



This Great Salvation

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| This Great Salvation

(Romans – Part 2, Chapters 5–8)



1 Background To The Letter

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Author and Recipients
- 1.3 Dating and Contents

1 Background To The Letter

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Epistle

The longest of Paul's epistles or letters, Romans is for many his finest and most complete work. It has been said that Ephesians is the "Queen of the Epistles", in which case Romans can only be described as the King of the epistles.

For many Christians the book of Romans is simply the best book in the whole of the Word; for many if they had to choose a single book to take to a desert island then it would be the book of Romans. For no other part of the WORD of God has, for many, so much of God's truth so completely contained and expressed in one place.

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones, who is the one of the most famous expositors of this great epistle, once described it as a *symphony*. Paul builds his argument for the gospel to a crescendo throughout the letter, like a symphony with its many parts – the problem of sin, the hopelessness of man's situation, the possibility of the answer, the announcement of the gospel and the triumph of the love of God which cannot be separated from us, even by the curse of sin.

Here is what some commentators have said about the letter: -

Paul's letter to the Romans stands like Shakespeare's Hamlet or Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: the master-work of a master craftsman. In this letter, Paul creates a tradition of Christian thought where none had existed before.

NT Wright

... the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament ... a light and a way in unto the whole scripture ... No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well; for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it us, and the more groundly it is searched the more preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.

William Tyndale's English New Testament [Prologue to Romans - 1534]

In the order which ultimately became established Romans takes pride of place among the Pauline letters. Historically, this is because it is the

longest letter, but there is an innate fitness in the accordance of this position of the primacy to a letter which, above all others, deserves to be called 'the Gospel according to Paul'.

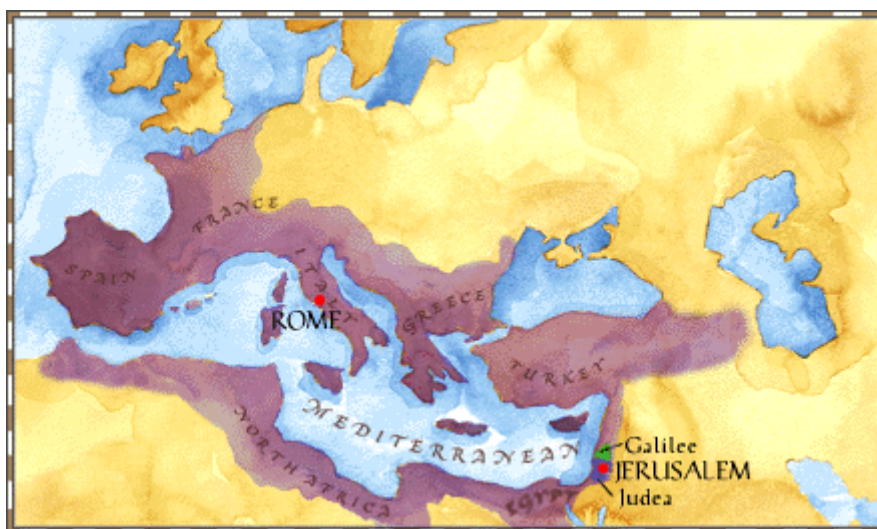
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The teachings of this New Testament letter are foundational to our understanding of the gospel and the Christian Faith. The truths hinted at in other letters from Paul, are here revealed and laid out by him for us see. They are foundational to our experience of a victorious Christian life.

1.1.2 The Importance Of Rome

The empire which ruled the world at the time of Christ and the New Testament church following was named after its principal city, Rome. As you can see from the map below the city was at the centre of the Empire at the time of Christ. The empire continued to spread after this (the main invasion of Britain taking place in AD43) until the 4th Century during which it went into decline over the next hundred years or so.

In terms of its relationship to the early church, the city was as early as the second century before Christ's birth home for a Jewish colony. There was a Jewish community in Rome as early the second century BC. It evidently grew after the conquest of Judea by Pompey, the distinguished military and political Roman leader of the late Roman Republic, in 63 BC.





Cicero¹, writing in 59BC described the Jewish community in Rome as influential.² The Jewish colony suffered multiple expulsions from the city but in each case Jews would drift back to this centre of trade, finance and power of the empire. One such expulsion took place in AD49 under an edict by Emperor Claudius, wherein two tentmakers were amongst the exiles and this led to a significant meeting with another tentmaker ...

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,³

Acts 18:1-2

The historian Suetonius⁴ records the following as the cause of Claudius' edict: -

Constant indulgence of the Jews in riots at the instigation of one Chrestus⁵

The gospel was obviously causing division amongst the Jewish community in Rome, but following the death of Claudius in AD54, once again many returned. By the time that Paul wrote this letter to the saints in Rome, a large number of Gentile and Jewish Christians comprised a typical church.

¹ Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) was a Roman writer, speaker, philosopher and politician.

² Endnotes, The Teacher's Commentary; Lawrence O Richards, © 1987 Scripture Press Publications Inc. Wheaton, Illinois.

³ Acts 18:1-2

⁴ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (AD 71-135): Roman scholar and official, best-known as the author of the Lives of the Twelve Caesars.

⁵ Ibid

1.2 Author And Recipients

1.2.1 Author

There seems little doubt, even amongst New Testament Critical scholars, that Paul was the author of this letter. It occupies the first place in the manuscripts which have come down to us, although in very early times the order was probably otherwise.

The external evidence⁶ of the authorship of Romans is uncommonly strong and the internal⁷ evidence is equally convincing. The style of the letter is commonly accepted as Pauline and in keeping with the style of his other letters.

The only queries over the composition have been directed toward the sixteenth chapter which contains many personal greetings, to a church which he has never visited. Some have proposed that this is still Paul's hand but was perhaps appended to the letter when it was sent onto the church in Ephesus later on. There does seem to be a clear break at the end of chapter 15, however there are many inconsistencies in this hypothesis, the detail of which is beyond our study here.

1.2.2 Recipients

It is noteworthy that the letter is addressed to the saints in Rome as opposed to the church in Rome, unlike other epistles. Bishop Gore theorises that Rome was perhaps considered less of an established church and more of a collection of saints.⁸ In writing to them Paul was perhaps making an apostolic claim to this group of saints with a view to establishing them with an apostolic commission and grounding.

Rome was of course at the edge of the Christian world at this time, as we can see from map below showing some of the churches to whom Paul wrote letters: -

⁶ Evidence based on the readings found in the manuscripts (as opposed to internal evidence, which based on the nature of the readings). External evidence is based on the number and nature of the witnesses supporting a particular reading.

⁷ Evidence based on the logic of readings (as opposed to external evidence, which is based on the readings of manuscripts). Also called "transcriptional probability" or the like, it is based on determining which reading most likely gave rise to the others -- e.g. which reading a scribe would be more likely to change by accident or on purpose; which reading the original author is most likely to have written.

⁸ St Paul's Epistle to the Romans - A Practical Exposition, Bishop Charles Gore, M.A, D.D. of the Community of the Resurrection, Canon of Westminster, Hon. Chaplain to the Queen; 1900 London John Murray.



According to Guthrie⁹, next to nothing is known about the origin of the church in Rome. Paul had not visited at the time of writing. It is highly unlikely that another Apostle had established it because Paul talks in this very letter about building on someone else's foundation¹⁰, and yet he regards this church as under his remit.

⁹ The Pauline Epistles – New Testament Introduction: Guthrie, Donald; © 1966 The Tyndale Press, London

¹⁰ Romans 15:20



1.3 Dating And Contents

1.3.1 Date Of Writing

Estimates vary on when Paul wrote this letter. The consensus seems to be that it was his during his stay in Corinth on his third missionary journey sometime between AD55 and the Spring of AD57. Paul was preparing to take the offering taken up for the believers who were in need in Jerusalem¹¹. Since the issue of this collection had not yet been resolved at the time of his writing the letters to Corinthians (dated AD55) then Romans must have followed it.

1.3.2 Purpose Of The Letter

As with Paul's other letters various theories have circulated concerning the purpose of his letter to the Romans: -

- **Polemic** - A desire to provoke Jewish Christians, but this found little favour amongst scholars.
- **Conciliatory** - Some have considered that Paul felt the need to vindicate his Gentile commission and to reconcile Jewish and Gentile elements. However it is likely Gentiles were in the greater majority in the church in Rome.
- **Doctrinal** - A full statement of Paul's doctrinal position, however Guthrie¹² argues that there are some theological avenues left to pursue by Paul and also the personal greetings are integral to the letter.
- **Summing Up** - Summing up his experience to date, perhaps because of his position and his concerns about his future. He may have sent it to Rome because he foresaw its strategic importance for the future.
- **Needs of his Readers** - Much weight has been given to this theory. It is likely that Paul received a comprehensive report of the church from Aquila and Priscilla, and others. Possibly therefore Paul wished to lay out the Christian principle of righteousness contrasted with the Jewish approach, turning then to the historical problem of Israel's failure and her relationship with the universal Christian church.

Perhaps the real answer is contained in Paul's own hand in the expression of wish to come and minister among them, for which for now the letter he send must suffice in the fulfilment of.

¹¹ Romans 15:25-27

¹² Ibid

1.3.3 Contents

There are many different outlines of the book of Romans, but in the main they carve the letter as follows: -

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Theme | - The righteousness of God |
| Romans 1 to 4 | - The problem of universal unrighteousness |
| Romans 5 to 8 | - God's solution and means of victory over sin |
| Romans 9 to 11 | - Israel and the sovereign grace of God |
| Romans 12-16 | - Righteousness worked out |



| From Death To Life



| 2.0 Reconciliation With The Father

- 2.1 The Peace Declaration
- 2.2 The Position of Privilege
- 2.3 The Place of Hope

2 Reconciliation With The Father

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:1-11

The Apostle Paul begins with the word 'therefore' (v.1). Whenever we come across this word in the Scriptures we should always ask ourselves what it is 'there for'. In this case Paul is ending one section of his letter and beginning another.

In the first four chapters of Romans Paul has laid out the case for humanity's lack before a Holy God¹³. Like a doctor he has diagnosed the illness, made clear the prognosis if left untreated, and prescribed the medicine needed to bring 'healing'. That medicine was Christ Himself. We all fell short of God's glory – elsewhere Paul describes us being in our very nature 'objects of wrath'¹⁴, at enmity from the moment of our conception with the God who made us. However from the moment sin came into the world, the Father promised a cure to the curse that followed. At the right time He would send His own Son to take our place in the seat of judgement. Like Abraham before us we placed our faith in Christ Jesus and by the shedding of his blood became justified before the Father.

Paul's 'therefore' now takes all of that and is as our starting point for laying out for us the consequences of this central truth of history: from that moment in the garden, mankind has been at war with his Creator, until God Himself sent an ambassador.

¹³ Cf. Romans 3:23

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:3

2.1 The Peace Declaration (v.1)

Paul's gospel begins with a peace declaration. It is not a demand from God, but a declaration of what God has already done for us.

Before anything else, our relationship with God had to be restored. Although being justified means being able to stand righteous before God, our predicament was not simply the same as requiring a pronouncement of innocence in the 'courts of heaven'. We were also those who had experienced a relationship breakdown with God and by our very nature were His enemies, in a state of war with Him, since the fall of Adam.

As part of our justification then, what was also needed was a peace declaration from God. Our offence was against God Himself, it was personal for Him and not just legal. He has not offended us but we have offended Him. Paul is here declaring that by Christ's action, God's offence is dealt with. Charles Hodge puts it this way, 'God is at Peace with us'; He has made a declaration of peace on the basis of what Jesus has done.

The Greek word (eirene) for peace which Paul uses, is linked to the verb eiro which means, 'to bind together that which has been separated'. Jesus as the great mediator has enabled us to stand justified before the Father and through His death also brought reconciliation between the Father and us. He has brought us back together.

As we mature in Christ, the Holy Spirit gradually reveals to us our true state in God's eyes, before we were justified through our faith in the Lord Jesus.

The purpose of the gospel for Paul was to declare to the world the false sense of peace by which it lives every day, not realising the offence caused to it's Creator. The gospel offers first and foremost a declaration of peace from an offended and angry God.

2.2 The Position Of Privilege (v.2)

Paul explains that because of God's declaration of peace, through Jesus, if we also lay hold of Him then we gain access into this grace. It is as if God lays hold of Jesus to declare peace and we lay hold of Him to lay hold of His grace. Jesus is the bridge from both sides. He gives the Father the means of peace and He gives us the means of grace, by granting us undeserved access.

The access is a one-of, once for all time access that cannot be revoked. The literal translation of Paul's words are 'we have had our access'. Many Christians often fail to live in the light of this truth, because they falsely live as though God may raise the drawbridge, and resume hostilities, at any moment if we put a foot wrong. This is based on a misunderstanding about the work of Christ, which is irrevocable and eternal.

The only thing that can change is our ability and willingness to lay hold of the grace that has been extended to us. We can remove ourselves from the position of privilege; we can walk away from His grace, but He will never revoke the peace treaty established in Christ's blood. For this reason this place of privilege is one in which we stand, with assuredness that we are secure therein.

2.3 The Place of Hope (vv.2-11)

This means there is hope for the world and everyone in it! It means we have come into a place of hope as we stand in the privileged position which grace affords us.

2.3.1 Hope which is looking to the Glory of God (v.2)

Hope is always focussed on something. It is hope 'in' or 'of' something. Paul declares our hope, as the redeemed, to be 'of the glory of God' (v.2). This is an interesting choice of words, because we (as his readers) might have expected our hope to be in our newfound freedom or even in the Lord's return.

What is this hope of the glory of God? Later on in the letter to the Romans Paul refers once again to glory,

And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.

Romans 8:30

Paul starts with glory here in chapter 5 and takes us on a journey of exploration of this great salvation we have come into, coming finally full circle back to the glory that we share with Christ, because of His death and resurrection.

Paul describes the hope of this glory when writing to the church in Colossae about the unveiling of the mystery of God's purposes, through the saints,

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

So the hope of glory is simply this - Christ in us. It is the incarnation of Christ within the spirit of the redeemed man, woman, or child of God. His birth within us and the process of shaping us into His image, by the hand of the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit, brings the ultimate glory to God. We became partakers of this divine glory, as Jesus Himself declares to the Father,

22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, ...

John 17:22–23a

It is this glory that Christ died and rose again to achieve; it is this glory on which Jesus was focussed as he chose His Father's will in the garden – not just our redemption from sin, but so much more.

2.3.2 Hope Which Brings Joy (v.2)

It is this hope which is the Christian's source of joy. This union of the soul with Jesus, the daily transformation of our inner beings. In this way it is both a future hope (of glory) and a present daily reality for those actively walking with Christ. One day we shall be presented perfect before the Father as 'finished works' of Christ Himself¹⁵. Haldane writes of the source of this joy within the disciple's heart,

Thus faith relies upon the truth of what God has promised, and hope expects the enjoyment of it. This hope is full of rejoicing, because everything it looks for depends on the truth and faithfulness of a covenant God. There can be no failure on His part, and consequently on the believer's no disappointment'¹⁶

Romans 15:4

Our hope is founded upon our faith in God's faithfulness. The surety of this hope produces joy in our heart before any other fruit in our lives. It is this joy that produces strength in the believer's heart,

And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10b

This joy comes first because it produces a strength within us, which we need for the testing which every Christian faces and is required of us in the process of maturity; the very same testing that Jesus had to go through.¹⁷

2.3.3 Hope Which Requires Endurance (v.3)

'More than that' Paul says. More than the joy that comes from the joy of our salvation and the hope it brings, we rejoice in our sufferings. In other words, of greater significance are the sufferings we face.

The word here is **thlipsis** – *a pressing together, pressure, or tribulation*.

¹⁵ cf. Colossians 1:28

¹⁶ Robert Haldane, *The Epistle to the Romans* (page 187), © 1958 The Banner of Truth Trust

¹⁷ Hebrews 5:8 – 'Although, He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered'

We rejoice not in the pressures themselves, but in (i) knowing they are sent by our loving Father, who disciplines those whom He loves¹⁸ and (ii) knowing that they will produce endurance within us, which is necessary for the journey of faith to which we've been called.

Without the pressures we would be like those selected to compete in a race but given no training. Paul urged the Corinthians in this kind of commitment to the call of God - running to receive the prize.¹⁹ Even the Son of God, had to go through the same process of training, the writer to the Hebrews tells us,

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Hebrews 5:8

2.3.4 Hope which is Part of a Journey (v.4)

Paul's next statement is an interesting one, "... *and endurance produces character and character hope.*" - Did you see that? He starts with 'hope' in (v.2) which brings us joy. Then he goes on to say that even more important is finding joy in the sufferings we face. These sufferings are able to progress us on a journey, which produces endurance within us, which in turn gives birth to character, which in turn produces 'hope'.

We should ask ourselves, 'what kind of 'character' does this produce in us?' The character of Christ, because the process of divine discipline in our lives is to enable us to go through the maturity process of sonship; to follow the Son in all He faced and so become like Him. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, 'share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death'.²⁰

So we start with hope (v.2) and then come full circle back to hope (v.4). Is it the same kind of 'hope'? No, it is a different kind of hope; it is a hope that is tried and tested; it is a hope that has been challenged by suffering; it is a hope that has become even more sure because faith and love have been tested in us. Our hope of glory (v.2) is borne out of a revelation of the glory to come, whereas the hope we see in v.4 is produced only in the heart of a believer who (experientially) knows the Lord. In Philippians Paul's reference to the participation in Christ's sufferings had only one purpose and that was - 'that I may know him'.²¹

2.3.5 Hope which is Founded Upon God's Love (vv.5-10)

There is yet another aspect of this 'hope' that Paul wants to lay out for us; and this is perhaps the most startling thing of all.

¹⁸ Hebrews 12:5

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:24

²⁰ Philippians 3:10

²¹ Ibid

This hope won't let us down, Paul says, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit within us.

It is not just a hope that we know we can rely upon because of our sufferings and the resulting character of Christ formed within us. It is also a hope which is founded upon the love of God which now dwells in us. Our assurance of hope comes from having experiential knowledge of that love which motivated the Father to send Jesus to die for us.

There are three reasons the Love of God is the foundation of our Hope: -

- (vv.6-8) God's love was **ABLE TO OVERCOME** our enmity – as we saw in verse 1, God has brought peace between us, all by Himself. Now Paul tells us that the very fact that He did this whilst we were His enemies shows us the nature of this Love. His love is of a completely different quality than we have known before.
- (v.9) God's love **DOES NOT DEPEND ON US** – Paul points out that if Christ's blood was able to justify us before the Father, then how much more can it be relied upon to get us home, even past the coming judgement at the end of the age. We rely wholly upon the blood of Christ - if we had any hand in His victory, however minor, then it would depend, in part, upon us and that leaves open the potential for failure. Hallelujah! It never depended on us!
- (v.10) God's love **BRINGS US LIFE** – Using the same argument, Paul says that if Christ's death has the power to save us whilst we were His enemies and can be relied upon not to let go of us through to eternity, then how much more is His life able to save us. Paul is not talking about salvation that comes from our justification, by Jesus' blood, but instead the salvation which is a life-long process in us, often called 'sanctification'. If the crucified Christ can save us from enmity and wrath, then how much more can the risen Christ, living in us, to enable us to live in His power and life!

At the end of this section Paul brings us back to **reconciliation** (v.11), which is where we started in v.1. We have been reconciled with the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ and in this we rejoice!



3 Restoration Through The Son

- 3.1 The Two Sons of God
- 3.2 Christ was like Adam
- 3.3 Adam was not like Christ

3 Restoration Through The Son (5:12–21)

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:12–21

3.1 The Two Sons of God

The Bible teaches us that God had two sons, Adam and Christ. One created and one uncreated; one called the First Adam and one called the Last Adam. Paul writes to the Corinthians ...

45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit... 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:45&47

Both these men produced races after their kind. Here we begin to explore how Christ, being one man, achieved the salvation of the entire race of men

(mankind). Paul introduces us to a concept theologians often call ‘federal headship’. This is the notion that the race of men have a federal head whose actions have implications for the entire race. Adam was such a man, the first man, and the template for his future descendants. Paul draws our focus to the work of the first Adam.

Verse 12 contains one of the most powerful statements in the whole of the Bible. In one sentence we have the truth about man’s origins; how he came to be where he is today – the question mankind has been wrestling with for its entire history.

Paul states clearly that sin came into this world through one man, and through sin came death, to all mankind.

There are two important implications for us here: -

- **All men have their origins in one man, Adam: -**
If there is no literal Adam then there is no literal Christ. If there is no literal Christ, then He did not rise from the dead, and as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, our faith would be in vain.²² Adam is no myth, no symbol; he was a real man, the father of us all.
- **Adam’s sin brought the punishment of death into the world: -**
Today we are living in an age when secular humanist philosophy has set itself up against this truth. Having its origins in the ‘enlightenment’ period when men started to search for a way to explain the world without a creator God, a few hundred years ago, modern ‘scientific’ theory stands on a foundation of evolutionary thought. This considers mankind to be in a kind of ascent, toward evolutionary ‘perfection’. In this philosophical worldview there is no such thing as sin. Mankind is far from perfect, but it is evolving toward it.

The Bible reveals the complete opposite to be the truth. Mankind rather than evolving from something primitive, has instead fallen from a place of innocence, infected by sin.

Equally, secularist humanist philosophy takes a completely different view of death. For the evolutionist death is part of the cycle of life; it is what nature uses to seed new life and bring forth something better. Death is nature’s way of improving species over time. Again the Bible teaches us clearly that on the contrary, death was not part of God’s plan for mankind, nor for the world He created. Death should not be part of life. It has no place in the world. Had Adam not tasted sin, he would not have died, for there was no principle of death in him. No, instead death came into the world because of sin, death was punishment for disobedience.²³

²² 1 Corinthians 15:12-17

²³ Genesis 2:17



To help us understand how this happened and how Adam's seed, Christ, was able to reverse this mistake, Paul starts to **compare** and **contrast** these two 'sons of God'.

3.2 Christ Was Like Adam (vv.12-14, 18-20)

Paul will often use parentheses in his writing; that is to say, he will start talking about one thing, and then stop to take a detour, before coming back to his main argument. In this case Paul takes such a detour in verses 15-17. In verses 12-14 Paul compares Adam and Christ, then stops to contrast the work of Adam with the work of Christ, before returning back to his main theme of the comparison between the work of the two, in verses 18-20. First, he shows us how Adam and Christ were alike.

3.2.1 Adam and Christ were both 'Federal Heads' (v.12)

When Paul here refers to Adam's sin, he is referring to Adam in his capacity as head of his race, incorporating Eve's actions for which God held him ultimately responsible.

Paul is not here saying that sin spread purely by physical means so that all in turn came to sin. No, he is instead asserting that when Adam sinned, we all sinned with him.²⁴ When he took that decision, we collectively took that decision with him. When Adam sinned he leapt into a deep pit and we leaped in with him; a pit deep enough that we had no means of getting out.

This can be a difficult concept for those of us with a western mindset to comprehend, because we are used to thinking individually and for being considered individually responsible. To a Jew like Paul, who thought collectively, seeing himself as a part of a large community, the concept was a very natural one. In essence mankind across the whole of history is one mass, rather a collection of separate individuals.

The evidence is right there for us in the text, for Paul says in verses 13 and 14 that even before the law was introduced, which would establish an 'account' for every act of lawbreaking by man, death (which is the evidence of sin²⁵) still reigned between Adam and Moses (through whom the law was given), even over those whose sin was not like Adam's.

Consider babies which die – they have not had a chance to sin, but the painful truth is that they are born guilty because they are part of the mass of humanity which made the choice in the garden that day.

²⁴ The tenses Paul uses refers to one historical event, rather than repeated sin through mankind's history

²⁵ Romans 6:23



This is why Paul keeps stressing that death reigned by one man's trespass. It is not because we all went on to sin, again and again in our lives after we were born. Before we took our first breath we were guilty because, by a process which we perhaps don't understand, we had already jumped feet first into the pit with Adam!

3.2.2 Adam and Christ Made Representative Choices (vv.12, 18-20)

Adam was given a simple choice between dependence and obedience on the one hand or independence from God on the other. Adam chose to believe satan's lie of 'independence',²⁶ but his descendent, Christ chose dependence and obedience to the Father's will.

Here's the really important implication of this 'Federal Headship' – *as surely as Adam's decision to sin led to the fall and the death of his descendants, so surely did Christ's decision lead to life for His.*

This is a key part of Paul's argument, making us understand that if we are in Christ then we are secured by his achievement as much as we were destined for sin and death by our natural heritage in Adam. Interestingly no Christian ever seems to doubt the power of Adam's heritage, but often we have to be reminded or even persuaded of our heritage in Christ.

It is no overstatement to say that understanding who we are in Christ is the most important thing we can learn; furthermore our ability to comprehend and lay hold of this truth as a point of revelation, will determine the entire course of our life in this age, preparing us for the one to come.

3.3 Adam was not like Christ (vv.15-17)

Now Paul begins his detour to show us the contrasts with Adam, which unsurprisingly are many!

3.3.1 Differences in the Man

- **Adam was our natural father, Christ is our spiritual father**

Our connection with Adam is a physical one; although as we have said humanity as one mass sinned, it is also true that the seed of sin, that is the sinful nature, was passed down to Adam's physical descendants. Our connection to Christ on the other hand is spiritual. We do not have to be of the same racial group as Jesus to be 'in Christ'.

It is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that through his descendants all peoples would be blessed. God's intention was never that His covenant people would be from one racial group, but from every race

²⁶ Nothing created can be independent of the Creator without experiencing decay and death.

and every tribe on earth. It is this truth that has been conveniently forgotten by those who have claimed faith in Christ and yet subjected others to slavery and racism.

- **Adam was just a man, but Christ is God and Man**

As we have already seen in the above quote from 1 Corinthians, Adam was a living being, whereas Christ was a life-giving Spirit. Adam was made from dust with the breath of God in Him, whereas Christ was God incarnated in the body of a man.

In understanding the difference between these two men, it may be helpful to consider the difference between the moon and the sun. Adam was like the moon. He was made by God but was not God; like the moon he reflected the sun's light but had no light of his own. Jesus we are told by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being²⁷. That radiance is like the light coming out of the sun, which radiates its glory throughout the solar system. Adam was made in God's image, but Jesus was actually God Himself.

The wondrous nature of the incarnation is that if Jesus had been fully God but not fully man then He could not have redeemed our humanity. He had to be one of us and He was. He took humanity into Himself. We'll return to this point later in chapter 8.

The implication for us here though is that if Adam, being just a man, could have such a powerful effect on us, how much more can this last Adam, being fully God also, affect us?!

- **Adam was immature, but Christ is mature**

Many Christians consider the work of Christ to be to restore mankind to the same state as Adam was, in his innocence in the garden. As if Christ came to press the 'reset' button on God's work. Returning to a state of innocence was always impossible for man; that is to say once the cat was let out of the bag it was never going back in! Once Adam and Eve's eyes we

re opened they could never return to their previous state of innocence. Although Adam was innocent, God had planned for him to grow and mature into the mature image of His Son. Christ therefore not only came to rescue us from sin and death, but also to take us onto maturity planned by the Father before the foundation of the world. The plan of the Father finds its continuity in the Son. It is often said God has not changed to plan B; He stuck with plan A, which was restored through the Son.

²⁷ Hebrews 1:3

3.3.2 Differences in their Legacy

- **Adam's legacy was earned, but Christ's was gifted (v.15)**

Another important difference for us to notice in Paul's language are the two phrases, 'free gift' and 'trespass'. Later in chapter 6 Paul explains,

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Death is something earned by sin. It is the proper payment for sin. Death is therefore penal. In the judgement of God, mankind's decision to sin deserved no less than death.

This stands in contrast to the work of Christ which resulted in a free gift to mankind. We have already seen from the last section that it is integral to the nature of God's grace that Christ died for us whilst we were still enemies. Man's fingerprints are nowhere on the work of Christ; for if they were, so would the possibility of failing to meet God's standards of holiness.

It has often been said the difference between mercy and grace is that the former is withholding what we utterly deserve (our wages) and the latter is giving us something we utterly don't deserve (the 'free gift').

- **Adam's one act of disobedience resulted in many sins, but Christ's obedience dealt with all sins (v.16)**

If it is somewhat difficult point to grasp in Paul's argument, but essentially Paul is saying that Adam's act of sinning resulted in many sins, which followed; this made the work of Christ much more than atoning for one man's sin. Instead He had to atone for all men's sins everywhere and in every age. This itself speaks of the infinitely greater power of that act of obedience compared with that one act of disobedience.

- **Adam's death was infinitely less powerful than Christ's life (v.17)**

Paul says that if by one man's trespass death reigned, then *much more* will those who experience Christ's free gift reign in life. The contrast here is

'death reigning over us' vs. 'us reigning in the life of Christ'

The argument goes that 'Christ's life' is infinitely more powerful than 'Adam's death'. In fact elsewhere the writer to the Hebrews describes Christ as having an indestructible life. Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer of his generation declares what we have already said which is that Christ's work was not simply to undo the damage of Adam's sin, but to fulfil God's original intention for man,

*Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse shall reign no more;
But Adam's race in Him shall boast
More blessings far than Adam lost.*

Simply put, sin robbed us all of life, but grace has given us back so much more than we lost!

- **If Adam's disobedience resulted in a plan of salvation, Christ's obedience will lead to so much more.**

There is another implication of the above contrast, which is an argument Paul later employs when dealing with his own countrymen, Israel, and their temporarily lost state in God's plan of salvation. Paul makes the argument that if Israel's hardheartedness resulted in mankind's salvation, through the death of God's Son, then what may result from Israel's repentance before the world and the acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah.²⁸

Returning to our passage here, the same can be applied to the work of Adam and Christ. If Adam's 'work' resulted in God's glorious plan of salvation then what will be the result of Christ's 'work'? We have already said that Christ's work was so much more than restoring what Adam lost, but here we see also a glimpse of what the effect might be of the last Adam's act of obedience? It has eternal ramifications.

- **Adam was intended to fulfil God's eternal purpose, but Christ carried things through to God's original intention.**

We are reiterating much of what we have already said, but it is worth our attention. The New Testament carries hints of an age to come, which is not to be our focus for now, but for which God is preparing us. God had always intended for mankind to mature into the image of Christ and rule as His regent rulers in the age to come. That original intention is fulfilled in Christ. In his book on the letter to the Ephesians, Austin T Sparks describes the ministry of Christ as a bridge across the time of man keeping God's eternal purpose straight,

God's line was to have gone straight without a bend, without a break, but when it came to a certain point, because of certain contingencies which were never in the purpose, that line had to go down, and then up and on again. The two ends of that line are on the same eternal level. You may, if you like, conceive of a bridge across that bend, and of Christ thus filling the bend, so that what was from eternity is not interrupted at all in Him; it goes on in Him.²⁹

²⁸ Romans 11:15

²⁹ The Stewardship of the Mystery, Volume One – All Things in Christ: Austin-Sparks T. Reprinted, 2002 from the original, unabridged writings of T. Austin-Sparks.



- **Death reigned all the more through Adam's sin when the law came, but Christ's grace reigns all the more in response (vv.20-21)**

Finally, and almost as a footnote, Paul returns to his earlier statement concerning the law (verse 13) at the end of this section to say that when the law kept a record of sin and wrongdoing, it did not contain it but if anything encouraged it. In response to the prolific nature of sin, however, Christ's ever-more powerful grace abounded to us. It is almost as if sin found an opportunity to propagate through the law, but was still no match for grace!



| 4 Resurrection By The Spirit

- 4.1 Death of the Old
- 4.2 Resurrection into the New

4 Resurrection By The Spirit (6:1-10)

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

Romans 6:1-10

4.1 Death of the Old

Paul starts this new section with an adversarial question. One of the great things about Paul is that his intellect was so keen that he often anticipated the thoughts of his readers, be they friends or enemies. Instead of moving on Paul will stop to take the time to deal with those questions. His approach should encourage us to do the same. Always question the Word; not its authority, which is without question, but its meaning. Such an inquisitive spirit finds great response from the Spirit who inspired and oversaw its creation.

The argument goes something like this – if sin brought death and then with the introduction of the law, sin was able to multiply itself even further, but grace was more than powerful enough to deal with this, then surely grace is doing all the work? If, as we have said, our fingerprints never appear on the sovereign and finished work of Christ, then surely it matters not what we do, so long as we trust Christ to save us? What obligation do we therefore have except to believe?

This was an argument at the time of Paul, from those who reliance remained upon keeping the righteous requirements of the law to attain righteousness, and it remains an argument today from those who feel they keep failing the Lord; whose refrain becomes, ‘what’s the point of trying, I always let Him down anyway?!’

Paul deals with this thought by stating the reality of the situation for those who have ‘died with Christ’.

4.1.1 Dead To Sin (v.2)

Paul answers the question by turning the whole thing on its head, whilst stating the reality of our new state in Christ. He says, ‘How can we **who died to sin** still live in it?’.

There has been much debate over the years about what this phrase, ‘dead to sin’ actually means. Do we simply ignore sin now, as if we’ve lost interest in it? Does it mean instead that we are dead to the penalty that sin carries, which as we have said is death? Does it mean that sin no longer has power over us?

Arguably it means all these things, but there is a deeper revelation laid out in Paul’s words. When he wrote to the saints in Ephesus he reminded them about their previous state before they came to Christ,

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, ...

Ephesians 2:1-2

The race of Adam is spiritually dead. It carries biological life, but not spiritual life, that is the life in which God exists. This is what Paul is referring to. This means that sin has a free reign in the heart of man, constrained only by social convention, self preservation and the remnants of conscience left behind after the fall.

This is a really important point, because often humanists will talk about the wondrous creativity of man, his capacity for greatness as well as destruction, pointing to this as some proof that mankind is not rotten at its core. There is kindness in the world, even amongst the unsaved. There is no denying any of this, but the simple truth remains that fallen man has lost the spiritual life he once shared with his creator. There is death in his very fabric. All that he creates, however lovely or terrible, is destined to fade and die.

The Christian writer and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, made the following statement about our salvation,

When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die”³⁰

We are not all called to die for Christ, like Bonhoeffer, but he was referring to the fact that in order to leave the race of Adam and join the race of Christ we have to die. There is no other way. Our old selves have to die.

³⁰ The Cost of Discipleship, 1937

Paul's point here therefore is that once we have undergone this process of death, then our natural state changes to one of righteousness (which he expands on later in the letter). If we have truly died, then we cannot carry on living in sin. In other words, justification (being declared innocent before God because of Jesus) and sanctification (the change from one degree of glory to another in the process of maturity) are inextricably linked. If one's experience of the former is real, then inevitably the other will follow. The seed of Christ within us will reproduce itself and grow to transform us completely from the inside out, even more surely as Adam's sin corrupted us from birth.

4.1.2 Dead Together (v.3)

It can be easy, given our experience of being physically baptised as individuals, to forget the context in which Paul writes this verse. Looking back over the end of chapter 5 and into chapter 6, Paul is discussing entire races. The race of Adam and the race of Christ. It is necessary, he states, to die in order to move from the former to the latter.

Although Paul refers here to baptism, many have argued that Paul is using this as a reference to the wider act of salvation, that is our coming to Christ and believing in Him as well as our submission to the waters of baptism.

Baptism is like joining a mass grave, ... of old lives. It is a communal act whereby we leave the race of Adam and join the race of Christ. Just as we saw in the previous section, we all leapt into the pit (of sin) with Adam (even though as individuals we are separated out over the history of our race) so we are also baptised at different times but take part in the one act. Just like Israel crossing the Red Sea and watching the waves crash down on the pursuing Egyptian army, so we look back as one race in Christ and see the waters of baptism crash down on our old lives, completely cutting us off from them.

4.1.3 Dead & Buried (v.4)

As if to place final emphasis on the completeness of the process, Paul refers to our burial with Christ. He uses the phrase here, 'in order that', we too might walk in newness of life, as Christ. As we have said we cannot embrace Christ until Adam has died in us. For good measure, like Christ whose body which bore the ugliness and curse of sin, our former selves were buried so that they could be raised anew, just like His resurrection body, which no longer carried the penalty of sin. There is no coming back from burial!

4.2 Resurrection into the New

Now the focus moves from death (of the old) into life (in the new). The newness of life which we now experience (v.4) we might call 'Resurrection Life'. We shall see that Paul expands on much of this later as we go through the next few chapters, but for now Paul makes 3 main points for us: -

4.2.1 The Certainty of 'Resurrection Life' (v.5)

Paul uses the same argument here as we saw him use in chapter 5, which is to say that if this thing is true, then how much more should this other thing also be evident. In this case, if we've died a spiritual death with Him and been raised to newness of life, then we shall surely be raised to a physical resurrection just as He was.

One might even say that the evidence of our new spiritual life gives us assurance of our future resurrection with Him on the last day, because it shows us that we are dead to sin and no longer dead in sin.

There is also an important principle at work here, which is in evidence with a closer reading of Paul's words. He is not only providing us with assurance of our future resurrection, but also giving us a principle of this resurrection life into which we have come. The principle is this - the stronger the bond in death, the stronger the bond in resurrection life. We are talking here in spiritual terms and perhaps it would be plainer to revert to the words of James the Apostle,

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:10

Jesus' call to take up our cross was founded on the same principle being that if we allow our old selves to be crucified then walking in newness of life, in resurrection life will be a certainty for us.

Again, as we observed when considering Paul's contrast between Adam and Christ, we never doubt the heritage left by Adam, which is dwarfed in comparison to that of Christ.

4.2.2 The Freedom of Resurrection Life (vv.6-7)

Paul now refers to our 'old self' (v.6). He is talking about our Adamic fallen nature. Interestingly the word he uses for old is not old as in a point in time, but old as in 'worn out'. The Adamic nature into which we were born was spiritually bereft of life and unable to meet God's righteous requirements. Through our salvation we identified with Christ in His death and this old nature within us died, a spiritual death. Another way of putting it is that the person we were before we came to Christ has died.

We also have to remember that Paul is speaking in corporate terms in this whole section, so he is actually saying that the race of Adam was crucified in Christ. When we became believers we left the race of Adam, which now lies dead and condemned.



The outcome of this death is that our physical bodies (Paul uses the Greek word soma here, which means human body) would no longer be dominated by that old nature which carried no spiritual life and simply subjugated our bodies to sin.

The ESV phrase 'brought to nothing' is rendered slightly differently in other translations, such as 'be done away with' (NIV, NASB, NKJV) or 'be destroyed' (NRSV). The Greek word employed by Paul here is katargeo, which means 'to render idle, inactive, or inoperative.'³¹

One commentator³² described this as imagining our physical body as a lathe which is turned, via a connecting rubber belt, by a spinning wheel. When we died to the sinful nature the rubber belt was disconnected from the spinning wheel (the sinful nature) and the lathe stops being driven around by it. The connection is broken.

When Paul therefore talks about 'our old self' (or old man in some translations) being crucified with Christ, he is actually talking about our participation or membership of the Adamic race. When this was crucified it means we left that race (we died our way out of it!) and joined a new race created in Christ, with Him as its head. We're no longer part of Adam's race and no longer bound by its slavery to the sinful fallen nature.

4.2.3 The Indestructible Resurrection Life (vv.8-10)

The life we now experience in the race of Christ is of a special nature. It is indestructible and thus contains a power that will overcome any resistance. Consider the words of the writer to the Hebrews,

'... another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.'

Hebrews 7:15b-16

Paul's words explain this for us more fully. Christ will and can never die again, because death no longer holds any power over Him. His death was a singular event that was so powerful that it never needs to be repeated.

It is essential that we understand this, because Paul refers back to this one event time and again. We are so used to thinking of our lives as a process, which in terms of sanctification is what they are, but this whole section of Paul's letter is taken up with our justification through the death of Christ (chapter 5) and our exit from the Adamic race into the race of Christ (chapter 6), which was a one time event that was effective for all time.

³¹ Wuest K, Words Studies in the Greek New Testament (Vol.1), page 101, © 1973 Wm. B. Publishing Company.

³² Ibid

Notice then the words of Paul in verse 10,

When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.

Romans 6:10

Did you notice what Paul did there? He contrasted the one event (Christ's death) with the continual event (Christ's ongoing life for the glory of God). The power of the one event is sufficient to fuel His continual life before God for eternity!

This is the same power that is now at work within us, which Paul describes to the saints in Ephesus as,

'the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.'

Ephesians 1:19-20

So for Paul these verses (6:1-10) answer indisputably the question he posed at the beginning of the chapter. If we are dead to the Adamic nature, how could we ever live in slavery to sin again? How could it ever exert its hold on us again for not only is it dead and buried for us, we have been raised into an irrepressible resurrection life which death and sin cannot hold back.

When Paul says 'likewise consider yourselves dead to sin' (v.10), he does not mean that we superficially think we are dead to sin when in reality we are not; no, he is saying the opposite. Paul is exhorting us to wake up to the reality that your life with Adam was dead and buried along with Christ and that the life that now fills you is far more powerful than the old man ever was. This is where we come back to Paul's comparison in chapter 5 of the power of Adam's sin compared with Christ's life.

In essence Paul is saying 'understand who you are and what has happened to you!'



| Throwing Off The Chains



| 5 Removing Flesh From The Throne

- 5.1 Remember the Truth
- 5.2 Reject False Claims
- 5.3 Remove All Opportunity

5 Removing Flesh From The Throne

11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:11-14

We start a new section in our studies ('Throwing off the Chains'). Paul has laid out positional truths for us, which are those things established in the spiritual realms which need to find their impact in the physical realm. Paul wants to get practical with us.

Verse 11 begins (ESV) with 'So', which is Paul's way of applying this truth of God to us. It is good practice to ask of the Word, 'So what?', which is a question that requires us to consider the implications of divine truth.

Paul's answer is unequivocal - 'you also must consider yourselves ...' - for Paul what follows is non-negotiable if we accept the truths we have just looked at. Paul's instruction comes in 3 parts:

5.1 Remember' the Truth (v.11)

The ESV's employ of the phrase 'Consider yourselves' could mislead us into thinking of this similar to the song from the musical 'Oliver' ('Consider yourself at home; consider yourself part of the family'). Paul is not urging us to just think of ourselves differently (i.e., wishful thinking or even mind over matter); he is commanding a much stronger action on our part. He is pointing to the fact that we must remember the **truth** of who we now are (in Christ) and our position (in the Kingdom of God and under its rule).

The Word of God is often urging us to remember the things it tells us. The apostle James gives us an excellent analogy,

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James 1:22-25

Interestingly the words of James are found in the context of being doers of the Word and not just hearers. James identifies the source of the problem as forgetfulness. He is not talking about absentmindedness, but a failure to remember the truth of the Word. The problem starts with our thinking rather than our conduct. If we have received a revelation of the truth and allow this to dictate to our minds then it will inevitably change our conduct (i.e., produce fruit).

5.2 Reject False Claims (v.12)

Sin (here personified by Paul) will seek to reign over us, despite the fact it no longer has the right to do so. Sin is a force which has been at work in the world since the fall and the Bible has always characterised it with personality, which is for our benefit so that we do not underestimate its cunning. Consider God's words to Cain when jealousy was taking hold of his heart,

6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Genesis 4:6-7

Sin has always sought to control mankind. Even when we are set free from the sinful nature, sin will try to assert itself over us and make us obey it (v.12). However we must reject those false claims.

These false claims come in many guises. Sometimes they will be lustful passions of the flesh; other times they will be temptations to mistrust God by giving into fears that assault us. The common denominator in sin's tactic is making false claims upon us, which contradict the Word of God. Chris Tomlin's song based on that great hymn Amazing Grace has the following words which declare the truth to us ...

My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace³³

The truth is that our chains (to sin) have gone and we've been set free. A helpful picture here is one of a prisoner sitting in a prison cell. The door has been kicked in and the shackles of the prisoner have been broken. The prisoner remains in the cell under the impression that they are still imprisoned. Paul's words remind us

³³ Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone), © Chris Tomlin 2006 from the Album 'See the Morning'.

that the bonds which were holding us are broken and we must stand up and walk out of the prison cell. It is up to us whether we get up and walk out.

Arthur Wallis put it this way, *“It’s not that I’m not able to sin any more, but that I’m able not to.”*

5.3 Remove All Opportunities (v.13)

Paul’s next instruction is about as practical as it gets. We should not present our bodies (the Greek word, *melos*, means human limbs and so it is clear Paul here refers to the physical body) to sin. In other words not only are we to remember the truth, walk in it, we are to actively resist allowing our bodies to be subjugated to sin which would still seek to subdue us.

The most practical way to do this is to present our bodies instead as instruments for righteousness. Rarely will God’s Word instruct us to refrain from one activity without simultaneously instructing us to commence (or continue) with another.³⁴ The principle here is to avoid a vacuum. We need to fill our lives with righteousness and apply ourselves to it. The Christian life is not one of passivity awaiting the return of our saviour one day, but instead laying hold of the purpose for which God has called each of us heavenwards. If we are devoted to this then sin will find little opportunity to make false claims upon our lives for we shall be demonstrating the truth of the Word.

There is also one other point for us to bear in mind here, which is the practical wisdom Paul offers. We need to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to be caught up in situations that will cause us to submit once again to the rule of sin. This could mean thought patterns we have struggled to be free from, which certain situations or even people may precipitate. Or it may mean certain temptations to lapse back into old patterns of behaviour.

As we shall see in the next section patterns of thought and behaviour often lead to more of the same; it is better therefore to avoid them altogether.

³⁴ An example of this can be found in Ephesians 5:18, where Paul instructs the saints to refrain from drunkenness from wine, and instead be filled with the Spirit. God does not leave a vacuum.



| 6 Restoring Righteousness

- 6.1 The Purpose of Our Deliverance
- 6.2 The Place of Righteousness
- 6.3 The End of Righteousness

6 Restoring Righteousness (6:15–23)

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.

For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:15–23

6.1 The Purpose of Our Deliverance (v.15)

At the beginning of this next section Paul poses a similar question as he did at the beginning of this chapter. In both cases his question relates back to the statement in the preceding verse.

In 6:1 Paul's question concerning the notion of sinning so that grace may abound precedes his statement in 5:21 - where sin once reigned in death now grace reigns through righteousness. Should we go on sinning in order that we can experience the release grace brings us? As if God intended this for us as some kind of continuous cathartic cycle of sinning followed by grace.

In verse 15 (above), Paul's question follows 6:14, concerning us being under grace rather than law. Paul's question now raises the notion that if we are no longer under law, nor constrained by it then are we not free to go on sinning as we please?

In both cases Paul is dealing with the issue of what we do with our newfound freedom from the state of slavery which our old, now crucified, nature kept us in.

To answer this question Paul employs the analogy of a slave market. The purpose of this analogy is to explain that we have gone from one master to another. When we served sin we were not bound by righteousness because sin was our master. This is not a perfect analogy Paul himself acknowledges (v.19), but sometimes our ability to perceive spiritual realities is limited and the Word of God therefore condescends to our level with pictures that we can understand.

In this case, the picture of ownership, similar to a slave in the ancient world tells us that the deliverance brought by Christ, was not simply about liberating us from sin's control, but instead returning us back to God's dominion (hence Paul's use of the word 'obedience' in v.17). The original lie of Satan to Adam and Eve, was that of self-determination or independence from God their Creator. We are designed to be fully dependent upon God and the lie was that there was a 'freedom' to be had outside of God's will. As we have seen so far in our studies, sin brought only death to Adam and his race.

The purpose of our deliverance was therefore to restore us to righteousness before God.

6.2 The Place of Righteousness (vv.16-18)

We have already said above that independence is not possible for us, due to our divine design. We will spend our lives serving something or someone. Sin tricks us into believing we are serving ourselves, whereas the reality is that we are slaves to it like the earlier picture of the lathe driven by the spinning wheel.

Now we come to a curious juxtaposition³⁵ of statements. Paul presents a choice, we can either serve sin (i.e., seeking independence from God) which leads to **death**, or obedience (i.e., living in dependence on God) which leads to **righteousness**. Did you notice the contrasting concepts there? Paul is comparing death with righteousness, as the two opposing outcomes or choices. It is unlikely Paul would contrast these two things without reason.

We should ask ourselves the question therefore, 'what is righteousness and why is it the alternative outcome to death?' Righteousness simply means 'rightness' or being in the right. We are in the right when our words or our conduct conform with God's standards (by which everything else is measured). When we live in conformity with God's will we will flourish and reach our full potential. It is the place where we experience the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring to us³⁶, not just salvation but fully laying hold of everything for which God laid hold of us

³⁵ Juxtaposition is the act or placement of two things (usually abstract concepts) near each other.

³⁶ John 10:10



in Christ Jesus³⁷. Righteousness enables us to find harmony with God's will for our lives so that we can be all he intends us to be. It is the state where the Christian is happiest.

God's original intention for Adam was that he would live on this earth and fulfil his potential by living to please God, which would bring Adam the maximum fulfilment. This has not changed. As we have been reborn into the race of Christ, nothing will please us more than living to please God every day. In the vein of Paul's own question in verse 2 we could ask the question, 'how can we not live to please God every day?' This is now our natural or default setting as new creations in Christ Jesus. This is not wishful thinking but the reality the Word presents us with.

6.3 The End of Righteousness (v.19–23)

Righteousness is not purely an end in itself, it is our pathway to sanctification (v.19), which is the process of our transformation into the image of Christ. Sanctification takes place in two ways,

- **The renewal of our physical minds**, which Paul refers to later,³⁸ by reprogramming our thought patterns and pathways into God's way of thinking.
- **Our spiritual maturity as 'sons of God'**. When we are newly born again we are like babe-like infants and need to mature into the full image of Christ.

These two elements are integral to the process of sanctification, hence why Paul says that if we follow his practical instruction (from vv. 11-14), then pursuing righteousness (i.e., living to please God) will ensure the process of sanctification takes place in us.

Living to please God will inevitably produce these two aspects of our growth and development. Paul puts it this way, sin begets only more sin, lawlessness only more lawlessness, but righteousness leads to sanctification. Sin is its own end; it does not lead to other or better things, only more of itself ('lawlessness leading to more lawlessness' v.19) and eventually death. Righteousness on the other hand is a pathway to sanctification.

Following on from this Paul tells us that sanctification ends in eternal life (v.22), because sanctification is our way of life up until the moment we go to be with the Lord or He returns for us all. It is our state of readiness for the future glory we shall share with God.³⁹

³⁷ Philippians 3:12

³⁸ Romans 12:2

³⁹ Romans 5:2



Finally Paul returns in verse 23 to his running theme of contrasting sin and grace, in what is one of his most remembered statements,

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

From the analogy of the slave market we have seen that sin compels obedience as does righteousness which is ours through grace. However the difference between these two ‘masters’ could not be greater:

- At the *end* of a lifetime of service to sin’s will, **sin’s commensurate wages paid is death.**
- At the *beginning* of our life in Christ, **grace’s reward to us is not commensurate;** it is not what we have earned. It is a free gift, not because it is cheap, but because we can never afford it, even if we spent every waking moment living to earn it! We do not spend our lives trying to earn the free gift, but it produces the ‘fruit’ of obedience in us through sanctification. In this sense obedience is produced by the free gift rather than being the means to earning it.

The true reward, we shall see later in our studies, is to become more than just slaves – it is to become ‘sons of God’⁴⁰ and immediately start enjoying eternal life with God.

⁴⁰ Hence why Paul explained his ‘slave market’ analogy had its limitations; it was purely to explain our transfer of allegiance or ‘ownership’.



| 7 Release From The Yoke Of The Law

- 7.1 Release from a Relationship of Bondage
- 7.2 Release into a Union of Fruitfulness

7 Release From The Yoke Of The Law

1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 7:1-6

As we come to chapter 7, the benefit of studying the Word together by exposition becomes clear – to fully understand this chapter we need to appreciate the context of chapters 6 and 8. We shall expand on this as we go along.

This chapter has proved a vexing experience for many readers and commentators over the years, due perhaps in no small part to the approach taken in understanding its purpose and therefore interpretation. It is hoped that our studies over the next two sections of this module will help bring clarity in revelation and understanding.

7.1 Release From A Relationship Of Bondage (vv.1-4a)

The context here is that Paul is referring back to his earlier assertion that we are no longer under law, but under grace. This was Paul's amazing statement in verse 14 of chapter 6. Paul has already provided us with an analogy of the slave market and now he uses another analogy of the law of marriage. No analogy is perfect and complete, but each serves to bring out certain points. Whilst the first analogy of the slave market was to demonstrate the transfer in our 'ownership' and our loyalty, this next analogy from the law of marriage, is to help us better understand the transition we have made from being 'under law' to being 'under grace'.

There is sometimes confusion over the apparent change in the analogy in verse 4, where the dead party is no longer the law but instead the believer. Some have postulated that Paul couldn't state that the law was dead so he had to reverse

the analogy. A simpler explanation is that the analogy had run its course in verses 2 and 3. It does not continue beyond, into verse 4. The point has been made in the analogy that our relationship with the law was fundamentally changed by death. Paul then returns to the overall context and summarises with the fact that we have died to the law 'through the body of Christ' (i.e., by being united with Christ in His death as Paul put it earlier on). Verse 4 is in this sense purely the application of the analogy to our actual situation.

This analogy tells us some important things about the law and our prior relationship with it:

- **God's Law is Universal** - back in chapter 2 Paul explains that the law equally applies to those who were in possession of the law, handed down to Moses by God, and those who were not,

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law
 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Romans 2:12-15

Jews and Gentiles alike came under the condemnation of the law's judgement upon their sin. None can escape its scope, just as none can claim ignorance of their Creator.⁴¹

- **The Law is Binding for Life** - in Paul's cultural background marriage was a lifelong union between a man and a woman. This was how God had defined it, setting its limits and boundaries in which He would bless the union. In our postmodern world, where the influence of the church upon the legal framework within some societies is being rolled back, marriage is no longer regarded as a lifelong union; nor is it regarded as being between man and woman. Such changes instituted by man do not change God's law of marriage and following Paul's analogy it matters not how we regarded ourselves in relationship to the law, we were bound to it as long as we lived.

In verse 6 Paul says that the law had held us captive; The original Greek text gives a sense of '*constantly being held down*'. The bond was not only lifelong but it was oppressive in its nature. As we shall see in the next section the reason for this lay not with the law but with us.

⁴¹ Romans 1:20

- **The Law is an Unbearable Yoke** - when the church formed its earliest council in Jerusalem to discuss what requirements could be made of the new gentile believers Peter stood before them and made the following statement about the law and its demands,

10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Acts 15:10

Kenneth Wuest paraphrases it this way,

“The law gives neither the desire nor the power to obey its precepts.”⁴²

The poet put it this way,

Do this and live, the law demands,
But gives me neither feet nor hands,
A better word the gospel brings,
It bids me fly and gives me wings.

- **Release from the Law must be ‘Lawful’** - Just as the widow is ‘loosed’⁴³ from her lifelong bond to her deceased husband, we are also only freed from the binding we have to the law by death. As Dr Martin Lloyd Jones puts it,

“If the relationship is not broken by death it will not be a legal break, it will be an adulterous association.”⁴⁴

The analogy demonstrates the importance of how we made the transition from one ‘husband’ to another. If it is not done properly then the new bond formed with Christ will not be legitimate and the law will make a claim of judgement upon us. In contrast the fact that we have died has meant that the law no longer makes a claim on us, nor can it, for we have died to the law (verse 7).

The necessity of a lawful severance of our lifelong bond with the law also provides the necessary legitimacy of our new union with Christ, perhaps here seen as our new ‘husband’ if the analogy is carried through, which does find some resonance with Paul’s later analogy to the Ephesians of the church being pictured as the bride of Christ.

⁴² Wuest K, *Words Studies in the Greek New Testament (Vol.1)*, page 113, © 1973 Wm. B. Publishing Company.

⁴³ The word Paul uses in verse 3 is the same word used in 6:6, the ‘body of sin might be brought to nothing’ or rendered inert, inoperative etc

⁴⁴ *The Law: Its Functions and Limits, (Romans 7:1-8:4)*, Lloyd Jones, D M (© Lady Catherwood and Mrs Ann Beatt 1973), The Banner of Truth Trust.

7.2 Release to a Fruitful Union (vv.4b-6)

So now Paul expresses this purpose in our death to the law,

‘... so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.’ (v.4b)

Paul’s use of the words, ‘in order that’ demonstrate purpose. As we saw earlier in our studies, aptly demonstrated by Paul’s slave market analogy, we are not freed from sin to be free unto ourselves, but to be bound to God. Arguably then Paul is not perhaps here borrowing from an analogy, for Marriage itself is a shadow of this greater reality, the union of the redeemed (the church) with Christ. The purpose of the marriage union is, in part, for reproduction. God’s original mandate to Adam and Eve was that they would be fruitful and multiply on the earth.

There are some key differences between this union and the last union which has now been dissolved:

It can only bear life-giving fruit - Chapters 5 and 6 should have now established for us, without any doubt, the reality of our new situation raised from death with Christ, to which we can add other Scriptures: -

- Romans 6:4 - We were raised to ‘newness of life’.
- Galatians 2:20 - The life we now live is the life of Christ and not our own.
- Ephesians 1: 20-21 - It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.
- Philippians 2:12-13 - This power now works in us as we work out our salvation.

The key for us is to receive a revelation of the certainty of Christ’s life in us. Jesus Himself put it simply to His disciples,

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

Doing anything outside of the life of Christ is fruitless, but in Him it cannot be anything other than fruitful, for as Paul shows the Corinthians,⁴⁵ He is the firstfruits of the harvest, guaranteeing the rest of the harvest.⁴⁶ The apostle John writes of those who have the seed of Christ within them,

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:20

⁴⁶ As the wave sheaf (Leviticus 23:10), which was the firstfruits of the harvest, is also a pledge of the harvest, so Christ is the firstfruits and pledge of the resurrection of all mankind.

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

1 John 3:9

It is a union of love and not of duty - We are not 'without law' or 'lawless'. It is simply that we are not bound or yoked to it in the same way. Paul explains that our service before God is not now via a written code,⁴⁷ but instead in the new way of the Spirit.

In explaining how he became all things to all men, Paul makes an interesting statement about his new relationship to the law,

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

1 Corinthians 9:20-21

Did you notice Paul's careful qualification of his position? When speaking of the Jews he describes himself as 'not being (myself) under the law', whereas in speaking of the Gentiles he then describes himself as 'not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ'.

Paul was not 'apart from the law'; he was not lawless and did not live as he pleased. He knew he was under the law of Christ, who has Himself fulfilled the law of God.⁴⁸

Paul's service to God was not by the written code, not by duty, nor by his own efforts but by the finished and complete work of Christ. As he has already said to his readers earlier in chapter 6,

... you who were once slaves of sin have become **obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

Romans 6:17

The natural flow of Paul's argument here is that serving God via the written code produces no life. This raises the question over the purpose and use of the law itself, which is why Paul deals with that very subject in the following verses. This question we shall turn to in our next section.

⁴⁷ Paul uses the Greek word 'grammar' denoting a written or legal document.

⁴⁸ Matthew 5:17



| 8 Relationship Between The Law And Sin

- 8.1 The Opportunity in the Law for Sin
- 8.2 The Purpose of the Law Toward Sin
- 8.3 The Impotence of the Law to Save us from Sin

8 Relationship Between The Law And Sin (7:7-25)

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

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

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Romans 7:7-25

Now we approach perhaps the most difficult part of our studies in Romans in the above section from chapter 7. As we said in the last section by way of introduction to this chapter, many have spent their time trying to decide whether Paul is referring to a young Christian or even a younger version of himself; others have wondered whether Christians make a transition from chapter 7 to chapter 8

as they mature as believers, almost as if the ‘old man’ is slowly killed off over a lifetime of discipleship.

However as we have said and as we shall see the key to understanding this section of Scripture is reading it in context and doing so from the foundation of chapters 5 and 6 which clearly show us our new position in Christ.

The whole chapter is about God’s Law, working out Paul’s statement in chapter 6 concerning us being under grace and no longer under law. He started with how we have been released from law in order for us to be joined in a union with Christ, and now here Paul moves on, starting in verse 7, to ask another advocate’s question, ‘are we saying the law and sin are two sides of the same coin?; if we needed to be freed from the oppressive relationship we formerly had with the law then freedom from sin is synonymous with freedom from law and surely the law must be bad, for us at least?

Paul’s resounding reply, as with the other advocate’s questions he raises, is an emphatic ‘no!’ The question provides Paul with an opportunity to demonstrate the relationship between law and sin

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones, speaking of these two elements, lavishes superlative praise upon this section of Paul’s writings. Speaking of chapter 7 he says,

It is beyond any doubt the profoundest analysis of sin, and of its ways and its results, which is to be found anywhere in the whole of Scripture. There is no more profound statement about sin, no more profound psychological analysis of sin and what it does, and how it does it, than you find here ...

It is also a mighty statement with respect to the function of the Law and the place of the Law in the life of the believer ... the greatest statement found anywhere in the whole range of Scripture with regard to the final impotence of the Law in the matter of salvation.⁴⁹

To understand the rest of this chapter, we must keep this end in mind.

Lloyds Jones also maintained that chapter 7 is in effect an exposition of Romans 6:14, ‘*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace*’. Paul explains to us the relationship between sin and the law and the effect of the two upon us before we came to Christ.

⁴⁹ The Law: Its Functions and Limits, (Romans 7:1-8:4), page 7; Lloyd Jones, D M (© Lady Catherwood and Mrs Ann Beatt 1973), The Banner of Truth Trust.

8.1 The Opportunity In The Law For Sin (vv.7–11)

8.1.1 Sin Is An Opportunist

The first thing that Paul shows us is that sin is an opportunist. We don't fully understand sin or its origin, but here we have one of the greatest insights into how it works. From the earliest days in Genesis, sin was personified by the Biblical narrative. Whenever the Bible personifies anything it is to give us an insight into the way something behaves, and not because it contains a sentient personality of its own. Man has often similarly described the world around him as if it had personality, as a simple tool to make behavioural observations and predictions.

As we have already noted in our studies God's words to Cain were illuminating,

6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Genesis 4:6–7

Sin is like a virus, which can only spread when in contact with living organisms.⁵⁰ When sin comes into contact with the law it is able to reproduce using the law. In verse 8 Paul says something slightly curious, 'apart from the law, sin lies dead', like a virus that can lie dormant, sin without the law can be like that; it experiences an acceleration of growth once it comes into contact with the prohibition of the law.

8.1.2 Sin Brought Death And Not The Law

Paul's emphatic 'no' to the advocate's question, in verse 7, as to whether the law is in effect culpable in mankind's sin enables him to describe the effect the sin has upon God's law. As soon as the law prohibits something, sin which is dead set against the will of God, automatically looks to break that law.

So in this way when the law was applied to us, death followed, because of sin's actions. That is what Paul is saying in this passage. Many have proposed that these verses are autobiographical on Paul's part; that he is describing his former life as a Pharisee, however to do so leads us down a path of interpretation which, as we shall see below, is simply incompatible with everything Paul has been saying in the last couple of chapters.

What is Paul then saying? 'I was once alive apart from the law' Is he saying that if God had not issued the law to Moses on the mountain then we could all have

⁵⁰ A single virus particle (virion) is in and of itself essentially inert. Viruses cannot reproduce or express their genes without the help of a living cell. Once a virus has "infected" a cell, it will "marshal" the cell's ribosomes, enzymes and much of the cellular machinery to reproduce.

continued on sinning, blissfully ignorant? We have already seen from chapter 5 that sin was in the world before the law, so death reigned from Adam to Moses as mankind was earning its ‘wages’ before the law was delivered to Israel.⁵¹ Is Paul saying that sinning was relatively low key until the law came along and accelerated its growth, as we have said with the comparison with viral growth? The Scriptures clearly show us that even by the time of Noah sin has spread exponentially across the earth,

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

We can see that the giving of the law on Mount Sinai was not an explosion point for sin in the world. This means that we can say that Paul is talking of God’s law and not just the written law of the Jews. He is not speaking autobiographically as one who spent his youth studying the law. No, instead he is speaking hypothetically of any of us. He is describing what happens when God’s law is applied to us.

This is really important because it helps us understand the whole of this passage. Paul is not saying he was alive before law was applied to him – he is saying that the effect the law had on him was not to liberate him, nor to free him but instead purely to condemn him. This is the effect of ‘death’ Paul is talking about. His first point in this passage is about the failure of the law in its interaction with us.

Any attempt to appeal to the law as a lifeline in our moral failure simply produces legalism (which Paul knew all about as a Pharisee) and is full of death not life!

8.1.3 The Necessity To Come Out From Under Law

So Paul has clearly established the reason why it was necessary to come from under the law. Firstly because it was simply a tool for sin to use to propagate itself in us, but secondly because through the law sin was able to bring death to us. The Biblical commentator, Robert Haldane, comments on the necessity for this lawful severance,

In the seventh chapter, it is affirmed that believers are dead to the law; and consequently sin has lost its power to condemn them, their connection with it, in respect to its guilt being forever broken.⁵²

The above quote from Haldane brings together two of Paul’s most important statements from chapter 6, ...

⁵¹ Romans 5:13-14

⁵² Robert Haldane, *The Epistle to the Romans* (page 239), © 1958 The Banner of Truth Trust

Freedom from Sin - For one who has died has been set free from sin. (6:7)

Freedom from the Law - For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (6:14)

Freedom from sin necessarily requires release from the judgement of the law, for the power of sin lies in the use of the law to condemn. Indeed this is the chief tool of the devil, described in the book of Revelation as the ‘the accuser of our brothers’; his only weapons are accusations on the basis of God’s law. The unregenerate remain condemned by that law but the regenerate cannot be.

8.2 The Purpose Of The Law Toward Sin (vv.12-14)

In verse 12 Paul is really summing up what he has been saying from verse 7 onwards, which is that the law itself is good and is not to be considered in any way culpable in the sin of mankind.

8.2.1 The Spiritual Nature of the Law

Psalm 119 is devoted to extolling the goodness of God’s law. Psalm 19 states,

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;

Psalm 19:7

The Word is not short of self-exaltation! There is nothing wrong with God’s law and His Word. Paul is dealing with the charge, which he himself has raised, that the law is no longer needed, and worse still that the law is the source of death for us.

Paul goes on to tell us that the law is spiritual, as opposed to natural (of the flesh) in verse 14. At the beginning of the chapter he talked about our release from the law and our new way of serving. Paul’s deliberate use of the phrase ‘written code’ or ‘letter of the law’ in verse 6 indicates that Paul is not declaring the law as fruitless in of itself. He does not use the word ‘letter’ as equivalent to ‘law’, but instead a representation of it, as Cranfield explains,

‘It is the letter of the law in separation from the Spirit. But since the ‘law is spiritual’, the letter of the law in isolation from the Spirit is not the law in its true character, but the law as it were denatured’.⁵³

So if the law is good and spiritual; if its true character was not seen in the ‘old way of the written code’, but rather provided sin with what it needed to propagate then Lloyd-Jones asks the obvious question which is, **“Why did the**

⁵³ C E B Cranfield, Romans (a shorter commentary) (page 152), © 1985 T & T Clark Ltd

holy God allow sin to do this with His Law, which is 'holy, and just, and good'?"

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8.2.2 The True Purpose of the Law

There are two immediate answers to this question.

- **To enable us to see sin as it really is** - Paul himself provides us with the first answer in verse 13, 'that sin might be shown to be sin'. The law shows us the following about sin
 - It Exposes The Presence of Sin: - Like the devil sin is deceitful and clever. It trips us up and the wonderful thing about God's law is that it exposes sin for what it really is. It is like a light shining into the darkness showing us that sin is there. In Paul's example it is true that the commandment not to covet led to more covetousness but it also showed fallen man the true nature of covetousness; it exposed it in the light of day. This is why Paul was happy to say in Romans 1 that all mankind stood condemned.
 - It Exposes The Character of Sin: - The second thing that the law does is to expose the true character of sin. The very fact that, as Paul has shown us, sin could take what is good, pure and holy, God's law and manipulate this law into an instrument for our destruction. That which is intended for good, sin is able to use as a tool with which it can attack us. This shows us the truly evil nature of sin. Sin is ... very sinful! Unfortunately in the world today sin has become trivialised and even explained away using psychology in some cultures. Sin is never more dangerous that when its true nature is ignored.
- **To Lead Us to Christ** - in addition to exposing sin for what it really is, the greater purpose of the law is to show us our need for Christ. If we turn to Galatians Paul asks the question of why the law was needed if Abraham (who preceded the law by 430 years Paul tells us) received the promise of a future seed through whom all would be saved,

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, ... 21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law

⁵⁴ The Law: Its Functions and Limits, (Romans 7:1-8:4), (page 166) Lloyd Jones, D M (© Lady Catherwood and Mrs Ann Beatt 1973), The Banner of Truth Trust.

was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

Galatians 3:19, 21-25

Other translations use the word ‘tutor’ or even ‘schoolmaster’ in verse 25. J B Phillips paraphrases verses 24 and 25 wonderfully,

Or, to change the metaphor, the Law was like a strict governess in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in him. Once we had that faith we were completely free from the governess’s authority.⁵⁵

The law was never meant to save us, nor could it ever do so. No, its purpose was to show us our need for Christ. It was to lead us to Christ and then hand us over to Him. This is why Jesus declared Himself to be the fulfilment of the law⁵⁶ and why later in Romans Paul declares the end of the law’s journey to be Him,

4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Romans 10:4 NIV

Against this backdrop we finally understand the purpose of the law, in the same way we understand the wanderings of God’s people through the desert as they looked forward to a coming Messiah.

The law then identifies sin, exposes its true sinfulness and shows us that we can never measure up to God’s holy standards.⁵⁷

Now we come to perhaps the most difficult part of Romans chapter 7 and yet our commentary thereon will be the shortest for we have laid the proper groundwork for an understanding of Paul’s purpose here.

8.3 The Impotence of the Law to Save us from Sin (vv.14-25)

8.3.1 The Wood for the Trees

There is one fact that is easy to miss when reading this chapter, but vital to avoiding a misunderstanding of it – there is no mention whatsoever of the Holy Spirit. In the previous chapters Paul discusses the work of the indwelling Christ

⁵⁵ J. B. Phillips, “The New Testament in Modern English”, 1962 edition by HarperCollins

⁵⁶ Matthew 5:17, Jesus said that He came to ‘make full’ the law, not to abolish it but to complete it in Him.

⁵⁷ Romans 3:23

and the Holy Spirit, and we know that the next chapter is all about life in the Holy Spirit.

As we have said several times so far, chapter 7 offers the reader, like no other chapter in the Bible, the possibility to miss the wood for the trees; it is easy to get lost in the details and miss the bigger picture. Paul has explained the relationship between sin and the law, and the nature and purpose of the law itself, and now he starts with what could appear to be an autobiographical account of his own struggle with sin. In fact many Christians have taken comfort from this interpretation as they have often also empathised with David in his Psalm of repentance after the death of his son by Bathsheba.

However there is nothing in the experience here described in these verses that in any way matches what Paul has written of the truth of who we are in Christ in the preceding chapters. This is not the experience of one who has been set free from the yoke of the law, nor freed from the law of sin and death. This person declares of themselves in verse 14, **'I am of the flesh, sold under sin.'** This is a slave to sin and not to righteousness.

8.3.2 The 'Nowhere' Man

Who then is the person Paul talks about? In some respects it is a moot point, whether it be the Paul who stood convicted on the road to Damascus of his moral failure but had not yet received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (just one of the theories) or just a hypothetical example is irrelevant.

What we can say is that this man has been convicted of his sin. He has been convicted by God and yet does not know the truth of the Gospel, about salvation through Jesus Christ. Lloyd Jones argues that there are those who stand convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin but are not immediately presented with the gospel. They have suddenly lost their self-righteousness and have glimpsed their moral failure before God but do not yet have the answer they need for their salvation.

What Paul describes here then is the internal battle such a man faces without having died to the law and its demands upon him. The law is unable to help him, because it is weakened by his flesh, which Paul goes on to point out only a few verses later (Romans 8:3). This man is trying to keep the law in his own strength but he finds he cannot. He therefore feels condemned and a failure before God.

Paul's point here is to demonstrate utterly and completely the impotence of the law in securing our salvation.

8.3.3 There is No Condemnation For Us

What it also describes sadly, is the tragedy that can befall Christians who may put themselves back under law. How do they do this? By living under condemnation and slipping into the flesh by their efforts to 'earn' the grace of



God. As Paul has said we are no longer under law, but under grace. In this sense it is true to say that we cannot be condemned under the law unless we choose to try to serve God by ‘the old way of the written code’.⁵⁸

This marks the end of chapter 7 in our studies, and as we move into chapter 8 it begins with the declaration on which we have ended, which is that ‘there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.’⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Romans 7:6

⁵⁹ Romans 8:1



| Life In The Spirit



| 9 Reliant upon The Life Of The Spirit

- 9.1 No Condemnation for Those in the Spirit
- 9.2 No Life for Those in the Flesh
- 9.3 No Longer Dominated by the Natural

9 Reliant Upon The Life Of The Spirit (8:1-11)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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

Romans 8:1-11

We come to our last section, 'Life in the Spirit', marking the beginning of chapter 8. This section is so titled because the freedom secured for us from 'the law of sin and death' has to be lived out; it must be evidenced; in Paul's own words from the last chapter, 'that we may bear fruit'⁶⁰. Life in the Spirit must therefore be lived, in the same way that the man whose prison cell door has been broken open needs to jump to his feet and run from that place of imprisonment to feel the full benefit of his deliverance.

Paul has spent the last two chapters dealing with possible objections to the doctrine he clearly laid down in chapter 5. In chapter 6 Paul showed us how our union with Christ guarantees our sanctification, because we are transformed from one degree of glory to another by the imperishable seed of Christ within us; Paul demonstrates this by showing us that our heritage in Christ is as certain now,

⁶⁰ Romans 7:4

as our heritage in Adam ever was, before we came to Christ. This means in many ways it is also as inescapable. In chapter 7, as a parenthesis, Paul deals with our previous 'union' with the law of God which judges and condemns all mankind, proving that neither our justification nor our sanctification can ever be achieved by the law; where the 'law of grace' (in Christ) is more than enough to save us, the law itself we find utterly impotent to do so.

As we reach chapter 8, Paul returns to his central theme of chapter 5 concerning our new place in Christ, which he expresses in absolute terms, just as Jesus Himself had already expressed our freedom (from sin and death) in terms which are certain and unquestionable.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be **free indeed**.

John 8:36

However this is only half the story, because we have a responsibility to walk in this freedom, as Paul says to the Galatians,

If we live by the Spirit, **let us also walk** by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

It is to this **walk** that Paul now sets his attention in chapter 8.

However in this initial section of chapter 8 Paul starts with a succinct summary of the position he has so far established, beginning with perhaps the most powerful statement, for us as believers, in the whole of Romans; arguably one of the most powerful statements in the whole of Scripture.

9.1 No Condemnation for Those in the Spirit (vv.1-4)

It is almost impossible to underline the importance of the first verse of chapter 8 in the revelation of every Christian,

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

9.1.1 One Class of Christian

Arguably the greatest single factor in the life of the Christian, is their revelatory experience of **who they are in Christ**.

This statement of Paul is the foundation stone for that revelation and yet for so many seemingly elusive to grasp and even harder to live in the light of. Often

just when some feel they have grasped it, their reactions to situations betray a failure to truly grasp their position 'in Christ'.

Paul has laboured hard through the last few chapters to really spell out our new position in Christ and yet so many commentators have read the last few chapters to reveal two types of Christians, those who struggle in repeated failure and those who seem, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to attain a level of 'overcomer status' whereby they live in perpetual victory. It is almost as if there are two classes of Christian, that of chapter 7, striving and continually failing to live up to God's standards thus feeling perpetually condemned, and the chapter 8 Christian, who has ascended to a plain of existence where the life of Christ flows with ease through their lives.

This interpretative approach to chapters 7 and 8 is sadly based on experience rather than revelation of the Word. Doctrine must never be determined by our experience; it must always be the other way around, firstly because God's Word never changes, whereas we often do, and secondly because God's Word to us often contradicts what the facts on the ground tell us – which Paul referred to back in chapter 4 of Romans in his discussion on Abraham.

No, there are not two classes or types of Christian; there is only those who are in Christ and those who are not. You are either in Christ or you are not.

9.1.2 One Single Judgement

If there is only one class of Christian, if we are either in Christ or not; if we either belong to Him and have died with Him or have not, then there is also only one judgement upon us all, who are in Christ. It is the same judgement that Christ Himself was subject to upon the Cross. We have not been judged on the basis of our own sin, but on the basis of Christ's finished and complete work upon the Cross. Speaking of this work, Paul says,

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus was judged by the Father, taking on the sin of the world, but raised to righteousness because He was innocent. He can no longer be condemned for the sins of the world, nor held by the power of death. In that great exchange Paul speaks of above, we took His place as righteous before God when we came into Christ. It is a single judgement that took place in history, never to be repeated, by which we were imputed with the Righteousness of Christ.

Turning to this great declarative statement of Paul's in verse 1, each of his words reveals something important and distinctive concerning this great judgement of God.

- **An Eternal Judgement**

“There is ... now”

Paul’s “now” is not here referring to the moment his letter was composed, nor the moment it was read by the church in Rome. He is referring instead to the eternal now of God. It is an eternal judgement that has been made upon those who are in Christ. The judgement has been made in the eternal courts of heaven, upon the Son, and all who are in Him. As He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit at the direction of the Father, Jesus was vindicated, as the early church creed recited by Paul confirms,

He was manifested in the flesh, **vindicated by the Spirit**, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Importantly for us, as those who are in Christ, ‘there is now’ is continually true, moment by moment. In every passing moment there is no condemnation for us in Christ. It is just as true for us now as it was yesterday, or it will be tomorrow, or indeed for the rest of eternity. This is crucial for us to grasp, because our feelings change from day to day, but our position in Christ does not change. Those in Christ live in the ‘now’ of God’s eternal judgement.

- **An Irrevocable Judgement**

“Therefore”

Paul is here referring back to the work of Christ, which he been explaining over the last 3 chapters. He is only able to make this statement on the basis of the doctrine of the atonement in these chapters. The atonement for sin provided by Christ Jesus was both complete and irrevocable, as He Himself declared, “It is finished” (**John 19:30**).

Paul summarises, over the next few verses, the work of Christ, which is a completely solid foundation on which we stand. Once again Paul shows us the Godhead in unison,

- **Authored by the Father (v.3 ‘For God has done’)** – Romans lays out of the ‘Gospel of God’, not the gospel of man. We noted in chapter 5, that it has none of man’s fingerprints on it, for it was achieved whilst man was still His enemy. How often we forget this and consider at moments of weakness that it depends on us to any degree! To properly understand the rest of this chapter we have to keep in mind God’s ownership of us and our destiny, ‘the author and finisher of our faith’.⁶¹ We shall come back to this later in the chapter.⁶²

⁶¹ Hebrews 12:2 (NJKV)

⁶² Cf. Romans 8:28-31



- **Appearance of the Son (v.3 ‘By sending His Son’)** – Paul explains that because God’s law, which is good and eternal, was unable to save us in our sinful state because it was weakened by the flesh (dominated by sin), Jesus accomplished by coming like God’s Trojan horse, in the ‘appearance of sinful flesh’ and yet remaining without sin. Even the powers of darkness were fooled into thinking they had Him where they wanted Him, condemned by His Father. However although like Adam He was able to sin (the writer to the Hebrews tells us He was tempted in every way as we are,) He chose not to sin, because He was not dominated by the sinful nature from birth as we were. An exchange thereby took place by which God achieved His goal: -
 - Sin was condemned IN HIM - He took our place of condemnation (v.3)
 - God’s law has been fulfilled IN US - We took His place of righteous innocence (v.4)
- **According to the Holy Spirit (vv.2&4)** – In verse 2 Paul explains that it is the law of the Spirit that has set us free from the law, which could only bring us sin and death by our condemnation under its terms. As we have seen the ‘law of the Spirit’ now rules our lives because we are alive with the life of the Spirit. It is now the normal inclination of our reborn spirits. Under the law of the Spirit we have exchanged places with Christ, and thereby the requirements of the law are met, and indeed exceeded, in us. In verse 4 Paul describes us as those who now live ‘according’ to the Spirit. This word in the Greek is *katá*, a preposition meaning ‘down from’ which suggests domination. We are those whose conduct is now dominated by the life of the Spirit of Christ, instead of the sinful nature which brought us only sin and death. More literally, we are ‘Spiritually minded’.

- **An Absolute Judgement**

“No Condemnation”

The word Paul uses here for condemnation means “punishment following a judicial sentence.” It is the legal, forensic opposite of justification.⁶³ This is incredibly important for us to understand, because Paul is using a negative to state a positive thing for us. It is similar to that great verse in chapter 1, where Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel ..., what he was saying was that he was very proud of the gospel. It is a way of emphasizing

⁶³ Utey, R. J. D. (1998). Vol. Volume 5: The Gospel According to Paul: Romans. Study Guide Commentary Series (Ro 8:1). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

something strongly. Here Paul does the same, he is telling us what we don't have, what we are not subject to, which is condemnation. In other words he is emphasising what we do have, which is a legal pronouncement over us, once for all time, that we are justified in the sight of God, the judge of all the earth. God has not 'let us off', nor forgotten to judge us. We have indeed been eternally judged as righteous by God Himself, and therefore cannot be condemned by any authority lesser than He!

We have to understand two things about the absoluteness of this judgement then: -

- Once for all time – the judgement is singular inasmuch as it is declared over Christ and all who belong to Him, but it is also singular in history.
- All or nothing – the judgement of God was not by degree, it was either guilty or not guilty.

The implications of these things for us, is that we can never be judged again and we cannot do anything to add nor detract from that judgement upon us.

Now at this point, we have to address certain thoughts and doubts to which we are subject to at different moments. Usually when dealing with sin in our lives, we slip into a thought pattern where we either feel we now stand condemned by God's law or we need to change our conduct to regain our place of standing before Him.

Not the Hokey and Cokey

Paul has clearly shown us in chapter 6 that if we died with Him then we have risen with Him. There is no halfway position for us; we are not prisoners out on parole living in a halfway house being reformed. Our position in Christ is absolute not by degree. We are not part-justified, or part-saved. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones explains why a misunderstanding of Paul's statement in Romans 8:1 cause many Christians so many problems:

There are many who misunderstand this. They seem to think of the Christian as a man who, if he confesses his sin and asks for forgiveness, is forgiven. At that moment he is not under condemnation. But then if he should sin again he is back once more under condemnation. Then he repents and confesses his sin again, and asks for pardon, and he is cleansed once more. So then the Christian is a man who is constantly passing from one state to the other; back and forth; condemned, not condemned. Now that, according to the Apostle, is a wholly mistaken notion, and a complete failure to understand the position. The Christian is a man who can never be condemned, he can never come into a state of condemnation again. 'No condemnation'! The Apostle is not talking

about his experience, but his position, his standing, his status; he is in a position in which, being justified, he can never come again under condemnation. That is the meaning of the word 'no'. It means 'Never'.⁶⁴

Romans 8:1

The implications of what is being said here cannot be overstated; they are simply huge and life changing! How many times have we felt like the Christian above, considering ourselves doing some sort of hokey cokey with our state before God, instead of absolutely justified by the blood of Christ?

If the devil tries to convict us of sin then our answer should be Romans 8:1, we cannot be condemned! Every sin we have committed and will go on to commit has been already dealt with. Provision was already made in the death of Christ. We must of course allow the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, in order to lead us away from it, but we must never allow ourselves to feel condemned, for that is no longer possible for us who are in Christ. The judgement of God is absolute and it liberates us from any kind of condemnation.

- **An Inclusive Judgement**

“For Those in Christ Jesus”

Lastly, we come to those who are subject to this great truth. As we have said there is only one class of Christian. You are either in Christ or you are not! Many Christians spend their lives wondering whether they are truly His or not, because they take their conduct as an indication of whether this be true of them or not. As we have seen our justification has nothing whatsoever to do with our conduct - past, present or future.

Paul goes to great lengths in his letter to the Romans to explain the absoluteness of our joining with Christ in His death and resurrection, the irrevocability of what God has done for us and in us; he has dealt with possible objections concerning doubts we may have about any residual power of our old nature may have over us and the jurisdiction over us. In this chapter he will go on to show us what we can expect from the seed of Christ growing in us and the fact that we cannot now be separated from His love. However what Paul cannot do for us is give us an inner assurance that we are one of 'those in Christ'. That can only come from the Holy Spirit Himself witnessing within us⁶⁵, which Paul turns to later in this chapter.

⁶⁴ The Law: Its Functions and Limits, (Romans 7:1-8:4), Page 271; Lloyd Jones, D M (© Lady Catherwood and Mrs Ann Beatt 1973), The Banner of Truth Trust.

⁶⁵ Romans 8:15

9.2 No Life For Those in the Flesh (vv.5-8)

Moving onto verse 5, we need to be clear, especially in light of the truths we have examined in verses 1-4, that Paul is now referring to those who are not 'in Christ'. As we have said many Christians think that being in Christ is like the hokey cokey (in and out, in and out), but this demonstrates a failure to understand what has taken place in their 'joining with Christ in His death'.⁶⁶

9.2.1 From Justification to Sanctification

It is important to note that Paul moved in verse 4b from justification to sanctification. We have already learned from our studies that if we are truly His, and truly justified before God, then our sanctification will inevitably follow⁶⁷ because the seed of Christ is in us so we can no longer live in sin and because in this new union we have been raised to bear fruit for God.⁶⁸ Fruit is the bi-product of sanctification, as we are transformed from one degree of glory to another.

So at the outset of these verses we need to understand that Paul is not here stating that if we pursue the flesh these things will be true of us as Christians, nor is he saying that if unbelievers try to apply their minds to the things of the Spirit they will become Christians. As we have said, we are not saved by degree; we are sanctified by degree over time, but justified completely in a single moment of history.

The statements Paul makes in these verses are therefore simply what we can inevitably expect from those who are not in Christ.

9.2.2 From Spiritual Death Comes Only Death (vv.5-6)

The contrast between those in and out of Christ is that their minds are set on opposite things. This is because the flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other,

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:17-18

Does this mean that Christians never think of anything other than heavenly realities? Does it mean that those outside of Christ never turn their thoughts heavenwards? No, the word Paul uses here in Romans for mind is 'phroneo' which

⁶⁶ Romans 6:3

⁶⁷ Romans 6:2

⁶⁸ Romans 7:4



means to 'direct the mind to something, to seek or strive for'⁶⁹. He is referring to the underlying driving force in a person's life.

The makeup of man is body, soul (mind) and spirit. When Adam sinned, he experienced a spiritual death. No longer did he have spiritual life inside of him; he was now spiritually dead. He became incapable of the relationship which God had intended Adam to have with Himself. What Adam was left with was a sinful nature that took control of him and drove his passions and desires. This is true of every descendant that followed, except for one, Jesus.

This means that no matter how much good an individual may strive to bring to the world, they will also bring sin and more than that they will be utterly incapable of bringing glory to God, which is man's true calling and purpose. What is both man's burden and his source of hope, is the fact that he remains body, soul and spirit, which means he never finds his fulfilment outside of Christ because there is an integral part of him which is dead.

This is why the unsaved are looking for fulfilment in a way which is different to other animate beings such as animals. A sheep grazing in a field doesn't take time to contemplate its future and whether it is really fulfilled in life; it doesn't have the same longings within to be spiritually alive again, like fallen mankind.

9.2.3 The 'Faithless' Cannot Please God (vv.7-8)

Paul goes further in verses 7 and 8 to say that not only do the unsaved live in spiritual death, but they are unable to please God. There are two principle reasons for this: -

- **Intrinsic Enmity (v.7)** - As we saw in our discussions on chapter 5 man in his fallen state is in a state of war with God. There is an inbuilt hostility and enmity toward God.

The word Paul uses here in verse 7 for the mind controlled by the sinful nature being **hostile** to God, is *échthra*, which is a sworn enemy. The word he uses concerning its refusal to **submit** is illuminating in understanding Paul's description,

hypotássō (submit)- to arrange under, to subordinate oneself. A Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader"⁷⁰

Those dominated by the sinful nature are unable to follow the command of the Lord, because there is something in the core of their nature which pulls them away from God's will. In essence, this is the sinful nature; it

⁶⁹ Wuest K, *Words Studies in the Greek New Testament (Vol.1)*, page 103; © 1973 Wm. B. Publishing Company.

⁷⁰ Thayer's Greek Lexicon

cannot help but seek its own end, and is therefore incapable of bringing glory to God, inevitably setting itself up against God.

- **Inability to Relate (v.8)** - Apart from an inbuilt enmity caused by the sinful nature, those who are spiritually dead have no ability to even relate to God. In verse 7 Paul describes the inbuilt enmity, and then in verse 8 he explains that even if they wished to please God they are unable to do so. We should ask ourselves why this is; surely if the unsaved are well intentioned God will be pleased by that? Are there not many unsaved who have served God's purposes even though they remained unregenerate, by intention or purely because of God's providential will?

That great chapter in our Bibles concerning faith, Hebrews 11 has the answer for us: -

And **without faith it is impossible to please him**, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

We can only relate to God when we are alive spiritually, for He is spiritual, so we are to communicate with Him spirit to Spirit.⁷¹ The writer to the Hebrews shows us two reasons why faith pleases God: -

- **God is REAL** - We must believe that He IS; the great 'I AM', the uncreated all-sufficient One, to and from whom nothing can be added or taken away.
- **God is a REWARDER** - God rewards those who seek Him. John Piper puts it this way,

"Behind the assertion that God is rewarding is the fact that God is so full and so completely self-sufficient that he overflows."⁷²

John Piper

In other words if we understand who God is, then we will approach Him in a way that recognises He doesn't need us, but instead He is our eternal source.

So the reason why any 'sacrifice' offered by the unsaved is not acceptable to God because it is based on the premise that it somehow adds to God, that He is somehow in need of it - hence the Bible describes these as 'works' because the

⁷¹ Psalm 42:7

⁷² John Piper. © 2013 Desiring God Foundation.

implication is that to some degree our actions can carry favour with God and earn His approval and acceptance.

Faith recognises that nothing can do that. Faith understands the lesson of the law, which is that there is nothing we can do to make ourselves worthy, that we can only approach God on the basis of grace, letting go of our works (which Paul describes his as ‘dung’⁷³) in order to embrace the work of Christ.

9.3 No Longer Dominated by the Natural (vv.9–11)

If by verse 9 we are in any doubt into which camp we fall, Paul is unequivocal with us, when he says “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit”. So let us clear up exactly what ‘flesh’ is and what way Paul is actually using it here in this context.

9.3.1 ‘In the Flesh’ vs. ‘In the Spirit’

The word used in the New Testament for ‘flesh’ is the Greek word *sarx*. There is no mystery to this word, nor any hidden metaphorical meaning. It simply means our physical flesh. So we can say from the outset that when tells us we are ‘in the Spirit’ he does not mean we have no physical form. It is plain to see that we still have physical bodies (*sarx*), Jesus had one too. So it clearly cannot indicate the presence of sin or sinfulness.

The flesh is that part of man that is purely physical: the part that only responds to the input of his five natural senses, that only trusts in its own natural resources and abilities, and is only motivated by natural appetites and desires. As such, although our flesh is not itself evil or sinful, our flesh will cause us to sin if we do not rule over it and cause it to submit to the higher way of the Spirit. A way that is not governed by what we see with our eyes, not driven by our self-centred desires or demands, but involves seeking after God, putting our faith in him, and denying ourselves.

Paul’s use of the words ‘in the ...’ here could be translated ‘in the sphere of’. Paul is differentiating between those who function solely in the physical realm and who are dominated by the sinful nature and those who ...

‘... belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

Galatians 5:24

As Paul has already said earlier in chapter 7, we are those who ‘*serve (God) in the new way of the Spirit*’, dependent on the life of the Holy Spirit within us and not the physical senses which make up the flesh.

⁷³ Philippians 3:8

9.3.2 In the Body, Not Yet With the Lord

The Word of God makes it clear that we shall one day be clothed with an immortal body like that Jesus was raised with⁷⁴. We are awaiting glorified, imperishable bodies and until then, Paul explains to the Corinthians, we have 'jars of clay' for bodies,

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you

... 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 12:7-12 & 16-18

Paul speaks here of physical restraints upon us and the discomfort that our bodies can present in this life, but he also speaks of God's purpose in this time of waiting for our redeemed bodies. In verse 7 Paul says that this is to show the surpassing power belongs to God. Jesus, the immortal Son of God, was clothed in a mortal body so that He could live a life dependent not upon Himself but upon the Holy Spirit within Him.

God has deemed it necessary for us to go through the same physical struggles as Jesus did and learn to overcome through the indwelling power of the Spirit within us, so that we (verse 18) '*look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen*'. God's heart in all this is to prepare us for eternal glory, which as we said early on in our studies is always God's end-game.

Returning to our verses in Romans 8, Paul draws our attention in verse 10 to the mortality of our bodies ('death') and the life of the Spirit ... 'because of righteousness' - harmony with the will of God ensures eternal life, whereas the opposite earns death as its wage.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 15

⁷⁵ Romans 6:23



Paul's final thought in verse 11 is therefore that the life of the Spirit is brought into sharp contrast with the mortality of our bodies, such that the former cannot help but overflow into the latter. God has not stopped the decay of our bodies, but He has deemed that they evidence the overcoming life of the Spirit; that our bodies should radiate with the life of Christ. The extent to which this happens in each of us Paul does not explicitly define, because it is not formulaic but a mixture of faith and providence.

We shall return to this theme later in this chapter.



| 10 Responding Through The Spirit Of Adoption

- 10.1 Led into Life
- 10.2 Placed into Sonship
- 10.3 Witnessed as Heirs

10 Reliant Upon The Life Of The Spirit (8:12-17)

So far we have focussed upon the matter of our freedom from sin and the condemnation of the law, chapters 6 and 7 in some ways being parentheses or departures from Paul's main thrust in chapter 5. At the beginning of chapter 8 Paul summarises those arguments for us and now in verse 12, however now we see him return to his main theme.

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

Romans 8:12-17

Paul's main theme is how God the Father has brought us near through His Son, Jesus; our heritage is now from Christ and not from Adam. Paul really picks up on this again in verse 12. Paul's focus now is not on breaking free of the flesh-dominated living, but that force which does dominate our lives, namely the Holy Spirit.

Although, as we have said, Paul is dealing with how we now walk, his emphasis remains upon God's actions first, and our reaction to them second.

10.1 Led into Life (vv.12-15a)

Those reborn through the Spirit of Christ are inclined to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit. In fact Paul words his statement in such a way as to imply that it evidences their sonship. Jesus told His disciples that this would be their hallmark,

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

John 16:13-15

The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us the truth of the Son, which He in turn received from the Father. The Apostles experienced this as soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. From then on, we can see in Luke's account of the disciples' early days without their Lord, this became their way of life, following the Spirit's leading within them,

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ...

Acts 15:28

In chapter 7 Paul has already talked about the new way of serving God through the Holy Spirit, instead of the old way of the 'written code'. Paul here shows us two ways in which the new way is different: -

- **Drawing not Driving** - The Holy Spirit now became the driving force in their lives. He is the One who draws each of us to Christ, provides us with the faith to believe in Him,⁷⁶ to which we only had to respond to His leading. The Spirit's style of leadership in our lives is one of leading us into righteousness and not driving us into it. In Galatians 3 we find a parallel line of thought from Paul,

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:18

We do not serve out of duty, or because we are slaves to the law, but because we follow the Spirit's prompting in our lives. As Paul has said in chapter 6 (verse 17) where once we were compelled to serve as slaves, we now serve 'from the heart'.

- **Filial Not Fearful** - As sons of God we do not serve out of fear but out of relationship. We have already laboured the point that we should live in fear of the spiritual hokey cokey and so we need not fear for our position. Neither should we be taken up with securing our ongoing justification through a legalistic application of God's 'rules' in our lives. Instead we have been released to serve in a freedom only known by sons of grace, not slaves of law.

The Holy Spirit bears witness within us to our sonship, as we follow His urging to cry out to God - this is a confession of God as Father, in the same way that we confess Jesus as Lord, through the Holy Spirit's prompting.

⁷⁶ Ephesians 2:8

10.2 Placed into Sonship (vv.15–16)

The word ‘adoption’ Paul uses here in verse 15 is made up of two words,

Huiiothesía (adoption) - Made up to two other Greek words, ‘huiós’ (a son) and ‘tithēmi’ (to place)

Paul is explaining how we were placed into sonship, which is a place of standing, of relationship with God our Father. There are two main aspects of sonship here in focus: -

- **Rights of Sonship** - We have little concept of adoption as it was perceived by the Roman audience to whom Paul addressed this letter. In modern Western society today adoption still often carries a stigma to it, along with personal difficulties with social interaction. Among the Greeks and Romans, when a man had no son, he was permitted to adopt one even though not related. He might, if he chose, adopt one of his slaves as a son. The adopted son took the name of the father, and was in every respect regarded and treated as a son.⁷⁷ Far from feeling unwanted, which is the emotion we often associate with adoption today, it spoke of being wanted and ‘chosen’ to be a son with all the rights and privileges of a son.
- **Process of Sonship** - Sonship is a two-way street. It is not only the conferring of rights upon us but also it marks the process of the formation of the Son of God within us,⁷⁸ which Paul goes on to mention later in this chapter.⁷⁹ The writer to the Hebrews describes this process of our maturity as sons of God, as the foundation stones of Christ.⁸⁰ The word for sonship used in this passage is mature sonship. The Holy Spirit takes responsibility for placing us into the mature sonship of Christ.

10.3 Witnessed as Heirs (v.17)

Lastly, Paul points out that if we are children and no longer slaves, then we are also heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ Himself. The Holy Spirit witnesses to us being heirs.

- **Heirs of Opposition** - before we can be heirs of Christ’s glory we must first share in His sufferings. This is not some sense of Roman Catholic penance, because it in no way adds to our worthiness - Paul has clearly established that none of us had any worthiness warranting our salvation - but instead is part of the melding process of Christ with His disciple. They must suffer the same death and face the same opposition, because Jesus learned

⁷⁷ Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. (1998). *Manners & customs of the Bible (Rev. ed.)*. (537). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

⁷⁸ Galatians 4:19

⁷⁹ Romans 8:29

⁸⁰ Hebrews 6:1-3

through His suffering.⁸¹ It is the process of allowing opposing force to come against us that God uses the pressure to test and prove our faith as Peter encourages us,

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6–7

Paul also learned over his life that this process of suffering is how we come to know Christ, in a personal and intimate way⁸². He learned to be like Christ in His death and suffer any discomfort the flesh could throw at him. The Holy Spirit led Jesus toward suffering at points in His life and He will also lead us into it, if we are willing to embrace it as He did. Paul returns to this theme later in the chapter.

- **Heirs of Glory** – this is where we started in chapter 5, the hope of glory. It is a mystery but we are called to share in the glory of Christ. Obviously this does not mean sharing in His adulation from all creation. Christ in us is the hope of glory in our hearts Paul tells the Colossians⁸³. It is this process of the image of the Son of God being formed within each of us, which will reach its zenith as the church, His bride, is presented to Him spotless and perfect. The church in her maturity will reflect the glory of Jesus and it is in this way that we are heirs of His glory and share it with Him, just as Jesus envisaged when he prayed to the Father,

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed ... 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Romans 15:4 NIV

⁸¹ Hebrews 5:8

⁸² Philippians 3:10

⁸³ Colossians 1:27



| 11 Revelation Of The Sons Of Glory

11.1 The Power of Hope

11.2 Future Hopes

11.3 Present Realities

11 Revelation Of The Sons Of Glory (8:18–30)

As we turn to the last half of chapter 8, Paul's language reaches higher to even more lofty truths and revelation which He has received from the Lord.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:18–30

If Paul's letter to the Romans was a musical symphony this part would be a pinnacle to which the music has been slowly building. Paul pulls together all of his earlier musical notes and themes, to produce a triumphant culminating sound concerning what he described at the beginning of the letter as the 'gospel of God'.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Romans 1:1

11.1 The Power of Hope (v.18)

In verse 17, which we looked at in the previous section Paul makes a subtle shift to the future, as his focus moves from sonship to being heirs. After the parenthesis we have seen in chapters 6 and 7 he is bringing us back to the subject of future hopes, which he focussed on in chapter 5 and which are so powerful for us now. Observe the wonderful paraphrase of Paul's words to the Colossians by Eugene Peterson concerning the importance of hope in our lives,

The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by hope.

Colossians 1:5, The Message

In verse 18, the power of hope which Paul has here in mind is to enable our perseverance through sufferings in this life, which God uses to shape our character, again echoing chapter 5. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to envisage their troubles as on a set of scales on the other side of which was their eternal glory,

17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

The importance of hope is therefore to keep us focussed on the eternal things, whilst God Himself shapes and moulds our character in this age (like a potter at the wheel shaping us). The apostle Peter had these same sufferings in mind when he encouraged the early church to deal with persecution,

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.
13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13

Paul now takes time to elaborate on the glory to be revealed and the tension in this age as this glory is anticipated and God's purpose in Christ is worked out.

11.2 Future Hopes (vv.19-27)

Paul speaks of three 'groanings' that are taking place here in this age, by creation, by the sons of God and by the Spirit Himself. Each reveal different aspects of the future hopes to which this age is anchored in the age to come.

11.2.1 The Creation Longs for the Sons of God (v.19-22)

Paul starts with the groanings of 'the creation'. In travail since the day it was subjected to bondage by its Creator in the garden, Paul reveals that the fall begins and ends with mankind ('the ground is cursed because of you'⁸⁵).

- **Nature, red in tooth and claw?** - We see 'nature red in tooth and claw'⁸⁶ every day, which evolutionary thought informs us, is simply part of life, like death itself, enabling nature to improve itself; the process of natural selection. However the Word of God informs us of the truth; the travail of nature is not a process of improvement but rather a state of decay, a suspension of its fullness and destiny.

In verse 20 Paul tells us that the creation was subjected to the curse but 'not willingly'. In other words, unlike man, it made no choice and was imprisoned against its will to 'corruption' (or decay). As intrinsic in the fabric of man to bring glory to God, is the need of the rest of creation to do the same. The creation cannot fully glorify God in this state of bondage, for it is not all that the Father intended it to be. Paul therefore describes this present state as a subjection to 'futility' - a Greek word, **mataiôtēs** which can be defined as '**what is devoid of truth and appropriateness**'⁸⁷.

- **A Prison of Purpose** - This state of bondage is however one not devoid of purpose, but one of hope; a divine hope of restoration. In talking to the crowds on the day of the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost, Peter describes this coming restoration which is the hope of all creation,

[Jesus], whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Acts 3:21

In the pages of Genesis, in the midst of bondage (and death) being brought into the world through the actions of Adam and Eve, we find the seeds of hope, not only in God's promise to send a seed of Adam to restore things as they should but in the measures taken to preserve His creation until that time,

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:24

⁸⁵ Genesis 3:17

⁸⁶ Canto 56, 'In Memoriam A.H.H.' by Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1849.

⁸⁷ Thayer's Greek Lexicon

It was the mercy of God to drive man from the garden to prevent him from reaching the tree of life, through which he would have tasted eternal life instead of being able to die in hope of his deliverance. By extension God made provision for the rest of the creation to be protected from eternal damnation until the seed of Adam could come and restore what had been lost.

And so the creation awaits the release that will come when the sons of God are revealed and their adoption is complete. Finally, Paul gives us a hint of the age to come when he describes creation's groaning as 'the pains of childbirth' (not just 'like' the pains of childbirth). The existing creation is to give birth to a new creation, free in 'the glory of the children of God' (v.21) , i.e., ruled over by men and women who are one with God. Redeemed men and women have followed Jesus into death (initially spiritually, but later physically) so that the old may die and the new may come. The rest of creation likewise will be allowed to die and then be reborn. As Paul put it to the Corinthians, the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality.⁸⁸

11.2.2 The Sons Long for their Father (vv.23-25)

Not only the creation says Paul, but the sons of God also.

- **New Creations?** - It is plain from what we have read so far that although we are called children of God with all the rights and privileges of sonship, we have not yet inherited all that has been bequeathed to us as sons of God. Yet Paul describes an inward groan 'for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies', so we know that adoption is not yet completed; we look forward to the redemption of our bodies which are still subject to decay.

Paul describes us as having the 'firstfruits' of the Spirit, which means that His presence within us is God's guarantee to us that He will bring our adoption through the completion, as Paul said to the Galatians.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:6

The Spirit of God is transforming us from the inside out, from one degree of glory to another,⁸⁹ until we are like Jesus in every way as the Apostle John told the early church.

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:54

⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:18

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:2

There is another element at work here also, bearing in mind Paul was writing to those familiar with Roman customs and practices,

Among the Romans there were two parts to the act of adoption: one a private arrangement between the parties, and the other a formal public declaration of the fact. It is thought by some that the former is referred to in verse 15, and the latter in verse 23, where the apostle speaks of "waiting for the adoption." The servant has been adopted privately, but he is waiting for a formal public declaration of the fact.⁹⁰

We have been adopted by God as His children but there will come a public recognition as the Sons of Glory are revealed to all creation on the day of restoration.

- **A Prison of Patience** - We have already said that the bondage which creation suffers is ultimately for purpose and it is the same with us. As Paul puts it, 'in this hope we were saved' (v.24).

We are saved in anticipation of a future hope which we cannot yet see fully realised. Why? Paul shows us clearly why, when he says we wait for it with patience. He is returning again to the theme of chapter 5, concerning our hope of the glory of God, whereby contrary circumstances test our faith to make our hope even more sure; we are transformed by the whole process of frustration in this age, until we are 'complete' in our character and ready for our responsibilities in the next age. As the apostle James encourages the church,

3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:3-4

11.2.3 The Father Longs for His Purpose (vv. 26-27)

Finally we come to the last 'groan', which is that of the Holy Spirit within us. The purpose of the indwelling Spirit within us, is to enable us to be both transformed into the likeness of Jesus and also to be instrumental to the Father's purpose.

⁹⁰ Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. (1998). *Manners & customs of the Bible (Rev. ed.)* (537). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

The Father commissioned the Son to restore creation through the sacrifice He made for the sins of mankind. Jesus in turn has sent the Holy Spirit to fulfil the same mission by filling each of us, (which Christ could not do being one man). The impetus of the Spirit within us is always for the will of God, as it was within Jesus Himself. Once He was baptised in the Holy Spirit, Jesus was led into the desert to be tested, strengthened and prepared for every encounter the Spirit would then lead Him to, in order that He could carry out His Father's work.

In our 'prison of patience' we learn to listen to the voice of the Shepherd, through the Spirit's leading. We learn through practice to discern the will of God through the inner promptings of His Holy Spirit.

11.3 Present Realities (vv.28-30)

The purpose of these verses is to underline the certainty of our salvation. It is not based purely on future hopes (which keep us anchored into eternity) but also on present realities upon which we can be sure.

11.3.1 Those Who Are Called to be Sons

Verse 28 is one of the most well known amongst Christians and often quoted for our encouragement. There are two elements Paul draws upon in stating those things which are present realities for us.

- **The 'Knowledge' of Calling** - In verse 24 Paul asks the question, 'who hopes for what they already have?' (NIV), for hopes are things we have yet to lay hold of. Now in verse 28, he turns to our present realities, to things which we do have, which are already ours in Christ. They are not future, but instead are present for us. And so Paul can state in verse 28 with confidence, 'And we know'. Paul's confidence rests upon 'calling'. The call of God on our lives gives us all the certainty that we need to stand with confidence in all circumstances. Similarly Paul was able to say to the Philippians that he had learned the secret of contentment in all circumstances. He knew he was called by God and nothing could change or hinder that fact because God's call is irrevocable.⁹¹
- **The 'Purpose' of Calling** - 'God works all things together for our good' we might have often heard it said. So often we recall the first half of this verse but not the second. God's work in our lives is always shaped by His purpose. It is when Christians forget this fact they often struggle to see His hand in their lives at all. The verses preceding this one speak of the Spirit's intercession in accordance with the will of God. In verse 28 Paul links this with our calling. Our calling always relates to God's Purpose. He works all things in our lives to this end. When writing to the Ephesians of his own calling to preach to the Gentiles Paul states that this 'was according to the

⁹¹ Romans 11:29

eternal purpose that he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord⁹². To see the hand of God in our lives we need always to remember the purpose of God, and that the centre of that purpose is Christ Jesus, our Lord. This is the test of those 'who love God' – are they seeking the gifts or the giver, our true prize?

- **The 'Working Together' of Calling** – Although some Christians draw confidence from their calling and some even orient themselves to God's purpose, in the midst of their circumstances, many still regard God as the complete author of all that befalls them. Some consider God as sending every fortune and misfortune our way. They may consider themselves submitting to God's sovereignty, almost to the point of fatalism; 'if it be your will oh Lord'. The danger here is to view God as almost mean and unfeeling, whereas the Scripture tells us we have a great high priest who can empathise with us. It can also result in us neglecting to take responsibility for the choices we make and the consequences that follow. The NIV renders this verse well, 'And we know that in all things God works'. We find ourselves in all sorts of circumstances, many by our own hand (and many not), which whilst God has allowed into our lives, He has not necessarily authored. When we turn to Him and submit to Him then He begins to work in those circumstances to shape them for our good, according to His purpose in our lives. From the ashes of terrible failure God can raise up victory in our lives.

11.3.2 Those Who Are Transformed into Sons (vv.29–30)

In these verses Paul uses a literary construction known as 'sorites',⁹³ whereby Paul builds from God's foreknowledge in eternity past to the climax of our glorification in eternity future. There are five stages, which Charles Cranfield⁹⁴ describes as links in a chain, each necessarily leading to the next in a natural succession of events, from eternity past to eternity future; from beginning to end.

1. **For those whom He foreknew** – God is bigger than time, which like everything else exists in Him, so He sees our beginning and our end at the same time. He sees us finishing the race before we have even started it. The Greek word Paul uses here, *proginóskō*, from which we derive our modern term, prognosis. It was God's prognosis over us before the beginning of time that we would come to know Him through Jesus Christ. We are not here by accident.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter uses this same word in conjunction with the phrase 'by the determinate counsel and

⁹² Ephesians 3:1

⁹³ 'Sorites' is a literary device in which the logical predicate of one clause becomes the logical subject of the next.

⁹⁴ C E B Cranfield, *Romans (a shorter commentary)* (pages 205-206), © 1985 T & T Clark Ltd

foreknowledge of God'.⁹⁵ Some theologians suggest in His foreknowledge, God also predetermines events and actions.⁹⁶ We know from reading Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that the predetermined events in Israel's history whilst born out of a multitude of individual choices made by her people, only served to illuminate the way to the gospel of Christ.⁹⁷ This leads us onto predestination ...

2. **He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son** – The Greek word Paul uses here for 'predestined' is *proorízō*, which is to determine something beforehand and as we have suggested above is closely related to God's foreknowledge. It comes from two other words, 'pro' meaning 'beforehand' and 'horízō', which means to mark out the boundaries or limits. As Wuest puts,

“Those foreordained now have special limitations put upon them provided within the scope of the salvation which they are to receive, namely, to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, and to be placed as adult sons” ⁹⁸

The word 'conformed' in Greek is *symmorphos*, which means to render like or to have the same form as another. It comes from a noun, *morphé* which refers to the outward expression of an inward nature or essence. It is the inner transformation of our character that results in a transformation of our outward expression. We are being transformed from the inside out, into the image and reflection of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is in fulfilment of God's original intention for man,⁹⁹ to be made in his image; it is also the original divine mandate given to mankind to fill the cosmos with the image of God. This is how and why Jesus became the firstborn amongst many brothers, as we are conformed to His image and character; as Paul described it to the Colossians, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' ¹⁰⁰

3. **Those whom He predestined He also called** – Now we move from eternity past into history, our calling. In writing to the church the apostle Peter addresses them as the 'called out ones'¹⁰¹ refers to the call they had received from God,

⁹⁵ Acts 2:23 (Young's Literal Translation)

⁹⁶ Cf. Acts 17:26 – God sets the times for every nation, their rise and fall.

⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:11

⁹⁸ Wuest K, *Words Studies in the Greek New Testament (Vol.1)*, page 144, © 1973 Wm. B. Publishing Company.

⁹⁹ Genesis 1:26

¹⁰⁰ Colossians 1:27

¹⁰¹ Colossians 1:27

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

1 Peter 2:9

God had chosen us, set us apart before the foundation of the earth, to be exclusively His and at a point in our history He then called us out. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to the point where we will respond to this call on our life. The Bible only ever presents us with the outcome that those who are truly chosen and ‘elect’ of God respond obediently to the call of God on their lives in the timing of God. We are called out of our old lives to serve the purpose of God (verse 28), specifically the good works He has prepared for us in advance to do as part of building His Kingdom.¹⁰²

4. **Those whom He called He also justified** – It is our response by faith to the call of God on our lives that enables us to be justified before God. Paul has gone into great detail about how the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, simply by our faith which completely lets go of our own works and embraces the work of Christ, which alone can save us.
5. **Those whom He justified He also glorified** – Finally we arrive back at glorification – the creation of a new race of men and women, sharing and displaying God’s glory.¹⁰³ In describing us as ‘glorified’ (aorist, past tense) Paul is describing something that is arguably more future than present for us. However Hebrew thought, in which Paul was of course expertly trained, often employed what is sometimes called the ‘prophetic past’, whereby something future was described in the past (aorist) tense so certain was its outcome. Once again Paul is keen for us to understand the certainty of our hope in Christ.

Our glorification is the culmination of the whole process of adoption for us, but it has already begun for us,

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Above is a Biblical definition of ‘sanctification’, our progressive conformity to the image of Christ. The difference between our sanctification and our glorification is purely one of degree. Commenting on the relationship between the two, FF Bruce explains this and at the same time demonstrates how Paul uses this to reinforce the assurance of our salvation,

¹⁰² Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰³ Romans 5:2



Sanctification is glory begun; glory is sanctification consummated. Paul looks forward to the consummation of the work of grace – a consummation guaranteed by its inception: ‘He who began a good work in you will bring it completion at the day of Jesus Christ.’¹⁰⁴

Phil 1:6

Our glorification has begun, it has been foreordained by God. As Cranfield puts it,

‘the divine decision has been taken, although its consummation has not (yet) been consummated’¹⁰⁵

It is complete in our head, Christ Jesus, but His body is yet to come into Her full glory. Jesus is the firstfruits, the firstborn, and our guarantee of the completion of God’s work in us, His sons of Glory.

¹⁰⁴ Romans, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, page 168. © F F Bruce 1985.

¹⁰⁵ C E B Cranfield, Romans (a shorter commentary) (page 206), © 1985 T & T Clark Ltd



| 12 Recipients Of Inseparable Love

- 12.1 Who Can Stand Against Us?
- 12.2 Who Can Condemn Us?
- 12.3 Who Can Separate Us?

12 Recipients Of Inseparable Love (8:31–39)

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

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

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

Romans 8:31–39

In this final section of Romans 8, Paul puts three rhetorical questions to us ... ‘who can be against us?’ (v.31), ‘who can bring any charge against us?’ (v.33) and ‘who shall separate us?’ (v.35). It is considered by many to be one of Paul’s most lyrical compositions.

These questions represent the pinnacle of Paul’s arguments over the last four chapters of our studies. They represent the natural conclusion of everything he has told us in the previous 3½ chapters. Let’s look at each of the three questions and Paul’s resounding replies.

As we go through this section it is worth noting that Paul’s focus in the last section was on the work of the Spirit within us, to prepare us for glory, whereas the focus here becomes the Father and the Son.

12.1 Who Can Stand Against Us? (vv.31–32)

12.1.1 God is For Us (v.31)

Paul’s first question is a good way of summarising for us the last 3 chapters. ‘What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us ...?’, he asks, which implies that the preceding chapters demonstrate above all things how utterly and completely God is for us! Often we simply forget this which is betrayed in our concerns about how He regards us or will treat us.

Like Romans 8:1, this statement has an incredible implication for us. If God is really for us, then anyone who stands against us, stands against God Himself. There is no power in heaven or earth capable of doing that.

Also, when we need something from the Lord, we sometimes treat the Lord as we would our parents when we were children, wanting to catch them in a good mood to ask. God is not subject to mood swings like parents, nor is He imperfect like parents, as Jesus Himself reminded us,

11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 11:11-13

12.1.2 God Has Already Given Us His Best (v.32)

Paul's reference to the sacrifice of God's son has obvious echoes of the account in Genesis of Abraham's testing through the sacrifice of Isaac. This historical event was prophetically pointing forward to God the Father sacrificing His Son for us. God was asking Abraham to do something that He Himself had already decided in eternity past to do. The difference between them was God knew all along that Abraham would not have to go through the pain caused by actually making the sacrifice whereas God Himself did.

He (God) said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

Genesis 22:12

God did not withhold His Son from being sacrificed for you and me. Paul's point is that there can be no greater demonstration of the Father's love for us. When we are tempted to doubt either God's support for us or His provision in any given situation, we need only remember that God has already given us the most precious thing He has.

Whenever we doubt that love, we lose sight of what He has already done. It is unequivocal and undisputable. It is the foundation of this great salvation.

12.2 Who Can Condemn Us? (vv.33-34)

12.2.1 The Accuser 'Without'

If no one can stand against us (because God is for us), then the next question to ask is 'who could bring a charge against us?' Historically the tactic of Satan and

his demons is if they cannot bring down one of God's children then they will look to accuse them, to solicit the condemnation of God Himself upon us. This is why Revelation describes Satan as 'the accuser of our brothers' who 'accuses them day and night before our God'.¹⁰⁶

In his letter to the early church, the apostle John assures us that if we are faithful to confess our sins to Him, He is faithful to forgive us.¹⁰⁷ Many have argued that Paul is implying in these few verses that Jesus is now the one with the sole right to condemn having taken on the sin of the world, He will come one day to judge it. Instead of condemning us however, His position is one of intercessor before the Father claiming us as His own. John describes Jesus' advocate role thus,

... if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1b

12.2.2 The Accuser 'Within'

The other main source of condemnation comes from within us. We have already spent time looking at Paul's words at the beginning of chapter 8. No condemnation can be brought upon us, from ourselves, the enemy, or even God Himself, for His judgement is irrevocable for the elect. Once again we face the very real challenge of whether we are living in the light of this fact or not. A true understanding of this can change our daily lives.

The answer is not, as the world would have us believe, to learn to love ourselves, but instead to fully understand the efficacy of Christ's death in imputing His unassailable righteousness to us, in which we can come with boldness¹⁰⁸ to stand before God.¹⁰⁹

12.3 Who Can Separate Us? (vv.35–39)

12.3.1 Our Greatest Fear?

Paul's last question is perhaps tapping into the greatest recurrent fear for many Christians. Could something or someone come between us and Christ? Paul's reply is emphatic and comprehensive which underlines our need to understand the inseparability of the love of God the Father from us, that is in Christ Jesus. Paul lists every conceivable power, force, concept, person and factor which our minds could consider a possible source of our separation from God's love.

¹⁰⁶ Revelation 12:10

¹⁰⁷ 1 John 1:9

¹⁰⁸ Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁰⁹ Romans 5:2

12.3.2 Our Necessary Testing (vv.36–37)

Interestingly Paul quotes here from Psalm 44, where Israel’s cry goes out to God for rescue from danger and distress,

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

Psalm 44:22

This could be considered cold comfort in the middle of a passage of assurance dealing with our greatest fear of separation from His love. However, once again Paul is returning us to one of the themes he started in chapter 5. There he talked of our ‘hope of glory’ and if you remember he took us on a journey through the testing of that hope, such that it becomes strengthened and more sure of what it is reaching for.

In verse 37, Paul tells us that God’s love won’t enable us to avoid any of these things, but it will ensure that ‘in all these things we are more than conquerors’. This will remind us of David’s words in a Psalm entitled, ‘Taste and See That the Lord is Good’,

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Psalm 34:19

Jesus clearly warned those who chose to follow Him that He did not come to deliver them from hardship and opposition. Indeed He promised we could expect it.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Tribulation is not something that should rob us of our peace, because firstly our peace comes from Jesus Himself (‘in me you may have peace’) and secondly because Jesus is able to overcome any tribulation that comes our way. As we can see above, David had learned that God often chose to deliver out of the midst of trouble – why? To allow us to face something that tests our faith in Him, which is the only way our faith can grow and be purified. ¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ 1 Peter 1:7

12.3.3 Our Mystical Union (vv.38-39)

The very last words of the chapter are of great significance in understanding Paul's overall assurance to us, 'the love of God (the Father) in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Here we arrive right back at the beginning of chapter 5, which is that we have been reconciled with the Father, through the Son. We are recipients of inseparable love **through Christ Jesus our Lord**.

At the heart of this statement is the union of Christ with the believer at the spirit-level, our innermost being. Our union with Christ is a mystery, which we understand only in part now. As believers, we are being transformed from the inside out, such that the join between us and Him is indistinguishable. This in essence is why we can be assured of being inseparable from Him. He is a part of us and we a part of Him; to use Paul's analogy to the Ephesians, as surely as my head is attached to my body.

Of all aspects of our salvation which we have looked at, this mystical union is perhaps the most wonderful and mysterious truth of all. Maybe one day, when our adoption is complete, we shall understand this mystery and truly appreciate what a great salvation we have had all along ...

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

13 Closing Thoughts (5:1–8:39)

The closing thoughts to this module are yours. Please use this page to reflect back over the preceding sections and the teaching accompanying this material to write your own summary of chapters 5-8. Write down the revelations you have received over the course, the challenges to your thinking that you don't wish to forget or let go of, using this page as a reminder to go back over these things until they become part of your daily revelation and life ...