

# ROM. 5:1 – 8:39

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## III. Assurance Provided By the Gospel: Hope of Salvation (5:1 - 8:39)

### A. The Hope of Glory

#### 1. From justification to salvation (5:1-11)

a. Douglas Moo writes, "In this paragraph, Paul invites us to join with him in celebrating the marvelous benefits conferred upon the justified believer: 'the Apostle speaks as one who is extremely happy and full of joy' (Luther); 'it is now the believer who is speaking – in fact we might almost say, singing' (Leenhardt)."

b. "Having been justified (pronounced righteous) through faith" sums up the central teaching of chaps. 1-4. By believing in Jesus Christ, the divine agent in God's climactic act of deliverance, Paul, the Romans ("we"), and all Christians have been "justified" – declared innocent of all charges justly brought against those who "sin and fall short of God's glory" (3:23).

c. As a result of this acquittal, we have peace with God. We are "right" with God; all is well with us. Rather than being enemies, we have been reconciled (v. 10). This peace comes through, and only through, "our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the only one through whom we receive justification (3:25-26), and thus the only one through whom we receive peace.

d. Jesus not only brought us peace with God, but he also introduced us into the "realm of divine favor" in which we stand. We are the blessed sons and daughters of God.

e. Having been justified through faith, Christians not only have peace with God but we also "boast" in the hope of God's glory. This means we are joyfully confident (some translate "exult" or "rejoice") that we will enter into the consummated kingdom, that perfect heavenly state where we will be all that God intends us to be (see "glory of God" in 3:23; 8:17-18). "Boasting" in human achievement is excluded by the gospel (3:27), but "boasting" because of the gracious provision of God in Christ is entirely appropriate.

f. Not only do Christians "boast" in the hope of God's glory, but we also "boast" ("rejoice") in the very hardships that might cause some to doubt that we really are at peace with God, in his favor, and headed for glory. We do so because, as we faithfully endure hardships, we prove our character (our "spiritual stuff"), which serves to strengthen our hope. A faith that is steadfast in trials, that maintains hope in the face of hopelessness, comes through with even greater hope than before. So what on the surface appears contrary to hope, in the end proves to be a means for strengthening it. See, Rom. 4:18-19.

g. The Christian hope will not turn out to be misplaced (and thus a source of shame). We will not turn out to have been duped. We know that God is not making fools of us because the Spirit has taught us how much God loves us.

h. Verses 6-8 declare the magnitude and wonder of the love on which our hope is founded. Human love, at its best, will motivate a person to give his life for a truly "good" person. God, however, sent Christ to die, not for "righteous" or "good" people but for rebellious and undeserving people. The point is that God's love is far greater in its magnitude and dependability than even the greatest human love. It is conviction of this love that the Spirit brings home to the Christian heart.

i. In vv. 9-10 Paul reiterates and expands on the central idea of the certainty of Christian hope. The point is that, if God has already done the more difficult thing – to reconcile and justify unworthy sinners – how much more can he be depended on to accomplish the "easier" thing – to save from wrath on Judgment Day those who have been brought into such relationship with him.

j. We are saved from wrath "by his life" (v. 10) in that his life is the glorious life of the resurrection. He is the "firstfruits" of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and by being "in him" we share the blessings of that resurrection life (which excludes wrath).

k. Not only will Christians be saved, but as he stressed in vv. 1-4, we presently rejoice in all that God has given us in Jesus Christ, the one through whom we have received reconciliation. Moo quotes Chrysostom: "And so the fact of his saving us, and saving us too when we were in such plight, and doing it by means of his only-begotten, and not merely by his only-begotten, but by his blood, weaves for us endless crowns to glory in."

## 2. The reign of grace and life (5:12-21)

a. The basic point of this section is certainly easier than the details. The basic point is this: the fact God has justified and reconciled his enemies through the death of one man, Jesus Christ, and can therefore be counted on to save them, is not as strange as it may seem. It means that just as there existed a death-producing connection between Adam and his own, so there exists a life-producing connection between Christ and his own.

b. The thought is begun in 5:12 where Paul says, "*just as through* one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and in this way death spread to all people, . . ." One is waiting for "*so also*" to complete the thought, but Paul digresses for several verses. It is not until 5:18 that he completes the thought, where he restates the "*as through*" comment of 5:12 and completes it with, "*so also* through the righteous deed of one man the justification that leads to life came to all people."

c. Paul says that sin, which he personifies or speaks of as an entity, entered into the human world or stream through Adam and that death entered through sin. Adam, the first man, is held responsible for introducing this Power into the human experience. He is what epidemiologists call "ground zero"; he introduced the plague. Paul is well aware that Eve sinned first (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), but Adam is the representative of mankind in salvation history.

d. Death came to Adam as God's righteous judgment on sin. God imposed the death penalty, which involved spiritual, physical, and eternal death. As Moo notes:

Paul frequently uses "death" and related words to designate a "physico-spiritual entity" – "total death," the penalty incurred for sin. Here, then, Paul may focus on physical death as the evidence, the outward manifestation of this total death; or, better, he may simply have in mind this death in both its physical and spiritual aspects.

e. Adam died spiritually that day in that he was alienated from God, the source of all life. He was condemned to die physically in that he was excluded from the tree of life, which represents God's life-sustaining provision. He also was condemned to die eternally in that, barring forgiveness (the restoration of spiritual life) during his now temporary physical life, he would be sent to hell at the final judgment.

f. This is the same thing that happens to us when we sin. God sentences us to "total death." We die spiritually in that we are alienated from God, and we are condemned to die physically and eternally. In other words, for the unforgiven sinner, even physical death is part of his punishment.

(1) That is not to say that those without sin (unaccountable) or those who have been forgiven will not die physically. Death is the lot of mankind. Babies sometimes die, and Christians will all die physically if they live long enough (unless the Lord returns before then). The difference is that, for those without sin (unaccountable) and for those forgiven, physical death is merely a *consequence* of Adam's sin, not a *punishment*.

(a) Adam's sin changed the situation of mankind. When Adam was excluded from the tree of life, God's life-sustaining provision, *mankind* was excluded and thus became mortal. That is why Scripture says that to die is "to go the way of all the earth" (Josh. 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2) and that "It is appointed to men to die once" (Heb. 9:27). Paul also may be referring to this "simple mortality" in 1 Cor. 15:22 ("as in Adam all die"). See also, 2 Sam. 12:23; Job 30:23.

(b) The fact we are mortal as a *consequence* of Adam's sin is not the same thing as being sentenced to die as *punishment*. When we sin, our mortality ceases to be a nonpunitive consequence and becomes a sentence. We are *condemned* to die rather than *fated* to die. If husband and wife murderers were sentenced to live on a remote island as punishment, the

children born to them on that island would live there as a consequence of their parents' crime, but not as punishment for it.

(c) Though Christians die, Paul declares, "There is now *no* condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Our death (and the death of the innocent) is not a death of condemnation. It does not end in eternal death (hell) but in eternal life through the resurrection. That is what Paul means when he says "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:56). Death as a mere consequence rather than as a punishment is death without the yoke of sin, and death without the yoke of sin is painless. It is a temporary passage to glory that is not to be feared (Heb. 2:15) but anticipated (Phil. 1:23).

(2) But why do forgiven people still bear this consequence of Adam's sin? Why are they not simply (a) kept alive until the consummation or (b) made immortal here and now? The Bible does not say, but since death as a consequence, "stingless death," is actually a blessing (e.g., Phil. 1:23), it doesn't really seem to be an issue.

g. Paul says in 5:12 that in the same way it happened to Adam, "death spread to all people, because all sinned." He is speaking here of the death sentence that comes on all who have committed sin, a group which he has already established includes all people (3:9-20, 23).

(1) Paul is using "all" here in the same sense he used "all" in 3:9-20, 23. When he says "all sinned" in 3:9-20, 23, he clearly is speaking of actual disobedience, so infants are not under consideration. As Catholic scholar Joseph Fitzmyer (p. 413) remarks, to take "all" to include infants is "a precision that Paul does not envisage." Paul means "all" of those old enough to be accountable. As Craig Keener (*Bible Background Commentary*) notes regarding 3:23, "Jewish sources agreed that everyone sinned (with rare exceptions, like a young child)."

(2) The exclusion of infants from consideration is confirmed by Paul's reference to knowledge as a key to culpability (1:19-20, 32, 2:1-3). Infants are not aware of creation (they can't even see) and do not yet appreciate the moral requirements God has planted in their hearts. You see, Paul was not writing a systematic theology, so he was not trying to address every issue. Given that children were not the center of attention in ancient culture, Paul's focusing on the accountable is understandable.

(3) Those who include infants within the "all sinned" of 5:12 do so by claiming that, though they did not actually sin themselves, they sinned "in Adam." In other words, they believe that all humans are born condemned, born under a death sentence (not simply "fated" to die), because they share in the *guilt* of Adam's sin. I think that is incorrect.

(a) First, why would Paul spend so much energy in chapters 1-3 establishing that everyone was condemned because everyone committed sins if everyone was condemned simply by being human?

(b) Second, in Rom. 7:9-10 Paul says that at one time he was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and he died. I think it very likely that Paul is referring to a time in his childhood before he was accountable for obeying the law. As soon as the law became applicable to him, "sin living in him" (the predisposition to sin) sprang into action, producing transgression and consequent judgment death. If that is correct, Paul obviously was not born spiritually condemned. Rather, he was born alive and then died when Sin caused him to transgress the law.

(c) Third, Ezekiel 18 makes it clear that the *guilt* of the fathers is not charged against their children. (This is different than the consequences of their sin being visited on their children.) For example, Ezek. 18:20 says, "The son will not bear the punishment of the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity." Paul echoes this theme of personal accountability in Rom. 14:12 where he says, "So [then], each of us will give account of himself [to God]." That eliminates for me the idea of Adam's *guilt* being passed on to us. See also, Deut. 24:16; 2 Chron. 25:4.

[1] Those texts that speak of God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (Ex. 20:5, 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9) are best seen as a warning about the seriousness of sin. Sin is such a grave matter that God will (or may) punish the guilty father by extending the harmful effects of his sin to his descendants. Though the children may suffer, they are not being punished. Rather, they are serving as instruments of God's wrath against the rebellious father. Part of the father's punishment is seeing what he brought on his descendants (which I suspect is why it goes only to the third and fourth generation, i.e., to one's great grandchildren).

[2] By the time of Ezekiel, Israel had twisted this warning about the gravity of sin into a denial of personal accountability. God was punishing them for their own sin, and yet they claimed they were merely receiving the consequences of their fathers' sins (by quoting the proverb "The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge"). They thereby avoided guilt, which removed the need for repentance. Since they were in fact being punished, and since punishment is inflicted only on the guilty, God demanded that they stop rationalizing their guilt.

(d) Finally, if children are born guilty because of Adam's sin, it poses quite a dilemma. Those that die in infancy must be either condemned to hell or saved apart from hearing and accepting the gospel. Few, if any, proponents of original guilt are willing to accept the notion of infant damnation, so they argue instead that infants are (or may be) saved in some special way. The Bible, however, gives no hint of such a thing. On the contrary, it stresses that salvation comes through hearing and believing the gospel (e.g., Rom. 1:16, 10:8-17; 1 Cor. 1:18). If infants do in fact need salvation, it seems strange that the manner of their deliverance is addressed nowhere in Scripture. If, however, infants are not guilty, the silence is perfectly understandable.

h. Though we all earn our own death sentence by committing our own sin, we all were in some sense *made sinners* by Adam's sin (5:19); death reigned *through him* (5:17). This indicates rather clearly that Adam's sin is in some way *a cause* of the sins that followed. In other words, all sin after Adam is in some way, shape, or form a *consequence* of Adam's sin. The best way to make sense of this, in my opinion, is to realize that Adam transmitted to all his posterity a bentness or proclivity to sin. We are a fallen race. Though our guilt comes not from the inclination to sin but from our choosing to act on that inclination, the inclination to sin explains how our sin can be said to be a consequence of Adam's sin and why every single human has chosen sin over God.

i. This predisposition to sin may have been transmitted socially, psychologically, and/or biologically.

(1) The social idea is that, by tasting sin, Adam gave it dominance in his life. It is an addiction that cannot be broken without divine power. All children are thus born into a corrupt, sin-twisted, and sin-addicted lineage and inevitably are bent thereby.

(2) The psychological idea is that, when man became mortal as a consequence of Adam's sin, he became inclined to overcome the resulting anxiety and insecurity by asserting his control and independence, which inclination leads to sin. See, Niebuhr I:174.

(3) The biological idea is that Adam's very nature was corrupted when he turned from God and this corrupt nature is part of what is inherited from one's parents. Either way, our sin, and hence our death sentence, is traceable to Adam.

k. Returning to Romans 5, the point of vv. 13-14 is that the multitudes who lived between Adam and Moses, when there was no express divine law to "transgress," still experienced the death-producing effect of the sin introduced by Adam. Even they were not exempt from Adam's baleful influence. Though they did not *transgress* as did Adam, they still *sinned*, and because they sinned, they did not merely die physically but were subjected to the "total death" of divine judgment (death as meant in v. 12). "Death," in the full sense, reigned from Adam to Moses because it was God's judgment on the sin of those generations, which sin is traceable to Adam.

(1) Paul doesn't prove that mankind between Adam and Moses was ruled by the divine judgment of "total death" (as opposed to mere physical death); he simply assumes it, no doubt because that was the accepted understanding of Scripture, and thus proof was unnecessary. According to Moo, "the unbreakable connection between sin and death, made clear in Genesis 2-3, was a staple of Jewish theology." After all, it was between Adam and Moses that God destroyed all but Noah and his family as judgment for mankind's wickedness. The wages of sin is death, as Paul will say in Rom. 6:23, and that death, judgment death, characterized humanity even before the Mosaic law.

(2) The fact some faithful people between Adam and Moses avoided judgment death through the grace of God, Abraham being a prime example, does not alter the fact

that Adam's sin brought judgment death on multitudes of people. This is all Paul needs to make his point that just as there existed a death-producing connection between Adam and "his own" (those who continued to follow him), so there exists a life-producing connection between Christ and his own. Death "reigned" in the sense it dominated and controlled mankind in general, despite the fact some escaped its power through the grace of God.

l. Adam's wide effect on mankind is analogous to that of Christ, but there are some major differences, which Paul is careful to point out. Many people died by Adam's trespass, whereas many people received God's grace through the gift of Christ's act. Adam's one sin brought condemnation, whereas the gift of Christ's act brought acquittal after many trespasses. Through the disobedience of Adam the many were made sinners, whereas through the obedience of Jesus the many will be made righteous. (The statement in v. 18 that the "justification that leads to life came to *all* people" means all people in Christ, those who "receive the gift" [v. 17], i.e., those who believe [1:16-5:11].)

m. In 5:20 Paul says that the Mosaic law was given, not to correct the situation created by Adam but to make it worse. The law intensified the power of sin by stimulating sinful desire (Rom. 7:5, 8) and by giving it the dimension of transgression. As Paul makes clear in chapter 7, it is sin, not the law, that is to blame for this. Sin used the holy and good law against its subjects (Rom. 7:8, 11-14).

## B. Freedom From Bondage to Sin (6:1-23)

### 1. "Dead to sin" through union with Christ (6:1-14)

a. Having said that grace superabounded in the face of the increase of sin occasioned by the law (5:20), some might think Paul is implying that one should remain in sin, remain under its control, so that grace may increase (see also, 3:8). Paul declares the suggestion absurd.

b. It is totally inconsistent for Christians, those who have "died to sin" (i.e., died to sin's detriment, been separated from its power), to continue to live under sin's control. To think otherwise is to ignore the fact that our sharing in Christ's death through baptism was so that we, like Christ, might rise from that death to "walk in newness of life," a life that is marked by the realities of the new age, especially the power of God's Spirit (e.g., Rom. 7:6; ch. 8). For if we have been conformed to Christ's death (in baptism), we also will be conformed to his resurrection life.

c. We know that our "old man" was crucified with Jesus in our sharing in the death he died once for all. That "old man" is the "man" of the old age, the man under the tyranny of sin and death. As John Stott says, "what was crucified was not a part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted." The "old man" is one who exists in Adam; the "new man" is one who exists in Christ.

(1) So this verse and Col. 3:9-10 make clear that the Christian has ceased to be "old man" and has become "new man." Yet, Eph. 4:22-24 commands Christians to "put off the old man" and "put on the new man." How are these to be understood?

(2) As long as we live in this overlap of ages, the new man in Christ continues to be subject to the influences of the powers of the old age, and he must continually resist them. In other words, we must *live* like the new creation we *are*. As Moo puts it, "What we *were* 'in Adam' is no more; but, until heaven, the temptation to *live* in Adam always remains."

d. This participation of our "old man" in the crucifixion of Christ has the purpose of nullifying or neutralizing the body as the "body of sin," meaning the body under sin's dominion. This is explained in the clause, "that we might no longer serve sin as slaves." Paul illustrates this point by citing (v. 7) what was probably a rabbinic or a general saying to the effect one who has died has been released from sin's hold ("justified from sin"), the idea being that a dead man can no more be enslaved.

e. But conversion is not simply a matter of dying with Christ. For if we shared in Christ's death, we believe we will also share in his resurrection life, a life we know is no longer under the power of death. Christ is no longer under the power of death because his death was a death "to sin," a death that separated him from the power of sin that is manifested in judgment death. And that one-time, sin-separating (and thus death-defeating) death was for all who will share in it.

f. Though his death was "to sin," the life Christ lives is "to God." His sin-bearing (for us) is finished (2 Cor. 5:21); his subjection to the power of sin as sin-bearer is over. He now lives "to God" in the sense he is free from that relationship to sin. So also, Christians are to constantly *regard* themselves as being dead to sin but alive to God. We must continually appropriate or lay hold of this reality; we must no longer see ourselves, in our relationship to sin, as we were outside of Christ.

g. The practical side of seeing ourselves as dead to sin but alive to God is that we must not *allow* sin to rule us (our "mortal bodies") or *offer* our bodily members to sin to be used as weapons of unrighteousness.

(1) Now that we understand ourselves to be "dead to sin, alive to God," we must constantly avoid using our abilities and resources in the service of sin. Rather, we are to offer ourselves in service to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and we are to offer our bodily members to God to be used as weapons of righteousness.

(2) Moo states:

In characterizing the body as "mortal," Paul is reminding us that the same body that has been severed from its servitude to sin (6:6) is nevertheless a body that still participates in the weakness, suffering, and dissolution of this age. Until we are

fully "redeemed" (8:23) and "put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53), we will continue to be subject to the influences of this age; and the believer must not let these influences hold sway. The Christian is no longer "body of sin" (6:6) or "body of death" (7:24), but he or she is still "mortal body."

h. The Christian can be bold and confident in his war against sin because sin's dominion has been broken – we are promised that sin will not exercise lordship over us. This doesn't mean we will not sin; it means sin will not be our controlling power.

i. The reason sin will not exercise lordship over us is that we are not under the law but under grace. To be "under law" is to be under the old covenant or order, which passed with the coming of Christ and in which sin was stimulated and intensified by the commandments. To be "under grace" is to be under the new covenant in which we have been separated from sin's power by dying to sin in Christ and being empowered by the Spirit to live for God. As Moo notes, "The paragraph that began with the question, 'Should we remain in sin in order that grace may increase?' ends with the glad tidings that we are under grace in order that sin may be overcome."

## 2. Freed from sin to serve righteousness (6:15-23)

a. Having addressed the charge that his gospel implies that Christians should sin because to do so increases God's forgiving, Paul now tackles the notion that his gospel leads to sinning through its claim that Christians are not subject to that body of commands known as the Mosaic law. Paul shows that this concern is rooted in a false dichotomy. The alternatives are not Judaism or immorality. One can be moral apart from Judaism, and for Christians, that is the only choice.

b. Paul says that if you *act* like something's slave, it's the same as *being* its slave; you become a *de facto* slave. That's true whether you act like a slave of sin, which leads to death, or a slave of obedience, which leads to righteousness (and those are our only two choices). This is the same idea in Jn. 8:34 where the Lord said, "Every person who is committing sin is a slave to sin," i.e., is serving sin.

c. But thanks be to God that, though Christians *were* slaves of sin, they wholeheartedly obeyed the "pattern of teaching" into which they were (thereby) delivered, with the result that they were freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness. Christian freedom is not autonomous self-direction but deliverance from those enslaving powers that would prevent us from becoming what God intends us to be.

d. Paul explains parenthetically (v. 19) that his use of "slavery" in speaking about the Christian's relationship with God is merely an analogy or image, necessitated by the weakness of human understanding. It is not intended to convey the negative aspects of secular slavery (fear of abuse, confinement, etc.) but simply to make the point that God is a master who requires absolute and unquestioned obedience.

e. Just as, before we were Christians, we offered ourselves as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness, which led to increasing lawlessness, so now we must offer ourselves as slaves to righteousness, which leads to increasing sanctification, i.e., living that is increasingly God-centered and world-renouncing.

f. We can and must serve righteousness because, when we were slaves of sin, we ignored God's righteous demands, and as a result we did things of which we are now ashamed, things that end in death. But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, our conduct leads to increasing holiness (being God-centered and world-renouncing), the end result of which is eternal life that is realized at the consummation.

g. For if you serve sin, the wage it pays is death. But if you serve God, he gives the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### C. Freedom from Bondage to the Law (7:1-25)

#### 1. Released from the Law, joined to Christ (7:1-6)

a. Paul said in 6:14 that Christians are not "under [the] law" and then immediately (vv. 15-23) explained that this fact does not lead to sin. He now elaborates on the assertion that Christians are not "under [the] law."

b. I think Paul's real targets are those Roman Christians who believed that the law was applicable to Christians. Though the Roman Christians as a whole would have been familiar with the Mosaic law, those urging its ongoing validity would have been especially identified with it. They would have been considered (and would have considered themselves) the most knowledgeable about the law.

c. Paul asks if those with knowledge of the law are ignorant of the fact that the Mosaic law, like law in general, applied only to the living. A rabbinic saying, which may have been known at this time, was: "if a person is dead, he is free from the Torah and the fulfilling of the commandments."

d. Paul illustrates this principle with a reference to the marriage relationship. The death of a wife's husband freed her from the law's obligation regarding her husband so that she was free to remarry (e.g., Deut. 24:3; levirate marriage). If, however, she married someone while her husband was still alive (assuming either no divorce or no divorce permitting remarriage), she would be called an adulteress, i.e., as one in violation of the law.

e. The point is that just as the wife was freed to be joined to another by her husband's death, so those championing the Mosaic law had been freed to be joined to Christ by sharing (through baptism) in the death of Christ. The purpose of this union with Christ was that they might bear fruit to God.

f. Paul focuses on Jewish Christians, those who died to the Mosaic law in converting to Christianity (see, Gal. 2:15, 19), because he is addressing the question of whether the law is binding on Gentiles. If Jewish converts were released from that law, then Gentile converts certainly could not be required to come under it.

g. When the Jewish Christians were in the flesh, that is, without Christ and under the law (relating to God in terms of the bygone order), the law was an instrument of their death in that their sinful passions were aroused through it. The law was actually used as an obstacle to their bearing fruit to God. But now, having died with Christ and been joined to him, they have been released from the law, with the result that they serve in newness of the Spirit rather than in oldness of the letter. They live life in the new order, not in the old.

## 2. Defense of his view of the law (7:7-25)

### a. Does not mean the law is sinful or evil (7:7-12)

(1) In saying that the effect of the law was to increase trespasses (5:20) and to arouse sinful passions (7:5), Paul was no doubt accused of saying that the law was evil and sinful. That, of course, would destroy any continuity between the law and his gospel, between the old and new covenants, between Moses and Christ, and would thus be a theological kiss of death. Paul flatly rejects the claim that he is saying the law is sinful. The law is not itself sin, but the law and sin do have a definite relationship.

(2) The law brings knowledge of sin (3:20) in the sense it shows the real nature and power of sin. Not only does the law provide the opportunity for sin to express itself as transgression and spell out that the penalty for sin is wrath and death, but the law is also used by sin to stimulate sinful desires. Through the law, sin's power is actually enhanced, with the result that one comes to understand the real "sinfulness" of sin.

(3) When Paul says (7:8b), "For apart from law, sin is dead," he means it is relatively inactive compared to sin under law. He does not mean sin is absolutely inactive apart from the law. That cannot be because he has already explained how *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:23), even those not under law (specific, revealed commandments), and how death reigned (through sin) even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression (5:13-14).

(4) At one time, Paul was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and he died. I think Paul is referring to a time in his childhood before he was accountable for obeying the law. As soon as the law became applicable to him, sin living in him sprang into action producing transgression and consequent death.

(a) Paul does not mention this, but commutation of that death sentence would have been available through faith under the law until the coming of Christ. And Paul, as a blameless (faithful) Jew (Phil. 3:6), would certainly have received it. With the salvation-

historical shift effected by Christ's coming, forgiveness is no longer available through the old covenant.

(b) If Paul is in fact referring to himself here, he obviously was not born spiritually condemned. Rather, he was born alive and then died when sin caused him to transgress the law. Many exegetes refuse to consider that Paul is speaking autobiographically because their interpretation of 5:12-21 convinces them there was never a time he was spiritually alive.

(5) Thus, the law is not sinful or evil. It is holy, righteous, and good. The culprit is sin, which uses the law to produce death.

b. Clarifying the law's role in death (7:13-25)

(1) Though sin killed him through the law (7:10-11), that does not mean the law is culpable in that death. The blame must be placed on sin, not on the good law that sin used to bring about death.

(2) Sin's evil work of using the good law to produce death served the good purpose of revealing the utter sinfulness of sin. It helped to expose sin as the wicked and ferocious power that it is.

(3) Elaboration on sin's work in bringing about transgression through the law (7:14-25)

(a) The law is spiritual, meaning in harmony with God (of the Spirit), but we humans (Paul refers to himself as a representative person) are not that way. We are "fleshly," oriented away from God, in that we have been "sold under sin." This is mankind's condition in Adam, not in Christ (6:2, 6-7, 11, 14, 17-18, 22). (1 Cor. 3:1 shows that Christians can *choose* to be "fleshly," can fail to appropriate their emancipation [see also, Rom. 6:12-13], but that is different than never having been emancipated.)

(b) Speaking from that perspective of enslavement to sin, Paul says that, though part of him realizes the goodness of the law and longs to obey it, he winds up transgressing the law because the sin (or sinful inclination) that dwells within him pulls him into disobedience. Sin keeps that part of him that wants to obey from taking over the mind and will to the extent that it can effectively and consistently direct the body to do what is good. His body is thus under the dominion of sin (sinful passions), "captive" to its rule (v. 23), with the result that it is a "body of death" (v. 24 – under sin's condemnation).

(c) As Paul looks back on his pre-Christian sin, with the post-Christian knowledge that mercy was no longer available under the old covenant, he expresses the anguish of a condemned man. Who will save him? Thanks be to God through the Christ who saved him.

(d) V. 25b simply recaps the dividedness of the "I" portrayed in vv. 15-23. His mind, at least part of it, is committed to the law of God, but the flesh is committed to the law of sin.

(4) Some commentators object to the view that Paul is speaking of a non-Christian experience because they claim the mind of a non-Christian is incapable of delighting in God's law and desiring to obey it. I think that is incorrect.

(a) That Paul and other pious Jews of his day sincerely sought to do what was required of them is evident from Rom. 10:2 ("For I testify about [the Israelites] that they have zeal for God . . ."). Paul's sincerity of faith is obvious in Phil. 3:6 where he says that with regard to righteousness rooted in the law, he was faultless (i.e., an exemplary Jew). Indeed, even some Gentiles obey some of the law of the heart (Rom. 2:14-15).

(b) When Paul says in Rom. 8:7-8 that the "mindset of the flesh" is hostility toward God and is unable to be subject to the law of God, he does not mean that non-Christians cannot know or desire the good. Rather, he means that, *in sum*, they are innately hostile to God. In other words, considering all aspects of their being, they are oriented toward themselves and their own gratification rather than toward God and others. So "mind" and "mindset" in 8:5-8 is more comprehensive than "mind" in 7:23, 25 (different words – *nous* in 7 and *phronēma* in 8); it speaks of a person's total orientation, not simply of that rational part which desires the good.

(5) The fact Paul is here speaking of the non-Christian's experience does not mean that Christians don't struggle with sin. As I've already stated, as long as we live in this overlap of ages, in this time before the Second Coming, the new man in Christ continues to be subject to the influences of the powers of the old age. We still are pulled, tempted to live in Adam, and we must continually resist that temptation. Thus, Peter in 1 Pet. 2:11 warns the saints to abstain from base desires that war against their souls. But we do so as people who've been freed from enslavement to sin; we fight as those who've been healed of our "addiction to sin." And we do so in the power of the Spirit, as Paul will emphasize in chapter 8. We are not the same person in a new situation; we are a new person in a new situation.

#### D. Life in the Spirit (8:1-30)

##### 1. The Spirit of Power (8:1-13)

###### a. Recapping the situation in Christ (8:1-4)

(1) Paul declared in 5:12-21 that, for those who are "in Christ," righteousness and eternal life replace the condemnation and death that was their lot in Adam. In chapters 6 and 7 he took a necessary and important detour to explain why this fact does not lead to lawlessness and to defend his claim that Christians are not under the Mosaic law. In the course of defending his claim that Christians are not under the Mosaic law, Paul asserted that sin actually used

the law to bring death to those under who were under the law. He then, in the last half of chapter 7, explained the dynamics of the process by which sin used the law to kill those under the law, thereby demonstrating that the blame lay with sin not with the law, which is holy, righteous, and good.

(2) In 8:1-4 Paul reconnects with 5:12-21 by reasserting its conclusion in light of the discussion in chapters 6 and 7. (This reconnection is confirmed by the fact the word translated "condemnation" in 5:16 and 5:18 [*katákrima*] is used only one other time in the N.T. – in Rom. 8:1.) The conclusion of what he has said over the last few chapters is that there is *no* condemnation for Christians – the death sentence has been removed. We are no longer alienated from God, no longer die physically as punishment for our sin, and no longer face eternal separation from God in the final judgment.

(3) Christians are not under condemnation because the principle that applies to them, that governs their situation, is "the law of the Spirit of life." Pursuant to that "law," they have received righteousness and life. (I think he calls it the "law of the Spirit of life" rather than the order or purpose or working of God for rhetorical reasons.) As one enters the new age of the Spirit, as one comes under the new covenant, one is freed from the governing principle of the old age, "the law of sin and death." In Christ, the former displaces the latter.

(4) This shift in governing principles is the result of God's having done what was impossible for the (Mosaic) law to do in that humanity was under sin and thus could not yield the obedience necessary for eschatological life. God provided righteousness and life by sending Christ to Earth as a human, in the likeness of sinful man, to be an atoning sacrifice. In this sacrifice, God punished sin in mankind (2 Cor. 5:21 – he was made sin for us), so that the law's just demand for the death penalty may be completely satisfied in those who share in Christ's death. They have been freed from the law (7:4) and from its condemnation.

(5) Those in whom this just requirement of the law has been fulfilled, those who have died with Christ in baptism, are described as those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(a) To become a Christian means to be transferred from the realm dominated by the flesh to the realm dominated by the Spirit. "Flesh" and "Spirit" stand over against each other, not as parts of a person but as the powers or dominating features of the two "realms" of existence.

(b) Moo states:

"To walk according to the flesh," then, is to have one's life determined and directed by the values of "this world," of the world in rebellion against God. It is a lifestyle that is purely "human" in its orientation. To "walk according to the Spirit," on the other hand, is to live under the control, and according to the values, of the "new age," created and dominated by God's Spirit as his end-time gift.

b. Elaboration on contrasting lifestyles (8:5-13)

(1) Non-Christians are described as those who are "according to the flesh" (v. 5) and "in the flesh" (v. 8), and Christians are described as those who are "according to the Spirit" (v. 5) and "in the Spirit" (v. 9). They are in two different realms or spheres. This echoes 7:5 where Paul pointed out that Christians were *formerly* "in the flesh."

(2) Those "in the flesh" are geared toward the things of "the flesh." They set their "minds," meaning the sum of their direction-determining faculties, on the values of this world; that is their prevailing orientation or commitment. That mindset, that prevailing orientation or commitment, is one of death because it is opposed to God. It does not and cannot submit to God's will because its ultimate orientation is elsewhere.

(a) That does not mean they are as evil as possible or that they cannot recognize and desire the good. Paul desired the good when he was "in the flesh." But when "in the flesh," that desire is overwhelmed by other aspects of one's warped being.

(b) Nor does it mean those "in the flesh" are incapable of obeying any commandments. Rather, it means that their worldly orientation spoils any formal compliance with God's will. However much a husband may be pleased with his wife doing what he wanted, it would all be spoiled if she were in love with someone else.

(c) Those in this state may not consciously sense their hostility to God and may deny being his enemy, but the fact remains that friendship with the world is hatred toward God (Jas. 4:4).

(d) It is a mistake to conclude from this inability to please God while "in the flesh" that one is unable to respond to the gospel while "in the flesh." The gospel is the power of God for salvation. It includes whatever is necessary to enable (but not demand) its proper acceptance. It is through that acceptance that the convert changes realms.

(3) Christians, those "in the Spirit," are geared toward the things of the Spirit. Their prevailing orientation or commitment is to the will of God. Those with such a mindset have entered into salvation, and they therefore experience life and peace with God.

(4) Christians are not "in the flesh" but "in the Spirit," since the Spirit of God dwells in us. The Spirit has entered into and taken control of our lives, and we, accordingly, live in that realm in which the Spirit rules, guides, and determines our destiny. There is no such thing as a Spiritless Christian.

(5) Though the Christian's body is mortal (6:12, 8:11), still subject to physical death because of Adam's sin, the Spirit who dwells in us provides us eschatological life because of the righteousness that has been given to us. And this life is not simply our new spiritual

life in the present. God, through his indwelling Spirit, will also raise our mortal bodies from the dead on "that day."

(6) Because we are "in the Spirit," we are no longer obliged to live according to the dictates of the flesh, that power of the old age that is opposed to God (like "the world"). But our rescue from "the realm of the flesh" (7:5, 8:9) has not removed us from contact with, and influence from, the flesh. Though we no longer belong to it, we have a continuing relationship to the old realm and can still heed the voice of the flesh.

(7) The structure of v. 12 ("we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to it") leads one to expect Paul to follow with something like, "but we are debtors to the Spirit, to live according to him." Paul abandons that structure, however, to warn his readers. He says that if they live according to the flesh, if they fall back into a lifestyle of the flesh (living like a non-Christian), they will die (in the full theological sense, i.e., they will be lost). On the other hand, if they continue to put to death the misdeeds (lit. practices) of the body by the power of the Spirit, they will have full spiritual life.

(a) You see, there is no salvation without sanctification, not because holy living is the basis of our relationship with God but because it is the result of that relationship. If we refuse to be serious about our service to God, we have chosen not to be serious about God himself. Douglas Moo has this to say:

Paul insists that what God has done for us in Christ is the sole and final grounds for our eternal life at the same time he insists on the indispensability of holy living as the precondition for attaining that life. Neither the "indicative" – what God has done for us in Christ – nor the "imperative" – what we are commanded to do – can be eliminated. Nor can they be severed from one another; they are inextricably connected.

(b) It is also important to note that, though we are responsible for this mortification of sins, it is accomplished through the Spirit. Quoting Moo again:

Holiness of life, then, is achieved neither by our own unaided effort – the error or "moralism" or "legalism" – nor by the Spirit apart from our participation – as some who insist that the key to holy living is "surrender" or "let go and let God" would have it – but by our constant living out the "life" placed within us by the Spirit who has taken up residence within. . . . Human activity in the process of sanctification is clearly necessary; but that activity is never apart from, nor finally distinct from, the activity of God's Spirit.

## 2. The Spirit of Adoption (8:14-17)

a. Those who are mortifying misdeeds by the Spirit (v. 13) have eschatological life because those who are led by the Spirit, who have the direction of their lives as a

whole determined by the Spirit, are sons of God. Life is inherent in being "sons of God," in belonging to God's people, because God's people are beneficiaries of the promise.

b. The Spirit received by Christians is not a spirit of slavery, one that leads again to anxiety before God, but the Holy Spirit, a Spirit of adoption. The Spirit engenders within us an awareness of our sonship, which awareness we express in heartfelt prayers and praise.

(1) The Spirit is so intimately involved in this process that Gal. 4:6 says the *Spirit* cries "Abba, Father."

(2) Though we are "already" adopted into God's family in terms of status, there is a sense in which that adoption is still future ("not yet"). As Paul points out in 8:23, our adoption is incomplete until we are finally made like *the* Son of God himself, until we receive "the redemption of our bodies."

c. And the fact we are God's children means we are also his heirs. In other words, we are slated to inherit at some future point the blessings God has promised. The statement that we are "fellow-heirs with Christ" reminds us that our inheritance comes only through, and in, Christ. As Moo says, "We, 'the sons of God,' are such only by virtue of our belonging to *the* Son of God; and we are heirs of God only by virtue of our union with the one who is heir of all God's promises (see Mark. 12:1-12; Gal. 3:18-19; Heb. 1:2)."

d. Paul adds that our participation in the inheritance, our sharing in Christ's glory, is conditioned on faithfulness, which he describes here as suffering with Christ. Those who belong to the Master cannot avoid the tensions and persecutions that were his lot. If the world opposed the teacher, what can his disciples expect? See, Jn. 15:18-21.

### 3. The Spirit of Glory (8:18-30)

a. Paul says that what Christians suffer in this present life is insignificant compared to the glory that is going to be revealed in us. Here I think he moves beyond suffering directly connected to our confession, to our being Christians, to all suffering attendant to our existence in this fallen world. (As Moo points out, "The 'travail' of creation, with which the sufferings of Christians are compared [vv. 19-22], cannot be restricted to the sufferings 'on behalf of Christ.'")

b. In vv. 19-25, he elaborates on the future revelation of glory mentioned in v. 18 by showing that both creation and Christians suffer at present from a sense of incompleteness and even frustration, and both eagerly yearn for a culminating transformation.

(1) Creation itself, which probably means "subhuman" creation, keenly anticipates the unveiling of the true nature of Christians. Though we are "sons of God," that nature is not apparent in this life because we experience suffering and weakness like everyone else. On the last day, however, our real status will be publicly manifested.

(2) The reason the "subhuman" creation is eagerly anticipating this revelation is that it too is not what it should be or what God intended it to be. God subjected creation itself to frustration when he cursed it as a consequence of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:17-18). It was no longer able to be what it was originally created to be. But this decree included the hope, signaled in the promise in Gen. 3:15 that seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head, that creation itself will be freed from its slavery to decay and will enter into the end-time glory to be enjoyed by God's children. We and it both are getting the "ultimate makeover."

(3) Up to the present, all parts of creation have together been groaning and experiencing birth pains in anticipation of deliverance into glory. And Christians, we who have the Spirit as a down payment on salvation, share this same anticipation. We too groan or sigh inwardly, nonverbally, in that our attitude is one of longing to be free from the corruption and infirmities that are part of life this side of glory.

(4) We do so because, just as creation was subjected to frustration "in hope," we were saved "in hope." To be saved "in hope" is to be saved in the expectation of that which is not seen, which is "not yet." Such hope causes us to steadfastly await its object (our resurrection) with eagerness. It sustains us in this overlap of ages (and our endurance, in turn, strengthens our hope – Rom. 5:4).

c. Just as hope sustains us in this present world, so too the Spirit helps us in our "weakness," in our existence in this overlap of ages. This condition means that we are unable to discern clearly God's will in the many things for which we pray. We cannot presume to identify our petitions with the will of God. But this "weakness," this inability to know what to pray for, is overcome by the Spirit's intercession.

(1) The Spirit himself intercedes for us with "unspoken groanings." This is a metaphorical reference to the Spirit's ministry of intercession that takes place in our hearts in a manner imperceptible to us. He expresses intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God. Moo remarks, "When we do not know what to pray for – yes, even when we pray for things that are not best for us – we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit's ministry of perfect intercession 'on our behalf.'"

(2) God, who sees into the inner being of people, where the indwelling Spirit's ministry of intercession takes place, knows that the Spirit is interceding on behalf of saints in accordance with God's will. So Christ intercedes for us in heaven, defending us from all charges that might be brought against us, and the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts throughout the difficulties and uncertainties of life on earth.

d. In this time of suffering and expectation (vv. 18-25), we are also helped by knowledge of the fact that God, in his providence, works in and through all things to the ultimate good of Christians, described here as those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

(1) Paul explains that the knowledge that all things are being worked for the good of Christians is based on the fact God's purpose and plan is that Christians (who remain faithful) be glorified in heaven, where we will love and glorify God forever and be loved and blessed as his children.

(a) In this context, the comment that Christians are destined to be "conformed to the likeness of his Son" refers to the fact our bodies will be transformed so that "they will be like [Jesus'] glorious body" (Phil. 3:21; see also, 1 Cor. 15:49).

(b) Jesus will thus be the "firstborn among many brothers" in that he will be the first of many to be raised from the dead in a glorified body (see, Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; 1 Cor. 15:20).

(2) Since Christians are destined for heavenly glory (the assumption being we will want to and therefore will persevere by God's power and protection), we know that our difficulties are not contrary to that purpose. In other words, God is not working against us but for our ultimate good, however tempted we may be to think otherwise given our inability to comprehend his immediate working.

(3) To paraphrase Paul, those God knew in advance would be Christians (and remain faithful, which Paul assumes Christians will do), he determined in advance would be glorified. And whom he determined in advance would be glorified (i.e., Christians), these he also called to faith through the preaching of the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 10:17). God's calling and our response was simply the actualization of his foreknowledge that we would be Christians, the outworking of what he knew from the beginning. Those called to faith were also justified, and those who have been justified will be glorified. (Though "glorified" refers to our future resurrection, it is past tense because it is predestined and is therefore as certain as if it already occurred.)

#### E. The Christian's Assurance Celebrated (8:31-39)

1. If God has determined from the foundation of the world that the faithful will be with him forever in heaven, whose opposition to us can matter? The God who gave his one and only Son on our behalf certainly will not withhold from us the eternal glories of heaven. He will not allow any opponent to thwart that purpose.

2. No charge brought against any saint will stand up (and thus exclude us from God's presence) because God, the one who counts, has already declared us righteous in Christ. In him we are absolutely immune from condemnation (8:1). Not only did Jesus die and get raised to life for our justification, but he is in heaven, at God's right hand, presenting himself to God as our perpetual sacrifice (acting as our High Priest).

3. Nothing that Christians may experience in this life, no amount of suffering, will alter God's passionate commitment to our welfare (his love), and therefore nothing we experience in

this life will (in itself) alter our heavenly destiny. That is why we are completely victorious in all these difficulties through Christ. Hardships and death are unable to deny us what God has planned for us. The destiny of the faithful is secure.