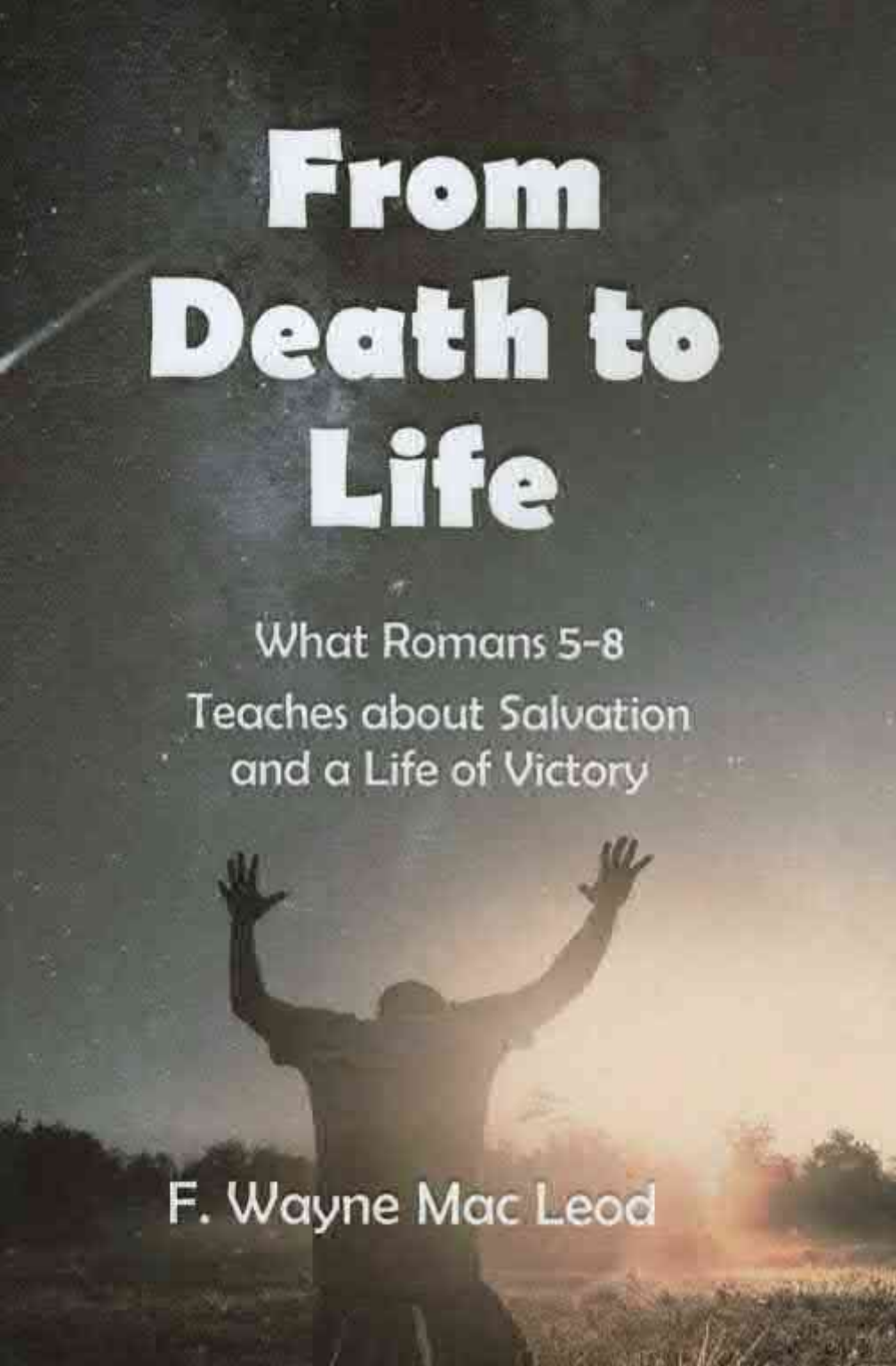


From Death to Life

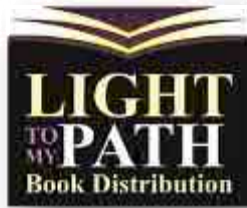
What Romans 5-8
Teaches about Salvation
and a Life of Victory

F. Wayne MacLeod

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a person standing in a field, seen from behind with their arms raised high in a gesture of praise or triumph. The person is silhouetted against a bright, low sun that creates a strong lens flare and illuminates the scene with a warm, golden light. The sky is a mix of dark and light tones, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of hope, victory, and spiritual uplift.

From Death to Life

*What Romans 5-8 Teaches about the Plan of God
for Salvation and a Life of Victory*



F. Wayne Mac Leod

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From Death to Life

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CHAPTER 1 -

THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM OF SIN AND DEATH

Read Romans 5:12-14

[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. (Romans 5)

Romans 5-8 contains some of the most significant theological teachings about salvation and the Christian life in the Bible. These chapters merit much more than I can give in this brief study, but this will be a beginning for us. My prayer is that the truths we examine here will have an impact on the spiritual life of the reader and help him or her to grasp more fully what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on their behalf.

I want to begin with the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 5:12-14:

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. (Romans 5)

Notice that these verses begin with the word “therefore.” The word implies that what follows is based on what the apostle has already said. I will not go into detail about this here. Suffice it to say that the apostle has been presenting the Romans with the truth that they could have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on their behalf. What follows is the development of this wonderful truth and is the focus of this study.

In Romans 5:12-14 the apostle Paul presents the Romans with some fundamental truths. Let’s take a moment to consider these truths by way of introduction.

Sin Came into the World Through One Man

Paul begins by telling us that sin came into the world through one man. Paul’s statement brings us back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 and the story of how Eve, tempted by Satan, picked fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and brought it to her husband. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from this tree. By partaking of its fruit, Adam and his wife disobeyed God. Through them, sin entered the world for the first time.

When God created the world, He approved of all He had made:

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1)

Before sin, creation was perfect. Adam lived in communion with His Creator. With the entrance of sin, however, everything Adam and Eve knew would change.

Death Came into the World Through Sin

Paul moves on in these verses to make a second point. He tells us that death came into the world through sin. What we need to understand is that the word death does not just refer to Adam and Eve but to all of God's creation.

Genesis is quite clear about the effect of death on creation. We see for example that the moment sin entered the world, Adam and Eve experienced its deadly consequences in their relationships. First, Genesis 3:7 tells us:

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3)

With the entrance of sin came shame. For the first time, Adam and Eve hid from each other. The innocence of their relationship disappeared. What was true in their relationship with each other was also true in their relationship with God. Genesis 3 recounts the first encounter with God after sin entered the world:

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." (Genesis 3)

When Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the garden, their response was to hide from Him. When asked why they were hiding, Adam responded by telling God that he was naked and afraid. Sin brought both shame and fear. This shame and fear separated them from fellowship with God.

We see the effect of sin and death in relationships today in the breakup of marriages and families. We see it in the betrayal of friendship and in the wars that ravage our earth. We see prisons filled with people who have shown disrespect for other human beings by stealing from them, abusing them, or taking their lives. Sin brought death to relationships.

Broken relationships were not the only effect of sin and death. Pain and suffering also entered the earth, and for the first time Adam and his wife would know what it was like to hurt physically:

16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." 17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,'

cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life (Genesis 3)

There would be suffering in childbirth for the woman. Adam would experience the back-breaking work of tilling the ground. Pain and suffering on this earth are the result of sin and death. This curse of death comes in the form of the many diseases that plague us throughout our lives. Our hospitals are filled with people who suffer the effects of sin and death. Diseases strip us of our loved ones and end the lives of countless people each day. Again, this is the effect of sin and death that came to this earth as a result of sin that entered the garden of Eden.

The earth itself would also experience death because of sin. Listen to the words of God to Adam in Genesis 3:17-19)

17 ... cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread... (Genesis 3)

The earth would no longer produce fruit without a struggle. Thorns and thistles now compete with the fruit of the land. Adam would be required to work hard to bring life out of the ground. Sin brought a curse on the earth. This curse has brought great physical tragedies through floods, famines, earthquakes, violent storms and many other natural disasters.

Notice finally in Genesis 3 that God told Adam and Eve that they would return to the dust in death.

19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3)

From the moment sin entered the world, Adam and Eve began to die. That process of death would take its toll on their body over the years. They would weaken with age. Their body would slowly shut down until it could no longer function. Death would come to both Adam and Eve.

From the moment sin entered the world everything would begin to age. Human bodies would grow old and die. The earth became sick and poured out diseases upon its inhabitants. Natural disasters and devastation plagued the planet. Relationships were broken, and grief and suffering was the result. Nations would rise against nations in battle. Husbands would betray wives. The once perfect earth would be cursed and riddled with sin and death. Children would be born to die. They would live in a painful and fallen world. Despair and hopelessness would abound.

Death Spread to all Men

Paul continues in these verses to tell us that death was not localized to one region or one family. It would not be contained in one generation but would spread throughout the world and to every generation that followed Adam and Eve. Sin filled the earth—no one escaped its infection.

We see the effects of sin in our day in broken relationships and crimes of all kinds. We see its impact on our earth as we struggle with pollution and natural disasters. We stand by helplessly as diseases wipe out large numbers of people. Our struggle with cancer or AIDS and other such sicknesses show us that death is around us.

We need to look beyond these obvious signs of sin and death in our society to its impact on our own hearts and minds. We feel the attraction to sinful ways and practices. We wrestle with sinful thoughts on a daily basis. We can see the deadness of sin in our relationship with our Creator. We too tend to hide from Him, like Adam and Eve not wanting Him to see us in our naked and sinful state. Deep down, like them, we feel shame.

Not one of us who can say that we have not sinned against God. Paul makes it clear that we have all sinned (Romans 5:12). Sin and death surround us. Sin and death define us. Like a deadly disease, sin and death have been passed on to every man and women—no one escapes its fury.

Sin was in the World Before the Law

In Romans 5:13 Paul brings another two important details to our attention. The first is that a person cannot break the law if it does not exist. The second is that before God gave the law through Moses, the punishment of death fell on the descendants of Adam even though they had not personally eaten from the forbidden tree.

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 (Romans 5)

This statement of Paul merits some consideration. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on Romans 5:13 says the following:

Ro 5:13 For until the law sin was in the world - As death reigned from Adam to Moses, so also did sin. Now, as

there was no written law from Adam to that given to Moses, the death that prevailed could not be the breach of that law; for sin, so as to be punished with temporal death, is not imputed where there is no law, which shows the penalty of sin to be death. Therefore, men are not subjected to death for their own personal transgressions, but for the sin of Adam; as, through his transgression, all come into the world with the seeds of death and corruption in their own nature, superadded to their moral depravity. All are sinful - all are mortal - and all must die. (Clark, Adam, Commentary on the Bible by Adam Clark (1831), Commentary on Romans 5:13, Laridian: Marion, Iowa, 2015).

What Adam Clarke is telling us is very important. If death reigned, as Paul tells us, from Adam to Moses (before God gave His law), then it leads us to understand that the curse we are under is not because we personally disobeyed the law. Even those who never ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil suffered the effects of sin and death in their lives. We are under the curse of God not because of what we do but because it has affected us from birth and is part of our very nature.

Writing in Psalm 51, the psalmist David would write:

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51)

The apostle Paul would tell the Ephesians:

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our

flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2)

Notice that the apostle told these believers in Ephesus that they were “by nature children of wrath.” The sin of Adam and Eve had repercussions on every person who would ever be born as a descendant of their seed—all would be born with a sinful nature. I am a sinner by nature even before I have a chance to obey or disobey the law of God. We are all under the curse of Adam’s sin. You don’t have to sin personally, to be born with a sinful nature and under the curse of sin and death.

Adam is a Type of the one who was to Come

Paul concludes with a word of hope. He tells us that Adam is a picture of the One who was to come (verse 17). Who does Adam represent? He is none other than the Lord Jesus. How can the one who brought sin be a picture of Jesus? Paul answers this question in the next section. Suffice it to say here that the comparison between Adam and Christ is one of contrast. Adam represented us in sin. Jesus represents us in salvation. Through one person, sin came to this earth. By another person, sin would be defeated. We will examine this in greater detail later in this study.

Paul presents us here in these verses with the universal problem of humanity. Sin came to this world through Adam and Eve. That sin affected all of creation and spread to every human. It would impact every generation from that point onward. All would be born under the curse of sin and death and in need of a Saviour. I am not a sinner because I disobey God, I am a sinner because I have inherited a sin nature. Even if there were no law to break, I would still be

under the curse of sin and death. Every child born on this earth is in need of a Saviour to save them from this curse.

The truth Paul explains here is not widely accepted in our day. We like to believe that human beings are good and pure. There is no question that we can do good things. This, however, does not change the fact that we are born under the curse of sin and death, and until that curse is lifted, we cannot see the kingdom of God. We all need a Saviour to rescue us from this curse and the sinful nature in which we were born. Until we accept that we are sinners by nature and birth, we will not understand our need for salvation. For the apostle Paul, this was the starting point.

What Paul tells us in Romans 5:12-14 is one of the essential truths of the Christian life. Adam's sin affects us all. We are separated from God because we are under that curse of sin and death. Until we accept this universal problem of humankind, we will never fully appreciate the reason the Lord Jesus came to this earth.

For Consideration:

How did sin enter the world?

How did sin affect the physical creation, personal relationships and the lives of Adam and Eve?

What evidence do you see of sin in your personal life and society? In your answer consider not only the matter of

disobedience to God but also sin's effect on your body and mind.

Can we be sinners even if we have not disobeyed the law of God? Does being a sinner depend on what I do or on who I am by nature and birth?

Why is it important to understand that we are born sinners? Why is this truth not very popular in our day?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to give you the humility to accept the fact that you are a sinner by birth.

Thank the Lord that while sin has affected every aspect of this earth and life in it, there is a solution in the person of the Lord Jesus who gives us hope.

Take a moment to pray for those who refuse to accept the universal truth that they are sinners in need of a Saviour. Ask the Lord to reveal this truth to them and the solution in Him.

Ask the Lord to renew this truth that we are all sinners in the mind and heart of our society. Ask Him to help your

church and community to understand and accept this truth so that they can turn to the Saviour for salvation and hope.

CHAPTER 2 - A FREE GIFT

Read Romans 5:15-17

Having reminded the Romans of the problem of sin and its curse, the apostle Paul went on to tell the Romans that God had a solution in the form of a gift.

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 judgment 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.

A Free Gift

Notice first that this gift is free. The apostle uses the Greek word “*charismatos*” here. This word comes from

the word “charis.” The AMG Complete Word Study Dictionary defines “charis” as follows:

A favour done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving-kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver, unearned and unmerited favour. (Zodhiates, Spiros (ed.), Baker, Warren (ed.), Hadhiantoniou, George (ed.), AMG Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament. “Charis,” Cedar Rapids: Laridian.)

A gift is something we cannot earn or merit in any way. If it is earned, it is no longer a gift. In this case, the gift Paul speaks about is a “free expression of the loving kindness of God” toward those who suffer under the curse of sin and death. The only thing you can do with a gift is receive it. You do not have to pay for it nor do you have to do anything for it—you need only to reach out and take it.

The Gift is not like the Trespass

The apostle goes on in verse 15 to compare the gift God offers to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden.

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. (Romans 15)

Through the sin of one man (Adam), many people fell under the curse of death. Sin, given entrance, ravaged the earth and every human being ever born on it. It had devastating worldwide consequences. The apostle went on

to tell the Romans, however, that the free gift God offered “abounded for many.”

Paul reminded the Romans that “many” people died because of the sin of Adam. This gift of God, however, has the capacity to touch everyone and everything that sin ruined. In fact, Paul told that Romans that the gift “abounds” to the many who were affected by the sin of Adam.

The word abound carries with it the sense of excess, running over and more than is needed. In other words, the gift is greater than the curse of death. It satisfies beyond all expectation the need of the person who is cursed by sin and death. It fills them to overflowing and pours over the sides in abundance.

Notice also in verse 15 that just as sin came through one man, so the gift God wants to give also comes through one man. Sin entered the world through Adam, but the gift comes through Jesus Christ.

The Result of this Free Gift

Paul goes on in verse 16 to compare the result of Adam’s sin and the effect of Christ’s gift:

16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. (Romans 5)

What was the result of Adam’s sin? Paul tells us that “the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation”

(Romans 5:16). Humankind was to be eternally separated from God and placed under the curse of death.

The gift the Father gives through His Son Jesus, however, would bring justification. Justification is a declaration of right standing. The gift that Jesus brings is one that overrules the sentence of condemnation and eternal separation from God. It places me in a right relationship with the Father. It is offered to me through the work of the Lord Jesus who paid my penalty so that I could be free from the eternal consequences of sin and death.

The Gift of Righteousness

While death reigned through the sin of one man, Paul tells us in verse 17 that those who receive the gift of Christ experience God's grace and righteousness:

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. (Romans 5)

Here in verse 17, Paul tells us something about this gift of God. It is a "gift of righteousness." What is righteousness? Righteousness relates to that which is right and good. It refers to the person who is without fault or failure before God. This definition immediately causes a problem for us. How could it ever be said that we are without fault or failure before God? Paul, himself would say in Romans 3:

10 As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks God. 12 All have turned

aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one (Romans 3)

The problem with the sin of Adam was that it resulted in every child being born with a sinful nature and under the curse of God. No one is born righteous. This is where the gift of righteousness comes into effect. The work of Jesus Christ covers all our sin and removes every obstacle between the Father and me. I am declared righteous not because I have never sinned, but because all my sin has been paid for and forgiven through the work of Jesus. Nothing now stands between God and me.

What is important for us to see here is that this gift of righteousness does not mean that I am now perfect. In fact, I am far from perfect. I see evidence of this in my life. I still wrestle with sinful thoughts and attitudes. I still do things that displease my Heavenly Father. If I am still imperfect, how can it be said that I have received the gift of righteousness?

To answer this, let's go back to the Old Testament book of Exodus. In Exodus 12 we read how God was preparing to bring the final judgement on the people of Egypt—the death of the firstborn child. The whole nation was under the curse of death. Israel was living in Egypt at that time. As they prepared for this terrible night, Moses instructed the people of God to slaughter a lamb. They were to take the blood of this lamb and paint it on the doorposts of their houses. When the angel of death passed over the nation and saw the blood painted on the doorposts of their home, he would spare their eldest son from the sentence of death. It was the blood of the lamb that spared the people from judgement. Moses made it quite clear to the people that this lamb they slaughtered was to be “without blemish” (Exodus 12:5). It was

because of this lamb “without blemish” that the angel of death did not destroy them.

Inside the walls of that house were a people who were afraid. These same people would be the ones who grumbled and complained in the wilderness, trying the patience of God. They would perish in that wilderness because of their rebellion against God. What was it that saved the people when the angel of death passed over them? It was not the fact that they were perfect or righteous in themselves. It was because a perfect lamb had been sacrificed and its blood protected them.

Similarly, the Lord Jesus is the perfect lamb of God. He laid down His life on the cross for us. He died so that when the Day of Judgement comes, the angel of death will pass over us and spare us from the wrath of God. We are not perfect, but we are covered by the blood of a perfect Lamb, just as the people of Israel in Egypt were. The gift of righteousness Paul speaks about here is the righteousness of a perfect Lamb—the Lord Jesus. It is His righteousness that covers us. We are not freed from the curse of death because we are perfect or without fault and blemish but because Jesus was without fault and defect and His righteousness covers us.

The implication of this truth is this: You will never be perfect in this world. You will always struggle with sin in your heart. You will never be able, by your own virtues, to stand before God having met all His standards. The only hope you and I have is to be covered by the blood of the spotless Lamb. Like the children of Israel, you need to place your confidence in the Lamb of God. He alone is righteous—His work alone can cover and protect you.

Receiving the Gift

There is one more point we need to underline here in this passage. Notice what the apostle told the Romans in verse 17:

17 ... 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. (Romans 5)

There are two points we need to see here.

First, notice that the gift of righteousness would reign through “the one man Jesus Christ.” In other words, there could be no righteousness apart from Him. My standing before God depends entirely on the work of the Lord Jesus. I have no righteousness of my own. I cannot be without fault before God. I was born in sin and as such have already fallen short of His standard. My only hope is in the work of Jesus to pay for my sin and cover my debt. I cannot look to myself and find any hope of being right with God. My focus must be on Christ, His right standing with the Father, and His perfect work and sacrifice. It is the work of Christ that covers me. It is His righteousness alone that is my hope. It is only “through the one man Jesus Christ” that righteousness can reign in my life.

Second, Paul told the Romans that this righteousness would reign in the lives of “those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift.” If you want this free gift, you will have to receive it from Christ. The fact that we have to receive this gift of righteousness shows that it is not ours. It is given to us. Many do not accept this gift because they do not see their need of it. They are still trying to be perfect and without fault by their own efforts.

The only way to know this reign of righteousness is to receive it from Christ. This means recognizing that you cannot generate this blamelessness in yourself. It means that you will have to recognize that you have and will continue to fail. Your only hope is to allow the Lord Jesus to be your protection. As a perfect Lamb, He sacrificed His life for you. His blood covers the doorposts of your soul. This sacrifice of Christ is your hope and confidence. You stand before the father imperfect in yourself but covered by one who is perfect and righteous.

For Consideration:

How is the free gift of righteousness greater than the sin of Adam? What is the result of the free gift?

What is justification? Does being justified mean we have never sinned?

What does it mean to be righteous? Can anyone be righteous in his or her own strength and effort?

How does the story of the Old Testament Passover illustrate righteousness? Who was without fault in this story?

Do those who receive the gift of righteousness still sin?

What is the difference between being covered by the perfect and righteous Lamb of God and trying to be perfect ourselves?

What does it mean to receive the gift of righteousness?
How do you receive this gift?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that while we were under the condemnation of sin and death, God provided a solution through His perfect and righteous Son.

Thank the Lord that while we are not perfect, His Son was a perfect sacrifice for us and covers the sins of all who will receive Him and His work on their behalf.

Ask the Lord to give you a deeper appreciation and gratitude for the work He has done for you as a sinner.

Do you know people who are still trying to be righteous before God and merit their salvation by their good works? Take a moment to pray that God would help them to see that apart from the work of Christ on their behalf, they have no hope.

CHAPTER 3 -

ONE ACT

Read Romans 5:18-21

[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)

It is easy for us to miss the significance of a single act or decision. A wrong move at the wrong time can mean the difference between life and death. A bad choice can mean the breakup of a relationship you have enjoyed for years. One uncaring word can have a life-long impact on the life of a young child. These wrong actions and words can touch not only your life but also those around you.

Notice what the apostle Paul tells us about the single act of one man in the Garden of Eden

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men (Romans 5)

One trespass led to the conviction of all men. Adam, opened the door for a terrible disease to enter the Garden. His disobedience brought sin into the world. That sin would ravage the earth bringing with it death and separation from God.

Imagine that you have been given the responsibility to watch over someone's home. You must keep the door locked and refuse access to anyone while the owner is away. As you stand guard at the door, you hear a knock and a voice from outside speaks with tempting and persuasive words. "What harm could there be in simply opening the door even just a bit?" Tempted by these words, you unlock the door and peek out through the crack. The next thing you know, the door is pushed open, and the person outside comes rushing in and takes over the house. All this happened because of opening the door just a crack. One simple act of disobedience changed everything. When Adam opened the door for sin by disregarding the command of God, the enemy pushed through bringing sin and death to everyone in the house.

The apostle Paul goes on to tell the Romans, however, that just as that one act brought condemnation for all, so another act brings life to all who are under that judgement.

18 ... so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (Romans 5)

Paul speaks of an act of righteousness that leads to justification and life for all men. Let's break this down and examine what Paul is saying. Paul speaks of justification. To be justified is to be declared to be in good standing. This statement comes in the context of Paul telling the Romans that the sin of one man brought condemnation. The apostle is telling us is that this condemnation can be reversed. We can yet be found in good standing with God (justified).

Notice also that Paul tells us that we can also experience life. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and opened the door for sin, they brought the curse of death on all of humanity. That curse brought with it physical death not only to human beings but to every part of creation. Physical death was only part of the problem, however. Sin also brought spiritual death. The relationship Adam and Eve had with God was broken. Sin stripped them of the ability to fellowship with God. They hid from God in shame and fear.

Paul tells us in Romans 5:18 that not only can we again have a right standing with God, but we can also regain the life that sin stripped from us. Our relationship with God can be restored. We can experience eternal life in the presence of God. We can have an intimate and satisfying fellowship again with our Creator. The condemnation of sin and death can be removed.

How is this fellowship possible? The apostle Paul tells us that just as one act of rebellion led to our fall into the curse of sin and death, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life.

I am a sinner because Adam opened the door. I didn't do anything to become a sinner. I was born that way. By nature, I was separated from God and in need of a Saviour.

Because I was born a sinner, I acted according to my nature.

Paul tells us that just as Adam's one act of opening the door to sin separated us from God, so the act of Jesus Christ can restore us to fellowship. That act of Jesus was an "act of righteousness." The work to which Paul is referring here is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is this act alone that can make us right with God and restore us to life.

The focus of Paul in these verses is on the "one act"—the one act that made us sinners and the one act that restores us to life. There are those who believe that they are sinners because they sinned at one time in their lives. They think that until they commit the first sin, they are sinless. This is not what the apostle Paul teaches. He is saying that we sin because we have a sinful nature and because we are already sinners. We are sinners even before we commit our first sin against God. Adam opened the door for sin, and that act affected every one of us so that we were born as sinners. We are sinners through the one act of Adam.

Similarly, Paul tells us that we are also justified and given life through a single act of righteousness—the death of Christ on the cross. Just as it is not what I do that makes me a sinner, so it is not what I do that removes the curse of sin and death on my life. There are those who believe that if they live a good life and do all they can to please God, they can be right with God and merit their salvation. Again, Paul tells us that this is not the case. Our hope is not in the many acts that we do but in the one righteous act that Christ did. Our only confidence in being made right with God is in that one act of Christ on the cross. His death alone can forgive and remove the curse on our life. Just as we are sinners because of what Adam did, so we are

forgiven by what Christ did. Paul emphasizes this in verse 19 when he says:

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.

This places our hope squarely on the work of Jesus Christ. I can have no hope of salvation apart from Him and his death on the cross. I cannot look at anything I have or will do for God to be my assurance of salvation and pardon. Jesus' death alone is sufficient. Every other effort will fall short. If we want to have a right standing before God, we must set our attention on what He did in that "one act of righteousness.

To underline the significance of this work of Christ, the Lord gave the Law of the Old Testament. This law could never save a soul or place it in a right relationship with God. That was the intent of the law. It set the standard of God before men and woman and showed them that, by their efforts, they could never measure up.

Consider the teaching of Leviticus 11 about being clean before the Lord:

23 But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you. 24 "And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 25 and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. (Leviticus 11)

Even to touch certain insects would defile us and bring separation from God. Even those things that were a natural part of life would make an individual unclean. A woman

who bore a male child would be unclean for seven days (Leviticus 12:2). After that initial seven days of uncleanness, she was to add another 33 days to be purified. Listen to what the law stated about this period of thirty-three days:

4 Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. 5 But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days. (Leviticus 12)

During this period of purification, the law of God stated that the woman was not to come near the sanctuary. If she bore a female child, the woman was not to go near the tabernacle for over two months until she was purified!

God told Moses in Exodus 19 that He was going to descend on the mountain. In preparation for the presence of God, Moses instructed the people:

14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." (Exodus 19)

Notice what Moses required here. The people were to wash their clothes and refrain from any sexual activity because the Lord was going to descend and reveal His presence among them. The reason for this was because even the sexual act rendered the man and woman unclean before God:

18 If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening. (Leviticus 15)

While these were not sinful activities, they did make a person unclean, and, in such a condition they could not enter the presence of the Lord.

Then there were the moral requirements of God. These obligations included things such as not stealing, murdering committing adultery (Exodus 20:13-15) The law, however, went much deeper than this. It also spoke of not coveting (Exodus 20:17). Coveting is a sin of the mind. This same law demanded that God's people love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Lord would judge His people in the book of Isaiah because they worshipped him with their mouth but not with their heart (Isaiah 29:13).

Consider also that law of God regarding physical blemishes and deformities:

[17] "Speak to Aaron, saying, None of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God. [18] For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, [19] or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand, [20] or a hunchback or a dwarf or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles. [21] No man of the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD's food offerings; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.

If a priest was blind or lame, he could not enter the presence of the Lord. A man who had a limb that was too long or an injured foot or hand was forbidden the privilege of exercising the role of priest. A dwarf or a man with crushed testicles could not serve the Lord in an official capacity. These deformities were the result of living in a sinful world. While these deformities were not necessarily the result of personal sin these men bore the imprint of sin on their bodies and that was enough to separate them from the service of the Lord.

If there was one thing the law of God did, it placed humanity before an impossible standard. It revealed the futility of trying gain a right standing with God by human effort. Even those things which were natural to a woman's body would separate her from God. What was normal and acceptable in marriage would render the couple unclean before God. Living on this earth and accidentally touching articles that were unclean would make a person impure and hinder fellowship with God. We could do all the right things, but if our heart was not in tune with God, then we fell short of God's standard. Paul put it this way in Romans 5:20: "Now the law came in to increase the trespass."

What did the law do? It showed us our sin by revealing the impossible standard of God. It showed us that living in this sinful world in these corrupt bodies separated us from God. It showed us that we were far from perfect in our service of God. It revealed the shortcomings of our heart and mind before Him. In short, it showed us that salvation by our personal effort was impossible. If we were to have a right relationship with God, something outside of ourselves needed to happen. All this pointed to the one act of righteousness accomplished by Christ. The law was not given to save humanity, but to point it to their need of the work of Jesus Christ on their behalf.

Paul would go on it Romans 5:20-21 to say:

20 ... 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)

As far-reaching and as all-encompassing as sin is, the grace of God abounds “all the more.” Grace is the unmerited favour of God. What Paul is telling us is this: While sin affects every part of this earth, separating us from God, the unmerited favour of God is such that it can restore us to a right standing and fellowship with Him. As powerful as sin is, the grace of God is greater still.

Paul told the Romans that “sin reigned in death.” The idea here is that sin was ruler and king of our lives—we were its servants. It had absolute power over us and our destiny. The reign of sin in our lives was a reign of death and separation from God.

That reign of sin, however, can be defeated. Paul told the Romans that grace could also reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ. Let’s take a moment to break this statement of Paul down to examine what he is saying.

Notice that Paul told the Romans that grace could reign in their lives. Unmerited favour is not something we merit or deserve. It is possible to receive pardon and release even though you are guilty. It is possible for you to know the favour of God and be in a right relationship with Him. God is willing to give this to us.

This gift of righteousness, according to Paul, reigns through righteousness. What is this righteousness that

Paul speaks of here? It cannot be my righteousness because the Law of God showed me that I could not be right with God through my own efforts. The righteousness that brings grace is the righteousness of Christ. Paul confirms this in verse 21 when he tells us that eternal life is “through Christ our Lord.” This takes us back to that one act of righteousness that Paul began with in verse 18 when he said:

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (Romans 5)

It was this one act of Christ when He died on the cross that brings pardon and life. This one act of righteousness leads “to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21). A single act of Adam brought sin and death to all. By one single act of Christ, hope is restored. Our assurance of eternal life and right standing with the Father depends entirely on that one perfect sacrifice of Christ. Nothing else will save us. There is pardon by no other means.

For Consideration:

What did the single act of rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden do to the earth and its inhabitants?

How did the law given through Moses reveal the impossibility of every being right before God through our efforts?

What is the difference between becoming a sinner because we sinned and being a sinner from birth?

Why do we need the pardon offered through Christ?

Paul tells us that grace can now reign through the one righteous act of the Lord Jesus that gives eternal life. What did he mean by this? How can we know this reign of grace leading to eternal life?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to recognize and confess before God that you have fallen short of His standard in nature and practice. Thank Him that He has proposed a solution through his work on the cross.

Do you know people who are trying to be good enough to go to heaven? Ask the Lord to reveal to them that this is not possible. Ask the Lord to show them that their hope is not in their efforts but the righteous act of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

If you have come to know the Lord Jesus and the effect of His work in your life, take a moment to thank Him for the change that He has brought about in you.

CHAPTER 4 -

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Read Romans 6:1-4

[6:1] 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 baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized 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. (Romans 6)

In the last chapter, we saw how the apostle Paul pointed our attention to the one act of Jesus Christ that gives eternal life—His death on the cross for us. He reminded us that the law of God, given through Moses, was never designed to save us from judgement but to show us our need of a Saviour. Our salvation does not depend on our merit or our actions. The work of the Lord Jesus alone brings forgiveness and places all who trust in Him in a right relationship with the Father.

This truth brings us to an essential question that the apostle Paul wants to address in Romans 6.

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (Romans 6)

If the Lord Jesus is willing to forgive even the worst sinners, why not enjoy the pleasures of sin and the forgiveness of the Lord at the same time? What motivation is there to stop sinning if the Lord willingly forgives us? If I don't have to be good enough to be in a right relationship with God, then what motivation is there to live for Him on this earth? If we are trusting in the one act of Christ on the cross of Calvary to give us a right relationship with God, then does it matter what kind of life we live? If I am not trusting in my personal efforts to merit salvation, then can I not live the way I want and trust that He will cover every sin I ever commit?

Paul's answer to this question is clear:

2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6)

The apostle is telling us here that if we desire to continue in sin, we have failed to understand the work of Christ and what took place on the cross. Paul continues in verse 2 to say: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" What does the apostle mean by this statement? When did we die to sin? Was it not the Lord Jesus who died for us?

Paul explains this more fully in Romans 6:3-4:

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized 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.

Let's take a moment to consider this statement of Paul.

Baptized into Christ

Notice first, that Paul speaks about those "who have been baptized into Christ Jesus." When we speak of baptism, we immediately think of water baptism. Paul, however, tells us that this baptism is a baptism of death.

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death,

We should not limit the baptism Paul speaks of here to water baptism. We know that many who are baptized in water, have never experienced death to self. Many go through the experience but are not truly baptized into Christ. To be baptized "into Christ" is a life changing occurrence. Water baptism is merely a symbol of a greater baptism. Listen to the words of John the Baptist about Jesus as recorded in Matthew 3:

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3)

John told his followers that the Lord Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire is indeed a life-changing experience. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the heart of the believer he or she becomes a new person. The apostle Paul would tell the Corinthians:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians)

What is this baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire? Notice that the Holy Spirit is accompanied by fire in John's statement in Matthew 3:11. Fire, in this context, is used to purify and cleanse. The baptism John the Baptist speaks about is a work of the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer to cleanse and purify. When Jesus told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to them, He also told them what the Holy Spirit would do:

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16)

The Spirit of God comes with His cleansing fire to convict of sin and judgement. The Lord pours out His Holy Spirit into our lives, convicting us of sin and judgment to come. The presence of the Spirit and fire changes us from within. He moves in us to change our attitudes and desires. He wants to make us more like Jesus in thought, word and deed. He makes us a new creation. In fact, Paul told the Corinthians in the passage quoted above that "the old has passed away." Those who are baptised into Christ are no longer the people they used to be. This baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire, puts to death the old ways and stirs up within us a new desire and new attitude. Those who have been baptised with this baptism, are a new people.

Those who trust in the righteous act of Christ on the cross are changed. A spiritual transformation takes place. The life of the Spirit of God is poured out on them, and they are cleansed and forgiven. They die to their old allegiance and surrender to Christ. They become His children. They are born again. They are baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire into Christ.

The Lord Jesus willingly laid down His life for us. His death paid the penalty for our sins and opened the door for a right standing with the father. As we approach that cross, we are baptized in identification with Him as He pours out His Spirit upon us making us His children. That baptism of the Spirit is life-transforming. It is a baptism of death to all we once were. By it, we are transformed. Paul put it this way:

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.

Through the work of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit of God, we have been given a new lease on life. Our hearts have been changed. There is within us, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a new desire to walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). The question Paul began with in verse 1 was this: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” For Paul, it was unthinkable that a person who had been baptized into Christ and transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit should ever return to the old ways. Those who have experienced this baptism of the Spirit through the one righteous act of Christ have a new desire in life. The Spirit of God and His baptism of fire has so changed them that their desire now is for Christ and His glory.

Many believe that Jesus died on the cross. Some of these individuals have even been baptized with water, but they have not experienced this baptism into Christ that Paul speaks about. They know nothing about the outpouring of the Spirit of God to transform and bring new life. It is this life of the Spirit of Christ that makes us new. Those who know the work of this Spirit as they approach the cross of Christ are changed. For those who have been transformed by Christ, the question: "shall we sin" is unthinkable. The desire of those who have been baptized into Christ is to honour Him for their hearts are now tied to His.

For Consideration:

What is the difference between water baptism and the baptism into Christ that Paul speaks about here?

How is a baptism into Christ a baptism of death?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in making us a new creation? Would this change be possible without Him?

What is the difference between human effort to live a good life and the Spirit's work of making us a new creation?

Why is the question: "shall we sin" repulsive to those whose lives have been changed by their baptism into Christ?

Has your life been transformed by Christ and the work of His Spirit? What evidence is there of this transformation in your life?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that not only did He die to forgive us of our sin but He is willing to transform us by the power of His Spirit in our lives?

Ask the Lord to help you to be more sensitive to the work of the Spirit of Christ in you to convict and make you more like Jesus.

Have you been struggling with sin in your life? Ask the Lord to give you victory. Ask the Spirit of God to remove any desire for sin from you. Recognize your need of Him and surrender to His work in your life.

CHAPTER 5 -

DYING WITH CHRIST

Read Romans 6:5-11

[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. [11] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6)

In the last chapter the apostle Paul addressed the question:

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (Romans 6)

In answering this question, Paul reminded the Romans that those who were baptized into Christ were changed

people. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire cleansed and renewed them in the inner person. In Romans 6:5-11, Paul adds another dimension to his answer. In these verses, he went on to tell the Romans that they were also united with Christ in His death and resurrection:

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. (Romans 6)

The question we must consider here is this: How were we united with Christ in His death? We were not physically on that cross with Christ when He died. It was many years after His death that we even learned what the Lord Jesus did.

Paul speaks here in legal terms. The cross was a legal punishment for crimes in the Roman world. Christ died as a criminal, not for any sin He committed, but for my sins. He took my place and died so that I could be free from the penalty of sin and death. I was not there when it took place. I did not even know Him when He died. But Jesus went to the cross in my name and on my behalf. In the legal records of heaven, my penalty is paid in full. I am united with Christ in death in the sense that He went on my behalf and in my name.

Paul went on in Romans 6:5 to say that because I was united with Christ in death, I can now be united with Him in resurrection (verse 5). To be united with Him in resurrection is to have victory over sin and death. It is to be freed from the consequences of sin to enjoy the presence of God and live in His glory. All this is possible because Christ died. All legal impediments are removed through the work of the Lord Jesus in my name.

Paul continued in Romans 6:6 to say something else about my relationship to Christ and His death:

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.

The death of the Lord Jesus was much more than a legal transaction. It is entirely possible to be forgiven but not changed in behaviour or attitude. The death of the Lord Jesus, however, not only provided legal forgiveness but also brought a change in the character of those for whom He died. Notice in verse six that Paul told the Romans that their old self was crucified with Christ.

That “old self” was “enslaved to sin.” By nature we are sinners. The selfishness of our heart becomes evident at a very early age. The tendency to wander from the purpose of God is apparent. The words we speak or the thoughts of our heart remind us of our sinful state. There is within us a sinful nature that rebels against God and His ways. At times, we find ourselves ashamed of our lack of passion for God and His truth.

The apostle Paul told the Romans in verse six that their old self was crucified with Christ so that the sin nature would be “brought to nothing.” Christ’s death not only forgives us, but it also changes us. The Holy Spirit comes to give us new life. He does more than convicts us of sinful ways. He is the life of Christ in us. His life in us empowers us and changes us from the inside. He puts to death the old ways of thinking and transforms us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:9).

The death of Christ paved the way for the great work of the Spirit to begin in us. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in

the forgiven heart, we are transformed. The body of sin is destroyed and “brought to nothing.” The work of the Lord Jesus not only forgives us but also changes us.

Paul reminded the Romans in verse 7 that the “one who had died has been set free from sin.” We died in that when Christ went to the cross He did so on our behalf and set us free from the legal penalty of sin. The person we once were also died, and we were given new life through the presence of God’s Spirit in our lives. Notice that the apostle went on to tell the Romans that they were set free from sin.

How can it be said that we are free from sin if we have sinful thoughts and continue to fall into sinful ways? Who among us can say that he or she no longer sins? Even as believers we must regularly come to our Saviour and ask for forgiveness. When Paul tells us that we have been set free from sin, he is speaking about freedom from the punishment and power of sin.

When the Lord Jesus died for us, He took on Himself the punishment for our sin. Because He did so, we no longer need to face the penalty. We have been forgiven and restored to God. Our penalty is paid. The apostle explained this in Romans 8:1 by saying:

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life had set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
(Romans 8)

We have been freed not only from the punishment of sin but also from its power. Those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells, have power over sin and its control. The Spirit of God empowers them and gives them victory as they

surrender to Him and His work. As the apostle Paul said in Romans 8:37:

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8)

The apostle teaches the Romans here that the cross of Christ changed everything for them. It removed the penalty of sin from their lives and empowered them to live in fellowship with God through the inner work of the Spirit. It would be unthinkable for those who had experienced this reality to continue in sin.

The cross of Christ pardons those who surrender to its work. It also empowers them to live victoriously over sin. There is one more detail we need to consider about the cross in this chapter. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul in verses 8-11:

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. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6)

The Lord Jesus did not stay on the cross. He rose from the dead and went to be with the Father in heaven. In fact, Paul tells us that “death no longer has dominion over him” (verse 9). The Lord Jesus conquered the power of death. The apostle reminded the Romans in verse 8 that because they were united with Christ in His death, they would also be united with him in His resurrection life. Just as the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, so we too have this wonderful

confidence. Death is not the end for us. Because of the cross, we can live for all eternity in the presence of Christ.

Verse 10 tells us that Christ died to sin. He died because of the sin that enslaved us and separated us from the Father. He died to overcome the power of that sin in our lives and rose victoriously over it. Having died to sin, Romans 6:10 tells us that He now lives to God setting us an example to follow.

Those who have been united with Christ in death have a new purpose in life. Like Christ, they are to consider themselves “alive to God in Christ Jesus.” They are to submit to the inner work of the Spirit of God to transform and renew them. They are to consider themselves dead to the sinful flesh, choosing instead to walk in the ways of the Spirit.

I must respond to what the Lord Jesus has done for me. He has taken away the penalty of my sin. He has put His Spirit in me, making me a new creature. What will be my response to this work of Christ? Paul told the Romans that their only legitimate response was to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. Everything has been done for us to have a new life. The apostle pleads here with those who have experienced this new life to walk fully in it. This is a choice we all must make.

For Consideration:

What does it mean to be united with Christ in his death?

What legal matters had to be addressed on the cross?

How did the cross of Christ transform your life?

What evidence is there in your life of the work of the Holy Spirit? How has the Spirit of God been giving you victory over sin?

How does the cross of Jesus change our eternal destiny? Do you have the assurance of an eternity in His presence because of the cross?

Consider what Paul has told the Romans in this section. How does a firm grasp of our blessings because of the cross remove any desire to continue in sin?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to thank the Lord for the forgiveness He offers through His death on our behalf.

Thank the Lord for the presence of His Spirit in your life to transform and enable you to live for Him. Ask Him to help you to be more sensitive to this transforming work of the Spirit.

Ask God to forgive you for the sinful desires that remain in your life. Ask the Spirit of God to change your ways and to reveal anything that needs to be changed.

Take a moment to thank the Lord for the hope you have of eternity in His presence. Ask Him to help you to live your life in obedience to Him. Ask Him to accept your life of obedient surrender as a token of your appreciation for His work on the cross in your name.

CHAPTER 6 -

DO NOT LET SIN REIGN

Read Romans 6:12-14

[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)

In the last chapter, we saw how Paul told the Romans that they were united with Christ in His death. The cross not only paid our legal penalty but it also empowered us to live for Christ through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. These two realities, however, do not guarantee that we will never fall into temptation. We can be sure that the enemy will tempt us, even as he tempted our Lord Jesus when He lived on this earth.

The penalty for our sins is covered. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us, but the battle continues to rage. Satan's arrows are focused on us. He will

do all he can to cause us to fall. We must still be vigilant. As we live in the salvation God has given, we must choose to walk in obedience and surrender. We must learn to resist the enemy and his temptations. Speaking to the Roman believers, the apostle Paul said in Romans 6:12:

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Notice the word “therefore” in verse 12. This word refers to what Paul told the Romans in verses 1-11 of chapter 6. The penalty for sin was paid, and they were empowered to walk in victory by the person of the Holy Spirit. Christ was Lord of their lives. They were not to let anything take His place on the throne of their heart.

The Romans were not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies. In other words, they were not to give it authority in their lives. Do not let sin “make you obey its passions,” Paul told them. Never give sin enough control in your life that it governs your actions, thoughts or words. Every deed and attitude must be held in submission to the Lord Jesus alone.

The fact that Paul addresses this issue in Romans 6 shows us that it is possible for the believer to submit to sin and its evil passions. The apostle Paul reminded the Romans that their “mortal body” was a battleground. Sin was waging war to gain a foothold in that body. God, however, had empowered them as His children to resist this evil. Every believer must preserve the integrity of their body and keep it for the Lord by opposing the evil passions of sin.

Paul warned the Romans about presenting their body to sin as instruments for unrighteousness:

13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness (Romans 6)

The word “members” refers to the parts of their “mortal body.” In other words, they were not to allow their tongue to become an instrument of unrighteous words. They were not to let their feet take them to unrighteous places. They were not to permit their eyes to dwell on unrighteous sights. They were not to give their mind the opportunity to bathe in sinful thoughts.

Notice that Paul uses the word “present” here in verse 13. He told the Romans that they were not to present the parts of their body to sin. The word present is significant and shows us that there is a choice to make. When the temptation to speak evil comes our way, we have one of two options. The first is to resist that temptation. The second is to present our tongue to that evil temptation and allow it to be used to slander or gossip. Paul challenged the believers in Rome to resist every temptation to surrender any part of their body to be used for unrighteous purposes.

Instead of presenting their body to sin for unrighteous purposes, the apostle Paul challenged the believers in Rome to submit to God.

13 but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

This presentation of themselves to God was a surrender of their bodies to Him for His glory and honour. The apostle restated this in Romans 12:1 when he said:

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and

acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12)

While we are on this earth, it is in these physical bodies that we must serve the Lord. Every part of our being is to be used as an instrument for righteousness. Our hands, our feet, our tongues or our thoughts must all be held in submission to the Lord Jesus and His purpose for our lives. This must be a conscious effort and decision on our part. God must be Lord of my body.

While this submission to God is a willing submission, Paul reminded the believers in Rome that they were to present themselves as those who had been brought back from death to life (Romans 6:13). In other words, while they offered themselves freely to God, they were also profoundly indebted to Him. The cross of Jesus had brought them pardon and forgiveness. The presence of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, was now living in them. The Spirit of God was transforming them into the character of Christ and empowering them in His service. They were guaranteed victory over death and eternal joy in the presence of their Saviour. These were compelling reasons to submit to God and His purpose for their lives. Could those who had been given so much do any less?

The apostle concludes in verse 14 with the reminder that sin would no longer have authority over them because they were no longer under law but under grace.

14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6)

Notice first that Paul told the Romans that sin would no longer have dominion over them. The word “dominion” means to have authority over or to be lord and master. The

apostle began in verse 12 by telling the Romans not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies. He concludes with the same thought. Sin was no longer lord in their lives. They had a new Master—the Lord Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ set them free from sin, its punishment and power.

Notice also in Romans 6:14 that Paul told the believers that sin had no more dominion over them because they were not under the law but grace. It is vital that we understand this. The Law of Moses demanded absolute obedience. Not one person could ever live up to the standard of the Law of God—everyone fell short. The penalty for sin was death. We stood guilty before the law, sentenced to death and eternal separation from God.

The Lord Jesus came and fulfilled the requirements of the law for us. He took the penalty of our sin on Himself and laid down His life. We did not deserve this act of mercy and grace. By taking the punishment for our sin, however, the Lord Jesus removed our debt to the law. He set us free from its sentence. The believer does not look to the law for salvation but to the work of Christ on the cross. This work of Christ stripped sin of its control over us. We are freed from its penalty. We are released from its authority over us.

The cross changed everything. It releases us from the dominion and control of sin and set us on a new path. This is the path of willing submission to Christ and His reign in our lives. It is the path of new life in the Spirit because of the forgiveness of Christ on the cross of Calvary. Paul reminds, us, however, that this life will not be without struggle. Sin will continue its attacks. In Genesis 4:7 the Lord had some strong words of warning for Cain:

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 contrary to you, but you must rule over it. (Genesis 4)

The words God gave to Cain are still applicable today. "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." This is the challenge of Paul to the Romans. The penalty for our sin has been removed, but sin still seeks to destroy us. The power of God indwells us, but we must be vigilant for the enemy continues to strike. Now that we have been set free from the penalty of sin and have given the indwelling power of the Spirit, we must avail ourselves of that power, present every part of our mortal body to God and reject the reign of sin. God alone is our King. To Him alone will we surrender.

For Consideration:

Does being forgiven of sin mean that we will never again be tempted?

What temptations do you face? Have you ever found yourself surrendering your mortal body to the passions of sin?

Are you ready today to surrender your body to the Lord and His will? Is there anything you are not willing to surrender to Him?

How has the Spirit of Christ in you been changing you, your attitudes and passions? How has He been giving you victory over sin?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to reaffirm your commitment to surrender your body in all its parts to the Lord for His glory on this earth.

Ask the Lord to reveal anything that you are not willing to surrender to Him. Ask the Spirit of God to give you a willingness to abandon this area of your life to Him.

Thank the Lord for the fact that you have been set free from the reign of sin and death in your life through the work of Christ on the cross.

If you are still trying to be good enough to merit salvation, take a moment to ask the Lord to show you more fully what took place at the cross. Ask the Spirit of God to make the reality of what took place at the cross of Christ real to you personally.

CHAPTER 7 -

UNDER GRACE

Read Romans 6:15-19

[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. (Romans 6)

In Romans 6:12-14 Paul instructed the Romans not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies. Through the work of Christ they were set free from its dominion and authority. Paul went on to tell the Romans in Romans 6:14 that they were no longer under the law but under grace. What does it

mean to be under the law? The Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible has this to say about being under the law:

“To be ‘under the law’ is, first, to be under its claim to entire obedience; and so, next under its curse for the breach of these.” (Jamieson, Robert; Fausset A.R.; Brown, David: Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible: Commentary on Romans 6:14, Laridian, 1871)

The system of law, as established in the Old Testament, was a system whereby God set out His requirements for His people and expected them to follow these requirements or suffer the penalty for being law-breakers. The punishment for breaking any of God's laws was severe. Listen to what God told Adam in Genesis 3:

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2)

For disobeying God and eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, the punishment for Adam was death.

Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord God said:

4 Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18)

Under the system of law, God demanded absolute obedience on pain of death. The apostle Paul put it this way:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6)

The apostle James reminds us that it did not matter which law an individual broke. If an individual broke even one obligation, he or she was guilty before God.

10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (James 2)

Imagine a murderer standing before the judge and saying, "I loved my wife and never was unfaithful to her. I shouldn't have to be punished for murdering my neighbour." The judge would laugh at such reasoning. No matter how good a person may be, if he or she breaks the law at any point, they will have to suffer the consequences. An honest and generous businessman who breaks the speed limit on the way to work will still have to pay the fine for speeding.

The God of Israel is a perfect God. Listen to how He is described in Deuteronomy 32:

3 For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! 4 "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deuteronomy 32)

Writing in 2 Samuel 22, David would say:

31 This God—His way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. (2 Samuel 22)

The ways of God are perfect, and His word is absolute truth. As a perfect God, sin is detestable to Him. The most severe penalty is handed out to those who sin and rebel against His purpose. Jesus would say in Matthew 5:48:

48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5)

The law of God demanded “blamelessness”:

13 You shall be blameless before the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 18)

It is the purpose of God that we walk in perfect communion with Him. No sin must stand between us. God set out the standard by which we were to live in His law. To walk in obedience to that standard was to walk in communion with God. To turn from any of His ways was to suffer the consequences.

The requirements of the law placed every individual who ever lived under the sentence of death. No one can live a perfect life. The apostle Paul put it this way:

23 For all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God (Romans 3)

In His grace, the Lord God offered a means of forgiveness for sin. He set up a system of sacrifices by which the penalty for sin could be paid by substituting an animal for the guilty person. An animal would be killed on the altar to pay the penalty for the guilty party. Millions of sheep, goats, and bulls were offered on the altars of Israel to pardon the sins of God's people. While this sacrificial system offered relief for the believer, it did not take away their sin. The

writer to the Hebrews said this about the sacrificial system of the Old Testament:

1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? 3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
(Hebrews 10)

Notice in these verses that the regular sacrifice of animals did not make the worshipper perfect (verse 1). The blood of these bulls and goats could not take sin away at all (verse 4). Consider the millions of animals that died in those days so that an imperfect and sinful people could continue to live.

For some years, I have had an acid problem in my stomach. This causes burning in my esophagus and the duodenum just below the stomach. I take medication that relieves the burning, but this medication does not heal the source of the problem. This is what it was like for Israel under the law. The sickness of sin remained. The sacrificial system brought relief from the wrath of God but did not remove or heal the sin that was the root cause of their problem.

The Lord Jesus changed all this. When He laid down His life on the cross, He offered a sacrifice like no other sacrifice. Commenting on this the writer of Hebrews said:

11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10)

The Lord Jesus offered his life as a single, one-time sacrifice for sin. That sacrifice, according to Hebrews 10:14 “perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” This means that there would never again need to be a sacrifice made for sin. This one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was sufficient not only to pay in full the penalty for every individual who came to Him, but it would also perfect those who came to Him. Because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, there is now nothing that stands between myself and God. Every sin I have or ever will commit is covered by that one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews 10 goes on to say:

15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” 17 then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (Hebrews 10)

The Spirit of God was free to work in a new way in the lives of those who had received the forgiveness of Christ. He placed the law of God on the hearts and minds of those who belonged to Christ. The purpose of God was not written on stone tablets anymore. It was written in the DNA of the Spirit filled believer. Those who were filled with God’s

Spirit desired to walk in the purpose of God. They were given new hearts that longed for God and his presence. They were given new minds that no longer saw things from a worldly point of view but a spiritual perspective. This new heart and the mind of Christ was the work of God's Spirit. Those who are forgiven and receive the new life of the Spirit were no longer the same. They were made changed through the death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let's return now to what the apostle Paul said in Romans 6:15:

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (Romans 6)

There were those who rejected the idea that Christ's death changed our status with the law. They believe that if we remove the requirement of the law, then there would be no motivation for the believer to live a holy life.

This might have been an issue for the old flesh, but the believer has been made new. He or she has the law of God written on their heart. The Spirit of God lives in the believer, convicting and empowering. Paul goes on in Romans 6:16 to say:

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.

The apostle reminded the Romans that to be freed from the penalty of sin and death, they presented themselves to Christ. In doing so, they offered their lives to Him and the work of His Spirit in them. They surrendered to the Lordship of Christ and His Spirit. Their allegiance was to Him. He was their Lord and Master.

This allegiance was not forced. Paul reminded the Romans that they had been “obedient from the heart” to the standard of teaching to which they were committed (Romans 6:17). This obedience from the heart is evidence of the work of the Spirit who was changing their heart and placing a new desire in it. Those who know the forgiveness of sin and the work of the Holy Spirit, willingly surrender as servants to Christ. The forgiveness of Christ is life-changing. Those who know the cleansing work of the Spirit of God are no longer the same people.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5)

It was unthinkable to Paul that an individual could be forgiven by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and willingly desire to continue in sin. He knew that the believer would continue to be tempted, but there was a power in them to overcome temptation. The Spirit of God would enable and give the believer the mind of Christ. It was the responsibility of every believer who knew this forgiveness and indwelling Spirit to surrender to God and allow Him to work out His purposes in their lives.

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. (Romans 6)

The forgiveness of Christ gives us a new life. It changes our heart and mind but it also places us under an obligation—we are to walk in obedience and surrender to God. We are not left to accomplish this on our own. The Spirit of Christ comes to dwell in our heart to teach and to stir up in us a desire to walk in obedience and surrender. It is the heart of those who are filled with the Spirit of Christ to offer themselves unreservedly to their Saviour to be perfected and used for His glory. Living under grace and forgiveness is not a license to sin. If anything, it creates in us a deeper motivation to walk in a manner worthy of our calling as believers.

For Consideration:

What does it mean to be under the law?

What is God's requirement of anyone who is under the law? Can we meet this standard?

Did the Old Testament sacrificial system remove the root problem of sin? Explain.

How did the work of Christ differ from the sacrifices of animals under the Old Testament law?

What is the work of the Spirit in the believer according to Hebrews 10:16?

What change took place in your life and attitude when you came to know the Lord and His forgiveness?

Are believers tempted to sin? Can we be content in sin as believers?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that you are no longer under the law but under grace.

Thank the Lord that the problem of sin has been resolved in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Take a moment to recognize the work of God's Spirit in your life. Thank Him for what He is teaching you and for how He has been changing your heart.

Are there any temptations in your life? Ask the Spirit of God to show you the Father's purpose and to give you a greater desire to walk in His way.

CHAPTER 8 -

THE FRUIT OF SIN

AND THE FREE GIFT

Read Romans 6:20-23

[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. (Romans 6)

We value freedom in our day. Those who fight for freedom are our heroes. Slavery and bondage in any form are perceived as being evil. The apostle Paul, however, reminds us that no one can be free in the fullest sense of the word. We are all bound by many factors. Our bodies limit our efforts. Our obligations and responsibilities restrict our time. Our culture checks how we express ourselves. The Lord Jesus taught that sin was a master that took many slaves:

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (John 8)

A slave is one who is controlled or dominated by another. Paul reminded the Romans in verse 20 that they were at one time "slaves to sin."

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

Notice in verse 20 that as slaves to sin the Romans were "free in regard to righteousness." The word "free" speaks about independence or separation. In other words, the Romans, as slaves to sin, were separated from righteousness. They could not please God because of their sin. They were enemies to God and all He stood for and fell under His judgement and wrath.

In Romans 6:21 the apostle Paul clearly showed the Romans the result of slavery to sin.

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.

Shame

Notice in verse 21 that the fruit of slavery to sin is shame. I have overheard enough conversations among the ungodly to know that they do not understand this shame. We have all heard men and women boasting of their immorality and drunkenness. When these actions, however, are exposed to the light of God's holiness, we see them for what they are. We define shame by measuring it against the standard of what is acceptable and good. Sin is a

failure to attain the standard set by God. It will always lead us to shame.

Death

Paul told the Romans in verse 21 that not only will sin lead to shame but also death. The death Paul speaks about here should not be seen as a physical death only. We will all die, whether we are believers or unbelievers. The death spoken of here is a separation from the life of God. Those who are enslaved by sin do not understand their need of Christ. They do not know His voice, nor do they experience His personal and life-giving presence in their lives—they are dead to the things of God. There is a future reality to this death as well. In eternity, they will be separated from the presence of Christ and His blessings.

Slavery to sin leads to shame and death. This is a slavery from which we must be set free. Only the Lord Jesus can set us free from the penalty of sin. He alone can remove the sin that enslaves us.

There is another type of slavery spoken of by Paul in verse 22. In Romans 6:19 the apostle challenged the Romans to present themselves as slaves to righteousness. The slavery Paul talks about here is a voluntary submission. We are to “present” ourselves to God to be His servants. Notice from Romans 6:22 that there is a requirement that must be met if we are to become slaves to God

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.

Those who wish to become slaves to God must first be set free from their former master. Only those who are free from

sin can become slaves to God. As a Master, God demands our full allegiance. To present ourselves to Him, we must make it our ambition in life to honour Him by turning from sin. If we serve sin, we cannot be a servant of God.

There is another detail in verse 22 we must not miss. Paul told the Romans that when they were set free from sin, they become slaves of God. What he is saying is that there are only two masters in this world—sin and God. If we are not a servant of God, we are a servant of sin. If we have been set free from sin, we have a new Master in God and are obligated to Him. We will serve one or the other, there is no middle ground, nor can we serve both.

We all have a master. That master is either God or sin. Our lives are controlled and guided by the master we serve. While having sin as a master will lead to shame and death, when God is our master the result is very different. Romans 6:22 tells us that the result of having God as our master is two-fold.

Sanctification

First, when God is our Master, we experience sanctification (Romans 6:22). Sanctification is the process whereby we are shaped into the image of God. It has to do with the defeat of sin in our lives and the production of a holy character. This is the work of the Spirit of God in us who transforms our attitudes and thoughts. He convicts us of sin and makes us more like Christ. While the fruit of being a servant of sin is shame, the fruit of being a servant of God is that we become holy in character, thought and action. This is not to say we are perfect. Sanctification is a lifelong process. The Spirit of God, however, will continue His work of convicting, enabling and transforming so that day by day we are being shaped into the image of Jesus Christ.

Life

The second fruit of being a slave of God is life. Life, in this sense, is not to be seen as physical life alone but more particularly spiritual life. This life is the life of the Spirit of God who comes to live in us. He opens our ears to hear God. He opens our minds to understand God's purpose. He empowers us and brings life to our spirit. While sin leads to death and separation from God, the life God's Spirit gives brings fills us with the power and presence of God. We are transformed from the kingdom of darkness to the realm of light. Our minds are freed from the bondage of sin and experience the reality of God and His purpose. We see what we never saw before. We hear what we never heard before. We are empowered to do what we never did before. All this is because of the life of God in us. We are no longer the same.

Paul concludes this passage with a summary of what he has been teaching in this section:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6)

On a basic level, the apostle told the Romans that sin led to death, but God gives eternal life. Notice, however, the words Paul uses in this verse. He speaks about the wages of sin and the free gift of God. There is a significant difference between our wages and a free gift.

Wages are earned. They are given to us because we merited them by some action. For example, we may have worked forty hours a week, and our boss gives us money to pay us for our efforts. Wages are earned.

A free gift, however, is not earned. The fact that it is free indicates that it is not something for which we worked at all.

What is Paul telling the Romans here? He is saying that death is earned. It is the result of our actions, attitudes and thoughts. We receive the penalty of death because we deserved it. Not one of us can say that we lived in perfect obedience to God and His purpose for our lives. All of us have fallen short of God's standard for our lives. God is always fair in His judgment. If we fall under the curse of death, it is by our own doing. We produce the fruit of our sinful nature.

While the penalty for sin is earned, eternal life is a gift. Eternal life can never be earned. As slaves, we were bound to sin as our master. The only way a slave can be released from his or her master is if another master purchases them. This is what the Lord Jesus did. He paid the penalty for our sin on the cross. He took my place and paid the price in full so that I could be released from death and its curse on my life. While a wage is earned, the only thing you can do with a gift is receive it.

Many mock the idea of eternal life given as a free gift. They cannot believe this is possible. Others, in their pride, refuse to accept such a gift. Still, others believe that they can earn this eternal life and forgiveness by their good works and efforts. Paul told the Romans, however, that eternal life is not earned—it is a free gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul places before us two options. He reminds us that we all have a master who determines our life and destiny. We are either a slave of sin, or we are a slave of God. The result of being a slave of sin is shame and death. If we are

a servant of God, however, we experience sanctification and life.

The penalty of death that results from being a slave to sin is earned and deserved. The life that comes from being a slave to righteousness is given freely to us by God. All we need to do is receive what He offers. Whose slave are you today?

For Consideration:

Is anyone of us genuinely free? Explain.

Who are the two masters Paul speaks about in this passage? Is there any other master?

What is the result of being a slave to sin?

What is the result of being a slave to God?

How do we know that we have experienced the life God offers to those who submit to Him? What difference does this life make in us?

Do those who perish in sin deserve their punishment? Is God just in condemning them?

Do those who receive eternal life deserve their gift? Is God just in giving this gift to them?

What keeps people from receiving the gift of eternal life?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to show you who your true master is today.

Thank the Lord that He offers eternal life to those who will receive it?

If you know the Lord today, thank Him for the life He has given you both now and in eternity.

If you do not know the Lord, ask Him to receive you. Accept from His hand the gift of eternal life.

Ask God to make you more and more like Jesus in character and attitude.

Do you know people who have never presented themselves to God as his servants? Ask the Lord to open their

heart. Ask the Spirit of God to enable them to surrender to Him with all their heart.

CHAPTER 9 -

FREE FROM THE LAW

Read Romans 7:1-6

[7:1] 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.

In Romans 6 the apostle Paul told the Roman believers that they were no longer under law but under grace

(Romans 6:14,15). He begins in Romans 7:1, however, by telling them that the law was binding on an individual as long as he or she was alive. How do we reconcile these two statements?

What we need to understand about law is that it has a sphere of authority. For example, the laws of Canada apply to those who live and visit the country. If I were to travel to Saudi Arabia, the rules that govern acceptable behaviour are different. What is legal in Canada may not apply to Saudi Arabia and vice versa. The law of Canada requires that I must drive my car on the right-hand side of the road. If I travel to England, however, that Canadian law no longer applies. There I am required to drive on the left-hand side of the road.

The law of God also has its sphere of authority. According to Paul, the law applies to every living person. There is no geographical boundary applied to the law of God. All God's creation is expected to live in obedience to the standard God has set out for them in His Word. Death alone can relieve a person of his or her obligations to the law. As Paul said in Romans 7:1, "the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives."

The apostle gives us an example of this in verse 2:

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.

When a couple marries, they obligate themselves to a standard of faithfulness and mutual support. The commitment of the couple to each other is a life-long commitment. While that vow may be tested by disagreements, sickness, or trials of various kinds, the couple agrees that none of

these struggles will keep them from being faithful to each other and supporting each other for the rest of their lives.

If a wife breaks this vow and is unfaithful to her husband by living with another man, she becomes guilty of adultery. The law of the Old Testament required that the woman and the man with whom she committed adultery be stoned to death (see Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22).

Notice, however, in Romans 7:2,3 that if a husband died, the woman was released from her vows. The wife whose husband died was free to remarry. She would not be guilty of adultery if her first husband died. The death of her husband set the woman free from her obligations to him. The authority of the law of marriage applied only exists when both partners were alive.

What does all this have to do with the life of the believer and his or her obligation to the law? Paul went on in Romans 7:4 to explain:

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.

Paul compares the way of law to a marriage partner. While I was alive, I was under obligation to the law as my partner. We saw in Romans 6:5-11, however, that when Christ died on our behalf, it was just as if we died.

There are two aspects to this death. First, there is a legal aspect. Christ died for me and my sin. He took my place. This means that His death paid my legal penalty in full. Imagine that you owed a great amount of money but could not afford to pay your debt. A friend paid that debt in your

name. Recorded now in the books of the creditor is the fact that you have paid your debt in full. This is what Jesus did. He paid my penalty in full. Recorded in the books of heaven is the notation: "Paid in full by means of death." I am freed from the penalty of sin through the death of Jesus in my name.

Second, there is a practical aspect to this death. The death of Christ paved the way for the Spirit of God to dwell in those for whom He died. The Spirit puts to death the old nature and transforms us into the character of Christ. We died legally with Christ on that cross, but we are also in the process of dying to sin and self through the inner work of the Spirit of God. Those who belong to Jesus are no longer the same people. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle put it this way:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old had passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5)

The believer has died to obligations of the law both legally and practically.

Remember, in this context, that Paul has been using the illustration of the death of a marriage partner. Consider for a moment that a woman loses her husband by death. In time she takes another husband. While she is married to her second husband, however, she continues to long for her first husband. Her thoughts and love are still directed toward him, even though he has passed away. What should we think of this woman's marriage? Is she not being unfaithful? When she married her second husband, she vowed that she would be faithful to him and renounce all others. This promise included her former husband who passed away.

Is Jesus Christ your hope? Have you promised faithfulness to Him alone? If so, then you must turn from the old way of law. The standard of God's law is too high for us to attain in human effort. We cannot possibly obey its rules. We have all failed to live as God expects. We must abandon any hope of this law giving us right standing with God. The way of the law must be dead to us.

In Romans 7:5, Paul went on to say:

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. (Romans 7)

To understand this verse and its connection to the context, we need to break it down. Paul begins by speaking to the Romans about a time when they were "living in the flesh." The term "flesh," relates to our earthly body and its way of thinking. The apostle reminded the believers in Rome that there was a time when they lived according to their human reasoning and nature. Their flesh and their thinking were influenced by their "passions." These physical, sexual, emotional and social passions governed how they lived. Notice that these passions were "sinful" passions. In other words, they were not governed by the Word of God and His purpose for their lives. Their desires were distorted and corrupt. Living out these passions led to crime, abuse and self-centeredness. Society was devastated as they acted on their sinful passions.

Notice also in Romans 7:5 that these passions were "aroused by the law." How did the law of God arouse sinful passions in the Romans? John Gill in his commentary on this verse says this:

The true sense of it is, that these motions of sin are irritated, provoked, and increased through the law's prohibition of them ... like a filthy dunghill, which when the sun strikes powerfully on it, it exhales and draws out its filthy stench; which nauseous smell is not to be imputed to the pure rays of the sun, but to the filthiness of the dunghill.

(Gill, John, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, "Commentary on Romans 7:5", Laridian: Cedar Rapids, 2013).

What happens to a manure pile when the light of the sun burns down on it? Does it not cause the presence of that manure pile to become more evident? The smell of the rotting manure fills the air. Similarly, the truth of God will bring out the worst in those who refuse to accept it.

When I was a young boy, I would sometimes turn over rocks in the field to find bugs underneath. One of the things I often noticed was that these bugs, content with the darkness, would often run for cover when the light of the sun hit them. Is this not what happens when the truth of God reaches the ears of those who do not want to hear it. There is a natural rebellion in the heart of man toward that light of God's truth. Their sinful nature rises to resist that truth. The law of God aroused sinful hearts. It exposed them for what they were.

Paul went on to say that these sinful passions aroused by the law were "at work in our members to bear fruit for death." The law exposed and irritated the flesh. It uncovered its horrible smell and shameful ways. The way of the law, however, did not destroy the sin that devastated our lives or bring lasting forgiveness. Only Jesus could do that. All the law could do is expose sin and bring death.

Paul concludes this section with a reminder in Romans 7:6 that because we have died both legally and practically, we are released from the way of the law. The law “held us captive.” Like a bad marriage, we were bound to a partner that was only hurting us. Now, however, we have been set free because we died with Christ.

6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Now that we have been set free, we can serve in a new way. Paul describes this as the “way of the Spirit.” The old way demanded obedience to a set of written laws and judged us by how well we could obey those rules. The way of the Spirit relates to the work of God’s Spirit in us to transform us into the image of Christ. One is an attempt to serve God from our sinful flesh. The other is a surrender to the work of God’s Spirit in our hearts. One leads to failure, the other to transformation.

Will you trust in the old way of the law? Do you believe that it is possible to obey God in the flesh? Can you by the efforts of the sinful flesh please God? Can you meet the standard that God has set for you and your perfection? If you understand the impossibility of satisfying God in this way, then you have taken a big step toward the truth Paul is teaching here in this passage. We can never meet the requirements of God by the law. This is why Jesus came. He came to set us free from the way of the law. He came to show us a new way—the way of the Spirit and life.

For Consideration:

Is it possible to be freed from the way of the law? How is this possible?

What did the Lord Jesus do to set us free from the law?

What does it mean to die with Christ?

How is the way of the law different from the way of the Spirit?

What is the work of the Spirit of God in us? How does He accomplish what the law could never achieve?

How easy is it to still trust in our goodness to merit the favour of God?

Have you renounced all hope in the way of the law to bring you to Christ?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord Jesus for His death on our behalf. Thank Him that when He died, my debt was paid entirely.

Thank the Spirit of God for the work He is doing in us to crucify the flesh and produce the life of Christ.

Ask the Lord to give you the grace to trust in Him alone for your salvation and sanctification. Thank Him that while this is not possible apart from Him, He delights to save and mature us in faith.

CHAPTER 10 -

IS THE LAW SINFUL?

Read Romans 7:7-12

[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. (Romans 7)

Paul's teaching that we are no longer under the law caused quite a stir among the Jews of his day. Even Christians would have questioned what he taught. For these believers, Paul's teaching implied that the law of God was useless or even sinful because all it did was expose sin and bring death. The apostle understood these objections and took the time to provide some answers in verses seven to twelve.

Paul begins with a question:

7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? (Romans 7)

Remember that Paul has been using the illustration of a marriage. He told the Roman believers that when the husband died, the wife was free to marry another. Her allegiance was no longer to be to her first husband. If she continued to focus on her first husband to the neglect of her present husband, she would be guilty of breaking her vows of faithfulness. Similarly, a believer who wanted to return to the law was being unfaithful to Christ. Speaking to the Galatians about the Old Testament practice of circumcision the apostle Paul would say:

1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. (Galatians 5)

Paul reminded the Galatians that the Lord Jesus had set them free from the bondage of the law. He told them that they were no longer to submit to its bondage. In Galatians 5 the apostle addressed the practice of circumcision. He told the Jewish Christians that if they began to practice circumcision as a requirement of the law, then they would be obligated to keep the whole law. If they returned to the old way of the law, they would be severing themselves from Christ and His work—they had fallen away from grace as the only means of salvation.

If it is wrong for the believer to return to the way of the law, what does this say about the law? If by returning to the law, we sever ourselves from Christ, is the law sinful? Paul answers this in the second half of verse 7 with a very definite: "By no means!" He explains this in the remainder of the verse:

7 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." (Romans 7)

Revelation of Sin

According to the apostle Paul, the law served a vital purpose—it revealed the problem of sin. It set a standard by which each believer was to live. It defined what was right and what was evil. Paul told the Romans that he would never have known that coveting was sin if it were not for the law of God (see Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 7:25). What God considers sin seems only natural to us. The law shows us what God expects. The law of God reveals to us that we are sinners in need of a Saviour. It points us to Christ, but it was never meant to be our salvation.

Accountability

Not only does the law point us to our need but it also made the practice of sin a punishable crime.

8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

When there is no law, we cannot be punished. The law, however, establishes a guideline for behaviour and

demanded that all people conform to that standard or suffer the consequences of disobedience.

Paul reminded the Romans that apart from law, sin lies dead. In other words, sin cannot be punished when there was no law against it. How can you punish a man for murder if murder is not a crime by law? The law makes sin a punishable offence. As Paul said in Romans 7:9:

9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Apart from the law, Paul was free to do as he pleased. When the law came, however, Paul became accountable for every action. That made him guilty before God of offences that were punishable by death.

Intended to give life

The apostle concludes in verses 10-12 by telling us that the law (commandment) promised life. This was the intention of the law of God. Life and hope of a good relationship with God were promised to all who perfectly kept the law of God. It revealed the high standard of God for His people. By living in perfect obedience to that standard, God's people would walk in harmony with their God.

The problem was not in the law of God but the people of God. The law was perfect, but His people were not. The commandment that promised life for those who walked in complete obedience brought condemnation to those who failed to live up to its standard.

10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.

Paul makes it clear in verse 11 that the problem was not in the law but the sinfulness of human nature.

11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

It was sin and disobedience that brought death. The law revealed the requirements of God. It was holy, righteous and good:

12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

The law could not answer our need, not because there was any fault in it, but because we could not keep it and fell short of its requirement. It is for this reason that we need another solution to resolve the problem of sin for under law we are all condemned.

For Consideration:

Why are we not to return to the way of the law?

How does the law expose sin? Would we understand God's purpose were it not for the law?

Why is it important that the law demand accountability? Would the law be of any use if it did not demand accountability or consequences for disobedience?

How does the law reveal our need for another solution to the problem of sin?

Can the law be perfect if it does not keep us from disobedience and ultimately condemns us?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to thank the Lord for how He has revealed His purpose to us through the law.

Ask God to help you to walk in obedience to Him and standard for your life.

Thank the Lord that your salvation does not depend on how well you observe His standards but on the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross for your forgiveness.

CHAPTER 11 -

THE LAW AND THE FLESH

Read Romans 7:13-20

[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. (Romans 7)

Paul made it clear that the law God gave to Moses was good. How could something be good and still bring death? Paul addresses this in verse 13:

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. (Romans 7)

Paul told the Romans that the intention of the law was not to destroy humanity but to reveal God and His purpose. The law exposed the holiness and justice of God. It uncovered the great compassion and righteousness of the God of Israel. It showed us how we could live in harmony and fellowship with Him. The problem was not to be found in the perfect law of God but in imperfect humankind that could not live in God's purpose.

It was the sinful nature of humankind that brought death and judgment. Ever since the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, this world has been plagued with the problem of sin. We are born with a sinful nature that rebels against God and His purpose. We cannot live up to the standards God has laid out in His law. Not one of us has ever been able to keep the law of God. We all fall short of the purpose of God for our lives.

Imagine that you were attempting to swim to an island 1,000 kilometres (800 miles) from shore. The distance you must cross by swimming is filled with very rough seas, large waves and dangerous sea creatures. The water through which you must pass offers no place of rest. You are determined to do this yourself with no outside help. The island you want to reach is a paradise filled with everything you ever wanted in life.

The island you want to reach is a perfect island. Your intentions are noble. The problem is that it is beyond the ability of any human. By undertaking this journey, you are

putting your life at risk. Somewhere in the body of water that separates the shore from the island your strength and human ability will give out, and you will sink to the bottom of that vast ocean, never reaching your goal. The cause of your death is not the island but your lack of ability. You could not achieve your goal.

The law is like that beautiful but distant island. It calls us, but we cannot reach it. We can never measure up to its standard. Some people may get closer than others but no one has ever arrived for it is beyond the ability of any sinner to reach that shore. Paul reminded the Romans that even he was sold to sin.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

As useful to the kingdom of God as the apostle Paul was, he understood that he was still a sinner. He knew that he could not live a perfect life. He was often frustrated by his inability to live the life God expected of him.

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.

It was impossible for Paul to live a perfect life. He could not reach the standard God required. He failed to do the things he needed to do and did the things he did not want to do. The problem was not a matter of desire but ability. Paul wanted to do what was right. He knew what was right, but he was incapable in his weak and sinful flesh to do it.

Notice that Paul agreed with the standard of God as laid out in the law. He wanted to walk in obedience. He saw that law as being the measure of goodness and holiness and wanted his life to reflect these purposes of God.

*16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law,
that it is good.*

Paul came to understand that desire and ability were two separate things. You can have the desire to do something but not have the ability to make it happen. This is where Paul found himself. He wanted to follow the ways of the Lord but could not do what he wanted to do. It is important that we understand that Paul is speaking here as a believer. As a believer in Jesus Christ, He could not perfectly live the life God expected of him through his own personal effort, no matter how committed he was to this.

This battle caused Paul to make an important discovery.

*17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells
within me.*

As Paul examined himself he saw that His heart was in tune with God and His purpose—he wanted to walk with God and live in harmony with Him. The problem was that he was a sinner. It was the sinful nature in him that kept him from doing what he wanted to do.

Notice in verse 17 that Paul made a distinction between the sinful nature in him and who he was in Christ. Sin was part of his nature, but it was not how he defined himself. The Lord Jesus had dealt with the legal consequences of sin on the cross. Paul identified himself now as a child of God—forgiven and cleansed of sin. He still lived in a sinful body which was tempted by sin, but Paul was much more than a sinful body. He belonged to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit lived in Him, making him a new person.

The fact that he had a desire to honour God was evidence of the work of the Spirit in Paul. The Spirit of God was

transforming his thoughts and attitudes. He was convicting him of sin. He was transforming Paul into the image of Christ. All this was taking place in a sinful fleshly body.

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

Paul understood that the flesh in which he lived was sinful and incapable of serving God as it ought. Every true and lasting goodness that dwelt in him came from the work of God's Spirit. The apostle saw the sinfulness of the flesh with its inability to obey and walk in perfect obedience to God. He also saw a new nature formed in him through the inner work of the Holy Spirit.

A great battle was raging in the life of Paul. The flesh was leading Paul in one way, and the Spirit was leading him in another. In his spirit, the apostle sought firmly after the Lord God, but the sin in his flesh caused him to do what he did not want to do. Paul placed the blame for his inability to honour his Lord squarely on his sinful fleshly nature. He despised that nature.

20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

We should understand here that the sin that lives in us, of which Paul speaks, is not something separate from us –it is our nature. It is not some foreign body that has invaded us, influencing us against our wishes. We were born sinners, separated from God and incapable of keeping His law. Paul's experience in the Christian life was one of struggle with this sinful and fleshly desires. He saw the

passions of his flesh to be contrary to God and His purpose.

When Paul came to Christ, the Spirit of God came to live in him. In the Spirit, Paul delighted to follow the Lord and walk in His ways, but evil was “close at hand” (verse 21) waging war with his flesh. As long as he was in his sinful body, Paul felt like a captive (see Romans 7:23).

The apostle longed to be free from what he called his “body of death.” He felt that this sinful nature only kept him from doing what he longed to do. He wanted to walk in the purpose of God, but his flesh hindered him. Paul’s grief over the sinfulness of this body of death that clung to him was so intense that he cried out in verse 24:

24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

He longed for deliverance from this sinful flesh. He yearned to be free to serve and honour his Lord as He deserved. He wanted to part with the sinful temptations that plagued his earthly body.

In his moment of grief, Paul looks up to the Lord Jesus and gives Him thanks for His work. He praises Him that by means of His Spirit, He received a new heart and mind. He thanked the Lord that He could serve Him with his mind even though his body still longed for the sinful ways of the world (see verse 25).

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)

Because of the work of the Lord Jesus, Paul's heart and mind were being transformed. He found a new desire to serve the Lord. What his flesh could not do, the Spirit of God was doing in his mind and heart, enabling him to love and serve His creator. While he lived in a "body of death" (verse 24) that waged war against his mind (verse 23), God had not abandoned him. The Spirit of God was at work, and through the work of that Spirit, Paul was able to love and serve His God.

One of the significant challenges of the Christian life is to distinguish the flesh from the work of the Spirit. For Paul, this distinction seemed to be very clear. He saw the flesh as a body of death that waged war against what God was doing in him. Paul saw himself as a prisoner and not a willing inhabitant of this sinful flesh (verse 23). He felt wretched because he longed to serve and fellowship with the Lord in a way he couldn't in his sinful body. He told the Romans that nothing good lived in that flesh to which he was captive (verse 18).

Paul also speaks about delighting in the law in his inner being. He talks in verse 25 about serving the Lord with his mind (that the Spirit was transforming). Paul's desire and focus was to serve his Lord, not from the flesh but his spirit and renewed mind. He saw his victory in service as coming from the Lord Jesus and the work of the Spirit in him and not from his human ways and understanding.

Do we believe our flesh is sinful and incapable of honouring the Lord God? If we do, we will put less confidence in it and more in the leading and work of God's Spirit in our lives. In Romans 8 Paul will take the time to speak more fully about what it means to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

For Consideration:

Can a law be good if no one can obey it?

Is it possible to perfectly obey the law of God in our flesh?

Have you ever felt that pull of the flesh? Give an example from your personal life.

What evidence is there of the work of the Spirit of God in your life?

Have you been aware of the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in your life? Give an example.

What is the difference between doing our best in fleshly insight and strength and walking in the Spirit, His enabling, and wisdom?

How important is it that was distinguish between the flesh and the Spirit?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that His purposes are perfect and that our inability to attain this standard does not diminish the perfection of His plan.

Ask the Lord to help you to understand that you cannot serve Him as He deserves in human effort. Ask Him to show you your need of strength and wisdom that is greater than the flesh.

Thank the Lord that His Spirit is transforming and leading us into the purpose of the Father.

Ask the Lord to help you to walk in the leading of the Spirit and to trust your own fleshly wisdom less.

CHAPTER 12 -

THE BATTLE WITHIN

Read Romans 7:21-25

[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)

In these final verses of Romans 7, the apostle Paul shares his struggle. He begins in verse 21 with the words:

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (Romans 7)

We understand several things from this verse. First, evil keeps us in following the purposes of God. Second, this evil is not far from us—it is “close at hand.” Finally, the fact that we are hindered by this evil is a “law” that governs us

as human beings. Paul goes on to explain these three principles in greater detail in the verses that follow.

Paul begins by reminding the Romans that, in his inner being, he delighted in the law of God. When he came to the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of God took up residence in his life. The Holy Spirit was working in him, transforming his mind and heart into the image of Christ. The work of God's Spirit was changing Paul and giving him a greater desire and love for God and His purpose. This was evident in the life of the apostle. The apostle was willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. His whole being was devoted to serving and walking in the purpose of His Lord. Paul could legitimately say:

22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being (Romans 7)

It was Paul's greatest desire to know Christ and walk with Him in obedience. He spoke boldly about this relationship with Christ and longed to see others experience the joy he was experiencing in his Lord.

Those who come to know the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, understand what Paul is saying. The Spirit of God has transformed our hearts. What used to please us now falls short. We now find more delight in the Lord Jesus. It is our great desire to walk with Him. It grieves us when we fall short or when His face seems hidden from us. We identify with Paul's great longing and delight in God and His purposes.

The apostle went on in verse 23, however, to describe something else that was taking place in his life:

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. (Romans 7)

Notice what Paul told the Romans here: “I see in my members another law.” The word “members” in the original language refers to parts of the body. The apostle is telling us that while he desired to do what was right, his human flesh was leading him in another direction.

Some time ago I was in Toronto to visit a missionary friend of mine. I was on a highway with streetcar tracks embedded in the pavement. As I prepared to turn onto my friend’s street, the wheel of my motorcycle slipped into the streetcar track throwing me onto the pavement. I remember seeing my motorcycle skidding away from me. The momentum caused it to bounce over on its side. At one point I remember thinking in my mind, “if I get up and rush over to it, I can prevent it from bouncing over and getting damaged.” That was what my mind said, but my body did not respond. It continued to lay there while my motorcycle skidded down the road and bounced over on its side before coming to a halt.

I experienced at that moment the difference between what the mind wants to do and what the body does. Paul desired to serve the Lord. His sinful body, however, seemed to follow another law—the law of sin. There was a battle raging in Paul. The desire to obey God was present, but he struggled in his body to walk in obedience. He agonized over this struggle crying out in verse 24:

24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Notice that Paul speaks here about a “body of death” from which he needed deliverance. The body of death to which Paul refers is, in part, his physical body that did not do what he wanted. “His members” (his body in all its parts) were held captive (verse 23). Paul told that Romans that a law of sin held his earthly body captive (verse 23).

The body in which the apostle lived was ruled by another law. It experienced desires that were contrary to the will and purpose of God. He was aware of sinfulness in his flesh that dishonoured the Lord God. His body not only experienced sinful passions but was also under the curse of that sin. The penalty of sin is death (see Romans 6:23). Paul’s body was experiencing this death. His body was subject to sickness and decay. It was growing older and weaker and would eventually perish and lie in the grave. Like a mortal disease, sin ravaged his form. Its desires were repulsive to Paul. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle would say:

*27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.
(1 Corinthians 9)*

According to Paul, the body with its sinful impulses had to be disciplined and kept under control. It was capable of great evil. Paul felt an intense need for deliverance from this “body of death.”

When Jesus was preparing for his death in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told His disciples to pray for Him as He went to spend time with the Father. Returning from His intense struggle in prayer, Jesus found His disciples sound asleep. In Matthew 26:41 He challenged them with these words:

*41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
(Matthew 26)*

Notice how Jesus reminded the disciples that their fleshly bodies were weak and would fall into temptation. Who among us has not experienced the pull of the flesh and its weakness? The apostle Paul was very much aware of this struggle in his body and cried out: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" He answers this question in verse 25:

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7)

All hope of deliverance from this sinful body with all its impulses was in Christ. Paul did teach that the body needed to be disciplined and kept under control. Ultimate victory, however, would not come through human effort to discipline and train it but through Jesus Christ.

There is one great certainty in life—our bodies will die. The effect of sin in these physical bodies is such that while we discipline them, the curse of death will always win out in the end. There is nothing we can do to stop this process.

The Lord Jesus, however, brought forgiveness and hope for us. The day is coming when we will be set free from this body of sin and death. Our souls will enter the presence of the Lord awaiting a new and perfect body. In that new body, we will dwell in the presence of our Saviour free from pain, suffering and tears (Revelation 21:4). Our earthly body, broken and stained with sinful impulses will perish and be no more.

Paul concludes in verse 25 with the perplexing words:

25 ... So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Notice how the apostle told the Romans that even if his mind was in tune with God and His purpose, his body was not. His heart was guided by the desire to follow God, but that was not the case for his flesh. His flesh was part of this world and longed to be satisfied by the things of this world. It was weak and often calloused to the ways of God.

Standing before the law of God, the apostle found himself falling short. He had a willing mind but saw himself doing what he did not want to do and leaving undone what he needed to do (Romans 7:18). He found himself serving the law in his mind but serving sin in his body (Romans 7:25). A great battle raged in him. How could he win this battle? How could he honour God in this sinful body? The apostle will address this in Romans 8.

For Consideration:

How has the Holy Spirit been changing your desire for Christ and His purpose? What changes have you seen in your life since you came to Christ?

Do you always do what you know is right? What are the desires of the flesh? Do you find yourself doing things to please the flesh?

How does your sinful flesh hinder your fellowship with God and your walk with Him?

What was the attitude of Paul toward the sinful desires of his flesh? Have you been living in victory over the sinful passions of the flesh?

For Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit to continue His work of transforming your character and moulding you into the image of Christ.

Ask the Lord for victory over the sinful nature of the flesh. Thank Him that while we still live in sinful flesh, He has provided a solution to the problem of sin through the forgiveness of Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Ask the Lord to help you to see the need for a solution apart from law and human efforts? Take a moment to confess that you have been guilty before Him and need His forgiveness and enabling.

CHAPTER 13 -

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Read Romans 8:1-4

[8:1] 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. (Romans 8)

The apostle showed the Romans in the last part of chapter 7 the impossibility of pleasing God in the flesh. While the mind may be willing to walk in the law of God, the body is weak and follows another law. The apostle Paul struggled with this conflict. This conflict rages in every human being. In the history of the church, many have sought to discipline the body and its sinful desires. Some have gone to extreme lengths to curb the sinful cravings of the flesh.

Simeon Stylites, who died in 459, sat for 37 years on top of a pillar in what is modern-day Syria. Some historians believe that this pillar was up to 50 feet in height. He did so to discipline his body to be closer to God (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Stylites). Other saints beat their bodies with whips to purge them of evil. In some countries today Christians have submitted to being crucified on crosses imitating what the Lord Jesus has done for them in an attempt to get closer to God.

The question we need to ask is this: Can we ever purge our bodies of their natural desires? If you cut out your eyes, this may keep you from seeing what you do not want to see, but it will not stop your mind from thinking about sinful things. You may cut off your legs and hands so that you cannot go where you do not want to go or touch what you know you shouldn't touch. This act, however, will not change the heart's desire.

As we begin Romans 8, the apostle Paul makes a powerful statement.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8)

Consider what the apostle is saying. He is telling us that we do not have to be condemned to the sentence of death. There is a way of escape for us. Those who are in Christ Jesus are freed from the penalty of sin.

I live a few kilometres from a ferry that travels to the island province of Newfoundland, Canada. The nearest route takes about 6 hours on the boat. The ferry will take me across the ocean to Newfoundland—all I need to do is get on it. When I am on the ferry, it does all the work. I simply enjoy the ride. The apostle Paul told the Romans in

Romans 8:1 that if they were in Christ, they were free from condemnation. Just as I needed to be on the ferry, so I need to be in Christ. When I am on that ship, I am not concerned about whether I can get there on my efforts—the ferry is doing this for me. This is the same in my relationship with Christ. If I am in Christ, the last concern on my mind is whether I can get to heaven on my own. By being in Christ, I have admitted my inability and ceased trying to get to heaven by my personal efforts—instead, I surrender to Him and let Him do the work.

Those who come to Christ, admit their need. They recognize that they are sinners. They confess that they are incapable of living the life God requires through the law. They confess that they have fallen short and will continue to fall short of His requirements. They come to Christ because there is no other way. They need Him to forgive them. They need Him to bring them to the Father. To be in Christ is to give up all human effort to merit salvation through human effort. It is to accept that He is the only way to the Father and apart from His forgiveness and blessing, we will be lost forever.

As Paul continues in verse 2, he speaks about another law. He has talked about the “law of God” which required perfect obedience on pain of death and eternal separation from God. He has also spoken about the “law of sin and death” that seems to govern our flesh and its desires. He now introduces the “law of the Spirit of life.”

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

The apostle Paul has shown us that we cannot, in our strength please God or meet His requirements. He now introduces us to a new way—the way of the Spirit. Notice

that he calls this new way the “law” of the Spirit. By calling it a law, the apostle is telling us that it is what must now govern our behaviour. The law to which we are now to submit is the Spirit, His leading and direction.

Notice something else in verse 2. Paul told the Romans that the law of the Spirit of life set them free in Christ from the law of sin and death.

The law of the Spirit of life sets those who are “in Christ” free. The phrase “in Christ” is significant. The law of the Spirit is only for those who are in Christ. It is the presence of the Spirit of Christ that is the guarantee of our salvation. He gave me spiritual life when He came to dwell in me. Every believer has the presence of the Spirit of God dwelling in them.

Those who are in Christ are freed from the law of sin and death and now live under the law of the Spirit of life. If we are in Christ, we are no longer under the old way of the law. We have seen that we cannot keep this law by our efforts. Under it, we were condemned to death. How are we to live for Christ now that our sins are forgiven? Paul tells us that we are to live under the law of the Spirit of life.

It is the Spirit of God who is our law. He is now our guide and counsellor. We surrender to Him and His leading. He will not only teach us what God requires but enable us to walk in those requirements. Paul told the Romans that by sending His Son, the Lord God did in us what the Law could not do:

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. (Romans 8)

It is important that we take a moment to break down what the apostle Paul is saying in this passage.

God has Done what the Law Could Not Do

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. (Romans 8)

The apostle told the Romans in verse 3 that the flesh weakened the law. What Paul is telling us here is that we were unable to keep the law of God because of our sinful nature. God, however, provided a way for us to be set free from the penalty of the law and be in good standing with Him.

God Sent His Son in the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

What was the solution of God to our inability to keep His commandments? Verse 3 tells us that God sent His son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The plan of God involved His Son. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh. The body He took on was subject to all the afflictions and temptations of our flesh. His body aged and felt pain. In that body, the Lord Jesus suffered and died.

The Lord Jesus Condemned Sin in the Flesh

Paul went on to tell the Romans in verse 3 that the Lord Jesus condemned sin in the flesh. The word “condemned,” literally means to pronounce a sentence against or to judge. What Paul is saying here is that the Lord Jesus pronounced his sentence of judgement against the sins of the

flesh. He opposed them and sentenced the flesh to death because of its rebellion against God.

The Righteous Requirements of the Law were Fulfilled

By sentencing the flesh to die, the Lord Jesus was following the requirements of the law. The flesh was rebellious against God and deserved to die. He took that human flesh with Him to the cross and laid it down to die.

The Requirements of the Law were Fulfilled in Us

Notice in verse 4 the phrase “in us”:

3 he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (Romans 8)

The words “in us” are significant. Christ laid down His life so that the righteous requirements of the law be fulfilled in us. He died so that my penalty was covered. He died of me. I am now set free from the legal penalty of the law. Jesus paid my debt. I have no more legal obligation to the law of sin and death.

We no Longer Walk According to the Flesh but According to the Spirit

Paul told the Romans that those who have been freed from the law, no longer walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. We do not draw our wisdom from our flesh but the Spirit and the Word of God. We no longer trust our reasoning but rely on the leading of God's Spirit. We have come to understand that we need a strength that is not our own, so we are dependent on the power of the Spirit of

God. We have pulled the electrical plug from the socket of human wisdom and strength. Now we have plugged into another source of power—the person of the Holy Spirit. He is our wisdom and guide. He is our strength and power. We cry out for His ability. We trust more in His leading than in our human understanding. In fact, we have come to distrust the instincts of the human heart with its sinful impulses. We have come to be suspicious of human reasoning with its bent to selfishness and rebellion. We are learning how to walk with the person of the Holy Spirit. The presence of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is my guide and comforter. He enables me to walk and minister as the Father requires. This is not to say that I live a perfect life. I am always learning to rely on the Spirit of God. I sometimes fail to listen. I am still tempted to trust my wisdom rather than His. These sins, however, have been covered by the Lord Jesus. I am freed by His death to know the presence of the Holy Spirit and to discern His leading and empowering in my life. I choose to walk “according to the Spirit” and make it my goal in life to know His guidance and submit to His authority and leading. Paul will continue in chapter 8 to describe this life under the Lordship of God’s Spirit.

For Consideration:

Is it possible to remove sin by disciplining the flesh or by afflicting our bodies with pain?

What does it mean to be “in Christ?” How has this changed the way you see salvation?

What is the law of the Spirit?

Have you seen your need of the Spirit of God? How much of your Christian based on human effort and wisdom? How has the Spirit of God been working in your life?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that He paid the penalty for your sin.

Ask the Lord to give you confidence in His work for you on the cross. Thank Him that there is nothing more that can be done for your salvation and that you are fully accepted by the Father because you are in Christ.

Ask the Lord to show you your need of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask the Spirit of God to teach you what it means to submit to Him and His leading. Thank Him that He has given us His Word to guide us and He will lead us specifically in the application of that Word and the purpose of the Father.

Thank the Lord that His Spirit will enables us to do what we cannot do in the flesh. Ask God to give you a higher expectation of this work of God in your life.

CHAPTER 14 -

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

Read Romans 8:5-8

[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. (Romans 8)

There are two ways of living according to the apostle Paul. In Romans 8:5 he told the Romans that a person could either live according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Remember that the apostle is speaking to believers in Rome. He appears to be telling them that it was possible for them to live their Christian lives in one of these two ways. Let's take a moment to consider these two ways of living.

Living According to the Flesh

Paul says several things about living according to the flesh in this passage. Notice what he told the Romans in verse 5:

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh (Romans 8)

There are two points we need to make here.

First, to set our minds on the flesh is to seek to please its appetites and desires. Our fleshly pleasures become our master. Admittedly, there are laws in our land that confine those desires and cravings to acceptable behaviours. Imagine what life would be like if everyone were able to do whatever they wanted to satisfy their fleshly desires?

The apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians described the works of the flesh when he said:

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5)

We don't have to look very far to see evidence of people who are living according to the flesh. Immorality, drunkenness, jealousy, anger and such things are evident all around us and part of the mindset of a fallen world.

The question we need to ask ourselves in this context is this: Is it possible for the believer to live according to the flesh? To answer this, I would like to return to the teaching of the apostle Paul as he addressed the believers in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3:

1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? (1 Corinthians 3)

Notice in 1 Corinthians 3:1 that Paul speaks to “brothers.” The implication is that these individuals were Christians. The apostle could not, however, address these brothers as “spiritual people.” Instead, he had to address them as “people of the flesh.” He told these believers that they were “still of the flesh” and “behaving only in a human way” (verse 3). These Corinthian believers were demonstrating the fruit of the worldly living in jealousy and strife. According to this, it is possible for the believer to live according to the flesh. The believers of Corinth were focused on their own interests and desires and surrendered to jealousy and strife when those passions were not satisfied.

In his second letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul would write:

20 For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned

earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced. (2 Corinthians 12)

Paul's concern in 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 was that the Corinthians would continue to live according to the flesh with its "quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder." He expected that if he went to see them, he would find people in the church living in sexual immorality and sensuality. He feared that these individuals had never repented of these sinful practices and continued to live in them.

Writing to the Galatians, the apostle warned them specifically about gratifying the desires of the flesh:

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. (Galatians 5)

We should not think that just because we are Christians, we are free from the temptations of the flesh. The desires of the sinful nature will seek gratification in us. These desires must be held in subjection to the will and purpose of God.

Even the apostle James challenges his readers to do battle with their fleshly desires:

[4:1] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? [2] You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You

ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. [4] You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4)

Notice, that the apostle James speaks to believers who have been surrendering to the passions of their flesh. I suppose that the majority of problems in the church of our day have to do with believers living according to their fleshly desires.

There is a second way that we can set our mind on the flesh. That is, to trust its instincts, strength and reason. Again, Scripture is very clear at this point. Listen to the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

5 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. (Jeremiah 17)

The prophet is clear about what will happen to those who put their trust in the flesh. There is no hope for them. They will not see good. They will be like a fruitless desert plant. This is not to say we cannot do many great things in the flesh. All around us we see evidence of great businesses built up through human wisdom and skill. Great wealth and prosperity are amassed in fleshly wisdom and strength. The problem with this prosperity is that it will not leave this earth. It will rust and decay. It will flower for a moment and be no more. Those who amass these riches will become old and die. They will then stand before their Maker to account for their lives. All that is not from him will disappear,

and they will stand naked before their Creator. As the Lord Jesus, Himself said:

36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8)

Jeremiah would go on to speak about the human heart, its impulses and reason by saying:

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

The writer of Proverbs 3 told his readers:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Because the heart is wicked above all things and its instincts are contrary to God, we dare not lean on its impulses. The worst advice you could give to a person is: "follow your heart." Even believers can trust their heart and be misled by human wisdom.

Paul went on in Romans 8 to say something else about living according to the flesh:

6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death (Romans 8)

What happens when we set our mind on following the instincts of the sinful nature and its ways? According to the apostle Paul, the result is death. The ways of the flesh are contrary to the purposes of the Spirit of God. To follow the impulses of our sinful heart is to wander into sin. The wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23).

Beyond this is the separation we experience from God and His blessing in our lives and ministries. God is pleased to bless those who walk in obedience to Him and follow His direction for their lives and ministries. There can be no ultimate blessing in walking in the flesh—it will only lead to death and separation from God and His purpose. Paul makes it clear that the mind that is set on the flesh cannot please God:

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. (Romans 8)

The way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit are so different that Paul tells us that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. The word, “hostile” could also be translated by the word “hate,” or “enemy.” It is a strong word that shows us that the way of the flesh is an enemy to God and His ways. The flesh hates and rebels against the purposes of God. It is so contrary to the way of the Spirit that it is not possible for it to submit to God’s law.

You cannot beat the flesh into submission to God.

23 Can an Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13)

Paul told the Romans in Romans 8:8 that if they followed the way of the flesh, they could not please God. This means then that there needs to be a complete break from the flesh. Believers must learn to distrust the instincts and reasoning of the human mind. They must learn to deny the impulses of their sinful human nature if they are to please

God. Instead, they must learn to live “according to the Spirit.”

Living According to the Spirit

This brings us to the second way of living. Paul only touches on this here in this section but will develop it further in Romans 8. In Romans 8:5-8, however, Paul has two things to say about living according to the Spirit.

5 ...but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8)

Notice first that the apostle tells us that to live according to the Spirit requires that we set our minds on the things of the Spirit. Paul does not define the “things of the Spirit” in this verse. The idea is that those who live according to the Spirit seek the will, purpose and heart of the Spirit of God.

Before He left this earth, the Lord Jesus told His disciples:

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16)

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come to the disciples. He would be their power and convict the world of sin and righteousness. It is the heart of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and lead us into the purpose of God.

The apostle Peter told his readers that the Holy Spirit was the source of prophecy and inspired His servants in the writing of Scripture:

19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1)

The "things of the Spirit" are found in the Scriptures He inspired. In these words, we can know the purpose and will of God for our lives.

Paul would go on in Romans 8 to say:

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Romans 8)

The Holy Spirit reveals Himself in the conviction of sin and desire for righteousness. He makes His will and purpose known in the Scriptures He inspired. He also leads His people in into the specific purpose of God for their lives. We do not have time here in this chapter to examine the leading of the Spirit of God in the lives of the apostles (see Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 16:6-7; 20:22-23). Suffice it to say that the Spirit of God led the early church in what they were to say or where they were to minister. The apostles were very keen to follow His leading and guidance in their daily routine.

Finally, Paul tells us that the result of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit is life and peace:

6 ...but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (Romans 8)

The life that Paul refers to here is spiritual and eternal life. Those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit and walk in obedience to Him and His leading will know the blessing and fullness of God. The Spirit of God will lead them in harmony with the purpose of God as revealed in His Word. He will also reveal the specific purpose of God for their spiritual gifts. By walking in obedience to the leading, conviction and purpose of the Spirit of God, the believer finds peace with God.

The apostle Paul told the Romans here that there were two ways of living. They could live according to the flesh, or they could live according to the Spirit. One of these paths led to death, the other to live and peace with God. This challenge is for us as well. Even believers can be tempted to follow the passions and instincts of the flesh. To live the Christian life, however, we must learn to deny the sinful nature its authority in our lives. We must mistrust its instincts and passions. Instead, we must learn to depend on the strength and wisdom of the Spirit. We must learn that the flesh cannot submit to God and chose to deny it, to walk according to the will and purpose of the person of the Holy Spirit. We will speak more of this.

For Consideration:

What does it mean to live according to the flesh? What evidence do you see in the world of this way of living?

Can Christians live according to the flesh? What evidence is there of this in the Scripture? What evidence of this is the church?

Do you see any evidence of the temptation of the flesh in your own life?

Can you trust the instincts and desires of the flesh? What does Scripture teach about this?

What does it mean to live according to the Spirit?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Are you aware of His person and work in your life?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to forgive you for times that you have chosen to live according to the flesh.

Ask God to teach you more about what it means to live according to the Spirit.

Ask God to forgive you for times you have resisted the leading and conviction of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask Him to give you grace and willingness to obey Him and His purpose for your life.

Take a moment to thank God that He has given us His Holy Spirit to enable us and lead us into the purpose of God.

CHAPTER 15 -

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Read Romans 8:9-11

[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)

The apostle Paul has been reminding the believer in Roman that there are two ways to live. They could live according to the flesh, or they could live according to the Spirit. Notice that as Paul begins verse 9 he uses the word "however."

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit (Romans 8)

The word, “however” is significant. While there was the option for the Roman believers to live according to the flesh, there was another factor in their lives that steered them in a new direction. Paul told the Roman believers that they were “not in the flesh but in the Spirit.”

The word “in” can be confusing here. This little word carries a variety of meanings, all of which are important if we are to understand what it means to be “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit.” Let’s take a moment to consider the meaning of this word.

The word “in” can describe where we live. For example, we might say: “I live in a home.” In this sense, the word “in” carries with it a sense of belonging and allegiance. It is in that home that I belong and find my shelter and comfort.

We may also use this word to help people locate us. I might tell a friend, who is looking for me, that I am in a specific store. The word “in” here enables a person to know where I am in relation to the other stores in a region.

Finally, we have an example of Jesus using the word “in” in John 15:

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (John 15)

Jesus uses the word “in” four times in John 15:4. He describes in this verse how a branch “abides in the vine.” This use of the word “in” speaks of a deep connection where the life of the vine flows through the branch.

When Paul uses the phrase “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit,” he is connecting all these meanings. In other words, when Paul tells us that we are “in the Spirit,” he is telling us that we belong in Him and find our shelter and comfort in Him. Our allegiance is to the Spirit of God. Being in the Spirit also refers to where we stand in life. To be in the Spirit means that we are under His authority and guidance. We identify with Him and His purposes. Finally, being in the Spirit speaks about the very intimate connection we have with the Spirit of God. His life flows through us. His thoughts guide us, and His strength enables us.

Paul reminded the Romans in Romans 8:9 that through the work of the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of God had come to dwell in them. Their allegiance was now to Him. His presence and power filled them and enabled them to live in harmony with the purpose of God. They were connected to the Spirit of God as a branch was attached to the vine. This was a privilege of being a believer. This connection defined the believer:

*9 ... if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him
(Romans 8)*

Paul made it clear that anyone who did not have the Spirit of Christ did not belong to Him. What is the one thing that defines a believer and distinguishes him or her from the unbeliever? According to the apostle Paul, it is the person of the Holy Spirit who lives in the believer. It is the Spirit of Christ that gives us life.

*10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
(Romans 8)*

Speaking to God in Exodus 33 Moses boldly said:

15 "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. 16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33)

Moses made it clear that it is the presence of God that distinguished the people of God from all other people. If the Spirit of God is not in us, how are we different from the unbeliever? What hope do we have to live the Christian life if the Holy Spirit does not empower and indwell us? He is our life and strength. It is the presence of this Spirit that makes us different from the unbeliever. The living Spirit of Christ is in the believer.

Notice also in verse 10 that Paul told the Romans that the Spirit is life for us because of righteousness. Paul was telling the Romans that they could know the life of the Spirit in them because of righteousness. What is righteousness? It is a right standing with God. The believer experiences the life of the Spirit because he or she now has a right standing with God. This standing is the result of the forgiveness of Christ and His work on the cross of Calvary. While we are not perfect, He was a perfect sacrifice, covering all our sins and giving us this standing before God. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, we have obtained this right standing. God seals this standing with His Spirit in us.

The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead gives us new life.

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.

The resurrection power of the Spirit of Christ now comes to fill these mortal bodies of ours. There is now a power available in us that was not available to us before we came to Christ. This power is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is a power that conquered the curse of sin and triumphed over death.

Is it possible for a believer to live according to the flesh? From what we have seen in Paul's letters, it certainly is. There is, however, now a power in the believer that is greater than the flesh. It is that Spirit that makes us different from the unbeliever. His presence and power are available to us for each task and every struggle we face. He will guide us and empower us for every work.

The question we need to ask ourselves is this: Why would we turn to the flesh and its ways when the Spirit of God is in us? Why would we resort to human effort when the empowerment of God is available to us? Why would we trust human wisdom when the guidance of the Spirit of Christ is at our disposal? Why would we, who are attached to the vine, determine to separate ourselves from the vine to produce fruit by our own effort?

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit," said Paul. Should those who are in the Spirit, ever be defined by the flesh? Should those who have experienced His power to transform their lives ever trust human wisdom and strength again? Should those who have been given a right standing with God ever return to the weakness and sinfulness of the flesh?

We have the Spirit of Christ. We have life in His name. We have been given a right standing with the Father through the work of His Son. This is now what defines us. We turn our back on the flesh and all that it represents. We choose now to live under the direction and empowering of the Spirit. We renounce our fleshly ways and understanding to walk in this new life under the guidance and authority of the Spirit of Christ.

For Consideration:

What does it mean to be in the Spirit?

Can you be a true believer if you do not have the person of the Holy Spirit in you?

How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in believers distinguish them from the unbeliever?

What would cause those who know the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives to return to the ways of the flesh and to live the Christian life in human effort and worldly wisdom?

What evidence is there in your life of the presence of the Holy Spirit. How has He changed you? How has He empowered and guided you?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that He had given you His Spirit to be in you. Ask Him to enable you to be more aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit and His guidance and conviction.

Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you have chosen to return to the flesh and its ways.

Ask God to enable you to trust more in the work of His Holy Spirit to enable you to live and minister.

Ask God to make the person of Christ and His Spirit more evident in what you do and how you minister.

CHAPTER 16 - NO OBLIGATION TO THE FLESH

Read Romans 8:12-14

[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. (Romans 8)

Paul begins Romans 8:12 by telling the Romans that they did not have a debt to their flesh. Throughout the Scripture, the Lord God reminds us of our need to minister to those in need around us. Take for example the command of God in Deuteronomy 15:

9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and you be guilty of sin. 10 You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

God's people had a special obligation toward the poor among them. To refuse to hear their cries for help in time of need was a sin in the eyes of God. What was true for the poor was also true for the widows and orphans in their time of need (see Exodus 22:22-24).

It was not just the widows and orphans who cried out in their need. The flesh also cried out with needs. Paul told the Romans, however, that they were not debtors to the flesh.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

What did the apostle mean when he said that we have no debt to the flesh? Writing to the Ephesians, he said:

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church (Ephesians 5)

What Paul seems to be saying in Ephesians 5:29 is that it is the most natural thing in the world to care for our flesh by nourishing and cherishing it. The same Greek word is used to speak of the flesh here as in Romans 8:12.

God commanded His people to care for the physical needs of the poor, the widow and the orphan. Their flesh needed to be nourished and protected. The Lord also expected that the believer care for their own bodies. The fact of the matter is that if we do not take care of our physical bodies, they will become sick and die. What is the case for our physical well-being is also true for our emotional well-being. Our bodies and minds cannot be healthy, nor can they reach their full potential if they are neglected.

When Paul told the Romans in Romans 8:12 that they were not debtors to the flesh, he went on in that same verse to say, “to living according to the flesh.” This phrase is significant. We have seen that to live “according to the flesh,” is to allow the flesh and its sinful impulses to control our actions and thoughts. To “live according to the flesh” is to let our sinful nature determine what we do. Paul is not telling us that we are to neglect our physical bodies, but rather to hold them in submission to the greater purpose of God for them.

The desires and cravings of the flesh must not be master over us. The sexual impulses of the body must be submitted to God’s purpose. The sinful jealousies of the mind will be confessed and brought under the lordship of the Spirit in our life. We are not obligated to surrender to the cravings of our flesh—to do so would be to sin. Our obligation as believers is to submit to Christ and His purpose.

The apostle Paul illustrated this when he wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9)

Paul disciplined his body and kept it under control. He would not let his body with all its passions and desires master him. He was not obligated to follow its cravings. His Master was Christ.

The apostle would go on in Romans 8:13 to say that if we live according to the flesh we will die:

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die (Romans 8)

When Paul speaks about dying, he is not only talking about physical death. Death is not just the cessation of physical life on this earth. We may be very much alive and yet live under death. Death can also refer to separation from God and His blessings. Many people have everything this world has to offer but live under the curse of God. They have no relationship with God nor any desire for Him. They are spiritually dead to Christ and any connection with Him.

This adds another dimension to Paul's teaching about living according to the flesh. He began in verse 12 by telling the Romans that they did not have a debt to the flesh. In verse 13, however, he takes this a step further by showing them that if they allowed their flesh to master them, they would die and be separated from the blessing of God.

To living according to the flesh will only separate us from God and place us under His curse. Those who understand and believe what the apostle is saying here will make it their priority to do what Paul told the Romans in verse 13:

13 ... but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Those who believe that living by the natural impulses and desires of the flesh will lead to death, will chose to die to it. They will "put to death the deeds of the body." In other words, they will not allow the flesh to control them. They will not surrender to its evil passions. They will discipline this flesh and crucify any instinct that does not bring glory

to their Lord and Saviour. They will view the flesh with caution. They will place more weight and confidence in the leading of the Spirit than in the reasoning of their human intellect. All actions and attitudes of the flesh that do not honour their Lord will be confessed and forsaken.

While this sounds simple, the reality of the matter is that the flesh constantly wages war with our spirit. In fact the apostle Paul struggled deeply with his flesh and its attitudes. We have already examined what He told the Romans in chapter 7:

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. (Romans 7)

The battle to overcome the temptations of the flesh is a difficult one. How can we fight the flesh and its sinful impulses? In doing so, we battle our own instincts and natural inclinations. How can we change what our flesh naturally desires and craves? Notice the words of Paul in Romans 8:13:

13 ...but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The phrase “if by the Spirit you put to death” gives us the answer to this question. The power to overcome the evil of the flesh is not in our flesh but in the Spirit of God who

indwells us. We cannot put the deeds of the body to death by our efforts. The history of the church is filled with people beating themselves and denying their bodies. These individuals may have been able to change some behaviours, but they could not deal with the root of sin. The Holy Spirit puts to death the deeds of the body. We cannot do this ourselves. The Spirit of God alone can remove these deeds and change us completely.

Speaking to the people of his day, the prophet Amos said about the Amorites:

*9“Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them,
whose height was like the height of the cedars and who
was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and
his roots beneath. (Amos 2)*

The Amorites lived in the land God wanted to give Israel. They were a great enemy to Israel, described here as being as high as a cedar and as strong as the oak. Notice what God did. He “destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.” If God only destroyed the fruit above, the Amorites would live another day. God did more than this, however. He also killed his roots beneath. This meant total victory for the people of God. Never again would this enemy pose a problem. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He not only destroys the fruit of sin but its roots in our lives as well. What we cannot do in the flesh, the Spirit of God will do for us.

Paul concludes this section with the words:

*14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of
God.*

Those who belong to God, have the Spirit of God living in them. God's children surrender to the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Only the children of God can be directed and empowered in this way. They have within them a power that no unbeliever has. The Spirit of God will lead and enable them. He will transform and renew. He will crucify anything in us that is not from God. He will do in us what we can never do on our own—He will put to death the deeds of the flesh.

We discover from these verses, then that the believer has no obligation to surrender to the flesh and its desires. In fact, to do so will mean death and separation from God's blessings. Instead, we must learn to surrender to the inner work of the Spirit of God who is crucifying the sinful deeds of the flesh in us. Just as we used to sense the desires of the flesh, so now we must open our hearts to the leading of the Spirit and His work. If we must now be led by the Spirit instead of the flesh, it is our great responsibility to become more and more aware of the work of God's Spirit and His leading in our lives. In this alone is victory over the flesh and fullness of life in Christ.

For Consideration:

Does God expect us to care for our physical bodies? What is the difference between caring for our physical bodies and living according to the flesh?

What does Paul say will be the result of living according to the flesh? Can we grow in intimacy with Christ if we live according to the flesh?

Where does Paul tell us the strength comes from to put to death the deeds of the flesh?

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Paul told the Romans that those who are sons of God are led by the Spirit. How important is it for us to understand how the Spirit leads?

How does the Spirit of God lead?

For Prayer:

Ask God to give you greater compassion for those around you with physical needs. Ask Him to show you if there is a way you can minister to their needs.

Ask God to give you the grace to submit all your fleshly desires to Him.

Are their desires of the flesh you struggle with today? Ask the Spirit of God to give you victory over any sinful desire of the flesh that hinders your walk with Christ.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be more sensitive to His work and leading in your life.

CHAPTER 17 -

CHILDREN AND HEIRS

Read Romans 8:15-17

[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)

We have seen that those who belong to the Lord have the Spirit of God dwelling in them (see Romans 8:11). The Spirit of God leads them into the purpose of God (see Romans 8:14). It is the presence of the Spirit that distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever. In fact, in Romans 8:15 Paul told the Romans that they had not received the “spirit of slavery” but the “Spirit of adoption as sons, assuring them that they were children of God. Let’s take a moment to consider these two spirits.

The Spirit of Slavery

The first of the two spirits Paul mentions here is the spirit of slavery.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear (Romans 8)

The spirit of slavery seems to refer to the system of law established under Moses. The law with its strict traditions and regulations required absolute obedience. Any transgression was punished. No one could keep the law of God perfectly, so all were under its condemnation. This system held its adherents under constant fear of judgement and condemnation.

Have you ever met anyone who lives under this spirit? They fear for their eternal destiny. They live in fear of condemnation. They know that they fall short but keep doing everything they can to gain their salvation by human effort. They never have peace because they are always living under the dread that they might not be good enough to get to heaven. Paul calls this spirit, the spirit of slavery.

This spirit, however, according to Paul, was not the spirit that governed the life of the believer. The believer was not under this oppression and did not live in constant fear of condemnation and divine wrath. Another spirit governed their lives.

The Spirit of Adoption

The Spirit that the Romans had received was a Spirit of adoption.

*15 ...but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons
(Romans 8)*

Notice that the word Spirit is capitalized. The implication here is that this Spirit is the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit that the Romans had received.

Notice also that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption. This reveals the nature of His work in the believer. He comes to seal an agreement between God and His children. He seals an adoption.

When God adopts us as His children, He agrees to be our Father and to care for us. This removes all fear. The Spirit of God seals the deal. By His presence in our lives, we become the children of God.

Because the Spirit of adoption lives in us, we can call God, "Abba Father." These are not words to take lightly. They express a level of intimacy and connection that not everyone enjoys. There are special privileges given to those who call God their Father. They are heirs to His blessings and salvation (see verse 17).

Under the spirit of slavery, we could never be sure of where we stood with God. The Spirit of adoption removes this uncertainty by making us sons and daughters of God. Paul went on in Romans 8:16 to say that the Spirit of God removes doubt and assures us of our standing with God.

*16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we
are children of God (Romans 8)*

Paul told the Romans in verse 16 that the Spirit of adoption bore witness to their spirit. The word "spirit" literally means

“breath.” When Paul told the Romans that the Holy Spirit bore witness to their spirit, he was saying that they had assurance from the very core of their being that they were children of God. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring assurance of salvation to those who belong to God.

To be assured in our spirit that we are the children of God is not just being convinced intellectually. It is not even something you can explain logically to another person. It is true that many passages of Scripture show us the means of salvation, but it is the Spirit of God who assures us that this salvation is real in our lives. His assurance removes doubt and fear. It convinces us that we are indeed forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. It guarantees us that we are the children of God and heirs of His kingdom.

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8)

You can know that you are a child of God and an heir. It is not the will of God that His children doubt their status as children. Nor it is His purpose that they question their inheritance. The witness of the Spirit of God in their lives clarifies this matter and sets all questions to rest. If we are children of God, we are then heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

To be an heir of God is to inherit all that He has planned for us. Time does not permit us to speak of all these eternal blessings. These blessings are not just material blessings such as mansions (John 14:2), golden streets (Revelation 21:21) and no more tears (Revelation 21:14). God, Himself will be our inheritance:

26 My strength and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my hear and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:26)

We will experience God in a new way. We will know intimacy with Him and union with Him that we cannot even imagine here on this earth.

Paul tells us that those who have received the Spirit of adoption as sons will also be fellow heirs with Christ. He is the One who made our inheritance possible. His death and resurrection opened the door for us to become children of God. We inherit with Him as our Redeemer these great privileges. Jesus paid the price for our redemption, and the Spirit of adoption is placed in us, sealing our acceptance as children of God. The deal is complete. Everything is now official. Those for whom the Lord Jesus died and in whom the Spirit of adoption lives are heirs to the kingdom of God.

There is one more detail that Paul mentions in verse 17. All these blessings are ours on one condition:

17 ... provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8)

At first glance, it might be possible to think that Paul is putting a condition on the salvation of the Romans. There are those might say that this phrase in verse 17 brings us back to the old way of the law. In other words, we will be saved if we suffer for Jesus on this earth. This interpretation, however, goes against everything Paul has been teaching in Romans 5-8. Paul was a firm believer in the work of Christ alone as being sufficient for our salvation. No personal effort of ours was necessary. I could be laid up in a bed of sickness and spend the rest of my life unable to do

a single thing for the Lord Jesus and still be guaranteed an inheritance because of what Christ has done for me and because the Spirit of adoption dwells in me. Paul is not speaking about salvation here but about our inheritance as children of God. The question of whether we are children of God has been settled by the work of Christ and the sealing of the Spirit of adoption dwelling in us.

To understand what Paul is saying in verse 17, we need to examine some other passages of Scripture. The Lord Jesus challenges His children to follow His example by taking up their crosses:

23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9)

The apostle Paul spoke at great length about his service of the Lord Jesus and the cross he had to bear as he was persecuted and endured great trials for the sake of his Lord (see 2 Corinthians 22-28). Following the Lord Jesus will not be easy in a world that rejects Him. Being a child of God will not mean that we will never have to suffer. The apostle Paul told Timothy that everyone who wanted to follow the Lord Jesus would suffer as a result:

12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (1 Timothy 3:10)

Persecution is only part of what it will mean to live for Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that there would also be hard work in store for those who wanted to honour their heavenly Father. Children of God will be called to account for the use of the gifts the Spirit of God had given them.

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.
(1 Corinthians 3)

Paul told the Corinthians that the day would come when God would judge their work. This judgment had nothing to do with their salvation. Paul made it very clear in verse 15 that if a person built on the foundation of Christ with gold, silver and precious stone he would receive a reward on the Day of Judgement. If his works were burnt up, he would still be saved but would "suffer loss." While salvation is assured, there is still a loss that takes place.

Speaking to believers of His day, the Lord Jesus would say:

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6)

He would go on to say in Matthew 10:

41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who

receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." (Matthew 10)

Jesus teaches that it is possible to lose rewards. On the other hand, however, our efforts for the kingdom of God do not go unnoticed. Those who endure suffering for the name of Christ will receive their reward:

22 "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. (Luke 6)

The apostle John encouraged his readers to work so that they would receive a full reward:

8 Watch yourselves, so that you may no lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. (2 John)

While all children of God have assurance of salvation through Christ and sealed by the Spirit of adoption, not all believers will receive the same rewards. Some of God's children will not be faithful in the use of their gifts. Some will fail to walk in victory. Others will become lazy and unproductive for their Lord. These believers will suffer loss. They will not experience the fullness of reward that could have been theirs.

Being a child of God does not remove our obligation toward God. It settles the matter of where we will spend eternity, but it also places us under great responsibility. God's children will face persecution on this earth. The Spirit of

God not only seals our adoption as children of God but also gifts us and calls us into service for the kingdom. There are those who rejoice in their inheritance as children of God and the security this brings. They have chosen, however, not to walk in full obedience. These believers will suffer loss not only in this life but in the life to come.

For Consideration:

What is the spirit of slavery? Have you ever known an individual who demonstrated that they were under this spirit of slavery? What characteristics did they demonstrate?

How does the Holy Spirit seal our adoption as children of God?

Is it the will of God that we have assurance of our salvation? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in giving us this assurance? Do you have the assurance that you have been adopted as a child of God?

Does being a child of God mean that we can sit back and enjoy our privileges? What responsibilities do we have as children of God? How has the Spirit of God gifted you?

Can a child of God suffer loss of reward?

What is the difference between being a child of God and suffering loss of reward? Have you been faithful as a child of God to the purpose of your Father?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that He has sealed your adoption as a son or daughter by the presence of His Holy Spirit in your life.

Thank the Spirit of adoption that He gives you the assurance of your salvation and relationship with the Father.

Ask God to help you to be a faithful child. Ask Him to guide you and empower you by His Spirit so that you will suffer no loss of reward but enjoy the fullness of His blessing both here and in the life to come.

CHAPTER 18 - THE BONDAGE OF ALL CREATION

Read Romans 8:18-25

[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.

To this point, Paul has been speaking about the effect of sin on human beings. Humans, however, are not the only ones to be cursed with sin. All of creation suffers from the impact as well. In Genesis 3, after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin God said to Adam:

17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3)

Notice what God told Adam that day. "Cursed is the ground because of you" (Genesis 3:17). The cursing of the ground would result in thorns, and thistles (Genesis 3:18). Adam would have to work hard to enable the soil to produce its fruit. He would eat of the fruit of the earth "in pain" (Genesis 3:17) Eve, Adam's wife, would experience pain in childbirth (see Genesis 3:16). Because of sin, pain and suffering flooded the earth. The fruitfulness of the earth decreased because of its curse. Death and decay touched every part of creation. Adam would have to work hard, and ultimately his body would return to dust. All of creation would decay, die.

Death, decay, sickness and suffering have been the result of sin. We and all of creation live under this curse. We watch the flower bloom in all its beauty only to die. We see sickness ravage our bodies and take away our loved ones. Great storms and natural tragedies remind us that we are still living under the curse of sin. Every one of us has not suffered in this life. This is not cause for despair, however.

The apostle Paul reminded the Roman believers that better times were coming for them:

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. (Romans 8)

There was glory to be revealed to those who belonged to the Lord Jesus. He does not go into detail about this glory. Suffice it to say that the glories of heaven and the world to come are overwhelmingly much better than what we experience here now.

The apostle goes on to say that creation itself longs for the day when the sons of God will be revealed.

19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

What is this revelation of the sons of God? There may be a variety of ways to understand this phrase.

First, we need to see this phrase “revealing of the sons of God,” in light of the judgment to come. Listen to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25:

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25)

Jesus reminds us that there is a day coming when He will judge the nations. In that day there will be a separation of the believer from the unbeliever. Those who belong to Him will inherit the kingdom prepared for them while those who have rejected him will be cast into “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). On that day of judgment, the children of God will be revealed. We will know who belongs to Christ and who has rejected Him.

Second, the phrase “revealing of the sons of God,” needs also to be seen in the light of the reward and glory to come for those who belong to Christ. Speaking to the Corinthians about the resurrection Paul said:

42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15)

What a day that will be when we, as the children of God are raised in our new bodies. How glorious it will be to shed these earthly bodies cursed with sin and take on a new body, bearing the image of Christ. The day is coming when the sons of God will be revealed in these new and glorified states.

In our day, evidence of the curse of sin is all around us. Paul tells us that creation is subject to futility. The word translated “futility” in the English Standard Version of the Bible carries a sense of vanity, worthlessness or emptiness. Let’s consider this for a moment.

Consider the man who works hard to accumulate great wealth and prosperity in life. What will happen to it in the end? He not leave all this wealth behind and lose it in death? Solomon wrote about this in the book of Ecclesiastes:

18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, 19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. 20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, 21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. (Ecclesiastes 2)

After all his hard work and toil, man must leave everything behind to someone who may not even appreciate the effort that went into amassing this wealth. It is given to someone who did not work for it. It is eternally lost to the person who toiled so hard.

Writing further on this subject, Solomon said:

14 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. 15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. 16 For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! 17 So I hated life, because

what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. (Ecclesiastes 2)

Notice again the frustration of Solomon. Where would all his wisdom lead in the end? He would die like the fool and lay in the grave forgotten. We are healed of our sickness only to die in the end. We gain wealth only to leave it behind to someone who may not appreciate it. We achieve great wisdom only to take it with us to the grave. If this life were all there was, then we would live under this futility.

In Romans 8:20 Paul reminds us that all of creation was subject to this futility because of sin. That sin entered when Satan tempted Adam and Eve, and they submitted to his temptations. The result of this was the judgement of God. He cursed the earth. It was from that point onward subjected to sin and its control. This sin only brought frustration, sickness and death.

God would not leave the world in this futility, however. Paul reminded that Romans that the day would come when creation would be free from the bondage imposed upon it by sin:

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. (Romans 8)

The same grace of God that sets us free from the curse of sin in our lives will also set creation free from this same curse. Nature will also obtain “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (verse 21). God’s plan is bigger than just you and me. He plans to restore all of creation to

Himself. The book of Revelation describes a new heaven and a new earth:

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21)

What a great hope we have. Just as we will receive new, glorified bodies, so the creation of God will be made new. God will reverse the curse, and we will enjoy fellowship with God in a world free from the effects of sin, death and sickness. There in that new world, we will have no reason to shed tears of sorrow and pain, for God will wipe all those tears away.

Paul taught the Romans in Romans 8:22 that creation as we know it is groaning in pains of childbirth.

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

He expresses both pain and hope in this verse. The woman who is about to bear a child suffers under pain of childbirth. This pain is a very intense and crippling pain. It is not a hopeless pain, however, for the woman knows that as she endures, a new child will be born turning her sorrow into gladness and joy. Yes, there is futility in this life. There

is pain, sickness, suffering and death. The promise of the Lord, however, is that this pain will one day come to an end. Creation will be set free from this curse and obtain the freedom and glory of the children of God (verse 21).

As we live on this earth, we live in bodies that groan with the fruit of sin and death. These bodies are subject to sin and its effects. Just as creation will one day be renewed our bodies will also be transformed:

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.
(Romans 8)

Notice that the day will come when our bodies will be redeemed. They will be released from the curse of sin through the work of Jesus on the cross. In the meantime, the Spirit of God has been given to those who belong to Christ.

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Corinthians 4)

Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 of the treasure we have in jars of clay. These bodies, like frail jars of clay, contain the knowledge and power of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. He works through these fragile bodies to accomplish His purpose. For now, we, long like all of creation, for the day when our weakness and the curse will be removed. This is our hope. Our confidence is in the work of the Lord Jesus and the promise of His Word. Though

we have not experienced the fullness of this hope and release, we trust in Him who will be faithful to His promise.

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. (Romans 8)

Paul reminds us here that while our sins are forgiven, and we have been freed from the judgement to come, we still live in a world subject to sin and evil. The world in which we live is under the curse of God. The physical bodies we live in live are also still subject to the effects of sin, sickness and death. For the believer, however, there is hope. God promises that we will shed these bodies and receive a new body, free from the effects of sin, suffering and death. Creation, as we know it now, will also one day be changed. Just as our bodies will perish and be transformed, so this earth will be destroyed and made new (see 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1-4). God's wonderful plan of salvation is not only for His children but also for His creation.

For Consideration:

What was the effect of sin on creation? How did sin change the creation of God?

How has your body been affected by the curse of sin?

What changes do you expect to see after the resurrection of your body? What promises are there for us in this new body?

What comfort do you find in the fact that there will be new heavens and new earth? What do you expect to see in this new earth?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to thank the Lord for the promise of a new body and a new earth. Thank Him for the hope you have in this promise.

Ask the Lord to give you grace and hope when your present earthly body suffers from the effects of the curse. Ask God to give you strength to persevere in hope.

Thank the Lord that He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide and strength us in this world cursed by sin. Ask God for the grace to walk in the power of His Spirit and under His leading.

CHAPTER 19 -

THE GROANING

OF THE SPIRIT

Read Romans 8:26-27

[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. (Romans 8)

In the last meditation, we saw how the creation groaned, waiting to set free from the bondage of sin and corruption (see Romans 8:19-21). The effects of this bondage are everywhere. Sickness, decay, tragedies, famines, and plagues are all part of living on in a world cursed by sin. As human beings, we suffer from the curse that is on the earth, but we also experience the effects of sin in our lives. Sin ravages our body in sickness and disease. It also destroys our souls as its evil desires and thoughts separate us from a holy and righteous God.

As believers, we struggle in these sinful bodies. We experience weakness of flesh and mind as we seek to walk with the Lord. Sometimes the struggles overwhelm us. Sometimes we do not have the strength to go on. The apostle Paul bore witness to the weakness of his flesh as he sought to serve his Lord. Listen to what he told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:

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. (2 Corinthians 4)

The Christian life is not an easy one. According to Paul, he was afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. All this took place while he was living in an earthly body struggling with its temptations. In Romans 7 the apostle recognized the weakness of his flesh when he cried out: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

How are we to live for the Lord, and persevere in our calling when we live in a body plagued by sin and a world under God's curse? Paul answers this question in Romans 8:26-27:

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.

Notice that Paul begins verse 26 with the word “likewise.” This brings us back to the preceding verses (Romans 7:19-23) where Paul reminded the Romans that all of creation groaned in the pain of bondage and corruption longing for release. Just as creation groaned, so the Spirit of God intercedes for us with “groanings too deep for words” (verse 26).

Paul reminded the Romans that they were not alone in their struggles. The Holy Spirit would help them in their weakness of flesh and mind. What is quite remarkable here is that the Holy Spirit helps by coming to inhabit frail, fleshly bodies. Paul would describe this as a treasure in a jar of clay:

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us (2 Corinthians 4)

The power of God dwells in ordinary bodies. When God called Moses to return to Egypt, he gave him the sign of a burning bush. This bush was a common desert plant. There was nothing special about it except the fact that the fire of God burned in this particular bush without consuming it (see Exodus 3:1-4). What an incredible picture this is. The power of God is at work in ordinary human flesh, burning and empowering that flesh to do what it could never do in its own strength or wisdom.

It is important to understand that while this help is available to us, we need to make use of it. Not every believer seeks the strength and guidance of the Spirit of God. There are times when we resort to our own wisdom. We have often failed because we have not sought the help and guidance of the Spirit of God. Paul reminds us, however, that the Spirit of God is ever willing to be our help.

As we continue to examine Romans 8:26, notice how the Holy Spirit wants to help us.

*26 ... For we do not know what to pray for as we ought
(Romans 8)*

Paul told the Romans that as believers “we do not know how to pray as we ought.” In its simplest form, prayer is speaking to God. Prayer is not always that simple, however. To pray as we ought to pray requires the help of the Spirit of God.

When we are in trouble and feeling our weakness, it is very easy for us to pray: “Lord, take this pain away.” The problem with this prayer, however, is that it does not consider the will of God. What is God saying in this affliction? Is He redirecting me toward another path? Is He convicting me of a sin I need to address? Is He seeking to teach me a lesson? Sometimes the greatest blessings of God come through the trials we face. Will we pray away the very source of blessing?

When Jonah was running from God, at one point, he recognized his need to get off the ship heading for Tarshish. He told the sailors to throw him overboard, and the storm would stop. While they hesitated to do so, they realized that they had no alternative but to cast him into the stormy sea. As Jonah sank into the depth of the sea, God sent a big fish to swallow him. Consider this picture for a moment. Imagine that you were Jonah drowning in the sea and you saw a great fish coming toward you with its mouth wide open. What would be your prayer? Would you not pray, Lord, save me from this fish? I don’t want to be swallowed alive and die this way? If you prayed this way, however, you would be praying away your greatest blessing. It was

the fish that would take Jonah to shore and vomit him up on dry land. That fish was Jonah's salvation.

How do we pray? When trials and struggles come your way should you pray them away or ask God to use them to refine us? What is the will of God? Do we pray the first thing that comes to our mind? Paul tells us that the Spirit of God helps us because we do not know how to pray as we ought. We do not understand the purpose of God and what He wants to do. Will we pray away the blessings of God because we did not recognize them?

Paul reminds us here that in our weakness we do not know what to pray for. We need to recognize that to pray as we should, we are in great need of the Spirit and His leading. Paul told the Roman in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit would help them to pray as they ought if they would wait on Him.

Not only will the Spirit help us to pray in the will and purpose of the Father, but He will pray for us in these times of need.

26 ... but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8)

There are two points we need to make about this statement of Paul. Notice first that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. To intercede is to plead for someone else. The Spirit of God cries out to the Father on our behalf. I suspect that there are times when I am crying out for one thing, and the Spirit of God is praying for me another prayer. I suspect that there are times when I am walking in rebellion against the purpose of God and the Spirit of God is crying out to the Father on my behalf. It is vital for us to understand in

this context that the Holy Spirit is not the only one interceding for me. Paul tells us in Romans 8:34:

34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8

We have the intercession of the Spirit of God and the Son of God crying out to the Father on our behalf. How do we face the weaknesses of the flesh? We do so through the intercession and power of the Spirit and the Son of God.

Notice second in verse 26 the intensity of the Holy Spirit's prayers for us. Paul told the Romans that the Spirit of God interceded for them with "groanings too deep for words." The Spirit of God "groans" as He pleads with the Father on our behalf. Groaning comes from pain and agony of soul. It is the expression of one who is burdened. Because the groaning of the Spirit is intercessory in nature, the pain from which this groaning originates is the result of our circumstances. The Spirit of God feels our pain. He cries out with depth of emotion for us. There is great intimacy in this verse. The intercession of the Spirit comes from a depth of feeling for us and our struggles. He cries out with tears for us. He agonizes before the Father not out of doubt but out of a deep sense of our pain and weakness. Paul described this groaning as being "too deep for words." Words are insufficient to describe the depth of groaning experienced by the Spirit of God for us. He feels so deeply for us and longs so deeply for us that He expresses His passion in groaning from the core of His being. We could not be loved more than this. The Son of God laid His life down for us. The Spirit of God groans with intense longing and desire for us and our maturity in Christ.

Paul reminded the Romans in verse 27 that the One who searched the heart understood the mind of the Spirit.

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. (Romans 8)

The one who searches the heart is God. As God examines the heart in which the Spirit of God was interceding, He understands the mind of the Spirit who dwells there. He understood the groaning of the Spirit, uttered without words. He heard that prayer and agreed with the Spirit because the Spirit of God was interceding in accordance with the will of God.

While we do not know how to pray, the Spirit of God intercedes passionately for the will and purpose of the Father to be accomplished in us. We live in fleshly bodies touched by sin. Our minds and thoughts are predisposed to sin. How can we know the will of God? How can we walk in a way that is worthy of His name? Paul told the Romans that when we don't even know how to pray, the Spirit of God cries out for us with passionate groanings so deep they cannot be expressed in words. God the Father understand that groaning and will hear the prayers of the Spirit on our behalf.

We have the prayers of the Spirit of God backing us up. He seeks our spiritual well-being and prays passionately for us. The Father works in us in response to those prayers. How undeserving we are of this type of love, but how wonderful it is to know this intimate work of God's Spirit in our lives. May we surrender to Him and allow His prayers to be effective in our lives.

For Consideration:

Is prayer simply a matter of telling God what you want?

Why do we need the Holy Spirit's help to pray?

It is possible for us to pray away the blessings of God?

What does the groaning of the Holy Spirit tell us about the depth of His feelings toward us?

How important is it to listen to the Holy Spirit as we pray?

What comfort do you find in knowing the support and intercession of the Holy Spirit for you?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to forgive you for believing that you do not need the direction and help of the Holy Spirit to pray.

Thank the Holy Spirit for His devotion toward us and His passion for us to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ.

Ask God to forgive you for times you have prayed outside of His will and purpose because you were not seeking Him and the leading of His Spirit.

CHAPTER 20 -

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Read Romans 8:28

[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.

The apostle moves now, in verse 28, to assure the Roman believers that, despite the many obstacles they faced, all things would work together for good.

As we break this verse down, notice the words, “and we know.” Knowing God, His character and His purpose, as he did, left no room for doubt in the mind of the apostle that God would use whatever took place in the lives of the Romans for good.

Notice also in verse 28 that Paul spoke about God working all things together for good in the lives of a very select group of people. The people the apostle speaks about in this verse have three distinct qualities.

First, these individuals love God. Their hearts have been won over to God. Their desire and delight are in Him and His purpose for their lives.

Second, these individuals have been called. By telling us that these individuals were called, the apostle speaks about a people who have had a personal encounter with God. God has spoken directly to them and invited them into His purpose. They have heard His voice and responded positively.

Finally, these individuals were called according to the purpose of God. This tells us that the Lord God had a specific plan for these individuals.

The individual Paul speaks about here is one who has heard the call of God and responded in loving and devoted surrender to His purpose for his or her life. It is to this person that the apostle said: "all things work together for good."

When Paul said that all things work together for good, he was not saying that everything would be easy. When he uses the words "all things" he speaks about the easy and the hard. He talks here about the blessings and the persecution. Paul experienced great suffering in his life and ministry. What he discovered, however, was that the Lord God used the trials he faced to accomplish His purpose in and through Paul. After being thrown into prison for preaching the gospel, the apostle Paul would write to the Philippians to say:

12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for

Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Philippians 1)

Paul understood that God was using what seemed to be a tragedy to accomplish His purposes. Being thrown in prison not only opened the door for Paul to speak to the imperial guard, but also gave greater confidence to other believers to stand up for their faith. In this, the apostle found great delight.

The apostle John wrote:

4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4)

The God, who has called us, is bigger than the enemy around us. He is able, not only to protect us from the evil thrown at us but also use whatever the enemy intends for harm to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

Speaking to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery, Joseph would say:

20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50)

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, they never could have realized how the hand of God would turn their evil plot into something good. Joseph rose in power in Egypt and became God's instrument to save Israel from famine and death.

Preaching to the people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost, Peter said:

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2)

The Jewish leaders killed Jesus on the cross. Peter told them, however, that their evil actions only served to advance the cause of Christ. God used the crucifixion of Jesus to deliver His people from sin. The man they crucified, rose from the dead proving that He was Lord and Christ the Messiah. He broke the power of death and paid the penalty for our sin. What the leaders of that day did to our Lord, as cruel as it was, was used by the Father to accomplish our salvation.

God is bigger than the circumstances we face. He can take what the enemy does to us and use it to accomplish His purpose. We can have confidence in the God who called us to care for us and to use all that happens to advance His kingdom and achieve His mission in and through us.

God will not leave us to fend for ourselves. His Holy Spirit dwells in us. He intercedes for us with deep groaning. Every trial we face will be used for good. Every pain we endure will refine us. God's presence will be in all things we encounter, blessing every trial and using every pain to mature us and draw us closer to Himself. We have great assurance in this beautiful promise.

For Consideration:

Does Romans 8:28 apply to all people? What are the qualities of the person to whom this promise applies?

What does it mean to be called by God? Have you heard His call in your life?

How has God used trials in your life to accomplish His purpose?

Can you trust God to bless what you are facing right now for good?

What does your response to trials tell you about what you believe about this promise of God in Romans 8:28?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to assure you that the trials you face today will be used by Him to accomplish good.

Thank the Lord that He is willing to bless the trials you face.

Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you have not believed that what you were going through could be used for good.

Take a moment now and surrender your life with all its pain and suffering to the Lord. Ask Him to give you the grace to believe His promise that all things will work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

CHAPTER 21 -

GOD'S GREAT PURPOSE

FOR THE BELIEVER

Read Romans 8:29-30

[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.

The apostle told the Romans in verse 28 that all things worked together for good to those who love God and were called according to His purpose. What is the purpose of God for those He calls? Paul answers this very in verses twenty-nine and thirty:

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)

What the apostle told the Romans here is that God had two great purposes for those who love Him.

Foreknown and Predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son (Verse 29)

The apostle Paul told the Romans that the first purpose of God of God for their lives was that they be conformed to the image of His Son.

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. (Romans 8)

To foreknow is to know something before it happens. God knew you and me even before we were born. To predestinate is to have a purpose for something before it comes into being. My wife may take up her knitting needles to knit a hat for our newest grandchild. She knows what she is going to make and has a specific purpose in mind even before she begins the project.

In Judges 13 we read how an angel appeared to the mother of Samson and said:

3 And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, 5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he

shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13)

Notice how the angel of the Lord speaks about a child who had not yet been conceived. Not only does the angel speak of the birth of this child but shares with his mother the purpose of God for this child. This infant, yet to be born would “begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (verse 5). God knew this child before he was born and had a particular purpose for the life of this child—he was foreknown and predestined for a specific lifestyle and responsibility.

Speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord God said:

5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1)

Notice two things in these words of God to Jeremiah. First, God knew him before he was even formed in the womb. Second, God had a purpose for him before he was born. Jeremiah was foreknown by God and predestined for a specific task and purpose in life.

Paul would speak of this in his testimony to the Galatians when he said:

15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. (Galatians 1)

Notice how the apostle told the Galatians that God set him apart before he was born. Again, we see how God foreknew and predestined Paul for a particular work.

What we see in these examples is that God not only knew us before we were born but also had a purpose for our lives. We were created for a purpose. We were not cast into this world by chance. The one who knitted us together in our mother's womb (see Psalm 139:13-14) has a purpose for our lives. He knows every day that is before us:

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book
were written, every one of them, the days that were
formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.
(Psalm 139)*

Nothing is hidden from God. He knows every detail of our life before it unfolds. Nothing will take Him by surprise. My life has a purpose.

Paul goes on in verse 29 to explain to the Romans what God's purpose is. God desired that His people be "conformed to the image of his Son."

To be conformed to the image of Jesus become more like Him. This involves more than a human effort to follow Christ's example. Those who are conformed, are changed in character and heart. This transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He convicts us and reveals sin. He breaks the power of sin and renews us. We become more and more like Jesus in our attitudes and behaviour. This transformation is taking place from within as a work of God's Spirit.

The process of being conformed is not an instant one. The Spirit of God works in us year after year. He uses the

circumstances of life to change us. Paul told the Romans that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (see Romans 8:28). This is because the Lord God will use whatever we face to chip away what is not from Him and transform us into the image of His Son.

Jesus has gone before us as an example. He suffered everything we suffered. The writer to the Hebrews tells us:

*15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
(Hebrews 4)*

The Lord Jesus overcame sin and went to be with the Father. He was the first to do so, but we who have been called by God can join Him in that victory. He died and rose victorious over sin so that he "might be the firstborn among many brothers." It is the heart of God that we follow His Son in this victory. God knew us before we were born. He brought us out the womb with a purpose in mind, that is that we should be conformed to the image of His son and follow Him in victory over sin and the grave to fellowship and eternal life in His presence.

Predestined and Called to be Justified and Glorified (Verse 30)

The second great purpose of God is in verse 30:

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)

We saw that God's purpose was that we be conformed to the image of His Son. How does this transformation take place? Paul tells us first that those who are called according to God's purpose are justified.

Justified

To justify is to declare someone just or in good standing. It is a legal declaration. In this case, it is the declaration of God to the sinner that he or she is now in good standing with Him.

We were born in sin and separated from God. The penalty for sin was death and separation from God. When the Lord Jesus laid down His life, he paid our penalty. This payment is applied to our debt, and we are forgiven and declared to be in right standing with God.

This justification is not based on anything we have done. We could never, by our efforts, gain a right standing with God. For us to have a right standing with God, two things need to happen. First, our debt needed to be settled with God. The penalty for sin is death. Second, the forgiveness of God needed to be extended.

Imagine that someone took the life of a loved one in your family. This individual is guilty of a crime in the eyes of the law and the source of great pain and loss for you. What needs to take place for this person to be restored? The criminal first needs to pay the penalty for his or her crime. There is a legal requirement that must be met. This may mean a time in prison.

Imagine, however, that this individual does the time required in prison and is released. While his or her debt is paid, you personally refuse to forgive the offence. You will

have nothing to do with this person and treat him or her with disgust and disdain. Living in your community is difficult for this criminal, even though he or she has paid for the crime in full. You see, the payment of a penalty may restore us legally, but we also need the forgiveness of the person we have offended if we are to be genuinely free.

The Lord Jesus not only pays our debt but guarantees a right relationship with the Father. We are restored to an intimate relationship with the Father. The sins that separated us in the past have now been forgotten. We live in the presence of God as if we had never offended Him.

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103)

25 I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43)

Justification has to do with the restoring of right standing with God. This is only possible through the death of Christ, who paid our legal debt, and the gracious forgiveness of the Father who chooses to remember our sins no more. It is the heart of God to restore those He has called to a right relationship with Himself.

Glorified

It is the will of God not only to forgive and restore us to a relationship but also to glorify those who are brought into this relationship with Him. Paul has been reminding the Roman believers that they lived in a weak and sinful body. Sin and evil temptations were influencing their minds and deeds. They continued to wrestle with the sinful nature and the evil that surrounded them. The day was coming,

however, when all this will change. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul would say:

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15)

Notice what the apostle Paul told the Corinthians. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor can the perishable inherit the imperishable (see verse 50). The day is coming for the believer, however, when our “flesh and blood” will be changed. The perishable body in which we now live will be transformed into an imperishable body. We will be set free from the chains of our flesh and the sin that tempts us. In the presence of God, we will be entirely new. We will receive a new body. We will have a new mind. The influence and curse of sin will be wholly broken in our lives, and we will live in the presence of God as He intended, enjoying perfect communion with Him forever. The heart of God is that we be changed so that the hindrances of our worldly mind and body no longer restrict our fellowship with Him.

On the day that Jesus was arrested, He went to Gethsemane to pray. He told His disciples to pray with Him and left to be alone with His father. After a time of prayer, He returned to find them asleep. Listen to his words that day:

*41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
(Matthew 26)*

Remember the words of the apostle in Romans 7:

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? (Romans 7)

The apostle knew that the day was coming when he would be released from his body of death. He would one day be changed. Writing to the Philippians, the apostle Paul said:

20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3)

The apostle understood that the day was coming when he would be transformed. He would receive a "glorious body" from the Lord Jesus.

The apostle John spoke of this glorification in 1 John 3 when he said:

2 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)

According to John, changes were coming. While he doesn't describe the nature of those changes, he does tell us that when Christ appears we will be like him—we will be transformed.

Paul described this glorified state in 1 Corinthians 15 when he told the Corinthians:

42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15)

When Jesus appears, we will be changed (1 John 3:2). Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 that we will rise with an imperishable body. This body will be a glorious, powerful and spiritual body. These bodies and minds will no longer be subject to or influenced by sin. John tells us in Revelation 21:

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21)

It is the purpose of God for those He calls to glorify them. His desire is to remove everything from them that has been cursed by sin and transform them body and mind into the likeness of His Son Jesus. This glorification will take place

when the Lord returns. When He returns we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). When our bodies rise at the resurrection, they will be transformed and enter the presence of our God. All that has been affected by the curse will be destroyed, and we will live as a new creation in a glorified body forever in the presence of the Lord God. This is the heart of God for those He calls.

For Consideration:

What comfort do you find in the fact that the Lord God knew you before you were born?

Does the fact that God had a plan for our lives remove our freedom or give us a reason and purpose in life?

What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Christ? How has this been happening in your life? What areas of your life need to be conformed more into the image of Christ?

Why are both the legal payment and forgiveness necessary components in justification?

What hindrances do we face in our relationship with God in our earthly body? How does our fleshly mind keep us from a deeper intimacy with our Creator? How will our glorification change all this?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that He knew you even before you were born and had a purpose for your life.

Thank the Lord that you were born with a purpose.

Take a moment to consider the plan of God to justify and glorify us, transforming us into the image of His Son. Thank the Lord for this wonderful purpose. Ask Him to give you the grace to accept what He is doing in your life.

Thank the Lord that the day is coming when you will shed this earthly body and take on a new body free from the curse of sin.

Take a moment to reflect on the work of God in your life over the past years. Thank the Lord that He is transforming you.

CHAPTER 22 -

WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

Read Romans 8:31-34

*[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.
(Romans 8)*

As the apostle begins this next section, he asks two questions:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8)

The first question in verse 31 is this: "What shall we say to these things?" This was a vital question. What can you say to Him who has saved you from eternal hell? What can you say to Him who has orchestrated every circumstance and

tragedy you ever faced to accomplish good in your life? What can you say to Him who is so touched by your needs that He intercedes before the Father with deep groaning? What can you say to Him who willingly suffered the cruel death of the cross in your place? What can you say to Him who prepares even now a place in heaven for you to be with Him forever?

The reality of the matter is that we are at a loss for words. Words are insufficient to give thanks to the Lord for His compassion and grace toward us. The sacrifice of our very lives is inadequate to repay the debt we owe Him. We are overwhelmed by grace. Throughout all of eternity, we will never be able to repay Him for what He has done. What can we say? What could we ever do that would express the depth of gratitude we feel toward the Lord God for reaching out to us in such a deep and personal way? We do not deserve what He offers. We could never merit such attention and care.

The second question of verse 31 is this: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Consider this question first of all from the perspective of who God is. He is the God to whom all of life owes its existence. Every breath we breathe is because of Him. If for even a moment He turned His back on us, we would be lost forever.

This God who stands with us is one who promises to work out all things for our good. He is greater than our worst enemy. We do not understand his ways, but His purpose is never defeated. This God has claimed us as His own. He has promised to protect and keep us. We can be secure in Him.

Paul goes on in verse 32 to remind the Romans:

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? (Romans 8)

The God who is “for us” is one who demonstrated His love by offering His own Son to die on our behalf. By giving His Son, the Father showed what He is willing to do for us. He gave what was most precious to Him—His own Son. In doing this, He revealed how important we are to Him.

Paul went on in verse 32 to remind the Romans that if the Lord God was willing to give His Son, would He not also “with Him graciously give us all things?” We need to be careful in our interpretation of this verse. There may be those who use this verse to say that if God was willing to offer His Son, then there is nothing He will not give us. We can ask for whatever we want, and God will give it to us. There are two words in this verse, however, that cannot be ignored. Notice in verse 32 that Paul tells us that God will graciously give us all things “with him”— “He who did not spare his own Son ... how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” In other words, the things God gives here come with His Son and are in line with His purpose through His Son.

What is the purpose of God through His Son? Romans 8:29 tells us that it is that we be conformed to His image. When God gives us His Son, He also gives us everything we need to be transformed into His image and demonstrate His character to the world. With Christ comes everything we need to live holy and godly lives in this world. With Him comes everything we need to be justified and glorified. The promise of Paul in this verse is that we will lack nothing to live as children of God and representatives of God in this life and the life to come. Wherever God calls you to go on this earth, you will have His presence and

courage. Whatever decision you have to make, you will have His wisdom. Whatever trial you have to face, you will have His strength. The child of God will not lack resources to do what God has called them to do. What comfort we need to find in this promise!

Paul asks another question in verse 33:

33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (Romans 8)

Every one of us will fail in life. We fall short of the standard God has laid out for us. Even though God provides us with all we need to live for Him, we will not always lay hold of those resources. Peter, denied knowing the Lord Jesus. David fell into the sins of adultery and murder.

Maybe you have met individuals who have wandered from the Lord they professed through the temptations of this world. These individuals have not taken hold of the resources God has promised for victory in their Christian lives. Can we fail the Lord, even as believers? We certainly can! We have all done what we should not have done as believers. We are guilty in thought and deed. Not one of us has lived a perfect life.

Notice what Paul told the Romans in verse 33, however: "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" Paul speaks in legal terms here. In any court of law, two things need to happen when a charge is brought against an individual. First, the charge needs to be proven. Second, if guilty, the guilty party needs to pay the penalty for his or her offence.

There is no question about our guilt. As I have already said, we have often failed the Lord and fall short of His

standard for our lives. Regarding the penalty, this has also been paid. The Lord Jesus, through His death on the cross, has paid for my sin in full. There is nothing more that needs to be done—I am free.

Paul reminded the Romans in verse 33 that it was God who justifies. In other words, God has given us a right standing with Himself. This is because, while we were guilty, His Son covered our penalty. We now stand before God with all our sin, past, present and future covered through the work of the Lord Jesus. We are not perfect, but we are forgiven. The highest court of the universe has approved the decision to accept the work of Christ as payment for all my sin. No charge now will ever stand against us because God has declared us to be in good standing through the work of His Son on our behalf.

Paul speaks in verse 33 about bringing a charge. He moves on in verse 34 to talk about a condemnation. Condemnation is a sentence brought to those who have been proven guilty of a charge. “Who is to condemn?” Paul asks in verse 33. It is true that we are guilty of sin, but no sentence can be imposed on us. The reason for this is in the remainder of verse 34:

34 ... 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. (Romans 8)

The penalty for our sin has been paid. What judgement can be brought against someone whose sentence has been served? How can you fine someone whose fine has already been paid? The penalty for our sin was death, but that sentence was served by Jesus in my name. I am free from condemnation.

Notice that not only did Jesus die to cover my condemnation, but He rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God interceding for me (verse 34). Paul is making some significant statements here that we cannot miss.

After dying for our sins, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. Death could not hold Him. He only took our sin to the grave and conquered the grave. Sin and death did not defeat Him. Had sin and death defeated Him, what hope would we have? If Jesus remained in the grave, what confidence would we have over death? Jesus rose from that grave, however, proving to us that victory over sin and its consequences is possible. The resurrection demonstrates that Christ had victory over sin and its consequences.

Beyond the proof of the resurrection, however, Paul gives tells us that, after raising from the dead, the Lord Jesus went to sit at the right hand of God. Again, this is a significant point. Jesus rose to be with His Father. Not only did He enter the presence of the Father, but He sat on the seat of honour in the presence of the Father. To sit at the right hand was to sit in a place of honour. He was given this place because of His victory over sin and death. The Judge of all people accepted the sacrifice of His Son for our sin. The fact that Jesus sits now in the seat of honour proves that His sacrifice was effective and covers our sin. Who can sentence us for sin when that price has been paid, and the Judge has accepted that payment on behalf of all who belong to His Son?

The apostle Paul makes one final point in verse 34. He told the Romans that the Lord Jesus interceded for them. Paul uses a legal term here. Jesus intercedes for us legally before the Father. It is through His intercession that we have hope. His work on the cross bridges the gap between the Father and us. His intercession is not just with words but

with His very own life. It is His death and resurrection that is the basis of His pleading our case before the Father. Whatever sin we commit stands before the cross of Christ. There it is stripped of its power and authority over us.

When Paul told the Romans that no one could bring a charge against them, he was not saying that they lived perfect lives. He was telling them that all their sins, were covered by the work of Jesus on the cross. They were free from their charges and the penalty of their sin because Jesus paid their penalty.

Jesus addressed the problem of sin. I will sin, but all my sins (past, present and future) are covered by the work of Jesus on the cross. I may suffer the consequences of my sin in this world, but my sins and shortcomings will never keep me from God. The work of Jesus guarantees that no sin will condemn me to eternal separation from God. Jesus' work removes the condemnation of sin for all who belong to Him.

Can you trust in the cross to cover your sin? You will fail in this life, but the cross is bigger than those failures. There are things I regret, but the cross is greater than those regrets as well. Every sin I have ever committed or ever will commit has been covered by the cross of Jesus. I not perfect but I am free from condemnation. Will you come to the cross today? Will you surrender to the Lord Jesus and His work? Will you accept the forgiveness that is offered to all who will come to Christ?

If you are a believer today, will you take a moment to contemplate the immensity of the gift you have received in Christ? Will you live in the freedom and victory that is yours through this work of Christ? We dare not take this work for granted. The apostle John tells us what the only

reasonable response to this hope we have in Christ should be to purify ourselves:

3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3)

When we know the cost of our forgiveness and the extent of that forgiveness our only legitimate response is to live in the victory that hope provides. Our only reasonable response is to purify ourselves and live in the victory we now have. May God give us the grace to walk not only in the confidence of our forgiveness but also in the victory that is ours through Him who gives us all things graciously with Christ.

For Consideration:

What does the willingness of God to sacrifice His Son tell us about the depth of love He has for us?

When Paul tells us that we have all things with Christ, what does he mean? Does this mean that we can have anything we want?

What is the difference between suffering the consequences of our sin in this life and suffering the penalty for those sins in the age to come?

How does the resurrection of Christ assure us of our forgiveness?

What does it mean to have all your sins covered?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to consider that the penalty for your sin has been paid (past, present and future). Thank the Lord for this great forgiveness.

Thank the Lord that He rose victoriously over sin and death and that this gives us hope and confidence that we too will know this victory in Him.

Take a moment to thank the Lord that your salvation does not depend on you but on the work that Jesus has accomplished on the cross.

Thank the Lord that He not only forgives us but gives us all things in Christ to live in victory and obedience. Ask the Lord to help you to live in that victory.

CHAPTER 23 -

WHO SHALL SEPARATE US?

Read Romans 8:35-39

[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)

In Romans 8:33-34 Paul spoke to the Romans about their legal assurance before God through the work of the Lord Jesus. He told them that no one could bring a charge or condemnation against them because God had declared them to be in right standing with Him through the work of His Son Jesus. In the verses that follow Paul speaks not so much about the legal payment for our sin but about the

love that made that payment possible. He begins with a question:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8)

Notice that Paul speaks here not about our love for Christ but His love for us. Our love for Christ may vary. There are times when our love for His is not what it should be. There are times when our love for the world or ourselves is stronger than our love for Christ. The history of Israel in the Old Testament is about the wavering love of the people of God for their Creator. God often accused His people of spiritual adultery. They turned from their God to serve other gods. In this world filled with temptations, many things can diminish our love for Christ.

Paul is not speaking here about our love for Christ. He focus of the apostle is on Christ's love for us. Christ's love for us is very different from our love for Him. Notice what Paul tells us about the enduring love of Christ for us in verse 35:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Paul mentions a number of troubles in this verse. Quoting from Psalm 44:22 the apostle connects these trials with being a follower of God— "For your sake, we are being killed all the day long" (verse 35). In other words, we suffer, sometimes because we are children of God. Paul told

Timothy that those who wanted to live a godly life on this earth would suffer persecution:

12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3)

Describing great men and women of faith the writer to the Hebrews says:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11)

These believers were destitute. They lived in caves, deserts and mountains clothing themselves in skins of goats and sheep. Jesus described His own life in the following way:

20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8)

Believers of all ages have had to lay down their life for the faith they profess. Some have lived destitute lives with no guarantee of provision for the next day.

The question Paul asks here is this: Can these trials separate us from Christ's love. Do these trials show that he doesn't love us anymore? Paul answers this in verse 37:

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8)

Paul tells the Romans here that they could conquer these struggles in life because Jesus loved them. It was through Him and His strength that we can get through the persecution and trials that come our way. He does not leave us when we find ourselves in difficulty. He stands with us and supports us through it all. Those who have faced trials in life know this presence in a wonderful way. They are comforted and given courage because of this love.

Notice also that Paul told the Romans in verse 37 that they were “more than conquerors.” Their victory was an overwhelming victory. There was more strength and encouragement than they needed for their trial. The joy of the Lord, the power of the Lord and His support abounded in their testing. The love of Christ was generously poured out to them in these times.

We live in a sinful world. We brought this sin upon ourselves. Evidence of wrongdoing is all around us. It is evident in our hearts and minds as we wrestle with the temptations of evil. It is evident in our bodies as they suffer from sickness, pain and ageing. Sin is apparent in our societies as we wrestle with abuses, murders or persecution. Satan is alive and active in our communities.

As believers, this is the world in which we live. We have not yet received our new body so we will suffer the effects of sickness and pain. We will experience the abuses of those who despise the purpose of God. What keeps us in these times? It is the knowledge of the love of Christ. It is the knowledge that He will never leave us. It is the knowledge that He will give us victory over this world with all its sorrow and grief. It is the knowledge that He is preparing a mansion for us in heaven where we will be forever with Him.

Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword cannot separate us from the love of God. In a world filled with these trials, it is only the love of Christ for us that can give us the strength to persevere.

Paul's assurance of the love of Christ was so strong that in verse 38 and 39 he lists ten things he knows can never separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Notice Paul's assurance in verse 38. He begins with the statement, "for I am sure." He leaves no room for doubt in this matter. Knowing the Lord Jesus as he did, and speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Paul tells us that there is no room for any doubt about what he was going to say. None of the things Paul adds to this list can ever separate us from God's love. Let's take a moment to consider his list of things that cannot separate us from the love of Christ.

Death

Paul begins by telling us that death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Believers will face trials in life. Some will even lay their lives down for the Lord Jesus. This was the case for Stephen. In Acts 7 the Jews stoned him to death. In Acts 7:56, however, as Stephen was being stoned, he lifted his eyes to heaven and cried out:

56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7)

As he was about to die, Stephen cried out: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Stephen's violent death was not a separation from God's love. While angry unbelievers lashed out at him, the Lord Jesus received His servant into

His presence where he would be protected and secure in His love forever. Death had no power over Stephen.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said:

55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15)

The sting of death is removed from those who love the Lord Jesus. Death is but a stepping stone into His arms of love.

Life

There are times when death is easier than life. Pain and illness ravaged our bodies. Natural catastrophes strip us of possessions, comfort and security. Loved ones pass away, leaving us lonely and grieving. Our children, enticed by the lure of this world, fall into immorality, drugs and addictions of all kinds. Life can be overwhelming.

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 the apostle Paul spoke of the problems he encountered in life. In those verses, he reminded the Corinthians that he was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and often in danger. He had been robbed and at risk from false brothers who sought his life. He also knew what it was like to be without food and water.

David spent years fleeing from King Saul who sought to kill him. He lived in caves and was in constant danger. Jesus tells us that as the days of His return draw near, there will be an increase of persecution on the earth.

21 Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10)

Despite this harsh reality, however, the apostle Paul tells us that even when life strikes us with its worst blow, the love of God remains strong. The effect of sin on this earth and in the lives of its inhabitants causes great pain and suffering. Amid this evil, however, the love of God reaches out to us. In this love, we find great comfort, strength and motivation.

Angels

Paul tells us thirdly that angels cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God created angels as heavenly beings. Scripture teaches us that there are angels who live in heaven, worshipping and serving the Lord. There are also fallen angels who rebelled against God and serve Satan in his evil purposes on this earth.

2 Kings 19:35 shows us the power of these angels:

35 And that night the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. (2 Kings 19)

A single angel, in one night, slaughtered 185,000 soldiers! When Peter was in prison in Acts 12, an angel appeared to him, told him to get up and leave his cell. As Peter responded to the angel's command, the chains that bound him fell off, and he walked out of the locked prison without being noticed by the guards (see Acts 12:7-11).

Fallen angels use their power to undermine the work of the kingdom of God. They influence and deceive leaders and governments for the sake of evil. Revelation 12:9 tells us that Satan seeks to deceive the whole world:

9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12)

As powerful as these angels are, Paul tells us that not one of them can separate us from the love of God. They may seek to hinder us in our walk with God. They may throw obstacles on our path, but they cannot change or take away God's loving commitment to us.

Rulers

Throughout history, political and religious leaders have done much to destroy the work of Christ. When Jesus was born, King Herod sought to kill Him. The leader of Jesus' day nailed Him on a cross. Across this world there are rulers have made it difficult for believers to worship or serve the Lord Jesus.

Rulers and governments are not always governed by Christian principles. The Bible is no longer the basis on which our leaders make decisions. We can expect to see opposition to the principles of God's Word. Believers who stand by the teaching of the Bible will struggle with rulers and the laws of their land.

Paul reminds us, however, that no ruler or political force on this earth can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. They may make being a follower of Jesus difficult.

They may persecute us for our faith, but they cannot take God's love from us. Some of the strongest believers I know live in countries where political and religious rulers restrict the practice of their faith. These believers have much to teach me about their experience of God's love in these difficult situations.

Things present

Paul speaks next about "things present." "Things present" includes anything we can see around us today. As you look around you, what do you see? Depending on where we live we will have different obstacles. As I look around me, I see materialism. I also see greed and lust for power and wealth. I am also aware of the watering down of faith and the turning away from God's Word as the standard for life and practice.

Paul is telling us that none of these things can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. It is crucial that we understand that our experience of that love may vary, depending on where we are in our relationship with God. The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 tells of a young man who left his father and went to live an immoral life on his own. He separated himself from the father because of the pull of his flesh. He wasted his inheritance and ended up with nothing. When he returned home, however, he was overwhelmed by the love of his father who greeted him with open arms.

Yes, "things present" may tempt you and pull you away from God for a time, but that will not change the love of God for you. He continues to love you. He continues to reach out to you. In love, He will pursue you like He did the lost sheep of Luke 15. You may resist Him because of the

attraction of “things present,” but you can never keep Him from loving you.

Things to Come

Not only will things present not separate us from the love of God, but Paul tells us that neither will “things to come.” None of us knows what tomorrow holds. Great temptations or great evil may be unleashed into our lives. We may face struggles we never thought we would ever have to face. Paul was so confident in the love of God that he was willing to make this bold statement. Nothing that could ever happen to us will be able to separate us from the love of God. Satan can unleash tremendous evil onto this earth, but he will not be able to change how God feels toward us. We may fall into sin and fail miserably, but God will still love us. My experience of that love and the intimacy I enjoy with God can undoubtedly vary, but God’s love is constant and strong. He died for us when we were His enemies, will He not love us now that we are His children?

I have seen believers who seemed to be close to the Lord one day and so far away the next. I have met believers who stood firmly for the truth of the Word of God but have wandered into error. I have known believers whose pride has been their downfall. I have had friends who have fallen into sexual immorality and strayed from the path God had for them. It is easy for us to think that we would never fall into sin. How thankful we need to be that our failures will not change God’s love for us. His heart is broken for those who fall. He grieves for them. He will not abandon them. He will pursue them like a lost child. His love will reach out to them in their sin.

Powers

The seventh thing that will not separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus is described as “powers.” The word used in this verse is the Greek word “dynamis.” The word refers to miraculous powers or mighty works. These powers may take many forms. In some cases, the power can come from false teachers. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 24:24 when He said:

24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24)

Notice that these false prophets perform signs and wonders. They lead people astray and sometimes keep them from becoming all God intended them to become. What is the response of God to those who have been led astray by these powers? Listen to what God says through Ezekiel about those who were led astray by false shepherds in his day:

7 “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. 11 “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12

As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34)

God's people had been led astray by false shepherds who were taking advantage of them. God's anger was aroused because of these shepherds and, in love, He reached out to His sheep and cared for them Himself. The fact that they had wandered from the fold did not change the love of God for His sheep.

The powers referred to here by Paul may also come from demonic sources. Revelation 13:11-14 describe this power of the beast that came out of the earth. This beast performed great signs, bringing down fire from heaven. It was sent to deceive the inhabitants of the world and to slay those who would not worship the beast who came out of the sea. Who would not fear such power? This power was not from God but Satan.

Around us, in this world, there is evidence of such power. It is exercised through witchcraft and other occult practices. While it is a real power, it cannot separate us from God's love and tender care. No power of hell can keep God from loving us and caring for us. The enemy would like nothing more than to cause us to believe that God has abandoned us. We can rest in the assurance of God's love, however, even when evil forces are unleashed around us.

Height

Notice in verse 39 that Paul tells us that no "height" can keep us from the love of God. He does not tell us what he means by this. What is important for us to understand is that there is no place God's love cannot reach us. There are many ways we can understand this term "height." Consider the fact that God is far above us. Scripture speaks of God being in heaven and us being on the earth. Listen to what the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 102:

18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord: 19 that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the Lord looked at the earth, 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die
(Psalm 102)

From the heights of heaven, the Lord looked down to the earth to set the prisoners free. He is far above us, but He will reach down in love.

Some time ago I was at a conference. The Lord was pleased to do a wonderful work in my life at that time. As God was working in me, a group of believers gathered around to pray. That time of prayer lasted for 2-3 hours,

and by the time we were finished we were all exhausted but sensed victory. One of the pastors who had been there that evening went out into the night sky after it was all over and looked up to the stars. As he did, he told me he felt that Lord say: "Bill, did you see what happened tonight? I reached down from way up here and touched Wayne." Bill told me later that he marvelled at the thought that such a great and awesome God would reach all the way down from heaven to touch a single person with His love.

Sometimes human beings lift themselves in pride. This was the case of the people to whom the prophet Obadiah spoke in his book. Listen to what he told them in Obadiah 3-4:

3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground? 4 Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord (Obadiah)

How often has pride lifted us up and kept us from fellowship with God? We believe that we did not need God and separated ourselves from Him. Speaking to the people of Obadiah's day, the Lord reminded them that He would bring them down. Paul testified that he had a "thorn in his flesh" to keep him humble:

7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (2 Corinthians 12)

God would not let Paul get so high that he no longer experienced His love and need for Him. God desired to keep Paul in fellowship with Him. God sees us from heaven and reaches down to us. He sees us in our pride and brings us down to where we can again know and experience His love. Though we lift ourselves up and turn from God in pride, He will not forget us. He will reach out to us in love.

Depth

If heights cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, neither can depth. In our human experiences, we can descend emotionally to great depths. There have been times in my life when I have asked the Lord that if He was finished with me to take me home to be with Him because I did not feel I wanted to go on any longer. Sometimes we can descend to great depths of sin and rebellion against God. In our pride, we can turn our back on God and His purpose for our lives. We can wander and fall into great sin, hurting many people in the process. Jesus descends into this depth to find us. He pursues us in our sin and rebellion. He was known as the friend of sinners and touched people the religious leaders of the day refused to touch. Maybe you have descended so low you wonder if anyone could ever love you. Paul was confident that no depth could ever separate us from the love of God in His Son Christ Jesus. No matter how far we wander, no matter how deep the pit, His arm of love reaches out to us.

Anything in all Creation

Paul concludes with this final thing that cannot keep us from the love of God. He was convinced that there was nothing in all of creation that could ever separate us from the love of God. What is there in this universe that was not created? God created everything that exists. The world as

we know it and even Satan and all his angels are created beings. Nothing in this creation can separate us from God's love. Recognize also that you and I too are created by God. This means that I cannot keep God from loving me.

While God's love for us remains strong in every circumstance of life, my experience of that love can vary. I can experience that love and enjoy it, or I can turn my back on God and know very little of this love. The question is not whether God loves us as His children, it is whether we are willing to open our heart to the fullness of that love and respond in loving surrender to Him in return.

Paul reminds us here in these verses of the wonderful assurance we have as children of God. Those whom God has called and justified can be sure that He will never stop loving them. As God, He commits Himself fully to His children. He seals His agreement with us by placing His Spirit in us. I may not always walk worthy of Him, but all my sins have been covered, and He will never abandon me. Such love demands a response. It demands my loyalty and devotion in return.

For Consideration:

What is the difference between Christ's love for us and our love for him? Take a moment to compare the two. How does your love for Christ compare to His love for you?

Does the fact that we may suffer for Christ in this life mean that He does not love us? How is the love of Christ evident in suffering?

What is the difference between Christ loving us and our experience or awareness of that love? Can I be loved and not be fully aware of that love? Can I be loved and never truly experience the fullness of that love?

What keeps us from experiencing the fullness of Christ's love for us?

Take a moment to examine what the apostle Paul tells us here in this passage about the love of Christ for us. Is this love something I we merit? Can we do anything to make Him love us more?

What is the difference between serving to merit the love of Christ and serving from a position of security in His love? What is the difference in motivation?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that while our love for Him may not always be what it should be, His love for us never changes.

Thank the Lord for how His love for us is evident even in the suffering we face in life. Ask Him to open your eyes to see this love more fully when you are struggling.

Thank the Lord that because you are secure in His love, you can serve and worship Him from a heart that is set free from any need to merit His attention. Thank Him that you are already loved completely.

Thank the Lord for the security you have in knowing that there is nothing that can ever separate you from His love. Ask Him to give you a heart that is eternally grateful.

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne Mac Leod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

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