



Commentary on Romans

"The Gospel of God"

Chapter 8:1-17

By

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We come now to the 8th Chapter of Romans. I think of it as the 'Great Crescendo' of Paul's teaching about Jesus Christ and the Law. It reminds me of what the Apostle John wrote in his Gospel account –

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

Paul used the word 'law' more than 60 times in chapters 1 – 7. About a third of those uses were just in chapter 7. The word 'sin' is used more than 50 times in chapters 1 – 7, and connected to 'death' more than 10 times. Paul made his point extremely well –

"For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death." Romans 7:5

Where will Paul take his readers from there? In Chapter 8 the apostle brought all that he had written so far in his letter to the Christians in Rome to a great crescendo. One important aspect to notice is the important part the Holy Spirit will play in Chapter 8. While Paul mentioned the Spirit only a few times in chapters 1 – 7, he mentioned the Spirit almost 20 times just in chapter 8. The apostle is turning an important spiritual corner that impacts salvation; a corner we must not miss.

Verse 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. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

ουδεν αρα νυν κατακριμα τοις εν χριστω ιησου μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα ο γαρ νομος του πνευματος της ζωης εν χριστω ιησου ηλευθερωσεν με απο του νομου της αμαρτιας και του θανατου

It's always important to remember that Romans was a personal letter, sent by the Apostle Paul to Christians in Rome. Paul did not include chapter and verse numbers in his letter. The chapter divisions were added more than a millennium later by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Stephen Langton – 13th century AD). Rabbi Mordecai Nathan formalized divisions of the Old Testament in the 15th century

AD. Robert Estienne (aka Robertus Stephanus) divided the New Testament into numbered verses in the 16th century. That means for centuries Christians found spiritual truths by reading through entire Books of the Bible and remembering where to find them without having the benefit of the chapter and verse references you and I enjoy today.

What this means is that chapters and verses were designed by men who were not ‘inspired’ by the Holy Spirit. I’m not saying that God didn’t lead these men to do what they did or didn’t approve of their work. I’m just saying we shouldn’t look at chapter and verse divisions as ‘inspired’ in the same way that the Holy Spirit ‘inspired’ the prophets and apostles to write the Bible. Though Langton, Nathan, and Estienne may have done a good thing for people interested in reading and understanding the Bible, we should not hold chapter and verse designations to any higher position than they deserve. Helpful, yes. Inspired, no.

I think you’ll find it helpful to read the previous part of this study in Romans to remember the verses that lead up to Chapter 8 –

“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 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. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Remembering those words will help us understand the ‘text within context’ as we look at Romans 8:1.

οὐδεν ἀρα (ouden ara) “there is no therefore” ... the word ‘therefore’ (ἀρα) is an ‘illative particle’ (JH Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p 71) .. one of my Bible teachers some 50 years ago used to say – “anytime you see a ‘therefore’ in Scripture, ask what it’s there for.” Thayer wrote that the word meant ‘to join, to be fitted.’ Klotz wrote that the word intimates that, “under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so.”

Because of what was said before, something else is true. In this case the truth is that – “now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

νυν κατακριμα (nun katakrima) “now condemnation” ... therefore there is now ‘no condemnation’ .. the word ‘condemnation’ is κατακριμα, which means ‘penalty, punishment’ .. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:3 that all human beings “were by nature children of wrath” .. Jesus said in John 3:18 that “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of

God.” Christians are not ‘condemned’ because they do ‘believe’ in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

This is not the first time Paul mentioned ‘condemnation’ in Romans .. re-read Romans 3:8, and especially 5:16-19 –

“And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

It's important to remember that because of Adam's 'offense' judgment came to all men. That resulted in 'condemnation' – the punishment of death and penalties of curses the family of Adam has endured since his disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Even as 'many were made sinners' by Adam's disobedience, 'many will be made righteous' by Christ's obedience. That is why those who are truly 'saved' are not under condemnation. Christ paid the 'penalty' on the Cross, which is why Paul wrote – "to those who are in Christ Jesus."

τοῖς ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ (tois en Christō Iēsou) "to those in Christ Jesus" ... being 'in' Christ Jesus is the miracle of salvation .. upon true 'belief' in Christ, the Holy Spirit places us positionally 'in' Christ .. only God knows which humans are really 'in' Christ Jesus and 'truly saved' .. someone saying they are a Christian does not make them a Christian .. someone 'walking the aisle,' or saying a particular 'set of words,' or attending 'certain classes,' or being 'baptized,' or belonging to a particular 'denomination,' does not make someone 'truly saved' .. salvation means being 'in Christ Jesus' .. so can we know if we are 'in' Christ Jesus? How can we know if our spiritual 'position' is truly 'in Christ Jesus?

μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα (mē kata sarka peripatousin alla kata pneuma) “not according to flesh who walk but according to Spirit” .. depending on what Bible version you use, you may notice that these words are not in Romans 8:1 .. here are some examples –

NIV – “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

ESV – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

AMP – “Therefore there is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior].”

ASV – “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

HCSB – “Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus.”

Why is that? Because of the Greek texts translators used. Here are some examples –

Westcott-Hort New Testament (1881) – ουδεν αρα νυν κατακριμα τοις εν χριστω ιησου

SBL Greek New Testament – Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Tyndall House Greek New Testament – Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

I don't see this as a particularly difficult problem, especially in light of what Paul wrote in Romans 8:4. The wording in verse 4 supports what the Stephanus New Testament (1550) and Scrivener New Testament (1894) include in verse 1 – μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα

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.

Since the phrase is repeated in verse 4, I’ll address the Greek in more detail when we come to that part.

Here are some other commentaries you may find helpful in your study of Romans 8:1.

Other Commentaries

The first verse of this chapter seems to be an inference from the whole preceding discussion. The apostle having established the doctrine of justification, and answered the objections commonly urged against it, now asserts his triumphant conclusion, “There is therefore, etc.; that is to say, it follows from all that has been said concerning the believer’s justification by the righteousness of Christ, and his complete deliverance from the Law as a covenant, that to him there can be no condemnation. The design of Paul is not so much to assert the different functions of the Law and the gospel, as simply to state the fact in regard to the condition of a certain class, namely, those who are in Christ. To them there is no condemnation whatever; not only no final condemnation, but no condemnation now, from the moment of their union to Christ, and deliverance from the curse of the Law. The reason is this: that Christ hath endured the penalty, and obeyed the

precept of the Law in their stead. Barnes’ Notes on the Bible

Believers may be chastened of the Lord, but will not be condemned with the world. By their union with Christ through faith, they are thus secured. What is the principle of their walk; the flesh or the Spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? For which of these do we make provision, by which are we governed? The unrenewed will is unable to keep any commandment fully. And the law, besides outward duties, requires inward obedience. God showed abhorrence of sin by the sufferings of his Son in the flesh, that the believer’s person might be pardoned and justified. Thus satisfaction was made to Divine justice, and the way of salvation opened for the sinner. Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary

no condemnation: to them which are in Christ Jesus—
As Christ, who “knew no sin,” was, to all legal effects,
“made sin for us,” so are we, who believe in Him, to
all legal effects, “made the righteousness of God in
Him” (2Co 5:21); and thus, one with Him in the divine
reckoning. there is to such “NO CONDEMNATION.”
(Compare Joh 3:18; 5:24; Ro 5:18, 19). But this is no
mere legal arrangement: it is a union in life; believers,
through the indwelling of Christ’s Spirit in them,
having one life with Him, as truly as the head and the
members of the same body have one life. Jamieson-
Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Therefore now

Connecting with Romans 7:25. Being freed through
Jesus Christ, there is therefore no condemnation now.

Condemnation (κατάκριμα)

As Romans 5:16, sentence of condemnation.
Vincent’s Word Studies

... condemnation is used exclusively in judicial settings, as the opposite of justification. It refers to a verdict of guilty and the penalty that verdict demands. No sin a believer can commit – past, present, or future – can be held against him, since the penalty was paid by Christ and righteousness was imputed to the believer. And no sin will ever reverse this divine legal decision. The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p 1555

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2

By this point in Paul’s lengthy letter to Christians living in Rome he has mentioned the word ‘law’ more than 60 times. Paul used the word ‘law’ in multiple contexts, which means we need to be careful in how we understand its usage.

The Greek word for law is νόμος. It comes from the word νέμω which means ‘to parcel out, distribute, divide, apportion.’ Greeks as early as the late 5th century BC used the word for “The problems of political authority and the rights and obligations of citizens” (Britannica). Plato and other philosophers viewed νόμος as a process of human reasoning to discover ‘standards of moral conduct .. which could then be expressed in specific laws.’

The writers of the New Testament often used νόμος to refer to the Law that God gave to Israel through Moses (Mosaic Law). It's important to remember that Christians believe in One God in Three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When a New Testament writer refers to God giving the ‘Law’ to Israel, that means Father, Son, and Holy Spirit gave the Law – not just one member of the Godhead.

Paul used the word νόμος for ‘the Law of God, the law of sin, the law of sin and death, the law in my members, the law of my mind, the law of faith,’ and ‘the law of the Spirit of life.’ We will see the latter in the next part of our study in Romans 8.

Verse 2

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

ο γαρ νομος του πνευματος της ζωης εν χριστω ιησου
ηλευθερωσεν με απο του νομου της αμαρτιας και του
θανατου

Notice that Paul wrote that one law (‘of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’) had made him ‘free’ from another law (‘the law of sin and death’). The idea of ‘freedom’ is also a central theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans, as well as other letters he wrote to other 1st century churches (e.g. Galatians, Corinthians). Here’s a quick reminder about what Paul wrote to the Romans in chapters 1 – 7:

“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:24

“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace

of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many." Romans 5:15

"And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification." Romans 5:16

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." Romans 5:18

"For he who has died has been freed from sin." Romans 6:7

"And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Romans 6:18

"For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness." Romans 6:20

"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." Romans 6:22

"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man." Romans 7:2-3

Notice that Paul used the Greek phrase δέω νόμος ('bound by the law') as an example to the Romans about their relationship with the 'law.' The Greek verb δέω was used for physically binding a person (with chords, ropes, chains, etc.), in addition to metaphorically in a legal or moral sense. Paul used the word καταργέω (released) to describe the woman as being 'freed, cleared, severed, discharged' from her marriage relationship after the death of her husband – "if her husband

dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.”

Paul used that easy-to-understand example to help the Romans understand the concept of ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ making them ‘free from the law of sin and death.’ Both of these laws are real and powerful. The ‘law of sin and death’ affects every human being. The ‘law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ affects only those who ‘believe’ the Gospel of Christ. As Paul wrote in the first chapter of Romans – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

It also connects beautifully back to another early part of Paul’s letter – ‘the law of faith’ –

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” Romans 3:27-28

When I quote Romans 8:1 and say that I am no longer under condemnation, I am not boasting. As Paul wrote, "Where is the boasting then? It is excluded?" It is not excluded by the law of works, but by the law of faith. That's why Paul wrote – "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

ο γαρ (for) is important to understand .. it means 'because, since' .. there is 'no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus' because (since) 'the law of the Spirit of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.' What is the 'condemnation?'

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19

Paul wrote the Christians in Ephesus that they “were by nature children of wrath, just as the others,” prior to God saving them by grace through faith (not of works – Ephesians chapter 2). Paul wrote in Romans chapter 5 that this condemnation came through Adam’s ‘offense,’ but that ‘justification of life’ came through Christ Jesus – “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

Paul was addressing the greatest gift ever given. He had already mentioned it earlier in Romans –

“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” Romans 5:15

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Romans 8:2 presents the particular ‘law’ that impacts this ‘free gift’ – “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” So, what is the ‘law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’? νομος του πνευματος της ζωης εν χριστω

Paul wrote earlier in Romans that the Law God gave Israel from Mount Sinai exposed everyone as a sinner –

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:19-20

What God did in Christ was 'free' sinners through the beautiful process of 'justification' –

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

Paul emphasizes that powerfully in Romans 8:2 –

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Other Commentators

Here are some thoughts from other commentators –

The law of the Spirit of life.—A phrase defining more fully the mode in which the union with Christ becomes operative in the believer. It begins by imparting to him the Spirit of Christ; this Spirit creates within him a law; and the result of that law is life—that perfect spiritual vitality which includes within itself the pledge of immortality. *Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*

For the law – The word “law” here means that “rule, command, or influence” which “the Spirit of life” produces. That exerts a control which is here called a law, for a law often means anything by which we are ruled or governed; see the notes at Romans 7:21, Romans 7:23. Of the Spirit. I see no reason to doubt here that this refers to the Holy Spirit. Evidently, at the close of Romans 8:1, the word has this reference. The phrase “the Spirit of life” then means

the Holy Spirit producing or giving life; that is, giving peace, joy, activity, salvation; in opposition to the law spoken of in Romans 7 that produced death and condemnation. *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

The law of the Spirit of life; some understand hereby the doctrine of the gospel, which is called the law of the Spirit of life, because it is the ministry of the Spirit and of life. Others understand the efficacy and power of that grace and holiness, wherewith the living and quickening Spirit of God hath filled the human nature of Christ. Others rather understand a regenerating and working the new and heavenly life in the soul, with great power and efficacy. *Matthew Poole's Commentary*

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,.... These words are of difficult interpretation. They may be understood of the Gospel revealing and declaring deliverance from the law of Moses; wherefore there can be “no condemnation”, Romans 8:1, by it. The Gospel may be designed by “the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus"; which may be called a law, not as succeeding the law of works, by which that is abrogated; nor as requiring conditions to be performed, or as enjoining duties to be observed, or as delivering out threatenings in case of disobedience; but as it is a doctrine, order, and chain of truths, as the Hebrew word signifies, and which is sometimes used for the Gospel, Isaiah 2:3 as is, Romans 3:27. It may be called the law, or doctrine "of the Spirit", because the Spirit is the author of it, and makes it powerful and effectual to the good of souls; by it the Spirit of God is conveyed into the heart; and the substance of it are spiritual things: and the "law of the Spirit of life", because it discovers the way of life and salvation by Christ; is the means of quickening dead sinners; of working faith in them, by which they live on Christ, and of reviving drooping saints; and also it affords spiritual food, for the support of life: and this may be said to be "in Christ", or by him, inasmuch as it comes from, and is concerning him; he is the sum, the substance, and subject matter of it. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

The word “for” introduces the reason there is no condemnation for the believer; the Spirit has replaced the law that produced only sin and death (7:5, 13) with a new, simple law that produces life: the law of faith (3:27), or the message of the gospel, the law of the Spirit of life. *The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition*, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p 1555

“The law of the Spirit” means not only a principle of law, but also the authority which is exercised by the Spirit. “The Spirit of life” means the Holy Spirit who brings life because He essentially is life. He is the Spirit of life. “In Christ Jesus” means that the Holy Spirit is in complete union with Christ Jesus. Because the believer shares the life of Christ, He liberates the believers.

“The law of sin and death” is the authority that sin had over our old nature, ending in complete severance of fellowship with God. That new nature could not break the shackles at all. Only the coming of a higher authority and power could accomplish this, namely the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates upon the new nature, which is vitally joined to the life of Christ. The man in Romans 7, who was joined to the body of the dead, is now joined to the living Christ also. J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible, Volume IV*, p 695

“The law here is not a written law but a regulative principle which exercises a control over the life of the believer. This regulative control over his life is exercised by the Holy Spirit. This control is in the form of the energy given the believer both to desire and to do God’s will, this energy coming from the life that God is, which in the believer is given him by reason of his position in Christ Jesus.” Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1955, p 129

Verses 3 – 4

“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, 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.” Romans 8:3-4

το γαρ αδυνατον του νομου εν ω ησθενει δια της σαρκος ο θεος τον εαυτου υιον πεμψας εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας και περι αμαρτιας κατεκρινεν την αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι ινα το δικαιωμα του νομου πληρωθη εν ημιν τοις μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα

το γὰρ ἀδυνατόν του νομοῦ (*to gar adumatōn tou nomou*) “for powerless being the law” .. The apostle is driving home a primary point of his letter to the Romans .. the Mosaic Law that many people (Jews and proselytes) looked to for salvation was ‘powerless’ .. that goes back to Paul’s opening salvo in Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” .. the ‘law’ has its place in bringing the lost to a knowledge of sin, but it is powerless to save from sin .. Paul also addressed the same issue in his letter to the churches in Galatia .. I recommend you read that short letter for comparison with what Paul wrote the Romans ..

ἐν ᾧ ἡσθενεῖ διὰ τῆς σαρκὸς (*en hō ēsthenei dia tēs sarkos*) “in that it was weak through the flesh” .. the ‘law’ was powerless because it was ‘weak through the flesh’ .. that’s quite a contrast to what people have believed for thousands of years about how to please God (or the gods) .. go back to the Tower of Babel and what do you see? people making bricks and baking them thoroughly .. they had brick for stone and asphalt for mortar .. the people used that to build a city

for themselves, "and a tower whose top is in the heavens" .. they wanted to make a name for themselves, "lest we scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11) .. building a city and a high tower is hard work, but it didn't accomplish their purpose .. God extended His grace to Noah and his family, but people wanted to 'work' for their spiritual purposes .. things have not changed in thousands of years .. what Paul was telling the Romans was that any idea that people could 'work, earn, or obey laws' for their salvation was powerless, "in that it was weak through the flesh" .. humans do not have the ability to save themselves .. they need God's 'grace' to be saved .. why? because only God can do it .. how did He do it? Paul explained ..

ο θεος τον εαυτου υιον πεμψας εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας (*ho theos ton esutou huron pempsas en homoiōmati sarkos hamartias*) “God of himself Son having sent in likeness of flesh of sin” .. the first step in HOW God saves humans is by sending His eternal Son from Heaven to earth ‘in likeness of flesh of sin’ .. that’s the Incarnation .. as the Apostle John wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) .. John also wrote –

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” 1 John 4:1-3

It's obvious that the Incarnation of the Son of God is vital to Christianity, but the Apostle Paul made sure the Romans understood that God's Son came in the 'likeness' of flesh .. in fact, 'in likeness of flesh of sin' .. Christ coming to earth in flesh has been debated for centuries .. some believed that Christ's flesh was really an 'illusion' .. that's one of the reasons the Apostle John made the point he did in both his Gospel and first letter .. Luke's Gospel makes it abundantly clear that the birth of Jesus of Nazareth to a virgin was unique and unrepeatable .. announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel who stood in the presence of God (Luke 1:19) – "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35) ..

The Greek word for ‘likeness’ is ὁμοίωμα (*homoíōma*) and comes from the verb ὁμοιόω (*homoióō*), which means ‘to make like, to resemble’ .. the noun that Paul used, ὁμοίωμα, means ‘resemblance, form, likeness’ .. Paul used the same word in Philippians 2:7 – “but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” .. Paul continued to use another word that helps us understand the idea of ‘likeness’ .. it’s the word σχῆμα (*schéma*) and translates as ‘appearance, form, fashion, external condition’ .. here’s how Paul used the word in a phrase – “And being found in appearance as a man” (Philippians 2:8) .. the Son of God came from Heaven to earth in the ‘appearance, likeness’ of a human being, but without sin .. that’s what Paul meant when he wrote the Romans, “God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” ..

The reason this is so important to understand is that the ‘law’ was ‘weak through the flesh’ .. the word ‘weak’ is *ēsthenei* and means ‘to be without strength, to be sick, weak’ .. if Jesus had been born with sinful flesh, He could not have saved us through His flesh .. it was specifically because the Son of God came in the ‘likeness’ of sinful flesh (appearing as a man, but not having sinful flesh) that He was able to save through the physical sacrifice of His body and blood ..

As I mentioned earlier the ‘type’ of flesh Jesus had while on earth has been debated for centuries .. though I do not believe that the Holy Spirit ‘inspired’ the writings of Church Fathers, and I do not agree with all they believed and taught, I find their writings important from both historical and theological perspectives in that we see what our ancient brothers and sisters in churches across the world were taught, along with how Church theology developed through the centuries .. the writings also demonstrate how early Church leaders dealt with a variety of theological challenges to Christianity .. one of those challenges concerned the ‘flesh’ of Jesus of Nazareth .. here are some of the early Church Fathers’ comments about that important subject ..

Early Church Fathers

“If the Father ‘sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,’ it must not be said that the flesh in which he appeared was illusory.... The Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to redeem our sinful flesh by a like substance, even a fleshly one, which bore a resemblance to sinful flesh although it was itself free from sin.” Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 5.14, 2nd century AD

“Paul shows that Jesus had the likeness of sinful flesh but not that he had sinful flesh in the same way we do. For we are all human beings who have been born from the seed of a man who has slept with a woman, and we can only say, along with David, that: ‘In sin my mother conceived me.’ But the one who was born without contact with a male but only because the Holy Spirit came upon a virgin and covering her with the power of the Most High gave birth to a spotless body which had the same nature as ours but without the

corruption of sin which is passed on by the act of conception.” Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3rd century AD

“Again it appears as if Paul is criticizing the law, but in reality he is harmonizing it with Christ. The problem with the law was that it was too weak to accomplish what it intended ... And even the law’s weakness was not its fault but the fault of the flesh, by which he means not the substance itself but the carnal mind. Just because Paul says that Christ came ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh,’ you must not think that his flesh was any different from ours. It was because he called it ‘sinful’ that he added the word ‘likeness.’ For Christ did not have sinful flesh but flesh which, though it was like ours by nature, was sinless.” Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 13*, 4th century AD

“What does sinful flesh have? Death and sin. What does the likeness of sinful flesh have? Death without sin. ... As such he came – he came as Savior. He died but he vanquished death. In himself he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself and he vanquished it – as a mighty hunter he captured and slew the lion.” Augustine, *Sermons for Easter Season, Homily 233.3*, 4th century AD

“God forbid that Paul should ever say that Christ’s body was made of sinful flesh! Rather, it was in the likeness of sinful flesh, for although it was similar to our bodies it can scarcely be compared with them in the sense that it could not be ill with carnal uncleanness.” Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanation of the Letter to the Romans*, 5th century AD

“Christ came ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ because, although he took on human nature, he did not assume human sinfulness ... the only begotten Word of God broke the power of sin by taking on human flesh and fulfilled all righteousness, not giving in to the temptations of sin in any way.” Theodoret of Cyr, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans*, 5th century AD

[Translations courtesy of *Ancient Christian Commentary On Scripture, New Testament VI, Romans*, InterVarsity Press, 1998]

Verse 3 continued

και περι αμαρτιας κατεκρινεν την αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι (kai peri hamartias katekrinen tēn hamartian en tē sarki) “and for sin condemned sin in the flesh” .. katekrinen means ‘condemned, judged, pass sentence upon, worthy of punishment’ .. God’s decision to judge and punish sin is based on His being the Supreme Judge in the universe .. God handed down laws (rules, regulations) to humans for thousands of years, but people were not able to keep the laws .. that’s why God sent His Son in the ‘likeness of sinful flesh’ .. it was ‘on account of sin’ that God ‘condemned sin in the flesh’ .. only the Eternal Son of God could take our place in the ‘judgment for sin’ .. why?

Verse 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.”

ἵνα το δικαιωμα του νομου πληρωθη εν ημιν τοις μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα (*hina to dikaiōma tou nomou plērōthē en hēmin tois mē kata sarka peripatousin alla kata pneuma*) “so that the righteousness of the law should be fulfilled in us not according to the flesh walking but according to the Spirit” .. this is one of the most amazing things Paul wrote to the Romans and it summed up beautifully his major theme so far .. the ‘righteous requirement of the law,’ which no one can meet, is ‘fulfilled’ (*plērōthē* – to fulfill, to complete) in us! How? According to the Spirit. Our ‘walk’ (περιπατοῦσιν – conduct, manner of living) is different because of what God has accomplished in us through His Spirit .. we now ‘walk’ according to the Spirit of God.

Verse 4 connects to verses 1 and 2 and should be understood in that full context – “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. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

We are who we are and have what we have spiritually because of God’s Love and Grace – a wonderful aspect of His Eternal Plan! The Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection are why some members of the human race are no longer under God’s condemnation and judgment, but ‘free from the law of sin and death.’ It is not because of anything they did, but because of what God did for them. What does God require from us? Faith in Christ.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:16-17

Thanks be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

Importance of Conjunctions

We don't often make much of 'conjunctions' in the Bible, but they are important to our understanding of how theological truths connect. That's what conjunctions do: they link words, phrases, or clauses together. It's important to remember that Paul did not write his letter to the Romans with chapters and verse designations. He wrote them as a 'letter.' Chapters and verses were added centuries later to make it easier for people to use the Bible for reading and studying.

Here are the conjunctions we've seen so far in Romans 8 –

- verse 1 – 'therefore' 'but'
- verse 2 – 'for' 'and'
- verse 3 – 'for' 'and'
- verse 4 – 'so that' 'but'

We find more conjunctions in verses 5 – 8:

- verse 5 – ‘for’ ‘however’
- verse 6 – ‘for’ ‘but’ ‘and’
- verse 7 – ‘because’ ‘for’ ‘for’
- verse 8 – ‘now’

Let’s see how these conjunctions help us in connecting the important theology Paul shared with the church in Rome.

Verse 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. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:5-8

οι γαρ κατα σαρκα οντες τα της σαρκος φρονουσιν οι δε κατα πνευμα τα του πνευματος το γαρ φρονημα της σαρκος θανατος το δε φρονημα του πνευματος ζωη και ειρηνη διοτι το φρονημα της σαρκος εχθρα εις θεον τω γαρ νομω του θεου ουχ υποτασσεται ουδε γαρ δυναται οι δε εν σαρκι οντες θεω αρεσαι ου δυνανται

οι γαρ κατα σαρκα οντες (*hoi gar kata sarka ontes*) “those for according to flesh being” .. Paul had just written 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” .. he’s already used the words σαρκα, σαρκός, or σαρκί five times in the first four verses of chapter 8 .. they all come from the Greek word σάρξ, which was used for ‘flesh, body, human nature’ .. Paul made the important point in verse 4 that God sent His Son from Heaven to earth in the ‘likeness’ of sinful flesh .. though Jesus did not sin, we do .. even Christians commit sins, but Christ’s death for our sins on the cross made it so 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’ .. the words οι γαρ in verse 5 link back to verse 4 so that we will be able to understand the spiritual significance of what Paul is writing ..

kata sarka points to the continual domination of the flesh .. the word κατὰ is a preposition that often denotes a sense of direction .. it can mean ‘according to, down, over against, throughout, daily, each day’ .. to understand how to understand this preposition we have to look at both the grammar and the context .. the use of the present participle οντες (‘to be, being, to exist, existing, to be present’) denotes the idea of being dominated continuously or habitually .. the context here is of a person being in a continual state of domination by the flesh .. that is the condition of an unsaved person who is dominated by an habitual nature of indwelling sin .. that is the condition Paul explained so well in many of his church letters (e.g. Ephesians 2:1-3; Philippians 3:18-19) ..

τα της σαρκος φρονουσιν (*ta tēs saros phronousin*) “the things of the flesh mind” .. the verb *phronousin* means ‘to think, to set one’s mind on, to have a mindset’ .. the word comes from φρήν which also carries the idea of ‘understanding’ .. Paul used the word in the present tense, indicative mood (the mood of certainty) .. the apostle made a simple assertion of fact that the unsaved person existed in a continual, habitual fleshly mindset that seeks for gratification from the sinful nature .. Paul made that clear earlier in his letter to the Romans when he wrote – “For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin ... There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” (Chapter 3) .. Paul declared that to be the mindset of every human being .. no one seeks after God, which is what he reiterated in Romans 8:5 ..

οι δε κατα πνευμα τα του πνευματος (*hoi de kata pneuma ta tou pneumatou*) “those however according to the Spirit the things of the Spirit” .. we come now to another important conjunction, δε, which means ‘however, but’ .. in this context the apostle used the word to set up a contrast between the unsaved person whose mind is set on things of the flesh with the saved person whose mind is set on the things of the Spirit (τα του πνευματος) .. the reason the saved person has a mind set on the things of the Spirit is because of the Spirit (κατα πνευμα) .. no saved person can point to themselves and boast of their spiritual accomplishment .. all credit and glory goes to God!

An unsaved person – the person whose mind is habitually set on the things of the flesh, which come from the evil nature of being unsaved – does not mean that everything they think and do would appear to be externally evil .. what it means is that an unsaved person’s mind dominated by the flesh, so whatever they think or do comes from the same mindset, the flesh (σαρκος) .. I bring that up because many people, saved and unsaved, view a person’s spiritual condition based on outward appearance .. that’s not how God views people .. He

sees and knows the ‘heart’ of every person .. Jesus said this to people viewed in the Jewish community as righteous (Pharisees) – “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15) .. God knew that the Pharisees were unsaved .. He knew that their mindset was continually and habitually on the desires of the flesh .. it’s important that we do not forget that as we live our lives and share the Gospel with others ..

Verse 6

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

το γαρ φρονημα της σαρκος θανατος το δε φρονημα
του πνευματος ζωη και ειρηνη

το γαρ φρονημα της σαρκος θανατος (*to gar phronēma tēs Thanatos*) “the for mind of the flesh is death” .. many English translators of the Greek text used the terms ‘carnally minded’ to convey the idea of the ‘mind of the flesh’ .. we saw the word in Romans 7:14 – “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” .. the Greek word translated ‘carnal’ is σάρκινός and means ‘fleshly’ .. the idea of the word σαρκος in Romans 8:6 carries the same idea of direction, which is ‘death’ (θανατος) .. while we often think of death as physical, it can also be spiritual .. when God told Adam, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17), the death God warned about

included both physical and spiritual effects .. the spiritual death Adam and the human race that came from him would experience was separation from God .. fortunately, God had a solution to that problem ..

το δε φρονημα του πνευματος ζωη και ειρηνη (*to de phronēma tou pneumatōs zōē kai eirēnē*) “the but mind of the Spirit life and peace” .. the apostle continued to explain the differences between the unsaved and saved .. while the unsaved experience spiritual ‘death’ – separation from God – the saved experience spiritual ‘life and peace’ through the Spirit of God .. the saved have been united with God through Christ .. As Paul wrote the Christians in Ephesus –

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Ephesians 2:14-18

Verse 7

διότι το φρονήμα της σαρκος εχθρα εις θεον (*dioti to phronēma tēs sarkos echthra eis theon*) “because the mind of the flesh is hostility toward God” .. here we find another conjunction, διότι (‘because, for, therefore’) that connects Paul’s thinking from verse 6 .. it helps the reader better understand the apostle’s theological point .. the habitual mindset of the unsaved is in a position of hostility toward God (εχθρα εις θεον) .. the word εχθρα means ‘enmity, alienation, hatred’ .. it comes from the word ἐχθρός (‘enemy, hostile’) .. the idea is one of ‘opposition’ to someone or something .. God told Satan in the Garden of Eden that ‘I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed’ (Genesis 3:15) .. God demonstrated that opposition and hostility through a series of ‘laws’ (rules, regulations) that He gave to humans over a period of thousands of years .. how did people respond to God’s laws?

τω γαρ νομῳ του θεου ουχ υποτασσεται ουδε γαρ δυναται (*tō gar nomō tou theou ouch hupotassetai oude gar dunatai*) “to for the law of God not it is subject nor even for can it be” .. we see that with Adam and Eve .. God gave them one command (‘law’) that they quickly disobeyed when Satan tested them .. we see that with how Cain disobeyed God through the murder of his brother Abel .. we see that with the early centuries of the human race when it was said during the days of Noah – “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5) .. God destroyed the earth with water, but kept Noah and his family alive and gave them very basic laws for life in the post-flood world .. however, God knew what was coming and said – “Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21) .. people’s ‘thoughts’ are evil from childhood, which is exactly what Paul wrote to the Romans .. unsaved people are not subject (*υποτασσεται* – a military term meaning ‘to arrange in order under, be submissive, be subordinate to a higher authority) to God .. why? because it is impossible for

them to do so .. ουδε γαρ δυναται, ‘nor even for can it be’ .. the ‘fleshly mind’ is in permanent revolt against God .. they cannot please God and will not please Him through any attempt of the flesh .. so many religions focus on gaining the approval of one or more ‘gods’ through ‘works of the flesh,’ but it is impossible to accomplish that with the One True God ..

Verse 8

οι δε εν σαρκι οντες θεω αρεσαι ου δυνανται (*hoi de en sarki ontes theo aresai ou dunantai*) “those now in the flesh being God to please not are able” .. Paul continued his thought and explained why unsaved people cannot please God .. they are not ‘able’ .. the Greek word is δυνανται and means they lack the ‘power, the ability’ to accomplish it .. the ‘power’ of salvation comes from God and only from God .. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16) .. the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ‘power’ (δύναμις – ‘ability, strength, might’) of God to salvation (σωτηρία – ‘deliverance, preservation, safety’) to ‘everyone’ who ‘believes’ (πιστεύω – ‘trust in, have faith in, believe in’).

The editors of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Romans*, shared these thoughts about how the early Church Fathers viewed this next portion of Romans 8 –

“The body is dead because is it mortal, but the spirit is alive if Christ dwells in us. The perspective of the Fathers was eschatological, and they frequently spoke in terms of future fulfillment. The Fathers were intrigued by the juxtaposition of the terms ‘Spirit of God’ and ‘Spirit of Christ’ in Romans 8:9. It was clear to most of them that this is the one Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and they interpreted the text accordingly. The Holy Spirit who raise Jesus from the dead has the power to give us new life as well. On earth he fills us with the wisdom, peace and righteousness of Christ, but all of this is merely in preparation for the great resurrection on the last day.”
New Testament VI, InterVarsity Press, 1998, p 203

Verse 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.

υμεις δε ουκ εστε εν σαρκι αλλ εν πνευματι ειπερ πνευμα θεου οικει εν υμιν ει δε τις πνευμα χριστου ουκ εχει ουτος ουκ εστιν αυτου

υμεις δε ουκ εστε εν σαρκι αλλ εν πνευματι ειπερ πνευμα θεου οικει εν υμιν (humeis de oui este en sarki all en pneumati eiper pneuma thou oikei en humin) "you now not are in flesh but in Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" .. Paul again goes to conjunctions to help his readers understand how he connects to his previous idea .. "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" .. unsaved people cannot please God .. there's no work they can do to please God .. they cannot earn God's pleasure .. 'but,' Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, "you are not in the flesh but in the

Spirit” .. those who have been ‘saved’ are ‘in the Spirit’ .. that is a remarkable relationship, to be ‘in the Spirit’ .. how does that happen? Paul already addressed that in this context –

“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. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 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, 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.” Romans 8:1-4

Trying to work or earn one's way to salvation is a waste of time and energy because of the weakness of the 'flesh' .. God did what the law could not do “by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin” .. unsaved become saved through faith in Christ – that's God's eternal plan – there is no other way .. As Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) ..

Paul's declaration of “if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” is most interesting .. it's a way of emphasizing his point of being 'in the Spirit' .. the word for 'dwell' (οικει) is present tense, indicative mood, active voice .. we are 'in the Spirit' if the 'Spirit dwells' in us .. that's supernatural – beyond anything the natural man can accomplish through natural means .. only God can accomplish that .. the word 'dwells' is οικει and means 'inhabits a place, lives in, resides in' .. Paul asked the Corinthians, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16) .. Paul went on to help the Corinthians understand that being 'the temple of God' because the Spirit of God lived in them meant that they belonged to God in a

unique relationship – “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 3:19) .. that’s important for God’s people to understand .. we’ve been bought with a price and belong to God – “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 3:20) .. as Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28) .. as Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians about what God did for them – “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14) .. saved people are ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit of promise .. the idea of being ‘sealed’ (σφραγίζω – ‘marked with a seal or signet signifying ownership’) means we belong to God .. the Holy Spirit living

in each believer is how God determined before time began to mark those who were His ..

ει δε τις πνευμα χριστου ουκ εχει ουτος ουκ εστιν αυτου (ei de tis pneuma Christou ouk echo houtos ouk estin autou) “if however anyone if the Spirit of Christ not has he not is of him” .. Paul uses another conjunction (δε – ‘however, but’) to demonstrate that the unsaved person does not have the Holy Spirit living in them .. anyone can claim to be a Christian, but only those who have the Holy Spirit living in them are true Christians .. how can you tell if the Holy Spirit is living inside someone? ..

Paul gave the Galatians some insight into that in his letter to them ..

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh

are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:16-21

Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians that they – “were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:8-10)

‘Fruit’ grows from within where the Spirit dwells .. in the context of identifying ‘false prophets,’ Jesus said – “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Matthew 7:16-20) .. can Christians be fooled by someone pretending to be saved? Yes. That’s why we find so many warnings about that in the Bible. It’s important that every true believer learn everything they can about how the Spirit impacts a saved person, then be on the lookout for any signs of perversion .. unsaved people can ‘fake’ knowing God for only so long before their lies are uncovered ..

Other Commentaries

“The ‘ye’ is emphatic. The Greek verb carries its own person in its ending, and does not need a pronoun to indicate the person acting in the verb. Consequently, when a pronoun is used with a verb, it is used for emphasis or contrast. Paul had just spoken of those who were in the sphere of the flesh, that is, within the grip of the evil nature, namely, the unsaved.” Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955

“But ye — Who are vitally united to Christ, who are in him, by living faith, and new creatures; are not in the flesh — Not in your unpardoned, unrenewed state, not carnally minded; but in the Spirit — Under his government, and spiritually minded, and therefore are accepted of God, and approved of by him; if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you — For wherever he dwells, he reigns, regenerates the soul, and makes it

truly holy. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ — Thus residing in him, and governing him, whatever he may pretend; he is none of his — Not a disciple or member of Christ; not a Christian; not in a state of salvation. A plain, express declaration, which admits of no exception. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Benson Commentary

"Such is not your case—if at least the Spirit of God and of Christ dwells in you, as it should in every Christian.

Dwell in you.—This expression is the complement of the other "to be in the Spirit," "to be in Christ." It denotes the closest possible contact and influence of spirit upon spirit. No mysticism, however vivid and intense, can really go beyond this without infringing the bounds of personality, and contradicting the direct testimony of consciousness." Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

"The Spirit of God dwell in you; the Spirit of God dwells in the regenerate, not only by the immensity of his presence, so he is every where and in all things; but by the presence and efficacy of his grace. The indwelling of the Spirit in believers denotes two things:

1. His ruling in them: where a man dwells as Lord, there he doth command and bear rule.

2. His abiding in them, and that for ever, John 14:16.

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; if he has not the same Spirit which in the former part of the verse is called the Spirit of God: it is called the Spirit of Christ, because it proceeds from him, and is procured by him, John 14:26 John 16:7 Galatians 4:6. When he saith such a one is none of Christ's, he means, that he doth not peculiarly belong to Christ, he hath no special interest in him, is no true member of him. As a merchant sets his seal upon his goods, so doth Christ his Spirit upon his

followers, Ephesians 1:13.” Matthew Poole’s Commentary

“that the Spirit of God dwell in you; the inhabitation of the Spirit is a distinguishing character of a regenerate man; which is to be understood not of his omnipresence, nor of a participation of his gifts, whether ordinary or extraordinary: nor does the Spirit of God only dwell in his people by his graces, but in person as in office, and in a way of special favour; as a spirit of illumination, regeneration, sanctification, and faith, as a comforter, a spirit of adoption, an intercessor, and as a pledge and seal of happiness: which inhabitation is personal; is not peculiar to him to the exclusion of the Father and of the Son; is expressive of property and dominion; is not confined to the souls of men, for he also dwells in their bodies; it is operative, powerful, and perpetual; it is the security of the saints’ perseverance, and the pledge of their resurrection and future glory. This is owing not to any goodness in them, or to any fitness and preparations of theirs to receive him; but to a federal

union to Christ and relation to him, to our Lord's ascension and intercession, and to the love and grace of the Father; and this proves a man to be a regenerate man, to be in the Spirit, and not in the flesh; for the Spirit of God is never in this sense in an unregenerate man, nor is he in any such sense without his grace; so that the indwelling of the Spirit is the grand evidence of relation to God, of an interest in Christ and union to him, and of a man's state and condition God-ward." Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

"dwells: Refers to being in one's own home. The Spirit of God makes His home in every person who trusts in Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 12:13. When there is no evidence of His presence by the fruit He produces (Gal. 5:22, 23), a person has no legitimate claim to Christ as Savior and Lord." The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p 1556

“And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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 8:10-11

ει δε χριστος εν υμιν το μεν σωμα νεκρον δι
αμαρτιαν το δε πνευμα ζωη δια δικαιοσυνην
ει δε το πνευμα του εγειραντος ιησουν εκ
νεκρων οικει εν υμιν ο εγειρας τον χριστον εκ
νεκρων ζωοποιησει και τα θνητα σωματα
υμων δια το ενοικουν αυτου πνευμα εν υμιν

Verse 10

“And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

ει δε χριστος εν υμιν το μεν σωμα νεκρον δια αμαρτιαν
το δε πνευμα ζωη δια δικαιοσυνην

ει δε χριστος εν υμιν (ei de Christos en humin) “if however Christ is in you” .. Paul uses another conjunction (δε) which can be translated – ‘and, but, however’ .. it connects to the previous verse – “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.” .. this connection demonstrates that having the Holy Spirit ‘dwell’ in you is the same as having ‘Christ in you’ .. that would make sense given the Nature of God .. He is One God in Three Persons .. a saved human being is in God and God is in them – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ..

το μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν διὰ ἁμαρτίαν (to men sōma nekron dia hamartia) “the indeed body is dead on account of sin” .. the word μὲν means ‘indeed, truly, on the one hand’ .. σῶμα can mean a physical ‘body, flesh’ or a spiritual body of the saved (like the ‘Body of Christ’ – e.g. Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27) .. νεκρὸν means ‘dead body, deceased, corpse, lifeless, without life, mortal’ .. διὰ means ‘because of, for the sake of, through, by, on account of, by reason of’ .. ἁμαρτίαν means ‘sin, missing the mark, a fault’ .. God told Adam that He would ‘surely die’ if he disobeyed God’s command .. that ‘mortality’ has been passed along from Adam to every human being (e.g. Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:22) .. saved and unsaved people are mortal .. their physical bodies eventually die .. but there is a difference ..

το δὲ πνεῦμα ζωὴ διὰ δικαιοσύνην (to de pneuma zōē dia dikaiosunēn) “the however Spirit is life on account of righteousness” .. Paul uses another conjunction, δὲ, to help us understand that a saved person, though mortal, has ‘life’ (ζωή) ‘through, on account of’ (διὰ) ‘righteousness’ .. the word for righteousness (δικαιοσύνην) comes from δίκαιος (just, righteous) .. it is the idea of something being made right

through a legal process .. it speaks to our legal standing before God as righteous – not because of anything we did – but because of the ‘righteousness’ of Jesus Christ .. Paul addressed this earlier in his letter to the Romans ..

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

The 'promise' of eternal (everlasting) life is a central part of the Gospel of Christ .. Christians can make that promise to unsaved people because Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead – made the promise –

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." John 5:24

"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." John 6:47

"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." John 10:28

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3

Paul and other apostles also taught that 'eternal life' is part of being saved –

"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48

"so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:21

"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:22-23

"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Corinthians 5:1

"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." Galatians 6:8

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6:12

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." Titus

1:1-2

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

1 Peter 5:10

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us." 1 John 1:1-2

"And this is the promise that He has promised us— eternal life." 1 John 2:25

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:11

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." 1 John 5:13

Verse 11

Question: how will God give eternal (everlasting) life to mortal humans? Paul answers that question in verse 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.”

ει δε το πνευμα του εγειραντος ιησουν εκ νεκρων
οικει εν υμιν ο εγειρας τον χριστον εκ νεκρων
ζωοποιησει και τα θνητα σωματα υμων δια το ενοικουν
αυτου πνευμα εν υμιν

ει δε το πνευμα του εγειραντος ιησουν εκ νεκρων οικει εν υμιν (ei de to pneuma tou egeirantos lēsoun ek nekrōn oikei en humin) “if now the Spirit of the [One] having raised up Jesus out from dead dwells in you” .. this connects back to verse 9 – “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” .. the Spirit of God ‘dwells’ (lives inside) saved people .. the Spirit of God ‘raised

up Jesus out from the dead” and ‘dwells in you’ .. what does that mean for saved people?

ο εγειρας τον χριστον εκ νεκρων ζωοποιησει και τα θνητα σωματα υμων δια το ενοικουν αυτου πνευμα εν υμιν (ho egeiras ton christen ek nekrōn zōopoiēsei kai ta thnēta sōmata humōn dia to enoikoun autou pneuma en humin) “the [One] having raised up Christ out of [the] dead will give life also to the mortal bodies of you through dwelling His Spirit in you” .. egeiras (ἐγείραντος in other Greek texts) is an aorist participle and speaks to a past event that has present effects – the Holy Spirit raising Jesus Christ out of the dead impacts people after the event – it affects all saved people today and will affect all people saved in the future .. zōopoiēsei means ‘to make alive’ to quicken, to give life’ .. it is an active verb in the ‘future indicative’ .. Paul used the word to help the Romans understand that their physical resurrection would be in the future .. their mortal bodies (thnēta sōmata) would receive life from the Spirit because He ‘dwells’ (lives) in them ..

That is true of every saved person, which is primary to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. True Christians have something wonderful to look forward to in the future. Is it pleasant to die one day because we are mortal? Probably not. However, it is pleasant to consider that we will rise from the dead one day because the Spirit of God lives in us as saved people. We have an eternal hope – “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” ..

Other Commentators

[Church Fathers]

“But he who raised Christ up from the dead will raise us up also if we do his will and walk in his commandments and love what he loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil-speaking, false witness, ‘not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing,’ or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in his teaching.” Polycarp, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 2nd century AD

“Here Paul touches once more on the resurrection, since this was the most encouraging hope to the hearer, giving him a sense of security from what happened to Christ.” Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, 4th century AD

More Recent Commentators

“Although the body is the prey of death on account of sin, nevertheless the Spirit is life on account of righteousness, Romans 8:10. (2) And even the mortal body shall be revived by Him who raised up Christ from the dead, because Christ’s Spirit dwelleth in you, Romans 8:11.” Meyer’s NT Commentary

“Consequences of this indwelling of Christ in the Christian. In one respect, they are not yet so complete as might be expected. τὸ μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν: the body, it cannot be denied, is dead because of sin: the experience we call death is inevitable for it. τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωή: but the spirit (i.e., the human spirit, as is shown by the contrast with σῶμα) is life, God-begotten, God-sustained life, and therefore beyond the reach of death. As death is due to sin, so is this life to δικαιοσύνη. It is probably not real to distinguish here between “justification” and “moral righteousness of life,” and to say that the word means either to the exclusion of the other. The whole argument of chaps.

6–8. is that neither can exist without the other. No man can begin to be good till he is justified freely by God's grace in Christ Jesus, and no one has been so justified who has not begun to live the good life in the spirit." Expositor's Greek Testament

"Regeneration by the Holy Spirit brings a new and Divine life to the soul, though in a feeble state. And the sons of God have the Spirit to work in them the disposition of children; they have not the spirit of bondage, which the Old Testament church was under, through the darkness of that dispensation. The Spirit of adoption was not then plentifully poured out. Also it refers to that spirit of bondage, under which many saints were at their conversion. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom God does not speak peace. But those who are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits, in and by his speaking peace to the soul. Though we may now seem to be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end." Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

"And this vitality extends beyond the grave. It will even react upon that material body which had just been spoken of as given over to death. Die it must; but the same Spirit to which the soul owes its life will also reinfuse life into the dead body, just as the body of Christ of Himself was raised from the dead."

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

"Your bodies indeed are not exempt from the death which sin brought in; but your spirits even now have in them an undying life, and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, even these bodies of yours, though they yield to the last enemy and the dust of them return to the dust as it was, shall yet experience the same resurrection as that of their living Head, in virtue of the indwelling of same Spirit in you that quickened Him." Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

“If you are sanctified by the Spirit, you shall be raised up by the Spirit also, as Christ was. The wicked also shall be raised at the last day. But the righteous shall be raised after a peculiar manner; they shall be raised, as by the almighty power of God, so by virtue of their union with Christ as his members, and by virtue of their relation to the Spirit as his temples. They only shall partake of a resurrection that is desirable and beneficial to them. Therefore it is called emphatically the resurrection of the just, Luke 14:14; and these two are joined together, as belonging one to the other; the children of God, and the children of the resurrection, Luke 20:36.” Matthew Poole’s Commentary

"The future resurrection of the believer's body is in view here, as the context and the word 'also' indicate. Our Lord was raised out from among the dead. This is physical resurrection. The dead saints will be raised out from among the dead at the time of the Rapture through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit." Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans*, Wm. Eerdman's Publishing, 1955

Many Bible editors and commentators have given a variety of titles to the next section of our study of Romans 8. Here are some of the names –

- Sonship Through the Spirit
- The Life of the Spirit
- Life Through the Spirit
- Heirs With Christ
- The Holy Spirit’s Ministries

The editors of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Romans*, shared these thoughts about how the early Church Fathers viewed this next section –

“Romans 8:12 and the following verses were favorites with the Fathers, who viewed them as an outline of the Christian life. To their way of thinking, there was no such thing as a half-hearted Christian. One who was born against must live the new life in anticipation of the resurrection. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is

to be made a child of God, not by nature as Christ was but by grace. We are God’s children by adoption and are given strength by the Spirit to live the kind of life that is required of those who have been so called. To be a child of God is to be made an heir – the greatest gift God can give us.” New Testament VI, InterVarsity Press, 1998, p 203

Verse 12

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.”

αρα ουν αδελφοι οφειλεται εσμεν ου τη σαρκι του
κατα σαρκα ζην

αρα ουν αδελφοι (*ara oun adelphoi*) Paul uses two conjunctions in addressing Christians at Rome (‘brethren’) that mean ‘therefore, so then, since’ .. αρα is a primary particle that denotes an inference or conclusion .. ουν is another primary particle that denotes an inference or logical conclusion from what Paul wrote previously about the Christian no longer living within the sphere of the evil nature ..the believer now lives in the sphere of the Holy Spirit ..

οφειλεται εσμεν ου τη σαρκι (*opheiletai esmen ou tē sarki*) “debtors we are not to the flesh” .. οφειλεται means ‘one who owes, under obligation’ .. Paul said that Christians do not owe (are not debtors) to the flesh ..

του κατα σαρκα ζην (*tou kata sarka zēn*) “according to flesh to live” .. Christians are under no ‘obligation’ to the flesh (σαρκι) to live ‘according to the flesh’ .. that is a remarkable statement given that unsaved people have no choice in the matter .. the unsaved have to live according to the flesh, as Paul wrote a few sentences earlier – “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Christians owe the ‘flesh’ nothing .. we are not obligated to the flesh, we are not debtors to the flesh .. Paul expands on that in the next sentence ..

Verse 13

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

ει γαρ κατα σαρκα ζητε μελλετε αποθνησκειν ει δε πνευματι τας πραξεις του σωματος θανατουτε ζησεσθε

ει γαρ κατα σαρκα ζητε μελλετε αποθνησκειν (*ei gar kata sarka zēte mellete apothnēskein*) “if for according to flesh you live you are about to die” .. Paul used two conjunctions, ει γαρ, to connect to the previous verse .. ει is a particle of conditionality and γαρ is a particle that express causation or explanation .. as Paul wrote earlier, unsaved people live ‘habitually’ under the dominion of the evil nature .. as he wrote in verse 13, “you will die” ..

ει δε πνευματι τας πραξεις του σωματος θανατουτε ζησεσθε
(*ei de pneumatī tas praxeis tou sōmatos thanatoute zēsēsthe*)
“if however by the Spirit the deeds of the body you put to death you will live” .. Paul used two more conjunctions here – ει δε (‘if however, but if’) – which introduces a conditional clause .. the ‘deeds of the body’ (πραξεις του σωματος) speaks to ‘actions, practice, function’ of the ‘human body’ .. notice that Paul addressed how the Spirit of God dwelling in a saved person would impact their physical actions .. θανατουτε means ‘to put to death, to kill, to mortify, to subdue’ .. the word is often used in the New Testament to describe how a saved person is able to ‘put to death’ the deeds of the flesh through or by the Spirit of God .. Christians often refer to that as the process of spiritual ‘sanctification’ (ἁγιασμός – setting apart for holy service, becoming holy, consecration) ..

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the

Gentiles who do not know God.” 1 Thessalonians
4:3-5

zēsesthe (you will live) is future tense, indicative mood,
middle voice .. the future for a saved person is bright indeed!
they will live forever with God ..

Other Commentaries

“Paul does not prevent them from living their lives in the flesh, for he was himself in the flesh when he wrote to them, but he cuts away the lusts of the flesh which brings death upon a man.” Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.10.2, 2nd century AD

“I have quoted this passage so that I might make use of the apostle’s words to deter your free will from evil and to exhort it to what is good. Nor should you on this account glory in man, i.e., in yourselves and not in the Lord. You are not living according to the flesh, but are putting the deeds of the flesh to death by the Spirit.” Augustine, *Grace and Free Will* 11.23, 4th-5th centuries AD

“Since we have obtained salvation from Christ the Lord and have received the grace of the Spirit, we are obliged to serve him.” Theodoret of Cyr, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans*, 5th century AD

"Romans 8:12. Ὁὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ 8:11] Draws the inference not merely from Romans 8:11, but from the contents closely in substance bound up together of Romans 8:10-11. "Since these blissful consequences are conditioned by the Spirit that dwelleth in us, we are not bound to give service to the flesh." That has not deserved well of us!" *Meyer's NT Commentary*

"Dr. Doddridge paraphrases the verse, 'Since it is certain the gratifications of the flesh can do nothing for us like that which will be done at the resurrection; and since all present enjoyments are mean and worthless when compared with that; here is a most substantial argument for that mortification and sanctity which the gospel requires. And it necessarily follows that we are debtors to the Spirit, which gives us such exalted hopes, and not unto the flesh, that we should live after the dictates, desires, and appetites thereof.'" *Benson Commentary*

“12. debtors] An emphatic word in the verse. Q. d., “We are debtors to the Giver of the Spirit; to the flesh we indeed owe nothing, for its result is death.” The first part of this statement is unexpressed, but obviously in point.” *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*

“The righteousness of Christ imputed, secures the soul, the better part, from death. From hence we see how much it is our duty to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If any habitually live according to corrupt lustings, they will certainly perish in their sins, whatever they profess. And what can a worldly life present, worthy for a moment to be put against this noble prize of our high calling? Let us then, by the Spirit, endeavour more and more to mortify the flesh.” *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary*

"We are debtors – We owe it as a matter of solemn obligation. This obligation arises,

(1) From the fact that the Spirit dwells in us;

(2) Because the design of his indwelling is to purify us;

(3) Because we are thus recovered from the death of sin to the life of religion; and he who has imparted life, has a right to require that it be spent in his service.

To the flesh – To the corrupt propensities and passions. We are not bound to indulge them because the end of such indulgence is death and ruin; Romans 7:21-22. But we are bound to live to God, and to follow the leadings of his Spirit, for the end is life and peace; Romans 7:22-23. The reason for this is stated in the following verse." *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

“Assuming that a person lives habitually under the dominion of the evil nature, Paul says, that person is about to be dying. The verb is present in tense, and therefore durative in meaning, indicating habitual action. The individual who lives habitually under the dominion of the evil nature is an unsaved person. That one is on the way to final death in the Lake of Fire. But the person who by the Holy Spirit, habitually puts to death the deeds of the body, will live. That person is a saved person.” Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans*, Wm. Eerdman’s Publishing, 1955, p 133

“Paul’s first instruction concerning g what his readers must do in the struggle with sin destroys several false views of his believers are made holy: 1) that in a crisis moment we are immediately made perfect; 2) that we must ‘let God’ take over while we remain idle; and 3) that some turning-point decision will propel us to a higher level of holiness. Rather, the apostle says the Spirit provides us with the energy and power to continually and gradually be killing our sins, a process

never completed in this life. This means the Spirit uses to accomplish this process is our faithful obedience to the simple commands of Scripture.” *The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition*, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p 1556

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Romans 8:14-17

οσοι γαρ πνευματι θεου αγονται ουτοι εισιν υιοι θεου
ου γαρ ελαβετε πνευμα δουλειας παλιν εις φοβον αλλ
ελαβετε πνευμα υιοθεσιας εν ω κραζομεν αββα ο
πατηρ αυτο το πνευμα συμμαρτυρει τω πνευματι ημων
οτι εσμεν τεκνα θεου ει δε τεκνα και κληρονομοι
κληρονομοι μεν θεου συγκληρονομοι δε χριστου ειπερ
συμπασχομεν ινα και συνδοξασθωμεν

Verse 14

οσοι γαρ πνευματι θεου αγονται ουτοι εισιν υιοι θεου (*hosoi gar pneumatic thou agontai houtoi eisin huioi theou*) “as many as for by the Spirit of God are led these sons are of God” .. Paul begins with a combination pronoun and conjunction – οσοι γαρ – which connects to the previous verse – “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” .. saved people have the Spirit of God living in them and as such are ‘sons of God’ .. that is an extremely special relationship to have with God .. Paul used that same phrase three times in his letter to the Romans and twice in his letter to the Galatians .. Paul continued to build on the deep meaning of that ‘sons of God’ relationship in the next verse in Romans 8 ..

Verse 15

ου γαρ ελαβετε πνευμα δουλειας παλιν εις φοβον αλλ ελαβετε πνευμα υιοθεσιας εν ω κραζομεν αββα ο πατηρ (*ou gar elabete pneuma douleias palin eis phobon all elabete pneuma huiiothesias en hō krazomen abba ho patēr*) “not for you have received a spirit of bondage again to fear but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry abba Father” .. how to unsaved people become saved sons of God? through supernatural ‘adoption’ .. the word ‘adoption’ is huiiothesias and is made up of two Greek words – υἱός (*huios* – ‘son’) and τίθημι (*tithemi* – to place, to set’) .. the Greeks had a legal system of ‘placing’ someone into a family as a ‘son’ .. what we know in our culture as ‘adoption’ .. Paul used the legal term to describe what the Spirit of God does for someone who becomes saved .. He places them into the ‘family’ of God as an ‘adopted child’ of God .. an adopted child had all of the legal privileges and rights as a child who had been physically ‘born’ into a family .. that is what God has done for us!

Paul used the comparison of ‘bondage’ (δουλειας – ‘slavery, servitude, bondage’) to ‘fear’ (φοβον – ‘terror, alarm, fear’) to being the freedom and safety of being ‘adopted’ as ‘sons’ of God .. that marvelous grace of our Heavenly Father is why Paul said we ‘cry’ (*krazomen* – ‘shout, cry out, call out’) ‘Abba’ (αββα – ‘daddy, papa’ – a personal term of endearment from a child to his/her father) ‘Father’ (πατηρ – which comes from a root word for ‘nourisher, protector, upholder’) .. God nourishes, protects, and upholds His adopted children – as a great, great Father ..

Verse 16

αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμεν τέκνα θεοῦ (*auto to pneuma summarturei tō pneumati hēmōn hoti esmen tekna theou*) “Himself the Spirit bears witness with the spirit of us that we are children of God” .. the word συμμαρτυρεῖ (‘bears witness with, to testify together’) speaks to how God’s Spirit in us bears witness with our spirit to the fact that saved people are ‘children of God’ .. saved people are no longer what they were – “by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3) and “condemned” (e.g. John 3:18) .. Paul wrote that saved people have an internal witness to their being children of God, the Holy Spirit ..

Verse 17

ει δε τεκνα και κληρονομοι κληρονομοι μεν θεου
συγκληρονομοι δε χριστου ειπερ συμπασχομεν ινα και
συνδοξασθωμεν (*ei de tekna kai klēronomoi klēronomoi men
theou sunklēronomoi de christou eiper sumpaschomen hina
kai sundoxasthōmen*) “if now children also heirs heirs indeed
of God joint-heirs now of Christ if indeed we suffer with Him
so that also we may be glorified together” .. this is a most
remarkable verse .. Paul begins with two conjunctions that
connect to the previous verse – ει δε .. ει sets up a condition
and δε which is often translated as ‘now’ or ‘but’ .. being a
‘child,’ whether born or adopted into a family, had legal
consequences .. Paul wrote “if children, then heirs” .. children
had legal rights as ‘heirs’ .. the Greek word for ‘heirs’ is
klēronomoi and means ‘an inheritor, to receive or possess
through inheritance’ .. in this context Paul wrote that a saved
person, having been adopted as a child into the family of
God, was an ‘heir of God’ (κληρονομοι μεν θεου) .. how does
someone go from being under God’s wrath to being an ‘heir
of God?’ .. through Christ! *sunklēronomoi de christou* (‘joint-

heir, co-heir, participating heir’) .. saved people aren’t just saved from God’s wrath and condemnation .. they become ‘joint-heirs’ with Jesus Christ! That means they share in what God has given to His Son, Jesus Christ ..

Paul used the word *sunklēronomoi* in Ephesians 3:6 – “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” .. the writer to Hebrews used the word in 11:9 – “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” .. the Apostle Peter used the word in 1 Peter 3:7 – “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” .. The Apostle John did not use the word, but we see clearly in Revelation that the children of God will rule and reign with Christ forever and ever (e.g. Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5) ..

Paul then wrote something very interesting – “if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” .. the conjunction *εἴπερ* is an emphatic particle and means ‘since’ .. Paul emphasized the fact that saved people will suffer with Christ (*συμπασχομεν* – ‘suffer together with’) .. suffering is something many modern-day Christians, especially in the West, don’t understand .. suffering has always been part of God’s plan for His people .. God made it clear in Genesis 3:25 that His Son would suffer for us .. we see suffering of God’s people throughout Scripture .. God emphasized to Isaiah that Israel’s ‘redeemer’ would suffer greatly .. we see the fulfillment of that prophecy in Christ’s suffering on earth .. Jesus told His disciples that they would suffer for following Him and would be persecuted and treated harshly – even imprisoned and killed .. Jesus told Ananias that He would show Paul “how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:16) .. Jesus told the Christians in Smyrna – “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10) .. the apostles wrote often to other

churches about the suffering they would face for following Christ .. I communicate with many church leaders across the world who minister in hostile and restricted countries .. many of their members are imprisoned and killed for following Christ and sharing the Gospel of Christ .. many pastors have been killed .. many churches and homes of Christians destroyed .. suffering has been, is, and will continue to be an integral part of God's plan for His children .. thus Paul's comment in Romans 8 – "if indeed we suffer with Him."

If all Christians had to look forward to was suffering and death with nothing else, we might wonder why .. however, Paul added these words – "that we may also be glorified together" .. the apostle used two conjunctions (ὡς καὶ – 'in order that, so that' 'also') and an aorist verb in the passive voice and subjunctive mood (συνδοξασθῶμεν – 'to share in glory, to glorify together) .. it's important to remember that Jesus Christ is our example, our pattern .. we take up our cross and follow Him .. what do we receive in return? we are joint-heirs with Christ and will share in His glory! that's God plan – shared glory for shared suffering.

Other Commentaries

“We have received the Spirit to enable us to know the one to whom we pray, our real Father, the one and only Father of all, that is, the one who like a Father educates us for salvation and does away with fear.” Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.11.78.5, 2nd century AD

“The Spirit of adoption ... bears witness and assures our spirits that we are children of God after we have passed from the spirit of slavery and come under the Spirit of adoption, when all fear has departed. We no longer act out of fear of punishment but do everything out of love for the Father. It is right too that the Spirit of God should be said to bear witness with our spirits and not with our souls, because the spirit is our better part.” Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3rd century

“Note the great honor here. For as believers we do not merely live in the Spirit; we are led by him as well. The Spirit is meant to have the same power over us as a pilot over his ship or a charioteer over his horses. And it is not only the body but the soul which is meant to be controlled in this way ... Paul uses the Hebrew word Abba to indicate that sonship given by the Spirit is true sonship.” Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 14, 4th century AD

“The sin of the world is a false confidence, a careless, complacent taking for granted that a man is a Christian when he is not. The fault, and sorrow, and weakness of the Church is a false diffidence, an anxious fear whether a man be a Christian when he is. There are none so far away from false confidence as those who tremble lest they be cherishing it. There are none so inextricably caught in its toils as those who are all unconscious of its existence and of their danger. The two things, the false confidence and the false diffidence, are perhaps more akin to one another than they look at first sight. Their opposites,

at all events-the true confidence, which is faith in Christ; and the true diffidence, which is utter distrust of myself-are identical. But there may sometimes be, and there often is, the combination of a real confidence and a false diffidence, the presence of faith, and the doubt whether it be present. Many Christians go through life with this as the prevailing temper of their minds-a doubt sometimes arising almost to agony, and sometimes dying down into passive patient acceptance of the condition as inevitable-a doubt whether, after all, they be not, as they say, 'deceiving themselves'; and in the perverse ingenuity with which that state of mind is constantly marked, they manage to distil for themselves a bitter vinegar of self-accusation out of grand words in the Bible, that were meant to afford them but the wine of gladness and of consolation ... God Himself is His greatest gift. The loftiest blessing which we can receive is that we should be heirs, possessors of God. There is a sublime and wonderful mutual possession of which Scripture speaks much wherein the Lord is the inheritance of Israel, and Israel is the inheritance

of the Lord. ‘The Lord hath taken you to be to Him a people of inheritance,’ says Moses; ‘Ye are a people for a possession,’ says Peter. And, on the other hand, ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance,’ says David; ‘Ye are heirs of God,’ echoes Paul. On earth and in heaven the heritage of the children of the Lord is God Himself, inasmuch as He is with them for their delight, in them to make them ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and for them in all His attributes and actions.”

MacLaren’s Expositions

“Are the sons of God – Are adopted into his family, and are his children. This is a name of endearment, meaning that they sustain to him this relation; that they are his friends, disciples, and imitators; that they are parts of the great family of the redeemed, of whom he is the Father and Protector. It is often applied to Christians in the Bible; Job 1:6; John 1:12; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2; Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:45; Luke 6:35. This is a test of piety which is easily applied.

(1) are we conscious that an influence from above has been drawing us away from the corrupting passions and vanities of this world? This is the work of the Spirit.

(2) are we conscious of a desire to yield to that influence, and to be conducted in the path of purity and life? This is an evidence that we are the sons of God.

(3) do we offer no resistance; do we follow cheerfully, and obey this pure influence, leading us to mortify pride, subdue passion, destroy lust, humble ambition, and annihilate the love of wealth and of the world? If so, we are his children. God will not lead us astray; and our peace and happiness consists only in yielding ourselves to this influence entirely, and in being willing to be conducted by this unseen hand "beside the still waters of salvation." *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

“This life in the Spirit implies a special relation to God—that of sons. I say of sons; for when you first received the Holy Ghost it was no spirit of bondage and reign of terror to which you were admitted, but rather the closest filial relation to God. This filial relation is attested by the Divine Spirit endorsing the evidence of our own consciousness, and it includes all that such a relation would naturally include—sonship, heirship, nay, a joint-heirship in the glory of Christ, who is Himself pre-eminently the Son.”

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

“adoption] Same word as Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5. The relationship of God's children to their Father is sometimes viewed as generative, for the change in their wills amounts to a change, as it were, of life and person—a new birth (see 1 Peter 1:3; &c.): sometimes as adoptive, in respect of the divinely legal redemption which procures to them this inner change, and also in distinction from the essential and eternal Sonship of Christ, the “Own

Son” of the Father.” *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*

“The Spirit of adoption doth not only excite us to call upon God as our Father, but it doth ascertain and assure us (as before) that we are his children. And this it doth not by an outward voice, as God the Father to Jesus Christ; nor by an angel, as to Daniel, and the virgin Mary; but by an inward and secret suggestion, whereby he raiseth our hearts to this persuasion, that God is our Father, and we are his children. This is not the testimony of the graces and operations of the Spirit, but of the Spirit itself. Conceive it thus; A man’s own spirit doth witness to him his adoption, he finds in himself, upon diligent search and examination, the manifest signs and tokens thereof. But this testimony of itself is weak, and Satan hath many ways and wiles to invalidate it; therefore, for more assurance, it is confirmed by another and greater testimony, and that is of the Spirit himself; he witnesses with our spirits, and seals it up unto us; he first works grace in our hearts, and then witnesseth to it. This testimony is not

alike in all believers, nor in any one of them at all times; it is better felt than expressed. He witnesseth to our spirit (so some read) by a distinct and immediate testimony, and witnesses with our spirit (so the word properly signifies) by a conjunctive and concurrent testimony.” *Matthew Poole’s Commentary*

“And if children, then heirs — Those that are really the children of God by adoption and grace, are not only under his peculiar direction, protection, and care, and shall be supplied with all things which God sees will be good for them; not only have they free liberty of access to God, and intercourse with God, as dutiful children have access to, and intercourse with, their father; but they are heirs of God — Heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and by the redemption of their bodies, being made immortal like God, they shall enjoy that inheritance. See note on 1 Peter 1:3. And joint-heirs with Christ — Entering into his joy, Matthew 25:21; sitting down on his throne, Revelation 3:21; partaking of his glory, John 17:22; Php 3:21; Colossians 3:4; 1 Corinthians 15:49;

and inheriting all things, Revelation 21:7, jointly with him who is heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2. Only it must be observed, he is heir by nature, we by grace. If so be that we suffer with him — Willingly and cheerfully for righteousness’ sake: that is, we shall enjoy these glorious and heavenly blessings, provided we be willing, not only to deny ourselves all prohibited carnal gratifications, and to govern our lives by his precepts, but also to suffer with him whatever reproach, infamy, persecution, and other injuries we may be called to undergo, in conformity to him, for the honour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience; that we may be also glorified together — With him, which we cannot be in any other way than by suffering with him: he was glorified in this way, and so must we be. Here the apostle passes to a new proposition, on which he enlarges in the following verses; opening a source of consolation to the children of God in every age, by drinking at which they may not only refresh themselves under the severest sufferings, but derive new strength to bear them with fortitude.” *Benson Commentary*

“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” – there is not that spirit of fear within you, wondering about your spiritual condition, unhappy, and despondent. Instead, you are filled with joy because you are His child, And the Spirit of God wells up within you, saying, ‘Abba, Father.” J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible, Romans*, 1983, p 701

“The Holy Spirit bears testimony to our human spirit that we are children of God (*teknon*, without article, thus, children of God by nature), and our Spirit-energized spirit thus joins the Holy Spirit in a joint-testimony to that fact.” Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955, p 135

“Every believer has been made an heir of God, our Father (Matt. 6:12; 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:4). We will inherit eternal salvation (Titus 3:7), God Himself (Lam. 3:24; cf Ps. 73:25; Rev. 21:3), glory (5:2), and everything in the universe (Heb. 1:2) ... we suffer with Him. Proof of the believer’s ultimate glory is that he suffers –

whether it comes as mockery, ridicule, or physical persecution – because of His Lord (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18 – 21; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 3:12)” *The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition*, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p 1556

Next eBook

Paul focuses on our future glory and God's everlasting love in the next parts of our study of the Gospel of God.

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