



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 24



FREED FROM CONDEMNATION

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ 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, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

– Romans 8:1-11 ^{NKJV}

INTRODUCTION

Just as the seventh chapter of Romans is a mountain peak of doctrine concerning the experience of the believer, so the eighth chapter is a towering peak of teaching on the completeness of salvation. When it comes to stabilizing the soul of the believer, this chapter is unexcelled. The condition of the person in Christ Jesus is described with unmatched power. On every side salvation is a bulwark for the soul, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.

*“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; **salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks**” (Isa 26:1). Speaking of the day of redemption, Isaiah also said, *“But you shall call your walls Salvation”* ^{NKJV} (60:18). The words of David the psalmist can be applied to our position in Christ Jesus. *“Blessed be the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness in **a strong city**”* (Psa 31:21).*

It might appear strange that a strong affirmation of security follows the exposition of a fierce inner struggle. For some, the struggle of good and evil within produces fear and doubt. The Spirit, however, is strengthening our faith, confirming that God has begun a good work in us, and will perform it *“until the day of Christ”* (Phil 1:6). We have been joined to the Lord Jesus, baptized into His death, and raised with Him by the glory of

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LESSON OUTLINE

1. THOSE WHO ARE NOT CONDEMNED (8:1)
2. TWO INEXORABLE LAWS (8:2)
3. GOD DID WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO (8:3)
4. THE LAW'S DEMANDS FULFILLED IN US (8:4)
5. TWO DISTINCT WAYS OF LIVING (8:5)
6. TWO DISTINCT MIND-SETS (8:6)
7. THE UNCHANGING BENT OF THE CARNAL MIND (8:7)
8. WHEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD (8:8)
9. THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (8:9)
10. THE BODY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT (8:10)
11. MORTAL BODIES ACTIVATED FOR GOD (8:11)

the Father (6:3-4). We are "dead" to sin and "alive unto God" (6:11). We have been liberated from the guilt and power of sin, and from the Law in its condemning capacity (6:18,22; 7:4).

In regeneration a new and dominant nature is given to us. It is harmonious with heaven, and in sharp contention with the world and all that is within it (1 John 2:15). If this was the only nature we had, our circumstance would be one of ease. However, this is not the case. The remnants of the old nature remain with us. They are tied, so to speak, to our bodies, and cannot be separated from them. Considered as a whole, these remnants are called "the old man" (Eph 4:22-24) "the flesh" (Rom 7:18) and "the natural man" (1 Cor 2:14). This nature, to be thrust from us when we are separated from the body, resists and wars against the "new man" that is "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10). It is aggressive, hostile, and unrelenting in this warfare. Without the extensive exposition of Romans seven, this battle would be so confusing we would lose heart. However, without the proclamation of Romans eight, the intensity of the battle would soon wear us out. Aware of this, Satan has sought to hide the truth unveiled in these two chapters. He has been phenomenally successful in this endeavor.

In spite of this circumstance, it is still correct that truth believed liberates souls captivated by ignorance. Our blessed Lord said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). When you take hold on the realities proclaimed in this text, you will experience a portion of the liberty of which our Lord spoke.

The power of God is confirmed in His effectiveness to do what the Law--His Law--was not capable of doing. **In Jesus, God condemned sin without condemning the sinner--something the Law was impotent to do.** Sin HAD to be judged and condemned. It could not be excused.

The Spirit will make a sharp distinction between those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit. He will affirm the total unacceptability of the flesh. He will also begin developing the indispensable ministry of the Holy Spirit.

All of this is done out of necessity. This is no dead academic lecture! God is exposing our souls to realities that will give us the advantage in the good fight of faith--realities that must be grasped by the inner man. Believers who attempt to face life and grapple with the challenges of inner warfare must know what this chapter affirms.

Although we are **not** free from the sin principle, or "law of sin," we are free from the guilt of and enslavement to sin. As long as we are "in the body," we do have to confront this "natural" law, but we are under no obligation to obey it. Therefore, it is written, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom 8:12). This is involved in the freedom declared in Romans 6:7: "For he that is dead is freed from sin." While we struggle with "the law of sin," we can confidently rejoice in our standing in Christ Jesus. The battle is only temporary, and good things are being realized because of it. We are being tutored in the nature of both the "flesh" and "the Spirit" (Gal 5:17), "the natural man" and "the spiritual man," (1 Cor 2;14), the "old man" and "the new man" (Col 3:9-10). The teaching of this section confirms both the liabilities of the flesh

and the advantages of the Spirit.

THE ENTIRE GODHEAD IS INVOLVED

Every member of the Godhead is extensively involved in our salvation. In the passage before us (8:1-11), "God" is referred to eight times in four verses (vs 3,7,8,9,11). Jesus is referred to nine times in five verses (vs 1,2,3,10,11), and the Holy Spirit is pointed out twelve times in seven verses (vs 1,2,4,5,9,10,11). This is a remarkable circumstance! **In eleven verses there are no less than twenty-nine references to Deity--and they ALL have to do with OUR salvation.**

- "Them that are in **CHRIST** . . ." (v 1).
- "Then that are in . . . **JESUS**" (v 1).
- "Who walk . . . after **THE SPIRIT**" (v 1).
- "The Law of **THE SPIRIT**" (v 2).
- "Life in **CHRIST** . . ." (v 2).
- "Life in . . . **JESUS**" (v 2).
- "**GOD** sending His own" (v 3).
- "**HIS** own . . ." (v 3).
- ". . . own **SON**" (v 3).
- "Who walk after **THE SPIRIT**" (v 4).
- "They that are after **THE SPIRIT**" (5).
- "The things of **THE SPIRIT**" (v 5).
- "Enmity against **GOD**" (v 7).
- "The Law of **GOD**" (v 7).
- "Cannot please **God**" (v 8).
- "But ye are . . . in **THE SPIRIT**" (v 9).
- "**THE SPIRIT** of . . ." (v 9).
- "**Spirit of GOD** dwell in you" (v 9).
- "**THE SPIRIT**" (v 9).
- "**THE SPIRIT** . . ." (v 9).
- ". . . of **CHRIST**" (v 9).
- "If **CHRIST** be in you" (v 10).
- "**THE SPIRIT** is life" (v 10).
- "**THE SPIRIT** of . . ." (v 11).
- "**HIM** that raised up Jesus" (v 11).
- "Raised up **JESUS** from the dead" (v 11).
- "**HE** that raised up . . ." (v 11).
- "Raised up **CHRIST**" (v 11).
- "**HIS SPIRIT** that dwelleth in you" (v 11).

Salvation is a Divine enterprise in which men participate -- not a human initiative in which God participates. The failure to embrace this critical distinction occasions the development of all manner of erroneous doctrines and emphases. If we are going to build the confidence of the people of God, they must hear of His working, His presence, and His commitment to their salvation. If they are

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to have a proper view of the liabilities of their natural persons, they must be told that at every point “flesh” rises to prominence, salvation is placed on a shaky foundation.

The passage before us will affirm the truth of salvation with unquestionable power. It will give no countenance to the flesh, nor will it allow anyone to remain comfortable that relies upon it. The Spirit will speak emphatically to us. There will be no ambiguity or vagueness in His words.

POWERFUL AFFIRMATIONS

We will read powerful affirmations of the truth – affirmations addressed to your faith. They are to be believed and heartily embraced.

- “There IS therefore NOW.
- Hath MADE me free .
- What the Law could NOT do.

- Condemned sin.*
- They that are after the flesh DO mind the things of the flesh.*
- They that are after the Spirit [DO mind] the things of the Spirit.*
- To be carnally minded IS death.*
- To be spiritually minded IS life and peace.*
- The carnal mind IS enmity against.*
- It IS NOT subject to the Law of God.*
- Neither indeed CAN be .*
- They that are in the flesh CANNOT please God.*
- You are NOT in the flesh.*
- If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is NONE of His.*
- The body IS dead because of sin.*
- The Spirit IS life because of righteousness.*
- He . . . shall also quick your mortal bodies .*
- The Spirit that DWELLETH in you.”*

If you are not accustomed to this type

of language, it will sound strange to you. We are living in a time when preaching and teaching, together with much religious writing, is philosophical. Relatively little is affirmed or declared, and a lack of confidence spouts from the pulpit like Mount Vesuvius.

All such preaching is powerless, and unworthy of falling upon the ears of believers. If ever we are to make progress to glory, our thoughts must be established, not placed upon the flimsy foundation of human wisdom and theological speculation. Solomon once wrote, “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Prov 16:3).

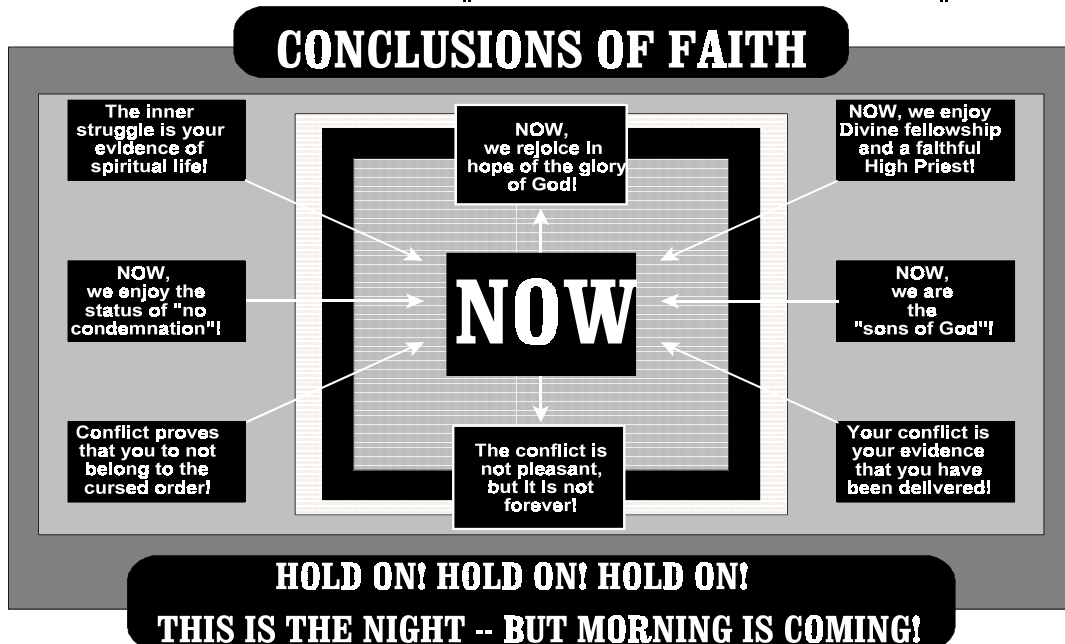
There is no better way to commit our works unto the Lord than to have our hearts and minds filled with Divine affirmations. The Spirit will now give us such provision.

THOSE WHO ARE NOT CONDEMNED

^{8:1} *There is therefore NOW no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” The seventh chapter closed with a powerful exclamation of

assurance and confidence: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” This is the shout of faith, and it is the result of “spiritual understanding.” It confirms those who make such a declaration are in “heavenly places,” surrounded with

realities that make for “the full assurance of hope” (Heb 6:11). It also confirms that the avoidance of condemnation is on the heart of every person who believes in Jesus. Faith moves the individual to do whatever is required to avoid being condemned by God almighty!



THEREFORE

This is a conclusion—a spiritually logical conclusion. It is the judgment of faith, and it is based upon perception. And what has led Paul to this grand conclusion—this inspired deduction? To be sure, he has written it through the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). However, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has blended with the experience wrought by faith. Thus, Paul’s statement is not only truth, it is truth experienced. That means what is here declared is common to all believers, for no Scripture came by, or was limited to, the interpretation or experience of

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the Prophet (2 Pet 1:20-21).

“Therefore” means, in view of what has been affirmed before. It refers to the inner struggle that was delineated in the seventh chapter—the frustrating warfare that takes place within the saved. Lest we forget the magnitude of that warfare, ponder again some of the statements that described it.

- ❑ **FRUSTRATION.** “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” (7:15)
- ❑ **POWERLESS.** “For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (7:18)
- ❑ **CIRCUMVENTED.** “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” (7:19)
- ❑ **COMPETITION.** “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” (7:21)
- ❑ **AGGRESSIVE OPPOSITION.** “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (7:23)
- ❑ **WRETCHEDNESS.** “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (7:24)
- ❑ **TWO MANNERS OF LIFE.** “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (7:25)

Confirming this cannot have reference to inner conflict prior to being in Christ, Paul now concludes something that cannot possibly be said of anyone except the person who is in Christ Jesus. He takes the very thing that has driven many to conclude they are unacceptable, and affirms that it proves acceptance. In view

of the inner warfare – in view of the incessant struggle with sin – here is the inspired conclusion.

THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION!

“There is therefore **now** no condemnation . . .” What a wonderful statement! This is the description of the person who has been described in chapters six and seven.

- ❑ The one baptized into Christ’s death is not condemned (6:3).
- ❑ The one who is walking in the newness of life is not condemned (6:4).
- ❑ When the “old man” is crucified, we are no longer condemned (6:6).
- ❑ When we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God, we are not condemned (6:11).
- ❑ When we are not under the law, but under grace, there is no condemnation (6:14).
- ❑ When we have obeyed the form of the doctrine delivered to us, we are not condemned (6:17).
- ❑ When we find ourselves unable to implement what we desire in our hearts, we are not condemned (7:15).
- ❑ When we consent that the Law is good, even though there is a part of us that struggles against it, we are not condemned (7:15-16).
- ❑ When we see that in our flesh nothing good resides, there is no condemnation (7:18).
- ❑ When we find a law within us that produces evil when we desire to do good, we are not condemned (7:21).
- ❑ When we find a law within us, warring against the law of our minds, and even captivating us, there still is no condemnation (7:23).
- ❑ When we feel our own wretchedness, there is no condemnation (7:24).

- ❑ When our minds serve the Law of God, while our flesh serves the law of sin, we are not condemned (7:25).

This is the meaning of this text. The glory of it is accented by our deliverance from the Law, which soundly condemns the very condition described.

This is too strong for some, for they imagine this gives license to sin. But that is a miserable delusion, foisted upon the simple by the prince of the power of the air. The point is that regeneration has made sin repulsive. It is hated and loathed at its source—in the thought processes. **No person, however disciplined, can hate iniquity who has not been delivered from it!** It is deliverance from sin that has provoked a hatred of it, and a love for the law of God!

Jesus said the person who does not believe on Him is “condemned already.” Our text affirms the opposite condition, where “no condemnation” exists “**now.**” Is that not a wonderful sound?

“Now”

It is essential to know the present status of the people of God—those who have believed the report of the Gospel, and are living in the vitality of their faith. The book of Romans frequently reminds us of the “**now.**” For those outside of Christ, alienation and condemnation describe their present condition. But that is not the case with those who are “*in Christ Jesus.*”

- ❑ **FULLY EXONERATED FROM SIN.** The state of the children of God is described as “*being **NOW** justified by his blood*” (5:9).
- ❑ **RECONCILED TO GOD.** Through Jesus, “*we have **NOW** received the atonement,*” or reconciliation (5:11).
- ❑ **RELEASED FROM SIN.** “**NOW,**” we have been “*made free from sin*” (6:22).
- ❑ **FREE FROM THE TYRANNY OF A CONDEMNING LAW.** “**NOW,** we are delivered from the law” (7:6).
- ❑ **UNWANTED DESIRES NOT IMPUTED TO US.** Concerning the struggle within, the child of God can say, “**NOW** then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (7:17).

The point is that regeneration has made sin repulsive. It is hated and loathed at its source—in the thought processes. No person, however disciplined, can hate iniquity who has not been delivered from it! It is deliverance from sin that has provoked a hatred of it, and a love for the law of God!

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Let there be no drawing back from the strength of the Spirit's affirmation. **The unrelenting contest within the child of God confirms he is NOT condemned!** Even though we are assaulted by the "law of sin" within us, there is "no condemnation!" Jesus declared the very same thing when He said, "He that believeth on him is **not condemned**" (John 3:18). In another place Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and **shall not come into condemnation**; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

"No condemnation!" That means we can boldly approach the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:14-16). **"No condemnation!"** That means we can confidently draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:22). **"No condemnation!"** That means Divine power is devoted to us—power that makes us adequate for any Divine assignment, and superior to any foe aligned against us. **"No condemnation!"** That means we can have the "full assurance of faith," the "full assurance of hope," and the "full assurance of understanding" (Heb 10:22; 6:11; Col 2:2). **"No condemnation!"** That means we have an Intercessor in heaven (Heb 7:25), and One within our hearts (Rom 8:26). **"No condemnation!"** That means our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58). **"No condemnation!"** That means no one can effectively lay anything to our charge (Rom 8:33). **"No condemnation!"** That means we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13).

No person who has been joined to the Lord can afford to be without this knowledge. They must see that the Father has received them because they have received His Son. Their acceptance of the reconciliation He wrought out in their behalf, is reason enough for God to justly receive them. Rather than condemning them, His eye is upon them, and His ear is open to their cries (1 Pet 3:12). Even

though they struggle with the law of sin that is resident in their members, he does not condemn them. Even though thoughts and desires rise in them against their will, often draining their resources, He does not condemn them. They are in His Son by virtue of their faith, and He will not condemn such a soul, regardless of the seemingly contradictory struggles they may endure.

No Warrant for Sin

It should not be necessary to say so, but this condition does not justify sin.

If salvation is from sin, then how is it that God would be able to tolerate it after one comes into Christ? Does spiritual life sanctify sin? Does the Lord Jesus, in whom is no sin, overlook and even condone what is contrary to the Divine nature?

Because of the pervasiveness of demonic doctrines, some are led to believe the expression of sin is of no consequence in Christ Jesus. But this is not so, and reveals a reprobate heart and mind. If salvation is from sin, then how is it that God would be able to tolerate it after one comes into Christ? Does spiritual life sanctify sin? Does the Lord Jesus, in whom is no sin, overlook and even condone what is contrary to the Divine nature? If sin is repulsive to the believer, as is declared in the seventh chapter, how must it appear to the One who has saved us from it? Sin is never right, and it is never excused. If it is not forgiven, and if we are not freed from its guilt and power, it will be the cause of our condemnation. Further, if the reality of this does not register upon the human spirit, no acceptable level of effort will be expended in the good fight of faith.

THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS

Throughout the seventh chapter, Paul spoke of his personal fight of faith.

However, he was not speaking only of himself, but as a representative of the household of faith. We know this is the case because of the confident note that is sounded in this verse. In view of the described conflict, "There is therefore now no condemnation to **THOSE** who are in Christ Jesus."

There are no eternal benefits outside of Jesus Christ. God has hinged everything relating to life and godliness to His Son. Further, redemptive benefits can only be ministered to those who are "in Christ Jesus."

The immediate context of this statement, however, relates to being "under the Law." From the standpoint of a covenant, only the Jews were "under the Law." Yet, considering the spiritual status of humanity, everyone outside of Christ is condemned by the Law. After all, it was given that "every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God" (3:19). By saying, therefore, "those who are in Christ Jesus,"^{NASB} the Spirit means those who are no longer under the condemnation of the Law. Our release from the Law and its consequent condemnation was in order to our marriage to Jesus. As it is written, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, **that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God**" (7:4).

God cannot deal favorably with us unless we are NOT condemned. Further, we cannot be in that condition unless we are free from the Law and in Christ Jesus. However we may imagine that God loves us, He cannot bestow His intended favor upon us unless we are "dead to the Law" and "in Christ Jesus." Redemption is "in Christ Jesus" (3:24). We are "alive to God in Christ Jesus"^{NASB} (6:11). In all of its remarkable facets, salvation is ministered to us "THROUGH" Jesus Christ. The benefits come to us BECAUSE of Him. They are also administered BY Him, as the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15; 12:24). Additionally, the Son of God ministers these benefits ONLY to those who are "IN" Him. It is God Himself who

puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), thereby qualifying us for the state now described: *“NO condemnation.”*

Although generally neglected by the Christian world, the Spirit has said considerable concerning being *“in Christ.”* He has left no doubt about the point at which this occurred. We were *“baptized into Christ,”* being *“baptized into His death”* (6:3). We were *“buried WITH HIM by baptism into death”* (6:4), and are therefore *“dead with Christ”* (6:8). While this may appear a technical point, we are not in Christ Jesus because we were baptized, as though that were the reward for obeying *“the form of the doctrine”* (6:17). It was THROUGH our baptism that we were brought into Christ Jesus. It was the passage way through which this was accomplished.

To be *“in Christ Jesus”* is to be *“joined”* to Him—made *“one”* with Him (1 Cor 6:17). It is not simply that Jesus is with us, but we are *“IN Him.”* In a telling expression of this circumstance, the Scriptures say *“we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph 5:30). Being *“in Christ”* involves all of the benefits that are in Him passing to us.

When we are *“in Christ.”* all that is in Him becomes ours. A brief representation of these benefits follows.

- Redemption is in Christ Jesus (3:24).
- Sanctification is in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 1:2).
- We are caused to triumph in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 2:14).
- In Christ we become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).
- We have liberty in Christ (Gal 2:4).
- True unity is found in Him (Gal 3:28).
- All blessings are in Him (Eph 1:3).
- We are brought near to God in Christ (Eph 2:13).
- The objective of God’s calling is realized in Him (Phil 3:14).
- The promise of life is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 1:1).
- True faith and love are in Him (2 Tim 1:13).
- The grace of God is appropriated in

Christ (2 Tim 2:1).

- Salvation in its entirety is in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:10).

Now our text boldly announces there is *“no condemnation”* to those who are in Christ Jesus. God does not condemn them. The Law of God does not condemn them. They are NOT condemned, even though they struggle with the law of sin that is resident in their flesh (7:23). They are not condemned even though they are not able to fully do what they desire (7:18). The struggle induced by faith is the personal proof those in Christ are not condemned.

While this may appear a technical point, we are not in Christ Jesus because we were baptized, as though that were the reward for obeying *“the form of the doctrine”* (6:17). It was THROUGH our baptism that we were brought into Christ Jesus. It was the passage way through which this was accomplished.

WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH

Later versions of Scripture eliminate the latter part of verse one: *“who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* All versions, however, do include the words in verse four, the latter part of which reads the same way. I shall take them as proper words that reflect the intent of this passage. As will be confirmed later, this phrase does not describe the CAUSE of condemnation being lifted, but the EVIDENCE of it.

Eleven times *“the flesh”* is mentioned in this chapter. It stands for everything about us that is unregenerate. It is the natural part of our persons, that is traced back to Adam. We have already been apprized there is *“no good thing”* in the

flesh (7:18)—nothing that God will receive. Notwithstanding, the flesh aggressively seeks to direct the manner in which we live. To *“walk in the flesh”* is to live according to natural drives and impulses. It is to live as though this world was the main world, and heaven was of no importance. Those who walk *“after the flesh”* think like men. They reason with this world at the center of their thoughts, and are driven by time and circumstance.

Those who are not condemned, do not yield to the impulses of the flesh, allowing it to manage their lives. They may struggle with *“the law of sin,”* but they do not yield to it. The direction of their life is heavenward, not earthward (Phil 3:20). Their manner of life is their confirmation they are NOT condemned.

WHO WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT

Walking after the Spirit is being *“led”* by Him in the mortifying of the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). It is the opposite of quenching or grieving Him (1 Thess 5:18; Eph 4:30). The ONLY way to live *“not after the flesh”* is to walk after the Spirit. This is living in the *“communion of the Holy Spirit”* (2 Cor 13:14) and the *“fellowship of the Spirit”* (Phil 2:1). It is when life is lived in willing harmony with the revealed purpose of God. Approached from the perspective of the seventh chapter, those who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit are those who:

- Hate the very suggestion to do evil (7:15).
- Willingly and heartily consent that the Law is good (7:16).
- Discern and confess that nothing good resides in the *“flesh”* (7:18).
- Recognize the competing law within their members, and refuse to yield to it (7:23).
- Delight in the Law of God after the *“inward man”* (7:22).
- Sense the wretchedness of their natural condition, anticipating their deliverance from it (7:24-25a).
- Serve the Law of God with their mind (7:25).

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Those expressions are the result of refusing to follow the dictates of the flesh. They are something of what is involved in walking in the Spirit. To such, *“There is therefore now no condemnation.”* The

fact that there is a struggle with sin and not concession to it, proves this is true. Because this aspect of spiritual life is again addressed in verse 4, I will reserve further comments for later. Remember,

this is evidence of justification. The inner war, fierce though it may be, confirms that a new principle of life has been introduced! That life is more powerful than death—vastly superior to it.

TWO INEXORABLE LAWS

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” This verse is an extension of the thought introduced in the opening of the first verse: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* The **evidence** of this condition, as I have already stated, is found in the manner in which saints live, obediently following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit will declare the **reason** for their removal from condemnation: **“FOR.”** This reason is carefully traced back to the working of God, not the manner of life we are living.

This is a critical distinction, and must be seen with the *“eyes of our understanding.”* As long as men imagine that release from condemnation is caused by what they do, they will, at the very best, come short of the joy and peace that comes from believing (Rom 15:13). In salvation, valid DOING is always a response. It constitutes evidence of Divine working, as we will now see.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Here is a principle, or law, employed by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who makes this law effective, for it does not operate on its own, or independently of Divine power. This is nothing less than a description of the manner in which the Holy Spirit works—*“the LAW of the Spirit.”* It describes how we were freed from the power and consequences of sin.

This freedom has already been announced to us: *“he that is dead is FREED from sin”* (6:7), *“being made FREE from sin”* (6:18,22). Prior to this freedom, we were *“servants of sin”* (6:17,20) and *“slaves to impurity”* (6:19^{NASB}). In this chapter, freedom from enslavement to sin will be traced to being led by the Holy Spirit (8:13). Only the inexorable law, or principle, through

which He works can free us from bondage to sin.

There are principles, or laws, at work in spiritual life with which we must be familiar. Our spiritual acquaintance with

persons that aggressively opposes the new creation in Christ Jesus. This is contrasted with the *“law of my mind.”*

- ❑ **The Law of the Spirit of life** (8:2). This is the working principle by which the Holy Spirit brings spiritual life

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them will give us an advantage in the good fight faith. If we are ignorant of them, we are thrust into disadvantage.

- ❑ **The Law of God** (7:12,14,16,22,25). This is the Law through which the knowledge of sin comes. It is summarized in the Ten Commandments, and was given as a covenant to Israel. This contrasts with *“the law of sin.”*
- ❑ **The Law of the mind** (7:23). This is the result of having God’s law put into our minds and written upon our hearts. This is contrasted with *“another law in my members.”*
- ❑ **The law of sin** (7:23,25; 8:2). This is the principle of sin that is resident in the human nature. This law is also referred to in verse 21: *“When I would do good, evil is present with me.”* This is contrasted with *“the law of God.”*
- ❑ **Another law in our members that wars against the law of our mind, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin** (7:23). This describes the bent of human nature. There is a principle at work in our natural

and liberty to us. This law will be contrasted with *“the law of sin and death.”* Here we see one of the vital aspects of spiritual life—liberating us from the tyranny of sin.

“The Spirit of Life”

This is a reference to the Holy Spirit, who is the immediate Author of spiritual life. That is why we are said to be *“born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8). Throughout the life of faith, it is ever true: *“the Spirit gives life”* (2 Cor 3:6). In Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, it was the Spirit that enabled the reassembled and enlivened bones to stand on their feet, *“an exceeding great army”* (Ezek 37:10).

- ❑ The Spirit leads us to *“mortify the deeds of the body,”* which is an aspect of life (Rom 8:13).
- ❑ It is *“through the Spirit”* that we *“wait for the hope of righteousness,”* another facet of true life (Gal 5:5).
- ❑ The people of God are *“built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:22).
- ❑ The presence of Divine qualities

within the saints is nothing less than *“the fruit of the Spirit”* (Gal 5:).

- ❑ Obeying the truth, the initial and consistent indication of life, is accomplished *“through the Spirit”* (1 Pet 1:22).
- ❑ Our washing, sanctification, and justification, were all accomplished *“by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor 6:11).
- ❑ Those in Christ are presently being changed *“from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Cor 3:18).

direct contradiction to *“the law of sin and death.”* This is an enlarged view of *“the law of sin,”* or the sin principle, that is irrevocably associated with our bodies (7:23,25). Not only does this principle gravitate to sin, it also leads to death—separation from God. Thus, it is called *“the law of sin and death,”* for these two things cannot be separated. Sin leads to death (6:23) death is the result of sin (5:12).

Once again, this is a *“law”* associated with our earthly nature, which centers in the body. As long as we are in the body, we will contend with this law. No amount of theological reasoning will rid us of contention with the flesh! After all of the fanciful and conflicting arguments concerning the meaning of this passage, every honest believer in this world knows that contention with the flesh is anything but over!

FREEDOM

Here some believe a serious difficulty is introduced. On the one hand, Paul has [for all believers] acknowledged we are brought *“into captivity to the law of sin”* that is in our *“members,”* or earthly constitution (7:23). How is it that we can be brought into captivity to the *“law of sin,”* yet also be freed from it?

To resolve this seeming dilemma, some have said the reference in 7:23 pertains to our lives prior to being in Christ, while 8:2 refers to life in Christ. This seems to relieve them of any difficulties with the text. However, this cannot be, for both are in the present tense. Also, if this explanation is true, then those outside of Christ are not really guilty of sin at all (7:17,20), have a delight in the law of God (7:22), thank God through Jesus Christ their Lord (7:5a), and are serving the law of God with their minds (7:25b). And who is the person who would care to affirm such representations apply to those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-2), and alienated from the life of God (Eph 4:18)? Such a conclusion betrays spiritual ignorance.

In What Sense Are We Free?

The Spirit has already declared this freedom. We are not obliged to sin. Although we contend with the *“law of sin,”* we are under no obligation to obey it.

- ❑ Those who are dead to sin live no longer in it (6:2).
- ❑ Being raised up with Christ, we walk in newness of life (6:4).
- ❑ Our old man is crucified with Christ that should no longer serve sin (6:6).
- ❑ The person who is dead with Christ is freed from sin (6:7).
- ❑ We are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God (6:11).
- ❑ We can refuse to allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies (6:12).
- ❑ We are admonished not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness (6:13a).
- ❑ We are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God (6:13b).
- ❑ Sin shall not have dominion over us because we are not under law, but under grace (6:14).
- ❑ Being made free from isn, we became the servants of righteousness (6:18).
- ❑ Now we are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness, with the result being holiness (6:19).
- ❑ Now being free from sin, and become servants to God, we have fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (6:22).

All of these statements postulate conflict. There can be no such thing as YIELDING if there are no contrary impulses. It is absurd to think that being under grace is necessary if we are once and for all rid of the sinful nature. Those who imagine such a thing simply are not honest.

Our freedom consists of release from servitude to sin. We are free to *“deny ungodliness and worldly lusts”* (Tit 2:12), which would not be necessary if they did not exist. Further, ungodliness and worldly lusts can ONLY exist where the law of sin and death exists. Once we are, by death or the change that will occur when Jesus comes, liberated from this body, we will never again struggle against *“the law of sin and death.”* Until then, we are free from the domination of that law. It need not rule us. In fact, if we will walk

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- ❑ It is *“through the power of the Holy Spirit”* that we are enabled to *“abound in hope”* (Rom 15:13).
- ❑ It is the Holy Spirit that brings us to obedience and the cleansing and sanctifying blood of Jesus (1 Pet 1:2).

All of these, and more, are accomplished through the Holy Spirit who works in strict accordance with heavens laws, or principles. **The Holy Spirit does not employ fleshly means to accomplish spiritual results!** This is, of course, devastating to much of the spurious Christianity that abounds in our time. It is no wonder church members are often found in bondage to sin. They are being subjected to a Gospel (falsely so called) that employs earthly means to obtain heavenly results. It simply does not work. If the Holy Spirit does not employ a certain principle, you may be certain God will not honor it if men choose to use it!

THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH

The Holy Spirit works powerfully in

in the Spirit, it CANNOT rule is (Gal 5:16).

Believers who feel trapped and condemned by the flesh can rise higher! The Holy Spirit is working within them to free them from the domination of sin and death. When the sinful nature erupts within, spewing thoughts and desires into our minds, we can resist them, casting them down with the effective weaponry we have been given (2 Cor 10:5-6). *“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”*

“Life”

This freedom from the domination of sin and the rule of death is accomplished

within the framework of *“LIFE.”* This refers to our involvement with the living God, for we are *“alive”* only to the degree we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son (1 John 1:3). Eternal life, which is nothing less than spiritual life, or life administered by the Holy Spirit, is *“knowing”* God, *“and Jesus Christ”* whom He has sent (John 17:3). It is the peculiar prerogative of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this fellowship between God and the redeemed. Elsewhere, it is depicted as the Spirit changing us from one degree of glory into another—making us more and more like the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

Freedom from the law of sin and death is legally accomplished the moment we

become one with Jesus Christ. All of the heavenly resources required to resist this law are then made available to us. However, the practicality and consistency of that victory is accomplished only within the context of a vibrant fellowship with God and Christ.

The subordination of the flesh cannot occur while a person is walking at a distance from God! There can be no advancement in the faith while living under the domination of the flesh. This second verse is affirming that everything is made accessible to us when we come into Christ. It then becomes a matter of appropriating the victory through faith. It is not automatic, as the remainder of text will confirm.

GOD DID WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO

“³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” The Spirit will not let us forget that salvation is traced back to God, and God alone. It is not the result of a joint effort between God and man, however desirable that may appear. In Christ, we are truly *“workers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9). However, that is a post-reconciliation posture. It is NOT the way we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13).

Prior to being in Christ, we were *“under the Law.”* For we Gentiles, it was not given to us as a covenant, but was the means of defining our condition. It *“stopped”* every mouth, rendering all the world *“guilty before God”* (3:19).

The Spirit will now show us what the Law could NOT do. His words are of relevance to both Jew and Gentile. The Jew was given the Law in a codified form, and the Gentiles had it imprinted upon their conscience (2:15). Whether we are speaking of *“the Law”* in a covenantal sense, or as a means of alerting the

conscience to good and evil, the words that follow apply. This will declare the weakness of a law-system.

WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO

There were things the Law COULD do. It could define sin (3:20). It could pronounce **“GUILTY”** upon the entire

The Law was an administration for the flesh, not the spirit. As a covenant, it was fleshly, temporal, and impotent to accomplish the ultimate will of God. However, it was not inherently weak; i.e., it had no weakness of its own.

human race (3:19a). It could contaminate the conscience, stopping every mouth, while shutting the door to the throne of all grace.

But there was something the Law (any Law) could *“NOT do.”* It could not forgive sin or purge the conscience. It could not take sin away from the face of the Lord, or constrain Him to be gracious

to sinners. In order for people to be saved, sin had to be dealt with; it could not be ignored or passed over as though it did not exist. The requirements of the Law could not be put aside, permitting God to receive those who had transgressed it.

WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH

The Law was an administration for the flesh, not the spirit. As a covenant, it was fleshly, temporal, and impotent to accomplish the ultimate will of God. However, it was not inherently weak; i.e., it had no weakness of its own. The inability of the Law was *“the flesh,”* or the constitution of the ones to whom it was addressed.

The Law demanded more than *“the flesh”* was capable of giving. Its weakness was found in the ones attempting to fulfill its requirements. Although addressed to those in the flesh, the Law placed necessities before them that were beyond their reach. The very purpose of the Law was to make this evident, so that men might see the need of a Savior. As long as men see no need for a Savior, they will not seek one. The Good News of a Savior means nothing to a person convinced of their own goodness, or their ability to achieve goodness. This accounts for the general lack of interest in Christ Jesus.

Even though the believer struggles with evil within, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.--by Given O. Blakely

The failure of the contemporary church to aggressively seek the benefits of the Gospel, and its amazing penchant for brevity and spiritual shallowness, are directly owing to its failure to perceive a need for the salvation of God. It does not see God as demanding more than they can give of themselves, and thus is not assertive in its demands for the Gospel.

A Modern Likeness

The weakness of the law can be likened to the use of steam in a steam engine. In bygone days, steam-driven locomotives were the iron horses of the railway system. The larger part of these locomotives was a massive metal boiler. Water was heated by means of a coal furnace, forming steam in this large boiler. Then, as the steam was released by controlled valves, it would drive the wheels of the great iron horse, moving it down the track. The steam was the means of generating the power of the engine.

If one attempted to construct one of those boilers out of cardboard, the power of the steam would dissipate at once. It would burst the cardboard, disintegrating it quickly. In such a case, the steam would be *weak through the cardboard*. There would be nothing wrong with the steam itself, or with the means through which it was produced. The weakness was in the container of the steam.

That was the situation with the Law. The flesh could not contain it. It was to the law what cardboard is to steam. It simply cannot harness the power of the Law. For *“the flesh,”* or the natural part of man, to keep the Law would be tantamount to people in an ICU ward of the local hospital running a brisk marathon race. Just as the demands of the race would exceed their ability, so the demands of the Law exceed the ability of men without Christ. It is *“weak through the flesh.”*

Because of this condition, God undertook the responsibilities inculcated by the Law Himself. He would not simply do away with the Law, but would see to it that its demands were met. The just

penalty for infracting the Law would be paid by means of an appropriate sacrifice.

THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH

“ . . . God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin . . . ” Other versions read as follows. (1) *“God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin.”*^{NKJV} (2) *“God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin.”*^{NASB} (3) *“God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”*^{NIV} (4) *“By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin.”*^{NRSV} (5) *“God, sending his Son in the image of the evil flesh, and as an offering for sin.”*^{BBE} (6) *“But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin’s*

that were unlike the ones for whom they were offered, both in appearance and nature. They were not in the image of God, as was man. Neither, indeed, were they rational or moral. That is precisely why *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Heb 10:4).

Thus God, in preparing an effective sacrifice, sent His Son *“in the likeness of sinful flesh.”* Although He had no sin of His own, He was clothed in a frame precisely like that of those He came to save—*“the likeness of sinful flesh.”* He did not come in *“sinful flesh,”* but in its *“likeness.”* He took upon Himself the *“form of a servant”* (Phil 2:7). Scripture makes much of this circumstance. The sacrifice offered for the sins of humanity must be offered by one who was made like the one’s to be saved.

The Deliverer Was Like the Delivered

It is written, *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”*^{NKJV} (Heb 2:14-15). Here, the successful defeat of Satan had to be accomplished by one who bore the image of the ones Satan had defeated. The means of Satan’s overthrow would be death itself. In this way, those who had been held in bondage through the fear of death could be righteously released from that servitude.

Under Law, the sacrifice bore no essential likeness of the ones for whom it was made. A lamb, a bull, a heifer, a goat—they were all animals that were unlike the ones for whom they were offered, both in appearance and nature. They were not in the image of God, as was man.

“control over us.”^{NLT} (7) *“God did, sending his own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin.”*^{NJB}

A Precise Offering

The offering presented by God differed from that demanded by the Law. While the offering of Christ, and the offerings made under the Law, were both substitutionary, there was a significant difference in them. Under Law, the sacrifice bore no essential likeness of the ones for whom it was made. A lamb, a bull, a heifer, a goat—they were all animals

This may seem to be too technical. We already know Satan can be defeated by angelic hosts. It is said of Michael and his angels, *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him”* (Rev 12:7-9). If it was simply a matter of Satan being

defeated, why not choose Michael and his angels for the job?

It is because such a victory could not be accomplished the release of sinners. The experience of Satan being thrust out of his former place could not bring benefit to those bearing another image. The angels were different in nature, and thus their victory could not be imputed to men.

His Heavenly Ministry Demanded He Be Like the Ones He Saved

More was involved in the Lord's death than the remission of our sins. Once our sins were forgiven, we needed to be sustained by a heavenly minister who knew what we required—knew by experience. We needed a High Priest who

His tenure in the flesh would uniquely qualify Him to sustain those who were tempted—assaulted by the evil one. Now we have a High Priest who can be *"touched with the feeling of our infirmities"* (Heb 4:15-16). This is possible because He is the Son of man. Because He is the Son of God, He is able to do something about our situation.

Because of Sin

The solitary reason for Christ's entrance into this world was *"for sin."* The presence of sin is what necessitated His coming! *"In the likeness of sinful flesh and FOR SIN."* The sin problem HAD to be addressed, and only the *"Second Man"* from heaven could do it (1 Cor 15:47). Jesus offered *"one sacrifice FOR sins*

Jesus Christ must come to grips with the matter of sin. That is why the Father sent Him into the world—to deal with sin: OUR sin!

CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH

Sin had to be effectively condemned before we could be made free. This is something that should certainly be seen more clearly by the average Christian. Not only did sin have to be judged and condemned, it had to be judged and condemned *"in the flesh,"* or in a person bearing the likeness of the transgressors. God could not condemn sin in the animal sacrifices. He could not condemn it by the law, but only identify it.

The wrath of God had to be expended against sin—enfleshed sin! Thus He condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus, His only begotten Son. Thus it is written, *"He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor 5:21). Having *"laid upon Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa 53:6), the Father *"cursed"* the Son (Gal 3:13), thereby condemning sin *"in the flesh."*

If you ever ponder how God feels about sin in one of His children, think what He did to His *"only begotten Son"* when He *"bore our sins in His body on the tree"* (1 Pet 2:24). Those who do not avail themselves of the sacrifice of Christ will themselves taste of the wrath and curse of the Almighty God! That is a result that cannot be avoided if unbelief persists. God is serious about the matter of sin—serious enough to curse His Son when He bore our sins. If men choose not to receive that atonement, they will suffer the vengeance of God, and that without remedy.

More was involved in the Lord's death than the remission of our sins. Once our sins were forgiven, we needed to be sustained by a heavenly minister who knew what we required—knew by experience. We needed a High Priest who was sympathetic with our situation.

was sympathetic with our situation. Thus it is written, *"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Heb 2:17-18). Thus Jesus was sent into this world *"in the likeness of sinful flesh,"* bearing the image of the ones He came to save.

forever" (Heb 10:12). It is true, *"Christ SUFFERED FOR SINS, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God"* (1 Pet 3:18). Again it is written, *"Christ DIED FOR OUR SINS, according to the Scriptures"* (1 Cor 15:3). Galatians 1:4 reads, *"Who gave Himself FOR OUR SINS, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."*

Those who seek to gain benefit from

THE LAW'S DEMANDS FULFILLED IN US

"⁴That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." It was not enough to simply remove sin. There had to be a realization of true righteousness, for the lack of which we were condemned outside of Christ. The reason for the forgiveness of sin was our need for righteousness.

THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW

In summary, the *"righteousness requirement of the Law"* involves loving the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:37-39). Because we were *"delivered from the Law"* does not mean that requirement has been dropped! Because we have been forgiven *"all*

trespasses" does not mean those requirements have been obviated, and are of no concern to us. There are countless people who wear the name of Jesus who have no regard whatsoever for *"the righteous requirement of the Law."* They conduct their lives as though God had little interest in this matter. What the Law *"could not do"* did not remove the necessity of the righteousness it

demanded. God's nature still required that spotless and unimpeachable righteousness!

FULFILLED IN US

Essentially, the righteousness of the Law is realized in the remission of sins. Thus it is written, *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"* (Rom 4:7-8). That cleansing is so thorough, that no vestige of guilt can be found in the person joined to the Lord. Upon the basis

of Christ's atoning death, God righteously remitted our sins.

The Confirming Walk

The fulfillment of the righteous requirement of the Law, however, does not end in remission. That forgiveness is confirmed in a godly walk: *"who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*^{NKJV} The Spirit will make clear to us that remission is not divorced from our conduct of life. While righteous conduct did not cause remission, it does evidence remission. Those who walk in

accord with the sinful nature are not in fellowship with God, and have no evidence their sins are forgiven. While this is not a matter on which we are to become judges of others, it is a factor to be considered in examining ourselves, *"whether we be in the faith"* (2 Cor 13:5).

The spirit will now elaborate on what it means to *"not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*^{NKJV} The seriousness of the considerations will become apparent in the strength of the various statements that are made.

TWO DISTINCT WAYS OF LIVING

"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, the things of the Spirit." There are only two ways in which life can be lived. They are summarized as *"according to the flesh,"* and *"according to the Spirit."* These two manners cannot be lived out simultaneously. Other versions read, *"they that are after the flesh"* and *"they that are after the Spirit,"*^{KJV} *"Those who live according to the sinful nature"* and *"those who live in accordance with the Spirit,"*^{NIV} and *"Those who are dominated by the sinful nature,"* and *"those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit."*^{NLT} Let it be clear, there are no other types of living! Every person is living in one of these two ways: *"according to the flesh,"* or *"according to the Spirit."*

fellowship with the body of Christ. This is a manner of life that can easily associate with the world, adopting its manners and preferences.

Living *"according to the flesh"* can appear respectable. However, it opens the

whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things" (Phil 3:18-19). Notice the strength of these words.

- They are not simply enemies, but *"THE enemies of the cross of Christ."*
- They will be destroyed.
- Their god is their earthly appetites.
- The source of their boasting is really the source of shame.
- They *"set their mind on earthly things."*

Living *"according to the flesh"* can appear respectable. However, it opens the door to Satan because it closes the door to the Lord. Earthly appetites are primary, and temporal things are the objects of the individual's quest.

Let me be clear about this matter. There is not the slightest chance that such people will go to heaven. Any religious affiliation they claim is spurious, for God has no children of this type. If these traits exist, they must be forthrightly abandoned, and that with great zeal.

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

This is a life driven by natural impulses. It may not be a life of gross immorality, but it is a life without God. The dictates of *"the natural man,"* which cannot receive the things of God (1 Cor 2:14), are honored and pursued.

This world is the center of a life lived according to the flesh. Time outweighs eternity, and thus heavenly things are of little or no consequence. Living *"according to the flesh"* does not require the Word of God. Therefore, those so living can go long seasons without the slightest exposure to Scripture. Such a life also sees no need for

door to Satan because it closes the door to the Lord. Earthly appetites are primary, and temporal things are the objects of the individual's quest.

Notice how the Spirit states this condition: *"those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh."* Their thoughts gravitate to the earth, and their minds are preoccupied with natural things. Elsewhere the Spirit says such individuals are opponents of Christ's cross. *"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and*

This is the kind of mind-set Jesus described when He once said to Peter, *"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men"* (Matt 16:23). I have no doubt but that Jesus repeats these words regularly in many respectable assemblies! There is altogether too much talk about the views and things of men, and too little about the *"wonderful works of God"* and His *"exceeding great and precious promises."* Such people are walking *"as mere men"*^{NASB} (1 Cor 3:3). Their minds do not get off of the earth, but remain nailed there like Sisera's head.

Even though the believer struggles with evil within, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.--by Given O. Blakely

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Living according to the Spirit is being moved along by the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is not quenched or grieved, and the “things of the Spirit of God” are desired (1 Cor 2:14). The heart eagerly hears “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). These are “led by the Spirit” (Rom 8:14), being easily directed in the way of life.

Those who live “according to the Spirit” set their minds on “the things of the Spirit.” This does not mean they seek to know more things about the Spirit

Himself, merely seeking to obtain more information about the Spirit. Rather, they devote themselves to the things He reveals and ministers. They “set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth,” and “seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1-2). They set their mind to “be filled with the Spirit,” and to let “the Word of Christ dwell” in them “richly” (Eph 5:19; 1 Col 3:16). They are preoccupied with another world, and repulsed by this present evil world.

The “things of the Spirit” are the realities He reveals, and the blessings that He ministers. This includes the marvelous “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9). The abounding hope He ministers is in this category (Rom 15:13). There is the pervading “joy of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 1:6). These, and kindred matters, are the subjects of thought in those who live “according to the Spirit.” They are engrossed with the things with which the Spirit is occupied. His agenda has not become theirs, and they find great delight in the presence and will of God.

TWO DISTINCT MIND-SETS

“⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Because of the devastating effects of modern religion, there is little concern about minding the things of the flesh. Spiritual mindedness is actually scoffed at in many churches. Not a few of God’s people have been chided for being so heavenly minded they are of no conceivable earthly good. I cannot begin to tell you how often some stunted Christian has admonished me to “lighten up,” and become more casual in my stance of life. Serious and sober believers are at a premium these days. The institutional gurus have dulled the senses of the people, so they scarcely have thought upon the expressions of this text. Indeed, I should not be surprised if vast multitudes have never even heard this text, even though it has a most alarming tone and arresting message.

TO BE CARNALLY MINDED

Other versions read as follows. “For the mind set on the flesh is death,”^{NASB} “The mind of sinful man is death,”^{NIV} “**To set** the mind on the flesh is death,”^{NRSV} “For the mind of the flesh **is** death,”^{ASV} “For the wisdom of the flesh is death,”^{DARBYS} “If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death,”^{NLT} and “And human nature has nothing to look forward to but death.”^{NJB} There should be no need to affirm the seriousness of the text. It breathes of sobriety and solemnity.

Carnally Minded

There is no possible way to derive the meaning of this phrase from the original language. This is a classic example of the manner in which the Holy Spirit teaches us. He uses words, but often assigns to them His own unique meaning. The word translated “carnally,” or “according to the flesh,” is σαρκός, which primarily means the muscular part that covers the bones of

It should not surprise us to find this kind of mind dominating the religious scene. The world is actually being consulted by religious men as though it contained the reservoir of wisdom. Its academic approval is eagerly sought, and its values embraced. Just how serious is a condition like this?

It Is Death!

The Spirit registers Divine disapproval of all carnal, or fleshly, mindedness. No person dominated by “the fashion of this world” (1 Cor 7:31) can walk with God! To be “carnally minded IS death!” By this, the Spirit means such a mind separates the individual from God. It removes sensitivity and tenderness toward God, and renders it impossible to hear Him who is “speaking from heaven” (Heb 12:25).

As soon as people begin to think in harmony with “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), they begin to die toward God. A distance forms between the soul and God, as the one with a carnal mind moves into the domain dominated by Satan himself.

a human or animal body, the physical body as a whole body. However, in this text, “carnal,” or “fleshly,” is applied to the mind.

This is a mind placed on life in the body-life in this world. As long as men pursue the path of nature, governed by what they see and feel, they are actually falling headlong into death. Chiefly, this has to do with the “wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 1:20) and the “wisdom of men” (1 Cor 2:5). It involves having the world’s sense of values, and maintaining its priorities.

As soon as people begin to think in harmony with “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), they begin to die toward God. A distance forms between the soul and God, as the one with a carnal mind moves into the domain dominated by Satan himself. Such a mind is impervious to Divine wooing, and thus incapable of receiving from the Lord.

Mark this well! When you are among people whose mind is ruled by the flesh—people who “mind earthly things”—the things of God will suddenly appear out of place. Such people are

repulsed by a heavenly emphasis, or conversation that is governed by the consideration of heavenly things.

The point of our text is that salvation delivers people from such a condition. To be found in that circumstance, therefore, betrays a lost state. Those who ignorantly defend what they call “carnal Christians” need to give heed to this verse—if, indeed, they are capable of doing so. If “*death*” is the state of those who are “*carnally minded*,” then such a mind is a sinful mind, for “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom 6:23). Note, carnal mindedness does not lead to death, but IS death! It is

anything that appealed to the flesh. There was not a syllable of His powerful words that appealed to those having no fundamental interest in eternal things and a vibrant fellowship with the Living God.

Faith cannot reside in a carnal mind, nor can hope and peace. Such a mind repels the Spirit and invites Satan and the hosts of darkness to take control.

TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED

What a remarkable contrast! “*But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*” Other versions read, “*the mind set on the*

mind that has been “*illuminated*” (Heb 10:32) and “*enlightened*” (Heb 6:4). Spiritually minded people live by every word of God. They savor the things of God, talk about them, and hunger for them. They are their happiest when the things of God are clear to them. They live for the world that is to come, and anticipate dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

Life and Peace

Every version reads the same way: “*life and peace.*” This is the result of being “*spiritually minded*”—of having a mind that is “*controlled by the Spirit.*” “*Life*” involves reciprocity to God. It is thriving in the presence of the Lord, knowing Him, and delighting in Him. This is “*eternal life*,” and is the ultimate objective realized in Christ Jesus. As it is written, “*And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life*” (1 John 2:25). This is why Jesus is come, to give “*us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*” (1 John 5:20).

Faith cannot reside in a carnal mind, nor can hope and peace. Such a mind repels the Spirit and invites Satan and the hosts of darkness to take control.

separation from God! It does not merely cause, or lead to, separation, but evidences that the separation has already taken place. That is precisely what the text says. “*To be carnally minded IS death.*”

A Practical Consideration

There is a current practice of catering to the “*carnal mind*” as though this was a valid means of reaching the lost. In some circles, “seeker friendly” services and small informal “cell groups” are in vogue. While there may be some commendable aspects to these approaches, it appears to me they represent more of a compromise than a godly initiative.

If “*to be carnally minded IS death*,” then God’s people do well to exercise themselves to avoid any encouragement for the entrance of such a mind. Neither our formal nor our informal studies should leave the door ajar for the entrance of the flesh. If you will consider the words of Jesus, you will note the total absence of

Spirit is life and peace,”^{NASB} “*the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace,*”^{NIV} “*to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace,*”^{NRSV} “*But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.*”^{NLT}

If this verse is true, and it surely is, then spiritually minded people are the ONLY people who are alive to God! These have minds “*controlled by the Spirit*,” a thought some cannot embrace. Yet, such a mind has been yielded to the Holy Spirit, submitted for faith, strength, and Divine tutelage. The influences of the Spirit have not been quenched, and His gracious leading has not been resisted. The Spirit can “control” the pure in heart without imposing His will upon them.

The “*spiritual mind*” is the mind in which Divine fellowship can be realized. It is where the Law of God can be written, and “*the spirit of wisdom and revelation*” can be experienced (Eph 1:17). This is the

This life is not conferred independently of spiritual mindedness. Those whose minds are riveted to the earth need not tell us how they have eternal life. If being spiritually minded IS life, and being carnally minded IS death, then those whose minds dwell upon the earth are not alive to God. It makes no difference what profession they make.

The spiritually minded person possesses a peace that “*passes all understanding*” (Phil 4:7). It undergirds the soul and keeps the individual from wavering (Phil 4:7). This is a peace that can actually “*rule in your hearts*” (Col 3:15), bringing personal stability in an unstable world. These two qualities flow out from being spiritually minded.

THE UNCHANGING BENT OF THE CARNAL MIND

“⁷ *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*” The Spirit will now elaborate on WHY the “*carnal mind*” is death. He

knows men will attempt to justify their carnal mindedness, but will have none of their feeble attempts to do so. He will speak candidly with us, unveiling the nature of “*flesh*,” the “*carnal mind*,” and

the “*natural man.*” There will be no provision for such a mind among God’s people—or anyone else, for that matter. It is condemned by God because of its nature, and what it compels men to do.

Even though the believer struggles with evil within, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.--by Given O. Blakely

In keeping with the struggle introduced in the seventh chapter, the “*carnal mind*” is the expression of the “*old man*,” or “*the flesh*,” in which dwells “*no good thing*” (7:18). To be “*carnally minded*” is to be dominated by that “*old*,” and totally unacceptable, nature.

In order to confirm why “*no condemnation*” can only exist in Christ Jesus, the Spirit will reveal three aspects of “*the carnal mind*.” Remember, this is the mind that is not “*controlled by the Spirit*.” It is the mind that functions without regard to the God of heaven.

THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD

Here is an unusually strong affirmation. Other versions read, “*the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God*,”^{NASB} “*the sinful mind is hostile to God*,”^{NIV} “*the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God*,”^{DARBYS} “*the mind of the flesh is opposite to God*,”^{BBE} “*the sinful nature is always hostile to God*,”^{NLT} and “*the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God*.”^{NJB}

This is the mind that is NOT motivated by the Holy Spirit—the opposite of a spiritual mind. It is the mind that perceives and thinks without God at the center. It is the mind set of the “*old man*,” which is crucified with Christ.

Such a mind is hostile, warlike, and belligerent against God. It contends with God, refusing to accept His ways, and fights aggressively against them.

The word “*enmity*” comes from the Greek word *ἐχθρα*, and means hatred, animosity, and discord. Thayer’s lexicon defines it as “*the CAUSE of enmity*.” This is the mind that actually alienates a person from God, causing him to become God’s enemy. This mind reasons against God, and is against His being. It is the mind that seeks to get rid of God by pushing Him away from all considerations. When the Word or will of God is affirmed, “*the carnal mind*” aggressively fights against it. It finds a reason to denounce God and His Word. It will question the Scripture, deny its authenticity, and find a reason to negate what it says. It will do this in the name of

self-preference, or what it conceives to be the best course. It will even appeal to scholarship, higher learning, and expediency. But in the last analysis, its objections flow from its nature. The “*carnal mind*” is antagonism against God.

This mind will quarrel with God’s judgments, even getting angry when God does something that is not conceived as right. It hates what God loves and loves what God hates.

THE CARNAL MIND IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD

Here is a recalcitrant mind, one that does not bow to the will of God. Other versions read, “*for it does not subject itself to the law of God*,”^{NASB} and “*It does not submit to God’s law*.”^{NIV} Wherever the Word of God is not honored, preferred, and obeyed, “*the carnal mind*” is in control. This mind does not merely admit it has failed to surrender to God’s law, it refuses to do so. This is the nature of “*the carnal mind*.”

THE CARNAL MIND CANNOT BE SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD

The Spirit now shows us why we must be born again—why a “*new heart*” must be received. You cannot train “*the carnal mind*” to be submissive to God and His Law. **It CANNOT be subject to the Law of God!** If men walk in the flesh, they, by that very circumstance, CANNOT love and obey God! The “*carnal mind*,” or “*mind of the flesh*,” “**IS NOT EVEN ABLE**” to be subject to the Divine will.^{NASB} It not only will not, it CANNOT—“*it cannot do so*.”^{NIV} ! It is not only steeled against the Lord, but zealously fights against Him.

If God does not write His law upon the hearts of men and put it into their minds, they CANNOT obey Him, or render acceptable service to Him. It is important to note this writing is done on the “*new heart*,” given to us in rebirth. If men who

profess Christ choose to live by the impulses of the old nature, they make themselves incapable of loving and submitting to God’s Law.

All who are outside of Christ are in an impossible situation! They, by their very nature, are hostile against God. If they do not appear to be so, it is only because they have not yet confronted God. Even when “*the carnal mind*” is cultured by Divine ordinances, and surrounded by countless benefits, it will go so far as to kill the Son of God! It will not balk at beating the Apostles, stoning Stephen, or driving Paul from the city. You cannot make the things of God attractive to the

The carnal mind will quarrel with God’s judgments, even getting angry when God does something that is not conceived as right. It hates what God loves and loves what God hates.

carnal mind. Only the Holy Spirit, working through the marvelous Gospel of Christ, can convince alienated people they are precisely that—alienated—and in need of a Savior. Wherever there is a genuine inclination toward God, the Holy Spirit has been at work.

This solemn warning is necessary because believers still contend with “*the carnal mind*.” That is the mind that controls the lower nature, and to which Satan has access. The contention is fierce and consistent. Lest we attach little significance to the warfare within, the Spirit shows us the results of yielding to the flesh. It puts us at odds with God, and brings us into war with Him.

WHEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD

⁸ ***So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*** Here is the spiritually logical conclusion to the facts that have been adduced. Do not forget how powerfully the case has been stated.

- ❑ Those living after the flesh set their minds on the flesh (v 5).
- ❑ To be carnally minded is death (v 6).
- ❑ The carnal mind is enmity against God (v 7a).
- ❑ The carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God (v 7b).
- ❑ It is not possible for the carnal mind to be subject to God's law (v 7c).

Other versions read, *"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God,"* ^{NIV} *"So that those who are in the flesh are not able to give pleasure to God,"* ^{BBE} *"those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God,"* ^{NLT} and *"those who live by their natural inclinations can never be pleasing to God."* ^{NJB}

THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH

Those who are *"in the flesh"* are those who are directed by natural appetites, not spiritual ones. Rather than abstaining from *"fleshly lusts that war against the soul"* (1 Pet 2:11), they culture those appetites. They follow the dictates of nature, and are **not** being led by the Holy Spirit.

Not Limited to Those Out of Christ

While this verse does apply to those outside of Christ, it is not limited to them. Indeed, that is not the emphasis of this verse. Paul has already acknowledged that nothing good can be found in the flesh (7:18)—even the *"flesh,"* or sinful nature, of the one who is reconciled to God. We have been exposed to the reality of inner warfare—the struggle of the flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:17). If it was impossible for the redeemed to succumb to the flesh, it would not be possible to struggle against it. **Wherever there is struggle, there is vulnerability.**

The strong admonitions to reckon

ourselves as alive to God (6:11), and yield ourselves to God and our members as instruments of righteousness (6:13,16,19) confirm spirituality is not an automatic process. In the context before us, *"those who are in the flesh"* are the professed believers who **do not** reckon themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. These are the ones who **do not** yield themselves to God, or yield their faculties as servants of righteousness. These **do not** take seriously the war within, **do not** put on the whole armor of God, and thus **do not** stand against the wiles of the devil. What can be said of such people?

Those who yield to the flesh, indulging its appetites time after time, must be told this. They must be apprized of the fact God will receive nothing from them, nor can He be pleased with them. Even their imagined "righteousness" is nothing more than "filthy rags" before the God of heaven

CANNOT PLEASE GOD

Those who are *"controlled by the sinful nature CANNOT please God."* ^{NIV} It simply is not possible for them to do so! Those who yield to the flesh, indulging its appetites time after time, must be told this. They must be apprized of the fact God will receive nothing from them, nor can He be pleased with them. Even their imagined *"righteousness"* is nothing more than *"filthy rags"* before the God of heaven (Isa 64:6).

Everyone Yielding to the Flesh

All who yield themselves to the flesh, obeying its lusts, make themselves reprehensible to God. They can make no claim to grace, for the grace of God teaches us to *"deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,"* living *"soberly, righteously, and godly in this present*

world" (Tit 2:12). ***Those who are in the flesh" are those who are NOT denying those lusts, and are NOT living godly in this world.*** All such people *"cannot please God."*

If we should be tempted to think pleasing God is not a critical matter, we must remember we are told we *"ought to walk and to please God"* (1 Thess 4:1). In fact, we are to *"walk worthy of the Lord unto ALL pleasing."* The very power of God is devoted to enabling us to do this very thing (Col 1:10-11). However, Divine power or not, should we choose to follow the dictates of the flesh, we will not be able to please God. It should be apparent that no one displeasing to the Lord should imagine they will be gathered to the Lord in that state.

This is yet another way of saying, *"without faith, it is impossible to please God"* (Heb 11:6).

An Example of the Effects

The alienating effects of being controlled by the flesh is seen in our Lord's remark to the Jews, who were set against Him. *"How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?"* (John 5:44). **Their preference for the honor of men rendered them incapable of believing on Christ!** In that state, they could not please God in the fundamental matter of believing on His Son. Only when they were freed from that condition would they be able to believe!

Thus the real nature of *"the flesh"* has been set before us. This is what we are without Christ, related only to Adam. It is what we are on our own. If this were suddenly to be perceived by the professed church, there would be such a jarring revival it would boggle the minds of the beholders! How vital it is to see this.

ONE MORE THING

It should be noted that the inability of those in the flesh to please God does not exclude them from the responsibility to do

Even though the believer struggles with evil within, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.--by Given O. Blakely

so. No person should imagine their natural incapacity for pleasing God means they are to be content with their state. God has provided a means through which we can please God, doing things that are even *“well pleasing”* in his sight.

This inability to please God can be overcome by believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ. The Holy Spirit will aid us in these efforts. Salvation provides an effective remedy for the situation. Further, God will not hold him guiltless

that refuses this remedy, choosing to depend upon his natural resources. If God has provided a solution to sin, woe to the person who chooses to refuse it! God will not hold him guiltless! His salvation is too great to excuse those who reject it.

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” Having duly warned us of the wretchedness of *“the flesh,”* the Spirit now returns to the matter of our salvation, regeneration, or being made righteous. He will confirm the essential difference in us in not owing to what we do, but what we possess. There is something very different about those who are in Christ Jesus.

YOU ARE NOT IN THE FLESH

“But you are not in the flesh.” This is a Divine commentary on the statement, *“But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me,”* and *“Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”* (7:17,20). It is one thing for a variant law to be found in us (7:23), it is quite another for us to be *“in the flesh.”* It is one thing to acknowledge nothing good dwells in our flesh (7:18), it is something else to be *“in the flesh.”*

To be *“in the flesh”* is not the same as being *“in the body”* (2 Cor 5:6; Heb 13:3). It is not simply being in a house of clay (2 Cor 4:7). We know this is the case because the Spirit has just said, *“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”* (8:8). To be *“in the flesh,”* in this sense, is to be under the domination of the unregenerate part—our natural self.

Other versions read, *“however, are controlled not by the sinful nature,”* ^{NIV} and *“You, however, live not by your natural inclinations.”* ^{NJB} As confirmed by the sixth chapter, in Christ we have been liberated from servitude to the flesh (6:18,22). We have also been *“delivered from the Law”* which held us prisoners

until faith came (7:6; Gal 3:23).

The flesh is no longer the domain in which we live. We have been raised up with Christ to occupy higher and more profitable realms. We have a body, but are *“not in the flesh.”* We wrestle with sinful inclinations, but are *“not in the flesh.”* God does not behold or receive us *“in the flesh.”* There is a higher domain.

Being “in the Spirit,” able to resist the demands of the flesh, is evidence that the Spirit does dwell within us. Where that evidence is lacking, there can be no claim of possessing the Holy Spirit. You cannot have the effects without first possessing the appointed cause.

IN THE SPIRIT

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.” Ordinarily, the Holy Spirit is said to be *“in”* us. (8:11; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 3:16). But here, we are said to be *“in the Spirit.”*

Elsewhere it is written that we have *“begun in the Spirit”* (Gal 3:3). If we *“walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh”* (Gal 6:16). We *“live in the Spirit,”* and are to also *“walk in the Spirit”* (Gal 5:25). Prayer is to be made *“in the Spirit”* (Eph 6:18), and we love the brethren *“in the Spirit”* (Col 1:8). You will recall that John, on the Isle of Patmos, was *“in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”* (Rev 1:10). What does it mean to be *“in the Spirit?”*

This is synonymous with being *“controlled by the Spirit”* (8:6, NIV).

From a more general perspective, it is the same as being *“in Christ Jesus”* (8:1). To put it another way, those who are *“in the flesh”* are attached to the earth, while those who are *“in the Spirit”* are attached to heaven. To be *“in the Spirit”* is to gather your resources from Him and be directed by Him. It is to have the Word of Christ dwelling in you richly (Col 3:16) and enjoy communion with Him (2 Cor 13:14).

The state of being *“in the Spirit”* was initiated by God Himself. When we were raised up to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places, we were put into the Spirit (Eph 2:6). This is what brought life to us—being put into the Spirit. Our life continues as we walk in the Spirit. Thus it is written, *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Gal 5:25).

THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU

“... if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” We are not *“in the Spirit”* merely by profession. Nor, indeed, is our standing to be considered the result of a Divine decree, as though there was nothing personal about it. Our text does not take being *“in the Spirit”* for granted, and neither should we. We are NOT in the flesh, but ARE in the Spirit *“if in fact the Spirit of God dwells”* in us. ^{RSV} Being *“in the Spirit,”* able to resist the demands of the flesh, is evidence that the Spirit **does** dwell within us. Where that evidence is lacking, there can be no claim of possessing the Holy Spirit. You cannot have the effects without first possessing the appointed cause.

The Indwelling Spirit

Carefully note HOW the circumstance is represented. He does not say we are *“in*

the Spirit” if we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Nor, indeed, does He say we are “*in the Spirit*” if we have been immersed. He does not say we are “*in the Spirit*” if we are members of the right church. The blessing of being “*in the Spirit*” is conditioned upon the Holy Spirit DWELLING in us. Alternate versions read, “*if the Spirit of God lives in you,*”^{NIV} “*since the Spirit of God has made a home in you.*”^{NJB}

The word “*dwelt*” comes from a word used to describe a husband and wife living together. It refers to a relationship, not a mere presence. **The individual in whom the Spirit dwells is not quenching, grieving, or resisting that Holy Spirit.**

All such people, and ONLY such

Personhood. The second (“*Spirit of God*”) reveals His Person and work are related to the purpose of God. The third (“*Spirit of Christ*”) confirms the indissoluble affiliation of the Spirit with the Son of God. The Holy Spirit, therefore, must never be thought of as independent from God’s “*eternal purpose*” or Christ’s redemptive work. Further, the Spirit personally dwells within believers, but is not devoted to their agenda.

Some who do not believe the Holy Spirit dwells within those who are in Christ say “*the Spirit of Christ*” is the attitude or character of Christ, and not the Spirit Himself. “*The Spirit*” is mentioned nineteen times in the eighth chapter of Romans. It is beyond all question that they have reference to the Holy Spirit Himself. He joins the Father

bodies by HIS SPIRIT that dwelleth in you” (8:11).

- ❑ “. . . but if ye through **THE SPIRIT** do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (8:13).
- ❑ “For as many as are led by **THE SPIRIT** of God, they are the sons of God” (8:14).
- ❑ “. . . but ye have received **THE SPIRIT** of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (8:15).
- ❑ “**THE SPIRIT** itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (8:16).
- ❑ “. . . ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of **THE SPIRIT**” (8:23).
- ❑ “Likewise **THE SPIRIT** also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but **THE SPIRIT** itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (8:26).
- ❑ “And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of **THE SPIRIT**, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (8:27).

Only those motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit are actually pleasing God. The unhindered, unquenched, and active presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to pleasing God. If He is not working in the individual, the flesh, by default, assumes the control of the individual.

It should require nothing more than the exposure of our minds to the text to confirm the Person of the Spirit is the subject. If men are unable to see that, it is because their hearts are hard and their minds are blinded.

The postulate of the text is that walking “*according to the Spirit*” (v 4), setting our minds on “*the things of the Spirit*” (v 5), and being “*in the Spirit*” (v 9), require the PRESENCE of the Spirit within. All of these activities are too aggressive and extensive for the “*flesh*,” or the “*natural man*.” Nature simply is not equal to heaven’s demands.

Again, this affirmation is significant. “*But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*” This will be developed at length in the remainder of this chapter. It is enough to say here that believers must not be casual in their acceptance of this affirmation.

people, are NOT in the flesh. Those in whom the Holy Spirit is not dwelling ARE in the flesh, and consequently unacceptable to God. Only those motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit are actually pleasing God. The unhindered, unquenched, and active presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to pleasing God. If He is not working in the individual, the flesh, by default, assumes the control of the individual.

HAVING NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

“*Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*” In this verse, there are three separate references to the Holy Spirit: “*Spirit*,” “*Spirit of God*,” and “*Spirit of Christ*.” The first (“*Spirit*”) accentuates His Divine

and the Son in salvation.

- ❑ “. . . who walk not after the flesh, but after **THE SPIRIT**” (8:1).
- ❑ “. . . **THE SPIRIT** of life in Christ Jesus” (8:2).
- ❑ “. . . who walk not after the flesh, but after **THE SPIRIT**” (8:4).
- ❑ “. . . they that are after **THE SPIRIT** the things of **THE SPIRIT**” (8:5).
- ❑ “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in THE SPIRIT, if so be that THE SPIRIT of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not THE SPIRIT of Christ, he is none of His*” (8:9).
- ❑ “. . . **THE SPIRIT** is life because of righteousness” (8:10).
- ❑ “*But if THE SPIRIT of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal*

THE BODY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

“¹⁰ *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the*

Spirit is life because of righteousness.” To this point, our

bodies have been identified as the seat of the “*flesh*,” or sinful nature. They are the

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visible evidence that our regeneration is not yet complete. Further, the body is something that must be subjected—made subordinate to the will of the Lord (1 Cor 9:27). It is essential, therefore, that we have a proper view of our bodies.

IF CHRIST IS IN YOU

The previous verse refers to the “*Spirit of God*” dwelling in us. Now we read of Christ Himself being in us. Essentially, both references refer to the same thing. Like God, Christ is in us “*through the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22). The Holy Spirit is called “*the Spirit of Christ*” because through His ministry we realize the indwelling Christ. Elsewhere it is said that God strengthens us “*with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*”^{NKJV} (Eph 3:16-17). It is understood, therefore, that Christ “*is in you*” through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this indwelling is realized through Jesus manifesting, or revealing Himself to us (John 14:23).

The Holy Spirit does not assume Christ is in us. He presents this teaching in such a manner as to provoke personal examination. This perfectly corresponds with the exhortation found in Second Corinthians 13:5. “*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?*”^{NIV}

THE BODY IS DEAD

If Christ is, in fact, “*in you*,” what is the result? “*THE BODY IS DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN.*” This is **not** the “*body of sin*” mentioned earlier (6:6). That referred to the whole of the sinful nature. This refers to our fleshly bodies in which the “*law of sin*” resides. The affirmation: they are “**dead**.” They have been purchased, and do not belong to us (1 Cor 6:19). Because of this, they are called “*the members of Christ*” (1 Cor 6:15). But this is in prospect of the resurrection, the time when Christ will “*change*” our “*vile bodies*,” that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil 3:20-21). Only then will our bodies be acceptable in glory.

The body is “*dead because of sin.*” Although our consciences have been purged (Heb 9:14), and our hearts and souls purified (Acts 15:9; 1 Pet 1:22), that is not the case with our bodies. The remnants of sin have not been removed from them, and they have not yet been purified. The Lord can, at His discretion, heal the body, but it remains a “*vile body*,” healed or not. They have been “*washed with pure water*” (Heb 10:22), but are not themselves pure.

The body is “*dead*” in at least two

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ways. First, it has no immediate association with God. Second, it has been assigned to death; i.e., we will eventually be separated from it, either in death or by transformation at the coming of the Lord. Until then, it is appropriately called “*the body of this death*” (7:24). It is a frail “*earthen vessel*” (2 Cor 4:7), and cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50).

The point of this teaching is that the body, together with its appetites, cannot be the center of our lives. God is alive, and is the “*God of the living.*” Those who follow the dictates of the flesh give more glory to the body than is appropriate. For them, the visible transcends the invisible, and the unseen is forfeited in favor of the seen. On the other hand, the person who lives by the Spirit is described in these words. “*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and*

eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:16-18). That is a spiritual confession that “*the body is dead because of sin.*” It is unworthy of emphasis, and cannot be the source of glory.

THE SPIRIT IS LIFE

“*... but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*” The source of our real life is not within ourselves, but in the Holy Spirit. Some translations do ascribe “*spirit*” to the human spirit. “*yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness,*”^{NASB} and “*yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness,*”^{NIV} “*your spirits are alive because of righteousness.*”^{RSV} However, even in this case, the life has been caused by the “*Spirit of life*,” which was affirmed in verse two.

Jesus said, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing*” (John 6:63). That is the sense of our text. Whereas sin had rendered the body “*dead*,” the Holy Spirit had brought life to the human spirit. This transaction has been accomplished “*because of righteousness.*”

This is a most marvelous declaration. The imputation of righteousness is the very subject that is being expounded. It is that righteousness, imputed to us because of our faith, that brings life to us. That is what brings Divine recognition and sustenance to the individual. Without that righteousness, the human spirit remains “*dead in trespasses and sins.*”

This correlates with the rest of Scripture which consistently associates life with the Holy Spirit. “*For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life*” (Gal 6:8). “*And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them*” (Rev 11:11). “*Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*” (2 Cor 3:3).

The perspective of the text is this: **Sin brought about our death in trespasses and sins, but the Holy Spirit defeated that death, bringing**

us life that is honored in heaven. Life triumphed over death in our spirits. That life was inaugurated when the righteousness of God was imputed, or

credited, to us. It was at that point that death was overturned, and we were made accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). The Holy Spirit administered that life.

MORTAL BODIES ACTIVATED FOR GOD

“¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” The Spirit will now show us how salvation addresses the matter of the body, which is *“dead because of sin.”* Although it cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and is consigned to the grave, yet the Spirit will not allow us to ignore it. It must be brought into the matter of our salvation. The manner in which this is done is glorious.

IF THE SPIRIT DWELLS IN YOU

Here the Holy Spirit is identified once again with God: *“the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead.”* This confirms that the Holy Spirit, and not the human spirit, is the subject of verse ten. It also corroborates that the Holy Spirit, and not the attitude of Jesus, is the reference of verse nine.

Again, the reference is not merely to a temporary presence of the Holy Spirit, or some sort of epochal experience that is here proclaimed. We are speaking of God’s Spirit *“dwelling,”* or taking up residence, in the child of God. Because we are sons, *“God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Gal 4:6).

The life that He will minister is nothing less than the resurrection life of Jesus. That is why He is referred to as *“the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead.”* That is fortified by the continued exposition, *“He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life. . .”*

This is nothing less than *“the power of His resurrection,”* eagerly sought by insightful believers (Phil 3:10). It is also the very power that is *“toward those who believe”* (Eph 1:20-23).

GOD WILL GIVE LIFE TO YOUR MORTAL BODIES

These are the bodies that are *“dead*

them (1 Cor 6:19-20). Even though the body is *“vile”* and a source of constant humiliation, yet it is *“for the Lord,”* to be used in His service (1 Cor 6:13).

By quickening our *“mortal bodies,”* the Holy Spirit brings them into spiritual life. They are to us what the Arabians were to Solomon. Even though they were

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because of sin.” Here, death does not refer to the grave, and this *“life”* does not refer to the resurrection of the dead, or the graves yielding up their dead. While it is certainly true that *“this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Cor 15:54), that is not the subject of this passage. Our text speaks of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, wherein the remnants of our old nature are subdued, and our members are yielded as servants unto righteousness.

Herein is a most marvelous work! Although our bodies are the weakest part of our constitution, and are *“dead because of sin,”* yet they can be employed in service to God. Through the Spirit, we can glorify God in our bodies, which do not belong to us, but to the Lord who bought

technically his enemies, and did not reside in the promised land, yet they brought tribute to him because of his superiority. It is written, *“And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon”* (2 Chron 9:14).

The Spirit gives life to our bodies in the sense of making them pay tribute to God. Our tongues are employed for God ((Psa 66:17). Our hands are lifted up to the Lord in holiness (1 Tim 2:8). Rather than being swift to shed blood (Rom 3:15), our feet now bring the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace (Rom 10:15). Now, by the grace of God, Christ can be *“magnified in my body, whether by life or by death”* (Phil 1:20). That circumstance is a powerful witness to the power of God.

CONCLUSION

You see what a large text we have covered. The Holy Spirit has pointed to the most difficult and taxing part of

spiritual life—inner warfare—and has affirmed it proves we are not condemned. We are not condemned because we have

lost our appetite for sin, and hate its intrusions into our minds. We are not condemned because our sins have been

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remitted and we are now awaiting deliverance from “the body of this death.” We are not condemned because we recognize our natural wretchedness, and refuse to acknowledge the cries of our sinful flesh. Grace has taught us to reject the appeals of the sinful nature, and to eagerly pursue holiness, without which no

man shall see the Lord.

All of these marvelous benefits have flowed from the wonderful works of God. In the last analysis, He did what “*the Law could not do.*” He not only raised Jesus, He raised us also. He has provided the help essential to walk in the Spirit and

not in the flesh. Although we acknowledge our imperfection, it is not credited to us, for we have been made accepted in Christ Jesus. These are things that could not be accomplished by Law. Only God’s grace, his only begotten Son, and His blessed Holy Spirit could accomplish them. Praise God for His marvelous works!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/22/2000—our final meeting for for the year 2000. Continuing in our studies in Romans, we will cover 8:12-17, **“THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SONSHIP.”** Here is a most blessed area of consideration—our sonship. It is vital to see the role of the Holy Spirit in the matter of being the sons of God. Without the indwelling Spirit, we could not be the children of God. With the Holy Spirit, however, we become “*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.*” This text is foundational to our spiritual understanding, confidence in Christ, and victorious life. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship.

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