit and growing in Christ. This passage in Romans 8:12-17 definitely brings in the idea of growing or maturing in our Christian life. We all begin as children of God, but our growing unto maturity as sons of God is a matter of our cooperation with the Spirit of God (8:14). We grow as we develop in our obedience to the leading of the Spirit. This development of our obedience depends upon our spiritual knowledge and our sensitivity to the working of the Spirit in our lives. In other words, the more accurately we know the things of God and the closer attention we pay to the Spirit's work, the greater will be our progress in spiritual growth. The last Bible verse we have from Peter reads in part: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

How do we develop spiritual knowledge in order to more accurately know what the Spirit is working in our lives? Firstly, this must be something we seek after. Romans 8:5 notes this seeking when it says: "those who live according to the Spirit *set their minds* on the things of the Spirit." So, we must have a practice of seeking knowledge of God. The primary place for gaining a knowledge of God, including His commands, His desires, and His ways, is the Bible. The Bible tells us: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). We may almost say that the Bible is the "language" that God uses to "speak" to us, to

guide us, and to train us. So, we must be those who are spending time in God's word, "and receive with meekness the implanted word . . . [being] doers of the word" (Jas. 1:21-22).

A secondary source of spiritual knowledge of the Lord and His ways can come from mature believers, who have learned from God. It is Biblical to learn from others who are more advanced than us in the Lord (note Phil. 3:17; 4:9; Heb. 13:7). This is learning that is focused on how to live the Christian life. I can testify that I have learned much from the biographies of highly regarded Christian men and women. Also, I have learned as well from radio and TV programs, books, and personal contact with those who have truly known the Lord in a deep way.

Another factor in our progress of maturing concerns our consecration to God. We must maintain an absolute consecration to God in order to mature in a proper way. In this consecration, we not just offering ourselves to serve God. We are also presenting ourselves to God for His purifying work in our lives for our spiritual growth. This means we are willing to die to self, including our thoughts, intentions, and choices in order to let Him transform our thinking and our living (Romans 12:1-2). Most often this process takes place in the affairs of everyday life, such as family life, the workplace and in the church.

For our consecration we should practice the steps we covered in Romans six where we learned to believe our identification with Christ, reckoning ourselves as dead to sin but alive to God. Then we present our new lives to God *for obedience*. By renewing this dedication process daily we are actively seeking to *let* God work in us what is pleasing unto Him. A daily consecration to God is typified for us by the daily burnt offering that was sacrificed to God every morning by the priests in the OT (Lev. 6:8-13). The burnt offering was on the altar to be totally consumed by the fire. Thus, it portrayed a total dedication to God.

Another important key for growth is how we take care of our failures and our straying from the path of obedience. The answer here is always to confess our sins to God in order to regain our fellowship with God. The Bible's famous verse on the confession of sins is 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Greek word for "confess" simply means to "agree with." Literally, it means "to speak the same thing."

When we sin, our conscience will signal us that we have done something wrong before God. This conviction of wrongdoing in our conscience may be somewhat subtle at times and other times it may be very strong. In any case, *at the slightest indication we have done wrong*, we should take action in order to restore our close fellowship with God. We can simply say, either inwardly or out loud, "Lord, I have sinned; forgive me." We agree with God with an attitude of forsaking our sin and trusting God for forgiveness. Proverbs 28:13 is an OT verse that gives the

same idea of confession but adds the important thought that the attitude of the person confessing is that he or she does want to truly forsake that type of sin. "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." See Appendix C for more detail on the importance of the conscience in our Christian walk.

Once we confess we must *believe* that God *has forgiven* us according to the promise of 1 John 1:9. Our former sins will sometimes surface in our minds, and our minds may have difficulty in letting them go. We can sink under the weight of guilt even over sins that have *already been forgiven*. This is not only a problem due to the frailty of the human psychological condition, but also due to Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). Satan can plague us with guilt because of our past sins. We should counter this false condemnation by standing on the truth of 1 John 1:9. Also, focusing on the following verses from Romans eight can relieve us from Satan's accusation: "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? **It is God who justifies**. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Rom. 8:33-34).

Very importantly, this passage tells us about the matter of our potential inheritance. We should not think that all believers will receive the same reward (or recompense) at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Our reward is determined by our doings in this life, not by our initial faith. God wants every believer to respond to the call of being a co-heir with Christ, who is the Firstborn. However, it seems from Scripture that most believers will not receive this extra portion of the inheritance. It will belong to those who truly follow Christ in discipleship. Please note, however, that even if a believer has left the pathway of obedience it is still possible for him to receive this inheritance. He simply needs to confess and return to the pathway of obedience. God may yet reward him for future faithfulness.<sup>86</sup> By God's grace we can start over again.

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<sup>86</sup> In speaking to several of the churches in Revelation two and three, Christ promised rewards for those who repented of their wrongs and then proceeded to overcome.



## Chapter Nine: Romans 8:18-30

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Romans 8:18-30: *God's work in suffering for future glory*

<sup>18</sup>*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* <sup>19</sup>*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.* <sup>20</sup>*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope* <sup>21</sup>*that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* <sup>22</sup>*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.* <sup>23</sup>*And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* <sup>24</sup>*For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?* <sup>25</sup>*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* <sup>26</sup>*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* <sup>27</sup>*And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* <sup>28</sup>*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* <sup>29</sup>*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* <sup>30</sup>*And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Understanding verse 18 requires us to understand its connection to verse 17. They seem connected because both verses make mention of suffering and future glory. Also, verse 18 begins with the word “for” (*gar* in Greek) in the ESV translation shown above. Most often the word *gar* would be understood as a word that would indicate the second verse is

some form of explanation, or cause, of the prior verse. However, this idea runs into trouble since the suffering in verse 18 is a general description of all the sufferings of life which are related to this age. Yet, verse 17 shows a more specific “suffering with Him”—our voluntary taking up of the cross of suffering with Christ.

Thankfully, this puzzle has been solved for us by Zane Hodges. He points out that another recognized meaning of the word *gar* fits best here. The translation here should not be “for”—showing a *cause* for the prior statement—but simply a word introducing a *remark* related to the preceding statement. So, Hodges translates the word as “now”, which is a recognized meaning by the authoritative BDAG lexicon in such usages. Hodges translates as follows: “Now I consider that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed for us.” Hodges explains the connection between the two verses as follows: “Having raised the suffering/glory theme in v 17, Paul now wishes to underline the huge disparity between the two kinds of experience. Although our **sufferings in the present time** so often seem dreadful and nearly unbearable, they are dwarfed by the superlative greatness of the glory to which they lead.”<sup>87</sup>

Paul has already introduced us in chapter five to the concept of suffering leading to glory. In Romans 5:2-5 we read that “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God [and] not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” *Sufferings are very much part of God’s plan for us to mature.* If we endure in our suffering by remaining under it in a way that honors God, then we will mature in our Christian life. In this way, our confident hope of future glory is made very real to us. We see this same thought also in 2 Corinthians chapter four. There Paul outlines his sufferings and ends with this statement: “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:16-17). The theme of the present sufferings of life used *to mature us*, and *so prepare us* for future glory, is one seen in a number of places in Scripture (some examples: Jas. 1:2-4, 12; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).

God’s intention in the various trials of our lives is to bring forth more of Christ in our lives. First Peter 1:6-7 reads: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Trials provide an opportunity for God to test our faith and prove its genuineness. The Greek word translated here as “tested by fire” is the word used for the

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<sup>87</sup> Hodges, p. 226.



assaying or proving of metals by putting them into the fire. The fire would remove the impurities so that the precious metal would come forth and be clearly seen. God uses various trials in our lives to refine us and produce Christian character.

When we go through trials, if our heart is set to trust and follow the Lord, we are pressed to seek Him earnestly. Things that used to be so important to us and occupied our attention fall away or diminish in their importance. Our focus becomes more centered on knowing Christ, and His life develops within us. Such a process prepares us to share in the special inheritance related to Christ's reign in the glory of His coming kingdom. The great prophetic writer, George N. H. Peters, makes this remarkable observation: "This future Kingship is really the secret cause of *that chastening* that oftentimes is now so grievous. God designs that by our trials we may become *fitted and prepared* for the position in the Coming Kingdom."<sup>88</sup>

Verse 18 begins a section of Scripture through the end of chapter eight that describes suffering. Christians face two great challenges in life—sin and suffering. Romans 5-8 deal with both of these challenges. The future glory following suffering in verse 18 seems to be especially reflected in verses 18-30. In the verses following 18, Paul breaks down the theme of suffering/glory in this way: vs. 19-22 cover non-human creation on this earth; vs. 23-25 cover believers in the way of an overview; vs. 26-30 outline God's working to bring the believers to glory.

We should recognize that the entire created world in which we live has suffered catastrophically from the fall of man in Genesis chapter three. Through this catastrophic fall sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5:12) and the ground was placed under a curse (Gen. 3:17). The world we live in is drastically different from what God created in Genesis chapter one.

In Romans 8:19-22 the apostle describes the plight, and the future hope, of the non-human world of nature, using a figure of speech that personifies the creation. The scope of the word "creation" in verses 19-22 has been debated by Bible teachers for a long time, but it seems best to understand it as "non-human" nature, including both living things and non-living things.<sup>89</sup> The creation is pictured in verse 19 as eagerly longing for

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<sup>88</sup> George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 2:590.

<sup>89</sup> Cranfield, p. 411-412. In his respected and scholarly commentary, Cranfield has a lengthy discussion on the various views put forth in Christian writings on the scope of "creation" in this passage. His conclusion is that the term here refers to "sub-human" nature, both living and non-living. This view seems sound and he also concludes that angels are not included in "creation" as used in these verses. It is unclear if Cranfield limits "creation" here to the earth. Although the Scriptures do speak of a coming "new heavens and new earth," the focus of Bible prophecies about the coming glory of the millennium relate to the glories that will be found on a greatly restored earth. It seems possible that Paul does not

the “revealing of the sons of God.” The “sons of God” here refers to the mature believers who are living overcoming lives (8:13-14). This “revealing” points to the time of Christ’s millennial kingdom when these faithful and mature believers are co-heirs with Christ, reigning with Him over a greatly restored earth (a time Jesus called “the regeneration,” Matt. 19:28). See Appendix E for details on the 1,000-year kingdom of Christ.

Romans 8:20-21 tells us more about the suffering of creation and its release. Creation was “subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope” (v. 20). God subjected creation by His will to futility, even placing the ground under a curse (Gen. 3:17-19). This “futility” has a meaning of emptiness, a lack of value or purpose. Through the fall all of nature lost its purpose as a perfect setting for man in God’s image to glorify Him. But, we should note that God so subjected it “*in hope* that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage” (vs. 20-21). God’s plan for man and earth cannot be successfully thwarted. Even His action of placing the creation under the awful burden of futility was not without a sure hope of future restoration.

Verse 21 notes that the creation is currently in “bondage to corruption.” The Greek word for corruption means to be in decay and ruin. Think of it: God’s creation which once was declared to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31), is now in a state of decay like a rotting apple. Disease, crop failure, death and an animal world marked by ferocious competition, killing and eating one another, are all evidence of this corruption. Today’s creation under a state of ruin finds the wolf stalking a lamb as its prey. It finds the venomous snake ready to strike at a human with little provocation. Such is the great damage of the fall. It seems that there could not possibly be any way to undo such great damage and ruin. However, the Bible prophesies that the restored earth during the reign of Christ will be radically different: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:6, 8-9).

God’s sure plan—the hope for creation—is that it will one day be set free from its “bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” We should carefully note that this phrase describing “the children of God” is to be distinguished from the phrase in verse 19 concerning “the sons of God.” The “sons of God” in verse 19 refers to the obedient and faithful believers, not all believers (v. 14). On the other hand, we have seen that “the children of God” refers to all believers (v. 16). So,

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have a technical definition of creation in mind here, but sees it in relation to conditions on the earth.

what is “the freedom of the glory of the children of God”? It is their freedom from the presence of sin (with its corrupting desires) when they receive their redeemed and glorified bodies. The redemption of our bodies is the final phase of our adoption, which is probably better rendered “sonship” (8:23). All the children of God will receive glorified bodies when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom (Phil. 3:20-21). Even the dead saints will be raised in a body of glory (1 Cor. 15:43). The creation will also someday experience this same freedom from the corruption of sin and the fall.

Paul sums up the longing of creation in verse 22: “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Here we see the first of three uses in this passage of the idea of “groaning.” The word “groaning” here means the deep inner sighing of someone living under the suffering of some adverse circumstance. Using the figure of a woman laboring in the pains of childbirth, Paul personifies creation enduring the great frustration of its bondage to corruption, causing it to groan for release. The idea of the “childbirth” speaks of creation’s longing for its deliverance into a new age, where restoration from the damage of the fall is realized. In summary, the verse pictures the creation as groaning from its plight in unison, longing for the age of Messiah’s reign (note the following verses depicting the gladness of creation when it is released from its suffering: Isa. 55:12; Ps. 96:11-13; 98:8-9).

Verses 23-25 concern the groaning of believers. As those “who have tasted the firstfruits of the Spirit,” we have an experiential knowledge of what God’s life is like and long to be freed from the presence of sin. All believers have had at least the initial taste of the Spirit, who has placed them as adult sons, crying “Abba! Father!” (8:15). Many have gone further to know some victory in their walk by the Spirit’s control (8:13-14). Such experience causes us to groan for release from a body that contains the sin principle with all of its inclinations. What we long for is the final phase of our placement as sons—the redemption of our bodies. This phase of salvation is something we long for in hope, with confident expectation. But, it is not yet seen as this redemption is part of the end-time plan of God that comes to pass when Christ returns and we receive glorified bodies (8:21; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-52).

Verse 24 is certainly connected to the thought in 23 of the future redemption of our body (our glorification). As part of our total salvation, we have a hope of future glorification at the return of Christ.<sup>90</sup> Of course, what

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<sup>90</sup> This verse reads, “for in this hope we are saved.” The verb here is in the aorist tense, which most often refers to a past event. However, the “time factor” in Greek tenses are flexible and are secondary to the “aspect,” or nature of the action. It seems probable that the aorist usage here is the “proleptic aorist,” which points to the future. The proleptic aorist is used to emphasize the certainty of an event that is yet future. In this case, that event is the redemption of our body, its future glorification. This thought is paralleled in Romans 8:28, where Paul uses the

is future is not yet seen. Further, verse 25 tells us: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." The Greek word rendered patience here is *hupomonē* (Strong's #5281), which is also rendered in other translations as perseverance. Through many trials, we wait with perseverance for the coming redemption of our bodies—being freed at the end from the grievous presence of sin. And this hope helps us purify our lives for His coming (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

Romans 8:26-27 present to us two mysterious and wonderful verses. In the midst of our suffering and weakness, verse 26 states: "the Spirit helps us in our weakness." What is our weakness, and how does the Spirit help us? It seems best, along with some other commentators, to understand our "weakness" as an appropriate description of our total human condition, not just a weakness as respects how to pray. The previous verses have vividly described how creation groans under the weight of the fall, longing for release from its damage and corruption. Also, we are groaning for the coming release from the presence of sin, longing for the redemption of our bodies. The Holy Spirit sympathizes with us and comes to our aid.

We are weak to overcome not only the presence of sin but also to victoriously endure the consequences of the fall as they have affected the human condition. Sickness, troubles in human relationships, challenges in making a living, the impossibility of living up to God's standards by our best efforts, and the inability to change a variety of other suffering and stressful circumstances are only some of the challenges that mark our weakness. Intuitively, we know that all the world is damaged, including ourselves, yet we are weak and helpless to do anything about it. Thus, we are suffering. We are weak to bear this burden of sin and suffering.

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness." The Greek verb for "helps" here presents the idea of a person under a heavy load who is helped by another who joins with him in carrying that load. In our condition of weakness, the Holy Spirit can come in and help us carry the burden of indwelling sin and all manner of suffering. A prime example of such help is in prayer, which is given here as a particular example of the Spirit's help. The Scripture instructs us, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (Jas. 5:13). We should pray, yet our problem is that "we do not know what to pray for as we ought" (ESV), or possibly it may read "we do not know how to pray as we should" (Rom. 8:26, NASB).

Our inability to pray as we should in our suffering is part of our weakness. So, the Spirit *intercedes for us*. This does not mean that the Spirit undertakes our intercession as we pray. It means that the Spirit sympathizes with our weakness, and thus intercedes for us, even with groanings that are too deep to be put into human words. This operation of

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aorist again to describe the future aspect of our salvation: "he also glorified." See the comments on Romans 8:28.

the Spirit likely happens whether we are praying or not. The word “likewise” that begins verse 26 is to be understood this way: just as we and creation *groan* under our burdens, desiring to be free, likewise the Spirit also *groans* in sympathy with us in His intercession. And, He intercedes for us according to our particular situation at any given time. We may not be conscious of the Spirit’s groanings, but be sure that God the Father is.

The Spirit may intercede for us even without the necessity of our prayers. We should, however, still pray as the Scripture urges us. What the Spirit does for us, which we may miss in our prayers, is to intercede for us “according to God.” Many versions supply the words “*the will*” in this verse, which words are not actually in the Greek text. This is done in the ESV: “according to *the will* of God.” However, as William Newell comments, this phrase, “according to God,” likely means much more. It may take on these further dimensions: “according to His nature (of which we are partakers); according to our needs, which He discerns; according to our dangers, which He foresees—according to all the desires He has toward us.”<sup>91</sup> God is searching our hearts, and in so doing “knows what the mind of the Spirit is” in His intercession to God the Father. This is a great and wonderful mystery. It is also a marvelous ministry for us, carried out for us by the indwelling Spirit of God.

I believe that we may confidently say that these three groanings—of creation, God’s believers, and the Holy Spirit—are all done in anticipation of the coming time of release from the burden of sin and the fall. These groanings will cease once they are “answered” with the return of Jesus Christ to set up His earthly kingdom. This is in accord with the petition of the disciple’s model prayer: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

Now we arrive at a famous verse: Romans 8:28. Even though there may be different explanations of this verse, most Christians understand that there is some comforting news here for believers. The famous evangelist and Bible teacher, R. A. Torrey (1856-1928), said: “Romans 8:28 is a soft pillow for a tired heart.”

This verse is actually very simple in its composition, but exceedingly profound in its truth. Firstly, a marvelous promise is given in the verse: “all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Secondly, we see that this promise is qualified by a clause that limits the promise only to “those who love God.”

We will look carefully at these two main aspects of the verse, but first let us consider the opening phrase, “and we know.” This opening phrase indicates that there was a common intuitive knowledge among the believers that no matter what happens in life God is at work to potentially move it towards good in our lives. This type of knowledge comes from the

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<sup>91</sup> Newell, p. 228.

Jewish thought based upon the OT Scripture. A prime example would be the life of Joseph. His life was beset with many adverse circumstances that were not his fault, yet God was allowing all of this to prepare Joseph for his role of leadership in Egypt. After the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers were fearful that Joseph might take revenge upon them for the wrong they did to him. Yet, the Scripture records: "But Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today'" (Gen. 50:19-20).

God is at work providentially in our lives with the goal to bring about good. Although the ESV reads "all things work together for good," the Greek text, along with manuscript differences, make the clause somewhat unclear. Thus, the NASB uses God as the subject: "God causes all things to work together for good." Of course, the working of all things toward a goal must indeed have God's hand behind it. God's wisdom and providence are at work to produce "good" in our lives through all events. However, we should note that the term "all things" here likely points primarily to the difficult and suffering circumstances of life—"the sufferings of this present time" (8:18; note the whole context of 8:18-39).<sup>92</sup>

What is the "good" which God desires to produce in our lives? Anderson and Reitman explain the difference between two Greek words for good. One word describes a good which is external and another word denotes an internal good. The external good is one everyone can see, and that Greek word for good is *kalos*. It might be used to describe the "goodness" of a handsome horse. Another word, *agathos*, describes a good not visible to the eye. Anderson and Reitman write: "It may be internal and not seen by the eye at all—an inward benefit or improvement that may be evident only to the individual himself and God. Many times, perhaps most of the time, the good which comes from some tragic event can only be realized internally."<sup>93</sup> A fuller definition of this "good" will follow in verses 29-30.

Now we will seek to learn the meaning of the more controversial phrase of the verse: "for those who love God." This phrase is placed in the emphatic position at the beginning of the Greek sentence. Its emphasis makes the meaning of the phrase important to our understanding of the verse. At one time I felt that this phrase was a term describing all believers since other descriptions in verses 28-30 would apply to all believers. Many commentators, but not all, take this view. However, when we look at the NT in terms of believers "loving God," we

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<sup>92</sup> Henry Alford writes: "**all things** (every event of life, but especially, as the context requires, those which are adverse . . .)." Alford, Henry, *The Greek New Testament*, e-sword edition. This understanding is also supported by some other commentators.

<sup>93</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 214.

learn that not all do. The verb used for love here is *agapaō* (Strong's #25). In the NT, this type of love towards others is not one primarily influenced by natural affection or feelings, but instead is primarily driven by the mind and the use of the will.<sup>94</sup> It is used here to describe believers who exercise their will to obey God. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15). See also John 15:10-14, 1 John 4:19-20, and 1 John 5:2-3. All of these verses link our love toward God with our obedience. First John 2:15 makes it clear that if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. This warning surely means that it is possible for a believer to *not* love God.

I believe we can rightly conclude that although being "called according to his purpose," and "being predestined to be conformed to the image of his son," etc., is something true of all believers, "loving God" describes only believers walking in obedience. To walk in obedience, as we have seen in chapters six, seven, and eight, involves a constant practice by the believer.

Since, as we will soon see, the "good" in verse 28 refers to God's purpose for us to be conformed to the image of His son (v. 29), it is logical that this purpose *can only be worked out in the life of an obedient follower* of Christ. If a believer hardens his or her heart and does not want to cooperate with God in obedience, it is evident that such a one cannot advance in maturity. This thought of maturity through obedience (endurance) in trials is certainly at the core of such passages as Romans 5:3-4, Hebrews 6:1-8, and James 1:2-4. Endurance when under trial involves obedience (Heb. 10:34-36).

I like the Williams translation of Romans 8:28 because it aptly brings out the present participle of "loving God." "Yes, we know that all things go on working together for the good of those who keep on loving God, who are called in accordance with God's purpose" (Williams). For us to gain the "good" God desires for our lives—confirmation to the image of His Son—it is needful for us to "keep on loving God" (obeying Him).

We have seen that "the sufferings of this present time" (8:18) are the primary things referred to by "all things" in verse 28. Such sufferings would be those such as poverty, sickness, difficult family members, war, accidents and tragedies, persecution for following Christ, the drudgery and hardship of work, unfair treatment by others, etc. But, what about sufferings that we bring upon ourselves by our sins? Can God also somehow include these in "all things" to produce "good" in our lives?

Firstly, let us be clear that it is not God's desire for us to sin, or to

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<sup>94</sup> In his study of the noun and the verb in the NT, William Barclay explains that such love involves a deliberate principle of the mind and, especially, an act of the will. Unlike natural human love, this love may be counter to natural affections or desire. It can involve the choice to love those who are not naturally appealing to us, such as our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). See William Barclay's book, *New Testament Words*.

suffer for our sins. Peter writes these verses to believers: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name" (1 Pet. 4:15-16). Peter was exhorting the believers to be willing to suffer for Christ's name, but they should not suffer for committing sins. Yet, we know that Christians do sin, and sometimes their sins are serious, with real suffering that follows. An unplanned pregnancy from an immoral act has very long term consequences that often result in much hardship. If a Christian commits a serious crime, he will go to prison and have that crime upon his record forever. Such an action will result in much suffering. Also, believers who become addicted to alcohol or drugs do much damage to themselves and others, causing much suffering.

Although God never desires for a believer to sin, He does strongly desire that each believer mature in Christ. If the Christian who commits a serious sin repents from it and then sincerely seeks the Lord, God can still bring forth "good" from the failure. Of course, there is not good in the sin itself. However, If a believer who has failed subsequently seeks to obey the Lord and grow, God can use even the failure as a stepping stone in the goodness of Christian growth and service. After a significant failure, a truly repentant believer is stirred to be more earnest in his seeking after God and in his desire to do God's will. He is more sensitive to sin in his life. He is more conscious of his great need of dependence upon the Lord. And, he is more devoted to the Lord in gratitude for God's mercy upon him.

Look at David's life. After David sinned with Bathsheba, God used Nathan to bring a deep conviction of sin to David's heart. The Bible records Psalm 51 as David's psalm of repentance. The psalm shows David's fresh sensitivity toward sin within him and his need for deep dependence upon God (Ps. 51:5-6, 9-10). Such repentance by David from his sin even caused him to want to help others to be turned from their sins (Ps. 51:12-13). It also increased his praise of God (Ps. 51:15). The "good" that resulted was an inward good in David's heart. His heart was fashioned afresh to make him a more sincere seeker of God and His righteousness.

The real key to understanding Romans 8:28 is twofold. Firstly, we must realize that the promise to produce "good" out of all things means a "good" that is primarily inward. This "good" works to move us forward in the plan of God for our lives—His purpose for us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Secondly, we must take note that this promise is made only to those "who keep on loving God" (Williams). When something happens in our lives, will we "keep on loving God"? Maybe we are living for God and suddenly something unexpected happens which seems terribly unfair and not our fault. That is our opportunity to "keep on loving God" so that His purpose in our lives can move forward. Or, perhaps we have not been following God and our sinful path has now resulted in difficult, perhaps even tragic circumstances, and we are to blame. Can



God produce something good out of our failure and our crushing circumstances? Absolutely. That is the promise of this verse. This promise is made to those who—even after disgrace and self-inflicted wounds—will choose to seek and obey God with a whole heart. What a promise! What a God!

Notice how verse 28 ends: “for those who are called according to his purpose.” Those who love God are also ones, along with all other believers, who are called by God in harmony with His purpose. The meaning of the verb for “call” in the NT means to be invited to participate in special privileges or to fulfill a special function.<sup>95</sup> The calling of believers is “according to his purpose.” This phrase, “according to his purpose” is then explained in the following verse. The calling of believers to accept His plan for them to become sons in His family is an invitation to the greatest privilege known to man.

Verses 29 and 30 use several terms that have been understood in various ways by Christians and theologians. It is beyond the scope of this book to delve too deeply into the meanings of these terms. I will present the meanings as I have learned them from some leading evangelical Bible teachers and sources.

Verse 29 begins: “for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” To “foreknow” is, in simplicity, to know something beforehand, before it comes to pass. A fundamental mistake was made in Christian theology by the ancient church father Augustine. Anderson and Reitman are well-studied in the history of theology and they explain certain errors that began with the church father Augustine (354-431 A. C.) and have continued to this day. They write: “However, one of Augustine’s biggest mistakes was to confuse this foreknowledge with *predetermination*. As the author of double predestination—that God chose some to go to heaven and the rest to go to hell before He ever created them—Augustine held that whatever God *foreknew*, God *predetermined*. Theologians have been supporting this doctrine or reacting to it ever since Augustine died (AD 431). Those who oppose this teaching have trouble accepting a view of God that would create some people just to send them to hell.”<sup>96</sup> This type of theology “was supported by Gottschalk (AD 850), John Calvin, and his successor at the Geneva Academy, Theodore Beza.”<sup>97</sup>

However, “foreknowledge and predetermination cannot be equated. God does not predetermine what He foreknows. Rather, foreknowledge is

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<sup>95</sup> The idea of being “called” is clearly equivalent to being “invited,” as seen in Jesus’ parable of the wedding feast in Luke 14:7-24. The verb *kaleō* (Strong’s #2564) is used 11 times in that parable to indicate “invite.” See Anderson and Reitman, p. 214.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 216.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 216.

only one 'compartment,' we might say of omniscience. With foreknowledge, God knows what *will* actually come to pass. But with omniscience, He knows not only what will come to pass but also what might come to pass."<sup>98</sup>

Anderson and Reitman use the Biblical story in 1 Samuel 23 to reveal both the foreknowledge and the omniscience of God as concerns human decision making. In His foreknowledge, God told David to go to Keliath because He would give David victory there over the Philistines (1 Sam. 23:4). David obeyed and defeated the enemy, delivering the city of Keliath. Saul learned that David was in Keliath and so he sought to capture David. When Saul was about to lay siege to Keliath in order to seize David, David inquired of the Lord as to whether the men of Keliath would surrender David into Saul's hand. God communicated to David that these men would hand him over to Saul, so David and his men left Keliath (1 Sam. 23:9-13). This shows God's omniscience. God knows what choices people will actually make in their lives (foreknowledge). Also, God in His omniscience knows what people might do under any set of circumstances and what would result. But, *most importantly, God does not determine our choices. As humans, we have free will. We are not puppets on strings with our actions predetermined by God as the "puppeteer."*

As respects our choice to come to Christ, these authors make the following observations: "This isn't to say that our capacity to choose has not been affected by the fall—it most certainly has. That is why we need God's *persuasion* (or 'drawing,' Jn. 6:44) and the Spirit's conviction (Jn. 16:8) to trust Christ as Savior. However, if we equate foreknowledge with predetermination, then our capacity to choose has been nullified—we become little more than automatons or robots in God's hands."<sup>99</sup>

Those who have accepted God's calling to belong to Jesus Christ (Romans 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:9), in line with His purpose, are also those who were "predestined," which means "marked out beforehand." This destiny is "to be conformed to the image of His Son." His purpose for us is to be like Jesus. While we are here on earth this conformation is a process, essentially the process of our progressive sanctification. God uses many trials and circumstances to help that process along. God desires that we see that His providential hand is behind the events of our lives. Then, we should humbly cooperate with Him in all circumstances as He conforms us to the character of His Son.

The last clause of Romans 8:29 shows an ultimate result of this process: "in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." This picture includes a result beyond what God intends to accomplish in the individual Christian. God wants a family, a household. In this corporate household, Christ will be exalted as the "Firstborn," which

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 216-217.

<sup>99</sup> Anderson and Reitman, p. 218.

denotes His preeminence. As the Firstborn, Christ will be “heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). Yet, He is the Firstborn “*among many brothers*”—others who will also bear His character as members of God’s family.

Now we come to verse 30, which continues to describe God’s working out of His plan. There are five steps, or five links to a chain, in verses 28-30. We can see the steps proceed in this order: foreknown; predestined; called; justified; glorified. We were foreknown and predestined in eternity, before the foundation of the world (2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8). These very persons whom God foreknew and predestined were then also called by God. This calling happened in time when the Holy Spirit called us to Christ through the gospel and we responded in faith (1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). The Scripture also reads: “and those whom he called he also justified.” God justifies those who respond to His call. This is the justification whereby God declares us righteous at the moment we believe (Rom. 4:2-5).

The final step is glorification. Note that for those of us who are already believers, the first four steps have already happened in our lives. The last step of being glorified, however, according to Scripture, is still future. We have seen in this section (Romans 8:18-25) that glorification involves the “freedom of the glory of the children of God,” which means released from the presence of sin and corruption by the redemption of our bodies. However, this is a matter yet future at the coming of the Lord (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-52). That is when we receive glorified bodies. Most English translations, however, show the action here as a past event: “he also glorified.” They read this way because the aorist tense most normally would be understood as describing a “past” event. However, the aorist is not limited to this understanding. More than one Greek expert I have read believes that the aorist is used here as a “proleptic aorist,” which describes a future event as something already completed in order to emphasize the certainty of the future event.

We should notice what is missing in this chain of five actions. Sanctification is not mentioned. This is the stage between justification and glorification. There is a good reason for its absence. Here Paul is describing God’s actions performed upon all children of God. Progressive sanctification, our Christian growth during our lifetime into greater conformity to the character of Christ, is dependent upon the believer’s cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit in his life (Rom. 8:4-6, 12-14; Phil. 2:12-13). Not all believers will walk a steadfast path in this phase of sanctification. Since Paul is only describing here the universal experience of *all* believers emphasizing *God’s actions*, sanctification is absent. The message that these verses give us is magnificent and encouraging. These verses guarantee that every believer will be brought through all the way to glorification by God Himself. This is real “eternal security.” Not one of His children will be lost along the way. All will eventually have the awful presence of sin removed from their bodies and the corruption within

eliminated. This also means that each believer will eventually be conformed to the image of God's Son. For this, we surely give praise and glory to God.

The glorification in Romans 8:30 has its emphasis on the redemption of our bodies, as seen earlier in 8:21-23. Yet, we must keep in mind that there is another aspect of future glorification that is possible for the believer. That is noted in Romans 8:17 where it is stated that we may be "fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may be also be glorified with him." This aspect of future glorification is related to rewards and not all believers will experience this reward.

Dr. Joseph Dillow gives the following explanation of these two aspects of glorification:

That two different aspects of the one future glorification are in view seems probable due to the contextual contrasts between them. In v. 17 the glorification is conditional and only for those who suffer with Christ, but in v. 30 it is unconditional and is for all who are justified. In v. 17 it is a sharing in the glory of Messiah, but in v. 30 it refers to our own glorification. In v. 17 the verb is "to be glorified with," and in v. 30 it is "glorified." In v. 17 it refers to the wonders of the messianic era, but in v. 30 it refers to our ultimate conformity into the image of Christ at the resurrection of the body. In v. 17 the verb is in a purpose clause implying intent and not necessarily certainty. But in v. 30 it is an indicative implying the certainty of a presently achieved fact. Verse 17 is in a context which stresses exhortation. It is a challenge to persevere in order that we might share in Christ's glory. But v. 30 is a statement of fact that we have already, in a proleptic and anticipatory sense, entered into that glory.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992), p. 381.



## Chapter Ten: Romans 8:31-39

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Romans 8:31-39: *God's love for us*

***<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,***

***“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”***

***<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Paul begins his transition to the stupendous conclusion of this chapter with a question that every believer should ponder: “What then shall we say to these things?” To what does the term “these things” refer exactly? It may be impossible for us to pin this answer down as the apostle has been stringing one astounding thought after in the preceding writing. Most commentators point to verses 29-30 as the immediate reference. However, some also speculate that “these things” may stretch back as far back as chapter three, or even to the theme verse of Romans 1:16. Since the thrust of 8:31-39 appears to be God's love and care for us during the trials of our Christian life, I suggest that Paul may be referring back to the matters covered in verses 18-30. Verse 18 introduces that section with the subject of “the sufferings of this present time.”

The entire section of 8:18-30 not only covers these sufferings, but it also gives us insight into God's plan and activity to fully recover His creation and redeemed mankind, bringing them to future glory. This He can and will do in spite of the adversities that come through the fall. Amazingly, God can even produce good out of adversity for His saints who are actively loving Him by choosing to be obedient to Him. So, Paul concludes in verse 31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" No one and nothing can, in reality, be against us. In spite of seemingly opposing forces and circumstances, God's ultimate plan for us (8:28-30) will be accomplished because He is for us.

Verse 32 tells us more about God's care for us. He has already given us His greatest gift, His Son. Therefore, how will God not give us lesser gifts along with His Son? The first part of verse 32 says God "gave him up for us all." The idea of "for us" here would be "for our benefit." Additionally, God will "graciously give us all things"—things that are for our benefit—along with His Son. In the context of Romans eight, this "all things" would primarily be all things needful for us to live victoriously over sin and suffering.<sup>101</sup> Second Peter 1:3 reflects this idea: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Yet, the "all things" likely extends to everything we need as we travel the course of the Christian life through the sufferings of this present time toward final glorification. Of course, we cannot ask God for anything we want. It should be evident that all that God gives us must be in accordance with His will (Jas. 4:2-3; 1 Jn. 5:14-15). It is comforting to know that God has promised to meet our basic physical needs (Lk. 12:27-31). The Scripture also testifies that our loving Father will supply comfort, encouragement, wisdom, strength, and much more, as we seek and trust Him for them.

The next question Paul raises in his series of rhetorical questions relating to God's love and care regards our security from an accusation of

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<sup>101</sup> Many expositors hold the view of the "all things" here as those things needful to lead us to glorification, but others hold a different view. They believe the "all things" refers to "all creation" which is given to believers who are joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom over a renovated creation. My view is that the immediate context of verse 32 refers primarily to things for the benefit of the believer's life as he lives in the present age. Such benefits are seen in the context of 8:18-39. We might list some as: the hope of future glory while undergoing suffering (8:18-22); the hope of the redemption of our bodies to help us wait with patience (8:23-25); the Spirit's intercession for us in our weakness in suffering (8:26-29); the encouraging knowledge that God's plan for our lives to be conformed to Christ's image is certain (8:28-30); the assurance that God justifies us in the face of every accusation or condemnation from men or the devil (8:33-34); the promise that in the midst of suffering and persecution that nothing can separate us from the love of God (8:35-39). In addition, the first part of the chapter (8:1-17) tells us of God's provision of the Spirit to His children for a victorious walk over sin.

wrongdoing: "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" No one can bring a valid charge because it is God who justifies! The devil is the "accuser of our brothers . . . who accuses them day and night before God" due to their failures (Rev. 12:10). But his accusations mean nothing because God has already justified us. We should accept and deal with the conviction of sin in our lives by the Holy Spirit. His conviction is always for specific sins that have not been revealed to us previously. However, we should not permit the devil's accusations against us. He will accuse us in our thoughts with his fiery darts or through the lips of others. He will also charge us of being guilty of sins and failures we confessed to God long ago. We should confidently reject his accusations which are designed to deflate our sense of peace by declaring, "Thank You, God, You are the one who justifies."

Not only may a charge be falsely laid to our account, but the accuser may go further and "condemn" us like a judge passing a jail sentence upon the guilty. However, Paul's response is that the sentence has already been served. Our Savior died in our place for our sins and rose again proving our justification (Rom. 4:25). Further, Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us (Heb. 7:25). Jesus is our Advocate with the Father whenever we sin, presenting Himself as the propitiation (the satisfaction payment to appease divine wrath upon sin) for our sins (1 Jn. 2:1-2). No person or spiritual being has a right to take on God's unique role as Judge.

Verse 35 raises a significant question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Most English readers will notice that this final passage speaks not only of opposition from men and spiritual beings but also of adverse circumstances. Yet, the English versions normally use the phrase "**Who** shall separate us?" Actually, the Greek word used for "who" applies to both beings and things (see the footnote).<sup>102</sup> The first two words in this list in verse 35 are general descriptions of great pressure or extreme affliction. These two words are very similar in meaning and may describe affliction from outward circumstances or inward distress. Because of their generality, it seems here that these words could describe any difficult trial or anguish in a believer's life.

The next five words (persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword) are vivid and more specific in description. These perils are ones that can afflict the faithful followers of Christ. Paul himself had already experienced persecution (Acts 14:19; 2 Tim. 3:11), famine (the Greek word is translated as "hunger" in 2 Cor. 11:27), nakedness (translated as "exposure" in 2 Cor. 11:27), and dangers (2 Cor. 11:27). Paul had already

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<sup>102</sup> Zane Hodges explains the usage as follows: "The Greek word translated *who* is *Tis* and covers both persons and things (whereas the neuter would have implied only 'things,' i. e., *what will separate us*). Pauls' list (seven items) is intended to refer to all eventualities, whether living beings or any possible experience." Hodges, p. 247.

been stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19), and eventually, like James (Acts 12:2), he would face the executioner's sword under Nero (2 Tim. 4:6 is considered by some Bible teachers as a reference to Paul's imminent execution). This was certainly Paul's experience. Verse 35 sets up a conclusion from OT Scripture in verse 36 that definitely refers to the affliction or persecution of God's people. Verse 36 begins with "As it is written."

Verse 36 cites Psalm 44:22 to explain what Paul means here. That passage is generally considered a prophetic word concerning the treatment of the Jewish remnant during the coming end-time tribulation period. Nevertheless, it stands as a timeless pattern for the sufferings and the persecution of God's people throughout the ages. During times of intense persecution, it seems that God's people (either Jews or NT believers) are simply "regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." Sorrowfully, this has been the case at various times and places since Christ ascended.

Paul goes on to tell us something very positive in spite of the sufferings. The suffering, even the suffering of persecution, does not mean God has abandoned us. Nor does it mean that we are simply given a fate to suffer undeservedly and perhaps even die. Instead, Paul tells us that in the midst of such sufferings we can triumph. The suffering does not need to defeat us spiritually or psychologically. Rather, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." It is through Christ—though our experience of His resurrection life—that we can fully conquer all the potential defeat and discouragement of suffering and radiate His life. In Ephesians, the apostle prays for the believers that they may know "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19-20). It is this great power that can work in us to triumph over suffering.

Further, the apostle shares with us that the Lord who works in us to conquer is the very One "who loved us." Paul emphasizes this matter of God's love for us in the midst of trials in verses 35, 37 and 39. Therefore, we should not wrongly interpret our sufferings as an indication that God does not love us. God's love for us is particularly shown by giving us His only Son to suffer and die for our sins. Christ's sacrifice for us stands forever as proof of His heart of love for us (Rom. 5:8). And, we must remember that "God is for us" (v. 31). He only allows suffering in our lives to help accomplish our conformation to the image of His Son. So, we must accept this role of suffering in our lives.

Paul introduces his thoughts in verse 38-39 with "I am sure." Other versions commonly translate the verb as "I am persuaded" or "I am convinced." The point is this: Paul has reached a settled conclusion that *absolutely nothing* can separate us from the love of God. Paul came to this conclusion not just through his theological reasoning or study. Paul



suffered greatly in his experience through rejection, misunderstanding, slander, physical deprivation, dangers of various types, Satanic attacks, beatings and even stoning. He was a proving ground for his statement that nothing can separate us from God's love. He had a keen sense in the midst of his sufferings that God loved him.

Paul writes an exhaustive list of adversaries and conditions that would seem to threaten such certainty of God's love towards His children. "Death nor life" would cover the full scope of human experience in our earthly existence. "Angels" and "rulers" are supernatural beings who could oppose believers. "Things present" would represent any present condition or situation. "Things to come" would include any possible future conditions. "Powers" would mean "authorities," and could refer to angelic authorities, and possibly also to earthly authorities. The phrasing "nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation" encompasses the entire universe with its sweep. Any and all of these things cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God's love toward His believers seems to be the most indestructible bond in the universe.



### ***Life Application***

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Romans 8:18-39 contains crucial truths for the believer's life. Much of this portion of the word deals with the problem of suffering. God responds to two questions here which bother us humans in our sufferings. Firstly, to at least some degree, these Scriptures unveil why God allows suffering in the believer's life. Sufferings are part of *His plan* by which He will accomplish His purpose in our lives. His purpose for us is to be conformed to the image of His Son (maturing in the character of Jesus). Sufferings should always be viewed by believers in light of the future glory they can help produce. At the end of a NT chapter describing some of Paul's own struggles with suffering, he concludes: "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17). Secondly, this section of Scripture shows us *God's provision* for the believer in suffering. In summary, then, we see here *God's plan* working through our suffering, and we see *God's provision* for us in the midst of our suffering.

*God's plan* is not specifically that we suffer, but His plan is that in our suffering we can learn of Christ and grow to maturity in Christ. Some of our sufferings come our way due to no fault of our own. As examples, this might include sickness, accidents, poverty or financial stress (not due to our mismanagement), job troubles, or difficult people in our family or other

circles of our life. These troubles can also take other forms in our environment. Such learning of Christ involves our humbling ourselves before God in openness to learn how He desires for us to obey Him and trust Him during the trial. We must remember that Jesus suffered many things in His human experience. By going through such trials, He was perfected in His human experience so that He could be our captain (or leader or pioneer) as we walk through this life.<sup>103</sup> He did not need perfecting in His character as He was already perfect, but in order to be our sympathetic high priest and the captain of our salvation, He needed to suffer. Consider the following verses:

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10, KJV)

“Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Heb. 2:17-18)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:15-16)

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” (Heb. 5:8)

The final verse above shows us that through His sufferings Christ

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<sup>103</sup> Hebrews 2:10 declares Jesus as the “captain” of our salvation (KJV). This means He has led the way in how to follow God through the pathway of human life, including through the difficulties and sufferings of life. The Greek word translated “captain” in the KJV has been variously translated (“captain,” “leader,” “author,” “founder,” “pioneer”). The following comments by W. E. Vine are helpful on the meaning of this word: “*archegos* . . . primarily signifies ‘one who takes a lead in, or provides the first occasion of, anything.’ . . . In Heb. 12:2 where Christ is called the “Author and Perfecter of faith,” He is represented as the one who takes precedence in faith and is thus the perfect exemplar of it. . . . Christ in the days of His flesh trod undeviatingly the path of faith, and as the Perfecter has brought it to a perfect end in His own person. Thus He is the leader of all others who tread that path.” W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (e-sword edition).

learned in human experience the matter of obedience. He learned the suffering of self-denial in order to obey God. And He learned the sufferings that such faithful obedience cost Him in terms of enduring adverse circumstances and mistreatment from others. As a man, He experienced many sufferings, but He was faithful to follow God by the power of the Spirit. *Such is the pattern for us.* In all of our trials and sufferings, God wants us to learn to obey Him and thus grow in our faith and character.

The natural tendency of us humans when suffering comes is to focus on the suffering. We believers, however, should rise to a higher plane. Instead of focusing on our pain and suffering we should focus on these Biblical truths related to suffering. We should seek the Lord to gain an understanding of how He wants to conform us to Christ's character in our suffering situation. We should bring everything to God in faith, looking for Him to use it for our "good"—the inward good of character development.

The sad truth is that most Christians *miss* what God is trying to accomplish in their lives through suffering. Let me share a couple of examples that I have witnessed first-hand. I knew a Christian couple who were married for many years. They had several children. Over the years the woman suffered from a husband who was immature in Christ and had a difficult and demanding personality. For years, she tried to be submissive as a wife but often prayed for her husband to change. There were many conflicts in the home. Eventually, the wife grew cold towards the Lord because the situation never changed. She "gave up" on the marriage and on trying to be consecrated to follow the Lord. She was greatly disappointed that the Lord "did not answer" her prayers for her husband to change. She finally could not tolerate the "suffering" any longer and she filed for divorce. The family was broken apart.

It seems to me that her focus was very much on her husband to change. She was focused on her suffering. She apparently lost sight of the fact that God does not always change our situations, but *is always at work trying to change us.* If she had learned to die to self and accept her present situation as her personal learning opportunity of the Lord, she could have grown in grace in the Lord. Even if the husband never changed, she could have gained greater experience and testimony of Christ's life. Her focus was off and her expectations were amiss.

Our expectation of the Lord cannot be to simply change our circumstance, although it is not wrong to ask for that. Paul asked for the thorn in the flesh to be removed three times. However, he stopped asking when he received a clear word from God that his particular suffering was God's will and God did not intend to remove it. Instead of removal, God wanted Paul to *learn* of the power of His grace in suffering. Through the experience, Paul learned to be content with his own weakness and discover the power of God to live in Christ's victory. "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships,

persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

Sometimes we experience a suffering situation and we do not know if it will last seemingly forever or if it is God's will to remove it. It is always wise to pray as Jesus did in the garden when He saw the prospect of the cross: "Not my will, but yours be done." In this way, we *accept* God's will, even if it means continued suffering.

I would like to share another story that gives a positive example of someone going through suffering. I knew a family well that consisted of a mother and father and seven children. When all the children were still at home under the parents' care, the mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. This was terrible news and, of course, the mother was very concerned about always being there for her children. Although she had the treatment recommended for her cancer, as well as other measures, her cancer did not go away. Even though a number of people fasted and prayed for her healing weekly, her condition went down. Her suffering lasted over three years and she finally died.

There is a positive testimony here. From the very beginning of her illness, the mother made up her mind that she would seek God during this illness and learn from Him. She surely did. She even testified later that she had not really experienced Christ until this illness. I think that was an overstatement, but her point was that she went much deeper with the Lord. She told my wife and me, "The Lord can really speak to you in adversity." Yes, He can—if you are listening. This mother's growth in the Lord was obvious. She wanted to minister hope to others who were suffering from a serious illness, so she often handed out booklets that had Scriptures for that purpose. She grew more eager to hand out gospel tracts and to discuss salvation with people. She did not give in to self-pity. While in a doctor's waiting room someone said they felt sorry for her because she was not improving. She replied: "You don't need to feel sorry for me. The Lord is with me." Importantly, she let God speak to her about her relationship with her husband regarding some disagreements. Over the three year period, she gave up some things very dear to her when she realized she must do so in order to follow her husband's convictions in leadership before God. Such self-denial—especially when one is suffering illness and tempted to justify some indulgence for the self—is a great spiritual victory.

There is one final item in this mother's story. It was a test that came to her just a few weeks before her passing. She had heard a sermon on the radio about Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, where He prayed to the Father, "Not my will, but yours be done." She had told her husband that she had not been able to pray in a way that left her healing, or lack of healing, totally in God's hands. The main reason for her reluctance had been her children. She wanted so much to remain with them in order to raise them for Christ. She struggled with this matter and finally won the

victory. She was willing to put aside her desire, her will, to accept the Father's will whether she stay or go to be with Jesus. To sincerely pray for the Father's will in our lives, even if we know that it might cost us dearly, is what God desires to see in His children. He desires total submissiveness and total obedience. This is what God was looking for in Abraham when he was asked to offer up Isaac.

Finally, through her experience of suffering from cancer, this dear mother was a testimony of the verses in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." The focus of this mother had changed during her suffering. She became much less focused on the things of this earth, including her own physical condition, and much more focused on the purposes of her Lord. She was looking at the eternal and spiritual things, and she allowed her suffering to help her prepare for future glory with the Savior.

Before we move on to God's provision let us briefly touch on suffering that we bring upon ourselves due to our wrong actions. God does not want us to suffer in this way (1 Pet. 4:15). However, God is so great that even our failures can be redeemed to bring about good in our lives. He can do this for those who love Him, that is, those who after the failure seek to obey Him (Rom. 8:28). The "good" He can work in us is that internal good, the goodness of transformed character. We can learn lessons from our failures and be sensitive to what God is teaching us through them. If nothing else, failures humble us and tend to make us more dependent upon God and less sure of ourselves. That certainly is a "good" internal attitude.

This portion of Scripture reassures us of *God's provision* for us in our time of suffering. God knows that we are weak and needy people, so He generously provides for us as we tread the pathway of life, often marked by sufferings.

We can catalog some of this provision in the items in this passage of Scripture (Rom. 8:18-39):

- There is a coming glory which will greatly outweigh the sufferings of this age. This gives us hope that can encourage us in suffering.
- Those who faithfully grow in Christ will have a future unveiling as sons of God. The whole of fallen creation awaits this unveiling.
- The damaged creation, with all of its problems, will be set free from its bondage to corruption. This gives us hope in a world that appears hopelessly sinful and filled with suffering, pain, and injustice.
- We who have the firstfruits of the Spirit are waiting eagerly for our full sonship, the redemption of our fallen bodies. This encourages

us that there will come a day when we do not have to battle the sin principle within us that is so bothersome.

- The Spirit helps us in our suffering and weakness by interceding for us according to God.
- God is at work in all circumstances and events in our lives for our good, if we love Him through our obedience to His will. This good is according to God's purpose for us to be conformed to the image of Christ.
- God will accomplish His complete purpose in us in the end. He will not abandon His plan for us but will eventually glorify us completely.
- Nothing can truly be "against us" because "God is for us."
- He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us will also with Him *give us all things*. Whatever we need for our journey through our sufferings to glory God can supply to us—encouragement, fellowship with others, material needs, grace to endure hardships, etc.
- No one can accuse or condemn us because God has taken up our case in Jesus, who willingly died for us and was raised for our justification. We do not have to live under the stinging accusation or the brutal condemnation of others.
- We are assured by God's word here that nothing in the universe can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is a promise we can hold fast in the worst sufferings of life. Not only so, but we can believe that through Him who loved us we can be more than conquerors in every suffering situation.

We should remember that God gives two basic provisions to help us make it through our journey in a way that honors Him. Firstly, He gives us His word. It is important for us to daily be in His word, meditating on the truths that can encourage us and help us to live an overcoming life. We must lay hold of God's promises and truths, living by believing them and acting upon them. Secondly, God has now placed us under the regime of grace (Rom. 6:14). That grace is nothing less than the Holy Spirit experienced by us in our walk here on earth. Paul learned that such grace was fully sufficient to meet his need in suffering (2 Cor. 12:9-10). God has made this grace available to us. However, we must come forward to His throne of grace in order to receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

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## Appendix A

### Law and Grace Principles

LAW PRINCIPLE	GRACE PRINCIPLE
Focuses on rules and religious traditions (Rom. 7:25b; Gal. 3:12; 4:9-10; Col. 2:20-22)	Focuses on Christ (Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:1-2; Heb. 12:2)
Operates by self-effort (Gal. 3:3, 12)	Operates by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20; 3:5; 5:5-6)
Empowered by the flesh (Gal. 3:3)	Empowered by the Spirit (Gal. 3:3, 5)
Performs for God (Gal. 3:12; Phil. 3:4-6)	Receives from God (Jn. 1:16; Gal. 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:10)
Uses human will to achieve for God (Gal. 3:3; Phil. 3:4-6)	Uses human will to seek God, receive from God, and cooperate with the Spirit's work in us (Col. 3:1-2; Heb. 4:16; Phil. 2:12-13)
Imitation of Christ (Matt. 7:22-23; 1 Cor. 1:12; 13:1-3)	Participation with Christ (Jn. 15:4-5; Rom. 15:18; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10)
Lives out the life of the self (Matt. 6:1-2; Gal. 6:12)	Lives out the life of Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21)
Independence from God (Gal. 5:4)	Dependence upon God (Jn. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 12:9-12)

## Appendix B

### “Soul Nourishment First”

by George Müller  
May 9, 1841

*It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost, for more than fourteen years. The point is this:*

I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experiential communion with the Lord.

I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon his precious Word, was, to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.

The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as



the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and then my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, either very soon after or at a later time, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this:

Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, in which case I read the Word of God for food, or for refreshment, or for a revival and renewal of my inner man, before I gave myself to prayer.

But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour, on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc., and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart, first being nourished by the truth, being brought into experiential fellowship with God, I then speak to my Father and to my Friend, (vile though I am, and unworthy of it), about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet, now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is, to obtain food for his inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow.

Now, what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts. When we pray, we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season,

therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us. We may therefore profitably meditate, with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man.

Thus there is far less to be feared from wandering of mind than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had time previously for meditation. I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God, I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I had ever had before; and after having now above fourteen years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it.

In addition to this I generally read, after family prayer, larger portions of the Word of God, when I still pursue my practice of reading regularly onward in the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in the New Testament, and sometimes in the Old, and for more than twenty-six years I have proved the blessedness of it. I take, also, either then or at other parts of the day, time more especially for prayer. How different, when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one.

## Appendix C

### The Believer's Conscience

*We contact God and know the Holy Spirit's work within us by our human spirit.*

- The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to our human spirit (Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:10)
- The human spirit is where we have direct contact with God and things of the spiritual realm (Jn. 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 6:18).
- The Holy Spirit can testify with our human spirits concerning spiritual realities (Rom. 8:16).
- The spirit of man is where God's enlightenment originates within us, and His light shines upon the inner parts of our being to give us awareness of His spiritual working (Prov. 20:27). Some commentators even equate the spirit in Prov. 20:27 with the conscience, but I am not sure that this is the sole function of the spirit intended by this Scripture.

*The faculties of the human spirit.*

- The human spirit is distinguished from the soul and the body (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).
- Some Bible teachers point out three faculties of the human spirit: 1) Conscience; 2) Intuition or leading; 3) Fellowship. Although these functions may be distinguished, they are usually very close in operation, working together and affecting each other. The conscience is the most critical since *if it is damaged our knowing His leading and our fellowship are greatly hindered.*

*The function of the conscience*

- All men have a conscience as a faculty of their human spirit. The basic function of the conscience is to convey the moral will of God to man (Rom. 2:14-15).
- In the fall man's spirit, with the function of the conscience, was deadened, so that the conscience functions on a greatly diminished level in unbelievers (Eph. 2:1; Eph. 4:17-19). Through regeneration the

believer's spirit is made alive, thus markedly enhancing the sensitivity of his conscience (Rom. 6:21; 8:10).

- The believer's conscience is his inner monitor as to whether he is sinning or obeying God. It testifies to the person whether he is upholding or violating *the code of moral conduct which he accepts as true*. It tells us when we are right with God or wrong with God because of our thoughts, attitudes, speech or actions. It convicts us of wrong after we sin, but it often acts to warn us ahead of time when we are about to sin. (1 Sam. 24:5; Rom. 9:1; 13:5; 1 Pet. 2:19)

### *The conscience and knowledge*

- The activity of each believer's conscience is *shaped by his knowledge of right and wrong*. Since believers can have differing knowledge, their consciences can act differently (Rom. 14:2-8, 22-23). The conscience responds to *the present light* we have of God's standards. *As we grow in our knowledge of Christ and His word, our conscience develops*. A believer who is more mature will learn that the conscience is sensitive not only to moral right and wrong, but to what is of God and what is not (2 Cor. 1:12).

### *Maintaining a blameless conscience*

- "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." (Acts 24:16, NKJV). Paul is a good model for us. He lived by the dictates of his conscience. If his conscience forbade something, he avoided it. If it approved something, then he proceeded. If Paul sinned towards God or man, then he took immediate steps to clear up the offense so as to make his conscience "void of offense" (Acts 24:16, KJV). Conviction of sin in our lives by the Holy Spirit is always very specific. The Holy Spirit convicts us that a particular action or attitude is wrong. Any *general* feeling of being "guilty" before God apart from conviction of a specific wrong is not the work of the Holy Spirit. This is condemnation put on us by the devil and should be rejected. Also, if we have already sincerely confessed and repented of a sin, any ongoing sense of condemnation about it should be rejected. Stand on the truth of Romans 8:33-34 when being condemned by the devil or our memory.

- To clear up our offenses toward God, we need to confess our sins, which includes an attitude of forsaking them (Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9). If we do not intend to forsake a certain sin, but only mouth a confession of it, then our confession is a sham. If we agree that something is really a sin then we must take an attitude of changing our way. To clear up offenses toward man we should be sensitive to the Lord's working within. The Holy Spirit may be working within us to humble ourselves to ask the forgiveness of others. Matt. 5:22-24

- Our fellowship with God is hindered when we do not sincerely confess our sin. Watchman Nee uses this illustration: The conscience is like a window which must be cleaned in order to allow God's light to shine in us and give us unhindered communion with God. God's light must shine through our conscience to show us where we are wrong. If we respond in confession to God's conviction of our wrongdoings, then the window of the conscience becomes clean, allowing for more light to enter. But, if we do not confess our sins, the function of the conscience is damaged and the window becomes cloudy. Thus we can see less of God's light and the voice of God in our conscience becomes more muted. If this pattern continues, it is possible for a genuine believer to sin without any feeling of being wrong. This leads the believer on a dangerous path further and further away from God, His truth and His righteousness. Not only will our fellowship suffer, but our understanding of God's leading will be affected. When the conscience is not clear then the other functions of the human spirit are affected. When the conscience is not clear, then we possess what the Bible terms an "evil conscience." Contrast a "good conscience" – Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21.

- A believer may try to cut off the voice of conscience by reasoning that his way or actions are justified. We must guard against this by being humbled before God and being honest with the voice of conscience. A believer may also try to avoid amending his way according to the conviction of conscience by doing some "good works" for God instead.

- The dangers of a violated conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5-7 – lack of love and wrong ambitions. 1 Tim. 4:1-3 – falling away from the faith and false teaching. 1 Tim. 1:18-20 – a shipwrecked faith, and damage to the church (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

- The fruitfulness of a good conscience. Love – 1 Tim. 1:5. Proper service from a proper character and walk with God (1 Tim. 3:9-10; 2 Tim. 1:3).

Three important exercises to strengthen our walk and the work of the conscience: 1) Consecrating ourselves daily to live unto God and His will (Rom. 12:1-2); 2) Spending time daily in God's word with an open heart to hear and learn (don't neglect any portion of the NT). Sometimes being in God's word will bring us under conviction of a sin. But another important function of reading or meditating on God's word is that it increases our knowledge of God and His will, thus shaping our conscience with God's truth for a more accurate walk with God.; 3) Taking immediate steps to clear up any conviction of wrong signaled to our conscience.

## Appendix D

### The Birthright

(The Rights of the Firstborn)

The warning concerning Esau and the birthright (Heb. 12:16-17).

Esau's birthright (actually plural: literally, "rights of the firstborn") was what belonged to him because he was the firstborn son. The Old Testament reveals special privileges for the firstborn of the family. This passage on Esau's loss of the birthright privileges is a part of the fifth warning passage given to the Hebrew believers in the letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 12 taken as a whole may be considered as the fifth warning.

Immediately following the case of Esau a contrast is given between the Old and New Covenants (Heb. 12:18-24; OT in verses 18-21 and the NT in verses 22-24). One of the blessings of the New Covenant is the fact that we have come to the "church of the firstborn." Although God has given us certain privileges belonging to a firstborn, it is clear from the warning passage that these privileges can be *forfeited by our actions*, as was the case with Esau. The "birthright" does not have to do with our eternal salvation, which cannot be lost because it is not based upon our works (Eph. 2:8-9); rather, it has to do with our reward.

The birthright as seen in the Old Testament

The birthright of a firstborn son in Israel consisted of the following major three privileges<sup>104</sup>:

1. He had a double portion of the inheritance from his parents, whereas the other sons had only a single portion (Deut. 21:15-17)
2. He received a position of authority in the family, and also in the kingdom if he was the king's son (Gen. 27:37; 1 Sam. 20:27, 29; 2 Chron. 21:3).
3. Priestly service. Instead of the firstborn of all Israel serving in the tabernacle, the Levites were taken for service. (Num. 3:12-13; 8:17-

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<sup>104</sup> Insights into these three privileges come from chapter 7 of the book "*In the Arena of Faith*" by Erich Sauer.

19) Besides the temple service given to the tribe of Levi, there was also a measure of priestly duty within the family given to the firstborn son. The record of 1 Samuel 20:27, 29 indicates that the (eldest) brother made arrangements for the family sacrifice.

The birthright could be transferred to one who was not literally the firstborn. In 1 Chronicles 26:10 we see that Shimri, not the firstborn, was made first ("chief") by his father, giving him the privileges of the firstborn. The *main meaning* of being the firstborn, then, becomes one of being chief, or having the pre-eminence in rank. This is in distinction from just being biologically the first son born. This privilege of having the chief rank normally belonged to the first one born, but could be transferred. The meaning of Christ as "the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15) carries with it the idea of pre-eminence and ruler over all, not birth order.

*Examples of loss of the rights of the firstborn:*

1. Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. (Gen. 25:31-33)
2. In Jacob's family, Reuben was literally the first one born. However, he lost his birthright due to his sexual sin (Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4) "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright." (1 Chron. 5:1). Reuben's sexual sin and loss may have been the thought behind the first clause of Heb. 12:16: "that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau . . ."

When Reuben lost his birthright, those privileges were divided up as follows:

1. The double portion of the inheritance (of the land) went to Joseph through his two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh), each being given a portion of the land. Genesis 48:21-22 reads: "Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. **I give you one portion more than your brothers**, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'" See also 1 Chronicles 5:1 above.

2. The priestly service was given to the tribe of Levi. (Num. 1:47-51; Deut. 33:8-10)

3. The position of authority was allotted to Judah, the tribe from which the Messiah, the future King, would arise. (1 Chron. 5:2)

### New Testament application

The “rights of the firstborn” in the Old Testament typify the privileges of the overcoming believer of the New Testament. The Greek verb for “to inherit” is *kleronomeo* (Strong’s #2816) and it means to obtain an inheritance. The OT Israelites took possession of their allotments of the promised good land through the casting of lots (Num. 26:52-55, 34:2). Their inheritance of the land pictures our inheritance of spiritual possessions. Lots are not cast, of course, for our inheritance, but God’s will determines our inheritance. In the OT family, **all sons received a portion** of the inheritance, **but the firstborn received a double portion** (Deut. 21:17). In God’s NT plan, all believers freely receive eternal salvation through grace, apart from works (Rom. 4:1-4; 11:5-6; Eph. 2:8-9). However, the New Testament affirms again and again the principle of *reward according to works*. It is on this principle that some Christians will obtain an *extra portion* of spiritual possession or blessing.

The common single portion of eternal salvation inheritance is spoken of in verses like Ephesians 1:14 and Hebrews 9:15, where our works are not noted. The extra portion of the inheritance has to do with *the 1,000 year Kingdom reward*, and is spoken of in verses like Col. 3:24: “the **reward [consisting] of the inheritance.**” Note that the context of Colossians 3:24 is related to our doings, our works.

One verse in particular points out both the common inheritance of all believers and the extra portion of inheritance together with Christ (in His 1,000 year Kingdom)—“and if we are children, we are also **heirs—heirs on the one hand, of God, and on the other hand, co-heirs with Christ**, if we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him.” (Rom. 8:17, translation by Zane Hodges). In this verse being an heir of God is dependent solely upon being His child. However, being a co-heir with Christ when He inherits His coming 1,000 year Kingdom is dependent upon our willingness to suffer with Him (experience His crucifixion in our lives to die to the world, sin and self).

*The threefold spiritual possessions of the Kingdom reward for the overcomer:*

1. A special portion of the enjoyment of eternal life (the life of God and Christ – Jn. 17:3) in intimate fellowship with Him during the 1,000 year Kingdom age (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30; Rom. 2:6-7).
2. Priestly service in partnership with Christ (Jn. 12:25-26; Rev. 1:6 with Heb. 3:14 [“partakers” means companions or partners], sharing priestly service with Christ; Rev. 20:6).
3. Ruling with Christ (Lk. 19:17, 19; Rev. 2:26, 27; 20:6).



*The warning to the believer of the possible loss of the birthright.*

The sole place in the NT where the loss of the “birthright” is mentioned specifically is in Hebrews 12:16, where Esau’s story is brought forth as a warning. The lesson here is that Esau despised his birthright by selling it for a bowl of stew. The spiritual meaning for us is that he traded the temporal enjoyment of the pleasures of this world for the future enjoyment of the Kingdom reward. He did not clearly see the value of his birthright. The decision he made was irrevocable. Once the decision was made, it could not be reversed. The verses on Esau may be paraphrased as follows:

“Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one serving of stew sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance—a change of mind by Isaac, altering his father’s decision—though he sought the blessing diligently with tears.”

The great spiritual warning to the believer is that one’s heart may be so subtly enticed by the pleasures of this world that an inward decision is made, setting his course to pursue worldly pleasures. This pursuit is at the expense of a complete consecration to follow Christ, at any cost, for the Kingdom reward. Hebrews 12:16 shows us that what we may think of as “sin” (“lest there be any fornicator”) is not the only danger to the Christian’s life and the Christian’s reward. Equally dangerous is the love of this world and the pleasures it offers, as depicted in Esau. These pleasures can often seem quite “innocent” compared to immorality, yet they *can be just as costly to a believer as gross sin*.

The warnings against the dangers of worldly pleasure are numerous in the Scripture (Lk. 8:14; 12:19-21; 17:31-33; Phil. 3:17-20; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; 2 Tim. 3:4; 4:10; Jas. 4:3-4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). Yet, the loss of the 1,000 year Kingdom inheritance can stem from other lifestyle problems besides the love of this world. Note 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5-7. The “kingdom” in these verses refers to the coming Kingdom of 1,000 years, the “age to come.”

## Appendix E

### The 1,000 Year Kingdom in God's Plan

**Kingdom** (*basileia*, Greek) primarily means God's authority or rule. Yet its usage includes not only the sovereign rule of God, but also the people and realm over which He rules.

**God's Kingdom** runs throughout all eternity. However, it takes on different characteristics in **successive stages or phases** throughout the course of time and eternity. "Thy kingdom is a **kingdom of all ages**, and thy dominion is throughout all generations." (Ps. 145:13, Darby)

The **present stage of God's Kingdom** has a spiritual realization among today's believers who have had God's word and life sown into their hearts (Mk. 4:3-20). Believers have been transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13) and enjoy the Kingdom of God in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

**Two future phases of God's Kingdom** are yet to come. **The next phase will be the millennial Kingdom of Christ**, which He will establish upon His return (Lk. 19:11-12, 15; Acts 1:6-11; Rev. 11:15). This next phase will last 1,000 years and Christ will openly reign on the earth from His throne in Jerusalem (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Is. 2:1-3; 24:23; Mic. 4:6-8; Rev. 20:4-6). At the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign, there will be a final rebellion of some of mankind and Satan, which God will judge (Rev. 20:7-10). Then Christ, at this point, will deliver the Kingdom to God the Father. This will bring in **the final, eternal phase of God's Kingdom**, which is realized in the new heavens, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 21:1-2).

**The millennial Kingdom** (1,000 years) has more prophetic Scripture devoted to it than does any other prophetic topic. **We must see its importance in God's plan, including His plan for believers.** Below are some of the names and meaning of this phase of God's Kingdom:

- **The Sabbath rest.** (Heb. 4:9) This rest is foreshadowed by God's rest on the seventh day after His creative activity (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4). This rest follows God's redemptive activity.

• **The age to come.** (Matt. 12:32; Mk. 10:30; Heb. 6:5) This will be the next age, brought in by Jesus' second coming (Matt. 13:39-40; 24:3).

• **The regeneration.** (Matt. 19:28) Also called the "the times of restoration" (Acts 3:21) as a fulfillment of prophecy (Is. 11:1-10; 65:18-25). This title indicates that this period is a time when the earth is released from its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:20-21).

• **The 1,000 year reign of Christ.** (Rev. 20:3-6) Popularly termed "the Millennium". Christ will rule over the earth from His throne in Jerusalem during this period (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Is. 24:23; Mic. 4:7; Zech. 8:3). He will rule with a "rod of iron" to keep all evil in check (Rev. 2:27; 19:15).

• **The Kingdom** (in certain verses). (Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 16:28; 19:23-24; 22:2; Lk. 9:62; 13:28-30; 18:24-25, 29; 19:12,15; 22:29,30; Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1,18; Jas. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Rev. 12:10).

**Blessings upon the earth during the 1,000 year Kingdom: The lifting of the curse.** The curse brought in by Adam's sin is lifted to a great degree in the coming Kingdom age. The creation is released from its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:21; Is. 11:6-9; 35:1; 55:13). **Satan will be bound** (Rev. 20:1-3). He will not be able to tempt and destroy. **Health for the redeemed** (Is. 33:24; 35:5-6). Christ's earthly healing ministry foreshadowed the Kingdom condition (Matt. 8:16-17; Heb. 6:5). **Peace** (Is. 2:4). **Righteousness and justice** (Is. 11:4; 32:1). **Joy** (Is. 14:7; 51:11). **Comfort** (Is. 49:13). **Truth will prevail** (Jer. 33:6; Zech. 8:3). **Material prosperity** (Jer. 31:12). **Holiness** (Is. 11:9). **Fullness of the Holy Spirit** (Is. 44:3). Other blessings will also exist. The remnant of the Jews will be converted at the end of this present age, and certain Gentiles will become subjects in this Kingdom (Ps. 2:7-9; Zech. 12:9-10; Rom. 11:26-27; Matt. 19:27-28; 25:32-34).

**Significance of the millennial Kingdom.** Since this coming age seems to the natural mind to be only a brief prelude to eternity, we may make the mistake of downplaying its importance. However, since God has paid so much attention to this coming age in His Word, it seems to have great significance in His overall plan. We can only suggest some reasons why God has placed such importance upon this coming age:

• **The Messiah's Kingdom.** Firstly, this Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, where He openly rules over all the earth. Here, He is at last manifested as the true and worthy Sovereign. His roles as

Prophet, Priest and King are fully seen. His full supernatural power, His righteousness and His full authority are displayed. Many names of the Messiah will find their fulfillment in this age. Some of these names are: the Branch, the Lord of Hosts, the Rod of Jesse, the King, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Redeemer, the Shepherd, the Stone, the Teacher, the Son of Man. In God's plan, this age will be used to uniquely display the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Many promises to God's people Israel will be fulfilled.** God is faithful to His promises and covenants with His chosen people, the tribes of Israel. Thus, the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, the Palestinian (or Land) covenant, and the New covenant all find fulfillment in this era.

- **This Kingdom Age will be a display of God's triumph** over the damage done to the earthly sphere by Satan and the fall of man. God's authority and God's wisdom in creation were challenged by Satan and Adam and Eve. Yet, this Kingdom age brings about the "times of restoration" (Acts 3:21) showing God's triumph over evil.

- **In the "age to come" God's plan for man** is realized and displayed through **Christ and the overcomers**, who are Christ's joint-heirs (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:9; 3:14). God's purpose for man in creation was for man to be in His image and for man to exercise dominion for God (Gen. 1:26). Adam lost the right to rule through disobedience and the earth was usurped by Satan. God's plan is finally realized in the Millennium (Heb. 2:5-9; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6). **The overcomers are those faithful believers** who overcome the obstacles of this life to faith and obedience. The overcomers are pictured by Joshua and Caleb, who were the only adult men who **fully followed the Lord** in the exodus generation. They were rewarded with entry into the good land (a picture of the Kingdom reward). The overcomers are also pictured by the overcomers of each of the seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3. The various **rewards to these overcomers portray some aspect of the Kingdom reward**. In this age (in our lifetimes) God is seeking to prepare believers to be fit to reign in the next age. Those who learn self-denial and obedience now will be prepared to reign then and also be priests to God (Lk. 19:16-17; Rom. 8:17b, 2 Tim. 2:12a; Rev. 20:6). The reward to the overcomer also includes a magnified enjoyment of Christ as eternal life, which is in accord with man's design of being created in the image of God (Lk. 18:30; Jn. 17:3; Rev. 2:7, 17; 3:4, 12). It is clear that the overcomers share in Christ's rule over peoples on the earth (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 19:11-19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10). They also seem to have some share in the New Jerusalem above the earth during this time (Rev. 3:12; 21:2).

- **A final test and opportunity for sinful man.** Children born to adults who enter the Kingdom will have sinful natures. Such persons will have opportunity for salvation. Yet, even under the ideal conditions of Christ's reign, many people will finally rebel against God at the end of the Millennium when Satan is loosed. This final rebellion proves fallen man's wickedness (Rev. 20:7-10).

- **The era of reward.** Scripture seems to place the focus on rewards for believers during this period (Matt. 19:28; Lk.18:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:8-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-7; Rev.2:26-27). All saints reign in eternity (Rev. 22:3-5).

**The Kingdom prize (reward) is the goal of the Christian race** and is given by God as a great incentive for us to run with endurance (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 10:35-36; 11:24-26).

## **Appendix F**

### **Eternal Security**

John H. Smith  
(with others)

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### **Statement About the Bible**

The writers of this booklet believe the Bible to be the Self-revelation of the one true eternal God. Fallen mankind worships many different gods and holds many different beliefs concerning what is truth. Therefore, absolute truth must come from outside of man. Without an absolute standard of truth, mankind has no solid basis from which to reason and arrive at valid conclusions concerning why he exists and what his purpose is on the earth. The writers of this booklet believe the Bible is that absolute truth. The Bible alone reveals the only true and living God and shows us how to know Him personally—one God Who is triune as Father, Son, and Spirit. God's Word, the Bible, did not originate from man, as stated in 2 Peter 1:21, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." This writing seeks to present only what God says in His Word. It is the sole authority for faith resulting in salvation, practical Christian living, and full maturity in Christ.

### **A Simple Outline of Bible Truth**

From eternity to eternity God's kingdom rules over all (Ps. 90:2; 103:19). God is "the King of the Ages" (1 Tim. 1:17) and "He will reign unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. 11:15). Mankind was created in God's image for dominion according to God's purpose and His heart's desire. God loved the man that He created and could never be defeated in His purpose. Therefore, Christ came to redeem fallen mankind and creation so that God's image could be perfected in him, thus qualifying him to rule on God's behalf. The first stage of God's purpose for man is fulfilled when, at the close of this present age, Christ will reign with His overcoming saints for 1,000 years on the earth (Rev. 20:4, 6). Following this is His eternal reign from the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, where all of His redeemed will reign with Him forever and ever (Rev. 22:4-5).

## ETERNAL SECURITY

To the beloved brothers and sisters who are in Christ, that they may stand firmly and joyously on the assurance of their salvation.

Eternal security is a vast subject that is integrated in biblical truth as a whole. This makes it imperative that we understand the great themes and principles of God's purposes and working that run throughout the whole Bible. Obviously, we can't cover all of these great themes and principles in one little booklet; however, we will note certain governing principles of Bible interpretation.

To begin with, we must understand that the Bible is a unity of truth. Passages of Scripture must be interpreted (1) taking note of their cultural context, (2) according to their historical context, (3) according to their immediate context, (4) according to the context of the entire Bible, and (5) in light of other Scriptures that are very plain and clear in their bearing on the issue, especially where hard-to-understand passages are concerned. The divinely inspired, God-breathed Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) never contradicts itself. If one passage seems to contradict another, there is a problem with our understanding rather than the text itself. If one verse seems to contradict a large number of references that are unmistakably clear, then this one verse is not being interpreted correctly. Also, we must realize that we are dealing with the Word of the infinite, all-knowing eternal God Who is not limited to time and space as we are.

God's wisdom in a mystery, that was predetermined before the ages of time for our glory, can only be understood as the spirit of the believer communes with the Spirit of God Who indwells his human spirit. The Spirit of God alone searches and knows all the deep things of God. The things God has prepared for those who love Him are spiritually discerned and taught by the Spirit. The thoughts of our natural man are not the thoughts of God. God's thoughts are much higher than our thoughts, even as the heavens are much higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8-9). Therefore, we must always approach the Word of God with prayer for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Only by revelation will we understand the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Eph. 1:17-23; Col. 1:9-13).

Please meditate on and carefully consider all the verses given in this booklet. Praise our God, that the Holy Spirit in our spirit will give revelation increasingly if we seek for it. (Remember that the Old Testament was first written in Hebrew, the language of the Israelites. And, almost all of the New Testament was first written in the Greek language that was commonly spoken in Jesus' time. Since then, it has been translated into numerous languages.)

There are a very large number of Scriptures that speak plainly of the eternal security of the believer. Scriptures that are said to teach otherwise

are being misinterpreted. Some of the reasons for this are: (1) Lack of understanding concerning the coming kingdom which involves the matter of reward or loss of reward. Such rewards are based upon the believer's life and service to the Lord, which has nothing to do with being eternally lost (explained later in this booklet); (2) Mixing law and grace in the matter of salvation so that salvation by grace alone is actually denied; (3) Confusing Israel with the Church; (4) Lack of sight concerning God's eternal purposes in the creation of man in God's image for dominion. These purposes run from Genesis 1:26-27 through the entire Bible and without which the Bible cannot be clearly understood; (5) Not understanding that eternal life is the free gift of God's grace. This gift must be distinguished from reward, or recompense, rendered to believers at the judgment seat of Christ (where only believers appear). These are positive and negative rewards given in respect to the believer's works; (6) The need to see more deeply the believer's relationship to God as that of a new creation child born of Him as Father and predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, and (7) The need to thoroughly understand the great provisions for our salvation in the finished work of Christ. When on the cross our Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," He had completed the work the Father gave Him to do for the salvation and redemption of mankind and the universe. As far as God is concerned, from His eternal viewpoint, His work is all done and only remains to be worked out in man on the earth and in the heavens. As long as Christians do not understand the items mentioned in this paragraph, they would tend to believe that a truly born again Christian can be lost for eternity.

There is little doubt that every born again child of God has at some time been attacked with regard to the assurance of their salvation. Satan is the accuser of the brothers (Job 1:9, 2:5; Zech. 3:1-2; Luke 22:31; Rev. 12:10). God's purpose in creation is to have humanity (mankind) in His image to express Him and to rule on His behalf (Gen. 1:26-27). Satan's desire is to interfere with and destabilize our relationship with God. Satan does this in order to prevent our maturing into the full image of Christ, which is necessary for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose of image and dominion. When this image is fully reached, believers will be qualified to rule and reign with Him (Rev. 20:4, 6), and Satan will be cast down (Rev. 12:9-11). Therefore, he fights fiercely to occupy believers with the possibility of becoming lost and thinking about what works they must do to keep themselves saved. This interferes with the Father-child relationship and stunts the believers' growth to maturity. In view of these crucial matters, let us consider some great indisputable passages that testify to the eternally secure salvation of every believer.

### **We Were Transferred Out of Adam Where All Die and Placed in Christ Where All Are Made Alive**

We were born positioned in Adam, being sons in his image with a fallen nature (Gen. 5:3). We were completely lost and without any hope (Eph. 2:12). In our natural birth position we were dead in trespasses and sins, but “in the Christ, all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22, YLT; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:12, 19).

Beloved brothers and sisters who make up the Body of Christ, in the counsels of God in eternity (the timeless realm where God exists with no beginning or ending), the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with the power and reality of every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3). The language of the original Greek text is indisputable. It shows that although the fulfillment of these blessings is a process in our individual experience, in God’s timeless sight all these blessings are already accomplished. Consider the blessings that will follow!

God our Father placed us eternally in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30). Our Father chose us “in Him” before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). As a lost and helpless child of the streets is often rescued and placed as a son in a loving home, so God marked us out beforehand (predestined us) to arrive at sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:5). Full sonship means spiritual maturity through transformation into the image of Christ in Whose image we were created (Gen. 1:26-27; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Think of it! In eternity past, before the foundation of the world, God took pleasure in choosing you to be His son! Praise Him! We are viewing here the God of the universe doing what pleases Him (Eph. 1:5). In Isaiah 46:10, God says, “My counsel will stand and I will do all my pleasure” (lit.). And in verse 11, “I will work and who shall hinder it?” (lit.). Is it not unbelief if one dares to stand before God and declare that our Almighty God will lose one that He chose before the foundation of the world? (See John 6:38-40.)

Some have asked the question: “Does God then also predestinate some to destruction?” For an answer, hear with a hearing ear the infallible Word of God. God is love, and He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). God is also righteous (Rom. 3:26; Deut. 32:4; etc.). He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). Therefore, He does not predestinate to destruction. His choosing and predestination are in accordance with His perfect foreknowledge of the choices every child of Adam will freely make in his life on the earth (Rom. 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2). With regard to these matters, Satan will both accuse us and slander God just as he did to Eve in the garden. Let us, as finite beings, bow before our infinite God in wonder, awe, humility, and worship, and let us stand upon the unmistakable statements of His holy, infallible Word.

Now chosen and placed in Christ, our Father has taken us into His grace and favor (Eph. 1:6). Please see this picture dear brothers and sisters! You are in Christ Who is in the presence of the Father; therefore, *you* are in the presence of the Father. So the Father accepts you just as He accepts Christ! God has put us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ ascended to the Father with us in Him (Eph. 2:6). Now our life is hidden there, with Christ, in God (Col. 3:3). God accepts us because He is satisfied with Christ and the salvation He has wrought on the cross and through resurrection. Positioned by God in the Beloved (Christ), in living union with Him, we continually have the completed redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences (Eph. 1:7). In Him also we were *chosen* as His inheritance—those marked out beforehand to participate in God's plan to bring all things in the heavens and the earth (i.e. the whole universe) under the headship of Christ. Thus we are predestined according to His purpose that, transformed and transfigured, we shall be to the praise of His glory. As Israel was chosen of old to be an elect nation, believers were chosen beforehand to be an eternal gift to God the Father. This predestination is according to God's eternal purpose and will absolutely be accomplished by the will and power of God (Eph. 1:10-12).

Furthermore, having believed, we were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is now indwelling us as the down payment, the pledge, the *guarantee* of our inheritance. Our inheritance will be the full redemption (that is, the full transformation of our souls and the resurrection of the body) of God's own purchased possession (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). We are that possession purchased by the price of Jesus' blood (1 Cor. 6:20). In ancient times, a seal gave legality to a document and marked its ownership. A king stamped his seal on certain possessions indicating they belonged to him (Esther 3:2; 8:8; Jer. 32:11). So the Christian is confirmed as God's child by the seal of the indwelling God, the Holy Spirit Who never leaves us (John 14:16; Rom. 8:16, 23; 2 Cor. 1:22; 1 John 3:24). We are one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). The Holy Spirit in us is God's seal signifying that He owns us (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

To summarize, in this glorious portion of the Word (Eph. 1:3-23) we find ourselves: (1) *blessed* with every spiritual blessing in Christ, (2) *chosen* in Him before the foundation of the world, (3) *predestined to sonship* (becoming mature sons), (4) *taken into favor* (accepted) in the Beloved, (5) *forgiven* of our sins, (6) *predestined to an inheritance* when all things are headed up in Christ, (7) *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise, and (8) in verses 22-23 *a part of His body* that fills all in all (the universe). What grace, what mercy, what love, what safety in the eternal arms! All these unspeakable blessings are the acts of our eternal God Who says, "I act and who can reverse it?" (Isa. 43:13, NASB). None can reverse it! The believers in Christ will never be lost.

Brothers and sisters, God is your real Father. When you received Christ by believing on His Name, you were born of God. This birth was

neither of man's will nor the will of the flesh. God gave birth to you by the exercise of His own will (John 1:12-13; James 1:18). We were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2). Peter then uses a strong expression: "God caused us to be born again" (1 Peter 1:3, NASB). It is an obvious truth that one born to natural parents cannot be unborn! Due to irresponsible or wicked behavior, the father may withhold that son's inheritance, but he will never cease to be a child of his father. (We will explain this further in the last section of this booklet.) God's work in giving birth to us according to His will cannot be undone by man (Isa. 43:13). Man's will is not the initiating cause of the new birth, nor does man have the power to produce the new birth. But man is responsible to exercise his will to receive by faith the gift offered by the Holy Spirit. It is also true that God knows who will receive and who will reject this free gift (1 Peter 1:2), and that man has free will to do either (1 Thess. 1:6-9; 2:13; Matt. 23:37; John 5:39-40). Man's responsibility to receive, together with God's will and choice, is easily seen in John 1:12-13—those who "received" were "born of the will of God." Whosoever (literally "every one who") believes on Him will not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus commanded all men to repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15).

The new birth of every believer, which is 100 percent by the power of the Holy Spirit, is a new creation that had not existed before (2 Cor. 5:17). Every believer's human spirit is now a new creation, having been regenerated and created anew by being born of the Spirit of God (John 3:6). Many other verses explain this further. You were born again by the Spirit of God entering your human spirit as the Seed, the Sperm of God (1 John 3:9). Sperm (Greek, *sperma*) is the actual word translated as Seed. Surely it is easy to understand that a father's human sperm brought his life into his children. In the same manner, the Sperm of God brings the life of God into the spirit of man. Stated in a stronger way, in our salvation the Sperm of God brings in God Himself.

The Person of all three of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit) is eternal life. In 1 John 1:1-2, John clearly tells us that the Person Who came from the Father—the One Who he and others had heard, had seen with their eyes, and had handled with their hands—was eternal life manifested on the earth. Jesus Himself said, "I Am the Life" (John 14:6, NASB). Again John writes in 1 John 5:20: "He [Jesus Christ] is the true God and eternal life." The book of Hebrews speaks of the Spirit as an eternal Person (Heb. 9:14). The gospel of John says that eternal life is to know the only true God and the One Who He sent, Jesus Christ (John 17:3). So it is clear from all these verses that the Person of God *is* eternal life.

As an example, if the person of John H. Smith could become a spirit and enter your body, then you would have John's life come into you. Just so, the entrance of the Person of the Holy Spirit into your human spirit was the entrance of eternal life. By this vital, living union of the Holy Spirit with

your spirit, you were joined to the Lord as one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). So this Seed of God that came into you is incorruptible, and therefore it is imperishable. Its source and cause is the constantly living and constantly abiding Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). If a saved person can be lost, then you are found saying that the Seed of God, which is the very life of God, is perishable.

When a child is born into a human family, he quickly recognizes his father and begins to call him “Daddy!” In the same way, as a son born of God, Who is your Heavenly Father, you have received the spirit of sonship in your spirit in which you cry, “Abba, Father!” (Rom. 8:14-15). Yes, even Christ within you cries, “Abba, Father!” (Gal. 4:6). The Indwelling Spirit of God within you bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

### **Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith**

According to Ephesians 2:8-10, salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works that no one may boast. Verse 8 specifically says, “By grace you have been saved through faith.” This phrase “have been saved” is a Greek perfect tense that emphasizes the continuing, eternal effect of our initial salvation. Our fallen self with its works has no part in our regeneration into a new creation. Christ alone is the means of our salvation. It is impossible to earn it by our works (Rom. 4:4-5). Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace (Rom. 11:6). We are exclusively His workmanship. This workmanship is a completed action of creation in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). We are a new creation that God alone can create (2 Cor. 5:17).

However, the works *following* our becoming a new creation are not to *obtain* eternal life; they are works that follow *after* we have received eternal life. They are works that God prepared beforehand for each one of us to walk in *after* we are saved. They are works that we do in the power of God’s gift to us, which is His new creation life (2 Cor. 5:17), and His all-powerful, all-sufficient, empowering grace (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Tim. 2:1).

So it is clear that we cannot obtain or keep eternal life by any works or any righteousness of our own. There is no way to obtain salvation other than by receiving it as a gift on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, followed by His victorious resurrection and ascension. His righteousness is imputed to us as a gift when we believe. The word “imputed” means that Christ’s righteousness is put to our account. God, the righteous Judge, accepts it. As Isaiah said long ago, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6, DARBY). It is as if you owed a debt that you could not pay, and then someone came along and totally freed you from that debt by putting their money to your account.

We lack space to further explain imputed righteousness, but for your study consider the following: (1) It is of necessity a righteousness apart from law-keeping because no one could keep the law to obtain it (Rom. 3:19-21);

(2) It is a righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:22-23); (3) On the basis of Christ's work this righteousness is put to our account as a gift when we believe (Rom. 4:5-6, 13; 5:17); (4) Christ Himself is made this righteousness to us by an act of God when He put us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul also tells us in Romans 10:3-4 that Israel did not obtain righteousness because they were seeking their own righteousness through keeping the law. Further, they refused to submit to the righteousness of God, which is the only righteousness acceptable to Him. Verse 4 tells us that Christ is the end of the law (the termination of the law [law-keeping] as a means of righteousness) for righteousness to every believer. There is no more law-keeping in order to obtain righteousness. He fulfilled all the demands of the law (Matt. 5:17), and now by faith we receive Him as our righteousness. "Knowing that a man is not justified on the principle of the works of the law, but by faith, therefore we believe on Christ Jesus that we might be justified [literally, placed in a right standing with God] on the principle of faith" (Gal. 2:16, lit.). Galatians 2:21 says emphatically that if anyone insists that he must gain righteousness by his own works through the law, then he sets aside the grace of God and treats Christ as if He died for nothing. This, brothers and sisters, is an awful thing in God's sight because His free grace and the finished work of Christ are despised. To insist on establishing your own righteousness by your own works actually perverts the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7). Paul terms it as "another gospel" and pronounces a curse upon anyone who teaches so (Gal. 1:6-9).

### John 10:27-30

In the gospels, the Jewish leaders had refused Christ's claims to be the Messiah and rejected the miracles that proved His claims. He had plainly told them Who He was, but they did not believe because they were not of His sheep (John 10:24-27). Surrounded by a crowd of Jews in the porch of Solomon, Jesus then spoke words of eternal assurance and comfort to those there who were His true sheep, and to all believers until He comes again (vv. 27-30).

I give to My sheep right now (present tense, not future) eternal life and they shall never, no never (a strong double negative) perish (v. 28). In John 5:24 Jesus said, "He that hears my word and believes on Him Who sent Me has eternal life [right now as a present possession] and does not come into judgment [eternal death], but has passed out of the death into the life" (lit.). Notice the use of the article "the." *The* death means the realm or sphere of death into which we were born as children of fallen Adam (Rom. 5:12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1). *The* life is the realm or sphere of life into which we pass immediately when we believe in Christ. That sphere is "in Christ" where we will be eternally. God is eternal life, and Christ personally is eternal life (John 17:3; 1 John 1:1-2; John 14:6).



As is God Himself, this life has no beginning or ending. By the very definition of the word “eternal”, if a person could lose it, then he never had it. This is because it is God’s life which has no beginning or ending. The phrase “has passed” is a Greek perfect tense, which means this life continues unendingly in our experience. So the sheep can joyfully shout, “We have passed out of the realm of spiritual death in Adam into the realm of eternal life in Christ!”

Our Lord continues by saying that no one can seize one of His sheep out of His hand. Furthermore, the Father, Who is greater than all, gave us to Christ and no one can seize us out of the Father’s hand. Rejoice, believer, that the Father gave you to Christ, and neither man nor devil can seize you out of Their hand! Praise the Lord, the impossibility of believers being lost does not depend upon any strength of their own, but rests upon the finished work of Christ and the mighty power of God (vv. 28-30).

### **Romans 8:28-39**

All believers are called according to and for the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11). We were called before the ages of time (2 Tim. 1:9). It was a call into the fellowship of the Son (1 Cor. 1:9). The One Who called us is the eternal God “of Whom and through Whom and to Whom are all things” (Rom. 11:36, lit.). This is to say that: (1) God is the source of all things; (2) He brings everything to pass that He planned in His eternal counsels; (3) and all things ultimately return to Him for His satisfaction and eternal glory. Therefore, we are confident that nothing will stop Him from accomplishing His purpose. He will cause all things to work together for good to those who love God, believers whom He has called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

We were *foreknown*, in eternity past, by God (Rom. 8:29). We were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God on the basis of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus and the sanctifying work of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:1-2). The believers whom God foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son. This confirmation to the image of the Son is mature sonship (Eph. 1:5) that is also described as the measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Can someone say that those foreknown, chosen, and predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son could ever be lost? Never! To say such a thing contradicts the plain Word and is an affront to the very character of our God Who foreknew, predestined, and will see us conformed according to His unalterable purpose for which we were called.

In Romans 8:30 we have four terms: *predestinated*, *called*, *justified*, and *glorified*. In the original language all four of these verbs are action words, which are in what is called the aorist tense. This means that these four actions of God on behalf of His eternal purpose and us, His children, are viewed in their entirety. You may say they are timeless. As far as our sovereign God is concerned, they are already accomplished. Therefore, all is viewed as one entire, eternally completed salvation described in these

five timeless (eternal in character) words: foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

All of this takes place in Christ where God put us (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1). Every believer was eternally foreknown, called, justified, predestinated to be conformed to Christ's image, and glorified. We, living in time, are in the process of transformation and glorification that God sees as already done. It is impossible that God would fail. It is therefore impossible that a saved person could be lost and end up in the lake of fire. To believe this would be questioning the character of God.

As Paul continues his triumphant praise we hear the language of heaven that is beyond human thought. Meditate on it, brothers and sisters, with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31). The answer, of course, is NO ONE! Neither man nor devil can defeat our Father God. Our enemies are His enemies. The irrefutable argument continues. Since God did not spare the greatest possible gift, His own Son—God manifest in the flesh—then He will surely give us all things. The “all things” are gifts immeasurably less than the supreme gift of the Son and are actually included in Him (Rom. 8:32).

The next verses in Romans 8 speak of our clearance from guilt and condemnation (vv. 33-34). God is the judge before Whose court we have been justified. Anyone who would bring a charge against God's chosen ones must face the Judge (God) Who has justified them, that is, set them in right standing with Him (Rom. 3:21-31). Neither man nor Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is able to bring a charge against them (Rev. 12:10-11). Neither can anyone condemn God's elect because Christ has already condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3) and now stands as our Advocate, our Representative in God's court. Christ has already fully satisfied God's just requirements for our sins and those of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2). All who would bring false accusations against God's chosen and justified ones will be turned away in defeat.

And finally, our glorious risen Lord at God's right hand is constantly interceding for us (v. 34). He is there ever living to intercede and complete the process of our full salvation (Heb. 7:25). This begins with the regeneration of our spirit, proceeds through the transformation of our soul, and is consummated with the resurrection and glorification of our body. In Jesus Christ's matchless prayer in John 17, He wills to have us kept in the Father's name (v. 11), kept from evil (v. 15), sanctified by the truth (v. 17), and to be with Him where He is (v. 24). The only lost one, Judas Iscariot, was never a child of God; he was never saved. He was the son of perdition, the son of destruction. His spiritual parentage was of the devil, not God. This is the very phrase used for Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:3. Jesus said plainly that of the twelve He chose, Judas Iscariot was a devil (John 6:70-71). In John 8, Jesus told the Pharisees that they did the works of

their father (v. 41) and that their father, their spiritual parentage, was the devil (v. 44).

In the closing verses of Romans 8, Paul triumphantly states that no circumstance and no created thing can separate the chosen and called believers from Christ because of His love for them (vv. 35-39). Christ's love, from which we cannot be separated, is perfect (John 13:1; 15:9; 1 John 4:8). So regardless of what is happening to us, we may abide in His love continually.

The terms in Romans 8:35 describe pressure from the outside, inner distress and anxiety, persecution from any antichrist source, deprivation of food, deprivation of normal things of life such as clothing, and even danger by the sword that brings physical death. Suffering and even death has been and presently is the lot of many of God's people (v. 36). But such cannot separate us from the love of Christ. Rather, we are more than conquerors, super-conquerors, through Him that loves us. From the blood of the martyrs recorded in the Bible, through the multitudes who suffered persecution and death through the centuries, to the present day (when 90,000 yearly shed their blood for Christ's sake), the triumphant shout goes up: "More than conquerors through Him Who loves us!" "It has been granted to us on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29, lit.). Paul himself gloried in his tribulations (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

What marvelous words close this chapter: neither death, life, angels, evil principalities, human or supernatural powers, things present in this world now, things to come, height, depth, nor any created thing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord! The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, traverses the universe and finds nothing that can separate the chosen, called, and justified believer from his Lord.

### **1 John 5:6-13**

Although there is some repetition of previous statements, it is profitable to look into this passage by itself. Near the end of his gospel (glad tidings), John tells us that the signs in his gospel were written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31, NASB). And in his first epistle he says, "These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13, NKJV) and be filled with joy in fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:4).

Now let us notice carefully the apostle's language. The Spirit Who is Truth bears witness to Jesus, the Christ (1 John 5:6). The testimony of the Spirit is the testimony of God. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He testified of His Son (v. 9). He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in

himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son (v. 10; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6, NASB). And this is the testimony: that God has [once for all] given us eternal life and this life is in His Son (v. 11). Then verse 12 concludes, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (NASB). "These things (in verses 9-12) I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you (those who believe in the name) may know that you have eternal life" (v. 13, NASB). The stress here is upon believing God's testimony about His Son, that the eternal life is in Him. Therefore, we who believe in and have the Son may be assured that we have eternal life. Our assurance is based upon God's testimony concerning His Son, not on our condition! And as stated above, we have the witness in ourselves that what God has said about His Son is true.

We feel that we must again strongly emphasize the Person of Christ. Notice that the original text and the NASB use the article "the" in verse 12 and read "the life", emphasizing that the Person of Christ is the eternal life. If you are given a bag with several items in it, you receive not only the bag, but also the items contained in the bag. Just so, when you receive "the Son" you get "the life." In his gospel, John wrote, "In Him was life" (John 1:4). Jesus said, "I [personally] Am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25, JS). In John 14:6 He said, "I [as distinct from any other source] Am the life" (JS). The word "Am" means that His very being is life. In Colossians 3:4, Paul declares that Christ is our life. By this he means that the Person of Christ is our life. Then we come to that matchless passage (1 John 1:1-2).

Here, John tells us that the disciples heard, saw, and handled the Word of Life that was from the beginning. The first verse of John's gospel states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This is Jesus Christ Who became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us (John 1:14). The eternal life that was with the Father was manifested! When they heard, fixed their gaze upon, and handled Jesus Christ, they were hearing, seeing, and handling eternal life (1 John 1:1-2). We all believe that Christ came into us when we were born again. How glorious is the fact that eternal life is one of the names of Christ! When our spirit was born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6), Christ Who is our life came into us. Christ dying for us on the cross became Christ in us to be our life. So John says, "He that has the Son has the life" (1 John 5:12; John 14:20; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27).

Now John assures us that he wrote these things (the epistle of 1 John) in order that we who believe on the name of the Son of God might *know* that we have eternal life (5:13). The Greek language has several different words that define different aspects of knowledge. All are usually translated by the English word "know." The word "know" used in verse 13 means a settled inner knowledge, a conscious absolute knowledge that we possess

eternal life in the Person of Jesus Christ Who indwells us. We shall never be separated from Him. We have seen this already from many references in the Word. Beloved brothers and sisters, rejoice! Stand upon this mighty truth and grow in Him.

In closing, John sums up the whole epistle, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding [through our spirit] so that we may know Him Who is true; and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He IS the true God and eternal life” (5:20, JS).

Thus far, we have shown that eternal life is a gift received by grace through faith with no works of man’s fallen self involved in gaining it (Eph. 2:8). Now, in the closing sections of this booklet, we will briefly consider some crucial misunderstandings that lead dear believers to doubt the security of their salvation.

## **Two Great Principles of Truth**

Often there is confusion regarding two great principles in the Bible. The *first principle* is that eternal life is a free gift of God by grace through faith totally apart from works. The *second principle* is that there will be positive or negative rewards for the works of a believer during his Christian life *after* his new birth. These two great principles of truth concerning God’s salvation and God’s righteous government run throughout the Bible. Many Scriptures relate to one of them or the other, but not to both of them.

As an illustration, suppose there are two shelves in a home. On one shelf the family keeps all of the utensils they use for eating and drinking. But, on the other shelf, only the pots used for cooking are kept. These two shelves are similar to the two principles we are talking about. All of the items on each individual shelf have a common purpose, but confusion results if eating utensils and cooking pots are mixed on the same shelf. One is for the principle of eating, while the other is for the principle of cooking. This illustrates how confusion arises over the matter of our eternal security. If verses that teach reward according to the works of a born again believer are viewed as referring to eternal life, then confusion will result. If verses that teach eternal life is the gift of God through grace are viewed as reward for works, this also will result in confusion. We will refer to these two principles as “*Gift Principle*” and “*Reward Principle*.” (Please note that the two original Greek words usually translated in our Bibles as “reward” or “recompense” have the varied shades of meaning, as translated in their various contexts, of pay, wages, reward, recompense, gain, retribution, punishment, repay, and return. You can easily understand how all these terms fit in with the two terms, reward or recompense.)

Concerning the *Gift Principle*, we have established that man’s eternal salvation (eternal life) is a gift of God. A gift is something prepared by the

giver. God prepared our eternal salvation for us through the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 17:1-4). The person receiving the gift does nothing to earn it by any of his own works; he simply takes the gift by faith. "It is God's gift, not on the principle of works" (Eph. 2:8-9, lit.). Paul was very careful to explain to us that eternal life is by grace alone and cannot be gained by any works of our own (Rom. 11:6; Gal. 2:16, 21).

A large number of Scriptures teach us that positive or negative reward for our life and service to the Lord is according to works. Jesus said: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12, NASB). The works of all men who are not saved by grace will be judged, and their reward (their recompense) will be the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12-15). The only possible escape from this judgment is for one's name to be in the Book of Life by virtue of the *Gift Principle* (Rev. 20:15). The question is sometimes asked, "Does this mean that a Christian can freely sin and live a fleshly life with no consequences?" The answer is, "No, he cannot!" This is because Jesus promises to reward every man, both unbeliever and believer, according to his works. For the believer, this judgment will take place at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; Matt. 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 11:18).

Because he has both the old "flesh principle" and the new life resident within him, the believer's works may be good or bad. The intense warfare between the two, Spirit and flesh, is described in Galatians 5:16-23. The reward, or recompense, from Christ may be positive or negative (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:23-24). Christ will judge only those works committed *after* we become Christians (1 Cor. 3:8-15). Please rest assured, however, that sins we commit after becoming Christians will not be held against us at the judgment seat of Christ *if* we sincerely confess these sins (1 John 1:9). Notice carefully that this verse says "If we confess our sins," *then* God is faithful—and on the basis of the blood (1 John 1:7) is righteous—to forgive the confessing Christian and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

The timing of the application of these two principles in the life of a Christian is important and helpful to us. The *Gift Principle* applies to us the very minute we place our trust in Christ for forgiveness. As stated earlier, at that moment we are eternally forgiven, we pass from death to life, we are born again by the Spirit of God, and we become a child of God. Also, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of our future completed redemption when our body is transfigured. We are eternally saved! (Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 1:7; John 5:24; 1 Peter 1:23; John 1:12; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Phil. 3:21).

As shown previously, it is by the gift of righteousness put to our account that we receive eternal life. But having received the gift of righteousness and thereby the gift of eternal life, we must now pay attention to the *Reward Principle*. This is especially important in light of the

fact that our entire Christian life will be evaluated by Christ at His judgment seat.

Paul likened our whole Christian life to that of an Olympic race, all with the goal of winning the prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27). He was racing for the prize of an imperishable crown, the positive reward given at the judgment seat for those who run victoriously. This crown, like other crowns gained by believers, points to the reward of ruling with Christ in His coming 1,000 year kingdom (1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Rev. 2:10; 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6). Other writings will explain this more fully. These overcoming believers bear His image and rule with Him over the earth in the millennial (1,000 year) kingdom. That kingdom is the first stage of the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose for the creation of mankind (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:4-6). This will be followed by the eternal day seen in the last two chapters of the whole Bible (Revelation 21 and 22). With such a great calling, it is little wonder that Moses, who could have had power and riches in Pharaoh's court, considered "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26, NASB). In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul wrote that he might be disqualified (rejected or disapproved) if he did not maintain strict self-control over his body. Christians, who take this to mean that Paul could lose his salvation, put these verses on the wrong "shelf." Paul's buffeting and leading captive his body was with the view of gaining the reward of the crown according to works. It was *not* with the view of gaining eternal salvation (which he already possessed). So by reading these verses carefully, you will see that Paul was not racing for eternal life, which he already possessed as a born again believer. Rather, he was racing for a prize, which was a reward for how he ran the race.

The coming kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament and was portrayed as a time of great blessing. The earth would be gloriously renewed from much of the curse and the Messiah would rule (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-10; 24:23). The Jews understood that participation in that blessed era was determined by God's judgment upon one's works after the resurrection, and *life in that age* was designated "eternal life" (literally, *age-lasting life*) (Dan. 12:2). Here we need to point out that the term "eternal life" can have various meanings in the Scriptures, even as terms tend to have in any language. There is no word in either Hebrew or Greek that explicitly means endless or eternal. A literal translation of the term would be "age-lasting life" or "life belonging to the age." Both the Hebrew word (*olam*) and the Greek word (*aionios*), which are sometimes translated as "eternal" or "everlasting," mean a long period of time (perhaps indefinite) or an age. *The context of the term must determine the exact meaning.* When the Greek word *aionios* is used in conjunction with God's life, it clearly means eternal, because God is eternal and His life is eternal (Gen. 21:33; John 1:1-4; Rom. 16:26; 1 Tim. 6:15-16, Heb. 1:10-12; 7:3, 15-17; 1 John 1:1-2). As we have received God's eternal life as a gift, we have an eternal

relationship with Him and an eternal salvation (John 3:14-16; 5:24; Rom. 6:23).

However, for proper interpretation of many Scriptures we must realize that *the Jews of Jesus' day had no concept of eternal life as God's life inwardly experienced in the new birth*. Nicodemus, for example, was waiting for Messiah's coming kingdom, which was prophesied repeatedly in the Old Testament. But his question about returning to his mother's womb and coming out again shows that he had no idea of the new birth (John 3:3-10). The rich young ruler also had no idea of the new birth. It was Messiah's kingdom, *life in the age to come*, which the young ruler sought. And Jesus confirmed that entry into life in that age was to be gained through obedience to God—not just to His commandments, but by following Him (Jesus) (Matt. 19:16-21; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-30). The young man asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (literally, "life for the age" or "age-abiding life"). The correct literal translation is, "What must I do to inherit life for the age [or age-abiding life]?" He was clearly asking, "What must I do to inherit a place in the kingdom of the next age?" (See the same thought in Jesus' conversation with a lawyer in Luke 10:25-28.)

Jesus defined the issue in their meeting as having "treasure in heaven." The word *treasure* carries the meaning of a deposit. How the young man followed Jesus would determine his deposit of treasure (reward) in the coming kingdom age. Here again we mention that at birth a child receives the irreversible free gift of life and a place in the family. Receiving the kingdom age inheritance, however, will depend upon his conduct of life. In Colossians 3:23-25, verse 24 shows us that the reward (recompense) consists of the inheritance and is based on service to our Lord Christ. In the passage concerning the rich young ruler, Jesus was speaking of His coming 1,000 year kingdom as being realized in "the age to come," which would also be the "regeneration"—the era of the earth's renewal (Matt. 19:28-29; Luke 18:29-30). The "age to come" (singular) cannot speak of eternity because there are "ages to come" (Eph. 2:7; 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17).

Eternal life is realized in our spirits now, through the new birth, as a gift of God (John 3:6; 17:3; Rom. 6:23). But *eternal life* is also viewed as a reward for our obedience as a believer, and this reward is in the 1,000 year kingdom age to come. Conditions in that age will be wonderfully blessed: "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9b). The *reward* in that age for the obedient disciple— "*eternal life*"— will entail *a greatly magnified and perfected experience of our fellowship with God and our experience of His life* (Luke 18:28-30). This reward in the coming kingdom is only for those believers who forsake all to follow Him (Luke 18:28-30). For the obedient disciple, Jesus promises: "and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30).



The Bible has warnings about believers missing the blessings of the kingdom. If, as some Corinthian believers, we persist in fleshly living, we will not possess the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:7-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). Also, in Matthew 10:38-39, 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-26, and John 12:25, Jesus teaches us that we must lose our life (soul life) now in order to find it at the time when He returns to reward men according to their deeds. This means that if we will deny our soul the fulfillment of its desires, pleasures, and satisfaction in this life today, and take up our cross to do God's will (Matt. 26:39), then, in the future when Christ returns, we will find the true satisfaction of our soul. This passage refers to reward, as mentioned in Matthew 16:27. Discipleship here involves works of obedience. When the Lord returns, a believer can lose the satisfaction of his soul by missing the kingdom joy, or he can gain it in the kingdom by denying himself now and following Jesus in obedience.

The faithfulness of our Christian life will determine our participation in Christ's coming 1,000 year kingdom. We must live according to the highest standard of practical righteousness in order to enter the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). We must do the will of the Father in order to enter the future kingdom (Matt. 7:21). If we are faithful in our service to Christ, He will reward us with entry into the joy of the kingdom and the privilege of ruling with Him (Matt. 25:14-23; Luke. 19:11-19). But, if we fail to serve Him, we will forfeit this reward (Matt. 25:24-30; Luke. 19:20-26). Thus, we shall be cast into "outer darkness," a picture of exclusion from the glory of the kingdom (Matt. 25:30). This will cause the weeping of sorrow and regret. All of the Lord's judgments of His slaves (believers) are based upon works of service, so "outer darkness" *cannot mean loss of eternal salvation. These passages all have to do with positive or negative recompense at the judgment seat of Christ* (Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15).

The book of Hebrews speaks of the inhabitable earth to come in the next age and that man, not angels, will co-rule with Christ (Heb. 2:5-6). Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, is bringing (leading) many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). That is, through the progressive sanctification of their lives and their service to Him they can gain participation in the glory of His kingdom. Remember that mankind was created for God's purpose of manifesting His image and ruling on His behalf (Gen. 1:26-27). God's purpose will be fulfilled in its initial stage (before the advent of the New Jerusalem when all evil will be put away) in the next age when Christ, with the overcoming believers, rules on earth for one thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6). Therefore, the various warnings in the book of Hebrews have nothing to do with the loss of eternal salvation. Rather, they clearly set forth the danger of missing entrance into the land (the kingdom in type) through various shortcomings mentioned in Hebrews: unbelief, disobedience, hardening of the heart (Heb. 3:18-19, 4:6-7), not going on to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11—6:8), not holding fast the confession of their hope based on the complete sufficiency of Christ and His work (Heb. 10),

neglect in running the race looking to Jesus while under the Father's child-training (Heb. 12:1-11), and selling one's birthright as Esau did (Heb. 12:12-17). Space forbids detailed explanation of these passages, but rest assured that the principle we stated above applies. Christ is presented in many aspects as the complete solution for entrance into the kingdom (Sacrifice, High Priest, Intercessor, etc.).

The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt and into the wilderness, from which only a few entered the reward of the land, which is a type of entering the millennial kingdom (Deuteronomy, chapters 1-10 and many other passages). This history of the Israelites is probably the clearest, simplest, and best-known example concerned with the free gift of salvation and positive or negative reward. Besides the significant example in Hebrews, First Corinthians 10:1-13 clearly sets forth as instruction and warning the same wilderness examples for those of us upon whom the completion of the ages has come. We will now briefly retell the story that many of you already know.

As God's people, they were *all* redeemed by the blood and passed out of Egypt through the sea into the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-2). They *all* ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. The manna represented Christ as their food and the water from the Rock represented Christ as their drink (vv. 3-4). But because of their repeated disobedience (Num. 14:22), most of them did not please God and died in the wilderness (vv. 5-11). *All* of them were redeemed from Egypt and could never go back even though they proposed such a thing (Num. 14:1-4). As their journey continued, it is clear that they remained the children of God. They were fed with miracle food and drink, and their clothes did not wear out. Nowhere in the account of their journey or in the whole Old Testament does it say they ceased to be the people of God. Yet it is also clear that most of them missed out on the reward of entering the good land, which was not entering God's promised rest—a type of the reward of the coming 1,000 year kingdom (Heb. 3:12-19, 4:1-9).

### **James 2:14-24**

Now that we understand the two principles of *gift* and *reward*, James 2:14-24 becomes clear. If the gift of eternal salvation is truly by faith alone, why does James speak of being justified by faith plus works? Many Bible readers have not been able to reconcile this passage with Romans 3:26—4:6. It is apparent that James is trying to motivate his Christian readers to proper living and good works. In verses 12 and 13 he begins with speaking about the coming judgment of believers: "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged" (James 2:12, NASB). Verse 13 follows with a continuation of the theme of the coming judgment seat of Christ where only Christians appear to be judged for their service, not with respect to eternal life. Immediately following is James' question: "What use

is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works?" Can that faith save him? (v. 14, NASB)."

The key to understanding this passage is the meaning of the word "save." The verb "to save" in Greek simply means to keep from loss, danger or ruin, or to make whole (see uses in Mark 5:23; Luke 8:36; Acts 27:20). The meaning of the word "save" *must be determined by the context*. Only in some cases does it mean to deliver from eternal condemnation to eternal life (Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8). Here in James it is salvation from a negative judgment regarding a Christian's life and service at the judgment seat of Christ that would prevent him from entering the kingdom as a reward. Those without good works are pictured by the unprofitable servant, who is negatively judged and loses his reward (Matt. 25:24-30). When Paul was assured that he had victoriously finished his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he could say, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (2 Tim. 4:18, ASV). (For another example of being saved for the kingdom, compare Matthew 24:12-13 with 2 Timothy 2:12.)

So there are two justifications in the New Testament. According to the *Gift Principle*, "justification is a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24, lit.). As shown earlier, this means that God declares us righteous as a legal act because of our faith in Jesus, apart from works (Rom. 3:26-28; 4:5-6). Because of this justification we can never be eternally condemned (Rom. 8:30-34), and we have new life in Christ (John 5:24; Rom. 4:25; 5:18). According to the *Reward Principle*, there is also a justification by works mentioned by James (James 2:21-24). This is justification for satisfactory service as a believer that brings reward. All believers must appear before Christ, Who will judge our works (1 Cor. 3:12-14; 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17). We may be disqualified from receiving a positive reward (1 Cor. 9:27) or we may be approved (James 1:12). There is justification through faith alone unto eternal life and justification through works bringing millennial reward. When, at the end of his life, God revealed to Paul that he had run victoriously, he was then confident that the righteous Judge would approve him to receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Paul's possession of eternal life was never in question.

## Conclusion

We now trust that each reader can apply the two principles of *gift* and *reward* to the many passages that were once confusing. May all be confident that the God Who chose us for Himself and predestined us to be His sons will also keep us for eternity (Eph. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:29-39). None of the threatening passages speak of the loss of eternal salvation, because God has delivered us from eternal punishment by the work of the cross. However, God, as a loving Father, may chastise us in this life, or

according to His righteous governance may have some dealing with us in the kingdom age. The penalties thus incurred may be severe, but not eternal (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:29-32; Luke 12:41-48). In the unending ages of the ages “there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4b, NASB). By His astonishing mercy and grace the days of discipline unto transformation will be over. There will be no more curse and we will serve Him and see His face. His name will be on our foreheads, and we will live in His light and reign to the ages of the ages (Rev. 22:3-5).

Imagine a father who runs a great business enterprise. His heart longs that his children mature and prove themselves responsible so that they may run the family business with him. In the same way, God now longs that we would grow up in all things in Christ (Eph. 4:15) and be responsible servants, willingly serving Him now and ruling with Him in the ages to come. Let us grow to maturity, standing upon the firm foundation of our eternal security in Christ. Let us count the sufferings of this present and strategic time not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us and unto us (Rom. 8:18). Let us then fulfill our responsibility to the cursed creation that is waiting with anxious longing to be liberated from the bondage of the curse at the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-23). So, let us “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1, NASB).

May the Lord bless every reader with a “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph. 1:17-18) that each may stand on a firm foundation of truth and walk in a way pleasing to his Lord. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

## **About the Author**

The author trusted in Christ in 1974 when he was a twenty-nine-year-old businessman. Shortly thereafter, he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for a period of time. Mr. Finley has had a preaching and teaching ministry in churches in Texas and North Carolina. He has also taught in Bible conferences in the U. S. and in Asia and at a Bible college in Asia. The author has written several books on Biblical themes.

Tom and his wife, Dee, have resided in North Carolina since 1987. He retired from a position in the insurance industry in 2008.