

HERE'S LIFE

An Exposition of Romans 5:12–8:39

Foreword by Dr. Gary L. Hearon

by David Kuykendall

Here's Life: An Exposition of Romans 5:12–8:39
By David Kuykendall

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This work is published by
David Kuykendall Ministries
Dallas, Texas

Fourth printing (revised), 2008

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Foreword

There are four things we can do to a living faith that, given time, will empty it of its glory and rob it of its reality. First, we can formalize it, making it a thing of rules rather than dynamic relationship. Second, we can externalize it until we are more concerned with outward form than inner quality. Third, we can trivialize it so that the focus is on petty detail rather than life-changing principle. Fourth, we can rationalize it and use it to justify our wishes instead of dictate our lifestyle. In each instance, the abundant life God intended for His children is conspicuous by its absence.

The Word of God is not ours to manipulate to justify our own prejudices, nor is it to be shorn of power by being reduced to man-made tradition. It is God's Word set over us to expose, inform, change, and direct us.

David Kuykendall allows God's Word to speak with fresh, vibrant power with the result that faith is nurtured and built up. This faithful pastor is an insightful writer. With clarity of purpose and surgeon-like skill, he opens new vistas of understanding of the abundant life God's Word promises His children.

Perhaps the main statement of the book is its recurring theme: "There are things that are true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them." That thought itself is worth the price of the book.

I commend this work to you with the prayer that it will bless your life and affirm you in your obedient faith-walk with the Lord Jesus, for this has most assuredly been its effect upon me.

Dr. Gary L. Hearon, Executive Director
Dallas Baptist Association

Preface

This exposition of Romans 5:12–8:39 is titled *Here's Life* because it explains how we may experience the abundant life promised by our Lord in John 10:10.

Here's Life is a book about living by grace. The passage discussed teaches that believers who continue to live by grace will enter into the life that is abundant.

Seemingly, since the days of the apostle Paul, Christians have never placed the theology or practice of living by grace center stage as they have such doctrines as justification and regeneration.

Almost every time I teach these truths—whether to an individual or a group—I am asked, “Why have I not heard of this before?”

Some hear the message and walk away. In John 6:66, the apostle records that many disciples of Jesus turned from Him because His was a “hard” saying. He had just told them they must live in total dependence on Him—which meant, of course, living by grace through faith.

Some hear the message and ridicule it. Possibly, it was contempt for the message of grace that prompted two foolish questions that circulated in Paul's day. They were, “Shall we continue in sin that grace might abound?” and “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

There are, though, those who joyfully embrace the message of grace and enter into the life that is abundant. It is my prayer that you will be among those of this last group. May the Spirit of God enlighten you as you read.

It is only because of the help of others that this book is in print. I am deeply indebted to my wife, Janie Kuykendall, Dr. Raynal Barber, Will Barber, and Kenny Moore for their careful study of the manuscript and their helpful and necessary suggestions.

Those who studied Romans 5:12–8:39 with me in my Sunday school class for many years have made a significant contribution to this work. Both their questions and comments added to a growing understanding of the passage. I thank all of you.

I owe a very special word of thanks to Mr. Jim Reimers, who has devotedly labored for many, many hours at the computer. He not only did the typesetting of the manuscript but also mastered the necessary procedures for doing so as he went.

A word needs to be said about quotations of Scripture. All quotations of the passage in Romans 5:12–8:39 will be in bold print. All other quotations will be in normal or italicized print, and longer quotations will be indented.

Introduction

The theme of Romans 5:12–8:39 is “life”—the abundant life promised by our Lord in John 10:10. In the entire passage, Paul uses the term “life” eleven times, “live” five times, “alive” nine times, and “quicken”—meaning “to be made alive”—one time. This makes a total of 26 times the idea of life is mentioned in the passage.

Setting the concept of life in bold relief is the usage of words such as “die” and “death” 39 times. Twelve of these usages describe the emotional and mental “death” of believers who are not experiencing the abundant life.

Romans 5:12–8:39 is the only lengthy, organized, and detailed passage in the Bible that tells how we may experience the abundant life promised by our Lord. Therefore, the reader must give undivided and thorough attention to Romans 5:12–8:39.

Paul’s development of his theme of life divides clearly into five sections. They are Part One, “An Introduction to Life”; Part Two, “Receiving Life”; Part Three, “Life Through Death”; Part Four, “Life in the Spirit”; and Part Five, “Conclusion.”

In Romans 5, Paul presents life as issuing from grace and righteousness. In Romans 6, he changes the order to grace, righteousness, holiness, and life.

In 8:1–10, Paul replaces the concept of grace with the Holy Spirit. The order then is Holy Spirit, righteousness, and life.

In 8:11–30, another change takes place. The order is Holy Spirit and life. The word “righteousness” is not found in 8:11–30. The life provided by the Holy Spirit is so vast it has features beyond those that come through righteousness.

Part One

An Introduction to Life (Romans 5:12–21)

Paul's introduction to Romans 6:1–8:39 is divided into two parts. The first part centers on Adam and Jesus. As a basis for all he writes, Paul presents Adam and Jesus as being both alike and different. They are alike in that each heads a race and each affects each member of his race.

Adam and Jesus are revealed as different in what they did, in their character, and how they affect their respective races.

The idea of the racial headships of Adam and Jesus is vividly underlined by Paul's repeated usage of the word "one" in verses 15–19 of chapter 5.

By "one" man the many were affected. Twelve times he uses the word "one" in 5:12–19. Seven times it refers to Adam. Four times it refers to Jesus. One time it refers to the one act of disobedience of Adam.

Paul concludes his introductory comments with a rather remarkable thought. Before we may travel the highway of life, we must first go through the valley of the shadow of death—*death produced in us through living by law.*

One must understand Paul's introduction in order to understand his discussion of the abundant life.

Generations of Christians have lived in the darkness of Romans 7 rather than in the blazing light of Romans 8. This tragedy is largely due to a lack of understanding of Romans 6—which is often due to a lack of understanding Paul's introduction to the entire section in Romans 5:12–21.

Next to chapter 7, Paul's introduction is the most difficult part of his presentation of the theme of abundant living. Yet understanding it may be likened to pulling back the curtains in a dark room. Light floods the heart and mind, drives away the darkness, and prepares for the larger discussion that follows.

Chapter 1

Adam and Jesus—Alike (Romans 5:12–14)

Adam and Jesus are alike.

Ordinarily, one thinks of Adam and Jesus as being different. Yet if we are to have victory in the Christian life, we must understand that in one way they are alike. This is the easiest part of the study to understand, but it is absolutely essential that we give adequate attention to it. Anyone teaching the life of grace should not give in to the temptation to hurry past this.

Almost every statement of Romans 5:12–14 introduces us to Adam and the effects he has on the human race. Then, in one swift stroke, Paul informs us that Adam is a “type” of Christ.

First, then, we must investigate what the passage reveals about Adam so that we might understand what it discloses about our Lord.

Adam Affected the Entire Human Race (Romans 5:12–14b)

Because Adam is the head of the natural race of men, the importance of this passage cannot be overstated. It provides the foundational truth about Jesus.

Adam Infected the Entire Human Race With Sin (Romans 5:12)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

“Therefore” reveals that Paul’s following statements have ties with what has gone before. It ties 5:12 at least back to the beginning of chapter 5. In 5:1, Paul states that God has justified believers by faith—which means He has declared us to be righteous. In 5:2, he writes that we stand in grace.

In Romans 5:12–8:39, Paul reveals that we may receive grace and become the righteous ones God has declared us to be. We may know how to do these things partly by understanding Adam and his effect on the human race.

Just as through one man sin entered the world. We were made sinners when Adam disobeyed God by eating from the wrong tree. **All sinned.** That is, all sinned when Adam sinned. We were not there. However, for all practical purposes we were there, because Adam committed his act of disobedience as the head of the race. As a result, Adam passes on the sin infection to all born into his race. Jesus, however, in being virgin born, did not receive a sin nature.

Also, in 5:19 Paul writes, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

Adam Infected the Entire Human Race With Death (Romans 5:12b–14b)

Thus death spread to all men. Adam’s sin resulted in death for himself and the entire human race.

Having been driven from the Garden of Eden because of disobedience, Adam and Eve no longer had access to the tree of life. The result was physical death that was passed on to all born into the human race. Paul drives this fact home more force-

fully with two additional facts.

(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.) (Romans 5:13–14b).

We are informed of the deaths of person after person in the Old Testament before the law had been given.

With the exception of Eve, no other person was guilty of the same sin as Adam—yet death reigned.

Scripture intends that we understand people died for one reason and one reason only. They were the descendants of Adam. When Adam, the head of the race, infected himself with death, he infected us all with death.

What happened to Adam in sin and death happened to us all when it happened to him even though we were not there. It happened to us because Adam is the head of the human race.

Adam Is a Type of Jesus (Romans 5:14c)

Who is a type of Him who was to come. “Who” is a relative pronoun referring to Adam. A “type” is a likeness. In showing a picture of your mother, you may say, “This is my mother.” Of course, the picture is not your mother. It is a likeness of your mother. It is a type. As a type of Jesus, Adam is like Jesus. Adam and Jesus are so much alike that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:45, names Jesus “The Last Adam.”

Him who was to come. In three verses, Paul discusses Adam, the “type” of Jesus. In five words, he makes reference to Jesus.

In 5:15, Paul *will almost shout* that we are not to take this likeness too far. Adam and Jesus are very different. Yet they are alike, and *we must understand the nature of that likeness*.

In what way are Adam and Jesus alike? Paul's statement that Adam is the type of Jesus follows his revelation that Adam infected the human race with sin and death. He did so because as the head of the race, he first infected himself.

The likeness, then, is this: *Jesus is also the head of a race and there are things true of Him that He passes on to those who enter His race*. He does so because those things first happened to Him. Study of this entire passage would be helped by memorizing the following:

Adam is the head of the natural race. Therefore, the moment some things happened to him, they happened to all born into his race.

Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Therefore, the moment some things happened to Him, they happened to all who enter His race.

Paul strongly underlines the concept of the two races and the two headships by his multiple uses of the word "one" in verses 12–19. In those eight verses, he uses "one" twelve times. Eleven times it either refers to Adam or Jesus. In each case, Paul uses it to show the effect each had on his entire race.

In 5:15–19, where Paul discusses the contrasting effects Adam and Jesus had on their respective races, he does what seems to be a rather strange thing. He lists the *potential* effects Jesus has on His race—not the *actual* effects.

In the case of Adam, Paul continues to mention sin and death. He does broaden his presentation to the concept of "condemnation." In contrast to what Adam did for his race, Paul lists the effects of Jesus on His race as being grace, righteousness, and life.

Yet in 5:17, he writes that we must receive grace, righteousness, and life. So, we know these are not things that happened to us when they happened to Jesus.

It is not until Paul moves into chapter 6 that he reveals the things that actually happened to us when they happened to Jesus. They are death, burial, and resurrection. These three things became true of us when we entered the race of Jesus.

Paul will show in chapter 6 that because *we are actually crucified, buried, and resurrected, we may potentially receive grace, righteousness, and life.*

Chapter 2

Adam and Jesus—Different (Part I) (Romans 5:15–16)

Paul wastes no time in moving from the likenesses of Adam and Jesus to their differences. The second word of 5:15–16 in the original language is “not.” It is as if Paul—once he has firmly established that Jesus and Adam are alike—shouts, “Do not believe that Adam and Jesus are alike in all things. There are enormous differences.”

Different in the Affecting Deeds (Romans 5:15a)

But the free gift is not like the offense. Here and three other times in 5:15–19, Paul underlines the differences of Adam and Jesus by making contrasting statements about them. He begins by showing the contrast of their affecting deeds.

“The offense” is Adam’s act of disobedience. The “free gift” is the opposite of the offense. According to 5:19, the opposite of Adam’s disobedience is our Lord’s act of obedience. The free gift, then, is the crucifixion of our Lord who never spoke of His crucifixion without including the fact of His resurrection. The free gift is our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection.

**Different in the Results of the Affecting Deeds
(Romans 5:15)**

Immediately following Paul's mention of the affecting deeds, the passage informs us of their results.

**The Result of Adam's
Affecting Deed (Romans 5:15a)**

For if by the one man's offense many died. Paul has already told us in verses 12–14 that Adam brought sin and death into the world. The groundwork is now laid for Paul's presentation of the results of the contrast of the affecting deed of the Lord Jesus.

**The Result of Jesus'
Affecting Deed (Romans 5:15b)**

Much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

Paul does not list here the actual results of the affecting deed of our Lord—only the *potential*. In 5:17, Paul writes that “grace” must be continuously received by believers. In chapter 6, Paul presents the actual effects of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Because of the *actual* effects of death, burial, and resurrection, it is possible for us to continue to receive the *potential* effects.

Much more. Paul's assertion is that it is far more certain that we may receive the effects of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus than it is certain we will die.

How certain are you that you will die if our Lord does not return in the next 100 years? You can be much more certain that you may receive the blessings Paul is about to mention.

Much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. The first

blessing mentioned that is ours because of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord is that of the grace of God. We were saved by grace. It is possible for believers to live by grace.

In Romans 1:5, Paul reveals that his ministry is by grace. In Romans 1:7, Paul expresses a desire that the Roman believers would receive grace. It is this “grace for living” Paul has in mind in this passage.

And the gift by the grace. This is the second time in verse 15 we have seen the word “gift.” The Greek words are different and have different meanings.

Verse 17 reveals that “the gift by the grace” is the “gift of righteousness.”

In Romans, Paul presents two different types of righteousness. One is a *declared* righteousness expressed with the word “justified.” The second is an actual—a *realized*—righteousness. The gift of righteousness is the second type—realized righteousness.

Different in Character (Romans 5:16)

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

Paul determines that we understand the differences of Adam and Jesus even though they are alike. In this verse, the emphasis is on character and its effects.

Adam Sinned

Paul mentions Adam’s sin again only to point out the contrasts between Adam and Jesus.

Jesus Did Not Sin

And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. Both Adam and Jesus were tempted. Adam yielded. Jesus did not. The author of Hebrews wrote that Jesus “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Our Lord’s sinlessness adds a dimension to His effect on His race.

**Different in Results of Their Character
(Romans 5:16)**

For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

Although the effects of Adam and Jesus on their races mentioned in 5:16 are much like those mentioned in 5:15, there are differences.

**Adam—the One Who Sinned—Passed to Us
Judgment Unto Condemnation**

To this point, Paul has informed us that from Adam we received sin and death. Now he changes his terminology to judgment unto condemnation. Why the change? The idea of judgment seems to bring God more directly into the picture. God had told Adam he would die if he sinned. Following Adam’s disobedience, God drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and made it impossible for them to return. That is judgment.

Why the term “condemnation”? Perhaps it is used to refer to both our sin problem and death problem. Does it refer to anything else? In 5:18, Paul repeats this statement and then does not use the word again until 8:1 where it relates to his “O wretched man” statement. The wretchedness of which he speaks

is caused by Paul's flesh when he reverts to legalistic living. Perhaps he introduces the reality of that self-condemnation here as well as the sin and death problems Adam passed to us.

Jesus—the One Who Did Not Sin—Made Possible the Gift of Righteousness

The free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. Remember that the free gift refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The words of “many offenses,” if translated literally, would be “out of many offenses.”

Justification. The Greek word literally means “a righteous act.” The word can, however, mean simply “righteousness.” Four times in the New Testament it is so translated. Righteousness best fits the context here.

So, the potential blessings that are ours from Jesus who did not sin revealed in this statement are the deliverance from sins to a life of righteousness. For example, we may be delivered from the offense of anger to the righteousness of patience. We may be delivered from greed to generosity.

Not until chapter 6 do we find Paul's development of this thought of deliverance from sin. Here we are still in Paul's introduction to all he will say later.

In 5:17, Paul moves us beyond the thoughts of grace and righteousness to the possibility of LIFE.

Chapter 3

Adam and Jesus—Different (Part II) (Romans 5:17–19)

In this chapter, as Paul continues his statement of contrasts between Jesus and Adam, we arrive at the summit of blessing Paul has been leading us to and which is the theme of this entire passage—LIFE. We may reign as kings in life by continuing to receive grace and righteousness. In 5:19, Paul reveals that we may actually become righteous—implying that our reign in life may become constant.

Different as Sources of Royalty (Romans 5:17)

The next contrast between Adam and Jesus that Paul presents centers in the word “reign.” There is a certain kind of royalty each provides for his race.

For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Through Adam, Death Reigns

By the one man’s offense death reigned through the one. We have been reading of death since 5:12. Now we are

presented with the reign of death. Death reigns and nothing can stop it: Doctors cannot stop death; the best medicines cannot stop death; good health habits cannot stop death. It reigns as king in the race of Adam.

**Through Jesus, We May
Reign in Life**

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Again, Paul makes use of his “much more,” indicating contrast. We may be much more certain that we may reign in life than we are of physical death. The key to proper interpretation of this statement is a correct understanding of “those who receive.” The verb is one of continual action. We must *continue* to receive.

The word “receive” reveals clearly that in this entire introductory statement, Paul writes of *potential—not actual*—blessings that are ours by being in the race of Jesus.

Abundance should be seen as relating both to grace and righteousness. Of course, as we have seen in 5:15, *we will receive righteousness by receiving grace*.

Will reign in life. You may have referred to yourself as “a child of the King.” This passage permits you to elevate yourself to the position of king. We may live as kings in life. We may reign above life and all its terrifying and destructive circumstances. As nothing can stop death in the race of Adam, nothing can stop us in life—not Satan, not people, not circumstances. We may reign as *kings in life*.

Life. We should understand this as the abundant life spoken of by our Lord in John 10:10. Life is the theme of Romans 5:12–8:39.

Through the One, Jesus Christ. The emphasis is again on headship. This possibility is ours because Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Because of His death, burial, and resurrection, we may reign as kings “in life.”

Paul waits until chapter 6 to explain how we may receive grace, righteousness, and life. We must do the same. Yet here in his introductory section, we rejoice in knowing what our possibilities are.

Different—A Restatement (Romans 5:18)

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

Romans 5:18 consists of a restatement of a portion of verse 16 and a summary restatement of verses 15–17.

Why did Paul use the technique of repetition? Repetition is essential for learning new truth. And we must understand the two races and two headships concept. In addition, verse 18 is introductory to verse 19.

Adam’s Offense Brought Judgment Unto Condemnation

Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation. “Therefore” is used to introduce the restatement that follows. “Judgment came” has been added by translators who are obviously correct because Paul is only repeating what he had written in verse 16.

“Condemnation” may be seen as meaning the sin and death mentioned in verses 12, 13, 14, and 17. Possibly it is used here to introduce the “death” he discusses in chapter 7 that enshrouded

him because of living by law. In 8:1, Paul refers to that death as condemnation.

The Righteous Act of Jesus Brought Us Life

Even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. "One Man's righteous act" is a reference to the death (burial and resurrection) of the Lord Jesus. "The free gift came"—which in verses 15 and 16 refers also to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—has been added by the translators. Something needs to be added. In keeping with Paul's earlier discussions, the correct addition should be "grace" so that the statement then reads "by the righteous act of one, grace came upon all men resulting in justification of life."

Justification of life. Here we would not have expected the word "justification." Rather, we would have expected righteousness. How does justification (declared righteousness) rather than realized righteousness give us life? Paul is possibly informing us that the intention of justification, which he discusses in 3:21–5:11, is always grace, righteousness, and life. In 5:1–2, Paul writes that because of our justification we stand in grace. By receiving that grace, we may have righteousness and life.

We would then paraphrase the latter part of verse 18 to read: *Through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God declares us righteous that we may receive grace resulting in righteousness and life.*

Whatever Paul means he stays with his theme of life—which comes through grace and righteousness.

Adam and Jesus Different as Sources of Character (Romans 5:19)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made

righteous. The connective “for” ties verse 19 to verse 18 and establishes that the truths of verse 19 are the basis for the truths of verse 18.

Through Adam We Became Sinners

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners. We became sinners when Adam became a sinner. Paul first introduced that fact in 5:12. It is important for Paul’s later discussion that he firmly establish in this section on the headship of Adam that we all became sinners when Adam ate from the wrong tree.

It is because we are sinners that there has come upon us “judgment unto condemnation.”

Through Jesus We May Become Righteous

So also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. This possibility moves us a long way from Paul’s statement in Romans 3:10 that “there is none righteous, no, not one.” This even takes us beyond what Paul has been saying in this context—that we may receive righteousness. Paul makes his ultimate statement on this theme in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The point here is that we may continually receive God’s righteousness until we become righteous. Of course, it will never be a righteousness generated by us. It will always be the righteousness of God in us. It is always a righteousness continuously received.

In chapter 6, Paul explains that we are creatures of habit, and when we continue long enough to receive grace, righteousness, and life, it becomes a lifestyle.

The important thing is to relate this back to verses 17 and 18. Both verses teach that through righteousness we have life. When we continue to receive grace and righteousness long

enough, we, in effect, become righteous, and our reign in life will be constant.

What victory!

Chapter 4

Life Through Law (Romans 5:20–21)

Paul concludes his “Introduction to Life” with a surprising revelation. Before one can experience the fullness of life—by grace and righteousness—one must first endure “death.”

“Death” here is of a different type than the “death” of verses 12–14. That “death” is physical. The “death” that leads to the righteousness of life is mental and emotional—an inner “death.”

Just as the thought of life through death is remarkable, so also is the source of that death—the intervention of law.

The Intervention of Law (Romans 5:20a)

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. Our first thought of the entrance of law is likely that of Moses on Mount Sinai. The context, however, indicates that Paul is referring to the intervention of the law in the life of a Christian.

Christians were never intended to live under the covenant of law given to the Jews at Mount Sinai as a way of life. Paul contends, however, that living under law is a step in the

pathway to the abundant life. At least, we must live under law for a season.

So how do we Christians live under law—even for a season?

There are several answers to that question. The first and most simple answer is that some Christians—drawn to the Scriptures because they are Christians—believe God intends for them to live out the Ten Commandments. In making the attempt, they place themselves under law.

A second way many of us have placed ourselves under law is by living under man-made rules.

There is a third way we place ourselves under law. It is the most subtle of all. It is the “doing my best for Jesus” approach to the Christian life—with or without rules.

A fourth way believers place themselves under law is simply in “choosing to do good.” Paul reveals this way of law-living in chapter 7. All living by self-effort is law-living.

That the offense might abound. You may be the best illustration of this last revelation you know. You have been doing things for God with a “fire in your bones.” Yet you are in deep grief because you neither have victory over sin nor do you have love and joy in your heart. If that is your experience, you are part of a crowd of many.

Law-living causes sin to abound because law-living is flesh-living, as Paul states in Romans 8:3. You may want to read Galatians 5:19–21a for a sample of what flesh produces.

**The Flight to Grace
(Romans 5:20b)**

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

In 5:15–17, Paul explains that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus make grace available. Here he says that sin makes grace attractive. Perhaps you know the experience in your own life. Having failed in your attempt to do “your best for Jesus,” you are now ready to admit to God that “you do not have it.” You are ready to tell Him that if He does not do something, your life will continue to be a spiritual wasteland—even a negative influence.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the abounding grace is available. It may be received in abundance by those who are attracted to it by abounding sin.

The Law as King-Maker (Romans 5:21)

That as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. In 5:17, Paul introduces us to the kingships of death and of believers. In 5:21, he introduces us to two more kings—sin and grace. Each ascends to the throne by way of law.

Sin as King

That as sin reigned in death. Paul’s “that” ties the thought to his earlier revelation that law-living causes sin to abound. Now he reaches back to interpret his thought of “abounding sin” as the reign of sin. “Reigned” is in the sense that sin was in control; it could not be stopped. Neither repentance, nor prayer, nor anything could stop it.

In death. Paul mentions death in verses 12, 14, 15, and 17. There is, though, a vast difference between what death means in those verses and what it means here. In the earlier verses, every reference was to physical death. Here he writes of an emotional and spiritual death. He writes of the “death” of

believers who have been a failure because they are under law and not under grace.

With the word “condemnation” in verses 16 and 18, Paul was possibly referring to the self-condemnation he mentions in 8:1. If that observance is correct, then the word “death” here carries the same thought as the word “condemnation” of verses 16 and 18.

In Romans 6, 7, and 8, Paul uses the term “death” to describe the self-condemnation that is the result of spiritual failure. In chapters 7 and 8, he relates this death to failure through law-living.

Perhaps the clearest expression of that death is found in Paul’s testimony of 7:15. He writes, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.”

Grace as King

Even so grace might reign. Paul contends that the day can come when believers are as much under the control of grace as they have been under the control of sin. The result will be “righteousness to eternal life.” One more time Paul repeats the order of grace, righteousness, and life he has established in 5:15–17. He does add here the concept of eternal. Paul does not mean only those who come under the reign of grace will enter heaven. Many Christians never get beyond law-living. He uses “eternal” to magnify the thought of “the abundant life.”

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Coming to the life and reign of grace must always be through the Lord Jesus. In Romans 6, Paul explains in detail how grace may reign through Jesus.

Part Two

Receiving Life (Romans 6:1–23)

In Paul’s introductory statement, he shows that from Adam we have received sin, death, and condemnation—and from Jesus we may receive continuously grace, righteousness, and life.

What did we actually receive from Jesus that we might receive grace, righteousness, and life?

Paul answers that question in Romans 6. We believers have received death, burial, and resurrection—and that is why we may receive grace, righteousness, and life. We may receive grace, righteousness, and life by knowing certain things and doing certain things.

Chapter 5 is titled “Receiving Life by Knowing.” That designation of the chapter makes sense only as we understand that grace, righteousness, and life come as a unit. Receive grace and you receive righteousness and life.

In 6:1–14, the emphasis is on how we may receive grace, righteousness, and life by knowing and doing.

In 6:15–23, the emphasis is on how we may become slaves to receiving grace, righteousness, and life.

Chapter 5

Receiving Life by Knowing (Part I) (Romans 6:1–5)

In Paul’s introductory section of Romans 5:12–21, he establishes that we receive life by receiving grace and righteousness. Nowhere in the passage, though, does he explain how to receive. He only informs us that it is possible because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the head of His spiritual race—and desirable because of the exposure of our sinfulness through law-living.

Paul writes in 6:14, “For you are not under law but under grace.” All Christians are not under grace. Most of us are under law. In Romans 5:20–21, Paul tells us that if we are to have life, we must live for a season of our lives under law. In Romans 7:4, Paul reveals that believers place themselves under law.

In 6:3–10, Paul writes of things believers must know to escape being under law and to place themselves under grace. In 6:11–13, he gives five commands believers must obey. So those under grace mentioned in 6:14 are those who know the things he teaches in 6:3–10 and do the things he commands in 6:11–13.

Also, Paul ends verse 13 with the assertion that obedience to the five commands would result in God using our bodies as instruments of righteousness.

We have, then, both a reference to righteousness and grace at the end of verses 13 and 14 constituting a twofold proof that here is the way to life.

The entire passage of 6:1–13 divides into three sections. In verses 1–2, Paul sets the stage for his discussion of how we may receive grace and righteousness. In verses 3–10, he lists those things we must know that we might receive grace. In verses 11–13, he tells us five things we must do to experience grace.

The Setting for Teaching the Message (Romans 6:1–2)

Paul introduces his explanation of how we may receive grace by confronting what was likely a very popular perversion of the message of living by grace. The confrontation provided Paul an excellent setting for his higher motive of teaching his readers how to receive life by receiving grace and righteousness.

The Perversion Expressed (Romans 6:1)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? At first that seems to be a rather unintelligent statement. Yet it expresses what must have been one of the real-life issues surrounding the theme of the life of grace.

Paul had written in 5:20, “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” That very *correct* statement opened the door for some very *incorrect* theology—and practice.

Those who advanced the perversion were likely saying, “If sin leads to grace, then the shortest road to grace is sin. Let us continue to engage in sin that we may continue to receive grace.”

Who would even desire to pervert the message of grace? Some conceivably used this perverted argument as an excuse for sin. Others possibly used the argument to make the message of living by grace look foolish.

Living by grace has never had widespread reception by Christians. It was abused in Paul's day. It is a little-known message and is often abused by believers today.

John 6:66 records that many of our Lord's followers turned from Him after He said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53).

The ones who departed from Jesus gave for their reason that His teaching on the occasion was a "hard saying." He was teaching them to be totally dependent on Him. Of course, living a life of dependence on Him is living by grace through faith.

Behind all abuse and perversion of the life of grace is "the father of lies" himself. Satan knows that believers will do his kingdom little damage until they live by grace. So he viciously opposes both those who understand and live by grace and the message itself.

The Perversion Answered (Romans 6:2)

Paul's response leaves no question about his position in the matter. It is "**Certainly not!**" It is foolish for anyone to think Paul's message of living by grace is an encouragement to continue in sin.

The Concept of Living by Grace Introduced (Romans 6:2)

How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Paul's introduction to living by grace slashes at us like the onset of a sudden storm. He thrusts it at us. There is shock in it. It is a new concept. There is such newness and suddenness in it, many of us have never yet seen it. But it glares at us from the pages

of Scripture: **We (believers) . . . died to sin.** Notice the singular. This is a reference to our sin nature. When we died to our sin nature, we died to the sins it produces.

To be “dead to sin” is to be dead with reference to sin. We can say, “As far as my sin nature is concerned, I am a dead person. I do not have to respond to my sin nature.” Because we know our own sinful nature so well, we wonder how such a thing can be true. Such a shocking revelation demands an explanation. It is also a platform from which to explain how we may receive grace.

Receiving Grace by Knowing (Romans 6:3–5)

Paul’s discussion of those things we must know that we might continue to receive grace is in 6:3–10. In this chapter, we will discuss only verses 3–5.

We Must Know That We Have Been Baptized Into Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3a)

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus. Paul’s “as many of us” is a reference to all Christians. Although some see the baptism as being water baptism, a study of the context indicates clearly it is not. What Paul discusses in the following statements has never happened to those who have only been baptized in water but who have not been born into God’s Kingdom.

Other Scriptures teach that we have been baptized into Jesus by the Holy Spirit. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). In the previous verse, Paul says that the body is Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

When we became Christians, many things happened to us. Some of them we experienced. Some we did not. We well remember the experience of our forgiveness. We remember the change of the new birth. We did not experience, though, our baptism into Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Yet God knew, and it was just as real as our forgiveness and our new birth.

Believe it!

When we were born into the Kingdom of God, we were placed into Jesus by the Holy Spirit. This truth we must know if we are to receive grace.

**We Must Know That We Have Been Baptized
Into the Death of Jesus (Romans 6:3b)**

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? When we were baptized into Jesus, we became just as crucified as Jesus.

When we were born into the race of Adam, we were born with a sin problem and a death problem. Adam is the type of Jesus. As set forth in 5:15–19, by being in the race of Jesus, it is possible for us to receive grace and righteousness resulting in life. That is *potential*. Now Paul sets forth the *actual*.

Were baptized into His death. Because our crucifixion is actual and not potential, we do not have to continue to be crucified. *We are crucified.*

When Jesus was crucified, He was crucified as the head of a new race of people. When crucifixion happened to Jesus, for all practical purposes, it happened to all who enter His race. We were not there, but He was crucified as the head of His new race. He was crucified as the last Adam.

**We Must Know That We Have Been Baptized
Into the Burial of Jesus (Romans 6:4a)**

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death. Just as Jesus was crucified as the head of the race,

He was buried as the head of the race. So, we believers are both crucified and buried.

In 6:6, Paul reveals that our “old man” has been crucified. We should understand that our burial is, then, the burial of our old man. He is crucified—and buried. Our burial is a second lock on the door of the burial ground of our old man.

That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Burial is an essential element in resurrection. Its ultimate issue is that we “should walk in newness of life.”

**We Must Know That We Have Been Baptized
Into the Resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:4b–5)**

Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

We are as resurrected as Jesus and have been since the day we received Him as Lord and Savior. We did not fully experience it at the time. But if we are to receive the grace, righteousness, and life that are ours, we must know this truth to be so.

Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. A literal translation is: Just as Christ was raised out of the dead ones, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

In Ephesians 2:4–6, Paul expresses our resurrection in three stages: We were quickened (made alive), we were raised up, and we were seated in the heavenly places. We should think of our spiritual resurrection in this manner.

We have been made alive. Just as the life of God returned to the body of Jesus in the tomb, the life of God entered our spirits when we became Christians.

We have been raised (out from among) the dead ones—spiritually. Believers cannot be comfortable in the atmosphere of an unsaved world—the dead ones. Our place is with the people of God.

We have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places. In Ephesians 1:20–22, Paul explains that we may experience life at the right hand of God. In Ephesians 2:7, he reveals life in the heavenly places as a life of “grace.”

Even so we also should walk in newness of life. It is possible for all believers to walk in newness of life because we have been baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

United together. We have been united with Jesus in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection. “Likeness” means that what happened to our Lord physically has happened spiritually to those who have been baptized into Jesus by the Holy Spirit. All such believers are crucified, buried, and resurrected. *We must know it.*

Chapter 6

Receiving Life by Knowing (Part II) (Romans 6:2–10)

This chapter continues the theme of receiving life by knowing—that we might receive grace and righteousness, which results in receiving life.

We Must Know That We Died to Sin (Romans 6:2)

Paul had introduced his explanation of our crucifixion in Romans 6:2 before telling us how we became crucified, with the words **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?** The idea of our being dead to sin is that as far as our sin nature is concerned, we are a dead person. In such a state, we do not respond to our sin nature when we are experiencing our crucifixion.

We Must Know Our Old Man Is Crucified (Romans 6:6a)

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

As soon as Paul establishes in Romans 6:3–5 that we are now crucified, buried, and resurrected, he centers our attention on our crucifixion. He begins by informing us that it is “our old man” that is crucified.

If we are to understand the meaning of the crucifixion of our old man, we must identify him. In a general way, we may say that our old man is the kind of person we are because of our birth into the race of Adam. We are sinners. We have a sin nature. See Romans 5:12 and 5:19. Words used in the New Testament to refer to our sin nature are “sin” and “flesh.”

Galatians 5:24 declares that our flesh with its affections and lusts has been crucified. Therefore, we may define our old man as our flesh with its affections and lusts.

We may know in an even clearer way just what our old man is by knowing the exact nature of the sin problem with which Adam infected us.

There were two trees in the garden. God named one “the tree of life.” The other He named “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” If Adam had eaten from the tree of life, he would have lived. That is the testimony of God in Genesis 3:22–23.

We conclude then that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil infected Adam with the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:22–23 confirms this conclusion to be correct. The passage reads:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

Is there a better, more precise explanation of the knowledge of good and evil? There is. In Romans 1:18, Paul writes of the entire human race rejecting God. In verse 22 he gives the reason—“professing to be wise.” The knowledge of good and evil, then, is the attitude that we are wise. Mostly it is subconscious, but it is in us all.

Whether we call this a “know-it-all attitude,” a “sin” (nature), or “flesh,” it is faith in ourselves. It is faith that we are wise. “Flesh” seems to move into areas of self-confidence beyond faith in its own wisdom, but believing we are wise is its deepest feature.

The Hebrew words translated “good” and “evil” in the Genesis account are not to be limited to morals. “Good” means “that which is to advantage.” “Evil” means “that which is to disadvantage.” So, the knowledge of good and evil is the knowledge of that which is to advantage and disadvantage. According to Paul, we do not know what is to advantage and disadvantage. We only think we do—and that is our sin problem.

Yet the attitude we are wise is only the root sin problem. “Our old man” is the attitude we are wise—*plus all that attitude has produced in us*. Paul writes in Romans 1:22ff that the attitude we are wise has resulted in such things as idolatry and homosexuality. In the last part of chapter 1, he extends the list to include the following:

being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (Romans 1:29–31).

In Galatians 5:19–21a, Paul includes another lengthy list of those things caused by our knowledge of good and evil, our flesh. He writes:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.

All people do not practice all the things listed in these passages. All of us together are guilty of them all, and each of us is capable of them all. We all have a particular sin pattern, but we all have the basic sin problem. We think we are wise.

Our old man was crucified. The tense of “crucified” indicates a completed action in past time.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him. “Knowing” is not a verb. It is not a command. It should be translated “by knowing” and should be connected with “should walk in newness of life” in 6:4. The thought is that because we are crucified, buried, and resurrected, we can walk in newness of life by knowing that our old man was crucified.

Most believers do not know of the crucifixion of their old man. Those of us who do understand the blessed message of our oneness with Christ must tell them. Just as we must inform the unsaved of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we must inform believers of their own death, burial, and resurrection.

**We Must Know the Freedom We Have Because
Our Old Man Is Crucified
(Romans 6:6b–7)**

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that

we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

That the body of sin might be done away with. Hebrews 2:14 describes Satan as being destroyed when Jesus died on the cross. The word “destroy” there is a translation of the same word translated in Romans 6:6 as “done away with.” Satan was not annihilated when our Lord died. Our Lord’s crucifixion did put him out of power. So, the passage could read “our old man was crucified that the body of sin might be put out of power.”

There is another possibility. The word translated “done away with” is translated in Romans 7:2 as “released” and in 7:6 as “delivered.” Both renderings of the word have the idea of “being set free.” The passage restated with that translation of the word reads, “Our old man is crucified that the body of sin might be set free.” It does not seem to fit. There is another change in the passage that the Greek makes possible. “Of sin” may be translated “from sin.” If we add that change, the passage reads, “Our old man is crucified *that the body from sin might be set free.*”

This last rendering of the passage is preferable. In the first place, it does away with the problem of defining “the body of sin.” Those who have developed a theology of “the body of sin” have done so with no help from supporting passages. This is the only place in the entire Bible where we find “body of sin.”

In addition, the latter rendering of the passage beautifully fits the larger context. In 6:12, Paul commands that we “do not let sin reign in [our] mortal body.” We may obey that command because our old man is crucified that the body might be freed from sin.

In 6:13, Paul commands that we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. In 6:19, Paul exhorts,

“So now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” We can obey these commands because the crucifixion of our old man makes possible the freedom of the body from sin—the sin nature.

Translating the passage as “that the body might be freed from sin” lays a foundation for obedience to Paul’s exhortation to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy . . .” (Romans 12:1). For something to be holy, it must be set apart. Our bodies may be set apart to God when they are freed from the control of our sin nature.

Sin. Notice the singular. The reference is not to “sins” but to “sin.” The reference is to our sin nature—the attitude we are wise.

Might. The body “might be freed” from our attitude that we are wise because “our old man was crucified.” Just because our old man was crucified does not mean our bodies are freed from sin in experience. They are freed from sin in the sense that our old man is crucified and thus they can be freed.

That we should no longer be slaves of sin. Again, we must understand sin as a reference to our sin nature—our know-it-all attitude. “Should” has the idea of “might.” Because our old man is crucified, our bodies “might” be freed from sin that we “might” no longer serve sin. We no longer have to be a slave to our sin nature. We no longer have to live out of our own attitude that we are wise—our reasoning power.

For he who has died has been freed from sin. It is not difficult to understand this thought from a physical point of view. The murderer who dies will kill no one else. The drug pusher who is dead is no longer pushing drugs. In addition, from a spiritual point of view, dead people—our old man is crucified—are freed from the power of sin, and we can experience that freedom.

**We Must Know the Relationship Between
Our Crucifixion and Resurrection
(Romans 6:8)**

Having established in Romans 6:3–5 that believers are crucified, buried, and resurrected at the time of conversion, Paul then centers our attention on the death feature of that threefold blessing. Now he argues **if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him**. We are both crucified and raised with Christ.

**We Must Know That Jesus Is Raised
From the Dead and Will Die No More
(Romans 6:9)**

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

Never lose sight of the fact that what Paul teaches here is something we must understand to enable us to live the life of grace. “Knowing” relates to “believe” in the previous verse: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”

Death no longer has dominion over Him. Jesus will never be crucified again. We can know that we will never be crucified again. We are in error when we tell others they need to crucify self or that they need to be crucified. We are crucified—once for all—and alive with Jesus Christ in resurrection life, which can be experienced in our present lives.

**We Must Know the Eternal Relationship of Jesus
to Sin and to God
(Romans 6:10)**

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Jesus is forevermore dead to sin. He is forevermore separated from sin. Jesus

is forevermore alive unto God. If to be dead to something is to be separated from it, we never have to respond to it. To be alive to something is to be in union with it. Jesus is in an eternal position of union and communion with the Father from His position of enthronement with the Father.

These things we must know.

Just knowing them, though, will not result in our receiving grace. We must act on these facts. In Romans 6:11–13, Paul gives us the five imperatives we must live out if we are to receive grace.

Chapter 7

Receiving Life by What We Do (Part I) (Romans 6:11–12)

Paul teaches in Romans 5:15–21 that we may have life through receiving grace and righteousness.

In Romans 6:14, Paul writes, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

Paul does not mean that all Christians are not under law but under grace. In Romans 7:4, Paul makes it clear that Christians can—and do—put themselves under law. In 5:20–21, he explains that Christians must, for a season, live under law if they are to enter the life of grace.

What Paul does mean in Romans 6:14 is that *those who know what he teaches in 6:3–10 and obey the imperatives of verses 11–13 are not under law but under grace.* Also, he closes the imperatives of Romans 6:11–13 with the assertion that when they are obeyed, God uses the parts of our bodies as instruments of righteousness.

There are five imperatives for living by grace. This chapter will discuss the first two.

**We Must Believe We Are Dead
to Sin and Alive to God
(Romans 6:11)**

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. In 6:10, Paul writes that Jesus died unto sin once but now lives unto God. Because Jesus is dead to sin and alive unto God, we are to “reckon [ourselves] to be dead . . . to sin, but alive to God.”

Reckon. The Greek means “to consider.” It means to “accept as a fact.” Here we should understand “reckon” to mean “believe.” Because Jesus is dead to sin and alive unto God, we are to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God. We have been baptized into His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5).

“Reckon” is in the imperative and is a command. For us not to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God is for us to be disobedient. It is a command of continual action. It is something we are to do continuously. Every moment we are to believe we are “dead . . . to sin and alive to God.”

Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin. It was this shocking revelation that Paul uses in 6:2 to open his discussion on how we may receive grace. There, according to the Greek text, Paul says “we died to sin.” Here the same thought is in the words that we are “dead to sin.” The statement can read “consider yourselves to be dead ones with reference to sin.” “Sin” is used in the sense of our sin nature. We are to believe that we do not have to be under the control of our know-it-all attitude and that we do not have to commit the sins it produces.

This command is contradictory to what has been commonly taught—that we are to accept the fact we are going to sin. Many

can testify that when they began to believe they did not have to sin, God began to deliver them from the power of sin.

For us to believe we are dead ones with reference to sin is not to believe we are living without sin. It is not to believe we will never sin. It is not to make a promise we will not sin. It is to believe we do not have to sin and need not be under the control of our “know-it-all attitude.”

Furthermore, Paul does not command us to believe we are dead to sin because of what we see in ourselves. We are to believe it because we have been baptized into the crucifixion of our Lord. By His crucifixion, Jesus is dead to sin. By our crucifixion, we are dead to sin.

Reckon yourselves to be . . . alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:10 states that Jesus is living unto God. Therefore, we are to believe we are alive unto God. From the time of His resurrection and ascension, Jesus has been face-to-face with the Father in unbroken communion with Him. Because we also are resurrected, we are to believe we have been placed into the same face-to-face relationship with the Father.

Alive to God. Our resurrection with Christ was first presented in Romans 6:4–5. Paul here seems to add a second feature. We are to reckon ourselves to be alive to God continually. The idea is that of continuously being alive unto God.

By now you may be saying, “This is too rich for me. I have never experienced death to sin. I am totally dedicated to God, but I have never experienced life in terms of a face-to-face communion with the Father.” There is a simple answer to your dilemma. Read the following statement:

There are things true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

Paul's following commands reveal that we are to *choose* to be dead to sin and alive unto God. Perhaps you have chosen not to sin for years but still have not experienced the victory you long for. You must also believe yourself to be dead to sin—the sin nature and all it produces in us—and alive unto God.

Think of justification. When you received Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, you were justified. That is, God declared you to be righteous. You were not righteous, but God declared you to be righteous. Are you experiencing your justification? You are if you are living each day with the faith that God accepts you as though you are as righteous as Jesus is. You must believe it to experience it.

Think of forgiveness. Are you confessing your sins more than once? If so, you are not experiencing your forgiveness when, in fact, you are forgiven. First John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When are we forgiven? When we confess our sins. Yet if we do not believe we are forgiven—when we *are* forgiven—we will continue, in some cases, to confess our sins because we are not *experiencing* what is true for us.

Because we must believe some things true of us before we will experience them, Paul commands that we reckon (believe) ourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Many have prayed for years for the abundant life promised by the Lord. They have begged God to remove sins from their lives. When the Lord revealed to them the meaning of Romans 6:11, they ceased to pray for change. They began to reckon themselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God. Immediately, they began to experience the change they had prayed for.

**We Must Choose Against Sin Reigning
in Our Mortal Bodies
(Romans 6:12)**

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. In this imperative, we are commanded to choose against sin reigning in our mortal bodies.

Sin is singular and refers to our know-it-all attitude. The command means we are not to permit our lives to be under the control of our own reasoning. This command places us on the defensive. Sin is on the attack. Sin will reign unless we believe we are dead to sin and alive to God and use our freedom of choice not to permit it to reign in us. We have so long lived by our own reasoning—some call it common sense—that we must consciously choose against controlling our lives by reasoning.

Do not let sin reign. This statement is an imperative. We are to obey the command. It is in the tense of continual action. We must continually choose throughout each day that we will not live by our own decisions and choices.

The groundwork for this command was laid by Paul in verse 6. There, as we have concluded, Paul tells us that our old man has been crucified that the body might be set free from sin. See the explanation in the comments on verse 6.

In the best Greek manuscripts, “it” in Romans 6:12 refers to the body.

If “it” is a reference to sin, there are no difficulties in understanding the passage. Because “it” refers to the body, there is need of explanation.

The Genesis account of Adam’s infection with the sin problem is immediately followed with these results:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed

fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Genesis 3:7).

The moment the knowledge of good and evil began its reign in Adam and Eve, their attention went to their bodies. Why? The answer is that because we are infected with the know-it-all attitude, we live by our own reasoning. We gather our raw materials for that reasoning from our five senses. Once we have made our decisions, we carry them out through the body. The know-it-all attitude must have the use of the body in order to function. This is possibly why the term “flesh” is used in the New Testament to describe our sin nature.

So, when sin reigns in our mortal bodies causing us to be preoccupied with our bodies, we pamper them. We yield to their desires. This is why, for example, when the church gathers to pray, most of the prayer requests are for sick people.

We are now ready to discuss the last three imperatives for living out our union with Christ and experiencing God's grace.

Chapter 8

Receiving Life by What We Do (Part II) (Romans 6:13–14)

When we receive grace, we receive life.

Paul firmly establishes this truth in Romans 5:15–21. We receive grace by knowing some things and by doing some things. This chapter consists of a study of the last three things we must do. When we obey the five imperatives, we move to the broad road of life through grace and righteousness.

We Must Not Give Our Members to Sin (Romans 6:13a)

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. “Present” is in the tense of continual action. The word means “to give or yield.” It means “to put at one’s disposal—make available.” In verse 12, Paul makes reference to the entire body. Now we are continually to refrain from placing the parts of our bodies at the disposal of our sin nature. We are on the defensive in verse 12. Here we are on the offensive. We are to choose not to give any part of our body to the control of our sin nature.

The implication is that some choose to be available to God—but not totally.

Sin. This is another reference to our sin nature—our know-it-all attitude.

Instruments of unrighteousness. Instruments are tools. The passage means that when we make the parts of our bodies available to our sin nature, the result is unrighteousness.

**We Must Give Ourselves to God as Those
Alive From the Dead
(Romans 6:13b)**

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead. In verse 11, Paul admonishes us to believe we are alive unto God. Now we are commanded to present ourselves to God. This is the fourth of the five commands we must live out if we are to continue to receive grace.

Present. We are to make ourselves available to God just as we are not to make available the parts of our bodies to sin. Rather than doing what seems to us to be the wise thing, we are to give ourselves to God and His thoughts.

The tense is that of completed action. Perhaps the idea is that every time we make ourselves available to God, it is to be for the remainder of life. Each time we realize there has been an erosion in our yielding ourselves to God, we are to make ourselves available to God again—and make the decision as being for the rest of our lives.

As being alive from the dead. You may be saying, “I have committed my life to God many times, and I always fail in my commitment.” Have you ever committed your life to God as being alive from the dead?

To give your life unto God as one alive from the dead is to give yourself to Him as one who is crucified, buried, and resurrected. Give yourself to God as one whose know-it-all attitude and all it has produced in you are now crucified and

buried. Give your life to God as one who is raised from among the dead ones. Give your life to God as one in whom God lives and as one who is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Make yourself available to Him without attempting to do things for Him. You will be on your way to victory in Christian living, and in most cases, you will be busier in the things of the Kingdom than ever before.

We Must Give Our Members to God
(Romans 6:13c)

[Present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God. This is the fifth and last of the commands we are to obey in order to live by grace. Note that “present,” the verb of command, is borrowed from the fourth command. Again, our members are the parts of our bodies.

The idea of this fifth command is that God is to have free access to the parts of our bodies that He might express Himself through them. When He does so, His righteousness will be expressed through us.

By Paul’s usage of “righteousness,” we know we have arrived at the destination Paul has pointed to since 5:12. When we have received righteousness, we have received grace—and *when we have received righteousness, we have received life.*

More specifically, Paul has pointed us to the result to which he has directed us since Romans 6:3. Righteousness is more than the result of obeying the fifth command of verses 11–13. It is the result of knowing the truths presented in 6:3–10 and obeying all five commands of 6:11–13.

We must never lose sight of Paul’s teaching that the righteousness we receive is something God does. It is never of us. Paul informs us in the third imperative that when we use our members, the result will be unrighteousness.

Illustrate the third and fifth commands with your ability to speak. You will never again use your own ability to speak, but from this moment on, only God has the right to use that ability. If you use your speaking mechanism, unrighteousness will be the result. If God uses it, righteousness will result.

Paul is now ready to confirm that by knowing the truths of 6:3–10 and obeying the commands of 6:11–13, we have arrived at the life of grace.

Confirmation
(Romans 6:14)

For sin shall not have dominion over you. “For” relates back to all Paul has written since Romans 6:2. The word “for” can be, and in this case should be, translated “Then.” The following words in the verse explain why sin shall not have dominion over a person who understands and experiences his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection by obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11–13.

For you are not under law but under grace. If anyone doubts that Paul’s usage of righteousness in verse 13 reveals we have arrived at the life of grace, Paul confirms the fact with this statement. Those who know the truths of 6:3–10 and obey the commands of 6:11–13 are not under law, but under grace.

Paul could not refer to all believers being under grace because Romans 7:4 teaches that believers place themselves under law. In 5:20, he teaches that before believers will come to grace, they will first experience life under law.

In Romans 7:9, Paul gives his own personal testimony of being under law. He writes, “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” As we shall see, he writes of a Christian experience.

When we are in that necessary time period of being under

law, sin does rule over us. Try as we may, we cannot permit God to have control of the members of our bodies. By knowing and obeying, though, we can give the parts of our bodies to God, for sin shall not have dominion over us because we are not under law, but under grace.

For a believer to be “under law” is for the believer to attempt to keep the laws of God. It is an attempt to keep man-made rules or, as we shall see, even to choose to do good. To be under law is to live in human strength rather than out of the resources of God. All self-effort is law-living.

For believers to be “under grace” is for them to be living in dependence on God—it is living totally out of the resources of God. It is for God to live through them.

The vital question is, “How is it that knowing the truths of 6:3–10 and obeying the commands of 6:11–13 frees us from being under law and places us under grace?”

The answer to that question is:

There are things true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

We experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection by knowing, believing, and choosing.

When we experience crucifixion, we put out of power the knowledge of good and evil—the flesh, sin—which is self-confidence. When self-confidence is put out of power, we are free to live a life of trust in God. When we are living in total dependence on God, we are living by grace. God Himself becomes our life.

Chapter 9

Receiving Life Through Slavery (Romans 6:15–23)

In Romans 6:1–14, Paul teaches us how we may receive grace, righteousness, and life. In verses 15–23, he teaches how we may continue to receive grace, righteousness, and life.

The theme of the passage is “receiving life through slavery to righteousness.”

In this section, Paul adds a new thought to the order of grace, righteousness, and life. It is “holiness.” The order now is grace, righteousness, holiness, and life.

The Setting for Teaching the Message (Romans 6:15)

In Romans 6:1–2, Paul presents a real-life setting for his discussion of how we may receive grace, righteousness, and life. He does the same here as a platform from which to discuss our slavery to grace, righteousness, and life.

The Perversion Expressed (Romans 6:15a)

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? In the tense of the Greek, “Shall we sin” implies just one sin at a time—isolated sins. Some in Paul’s

day were seemingly abusing the message of grace by making such a foolish suggestion.

Perhaps some were using the message of living by grace as an excuse to sin. Yet it is possible that believers who rejected the message of grace were setting forth this ridiculous statement to assault the message of living by grace by making Paul and his message look foolish.

The Perversion Answered (Romans 6:15b)

Paul's answer is the same as it was to the foolish question recorded in 6:1—**“Certainly not!”**

With that real-life setting, Paul is now ready to set forth his thought that we may have life through slavery to righteousness.

Believers Can Become Slaves to Righteousness (Romans 6:16a)

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey. In answering the question of verse 15, Paul does something of far greater value than just giving an answer. He lays the groundwork for setting forth the truth that we may receive life by becoming slaves to righteousness. Throughout this passage, we encounter repeatedly the word “slaves.” It always has the idea of “slavery.” We shall see that we become slaves to righteousness by continuing to receive grace, righteousness, holiness, and life.

The Pathway to Slavery

You are that one's slaves whom you obey. We are all creatures of habit, and it is that feature of the human personality Paul uses as the basis of his argument. For example, some of us have put on our watches so often that we now put them on without even thinking about it. At times we cannot even remember putting them on. We are slaves to putting on our

watches. This slavery to putting on our watches came one step at a time. In the deeper issues of life, habit plays its significant part.

The verbs “present” and “obey” in Romans 6:16 are both continual action verbs. We become slaves to what we continually present ourselves and what we continually obey. We are creatures of habit.

The Possible Slavemasters

Whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? All believers will be slaves. Our options are two—sin and obedience.

The Slavemaster of Sin

This possibility is an additional answer to the foolish question with which Paul began this discussion. Although it is possible for us to become slaves to individual sins, the reference here is to “sin”—singular.

This is another reference to our attitude that we are wise. Each time we yield to our sin nature, we become more and more its slave.

Slavery to sin results in death. “Death” is used here in the same sense of 5:21—the living death of the Christian who is not receiving grace, righteousness, and life.

The Slavemaster of Obedience

Or of obedience leading to righteousness? Paul’s usage of “obedience” is surprising. Why did he not place God as the opposite of sin, as he does in verse 13? He uses obedience here to direct our thoughts to the five imperatives of verses 11–13. The result of obeying those five imperatives is righteousness. The result of obeying obedience is righteousness.

We may become slaves to grace—and righteousness—by becoming slaves to obedience of the five imperatives of 6:11–13. Just as we—because we are creatures of habit—become

slaves to sin one step at a time, we become slaves to obedience and its resulting righteousness—one step at a time.

**You Are Servants of Righteousness
(Romans 6:17–18)**

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

You were slaves of sin. Even though Christians often live as slaves of sin, the wording of the passage indicates a reference to believers before their conversion to Christ.

You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine. The verb form of “obeyed” indicates a one-time obedience. It is a reference to the reader’s conversion experience. “That form of doctrine” is a reference to the gospel of Christ.

To which you were delivered. The gospel was delivered to Paul’s readers, but they also were delivered to the gospel. The gospel was delivered to us, and we were delivered to the gospel. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,” declares Jesus (John 6:44). “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit,” writes Paul to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:3). We were delivered to the gospel that was delivered to us.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. The tenses of the verbs indicate a sudden and completed action. This verse refers to our conversion and declares that at that moment in time, we were set free from sin and we became slaves of righteousness. We will not argue with Scripture, but we know this has not happened to us in experience. Paul knew that also. This is indicated in his commands in verses 11–13 and in his statement about habit in Romans 6:16.

We must understand this statement in the same way we understand that we are dead to sin and alive to God. It is true of us, but we will not experience it until we choose to experience it and believe it is true of us.

**Make Your Members Slaves of Righteousness
(Romans 6:19–23)**

Verses 19–23 center in the command of verse 19 that we are to “present [our] members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.”

The Command (Romans 6:19)

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Here Paul likely is referring to his usage of slavery as an analogy for teaching spiritual truth. His readers understand slavery.

Just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness. This is a reference to the pre-Christian days of Paul’s readers. Paul knows that all nonbelievers have a lifetime of yielding to the sin nature and are slaves to it. His readers had weaved for themselves a web of slavery. Their moral and spiritual lives were in a continual downward slide. And it happened one step at a time.

So now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. The yielding—according to the Greek form Paul uses—is to be a one-time event. Yet Paul knows it will have to be done repeatedly. So, in effect it will be one step at a

time. “Your members” refers to the different parts of the body as indicated in 6:12 and 6:13.

Paul has given clear instructions on how to yield our bodies to God in 6:12–13.

For holiness. Here Paul introduces a new thought. Another translation would be “sanctification.” What is holiness?

The first meaning of holiness is set-apartness. In the Old Testament, something was holy when it was set apart for a particular use. When God saved us, He made saints of us—He sanctified us. That is, He set us apart unto Himself. Here Paul informs us that we can *experience* that set-apartness as the result of making our members slaves to righteousness as expressed in 6:11–13.

Every time we obey the five imperatives of Romans 6:11–13, we are available to God—we are holy. When we repeatedly live out the five commands of Romans 6:11–13, in time we become slaves to that lifestyle. The result is an increasing availability to God—and that is holiness. It is sanctification.

The Motivation (Romans 6:20–23)

The remaining verses of chapter 6 constitute a lengthy statement of motivation for Paul’s readers to obey his imperative to make their members slaves to righteousness. We will do so, of course, by continually obeying the five imperatives of 6:11–13. Paul begins with a statement of positive motivation, moves to the negative, and then returns to the positive.

Positive Motivation (Romans 6:20)

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. The positive motivation in this statement is that Paul’s readers now have an option. They can be slaves of righteousness. Before they came to Christ, they had no options.

Negative Motivation (Romans 6:21)

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? Perhaps Paul means by this that the

very memory of those things we did when we were the slaves to sin creates in us feelings of shame. Yet he also means that doing things as believers that we did as nonbelievers results in feelings of shame. The alternative is to give our members as slaves to righteousness.

For the end of those things is death. Living out our Christian lives in slavery to sin will only result in the mental and emotional state described as death.

Positive Motivation (Romans 6:22–23)

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. The first part of verse 22 is a restatement of portions of what Paul has written since verse 17.

This second and last statement of positive motivation can be summed up in one word—life. Paul introduces this revelation of life by repeating a portion of verse 18—“and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” He continues with a thought he had presented in 6:19—“you have your fruit to holiness.” The holiness is, of course, the result of making our members slaves of righteousness by living out the imperatives of 6:11–13 repeatedly.

And the end, everlasting life. Paul has pointed us to this life since 5:12. He first used the term in 5:17 and then repeated it in 5:21. It is imperative that we grasp his revelation that life at its fullest is the result of holiness.

Our loving Lord, in sovereign grace, permits us to experience the abundant life for a few weeks or months in the earliest days of our understanding and living out our oneness with Christ. Then we return to life much as it was before we understood the life of grace. At that point, growth in living by grace begins.

It is after months, or possibly even years, of obeying the five imperatives of 6:11–13 that we make our members slaves of righteousness and experience life in its fullest. When we come to life on these terms, any regression to life as it was before will be brief and temporary.

Everlasting life. The life that is ours in Jesus Christ will last for eternity. Yet we must understand that the use of “everlasting” here must also contain the idea of a quality of life. It is used here in the same sense “eternal” is used in 5:21 and the following verse (6:23).

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). “For” is used to restate that life is ours through our union with Christ.

The wages of sin is death. Paul places these words here to serve as backdrop to make more brilliant the thought of life.

Wages. Note the plural. Paul seems to be saying, “When you permit your life to be under the control of your own wisdom, you will experience death upon death upon death.”

The gift of God. Here Paul uses the Greek word for “gift,” which is translated “free gift” in 5:15 and 5:16 where it refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

Everlasting life. Paul uses the same adjective he had used in 5:21 to enhance the thought of the abundance of the life that we can experience. The life will last forever, but it is also a quality of life.

In Christ Jesus our Lord. “In” has the idea of “in union with.” As we experience our union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, we will experience the abundant life.

Our Lord. He is the reigning Lord. He reigns over this universe. When we experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, we experience life in the heavenly places with Him in His position of the Lord of this universe.

Part Three

Life Through Death (Romans 7:1–25)

Because of its difficulty, many have refused to come to grips with the seventh chapter of Romans—which concerns the believer and the law.

Admittedly, it is the most difficult of the chapters we study in Romans 5:12–8:39. Yet once a key for interpretation is provided, it becomes a spiritual mining field yielding up precious treasures.

It is a painful chapter to study because almost every word from 7:7 through the rest of the chapter is about “death.” Yet it is a death *leading to life*.

It is not perfectly accurate to say Romans 7 is about the believer and the law. It is more nearly accurate to say that Romans 7 is about the believer and law-living. As the chapter develops, Paul reveals that even when we choose to do good we experience the same death we experience when seeking to live by law. It is so because both approaches to life are “flesh” approaches.

In the first 6 verses of Romans 7, Paul discusses our freedom from law-living. It is possible when we experience our crucifixion, which he has explained in chapter 6.

The remainder of the chapter—with one exception at the beginning of verse 25—is Paul's personal testimony in which he relates how he did experience and does experience death through law-living.

Chapter 10

Freedom From Law (Romans 7:1–6)

In Romans 5:20–21, Paul explains that believers must go through the death of living by law that we might experience the abundant life through living by grace. Paul gives a detailed account of his own experience of death through law in 7:7–25.

Before taking us into the depths of death, Paul permits us a quick glimpse of the brilliant life of freedom from law in 7:1–6.

Illustration (Romans 7:1–3)

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Paul is not discussing divorce and remarriage here. He is illustrating both our relationship to and freedom from law. Paul

uses the illustration to teach us two things. First, the passage indicates that when we are living by the law, our relationship to it is so strong it may be likened to marriage.

Second, the illustration conveys the message that only death releases us from our strong ties with the law.

The Application (Romans 7:4)

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Paul wants all his brethren—not just Jewish believers—at Rome to understand that they “have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.” He sees both Jew and Gentile Christians, then, as being married to the law. Remember in Romans 5:20 Paul asserts that all Christians will—for a time—walk this deathly pathway.

How can it be that Gentile believers could be under law? The answer is that we place ourselves under law. There are four ways we do so.

In the first place, many Christians place themselves under the law of the Ten Commandments. They believe they are responsible for keeping them. They always fail.

Second, many God-loving Christians have committed themselves to man-made laws: praying so many minutes a day, reading the Bible so long each day, witnessing to so many people each day.

Third, in taking the approach to the Christian life of doing our best for Jesus, we engage in law-living.

Fourth, even if we only choose to do good, we are in law-living—a thought thoroughly discussed by Paul in Romans 7.

If the last three explanations of how Christians place themselves under law seem strange, take note of two sections of Scripture. First, in Romans 8:3 Paul writes, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh . . .” That statement reveals the flesh as one of the parties in a law arrangement. Flesh is our self-confidence—basically, the attitude we are wise. Consequently, any approach to the Christian life that is one of self-confidence may be described as law-living.

Second, three statements made by the Israelites at the time of the giving of the law to them reveal the nature of law-living. On three occasions in one form or another at the time the law was given, the Israelites said, “All that the LORD has said, we will do.” That is the very essence of law-living. It is serving God out of self-confidence—out of self-effort. (See Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 24:7.)

Many of us need only to rethink our Christian lives to agree that we married ourselves to law. We have made rules for prayer and Bible study. We have chosen to do good. We have done our best for Jesus. We might have even tried to keep the Ten Commandments.

How could a relationship between rules and flesh become so intimate as to be called a marriage? The answer must be that we think our performance is what pleases God, and many of us desperately want to do that.

Because many of us had a passion to serve our Lord and because we did not understand the life of grace, we plunged ourselves into a lifestyle of law-living. It brought death. Yet that death is God’s plan. It is necessary to move us to “life.”

You also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ. Paul is back to his theme of our crucifixion. When Christ was crucified, we were crucified. “Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3).

In Paul's illustration of Romans 7:1–3, it was the death of the husband that freed the wife from the law of her first marriage. In the application of the illustration to believers and the law, death again is the freeing factor for the wife—but it is the death of the wife that frees her for the second marriage. The wife, of course, is the believer who has been engaged in law-living and then begins to experience crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

In Romans 8:3, Paul writes that the law arrangement is weak because of the flesh. The law arrangements are between rules and man's flesh. When we became Christians, our flesh was crucified. That is why Paul can write that we have died to the law by the body of Christ. When we experience our crucifixion, the flesh is out of power—and, as a result, there can be no law arrangement.

That you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead. We—the believers—experience our crucifixion so that we might be freed from our intimate relationship with law and live as brides of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Him who was raised from the dead. Jesus—the believer's Bridegroom—has been crucified, buried, and resurrected. The wife may experience crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. In this marriage, both Bridegroom and bride are enthroned in the heavenly places in a relationship so intimate it is referred to as a marriage.

What a marriage! And we need only to experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection to engage in it.

That you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead. This marriage is of the type set forth in Scripture as the ideal marriage. The husband is the "head" of the marriage. That is, the husband is both "guide" and "provider" of the marriage. Jesus is the "guide" and

“provider” of all things for believers who live in union with Him.

The wife is submissive to the husband in this perfect marriage relationship. Paul had admonished in 6:13 that we are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead. That is, we are to give our lives to God as those who have been crucified, buried, raised, and resurrected. When we give ourselves to the Lord in this manner, we do so without the annoyance of our know-it-all attitude that has been crucified and buried.

There is no difficulty in our being totally submissive brides to our Bridegroom when our seeming knowledge of good and evil has been put out of power.

That we should bear fruit to God. Are we being fruitless in our attempts to serve the Lord? It is not necessary that we continue in failure. We may enter into an intimate relationship with an enthroned Bridegroom and bear fruit unto God. We need only experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection as taught in Romans 6:3–13.

“Fruit to God” that comes from the heavenly marriage may be classified in two ways. First, Jesus and His bride bring forth new children into the Kingdom of God. Second, Jesus and His bride bring nourishment, growth, truth, and comfort to those who are already the children of the King.

Fruit to God. Jesus made two breathtaking statements about the fruit that would come from the person who lives the totally dependent life. In John 7:38 He said, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

One is reminded of the temple of Ezekiel 47. A river that brought life and healing everywhere it went flowed from a temple. (Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.) “Rivers”

will flow from us that will bring life and healing everywhere we go.

In John 14:12, Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” All Jesus did for people’s bodies, we will do for their spirits. We will raise the dead (evangelism) and heal the spiritually blind, deaf, lame, and leprous. Note that it was Jesus who said we would do greater works than He did.

The Explanation
(Romans 7:5–6)

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

For. Paul’s intention is to place in bold relief the fruit unto God that comes from our living out our marriage to Jesus with the fruit of death that comes from marriage to law.

When we were in the flesh. This could be a description of a person attempting to serve God before salvation. It also describes God-loving believers who do not understand and experience their union with Christ. That is not to say everything they do is in the flesh. It is to say that much of what they do is in the flesh.

The sinful passions which were aroused by the law. Paul is preparing us for his personal testimony in which he thoroughly explains this remarkable statement. Also, it explains Romans 5:20–21.

Were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. Paul returns to his emphasis on our members. “Sinful passions” created by law-living engage our members—the parts of our bodies. Paul uses a strong statement of his mem-

bers in his personal testimony in 7:7–23. (See the comments on 6:6 and 6:12–13.)

To bear fruit to death. The ultimate fruit of law-living is death. Paul intends that we contrast the fruit of death that comes by law-living with the fruit unto God that comes by living out our marriage to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). We must understand that we are delivered from the law in the same sense we are dead to sin and alive to God. The experience of being dead to law comes only as we live out the five imperatives of Romans 6:11–13.

Having died to what we were held by. “What” refers to the law arrangement. When we experience our spiritual crucifixion, we are dead to the law. In Galatians 2:19, Paul testifies, “For I through the law died to the law.” *The death that comes through the law leads to death to the law.*

We were held. We wanted to please God and thought that we could do so through our performances for Him. We were in slavery to law-living.

So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit. “Spirit” is a reference to the Holy Spirit. There is no departure here from the “bride” and “Bridegroom” thoughts of verse 4. Here is just another way of stating the same manner of life—one of total dependence on Jesus for guidance and resource.

And not in the oldness of the letter. The reference is to serving the Lord in the flesh. It refers to living by rules, doing our best for Jesus, serving in human strength. Our flesh is crucified.

When we do not experience our crucifixion, our “old” man drags us back into the “old” way of living—in self-effort.

Chapter 11

Life Through Death by Law (Part I) (Romans 7:7–13)

Having taught that we may be free from law-living through our crucifixion, Paul is now ready to explain law-living and the certain “death” that results. It is a remarkable presentation in that he uses his personal testimony as a vehicle for his teaching.

Throughout his writings, Paul gives personal testimony but never with such extensiveness and detail as in this chapter. It is an intensely emotional passage.

There are likely several reasons the Holy Spirit led Paul to explain law-living and the resultant death by use of personal testimony. First, personal testimony presents the facts vividly and with emotion. We involve ourselves with Paul as we read.

In addition, personal testimony is used that we may know that Paul understands by experience what he writes.

Finally, with this technique Paul is able to impress us with the fact that he at times lapsed into law-living and the resultant

death. There is some enlightenment in knowing that even he experienced the painfulness that so often grips us.

In verses 7–13, Paul testifies about his law-living in the past. In verses 14–25, he writes of his present experience with law-living.

Why his division into past tense and present tense? Paul uses past tense to refer to his first post-conversion experiences of returning to law-living. He uses the present tense to explain that at the time of his writing the book of Romans, he still had lapses in living out his union with Christ.

Our attention in this section is to the testimony of his first post-conversion experience of law-living, which is also known as “legalism.”

The Enigma (Romans 7:7a)

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Paul knows that to those who have not known of their union with Christ, there will be questions about some of the statements he has made. “The motions of sins are by the law.” “We have died to the law.” His swift and certain answer to the question is, “Certainly not!” We get the message. Regardless of what he has said about the law, he does not believe that the law is sin.

The Experience (Romans 7:7b–9)

On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7b).

Paul emphasizes the idea that there is a strong connection between law and sin. He can testify out of his own experience that he would “not have known sin except through the law.”

For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” Covetousness is a reference to the tenth commandment. It was confrontation with the prohibition against covetousness that caused Paul to covet.

But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire (Romans 7:8a).

“Sin” is a reference to Paul’s sin nature—his flesh. Flesh wants to accomplish. It believes in itself. Flesh said, “I will not covet.” “Evil desire” should be translated “covetousness.” Paul was filled with covetousness when he was confronted with and attempted to keep the commandment not to covet.

For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (Romans 7:8b–9).

For apart from the law sin was dead. The law brings the sin nature—flesh—into power because all law arrangements are between rules and flesh and call for self-effort.

I was alive once without the law. When was Paul ever without law? Our first thought is that he means childhood. However, Philippians 3:5 informs us that Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews. He would not have been without law as a child. We must look for another time. It must have been in those first few days and weeks after his new birth experience.

Many who have trusted Christ in adulthood testify that in those first days as Christians, they were so consumed with Jesus there were no thoughts of rules or self-effort. Paul’s being alive once without the law must have been during his first days as a believer.

When the commandment came. In the previous verses, Paul is very specific about the commandment and the experience. He refers to the commandment not to covet. Perhaps after

the emotion of becoming a Christian began to wane, Paul began one day to think of how covetous he had been as a Pharisee. Possibly he thought, “I just must not be as covetous as a Christian as I was as a Pharisee.” *At that moment the law came.*

When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Again, the reference to “sin” is to the sin nature. In his own flesh, he would keep that commandment. That is the revival of sin. By saying “sin revived,” Paul reveals that at an earlier time in his life, sin was in control of his life. This would have been during his pre-Christian life.

And I died. His grief over spiritual failure was so deep that he called it death.

**The Explanation
(Romans 7:10–13)**

Having detailed that intervention of law resulted in death for him, Paul now explains on a yet deeper level how it happened—and then he explains how it moved him to grace.

And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death (Romans 7:10). “To bring” has been added by the translators. Those words are not in the Greek text. It is obvious that something needs to be added here. A statement of Paul found in Galatians 3:21 can help here. There he wrote, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.”

Likely, Paul’s thought in Romans 7:10 was, “The commandment which I supposed was to bring life, I found to bring death.”

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me (Romans 7:11a). Remember we are still in the context of Paul’s seeking to keep the commandment not to covet and being filled with the very thing he struggled not to do.

Sin . . . deceived me. Here is what must have happened. The thought of the commandment came to the mind of Paul. He knew he must keep it and decided that with enough determination he would keep it—because he believed that in his own strength he could keep it. We have been deceived in the same manner.

With us the deception and revival of sin happens something like this. We attend a highly emotional conference on some theme such as prayer. We hear the marvelous testimonies of those who get alone with the Lord each morning at a certain hour and for a certain amount of time. We say to ourselves, “If I really put my mind to it, I can do that myself.” That is the deception of our sin nature.

Similarly, this is the way the Jews spoke of keeping the laws when God made a covenant with them. Three times in the context (Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 24:7) it is recorded that the Israelites said, “What the LORD has said, we will do.” We know the Old Testament well enough to know they were utter failures. We know ourselves well enough to know we are utter failures. We have set our minds to serving God time and again, and each time, “sin revived.”

And by it killed me (Romans 7:11b). “It” refers to the commandment. “Killed me” was stated by Paul in verse 9 with “I died.”

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good (Romans 7:12). Paul’s failure is not because of law. It is because of his own sin nature, which is activated by law. So the law stands as “holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” The commandment is holy, just, and good because it is the vehicle leading us to life by driving us to grace through the death with which it enshrouds us.

Has then what is good become death to me? (Romans 7:13a). The answer is again an immediate “Certainly not!”

But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful (Romans 7:13b). When Paul writes in Romans 5:20 that the law entered in that sin might abound, he is speaking from experience. Years earlier, he had experienced the painful revelation he exposes here. When in 5:20 he continues, “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,” he also is writing from experience. When God permitted the young Paul to revert to law that he might see himself as “exceedingly sinful,” He started him on his journey to the life of grace. He does the same for us.

In Romans 7:14–25, Paul moves from a past tense testimony to a present tense one—which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 12

Life Through Death by Law (Part II) (Romans 7:14–25)

In Romans 7:14–25, Paul continues his personal testimony of death through law. There are, though, significant differences between this last part of his testimony and the first part. Paul’s testimony in 7:7b–13 is in past tense. Verses 14–25 is in present tense.

The present tense testimony is more mature. By the time Paul wrote Romans, he understood the involvement of the body with law-living. He sees law-living and the resulting death in terms of laws. He knows that even the “choosing to do good” is the resurrection of the flesh. His experience of “death” seems greater. Most important, he knows there is victory over law-living and death because he understands his oneness with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection.

Are we to interpret Paul’s testimony in present tense to mean there is no hope of victory? No! In 7:1–6 he makes it perfectly clear there is victory through experiencing our oneness with Christ. Even in the midst of the testimony of death (Romans 7:24), Paul shows in 7:25a that he knows there is a way of escape in Jesus Christ.

By his use of the present tense, Paul reveals that even he lapses at times into law-living. There are no perfect saints on this earth. As Paul shows in Romans 6:15–23, we may become slaves to living in union with Christ. There can be a growing and increasing victory. Yet we all will have our moments of lapsing into law-living—self-effort—of one type or another.

Because Paul knew the way of victory over law-living and its resulting death, we can be certain that he did not long remain in that state of death. Nor do we need to remain long in law-living and a state of death. We also know the way out—experiencing our oneness with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection.

Also, in Romans 5:20–21 Paul establishes that death from law results in life through grace. Every lapse we have into law-living and death can, if we respond correctly, result in a more gripping slavery to the life of grace.

The Transition (Romans 7:14)

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. With this verse, Paul moves from the past to the present. The time segment between verses 13 and 14 is likely several years—from that first experience of reverting to law-living just days after his conversion to the time he writes the letter to the church at Rome.

The law is spiritual. Perhaps the thought here is that because God has given the law, it is spiritual. In addition, the law can be considered spiritual because it is God's instrument in producing sin in us that leads to death—which ultimately leads to life.

But I am carnal. For “carnal” we could substitute the word “fleshly.” The flesh that was aroused by law in the past is still

aroused by law. Paul is crucified and in a growing way is experiencing his crucifixion, but the flesh is not annihilated. There is danger in believing the flesh with its affections and lusts—our old man—is annihilated. We may have experienced our crucifixion for years and kept flesh out of power much of the time, but it has not ceased to exist.

Sold under sin. This is a picture of slavery. Paul teaches in Romans 6:16 that when a person obeys his sin nature repeatedly, he becomes a slave to it. He is obviously saying here that is what happened to him in his problem with covetousness.

The law is spiritual, but I am carnal. Paul had brought the two together with his self-effort to keep the law not to covet. We do the same. Bringing flesh and law together is as deadly as bringing together certain gases. Paul has just testified to the result of death and continues to do so in the following verses.

The Description (Romans 7:15)

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. Up to this point, Paul has used the concept of death repeatedly. Here he describes in detail the nature of that death.

“Does verse 15 sound like someone you know?” Many admit that it is a description of their lives. Romans 7:15 describes all God-loving people who do not understand and live out their union with Christ.

For what I am doing, I do not understand. “Understand” is the translation of the word “to know.” Here it means “understand.” Paul says, “I cannot understand myself.” That statement may be more for us than it was for Paul at the time he wrote the Roman letter. By then he understood what was hap-

pening to him. If our present testimony is that we cannot understand why we do what we do, then these words are for us.

For what I will to do, that I do not practice. Notice the self-effort. Whether this means living by some rule or not, it is still Paul—rather than God—using his members. The failure is in the “I”—what I would do.

But what I hate, that I do. What were the things Paul hated? In 7:7, he indicated his choice not to be covetous. However, that is the only thing he mentions specifically. As long as a God-loving believer lives in self-effort—whether it be by keeping rules or not—he will never be free of the things he hates.

The Explanation (Romans 7:16–18a)

Paul restates in this section much of what he expressed about his first post-conversion experience with the law. In it all, there is an underlying emphasis on the fact that the flesh is not dead.

If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good (Romans 7:16). The law is good in that it keeps before him the standard for living. Also, the law is God’s instrument to reveal to him his sin nature and to move him to the life of grace.

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me (Romans 7:17). It is as though Paul thinks of the flesh as being another person dwelling within him. Someone else in him is causing him to do things he hates.

When we live out of our know-it-all attitude, we choose against yielding ourselves to God. This verse reveals a strange thing about believers who are not living by grace. While trying to keep control, they lose control—not to God but to the flesh.

We must be careful not to think Paul is shunning responsibility for the failure in his life caused by the flesh. His cries of death throughout this chapter indicate that he takes full responsibility for the indwelling sin nature and its effect on his life.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells (Romans 7:18a). In this statement, we have one of the most profound revelations of the human heart.

In me (that is, in my flesh). Paul is his flesh. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says he has been crucified. Then in Galatians 5:24 he writes that the flesh with its affections and lusts has been crucified.

Paul is his flesh. We are our flesh when we are not living out our union with Christ.

What is the explanation? Remember that our flesh is basically the knowledge of good and evil. It is the attitude we are wise. That underlying attitude so dominates our lives that Paul can say, “I am that attitude.” We should say the same. We are an attitude of wisdom incarnate if we are not experiencing our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Only we make decisions for our lives.

Nothing good dwells. There is nothing good in our flesh. Flesh can pray, read the Bible, or preach if it decides that is the wise thing to do. Yet in flesh, nothing good dwells.

The Repetition (Romans 7:18b–20)

For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice (Romans 7:18–19). In verses 18b–20, Paul repeats what he has just written. First, he repeats his testimony of failure. Notice the “I.” It is a matter of self-control and self-effort Paul is discussing.

What is good. Paul has referred to the law as good, but here he moves beyond thought of keeping the law and reveals that law-living includes any effort at doing good. It is true for him. It is true for us.

In verse 20, Paul repeats the explanation of the failure. **Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.** As long as I am deciding what to do and attempting to do it, the indwelling sin nature is raging. Such action is law-living because it is flesh-living. Paul repeats his earlier confession of losing control.

The Revelation (Romans 7:21–23)

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

In these verses, Paul reveals a mature grasp of the Christian life. He has come to understand his lapses into law-living in terms of laws. It is the most difficult section of Romans 5:12–8:39.

In these three verses, Paul uses the word “law” five times. With those five usages, he discusses three different laws: the law of sin, the law of God, and the law of his mind. In three of the five usages of “law,” he comments on the law of sin.

The First Law—First Reference (Romans 7:21)

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. “Law” is used in the sense of “law” of gravitation—it always works the same way. Paul discovered that every time when he even thought of doing good, evil was

present. Remember his statement in 7:9: “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” The main difference from that statement is his use of “good” rather than “law.”

**The Second Law—The Law of God
(Romans 7:22)**

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. This law of God is a reference, of course, to God’s laws in Scripture. In the following verse, Paul writes of the law of his mind and in 7:25 he writes, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God.” Paul’s references to his mind must be what Paul refers to with the words “the inward man.”

**The First Law—Second Reference
(Romans 7:23a)**

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Another law. By “another,” Paul contrasts this law with the law of God. The law in Paul’s members is the law of sin, which he had introduced in 7:21. Here Paul says three things about the law of sin. It is in his members, it wars against the law of his mind, and it brings him into captivity.

In my members. Flesh always involves our members. Anytime we reason our way through life, we activate the body to secure raw materials for making decisions and for expressing those decisions once they have been made. Genesis 3:6–7 makes it very plain that once the sin nature is aroused, we begin to pamper the body. We come under the control of the body, according to Romans 6:6 and 6:12.

**The Third Law
(Romans 7:23b)**

Warring against the law of my mind. The law of Paul’s mind must have been his inward man’s delight for the law of God that he mentions in 7:22.

**The First Law—Third Reference
(Romans 7:23b)**

And bringing me into captivity. Paul's cry for deliverance from the body (in 7:24) makes it plain that the captivity here is of the body. Romans 6:6 and 6:12 reveal that we become the victims of our bodies when our sin nature is in control. It is so for the reasons revealed in Genesis 3:6–7.

To the law of sin which is in my members. “To” should be translated “by.” “Which is in my members” identifies the law of sin with the law that brings Paul into captivity. As the verse stands, apparently, there are two laws in Paul's members. This seems very unlikely. Yet when we identify the first law mentioned in 7:23 with the third law mentioned in 7:23, we have a very awkward statement.

What is the answer to this difficulty? It seems that when Paul began to write about captivity, he became consumed with the thought of it (7:24 with its agonizing cry would indicate as much) and repeats the first part of the verse. In that case, the idea of 7:23 is as follows: The law of sin is in my members and has brought me into captivity—and this captivity is by the law of sin that is in my members.

**The Results
(Romans 7:24)**

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? This cry for deliverance by Paul is one of the best-known passages of the Bible. It is a plea that all who love our Lord have made for themselves. It is the cry of one who loves God but is not experiencing crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. It is the cry of all who serve the Lord in human strength.

O wretched man that I am! Paul does not mean he feels wretched all the time. The entire context indicates that he falls

into this state when he ceases to live out his union with Christ and chooses himself to do good.

Who will deliver me from this body of death? Paul knows who will deliver him. In the very next verse, he answers his own question. His deliverer is the Lord Jesus. He is our deliverer because He was crucified, buried, and resurrected as the head of the spiritual race. In 7:1-6, Paul makes plain that he knows the way to victory.

From this body of death. On several occasions, Paul has shown the part our bodies play in our defeat when we fail to live out our oneness with Christ.

Death. He uses “death” to describe the inner state of mind and emotions God-loving people experience when they do not live out their union with Christ. It is the death of failure, guilt, depression, and feelings of inferiority.

The Resolution
(Romans 7:25a)

I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Anytime Paul has a lapse in living in his union with Christ and falls into legalism and death, he knows the way back. By the time he wrote these words, he had fallen into the death state only to return to grace many, many times.

The Restatement
(Romans 7:25b)

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. Following his explanation of where his victory lies, Paul returns to his discussion of the failure that comes when we live in human effort. This statement is a summary of 7:15–24.

Paul wants us to understand that the flesh is not annihilated. The flesh is crucified. The flesh can be crucified and yet be

in power. Anytime we are not living out our oneness with Christ, the flesh is in power.

Just one thought of “I will” or “I will not” and the flesh is back in power. When the law comes, sin—the flesh—revives.

Part Four

Life in the Spirit (Romans 8:1–30)

Paul writes that life is by grace through righteousness in chapters 5 and 6 of Romans. Paul changes grace to Holy Spirit, and the formula for life is Holy Spirit, righteousness, life in Romans 8:1–10.

Paul breaks the mold again in 8:11 and the order is Holy Spirit—life. That formula for life is followed through 8:30.

In 8:1–4, Paul discusses life through the law of the Spirit; in 8:5–10, he contrasts death in the flesh and life in the Spirit; in 8:11–16, he discusses life in the expansiveness of the Spirit; and in 8:17–30, he reveals the part the Holy Spirit plays in our life of glory.

Chapter 13

Life Through the Law of the Spirit (Romans 8:1–4)

In the latter part of chapter 7, Paul introduces us to the law of his mind and the law of sin. Both laws are at work in the lives of all believers who do not live out their oneness with their Lord. In Romans 8:2, Paul introduces us to another law at work in believers. It is at work at all times in all believers. It is the law of the Spirit.

As the laws mentioned in chapter 7 are so named because they always work the same way, the law of the Spirit is so named. From the moment the Spirit of God enters a believer at conversion, He never varies from His work in and His intention for that person. His intentions and actions are always the same for all believers. The Holy Spirit is at work at all times—and in all believers—to give us life.

Paul sets forth four reasons the law of the Spirit gives us life in 8:1–4.

The Law of the Spirit Has Set Us Free From Condemnation (Romans 8:1)

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

What follows “therefore” relates to and is dependent on something that has been written before. The tie is with “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” in 7:25. In that statement, Paul expresses that our freedom from the body of death is in Jesus. In the first six verses of chapter 7, Paul had shown our freedom from law through our oneness with Christ in crucifixion. Therefore, then, relates to that full thought: We are free from the body of death because we are free from law-living in our union with Christ in crucifixion.

Because of our union with Christ, there is now “no condemnation.” That is, there is freedom from law-living and the self-condemnation of death. There is freedom from the self-condemnation exposed in the agonizing cry for deliverance from the body of death.

“In Christ Jesus” has the idea of “in union with Christ Jesus.” We cannot, though, take Paul’s thought here to mean simply “in union with Christ Jesus.” His testimony in chapter 7 is that even after he was placed into Christ, he experienced painful self-condemnation. Therefore, we must understand that he means “there is therefore now no condemnation” *to those who are experiencing their union with Christ Jesus.*

He explains in 8:2, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” As we have seen, freedom from the law of sin and death is through experiencing our crucifixion.

So, one benefit of receiving “life in the Spirit” is freedom from agonizing self-condemnation.

**Life Is “the Law” of the Spirit
(Romans 8:2)**

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

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. “Law” is used in the sense of the law of gravity. The Holy Spirit works in all believers according to a law from which He never varies. Our first inclination is to understand Spirit of life to mean “the Spirit who gives life.” “Life” refers to “the abundant life.” “In Christ Jesus” could be translated “in union with Christ Jesus.”

With these changes, the statement, then, would read “the law of the Spirit who gives the abundant life in union with Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” The meaning, then, would be “the life-giving Holy Spirit always is working to give me the abundant life by leading me to experience my oneness with Christ which sets me free from the law of sin and death.”

There is a second possibility. “The law of the Spirit of life” can be translated “the law of the Spirit which is life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” The translation, then, would be “the law of the Spirit which is abundant life in union with Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death.” The meaning would be the same as the first possibility.

In either case, the Holy Spirit’s unceasing efforts for us are that we may have the “abundant life.”

The law of the Spirit then is as follows: From the moment the Lord saves someone, the Holy Spirit works unceasingly to give that person the abundant life by bringing that one to experience his death, burial, and resurrection.

**The Law of the Spirit Sets Us Free From
the Law of Sin and Death
(Romans 8:2–3)**

For the law of the Spirit . . . has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). “For” relates 8:2 with 8:1 to introduce the reason we are free from self-condemnation. In 7:23–24, Paul testifies that the law of sin brought him

into captivity to his body—resulting in the “O wretched man” cry of self-condemnation. Experiencing his union with Christ in crucifixion, burial, and resurrection sets him free. “Me” indicates a continuation of personal testimony begun in 7:7.

“The law of sin and death” is described in 7:9: “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” Every time we intend to keep a commandment—or choose to do good—sin revives and we die. The Holy Spirit by prompting us to experience our union with Christ sets us free from this law.

Paul now is ready to explain *how* the law of the Spirit could set him free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

This statement explaining the necessity of our Lord’s crucifixion as foundational for the Holy Spirit to lead us to live out our union with Christ is wonderfully enlightening.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. “Law” refers to the law arrangement the Lord made with the Israelites. Repeatedly, the history of the Jewish nation proved the weakness of that arrangement. Paul’s personal testimony confirms this truth.

Through the flesh. Any law arrangement is a flesh arrangement. It is always an arrangement of self-confidence on our part. When God gave the law through Moses, it is recorded that three times the Israelites said, “What the LORD has said, we will do.” That is flesh. That is flesh on their part. That is flesh on our part. And the arrangement is weak.

Law arrangements are not only weak; they are also dangerous. They result in such negatives as anger, hate, and jealousy. Many more such things are mentioned in Galatians 5:19–21a.

Paul says in Galatians 6:8 that they who sow to (or because of) the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. This seems to imply not only the danger of flesh-living but also the waste of flesh-living.

Under any conditions, we must avoid law-living so that we may avoid flesh-living.

God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. This is a reference to the incarnation of Jesus. He was not a sinner. He did not have a sin nature. He did become a man like us.

On account of sin. He came to die for sin. Note the singular. In several places in the New Testament, we are told that Jesus died for our “sins.” Here we are told that He came to deal with sin—our sin nature. He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He condemned sin in the flesh. In Matthew 20:18, Jesus used this same word for condemned in order to prophesy that the Jewish leaders would condemn Him to death.

Sin. Note the singular. It is a reference to our sin nature—our flesh, the attitude we are wise. How did our Lord’s death on the cross condemn sin? Jesus died as “The Last Adam”—the head of the spiritual race. The moment we were placed into Him by the Holy Spirit, we were crucified also. It was our sin nature and all it produces in us that was crucified. God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus died, sin died.

**The Law of the Spirit Results in the Righteousness
of the Law Being Fulfilled in Us
(Romans 8:4)**

Jesus died on the cross for the crucifixion of our sin nature **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** Throughout, Paul has informed us that life is the result of righteousness. Now he informs us that

the law of the Spirit results in the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us.

That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. Paul is at the very heart of all he has been writing about since 5:12. “Righteous requirement” results in life. In Romans 13:8, Paul writes, “For he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Jesus says:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

Fulfilled in us. We are not the ones who do the fulfilling. It is done by another. We are reminded of Romans 6:13: “[Yield] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” That is, God will do the works of righteousness through us.

Who do not walk according to the flesh. To walk according to the flesh is to live according to our own reasoning. Attempting to keep the law in the flesh results in utter failure and leads to “death.”

[Walk] . . . according to the Spirit. This means to permit Him to guide our lives. One feature of His guidance is to give us the abundant life by leading us to live out our union with Christ. Stated differently, when we walk according to the Spirit, among other things, we will live out our union with Christ by obeying the five imperatives of Romans 6:11–13. As a result, we will experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

It is the experience of our crucifixion that results in “the righteous requirement of the law [being] fulfilled in us.” It is

the Holy Spirit who fulfills the righteous requirement of the law in us.

Jesus explained to the woman at the well that the water He gives would be in a person “a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). This means the Holy Spirit has been seeking to fill us each moment of our Christian lives. There is a barrier. It is the flesh. Galatians 5:17 says, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit.”

Any time we are living out our union with Christ—as enlightened, led, and empowered by the Holy Spirit—our flesh is out of power. The result is a Spirit-filled life. Then the Holy Spirit fulfills the righteousness of the law in us.

In Galatians 5:22a Paul writes, “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Both Jesus and Paul teach that the law is fulfilled when we love. So, when we live out our union with Christ and the Holy Spirit loves through us, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us.

We will never live up to the law—or do good—by seeking to do so. We will keep the law and do good only when we cease seeking to do so and live out our union with Christ as prompted and directed by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will never cease prompting us to live out our union with Christ, because the law of the Spirit is to give us the abundant life by doing that very thing.

Chapter 14

Life—Contrasted With Death (Romans 8:5–10)

As a shining light is more brilliant against a background of darkness, life is expressed more vibrantly against a background of death. So, in order to express a more glowing perspective of our life in the Spirit, Paul, in Romans 8:5–10, contrasts that life with the death produced by flesh.

The Contrasts Explained (Romans 8:5–6)

In Paul's testimony recorded in 7:14–25, he makes it clear that he had lapses in living out his union with Christ. We do the same. Death is always the result. When we do live in union with Christ, life is always the result. Here we have a double-edged encouragement to continue living out our union with Christ.

Contrast in Our Thoughts (Romans 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, the things of the Spirit. “According to the flesh” means to live out our lives on the terms of our own wisdom.

Some would call it living according to common sense. It is law-living.

When we set our minds on the things of the flesh, we think the thoughts of the flesh, which are the thoughts of the underlying attitude that we are wise. They are the thoughts of reasoning and decision-making. They are the thoughts prompted by the raw materials taken in by our five senses. They are the thoughts of wanting to prove our wisdom by being number one—resulting in thoughts of competition with others. Again, our attention is drawn to Paul's listing of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21a.

Those who live according to the Spirit. To live “according to the Spirit” is to live under His guidance and enlightenment. Among other things, it means to be living out our union with Christ because the law of the Spirit is life in union with Christ. As a result, to live according to the Spirit ultimately means to be filled with the Spirit resulting in His living through us.

Set their minds on . . . the things of the Spirit. When we live according to the Spirit, we think the thoughts of the Spirit—which are thoughts about Jesus. In John 15:26 Jesus says that the Holy Spirit testifies of Him. In a later verse in John, Jesus says, “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). The thoughts of the Spirit are thoughts of evangelism (see Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1ff). To think the thoughts of the Spirit is to think of others and their needs. It is to meet the needs of others. “The fruit of the Spirit is love . . .” (Galatians 5:22a).

In order to understand fully Paul's thought of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, we would need to do a thorough study of all the various ministries of the Holy Spirit.

Contrast Between Death and Life (Romans 8:6)

The themes of life and death have surfaced time and again in our study. They surface again here.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. For us to be “carnally minded” is for us to have the mind of the flesh. Literally, the statement reads, “The mind of the flesh is death.” Death is used here in the sense Paul has used it over and over since Romans 5:21—a state of utter spiritual despair. Thinking the thoughts of the flesh results in death.

But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Literally, the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. “Life” refers to the abundant life. Life and peace are ours as the result of thinking the thoughts of the Holy Spirit. Paul could have said only life. Peace is added to put in bold relief the contrast with the death of mental and emotional despair caused by the flesh.

The Reasons for the Contrasts (Romans 8:7, 10)

Paul now gives the reasons for the contrasts he has just mentioned. First, he explains why the flesh produces death.

Why the Flesh Produces Death (Romans 8:7a)

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. “The carnal mind” should again be translated as “the mind of the flesh.”

Is enmity against God. Paul does not say flesh is the enemy of God. He wants us to understand that flesh is so much the enemy of God *it is best described as enmity itself*.

Why is the mind of the flesh enmity against God? The answer is in the nature of the flesh. Flesh says, “I am wise.” Flesh says, “I am wiser than God.” Flesh says, “I am so wise I am insulted that anyone would dare tell me what to think or do—even Almighty God Himself.”

For it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Paul, in chapter 7, presents the conflicting thought that he wants to keep the law—or do good—but cannot. The something in Paul—and us—that wants to do good is flesh. Flesh wants to accomplish—even in doing such things as prayer and Bible study. Yet flesh wants to accomplish these things on its own terms. It does not want God telling it what to do.

**An Interlude
(Romans 8:8–9)**

In 8:10, Paul continues his statements of contrast between the flesh and the Spirit by explaining why the Spirit gives life. Before doing that, however, he departs from the theme of contrast to give added thoughts about the flesh and the Spirit.

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). In light of chapter 7, we can here substitute “they that involve themselves in law-living—whether by living by rules or by choosing to do good—cannot please God.” We could substitute “they who seek to serve God in their own strength cannot please Him.”

Notice the strong similarity between this statement and the famous statement in Hebrews 11:6: “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” How do we bring together the two statements? When we live in the flesh, we are living by faith in ourselves—and when we live by faith in ourselves, it is impossible for us to live by faith in God. We cannot have faith in ourselves and faith in God at the same time.

Paul now adds one of the most important statements on the Holy Spirit found in the entire section.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His (Romans 8:9).

This can be a most confusing passage. It could be taken to mean that if we are Christians, we are never in the flesh but always in the Spirit. This interpretation would undermine all Paul has been relating since Romans 7:1. In 5:20–21 Paul teaches that there will be a season when we live under law—which, of course, means in the flesh. Therefore, we cannot accept the belief that if we are Christians, we are always in the Spirit.

In ruling out the thought that all Christians are always in the Spirit, we are faced with the dilemma of determining the meaning of “dwell.” Here, “dwell” is not a synonym for “in” because in the last part of the verse, Paul states emphatically that we are not even Christians if we do not have the Spirit.

The answer to the dilemma is to be found in Paul’s prayer recorded in Ephesians 3:14–19. His prayer is that his readers will be so strengthened in the inner man that Christ may *dwell* in them by faith. With the exception of an added preposition for the purpose of strengthening it, the word translated “dwell” in the Ephesians passage is the same as the one in Romans 8:9. Paul understood that his readers were Christians and possessed the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, Paul reveals that Christ may be in us without dwelling in us. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commands his readers to be filled with the Spirit. It is the filling of the Spirit Paul must have in mind both in Ephesians 3:17 and in Romans 8:9 when he uses the word “dwell.” Thus, we understand him to mean that when we are filled with the Spirit, we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit when we live out our union with Christ.

Now Paul returns to his explanation of why the Spirit gives life.

**Why the Spirit Produces Life
(Romans 8:10)**

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Before Paul explains why the Spirit gives life, he interjects the thought of death. This is another reference to what Adam did to the entire human race when he disobeyed God. Much of what Adam did to us may be reversed in this life. The problem of physical death cannot. We must wait for the resurrection for that reversal to take place.

But the Spirit is life because of righteousness. One more time Paul projects the thought that life is by the Spirit through righteousness. When the Holy Spirit lives out His love through us, we experience the abundant life.

Paul now is ready to move beyond the thought of life through righteousness and explain other features of “life” in the Spirit.

Chapter 15

Life—in Its Expansiveness (Romans 8:11–16)

Since Romans 5:15–17, Paul has stated repeatedly that life is the result of righteousness. When in chapter 8 he made the transition to Spirit, righteousness, and life, the order remained intact.

From 8:11 on, though, Paul never uses the word “righteousness” again in chapter 8. It is as though Paul breaks from any restrictions and moves to wider and broader areas of life that are ours “in the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit Gives Us Life by Quickening Our Mortal Bodies (Romans 8:11)

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

In Romans 8:10, Paul had informed his readers that in this life, the problem of physical death will not be reversed, with these words: “And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Now he wants his readers to know that the Holy Spirit still has a ministry to perform in these bodies that are doomed to death.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. A literal translation would be “since the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead is dwelling in you.” In 8:9, we saw that Paul uses “dwell” to indicate filling with the Spirit. That happens only as we live out our union with Christ.

He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Even though we are all moving in the direction of death, the Holy Spirit will give life to our mortal body in this present time when He dwells in us—when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

All believers will be given resurrected bodies at the return of Jesus, but the bodies of those filled with the Spirit will have a divine touch on their bodies even in this life. There are several reasons being Spirit-filled results in an infusion of life.

First, we experience the crucifixion of our old man. That experience liberates us from endless energy-draining emotions. We know what they are: anger, fear, jealousy, resentment, depression, guilt. We can name others. Retention of the energy lost by these emotions quickens these mortal bodies.

Second, when we experience our oneness with Christ, we are free from the responsibility of making decisions—one of the most energy-draining activities we engage in. Walking in the Spirit is a life of responding to God’s plans for our lives freeing us from that responsibility of making decisions.

Third, when we live out our union with Christ, we do not waste energy doing things not directed by the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, when we walk in the Spirit, He quickens our bodies by showing us more efficient ways to do the things we must do. You have likely had many experiences when in frustration about a matter you looked to the Lord for light. He gave it.

Fifth, when we live out our union with Christ, the Holy Spirit quickens our bodies by freeing us from all the emotionally induced illnesses we have. It is common knowledge that such things as anger, fear, and resentment bring upon us physical illnesses.

Sixth, the Holy Spirit will not drive us to a life of physical fatigue. The flesh does that. Jesus took His disciples aside to rest. The Holy Spirit does the same for us. That is not to say we will not be tired at the end of the day. It is to say the Spirit will not so drive us that we stay in a state of physical fatigue.

Seventh, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He will not permit us a life of inactivity—which is the cause of much loss of vitality. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul testifies, “I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (Colossians 1:29).

Eighth, the Holy Spirit will guide in caring for the body through such matters as exercise and diet. Nor do we tear down our bodies with sinful habits. Remember, your body is the Holy Spirit’s temple.

Ninth, our mortal bodies are quickened by the Holy Spirit by provisions of supernatural energy. Time and again we have experienced a miraculous energy to work the works God was leading us to do.

Tenth, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will be fruitful in ministry. Jesus testifies that those who continue to believe in Him—which is another way of describing a Spirit-filled life—will do the works He did but even on a higher level. This must mean that what Jesus did for people physically, Spirit-filled believers will do for others spiritually. Such success in ministry will result in an infusion of desire and vitality.

When Jesus, after speaking to the woman at the well, was questioned by His disciples about not being hungry, He replied, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

An Interlude
(Romans 8:12)

In Romans 8:12, Paul departs from his explanations of “life in the Spirit” to encourage us to walk in the Spirit.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. In a negative way, Paul tells us we are debtors to the Spirit to walk after the Spirit. We believers have only two options in life. We may walk after the flesh, or we may walk after the Spirit. So Paul’s way of telling us to walk after the Spirit is to tell us “we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.”

“Debtors” is the word commonly used to designate a person who owes a debt to another. This is the second time in Romans Paul uses it. The first usage is Paul’s famous statement, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise” (Romans 1:14). Paul placed himself in the debt of the groups mentioned both because of the love of God for them and because it was the Father’s desire to save them.

Debtors—not to the flesh. Remember that living in legalism is walking in the flesh. This statement then is a reference to the fact that we are not debtors to keep the commandments in our own strength.

Paul contends in Romans 8:12 that we are to make ourselves debtors to the Holy Spirit because of His desire and work to give us “life.” Paul wants his readers to place themselves in obligation to the Holy Spirit. It is the obligation of deep respect and appreciation. We are debtors to ourselves and to others. We are not debtors to the flesh.

**The Holy Spirit Gives Us Life by Enabling
Us to Mortify the Deeds of Our Bodies
(Romans 8:13)**

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.

The deeds of the body. In Romans 7:21–23, Paul testifies that even when he chooses to do good, the sin nature begins to work in his body. He had written in 7:5, “For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.”

When we experience our crucifixion, we do put to death the deeds of the body. We put to death all sin because all sin affects our bodies.

**The Holy Spirit Gives Life by Assuring Us We Are
Children of God (Romans 8:14–16)**

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8:14). The Lord has many children who are not being led by the Holy Spirit. So, we must look for an interpretation of this statement that allows us to be Christians without being continually led by the Spirit. We find help in a statement from Jesus. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they *shall be called* sons of God” (Matthew 5:9, emphasis mine).

Those who are led by the Spirit give evidence to others that they are the children of God. They also have assurance themselves that they are the children of God. That thought is magnified in the next two verses.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we

cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:15–16).

The Holy Spirit is not the “spirit of bondage.” In chapter 6, Paul writes of slavery to “sin.” In chapter 7, he writes of being taken captive by his body. Being filled with the Holy Spirit leads to neither of these tragic states of life.

Again to fear. Because of the context, these words teach that those who walk in the Spirit have assurance of salvation. It is conceivable that Paul here refers to the fear of being eternally lost.

Yet there are other fears we escape when we walk in the Spirit. Spirit-filled Christians are free from the know-it-all attitude and are, consequently, free from deciding what the future should be. The result of that liberation is release from worry. Spirit-filled Christians are not preoccupied with their bodies and, as a result, are free from constant fears of illness and death.

You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of adoption.” In Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, Paul uses adoption as a descriptive term of our salvation. The idea is that of being taken from one family and placed into another. Here the idea of adoption centers in the thought of the *inner realization* that we are in God’s family.

Paul has just written that those who are led by the Spirit have evidence that they are the children of God. Now he amplifies that thought.

The Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” Abba is Aramaic for Father, and it would seem by the context that it was commonly used in prayers. When we walk in the Spirit, because there is an inner awareness that

God is our Father and we are His children, we address Him as Father.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Deeply rooted in the spirit of believers who live out their union with Christ is an absolute assurance that God is their Father. This calming assurance is one of the features of the life we have in the Holy Spirit.

One believer having doubted his salvation said, “A few years ago I went through a long period of doubt about my salvation. You cannot imagine the agony I went through.” The book of 1 John was written so that those who believe may know they have eternal life. This fact alone shows the need for assurance. In 8:15, Paul seems to say that assurance frees us from the fear of being eternally lost. There are other freedoms in knowing for sure we are children of God. We are free to read the Bible without searching for assurance. We are free to pray without wondering whether or not the Father accepts and hears us. We are free to offer Christ to others without feeling we are offering others salvation we are not sure we have.

The inner witness of God’s Spirit that we are His is a very important feature of “life in the Spirit.”

Paul now moves to the glorious theme of the Holy Spirit and our life in eternity.

Chapter 16

Life in Eternal Glory (Romans 8:17–30)

With Romans 8:16, Paul closes one feature of his discussion of “life in the Spirit” and moves to yet a higher plateau of blessing. “Life in the Spirit” includes life in eternity as well as life in the present. For Paul, the eternal aspect of our “life in the Spirit” is summed up in one word—glory.

The Holy Spirit Gives Us Assurance of Eternal Glory (Romans 8:17)

And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. In Romans 8:14–16, Paul writes that one feature of life in the Spirit is an inner assurance that we are the children of God. In 8:17, he adds that the assurance includes an absolute certainty that we are joint heirs with Christ. All things the Father has for the Son He has for believers. Can you think of any promise in all of God’s Word greater than this one?

If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. With this, Paul tells us that our heritage is summed up in the word “glorified.” He follows this theme of

glory through to verse 30. Notice that the last word in 8:30 is “glorified.”

**Glory Is Through Suffering
(Romans 8:17)**

If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Our suffering results in glory. All believers will be glorified. This fact is abundantly established throughout the New Testament. Yet there is a glory that is ours because of our suffering.

To the church at Corinth, Paul writes:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17–18).

Earlier in 2 Corinthians, Paul had written, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul writes that the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ.

With these passages, Paul explains that when we suffer, we are drawn to our Lord. And as we gaze on Him, the glory that is His becomes ours.

Romans 8:17 implies that the glory that comes upon believers now because of our sufferings will carry over into eternity.

Glory in Scripture is love, righteousness, power, and radiance. The aspect of glory here seems to be that of radiance.

**It Is a Glory Greater Than Our Suffering
(Romans 8:18)**

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Paul knows that his sudden introduction of suffering into the high themes he has been discussing will be shocking. To soften the shock, he assures us that whatever we suffer will produce a glory that far exceeds the sufferings.

**It Is a Glory Shared by Creation
(Romans 8:19–21)**

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Paul presents creation as having desires and thoughts. It “eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility.” Many have set forth the view that when man fell, something happened to all creation. Thus, creation awaits redemption.

The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. A literal translation of “glorious liberty” is “the freedom of the glory.” Creation will share in the awaited glory of the children of God.

**The Holy Spirit Gives Believers a Deep
Desire for Eternal Glory
(Romans 8:18–25)**

In continuing his theme of the Holy Spirit and our eternal life of glory, Paul informs us that the Holy Spirit creates in all believers a deep desire for eternal glory.

**It Is a Deep Desire Shared by Creation
(Romans 8:22)**

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. There are no parallel statements in Scripture. Again, Paul pictures creation as having thoughts and feelings. “Until now” shows that the groans and labors never cease.

**It Is a Deep Desire Shared by All Believers
(Romans 8:23)**

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. The groaning is in all who have the firstfruits of the Spirit. One does not have to be a mature Christian to experience the deep inner desire for glory.

**It Is a Deep Desire for a Glorified Body
(Romans 8:23)**

Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. The glory we believers long for is that of the resurrected body. In a parallel passage, Paul writes:

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life (2 Corinthians 5:1–4).

Paul describes this resurrected body as both adopted and redeemed. The emphasis is on the deep inner desire placed in believers by the Holy Spirit for that body.

The Scriptures use the term “adoption” as a descriptive term for explaining our entrance into the Kingdom of God. Now Paul uses the term “adoption” to describe our glorified bodies. Perhaps the idea here is that of fullness of sonship when we are clothed by a glorified body.

**It Is a Deep Desire With a Pre-Christian Beginning
(Romans 8:24a)**

For we were saved in this hope. In the Greek, the verb is past tense. We “were saved” by hope. A significant part of the appeal that drew us to Christ was the promise of a life in heaven that would last forever. We had the hope of glory at our conversion.

**It Is a Deep Desire That Will Be Satisfied
at the Resurrection (Romans 8:24b–25)**

But hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. The longing for and expectation of a glorified body will be satisfied upon the return of Christ. We eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

**The Holy Spirit Assists in Our Eternal Glory
(Romans 8:26–30)**

All Paul has written in 8:17–25 is preparation for the truths he sets forth in 8:26–30. In these verses, he informs us that the Holy Spirit participates in our eternal glory.

**The Holy Spirit Assists Our Glory
Through Intercession (Romans 8:26)**

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

“Likewise” reaches back to 8:15–16 and 8:23. In 8:15–16, Paul writes that the Spirit gives us assurance of eternal glory. In

8:23, he writes that the Spirit gives us a deep desire for glory. Now Paul informs us that the Spirit also participates in that glory.

The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. The Greek word translated “helps” is found only one other time in the New Testament. It is used by Martha in her appeal to Jesus for Mary’s assistance. Martha wanted Mary to participate in the work. It is that idea of participation Paul intends to convey in this statement. The Spirit “participates” in our weaknesses.

The thought may be disturbing and difficult to grasp. It would be impossible to grasp if we did not understand Paul’s earlier revelation that our glory is through our sufferings.

For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought. We mostly pray that our infirmities will go away. Glory or no glory, we want to be comfortable. We also pray for comforting circumstances for our families and friends. Because the Lord knows of that tendency in us, Paul writes, “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.”

But the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us. This is one of the most misquoted and misunderstood statements in the Scriptures. Often it is said to mean that the Holy Spirit leads us in our prayers. Even though the Holy Spirit does desire to lead us as we pray, that is not the meaning of intercession. We make intercession when we pray for another. The meaning of Paul’s statement is that the Holy Spirit prays for us.

The Holy Spirit has been praying for us since the moment we were born into God’s Kingdom. Some of His intercession is in the form of participation in our sufferings.

With groanings which cannot be uttered. Since 8:19, we have been in a passage in which “groaning” is a significant part. All creation is groaning for participation in the glory of the freedom of the sons of God. All Christians “groan” for a

glorified body. The Spirit's groanings which cannot be uttered indicate the deep desire of the Spirit for our glory. The Spirit is not praying we will have a glorified body. All believers will have such a body. He is praying for the increase of the radiance of that body—which will come through suffering.

The Holy Spirit Assists Our Glory in Harmony With the Father (Romans 8:27–30)

Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Even though the Holy Spirit is mentioned in 8:27, attention shifts to God the Father with emphasis on His participation in our glory as He responds to the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

The Father Wills That the Holy Spirit Pray for Our Suffering and Glory (Romans 8:27)

He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. The Father knows our need for suffering as does the Spirit. He also searches our hearts and knows of our self-confidence that keeps us from depending on Him. The Father knows what is the mind of the Spirit. He knows the Spirit prays for our suffering and glory. And the intercession for that suffering and glory is according to the will of God.

The Father Answers the Prayers of the Holy Spirit for Our Suffering and Glory (Romans 8:28–30)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

When we are called on to encourage someone in deep suffering, many of us quote Romans 8:28. It seems to be that perfect

verse for those who hurt. We likely never quote it except to someone who is suffering.

And we know. The “and” ties this great verse to what has just preceded. The Holy Spirit prays for our suffering and glory and does so according to the will of the Father. Romans 8:28 reveals that God works all things together for good in answering the prayers of the Holy Spirit for our suffering and glory.

To those who love God. Some have responded to their God-given suffering with bitterness and rebellion. Such response will not work out God’s purpose of glory.

To those who are the called according to His purpose. The eternal purpose of God is revealed in Romans 8:29–30.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. In Romans 8:17, Paul tells us that we are joint heirs with Christ because through our sufferings we will be glorified. Here in 8:29–30, he informs us that the Father answers the Holy Spirit’s prayers for our suffering and glory because in eternity past He predestined us to be like Jesus—He predestined us to be glorified.

Part Five

Conclusion (Romans 8:31–39)

Beginning with Romans 8:31, there is a distinct departure from the theme of “life.” The remaining verses of the chapter inform us of how we may be victorious in the suffering that is ours because of the prayers of the Holy Spirit and the purpose of the Father.

Most, if not all, of us have been paralyzed in the face of our sufferings. Yet there is a way to victory. Paul divides his discussion into two parts. First, we are to arm ourselves with truth. Second, we are to make a resolve in our spirits that suffering will not drive us from the love of God.

Chapter 17

Victory in Suffering (Romans 8:31–39)

Paul's concluding remarks of Romans 8 are in the form of guidance in facing our sufferings. The guidance may be summed up in two statements. Arm yourself with truth, and in the grace of God, resolve not to permit sufferings to drive you from the Lord and His love.

Arm Yourself With Truth (Romans 8:31–34)

Suffering is necessary if we are to increase in glory. Yet Satan, who is the master of deceit, uses suffering as an excellent opportunity to turn us from God. Witness the story of Job. Witness our Lord's state of hunger before the temptation to turn the stone into bread.

In Paul's famous passage on our warfare with Satan recorded in Ephesians 6:10–18, he admonishes us to put on the whole armor of God in preparation for the battle. Among other things, he exhorts us to have our waist girded about with truth. In Romans 8:31–34, Paul shares some of the truths with which we need to arm ourselves to face our suffering victoriously.

**Understand the Sovereignty of God
(Romans 8:31)**

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? No one can successfully be against us if God is for us because no one but God can control our circumstances. Nothing or no one can hinder God in that control.

How interesting that Paul would begin his encouragement for facing difficult circumstances with an emphasis on the sovereignty of God. Paul knew what many have since discovered. There is great comfort in realizing that our lives are in the hands of God and nothing can get to us except it be the will of God.

Satan can defeat us often through our God-given difficult times by making us believe we are in the grip of some bad fate or even in the grip of Satan himself.

When we, in the midst of our sufferings, know we are in the hands of an all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving God, it enables us to stand tall in victory.

A pastor met a member of his church in the hallway. She had a glowing radiance about her. The pastor was mildly shocked because he knew that she was having serious surgery the next day. With an unbroken smile she announced, "I am at perfect peace. I know I am in the hands of God, and whatever comes is fine with me."

Glorious!

This woman knew God was in control. She knew what ever happened would be from His loving hands. Satan's lies had not been able to penetrate her.

Because of the sovereignty of a loving God, we are admonished to give thanks in all things. Many have obeyed that command with the result of an indescribable peace entering their lives at a time of suffering.

**Understand the Goodness and
Loving Provision of God
(Romans 8:32)**

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? We will never have a day we do not need the Lord and His sustaining grace. The God we turn to for our resources throughout each day is the One who sent His Son to die for us on the cross. If He did that, He will hold back nothing we need.

Satan’s lie is that a God who would permit us to suffer is no loving God at all or a God without power to keep us from suffering. Rather, He gives grace to face our suffering.

This passage, of course, is larger than its context and means that all resources for every area of life are ours.

**Understand the Justification of God
(Romans 8:33)**

Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. “Justifies” in this setting is best understood in one of the servant passages about Jesus recorded in Isaiah 50:6–8. The passage reads:

“I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near who justifies Me; who will contend with Me?” (Isaiah 50:6–8).

This is a prophecy about Jesus dying as a criminal on the cross. Jesus testifies that His Father justifies Him. So why does Jesus need to be justified? That is what God does for a sinner who receives Jesus.

“Justifies” here must be a declaration that the Father will justify Him in the eyes of man—not in His own eyes.

Often a believer who goes through suffering thinks that all suffering is caused by sin. Some Christians who witness the suffering of a child of God believe his or her pain is caused by sin. When the suffering is from God for the purpose of glory, God will justify that person in the eyes of men, just as He did, and does, for Jesus.

**Understand the Intercessory Work of Jesus
(Romans 8:34)**

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Who is he who condemns? The condemnation Paul mentions here seems to be the same as that in verse 33 and is a reference to the condemnation of others who believe that all suffering is caused by sin.

Satan has a passionate interest in us. His desire is to take us from a walk with the Lord.

We believers are also the center of interest of another—the Lord Jesus Christ. While under the attack of Satan’s lies of our unworthiness, there is victory when we understand the intercessory work of Jesus.

Paul would have us think on the theme of the intercessory work of Jesus in light of the themes of His death and resurrection that have dominated all he has written throughout the entire passage we have examined.

It is Christ who died. He did die. He died for us. Can there be any question of His love for us? There cannot. Furthermore, “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). He died as the head of our race, and through experiencing our oneness with Him, we may experience the

crucifixion of our old man—we may experience death to sin. Jesus died, and when He did, He took away all the power of our accuser. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Yet the nature of His death proclaimed Him as a criminal.

And furthermore is also risen. Satan could not hold Him back. He is risen. It is our privilege to live out our union with Him and experience our own life of being risen out from among the dead ones.

Who is even at the right hand of God. He is seated at the right hand of the Father in mighty authority. Our risen Lord is in a position of authority over our vicious accuser. In our enthronement, we are in a position of authority over our accuser. We may experience enthronement with Him as we live out our union with Him.

Who also makes intercession for us. Having reflected on the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are ready for the introduction of His ministry of intercession as a weapon against Satan’s attempts to use our sufferings to take us from God. Also, it is to remind us of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 8:26.

Makes intercession for us. We learn more of the intercessory work of Jesus from the writer to the Hebrews than from any other author in Scripture. One feature of our Lord’s intercessory work reveals that He also prays for our sufferings. Hebrews 7:25 explains, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

This is intercession for our progressive salvation. This work of God the Son is in perfect harmony with the intercessory

work of God the Holy Spirit and the purpose of God the Father. (See comments on 8:17–30.)

There is another feature of our Lord's intercessory work. It is for our comfort. Read the following passages from Hebrews:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:14–18).

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14–16).

What a beautiful truth. The one who endured the cross, who walks with us, and who knows by personal experience our painful infirmities is seated at the right hand of the Fa-

ther asking Him to give us understanding and strength in the midst of our sufferings.

This presents to the mind of the believer a remarkable insight. We are suffering because God the Holy Spirit is praying that the Father will give us circumstances that will result in our glory. Yet we have strength in our sufferings because God the Son is interceding from an understanding and caring heart.

When we equip ourselves with the truths of Romans 8:31–34, we are prepared for the onslaught of Satan, who would take us away from our walk with the Lord.

Exercise Your Power of Choice (Romans 8:35–39)

To have victory in suffering, we must be equipped with truth. We also must exercise our power of choice.

The Temptation (Romans 8:35)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Paul had evidently experienced the temptation to turn from his walk with the Lord during a time of suffering. He had talked with scores of others who had done so. He understood what pain can do to the human heart. He knew his readers would have their own times of temptation to turn from the Lord, so he places before them the possibility.

The Realization (Romans 8:36)

As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Now that Paul has permitted his readers to consider the possibility of turning from a walk with the Lord, he does not comfort them with some vague, false hope. He does not write, “Maybe things will get better.” No! Paul wants his readers to realize things will never be easy. Suffering in one form

or another is the constant companion of all believers. His statement is a quotation of Psalm 44:22.

The Affirmation (Romans 8:37)

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. This is Paul's answer to the possibility of turning from the Lord in the face of suffering. Even though we are killed all the day long as lambs for the slaughter, we will not for a moment consider turning from God and His love. The temptation to turn from the sovereign work of God in us is a temptation to turn from the glory God has in mind for us. It is also a temptation to turn from circumstances God will use to make us strong in Him.

The Explanation (Romans 8:37)

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. "In" should be translated "by." It is by our sufferings that we become more than conquerors. In this, Paul reveals a present blessing that is ours in our sufferings, which is a companion blessing to the glory that is ours in eternity.

There is no strength like the strength that comes to those who have suffered often and have come to a lifestyle of being totally dependent on God. Time and again, God's children have walked triumphantly through life when their sufferings have brought them to a place of total dependence on God.

In all these things we are more than conquerors. There is no mention here of the Holy Spirit, but this is an added blessing from Him. This is one more feature of "life." It is so because the sufferings that result in such victory are ours by the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit.

Through Him who loved us. He loved us in sending the suffering. He loved us in the midst of the suffering. Above all, He loved us in sending Jesus as the Savior and as "The Last Adam."

The Reaffirmation (Romans 8:38–39)

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No occasional suffering, not daily suffering, not hourly suffering, not Satan himself, not anything will turn Paul away from God. He is convinced that all those who know God's love will never turn from Him. We are reminded of David's statement, "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

David, though, makes his statement of commitment to the house of God following nothing but statements about God's love and provision. Paul makes his in the face of the possibility of dark adversity.

Surely, we who are one with Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection and are being equipped day by day for an eternal glory can say with Paul, "Nothing, nothing will ever turn me away from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

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