

KNOW WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

Romans 6 - 8



Who Are You -- a Saint or Sinner?

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Know Who You Are in Christ?

ROMANS 6-8

2.0



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PREFACE

After one becomes a Christian, the sun shines every day. But, within a few weeks the dark clouds roll in, weeds of failure crop up, and thorns appear all over the path.

During this time the believer may begin to question his conversion. He says to himself, "If I am really saved, why did I sin? What's wrong with me?"

But, human failure is the tool God uses to drive the man into the Scriptures to receive light on the gospel. Hunger is the basis of growth.

Some counselors teach, "you just lost your salvation;" others argue you "need to be filled with the Spirit and speak in tongues." Some teach that you are a spiritual schizophrenic called a "carnal Christian" with two natures -- with a white wolf and a black wolf. None of this is helpful.

After years of feeding the white dog, the struggling Christian finds the black dog getting bigger and bigger. He begins to ask, "Who am I? What does it mean to be a Christian? How do I get the victory? Is failure normal?"

The key to victory is knowing who you are in Christ; that is, to understand what God has done for you in the gospel (Romans).

This book is designed to assist toiling believers wrestling with what it means "to be in Christ." This knowledge of the gospel helped me. May the Lord use it for your strength and progress in becoming Christ-like.

Brooky Stockton, ret. Pastor / Seminary Professor.



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FOUNDATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the good news that Christ died for our sins wherein the believer taste the first fruits of the kingdom of God.



1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

PEACE WITH GOD

ROMANS 5:1



Figure 1: Courtesy of Freepik

Romans 5 is the grounds of victory announced in chapters 6-8

An Interpretation of Romans 5:1

NAS Romans 5:1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

KJV Isaiah 53:5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Is it possible to have peace with God?

I heard the story of an evangelist that went up to a good ole boy from Texas and asked him if he wanted to have peace with God. The arrogant ole rascal replied, "Gosh, I didn't know we ever had a quarrel."

The problem with offering people peace with God is that so many people don't understand that they are at war with Him. Before the postmodern era, men knew they were sinners and that they needed a Savior. Today, the evangelist has to first convince men of the realities of their spiritual war before he can show men peace with God. To the thirsty, sin-sick, rebellious soul, however, the good news that he can have peace with God is as refreshing as cloud burst in Death Valley. ***But, not all are agreed that we can have peace with God.***

There is only one verse that has the phrase “peace with God” and it is found in Romans 5:1. One Catholic apologist says, “. . . the best manuscripts of Romans do not say ‘we have peace with God’ but ‘let us have peace’ making it an exhortation to have peace with God . . .” (Internet Question Box). Now there is a big difference between saying, “We have peace with God,” and “Let us have peace with God.” The former is a fact; the latter is a quest. Well, what is it? Is Paul exhorting the believer to pursue peace with God, or is he stating a fact that we have peace with God?

What is at Stake?

Lots of theological capital is invested on this issue. If the believer “has peace with God,” his soul can rest. All religious endeavors, then, are based on a standing of peace. But, if the believer does not have peace with God, and this is an exhortation to pursue peace with God, then the believer is cast head long into performance-based activity; that is, because he is never sure that He can please God, he must always perform so that he can somehow gain God’s acceptance/peace.

Not only does the Catholic apologist believe it should be translated, “Let us have peace,” the great Baptist Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson agrees saying, “This is the correct text beyond a shadow of doubt, the present active subjunctive.” Robertson’s agreement almost closes the case before it is even investigated. Furthermore, the great textual critics Westcott and Hort translate the verb, “let us have peace.”

Resolving this issue is no easy task. Most people will simply say, “I think it should be A” or “I think it should be B” or “Please don’t ask me to think!” Some may say, “I feel it should be A.” Fine! What if someone else feels it should be B. whose feelings are correct? Feelings are no way to resolve Bible difficulties. Can we resolve this issue? Yes, we can, but we will have to roll up our sleeves and do the work of a Bible sleuth.

The Textual Problem

The controversy surrounds a textual variant. Some manuscripts read, "We have peace with God" (eivrh,nhn e;comen pro.j to.n qeo.n), and other manuscripts read, "Let us have peace with God" (eivrh,nhn e;cwmen pro.j to.n qeo.n). If the verb is spelled with an omicron (e;comen) the verb is in the indicative mood, the mood of reality. If the verb is spelled with an omega (e;cwmen), the verb is in the subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility and hope. The former represents a fact; the latter represents an exhortation to pursue peace as a goal of religious instruction.

Personally, I agree the indicative is intended and not the subjunctive; that is the text should read, "Therefore having been justified by faith, **we have peace** with God;" and **not**, " . . . let us go find peace with God."

Nevertheless, the next session discusses the textual problem. Skip the next division if this element of textual criticism is not your cup of tea.

The Nature of the Textual Problem

Now, it is not difficult to see how this variant came into existence. Both the omicron and omega were pronounced the same in classical Greek. An amanuensis writing down a reader's dictation would not detect the difference in sound. The pronunciation is essentially identical. We have, then, an error in hearing.

External Evidence

MSS[1] that support e;comen: a¹ B² F G Y 220 6 104 256 263 365

MSS that support e;cwmen: a* A B* C D 33 81 436 1175 1912 1962 *Byz^{pt}*

MSS that
support

e;comen

MSS that
support

e;cwmen

a ¹ IV	a* IV
B ² IV	A V
F IX	B* IV
G IX	C V
Y VIII	D V
220 ^{vid} III	33 IX

When looking at the external evidence, the vote has to go to “Let us have peace with God.” The textual critic Bruce Metzger says,

“e;cwmen has far better external support than the indicative” (A Textual Commentary, p. 452). “A long series of earlier editions preferred the latter interpretation (e;cwmen): Tichendorf, Westcott-Hort, von Soden, Vogels, Merk, Bover. Robertson sided with these critics. These are strong witnesses that support “Let us have peace.”

But, there is also some textual support in favor of “We have peace.” In a¹ we have the scribe making a correction of e;cwmen to e;comen. Likewise B² makes the same correction. Interestingly, Uncial MS [\[2\]](#) 220^{vid} is the earliest of all the witnesses. The superscript “^{vid}” after 220 means “apparently;” that is, the MS is damaged and the exact rendering is uncertain. According to Daniel Wallace in his study of the MS, the text is torn right in the middle of the letter “o” or “w” making it difficult to read. However, a study of the other omicrons in the MS indicates that the torn letter is definitely an omicron. Thus, there is external evidence from

the earliest MS that the text should read “we have peace.” But, external evidence is inconclusive.

Take a look at Romans 16:21, “I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord.” Tertius was Paul’s amanuensis. It is quite possible that Tertius wrote “e;cwm~~e~~n” rather than “e;comen” and that Paul, after editing the book, corrected the misspelling and wrote “o” in the margin of his letter to the Romans, and then signed it. Other copyist, not recognizing Paul’s correction, might have retained the letter *omega* in their spelling of the text. Thus, two textual traditions developed. Aland and Aland say in The Text Of The New Testament (1989), “Many scholars believe that in the original dictation of the letter Tertius may well have written e;cwm~~e~~n for Paul’s dictated e;comen” (p. 286).

Internal Evidence

It becomes apparent that we are not going to be able to make a determination whether the text should be read “let us have peace” or “We have peace” on external evidence alone. But, the internal evidence is another story.

First, we have the conjunction, “therefore” (vnun) which links Paul’s previous statements with his statement in Romans 5:1. The use of the indicative (e;comen) fits Paul’s presentation of truth with indicatives in chapters three and four. Romans 5:1 comes in the middle of Paul’s argument that begins in Romans 3:21 and ends in Romans 5:21. In this section, all the verbs, except a few quotations from the OT, are indicatives. *Paul is laying down facts, not giving exhortations.* We call this section the “Indicatives of the Faith” or “Facts of the Faith.” There are roughly 66 indicatives in this section informing us about the realities of Christ’s accomplishments on behalf of the believer. An exhortation in the midst of these indicatives would be out of place. Furthermore, since the statement, “Therefore, since we have been justified is an aorist, indicative, it would be consistent to follow it was another indicative, “We

have peace.” Peace is, therefore, the natural result of being right with God.

Second, the exhortations begin with Romans 6:11. There is roughly sixty imperatives in Romans beginning in chapter six. Up to chapter six, Paul is careful to lay out the facts of the gospel before he calls for a response to the gospel. An exhortation in the middle of fact presentation seems out of sequence.

Third, an exhortation to pursue “peace” which suddenly *takes the spotlight off of Christ’s accomplishments* for the believer and places the onus of seeking peace on the believer seems to be out of place in Paul’s argument. It seems incongruent for Paul to exhort believers to guard peace before he has shown that they possess peace.

Fourth, in Romans 5:10, Paul uses an “if then” argument. “If being enemies we were reconciled to God . . .” Paul acknowledges the believer was in the state of unbelief at war with God, but that the death of Christ reconciled him to God. The word “reconcile” supports the idea the believer now has peace. The verb “reconciled” (kathllaghmen) is an aorist, passive *indicative*. Our reconciliation is a fact in possession, not a pursuit for acquisition.

Fifth, there is the theological argument. Paul argues in section 3:21-5:21 that justification is not obtained because of a performance-based initiative. When a sinner believes God, he mercifully receives the gifts of grace: justification, redemption, regeneration, and reconciliation. It would be out place for Paul to say, “Let us have peace” because he would be turning the believer back to a performance-based theology; the very theology from which he vigorously sought rescue the believer in his argument in the previous chapter. In Romans 3:21-5:21 the word “faith” is used 19 times and the word “believe” or “believed” six times. It is through faith, not human performance, that a man is declared right with God. If a man is right with God (justified), he has peace with God.

The internal evidence is overwhelming that the text should be translated “we have peace with God” (e;comen).

Textual critics, Aland and Aland say,

“The external criteria yield no certainty here, so that internal criteria become determinative” (1989, p. 286). For this reason the textual committee gave the translation “we have peace with God” an “A” rating; that is, all the team members agreed. Metzger has this to say: “Internal evidence must take precedence . . . Paul is not exhorting but stating the facts (‘peace’ is the possession of those who have been justified), only the indicative is consonant with the apostle’s argument” (1971, p. 452).

In conclusion, do believers have peace with God?

The answer is emphatically “Yes!” Just as the Israelite of old did not give a peace offering to obtain peace (Leviticus 3), but because he possessed peace. Likewise, the NT believer does not worship to obtain peace but because he has peace (Romans 12:1).

The reason for peace is **not** the believer’s performance, but justification based on Christ’s performance in history for us (see the ablative “faithfulness of Christ” in 3:22).

The primary work of Divine grace is **not** God's work exerted in us, but God's work outside of us in Christ at Calvary.

God does not give us peace because of human work but because of Christ’s work.

Grace/peace triumphs in the presence of human weakness, and it ceases to be a gift of grace if it is withdrawn because of human failure.

Gracious souls have stopped trying to be good in order to be accepted because they know they are accepted because Christ was good.

Gracious souls have stopped trying to gain acceptance by their performance because they know they have acceptance because of Christ's performance.

Grace delivers the imperative, **not** so men can be accepted in God's sight, but because men **are** accepted in God's sight.

We come to church, and teach Sunday school, and sweep the sidewalks, and set up chairs **not** to obtain peace with God, but because we have peace with God. We do **not** have a temporary cease-fire.

We are **not** on probation. We are **not** out on parole. We are **not** in danger of losing our peace with God because of human failure because our peace is **not** conditioned upon human success.

We serve Christ, not to be blessed, but because we are already blessed.

Because I am enriched by grace, I have stopped trying to do something to earn God's love.

The great secret of the Christian life is to allow myself to enjoy peace with God knowing that I am unworthy of this peace. I am not conflict conscious, but peace conscious. Isaiah 53:5 says, "The chastisement of our peace was laid on Him."

Furthermore, I am not sin conscious. I am righteous conscious. All the sins I have ever committed or ever will commit were paid for by Christ. The verdict is in: I am justified. Peace is a gift, not a reward. It is free, but not cheap. It is available to all, but it is only received by a few.

[1] Evidence taken from Aland's GNT, 4th Edition, p. 530, textual apparatus.

[2] MS is an abbreviation for the word "manuscript" (MS). MSS refers to "manuscripts."

SAVED BY HIS LIFE

ROMANS 5:10

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 8:2 'the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.'



Figure 2: Courtesy of Freepik

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in

His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

If the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit, a growing cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us,

The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our sins, but He lives for our sanctifying. He died for us, He lives in us. Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure (MacLaren).

That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the animating principle of our lives. When we

depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death (MacLaren).

The blood of Christ at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification, but the quickening blood of Christ, His intercessory work at the right hand of God, and washing by the Holy Scriptures cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification.

THE TALE OF TWO MEN

ROMANS 5:12-21

Romans 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.



This chapter answers two questions: (1) how can God hold all humanity responsible for Adam's sin with its terrible effects; and (2) how can each believer enjoy the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection by placing their faith in the Lord?

The answer lies in the doctrine of two federal headships – the Tale of Two Men: The Dynasty of Adam and the Dynasty of Christ.

Figure 3: Courtesy of Freepik Adam is the federal head of fallen humanity where sin and death reign; and, Christ is the federal head of the new humanity where righteousness and life reign in and over believers.

Like Americans are affected by the votes of their congressional representative, men are affected by the decisions of their spiritual representative. If men do not separate from Adam's sin, and come to Christ by faith, the fate of Adam will be their fate: condemnation and death. If men separate from Adam and come to Christ placing their trust in Him they will receive the gift of eternal life and all the benefits of His death, burial and resurrection.

Those people who remain in Adam out of love for their sin will inherit the wages of sin. Those who hear the gospel and flee to the cross for protection will receive the gift of life.

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

Notice the deeds and effects of First Adam and the Second Adam

The Two Heads

The Dynasty of Adam	The Dynasty of Christ
Head of Humanity	Head of the New Humanity
Given authority over creation	Given authority over the old and new creation
Sinned	Obedied
Disobeyed God's law	Obedied God's law
Declared sinner	Declared Righteousness
Judgment and Condemnation	Justified and Forgiven
Sin imputed to men	Righteousness imputed to men
Sentenced to death	Rewarded with life
Wages / Offence of one	Gift of grace
Death Reigned	Eternal Life Reigns

The following chapters in Romans entertain the benefits of being united and identified with the Risen Christ and, the dire consequences of being an unrepentant sinner in Adam.

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

When a person places their faith in Christ, they are transferred from Adam into Christ where sin cannot have dominion over a man (6:1-6).

Paul addresses believers as “saints” and not “sinners.”

Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The key is to start thinking like a saint instead of sinner, a man in the spirit and not a man in the flesh.

Romans 6:11 Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Think like an eagle and not a chicken.



THE NEW MAN

ROMANS 6

Saint or Sinner?

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Q: Are you a sinner or a saint; a man in "the flesh" or a man "in the Spirit; a chicken or an eagle?"

The Believer's Identification with Christ



Romans 6 is perhaps the most important chapter you need to study in order to live a holy life.

This passage must be thoughtfully considered, examined, studied, and investigated, and **not** hastily read!

You can be a victorious Christian by grasping what it means to be identified with the Christ in Romans 6 . . . and if you fail to comprehend the wonder of your union with Christ you will be trapped into an Armenian performance-based way of living.

Who are You: Sinner or Saint?



The Question, “Who am I?” has been touted as one of the most fundamental questions of man. Even more difficult is the question, “What is a Christian, saint or sinner?”

Some preachers want Christians to know that they are sinners through and through.

Every week these poor Christians endure loud, pulpit pounding diatribes against sin. “I am just a sinner saved by grace,” says another. A well-meaning saint touts, “I am just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” Others want us to know that God saves sinners, but not completely. “We have two natures, an evil nature and a good nature,” they say. “You have a white dog and a black dog living in side you. Whichever one you feed the most wins.”

The doctrine of the “two-natures” the believer has created more problems than it solves. Further, it has a tendency to produce introspective spiritual schizophrenics— Christians that see themselves as a Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde. No wonder Christians are so defeated. They do not know who they are!

Furthermore, we hear phrases like “self is on the throne,” “crucify the flesh,” or “you must die to self” as if “self” is an ugly beast living inside the Christian’s black, sin-stained heart.

Another challenge is the phrase “positional truth.” What is meant by *positional truth*? Positional truth was strongly advanced by the dispensationalist, Keswick mystic, Miles Stanford, who sought to counter the legalizing of the gospel and the pseudo spiritual Charismatic Movement. His focus on “Christ crucified” was honorable. But, there is an upside and a downside to this view.

The upside is that positional truth takes a high view of Christ and the believer’s identification with His history by faith.

The downside is the language used is a transcendental mixture of sense and nonsense. This view advances the idea that you are “righteous positionally” but “sinful conditionally.” It sounds like double-talk: “It’s really not true, but you need to believe it is true anyway.” Hummm? This kind of rhetoric has confused many sincere seekers of truth—at least on the subject of sanctification.

Consider this supposition: a regenerated man has only one nature, a righteous nature with a powerful desire to please God.

Every statement in the New Testament about the nature of Christian is extremely positive. God’s Word calls Christians “saints” (1Corinthians 1:2), “new creations” (2 Corinthians 5:17), “children of God” (Ephesians 5:1-3), “sons of God” (1John 3:1), “children of light” (Ephesians 5:8), “in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9), and a “sweet fragrance of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15).

While a believer may have “carnal thinking” (2 Corinthians 3), he cannot have a carnal constitution. All believers are declared to be “in the Spirit^[1]” constitutionally and all non-believers are declared to be “in the flesh^[2]” constitutionally (Romans 8:9).

You can soar with the eagles in the clouds of righteous by “counting as true” your identification with Christ as taught in Romans 6.

Two Dynasties

Paul discussed the history of two dynasties^[3] (5:12-21). The *Dynasty of Adam* which is characterized by the reign of sin, law, condemnation, and death; and, the *Dynasty of Christ* which is characterized by obedience, grace, justification, and life. There are two races of men, those *in Adam* and those *in Christ*. Christians are said to be “in Christ.” In Christ, the Christian is justified^[4] (5:1), regenerated^[5] (5:5), reconciled^[6] (5:10) identified with his glorious history (6:3-5), adopted (8:13-16), and glorified (8:30).

Dead to Sin

In the book "Born Crucified" by L. E. Maxwell, he tells this story:

"During the Civil War a man by the name of George Wyatt was drawn by lot to go to the front. He had a wife and six children. A young man named Richard Pratt offered to go in his stead. He was accepted and joined the ranks, bearing the name and number of George Wyatt. Before long Pratt was killed in action. The authorities later sought again to draft George Wyatt into service. He protested, entering the plea that he had died in the person of Pratt. He insisted that the authorities consult their own records as to the fact of his having died in identification with Pratt, his substitute. Wyatt was thereby exempted as beyond the claims of law and further service. He had died in the person of his representative. There we have the truth of identification in a nutshell. God's way of deliverance is through death--through identification with our Substitute in His death and resurrection."

Believers are born crucified legally and no longer obligated to respond to sin's beckon and call. They are no longer in sin's jurisdiction and do not have to respond when drafted!

But, it is more than this. You have been "born again" and your spirit, the essence of who you are, no longer wants to sin. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you. You identified with Christ, and in a spiritual sense, you are still born to sin.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (faithfulness) of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

F. J. Huegel, in Bone of His Bone, rightly summarizes our failure thus:

"We have been proceeding upon a false basis. We have conceived of the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not an imitation of Christ. It is a participation of Christ."

Paul declares that Christians are dead to sin: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (6:2). The answer to Paul's question is, "It is impossible!" This is like asking, "How shall they who died in New York City still be walking around alive in New York City?" This too is impossible.

The word "dead" is in an aorist indicating that the Christian died to sin at some time in his past. It is a completed action. By "dead," Paul means "unresponsive," "cut off," "unable to respond."

"Shall live" is a future tense implying that a future relationship with sin is impossible. The *work of redemption* has set the Christian free from the power of sin.

This is not just "positional truth!" He really is free!

A transformation occurs in the believer's internal constitution when he is united to Christ. When God regenerates a man, he changes the man in such a way that His "new creation" is unresponsive to sin; that is, the seed^[7] of Almighty God is in him so that he does not want to sin. Paul is not saying believers cannot sin. He is saying that the believer's identification with Christ grants him benefits that make it possible for him to live a genuine righteous life.

If we regard the doctrine of perfection a heresy, then we must regard contentment with sinful imperfection a greater heresy.

Consider the wise words of Dr. A. J. Gordon:

"Divine truth as revealed in Scripture seems often to lie between two extremes. **If we regard the doctrine of sinless perfection as a heresy, we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy.** And we gravely fear that

many Christians make the apostle's words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," the unconscious justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness, than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. Certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldling throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist." (Emphasis mine).

But what saith the Scripture? "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6:1, 2).

The believer is born again . . . but not all of him is born again. Sin still dwells within the body . . . but, the regenerated spirit is under no obligations to obey it.

Baptism

Paul declares that the Christian is "baptized into" the history of Christ; i.e. the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (6:3-4). The word "baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptize* (bapti,zw). It is an aorist indicating completed action. It simply means, "to be placed into."

The believer is "placed into" Christ and identified with his victorious history so completely that he is said to be "dead unto sin."

This baptism is not water baptism, but an operation of the Spirit whereby He takes the believer out of the Dynasty of Adam to place him into the Dynasty of Christ. This happens at the moment of conversion.

An illustration may be helpful. When an immigrant leaves his country of origin and becomes a United States citizen, he no longer has a duty to his mother country. Further, all the benefits of being an American are now his. He is dead to his motherland, but alive to his new country. Being

physically present in America and having legal status as an American Citizen, he can now enjoy a new life.

This act of “placing” a believer into Christ’s victorious history is effective and efficient in two ways: (a) positively, the believer is radically identified with the virtues of Christ’s accomplishments; i.e. he is permanently alive to God (Romans 6:11); and negatively, (b) the believer is permanently dead to sin, i.e. completely severed from sin (harmatia) (Romans 6:1-2).

The Literary “We”

Who or what does Paul mean by “we?”

By “we,” Paul means “we Christians.” It is a literary “we,” a narrative of inclusion because of Christian brotherhood. But this is not just a broad generalization. Paul intended the individual to personalize this truth. “I” am baptized into Christ and “I” am dead to sin! That is, because “YOU” (singular) have been baptized into Christ, “YOU” are dead to sin!

By “YOU” (or “we”) Paul does not mean “the physical body” or “the body of sin” referred to in verse six. By “YOU,” Paul means the *essence of your being, the inner-most “YOU,” the core of your being, your living born-again soul, your inner matrix* or that part of your personality that is truly “YOU!” “YOU” have been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ.

This baptism is radical identification with Christ.

“YOU,” the essence of who you are as a regenerated being, has been so completely identified with Christ so that “YOU” are “dead to sin and alive to God.” What was true of you in Adam is no longer true of “YOU” in Christ. What is true of Christ, is now true of “you.” Since Christ rose again, He is not impacted by sin and death. Since “YOU” share in the virtues of his history by radical identification with Him, “YOU” are “dead to sin and alive to God.”

Another illustration may be helpful. When a man gets married, he is no longer single, he is a married man (lawfully); but, he may struggle for weeks or months because he still thinks like a single man. But, in time, his mind will adjust to his new legal status and accept the role of husband in the marriage . . . and if he doesn't I'm sure the little wife will have a tactic or two to remind him of his change in status.

Likewise, with Christ! At one time the unsaved man lived like a man in Adam doing what the sons of Adam do (sin), but upon his conversion to Christ, his legal status changed. He is no longer in Adam, but "married" to Christ. The sooner he stops thinking like a man in Adam and starts thinking like a man in Christ, the more positive his Christian experience will be, and the more he will take on family characteristics.

Destruction of the Body of Sin

There is a reason for this radical identification with the history of Christ as indicated by the purpose clause in verse 6, "in order that" (*hina* clause) "the body of sin might be destroyed." It is important to correctly identify the terms here. "The body of sin" is not the "sin nature" as the Keswicks taught. It is not "the sin principle" at work with in us. The "body of sin" refers to the physical body (soma). Your soma is your body, your members[8], that physical, flesh and blood, mental and emotional part of you which is un-regenerated and unaffected by conversion. While "YOU" are a "new creation," your body (soma) is still part of the old creation. Your body is still subject to being an instrument of sin[9].

The subjunctive verb, "destroyed" (*katargeo*), does not mean "annihilated." *Katargeo* means "to render inoperative" or "to make unemployed" or "to put out of business."

In using the subjunctive, Paul is pointing out the real possibility of reducing the power of the body (soma) over the soul.

Now who is the "old man" (*o` palaio*) of verse six?

The “old man” is **not** the sinful nature. It is not the sin principle at work in the believer. It is **not** “self.” *The “old man” is all that you were in the Dynasty of Adam apart from the Dynasty of Christ.*

It is your old identity, your old standing in fallen humanity, the sinful, un-regenerated you under the power of *harmatia* before “YOU” were “placed into” Christ.

Let us put it together. When you placed your faith in Christ, the Spirit took “YOU,” the essence of your being, and identified “YOU” with the virtues of Christ’s accomplishments so that “YOU” are constitutionally regenerated, connected with God, and disconnected from the power of sin. Though the born-again “YOU” is still living in an un-regenerated body that is capable of being used as an instrument of sin, YOU are righteous by nature and capable of taking charge of your body in such a way as to discharge it for the Savior’s use.

Note that in Romans 12:1, Paul does not ask the believer to surrender himself (the “YOU”), but to place his “body” on the altar of service. “YOU” are already surrendered. “YOU” want to please God and to serve him. “YOU” want to do what is right, but “the body,” the un-regenerated part of your constitution needs to be commandeered and inducted into service by an act of your will.

It is true that justification is inefficient and positional.

The Keswicks were correct. Justification is legal and forensic in nature. One’s status before God changes from condemned to justified!! But, justification is **not** the same action as being “born again” **nor** does justification transform the character of a man. But, regeneration combined with the “baptism” of the Spirit is efficient resulting in a change in one’s spiritual constitution.

Paul asserts his proposition once more, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (6:7).

The “he” is the “YOU” we have been talking about. Because of YOUR radical identification with Christ, the regenerated “YOU” is “dead,” and therefore, “freed from” the reign of sin.

Let’s look at another illustration. Have you seen the movie, "Shawshank Redemption?" Do you remember the scene when Red was out of prison and started working in the grocery store? In this scene, Red politely asks permission to use the boy’s room, but his boss reminds him that he is free and that he no longer has to ask permission to service his human needs. Red, though free, still thought like a prisoner. In time, however, he adjusted and used his freedom to find Andy and to start a new life. The same is true of a Christian. He has been freed from sin, but he may still think like a prisoner. A little reflection of the Christian's change in status will empower him to think like a free man.

PART II



Paul continues, *“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”* (6:8). Paul restates his proposition that if “YOU” are radically identified with His death, then “YOU” are radically identified with His life. His life now reigns in “YOU” and through “YOU.”

A bottle can be in the ocean, and the ocean can be in the bottle. “YOU” are in Christ^[10] and Christ is in “YOU.”

In verses 9 and 10, Paul rehearses the history of Christ. Having died, he died unto sin once. Having been raised from the dead, He has a perpetual, living relationship with the Father. Likewise, if “YOU” are connected to Christ, “YOU” are dead to sin, and “YOU” are permanently connected to God!

THE FIRST COMMAND FOR THE NEW CHRISTIAN

Reckoning



In verse 11, we come to the First Command in the Book of Romans . . . and, perhaps the MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The reason Christians have so little victory in their Christian life is because they do not understand or grasp the importance of the first command in the book. If they don't know it, they can't obey it. If they don't obey it, they will live in chaos and confusion thinking like a son of Adam.

“Reckon yourself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God” is the first command in Romans.

“*Reckon*” (logizomai) is a frequently used word in Romans four and it means “to think,” “to compute,” “to credit,” “to act on,” “to calculate,” and “to weigh carefully.”

Reckoning is a mental operation! The believer is **not** asked to do anything . . . **but to think correctly!** The command appeals to the new “YOU” who is created in righteousness.

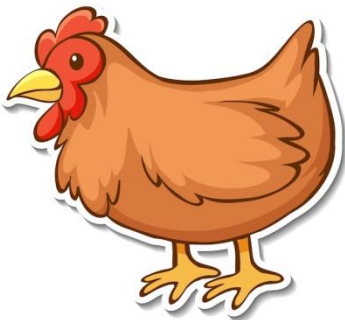


Figure 4: Courtesy of Freepik

Paul is saying that since “YOU” are regenerated and identified with Christ, “YOU” are dead, cut off, severed from sin, and “YOU” are “alive to God.” “YOU” are connected to a vital, dynamic living relationship with your Heavenly Father. Therefore, START THINKING THIS WAY!

Stop thinking like a chicken and start thinking like an eagle.

Stop thinking that you are “just a sinner saved by grace!”

Stop thinking that you are a “sinner” struggling to do the impossible!

Stop thinking like a beggar!

Stop thinking like a *spiritual schizo* that has a black dog and a white dog living inside of you!

Stop thinking that you have two spiritual natures . . . that you are some kind of spiritual schizo with multiple personalities!

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8)



Figure 5: Courtesy of
Upsplash

Start thinking that “YOU” are a regenerated being, a “new creation,” a “child of God,” a “sweet fragrance” with only one nature, a righteous nature!

Start thinking that “YOU,” the inner most part of your personality is a righteous person who wants to do what is right—“You are dead to sin . . . and alive to God! *Think like* this says Paul!

When you do what is right, you are living consistent with who “YOU” are; and, when you do what is wrong, you are living inconsistent with who “YOU” are! —not the other way around!

You will never fly in the clouds of righteousness until you are able to say, “Sinning, is no longer who ‘I’ am and what ‘I’ do!”

For this reason, Paul urges the believer to renew his thinking (Romans 12:2-3)!

The “mind” (tu nous), **not** the nature needs to be renewed (Romans 12:2). That is, the mind needs to catch up with the believer’s existential transformation . . . like Red in the Shawshank Redemption.

Every married person can probably remember the days following his or her public wedding. How easy it is to be married and still think like a single person. Though married, it takes time to “think married.” Likewise, though one is “alive to God,” it takes time to think, “I am alive to God.”

Paul is not teaching sinless perfection here. Remember, “YOU” (a regenerated being) still lives in a “body of sin” (an un-regenerated instrument). “YOU” will struggle with sin throughout this life, not because something is wrong with “YOU,” but because “YOU” still live in a “body” easily supplanted by sin. “YOU” are born-again, but your body has not-yet been born-again. “YOU” are dead to sin and alive to God, but your body is not dead to sin or alive to God.

Therefore, take charge of your body and all its un-regenerated parts and start resisting sin (6:12-13; 12:1-3).

Sin remains in your body and your members, but sin cannot reign over “YOU!”

Look at Romans 6:14 -- "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Paul reminds the Hebrews of the difference between law and grace. While the law educates a man about what is right and wrong, it does not supply the power to keep the standards it espouses, but grace not only acknowledges the righteousness of the law but transforms the soul to keep the law of the LORD God (Romans 8:4).

Paul is not pitting law against grace.

The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness; likewise, the opposite of grace is not law, but licentiousness (Jude 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 2:8).

One mature in grace will keep the law (John 15:14, Romans 8:4, 13:8; 1 John 5:1-3).

An illustration of grace thinking may help.



Pneumatikos

I once heard a story about an eagle found by Farmer Brown.

The baby eagle fell out of its nest. Farmer Brown took the eagle home,

put it in his chicken coop, and called him *Pneumatikos*.

However, the chickens called him *Sarkikos*.

The eagle grew up and noticed he was bigger than the other birds in the coop. Furthermore, he had an urge to fly. Pneumatikos went to mother hen and asked, "I have a desire to fly. What am I?" Mother Hen said, "Stop all this non sense about flying. Sarkikos, you are a chicken, and chickens don't fly."



Weeks went by and Pneumatikos was very unhappy. Inside of him was a big heart with a desire to soar above the clouds. So, he went to the head rooster and said, "Mr. Rooster, I am unhappy. I have this desire to fly, but mother hen told me I was a chicken and that chickens don't fly. What am I?" The

rooster said, "Son, you got to understand you are different than the rest of us chickens. Sarkikos, you are a chicken-eagle! You want to fly because part of you is an eagle. But, you can't fly because part of you is a chicken. You'll just have to learn to live with it?" Confused and discouraged, Pneumatikos just flapped around the barnyard pecking for corn.

One day, Pneumatikos saw Farmer Brown, "Farmer Brown, I am unhappy. I want to fly, but Mother Hen said I was just a chicken, and then Mr. Rooster said that I was a chicken-eagle. Who am I?"

Farmer Brown said, "Pneumatikos, 'YOU' are **not** a chicken, and 'YOU' are **not** a chicken-eagle.

'YOU' **are** a pure bred eagle. 'You' were born to fly, and if you'll just keep on flapping your wings, you'll soar like an eagle."

Delighted, Pneumatikos started flapping his wings and within a few hours, Pneumatikos soared above the farm and never lived with chickens again.

Pneumatikos was flight-challenged, not because of his nature, but because he was mentally handicapped by chicken theology!!

Pneumatikos was born to fly. Inside him was a powerful heart designed to pump huge amounts of blood to his muscles so he could soar above the clouds. Likewise, believers are "justified" (Romans 5:1), "regenerated" (5:5), "reconciled" (5:10), and "identified" with Christ (6:3-4), and proclaimed "in the Spirit" (Romans 8:9). Believers have a powerful heart to do what is right. How many pneumatics Christians (and all are) have failed to soar above because they have been bound to the chicken coop below by chicken theology?

Who are you?

If you are a Christian, "YOU" are not a sinner at the core of your being. "YOU" are not a saint-sinner at the core of your being. "YOU" are a saint with a powerful desire to live in the heavenliest (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 2:1-10).

It is not improper to say you have a spiritual nature (the regenerated part of you) and you have a physical nature (the body and the un-regenerated part of you). But, it is improper to say that you two natures, a black dog and a white dog, inside of you. "YOU" are **not** a spiritual schizoid.

"You" are a child of God who wants to please your Heavenly Father.

You may stumble and you may sin, but if you sin, you sin because you are living inconsistent with your righteous nature. But, when a sinner sins, he sins because he is living consistent with his sinful nature!

Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is dependent on three factors in Romans six:

- (a) the fact of the believer's radical identification with Christ and His accomplishments; and,
- (b) the "knowing" and "understanding" the fact of what it means "to be placed into" Christ; and,
- (c) obedience to Paul's command to "reckon" or "count" these facts to be true.



"YOU" are **not** a chicken, and "YOU" are **not** a chicken-eagle. "YOU" are an eagle. "YOU" are a saint. "YOU" are dead to sin and alive to God.

Reckon this to be true! THINK THIS WAY! "Now flap those wings and begin to fly," argued Paul.

Grace empowers us to live righteously (Romans 6:14).

[1] The term "spirit" in Romans 8 refers to justified, born-again, reconciled believers in Christ; i.e. saved men.

[2] The term "flesh" (sharks) refers to the un-regenerated, unsaved man or all that man is apart from Christ.

[3] Adam and Christ are often referred to as two Federal Heads, one of fallen man, the other of saved men.

[4] Justified is a legal term meaning "to be declared righteous and treated as such."

[5] Regenerated is a theological term referring to spiritual transformation of man when he believes in Christ. This is called being "born again"; that

is, the day God saves a man and places the Holy Spirit within man wherein he becomes a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

[6] Reconcile is the operation of God whereby he restores His relationship to fallen sinners—sinners who were at one time hostile to God’s law order; that is, reconciliation means the believing sinner has been restored to a right relationship with his God and Creator due to the propitiatory work of our Lord Jesus at Calvary.

[7] Seed means the “Holy Spirit” and his work of creating a new being in Christ.

[8] The term “body” refers to all of man’s capacities as an earthly being: mind, emotions, feelings, conscience, hearing, seeing, touching; that is, the body has “members” (melos) connected with the physical body. For example, when a man becomes a Christian he is a new creature (in his spirit / soul), but his “memory” does not change. Memory is a capacity of our earthly body: See Romans 6:13, 19; 7:5, 23.

[9] With a regenerated soul and an un-regenerated body, there is conflict. It was from this conflict between the righteous soul and his unrighteous members that the early “brethren” conceived the concept of the “two natures” of the Christian. Yes, there is dissension and struggle in the Christian, but this is not the same thing as saying the believer has two spiritual natures, a white dog and a black dog, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, inside him. The former helps us understand the tension we all feel, the latter turns us into spiritual schizophrenics.

[10] “In Christ” refers to our change in status; our change in position; i.e. from being condemned in Adam to being accepted before God due to the redemptive work of the Savior. “Christ in you” does not refer to his Divine Being at the right hand of the Father, but to the work of the Spirit transforming the believer into the image of the Savior; i.e. his changed, regenerated condition.

THE MAN SOLD UNDER SIN

ROMANS 7:7-25

**“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”
(7:14).**

Q: Who is the “I”: Paul, the Christian, or Paul as an unsaved Jew?



This brief entertains the question, "Who is the man of Romans 7; that is, the man "sold under sin?"

Is this Paul, Christians, or unregenerate Jews?

It is the position of this brief that the man of Romans 7 . . . the man sold under sin . . . the wretched man . . . is not a Christian, but an unsaved Jew facing the commands of Torah without

the Spirit of God.

Summary

Romans 7 should not be interpreted existentially, but historically. Paul is not discussing his personal history, nor is he speaking typically as a Christian of the failure in his Christian experience. A transition from Law to Grace occurred in history. He addresses the shift from “Judaism” to the era of the gospel.

Romans 7 is a parenthetical development in Paul’s argument regarding sanctification where he addresses the question of law in relationship to the Jewish believers.

All of Romans 7 is addressed to Jewish believers and not to Gentiles. Paul says in verse one that he speaks “to them that know the Law (Torah).” Jews are addressed all through chapter 7. To change audiences at verse 14 is an artificial interpretation.

Paul's "I" is not autobiographical, but a literary device meaning "Israel" or "We Jews."

Paul's argument is designed to show how through the gospel a Jewish believer has moved out of Law into Grace by participation with Christ. Jewish life under the Old Covenant was frustrated because the Jew faced the claims of Law with only the resources of nature. This left him defeated. Paul's good news is that through the gospel, God has provided resources through His Spirit to defeat the law of sin and death and to empower righteous living.

When Paul says "I am carnal sold under sin," he is not speaking of himself as an Apostle or a Christian. The struggle is not the struggle of a Christian, but the struggle of an unregenerate Jew facing Torah. If one insists the present tense verb refers to Paul the Christian, then we must conclude the author of Romans was "carnal" and "sold under son." This is ridiculous.

The use of the present tense in verse 14 does not refer to present time, but to a present condition. Every Jew who faced the law without the resources of grace found his condition as "carnal" and "sold under sin."

In contrast to Jewish's defeat under law is the victory of a Christian under grace. Because the Christian is free from law and in possession of "born again" life by the power of the Spirit, he is also free from the power of sin. Paul sets up dualism between Adam and Christ (5), those under law and those under grace (6), between the dead and the living (7), and between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" in chapter 8. All Christians are "in Christ." All are "in the Spirit." All unsaved people are said to be "in the flesh."

The Man of Romans Seven

For centuries Bible scholars have wrestled with the interpretation of Romans 7:14-25. Is this passage a description of Paul's experience before or after his conversion to Christ?

There are those who regard Romans 7 existentially by applying it to the believer's struggle with intrinsic sin. They interpret the phrase, "I am carnal sold under sin" as referring to a Christian struggling with sin in his personal life. Unwittingly, this view normalizes failure in the Christian life and denigrates the gospel.

Another view of Romans 7 is that Paul is addressing the unbeliever's struggle with the tyranny of sin. They interpret the phrase, "I am carnal sold under sin" as referring to the plight of unregenerate men facing the demands of law. The challenge with this view is that it fails to address the context of Jews facing the demands of Torah.

I am prone to interpret Romans 7:14-25 as referring to the plight of unregenerate Jews facing the demands of law for the following reasons:

Historical Context: Most treatments of Romans 7:14-25 do so either in light of their own personal experience (multiple moral failures) or in light of modern psychology (the introspective psychological Christian culture) rather than in light of the historical context. People error because they are too quick to read their personal experience into Romans 7. This passage must be interpreted in light of its historical context.

Paul's letter was written to a Roman community containing both Jews and Gentiles. The friction between the Jews (vegetarians) and the Gentiles (meat eaters) surfaced in chapter 14. Each ethnic group had its own challenges. At times in Paul's letter he addresses the issue facing each party. For example: Paul addresses the historical Gentile problem in chapter one—their total debauchery. In chapter two, Paul addresses the historical Jewish problem—total hypocrisy. The different issues facing the two communities is brought out again in Romans 9-11.

The literary context: The Book of Romans is a legal work, i.e. he discusses the gospel in forensic terms. The subject of justification, freedom from the guilt of sin is discussed in Romans 3:21-5:11. The subject of sanctification, freedom from the power of sin is addressed in Romans 5:12-8:4. In Romans 5:12ff, Paul discusses the history of two heads, Adam the head of the human race, and Christ, the Head of God's new creation. In Adam's family, sin reigned. When the Law entered, sin increased.

In Christ's family, righteousness reigns because men are no longer under law without the power of the Spirit, but under the resources of grace, i.e. under the Spirit of God, by virtue of the believers identification with Christ (6:1-10). In Romans 8, the members belonging to these two federal heads are introduced as "flesh" (unregenerate men) and "spirit" (regenerate men).

The History of Adam & Christ

Two headships	Adam	Christ
Two acts	One trespass	One righteous
Two judgments	Condemnation	Justification
Two reigns	Sin & death	Life reigns
Two kings	Law	Grace
Two effects	Many died	Many made righteous
Two principles	Wages (6:23)	Free gift
Two states	Slaves of death	Slaves of righteousness
Two classifications	Flesh (Romans 8)	Spirit (Romans 8)

The Immediate Context:

In Romans 7:1, Paul is obviously addressing Jews and not Gentiles. "Know ye not, brethren (Jewish brethren), for I speak to them that know

the Law (Torah), how that the Law (Torah) hath dominion over a man (Jewish man) as long as he liveth? He is addressing Jews exclusively from chapter 7:1 through 7:25.

Romans 6

Romans 7

Romans 8

Applies to Jew & Gentile

Applies to Jews

Applies to Jew & Gentile

Parenthetical nature of Romans 7: Romans 6:14-7:4 is Paul first great parenthetical thought in the book where he stops to address the place of law in Jewish life. His second parenthetical thought is in Romans 9-10 where he addresses the place of Israel in God's gospel plan.

Romans 6

Romans 7

Romans 8

Freedom from sin

Freedom from Law

Freedom from sin

The need to address the place of law: When Paul said, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace" (6:14), every Jew listening to Paul's letter being read in the Roman assembly would have "hit the ceiling." Can't you hear them say, "Paul, what do ya mean 'sin shall not have dominion over us' because we are not under law? If the law has no place in our sanctification, why did God give it to us anyway? Why are you betraying our Jewish faith with your antinomian teaching?"

This was **no** small issue to the Jewish mind. **Romans 7 is Paul's answer to the Jewish struggle.**

Paul has another parenthetical argument in Romans 9-11 where he addresses another Jewish problem. Because Romans 9 is parenthetical, Romans 12:1 should follow Romans 8:39 logically. Likewise, Romans 8:1-4 should follow Romans 6:14 logically.

The critical questions

A key to sanctification and the topic addressed in Romans 7 is freedom Torah.

The word “law” is mentioned 29 times between 6:14 and 8:4. Paul declared all Jews free from the Law (Romans 6:14:7:1-10; Galatians 5:1ff). The critical questions being answered in chapter seven is peculiar to the Jewish mind:

“If freedom from sin is related to freedom from law, is something wrong with God’s law?”

And secondly, “If freedom from sin is due in part to freedom from Torah, how then can a man be righteous apart from instructions of Torah?”

Every Jewish boy was taught the Torah by his parents and attended synagogue school to learn about Torah. At 12 he became a *ben-Torah*, that is, a son-of-the-law, responsible to the Law. He learned to read, quote, love, and honor the Torah. Now, Paul appeared to contradict the very faith which Jews loved. These questions had to be answered in the Jewish mind if the Jews were going to completely embrace Paul’s gospel.

The Gentiles in the congregation were never under Torah. Galatians 3:4 makes this clear:

“Wherefore the Law was our (Jews only) schoolmaster to bring us (Jews) unto Christ, that we (Jews) might be justified by faith.”

By “law,” Paul means the Jewish Torah with all its regulations, ceremonies, codes regarding circumcision and the keeping of feast days.

To Paul, the Torah served God’s purpose between Moses and the time of Christ. When Paul uses the phrase “our schoolmaster,” *ono, moj paidagwgo.j hmw/n ge,gonen eivj Cristo,n* (the law became our schoolmaster unto Christ), he does **not** mean “we Gentiles.” He means “we Jews,” i.e. those Jews living between Sinai and Calvary.

[Note that in the Book of Galatians, “the law” seems to include Rabbinical Case Law]

Paul's point is that Christ, the Living Torah, has replaced the old *paidagogos*. Torah was an imperfect objective expression of righteousness and a cultic tool to isolate the Jew until Christ arrived in history. Christ is the perfect, subjective expression of God's righteousness that embraces both Jews and Gentiles into eschatological family. No longer would Torah be the guide: "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Christ is the Word, the bread, the life, the shepherd of God's people. All that the Torah meant to the Jewish community, Christ means to new covenant community. God never intended for Torah to be placed as yoke on the neck of Gentiles, and Paul fought fiercely to free the Gentiles from the bondage that formerly shackled the Jewish nation (Galatians 5).

In summary, Romans 7 addresses a Jewish problem relating to the law during the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant in the first century. The issue being addressed was not a Gentile bone of contention, though the Gentile had much to learn from this historic transition.

In Romans 7, Paul addressed the Jewish believers in the church at Rome:

"I am speaking to men who know the Law (the Torah)."



Before Christ lived and died, the Jewish people were married to the Law. The Torah was like a husband who had dominion over them. But since believing Jews shared in the benefits of Christ death, burial, and resurrection, their relationship to Torah ended. Married to Christ, they were "released from the Law to serve in the new way of the Spirit" (7:1-6).

Note the Greek dualism being created between Adam's family, those in the "flesh," and Christ's family, those "in the Spirit" (Romans 8).

The "I" (, ego) of Romans 7 should not be taken in an autobiographical sense, but in a literary sense.

He identifies the "I" as one who is "carnal" and "sold under sin." Surely, this is not Paul the Apostle! Paul's use of "I" is representative of what was generally true in the experience of all Jews under Torah. (Personally, Paul learned at the feet of Gamaliel, the great doctor of law, and felt himself blameless when he measured himself by the Law — Philippians 3:4-6). The "I" is representative of unregenerate Israel. This is **not** Paul's experience, **nor** is it the "normal Christian experience." The normal Christian experience is freedom of sin (8:2-4).

"I" is representative of what is generally true of all Israel. The pronoun "I" is Israel.

The virtue of Torah (7:12, 14): Torah was "holy," "just," "good," and "spiritual." If there was a problem with the Law, it was this: The Law could tell a man what was right, but it did not supply him with the power to do what was right. Every Jew faced the demands of the Law with meager resources—the resources of fallen, unregenerate human nature.

When Paul says, "We (Jews) know the Law is spiritual: but I (representative of "we Jews") am carnal, sold under sin," Paul is stating that the problem with the dominion of sin in the life of Jews was not due to inadequacy of the Law, but the inadequacy of fallen humanity.

By using the term "I am carnal," Paul is **not** addressing his Christian experience. He is **not** speaking as "born-again" Christian who could not escape from the tyranny of sin. He is **not** discussing his personal gestalt, but the historical Jewish dilemma. As a Christian, Paul declared "freedom from sin" (6:1, 11) freedom from law (6:14), and freedom from condemnation (8:1) to all who are "in Christ" (8:1, 9).

Grammar: When Paul uses the verb “I am” (eivmi), a present, active, indicative, 1st person, singular, he uses the present tense to describe the present condition of every Jew at the time he was facing the Law with only the resources of unregenerate flesh. He uses the present tense because in verse one Paul’s audience are ones that presently “know” (ginw,skousin, present participle) the law. It is much easier to speak in the present tense about a general experience in an undefined past when the argument is complicated. The problem of verbal-noun agreement in matching the “was” and “is” and “shall be” with the “I” “they” “we” and “them” can certainly be understood. One can see the difficulty verbal-noun agreement in Paul’s discourse when one sees that

Paul uses the Greek present, aorist, perfect, imperfect, and future tense in the course of his argument in 7:1-13. Paul did not use the aorist, the historical tense in section 7:14ff because Paul’s argument is not autobiographical, but theological. He argues from first person using the present tense as representative of what was or is that “is” generally true in the pre-conversion experience of the Jew.

If we take “I am,” a present tense, which means an act or condition that is durative in the present an isolate it from the context, we must conclude that Paul was writing his masterpiece to the Romans in an “unspiritual” state. Is Paul really saying that at the moment he was writing Romans, “I am carnal” that the apostle Paul was actually in a carnal, defeated, unspiritual state?

There is no justification to for Paul to switch his address from discussing the failure of unregenerate Jews under law to discussing the supposed failure of Christians under grace. What kind of gospel is that?

When Paul says, “I delight in the Law of God after the inward man” he is speaking as a Jew who learned to love and honor God’s Law, something, by the way, many non-Christians do today. However, the chasm between respecting the Law and obedience to law was great. Paul adds about the

Jewish experience, “I (representative of Jews) find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me (the unregenerate Jew).”

When Paul says, “Oh wretched man that I am” he is **not** describing his Christian experience. He is describing the plight of all conscientious Jews. The plight of Israel was wretched because they faced a pure, true, holy law with only the resources of human nature.

In Romans 8:1-4, Paul describes the condition of regenerate men in reference to the Jewish problem. What the Law could not do, i.e. empower men to keep it, the Spirit of Life does when men participate in Christ. In Christ, men not only know what is right, they are empowered by the regenerative powers of the Spirit to reflect God’s character. Two states are discussed: “the flesh” representative of all unregenerate Jews (and unregenerate Gentiles), and “the Spirit” representative of all those who participate in Christ (regenerate Jews and Gentiles).

Paul finishes his argument in by saying, “You (Jews in Rome) are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, it the Spirit of God dwells in you (regeneration). Now if any man (Jews or Gentiles) have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not in the family of Christ (Spirit), but still a member of the family of Adam (flesh)” (8:9). It is **not** possible for a Christian to be “in the Spirit” and “in the flesh” according to Paul’s argument in Romans 8. All Christians are “in the Spirit” regardless of the degree of their sanctification.

All non-Christians are “in the flesh” regardless of the degree of their wretchedness or goodness. In using the terms “flesh” and “Spirit,” Paul is not addressing a man’s individual immediate spiritual state **but** the locus of his being—“in the flesh” (unregenerate in Adam) or “in the Spirit” (regenerate in Christ).

Historically speaking, God’s new eschatological community, His new humanity, was being created through gospel proclamation. Two classes of people emerged: Adam’s kindred and Christ’s kindred, or members of the

old creation or members of the new creation, or the “flesh” and the “Spirit.”

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE “IN THE SPIRIT” OR “IN CHRIST.”

ALL NON CHRISTIANS ARE “IN THE FLESH” OR “IN ADAM.”

A Little Theology

What is true historically, the tension between flesh (unregenerate men) and Spirit (regenerate men), between Jews and Christians, can also be seen in one’s personal gestalt (Galatians 5:16-22). While the believer is “born again,” he is only half born again, i.e. his inner man is united with Christ but his “body” or “members” remains un-regenerate.

Sin remains, but it does **not** reign.

Neither justification nor sanctification removes sin completely from the believer. There is a tension between the unregenerate and regenerate part of the believer. For this reason, Paul commands the regenerate Romans to offer their unregenerate bodies on the altar of worship in Romans 12:1.

However, Paul is **not** addressing the individual’s personal gestalt in Romans 7. He is addressing the larger issue, the historical transition from law to grace taking place in the first century and the rule of life which characterizes God’s new society (those “in the Spirit” called “saints”) -- God’s eschatological people who share in the blessing of God’s eschatological Spirit in a first fruits way. Fulfillment is **now** (justification); consummation (glorification) is **not-yet**. The tension between the Age to Come and the this Present Evil Age is active in the believer’s personal experience because he is a “new creation” living in a body germane to the “old creation.”

In Conclusion, Romans 7 is one of many parenthetical thoughts in Romans where Paul digresses to discuss the historical transition taking place in history between life under the Old Covenant and life under the

New Covenant. All of Romans seven addresses the plight of the unregenerate Jews facing God's Law without the resources of the Spirit. The passage is not autobiographical nor is it typical of the Christian experience.

Paul's good news is that in the Gospel of Grace, the Spirit unites men to Christ to participate in the life of Christ. This means freedom from sin, from law, and from condemnation. Because Jews were no longer under Law seeking to produce righteousness with their own resources, but under grace and the resources of a victorious federal Head, the Jewish believer could experience freedom from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

When Paul says, "I am carnal, sold under sin" Paul is not speaking autobiographically. Personally, Paul saw himself as "blameless" in reference to the Law (Philippians 3:6). Nor is Paul speaking autobiographically as a Christian. He did not experience defeat after he became a Christian, but before he came to faith.

Can anyone take seriously the idea that at the moment he was writing to Romans he was "carnal, sold under sin?" Remember, he uses the present tense, "I am."

Rather, Paul uses the literary "I" to represent what was generally true of all Israel who faced the demands of holiness in the power of their own resources, and he uses "am" a present tense to discuss the state of being that all Jews felt when they honestly faced the demands of law sometime in an undefined past.

Application: In Romans, Paul the Attorney is pressing his argument about the virtues of the Gospel in contrast to vices of paganism and cultic Judaism. Alien righteousness outside the man is available in the gospel when it is received by faith (justification). But, practical righteousness is possible because the Spirit of God takes the believer out of Adam and places him into Christ to participate in blessing of grace (sanctification).

Paul is **not** saying that defeat was his normal Christian experience until he found “deeper life truths.” Paul is saying that deliverance from the tyranny of sin is possible because the believer now participates in the victorious history of Christ. Paul is **not** teaching perfectionism, he is teaching that believers are indeed “dead to sin and alive to God.”

Secondly, while we regard the doctrine of “sinless perfectionism” a great heresy, we **must** regard *contentment with sinful imperfection a greater heresy*. Defeat is not standard. Being “carnal” is not the normal Christian experience. Victory over sin is proclaimed in Christ when the gospel is believed.

Unlike justification, there is something efficient about the Spirit regenerating men (Romans 5:5) and “placing them” into Christ’s victorious history. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17), a child of God (Ephesians 5:1-3), and a member of God’s new humanity (Ephesians 2). Dead to sin, he cannot be sin’s slave any longer (Romans 6:14). Impossible!

In the gospel men have all the resources they need to live a victorious Christian life—resources Jews did not have under Torah. Victory, not defeat, is the normal Christian experience. Think it. Believe it. Live it.

Lecture presented to a forum of seminary students and faculty at Trinity Seminary working through unresolved issues related to theology circa 2001-2002.

FLESH OR SPIRIT

ROMANS 8



Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The “therefore” refers back to Paul’s treatise on the plight of unredeemed Jews in chapter 7 – that while they knew the law of God they were carnal without

power to keep the law.

This text is the heart of Paul’s gospel: now that Christ has come and offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, there is not now nor ever will be “condemnation” for those “in Christ Jesus.” “In Christ” stands in juxtaposition to those who are “in Adam” (Romans 5:12ff) experiencing the tyranny of sin reigning over them.

“walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” is not found in early manuscripts. Apparently, some zealous scribe added the words in order to employ the existing church to be more spiritual.

The point of this passage is that since Christ was judged for the sins of the elect, there is not one drop of wrath left for the believer to endure. He is free of guilt and free from the power of sin (See Hebrews 10).

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

The “law of the Spirit of life” defines a rule that life reigns in those who have been baptized into the history of Christ, the Second Adam (Romans

6:1-14); i.e. the “law of sin and death” identifies the effects on those who share the bonds of men living under the tyrannical history of the first Adam.

When a man believes, the Spirit takes the man out of Adam and places him into Christ so he may share in the marvelous benefits of His triumphal history. Paul is discussing a change in position or residence in relation to Adam.

Paul uses the word “baptism” (baptize) to describe the change of status for one who believes. The word “baptize” (6:3-4) simply means “to be placed into.” It has nothing to do with water baptism and everything to do with a change in one’s spiritual position or citizenship. It has nothing to do with experience and everything to do with a change in standing.

By way of illustration, the believer is not in some old downtown bus terminal looking for a ride to some city ghetto, but in a modern airport flying a new jet out of bondage to freedom.

Because he is “in Christ,” He is alive to God and dead to sin” (Romans 6:11). Sin cannot reign over him. Life reigns.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

The Jews saw the law (Torah and the Talmud) as a mediator between God and man. The problem with this diegesis is that the law told a man what was right, but it did not empower the man to do what was right. The law is good, but it provided no power to do good.

But, in the economy of the gospel, the Spirit saves the believer from the penalty of sin and then proceeds to empower the man to keep the law.

“weak through the flesh” exposes the inability of sinful man to keep the law.

Notice “those in the flesh” (sarx) are unsaved, un-regenerated men still in Adam; “those in the Spirit” are redeemed men, Christian men. The “flesh” is not a reference to the sin nature any more than spirit is a reference to the spiritual nature.

Paul is addressing two categories of men: (1) those in Adam or “the flesh;” and, (2) those in Christ or “the Spirit.” He is **not** addressing the alleged hypothesis of “two natures within Christian men.” All Christians are “in the Spirit;” and, all non-Christians are “in the flesh” or “in Adam.” No man can be “in the Spirit” and “in the flesh” at the same time.

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

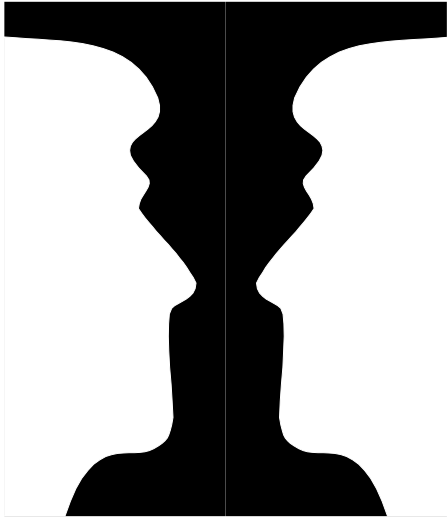
The purpose of salvation is to save men from the power of sin and from lawlessness.

Christ died for our sins and gave believing men His Spirit, not to free them from the law, but to empower them to keep his law. It is true, believers are not saved by law; but, they are saved in order to keep the law.

This text is a blow to antinomianism – the belief that the Christian man has no duty to God’s moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments and relevant case law. Few things are more derelict than the presumption that men are free to choose what law they will serve. Christian men are saved from the power of sin and given the power to honor, to keep, and to obey God’s law.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The “they” refers to unsaved, un-regenerated men; i.e. unbelieving Jews in chapter 7.



“The flesh” refers to carnal, unsaved, un-regenerated men such as Jews. “The Spirit” refers to justified, born again, regenerated men.

The preposition “after” does not refer to actions of chasing “the flesh,” but to one’s being . . . or state of existence.

The New Living Translation translates the word “flesh” (sarx) as “sinful nature” in this section creating a false dichotomy that twists

the gospel. Paul is **not** addressing the believer’s personal gestalt, but two classes of humanity – the saved and the unsaved, those in the flesh and those in the Spirit. Paul is **not** teaching that the individual Christian is a Dr. Jekyll and a Dr. Hyde . . . men with two natures, one good and the other evil . . . men having a black dog and a white dog living inside them. God forbid!

Christians are not bifurcated. They do not have two personalities, two natures, or a “double” mind.

If Christians have a conflict, it is not between two spiritual natures but the fact that the redeemed man still lives in an unredeemed body.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

The word “minded” (phronema) refers to the anchor, core, or inner engines of one’s thoughts. The word “carnally” (sarx) refers to the orientation of unsaved, un-regenerate men in Adam (Romans 5:12ff).

Unsaved men love the world of death, think death, and do things that produce death. But, saved men are “spiritually minded” (genitive); i.e. their thinking is driven by, energized by, and directed by the Spirit which embodies “life and peace.” (See Proverbs 8:36)

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity (echthra) against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The “carnal mind” refers to the driving force or thinking process of unsaved, un-regenerated, unredeemed men who are hostile (echthra) to God. It is not possible for natural, carnal men in Adam to gladly subject themselves to the “law of God.” Nor is it possible for unsaved Jews trained in the law to do what the law requires – they are carnal -- sold under sin (Romans 7).

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

“flesh” (sarx) is not describing a “carnal-minded Christian.” It is addressing the fact that the unredeemed man does not have the capacity to obey God’s law and to please Him. Every thought, word, and deed of Adam’s children leads to death of relationships.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

“ye” refers to Roman Christians, saved Jews and Gentiles. Believers are not in Adam; they are not in the sarx (flesh) without a capacity to do what is right. Christians are part of a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); those in the sarx are a part of the old creation in Adam.

The conjunction “but” (alla) is a strong adversity. Christians are “in the Spirit.” Every believer, the mature and immature, are in the Spirit; i.e. “in Christ” sharing the power of His marvelous, victorious history (Romans 6:1-14).

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

“you” is plural referring to the Roman Christians.

Paul now introduces a true dichotomy – the difference between the soul (spirit) and the body. The soul of the believer is saved; that is, it is energized or “born again” by the “life” of the “Spirit.” Though his soul is saved, his body is “unredeemed”; that is, his spirit is governed by the life of the Spirit, but his body is not-yet regenerated. Consequently, there is an actual tension between the saved soul of a man and his unredeemed body (Romans 12:1).

God’s salvation plan involves not only the soul, but the whole man.

The redemption of the body (Romans 8:11ff) awaits the coming of Christ at the end of history (Romans 8:11-16).

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Verses 11- 27 transition from matters of the soul to matter of the body: adoption, redemption, subjection to the spirit, the Spirit's help with physical infirmities, and the hope of a redeemed creation.

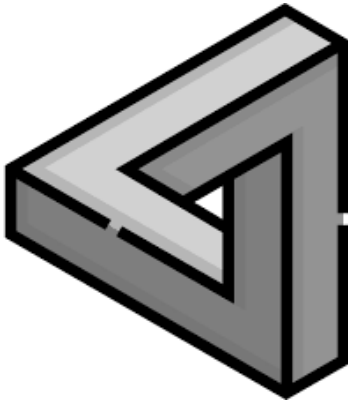
Until then, the Christian, gladly lives his life by the power of the Spirit bringing his body into subjection to the will of God. He believes in Providence knowing that out of struggle, good comes.

FIVE IMPOSSIBILITIES

ROMANS 8:31-36

We now come to Paul's conclusion regarding the gospel wherein he states five impossibilities for His elect.

First Impossibility



Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

This is arguably one of the greatest verses in the Bible. It was John Calvin's life verse. *If God is for us, who cares who is against us?* Furthermore, it was Melancthon's favorite verse.

Two great men stood side by side in the early Reformation movement. One was Martin Luther, the thrashing activist, and the other was Philip Melancthon, the refined scholar. Luther once said of their relationship:

I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike, fighting against innumerable monsters and devils. I am born for the removing of stumps and stones, cutting away thistles and thorns, and clearing the wild forests; but master Philippus comes along softly and gently, sowing and watering with joy, according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him.

Where did Melancthon get his strength? What made this gentle, retiring man stand with Luther against the crushing powers of the papacy? The heart of the text, Romans 8:31, gives the answer:

If God be for us, who can be against us?

In his lectures and correspondence, that verse is quoted more than any other Scripture. It still hangs on his study wall in Wittenberg where

visitors can see it. As the record has it, when Melanchthon sensed he was dying he asked to be placed on a portable bed in his study because that is where he was happiest. When the pastor read Romans 8:31, Melanchthon exclaimed,

“Read those words again!”

The pastor by his side read,

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Melanchthon murmured in a kind of ecstasy,

“That’s it! That’s it!”

This text had always been the greatest comfort to him. In the darkest hours of his life when death's cold stare threatened, he comforted himself again by reciting, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Mounce:

"Nowhere in the annals of sacred literature do we find anything to match the power and beauty of this remarkable paean of praise."

Jamieson & Fausset:

"This whole passage strikes all thoughtful interpreters and readers, as transcending almost everything in language"

William Newell explains our difficulty in appreciating our text:

“Our weak hearts, prone to legalism and unbelief, receive these words with great difficulty: God is for us . . . They have failed Him; but He is for them. They are ignorant; but He is for them. They have not-yet brought forth much fruit; but He is for them. (Romans 8: Expository Notes Verse by Verse)

You may assume that those of us who are always before the public speaking of the blessed promises of God are never downcast or heartbroken. You are mistaken. We have been there, and perhaps we know how to say a word in season to any who are now going through similar experiences. With many enterprises on my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat on this promise of my God, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" [Unknown. Preceptaustin.org].

Newell is correct! We are legalists by nature with a performance-based theology. We feel like God is for us when we are dutiful to our Christian responsibilities, and we feel God is against us when we sin and fail Him. We feel God's favor shines upon us when prosperity knocks at our door, and that God is against us when adversity storms our gate. With knowledge of His law our own weaknesses and failures fuel the furnace of doubt as to whether God is for us. The marvelous truth in this text is that God is greater than our weaknesses, greater than our sins, greater than our failures, greater than our disappointments, and greater than our adversaries. It is no test of faith to believe God is with us when we succeed and have money in the bank, but it is a test of faith to believe God is with us when we fail and our purse is empty. Thus, the great response of faith in Romans is to consent to be loved though unworthy; i.e. at all times, good and bad, to take sufficient comfort from the truth, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE TEXT

Literally, Romans 8:31 can be translated, "If God for us, who against us?"

This is the beginning of Paul's conclusion regarding his great treatise on the gospel of the Son of God (Romans 1-8).

“If God be for us” is a first class conditional in Greek and must be rendered, “Since God is for us . . .” “If God is for us” is not a question. The major premise is not in doubt. The question raised is rather an enemy can be equal to the power of Almighty God . . . and, the answer, of course, is a trumpet blast, “NO ONE!”

The “us” here does not refer to all men howbeit religious, or all Americans. It refers to Christians; that is, to His elect—to those who believe and are justified in His sight (See 8:28-30).

The word “who” can also be translated “what?” Since God is for us, there is no one or no circumstance that can be against us.

The word “for” (huper) is a preposition meaning “above” or “around.” If God surrounds us, who or what can break through His impregnable fortress to bury us? Nothing!

Note the word “things” (8:37). It references our physical “weakness” (8:26) and “sufferings” in this present evil age (8:18). All pain, agony, and terror connected with sickness and disease and poverty are simply summed up under the term “these things.” All our Herculean concerns about life and death are shriveled into two words: “these things” — “things” which are degraded as having little weight in the big scheme of God’s redemptive plan.

Denney adds:

The idea underlying all that precedes is that of the suffering to be endured by those who would share Christ’s glory (Romans 8:17-note). The apostle has disparaged the suffering in comparison with the glory (Romans 8:18-note); he has interpreted it (Ro 8:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 as in a manner prophetic of the glory; he has in these last verses asserted the presence through all the Christian’s life of an eternal victorious purpose of love: all this is included in ‘these

things.' (Nicoll, W Robertson, Editor: Expositors Greek Testament: 5 Volumes. Out of print. Search Google)

When *Chrysostom* was brought before the Roman Emperor, the Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied,

"Thou canst not banish me for this world is my father's house."

"But I will slay thee," said the Emperor.

"Nay, thou canst not," said the noble champion of the faith, "for my life is hid with Christ in God."

"I will take away thy treasures."

"Nay, but thou canst not for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there."

"But I will drive thee away from man and thou shalt have no friend left."

"Nay, thou canst not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee; for there is nothing that thou canst do to hurt me."

On this text, *Ray Stedman* illustrates as follows:

"Now, that is a wonderful statement, and, in times of doubt, I suggest that you try to answer these questions...Now, what is the effect of this realization? It is clear from this passage that it is the removal of fear. If God is for us, who can be against us? All fear of successful opposition is removed. It is not that there is no opposition. The Law is still there, the Sin nature is still there, the flesh nature is still there -- there is still going to be opposition (1Pe 2:11-note Gal 5:16-note; Gal 5:17-note; Gal 5:18-note). But Paul is saying, "If God is for us, what

difference does it make?" A few weeks ago at our elders' meeting, Barney Brogan was telling us about his grandson. His daughter has moved to Missouri with the boys. As some of you know, their father is Chicano, and the children look like their dad. Their 13-year-old ran into a tremendous nest of White Supremacy at school. Because of the prejudice against blacks and Chicanos, that little innocent lad began to suffer very unjust torment and persecution. He didn't understand it; he came home weeping, beaten up because of his looks. His mother didn't know what to do, and so she wrote and asked us to pray for this situation, and we did. A week or so later a letter came back and described how one night the biggest kid in school appeared at their door and said that he was a Christian, that he knew they were Christians, and that he had come to tell them that he had gone to every kid in school who had beat up on the boy and told them that if they ever did anything like that again, they would answer to him. I don't know what that boy's name was, but let's call him Mike. I can imagine this little boy going back to school, walking in the shadow of Mike, with all his tormentors looking at him. He probably would be saying to himself, "If Mike is for me, who can be against me?" That is what God is saying here." (If God be For Us)

The opposite of this thought is also true: *If God be against you, who can be for you?* If you are God's enemy, your blessings are temporary and your troubles are permanent (Proverbs 1:26). Your pleasures are like the dew which quickly disappear and your pains are like boulders on your chest. Whether you have adversity or prosperity, so long as God is against you, you face eternal perils. Consider this: If God be against me, what then? What will become of me when eternity knocks at my door? What will happen to me when I die? How can I stand in the Day of Judgment? Just as there is certainty for the child of God that God is for him, there is

certainty for the Christ-neglector that God is against him. Nothing he owns will shadow him from the fires of judgment.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Though earth, hell, and all their armies come against you; if the Lord of Hosts surrounds your camp, you shall scatter them like toy soldiers. When Hezekiah went to bed in Jerusalem with the Assyrian army around his throat, he woke up to vultures feeding on the dead bodies Sennacherib’s soldiers. Likewise, you shall know the favor of the Lord for all eternity.

Second Impossibility

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32 o[j ge tou/ ivdi,ou ui`ou/ ouvkv evfei,sato avlla. u`pe.r h`mw/n pa,ntwn pare,dwken avto,n(pw/j ouvci. kai. su.n avtw/| ta. pa,nta h`mi/n cari,setaiÈ

S Lewis Johnson states the following:

Romans 5:8-10 and Romans 8:32 appear to me to be unanswerable texts for those who deny the scriptural teaching of Christ's substitutionary atonement. These passages state plainly that, if Jesus gave Himself for us in atonement, everything else must follow because, having done the most that He could do in dying as our substitute, the lesser things — such as conviction of sin, repentance, effectual grace, faith — must inevitably follow. God's great eternal purpose, expressed so beautifully in 8:28-30, must reach its fruition in glorification for all those for whom He died."

Observations about the text:

First, notice the word “spared” (pheidomia). It means to save from loss or discomfort. In some contexts it means to refrain from doing something (2 Corinthians 12:6).

The word "spared" is the same as in the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 22 in reference to the sacrifice of Isaac.

Genesis 22:12 And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld (Hebrew = chasak = withhold, keep back, spare; LXX = pheidomai) your son, your only son, from Me."

Genesis 22:16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son

In providing His only Son as the sacrifice for our sins, God was showing His ultimate provision for our needs, even as foreshadowed in Genesis 22 where Abraham experienced the reality that it is the LORD Who Provides the Lamb on the Cross by the shadow of the ram caught in the thicket. The God who sees our needs and provides a lamb for our sins is known as Jehovah Jireh.

The term "delivered Him up" (from paradidomi: para = alongside + didomi = to give) means to hand over to someone; using legal parlance it refers to delivering one into the custody or power of another to be judged or condemned. In the NASB it is translated betray(17), betrayed(10), betraying(9), betrays(3), commended(1), committed(3), deliver(6), delivered(21), delivered over(1), delivering(3), entrusted(3), entrusting(1), gave(4), gave...over(3), given...over(1), hand(6), handed(9), handed...over(1), handed down(4), handed over(4), hands(1), permits(1), put(1), putting(1), risked(1), surrender(1), taken into custody(2), turn...over(1).

Notice its usage in other parts of Scripture especially in Romans four:

Romans 4:25 He who was delivered (paradidomi) over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Matthew 10:17 "But beware of men; for they will deliver (paradidomi) you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues... 10:19 "But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given (paradidomi) you in that hour what you are to speak... 10:21 "And brother will deliver up (paradidomi) brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Mark 15:1 And early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away, and delivered Him up (paradidomi) to Pilate.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed (paradidomi) them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

Second, notice the adversative "but" (alla). It highlights a power contrast—a dynamic action unknown among humanity. God did not spare His Son, BUT gave him up for us—not for good men or righteous men but for "helpless" "sinners" and "enemies" of God. Such benevolence is simply incomprehensible!

Third, notice the word "above" (huper) or "for." It means "above" or "in place of." Thus, we have the doctrine of substitution wrapped up in this preposition. Its use in Galatians 3:10 and 3:13 is interesting. The sinner is described as being "under" (huper) a curse (3:10); that is, like a wife of King Henry the VIII, our neck is on the block and we have an executioner holding a sword over our body ready to lop off our head. But, the text says, Christ became a "curse above (huper) us;" i.e. He stepped between us and the executioner and received the blow belonging to us. The sword reached him, but it did not touch us.

Fourth, notice the term "freely give" (charizomai) in the question, "Will He not freely give us all things." The gift of "all things" refers back to the "good" (8:28), the "image of His Son" (8:29) to "glorification" (8:30), and to the "redemption of the body" (8:28). "Freely give" references the excelling grace (charis) or gratuity of God towards His beloved.

The specific meaning of *charizomai* depends on the context in which it is used. In the NASB, it is translated as follows: bestowed(1), forgave(2), forgive(3), forgiven(4), forgiving(2), freely give(1), given(1), graciously forgave(1), granted(5), hand(2), things freely given(1).

Half of the uses of *charizomai* in the NT convey the sense of granting forgiveness, both Divine and human -- to forgive out of grace, doing it freely and graciously.

In Luke 7:42 this meaning overlaps with the forgiving or canceling of a debt, which is what one does when they forgive another person.

In Acts 25:11, 16 *charizomai* is parlance for putting Paul under the custody of Roman authorities. In Greece, *charizomai* was a political term used by politicians rewarding civil servants for their beneficence. See its usage in the following texts:

Luke 7:21 At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind.

Luke 7:42-43 "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Acts 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,

2 Corinthians 2:7 so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

2 Corinthians 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

Ephesians 4:32 (note) And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Spurgeon shares the following:

“Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical, -- we must walk in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things shall be in our actual possession; and meanwhile, according to our capacity for receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.”

MacArthur picks up on the fact that *charizomai* includes the blessing of forgiveness.

“It therefore seems reasonable to interpret Paul’s use of *charizomai* in Romans 8:32 as including the idea of God’s gracious forgiveness as well as His gracious giving. If so, the apostle is also saying that God freely forgives us all things (cf. 1 John 1:9). God’s unlimited forgiveness makes it impossible for a believer to sin himself out of God’s grace.” (MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos)

Considering the many uses the verb *charizomai*, it is reasonable to interpret passage as freely gives and freely forgives all things. Paul, the rhetorician, appeals to our sense of logic. If God has already given us the greatest gift (His Son), will He not give us the smaller ones? If He has already paid the ultimate price for our souls, will He hesitate to spend auxiliary fees for our simpler needs?

Finally, notice the question. It is framed with a negation. Like all of God’s bundle of promises, they must be appropriated by faith to be enjoyed; that is, too many of us are not taking sufficient comfort from the promises of God. We’re living like beggars fearful of where we are going to get our next meal. Genuine faith does not ask, “Can He?” or “How shall He?” but “How shall He not” give us all things? Now that God has given us His Son, it’s just not possible not to receive the rest of inheritance!!

Stedman writes:

“He who has already given us the best, the greatest, the dearest, the most precious thing He has, and Who did so while we were sinners -- while we were enemies, while we were helpless -- will He not also give us some of these trivial, piddling little things that we need? If someone thinks enough of you to give you a costly, brilliant, beautiful, flawless diamond, do you think he will object when you ask him for the box that goes with it? If a mother will give up a baby, do you think she will object if they ask to take his clothes too? And if God has given us his own Son already, do you really think

God is going to withhold anything else that we need? Paul's argument is unanswerable: Of course he won't. We can say with David in the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," [Psalm 23:1ff], [If God be For Us]."

Spurgeon commenting on *He freely gives* expresses it so eloquently:

"If this is not a promise in form, it is in fact. Indeed, it is more than one promise, it is a conglomerate of promises. It is a mass of rubies and emeralds and diamonds, with a nugget of gold for their setting. It is a question which can never be answered so as to cause us any anxiety of heart. What can the Lord deny us after giving us Jesus? If we need all things in heaven and earth, He will grant them to us: for if there had been a limit anywhere, He would have kept back His own Son."

Third Impossibility

Romans 8:33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

A charge against God's elect? Paul takes us into the Courtroom. Before us is the Supreme Judge of the Universe. The books are opened. The Ten Commandments hang on the wall. Cases are being heard. Verdicts are given. Sentences are handed out. Then, you hear your name? The accuser steps forward with piles of documents. You know him. He knows you! He questions your Christianity and preys the court to hear his complaint against you. The Judge says to the accuser, "You may proceed. What is your cause of action?" In a matter of minutes your accuser shares the most vile, embarrassing, damnable secrets of your life. Your jaw drops open and fear sucks all the oxygen out of the Courtroom. Your knees knock and your fingers quiver. The real you has been discovered!

Suddenly, the Judge interrupts the accuser and says, "Enough? This case is dismissed! You have no standing in this courtroom. This case has already been tried." The judge looks at you and says, "You are free to go.

Have a good day!" Still sweating and trembling, you manage to ramble out of the chambers looking for a bench where you can sit and recover. You find it . . . and begin to analyze what just happened. A verse comes to your mind, "Who shall anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifieth!"

The word "charge" is legal parlance. It is the equivalent of an indictment based on probable cause—a violation of God's law which carries the death penalty. A charge must aver the facts and the law violated. A charge must be written in the form of a complaint (indictment). The complaint must be filed in court and a hearing requested. The Scripture is full of such proceedings (Psalm 50: Micah 6).

The term "elect" refers to one of God's children; that is, those who are the object of God's favor. And you, one of the elect, is a proposed party to the case. Moody once said the elect are the "who wills" and the non-elect are the "who will nots."

Colossians 3:12 . . . those who have been *chosen of God*, holy and beloved" should strive to "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience..."

In the verse, you have the case of "Who v. God's Elect." The pronoun "who" challenges standing. A party who brings the charge must have standing; that is, the accuser must be a real party of interest. Without standing, there can be no commencement of an action. An unauthorized prosecution is a tort and the accuser and the case must be thrown out of the court.

So, what is your defense if you are named as a defendant? What do you do if an accuser files a complaint against you in the Supreme Court? Simply this: One defense is to claim the principle of double jeopardy. Your case has already come before the Judge. Your attorney pleaded your case and declared to the judge that your sins have already been paid for based on the merits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The law does

not permit double jeopardy; that is, multiple punishments for the same offense. If Christ died for your sins, how many sins are left to be paid for? If He took all your punishment for sin at Calvary, how much punishment is left for you to endure? How efficient and effective is the death of Christ for your sins?

Further, if the case has already come before the Court, no accuser has standing and the Judge will not hear the case. Without ratification of commencement, the case cannot proceed.

The word “justifieth” is a forensic term referring to the verdict of the Court. The verdict for those who trust Christ as their Savior is “justified;” that is, declared righteous and treated as such. It is better than “not guilty” or “innocent.” “Justified” is a positive declaration stating your status in God’s Courtroom. It is the same as that of the Lord Jesus Christ—righteous!

The term “God” refers to the Supreme Court and to the Supreme Judge. If the Supreme Judge of all men has declared you righteous, no accuser has standing in His Court and the accusations are null and void. The case is dismissed and all charges dropped *nunc pro tunc* to the beginning of your life.

Thus Paul still has us in a courtroom setting, but now a remarkable change has taken place. While the justified sinner stands before the bench, the call goes out for any accusers to step forward. But none are permitted to come inside the bar because they don’t have standing and the case has already been tried! How could there be? If God has already justified His elect, who can bring additional charges against them? If God, the Supreme Judge, justifies you, then what claimant is going to successfully bring a charge against you?

There is a great illustration of this in the life of Paul.

Acts 25:24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you behold this man about

whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.

Just as Paul's accusers gained a hearing before Festus, stated their charges, and demanded the death penalty, the devil is the accuser of our souls. Oh, those voices inside us that say "he should not live any longer!" He accuses us with shouts of condemnation (Job 1:9, 10, 11 2:4, 5, 6 Zechariah 3:1, 2, 3, 4 Revelation 12:10, 11; 1 Peter 5:8).

This verse grants us permission to not listen to his voice. We must refuse the Devil's summons to hear these thoughts that condemn us, that shame us, that make us feel that there is no hope for us. These thoughts are like little sparrows flitting around us, but we don't have to let them build a nest in our mind. If God does not listen to the charges, neither should we!!

Stedman summarizes it well:

"Who can condemn us when God justifies us? Therefore we refuse to be condemned. We don't do this by ignoring our sin or trying to cover it over, or pretending that it isn't there; we do it by admitting that we fully deserve to be condemned, but that God, through Christ, has already borne our guilt. That is the only way out. That is why Christians should not hesitate to admit their failure and their sin. You will never be justified until you admit it. But when you admit it, then you also can face the full glory of the fact that God justifies the ungodly, and therefore there is no condemnation. (If God be For Us)"

Fourth Impossibility

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who has not sinned and heard a powerful voice shouting, “guilty, guilty?” Guilt is a joy robber. While the Lord wants us to confess and forsake our sin, He doesn’t want His people living on this earth with their heads hanging down, fearful of judgment, and suckin’ on sour pickles because they fail Him. God is greater than a ringing conscience. Thus, we have the remedy for guilt in this verse.

There is no more terrible announcement to a guilty man than, “You are condemned!” Our English word “condemnation” fails to communicate the biting seriousness of the Biblical term. Our English word “condemn” can mean “disagreement” or “censor” or “disapprove.” All our English nuances miscarry the true meaning and emotional impact of the Greek word “condemnation.”

The Greek term “condemnation” lugs a ten pound sledgehammer in its dispatchment. When a house is condemned, the wreckers tear it to the ground. When a sinner is condemned, he perishes in the fires of hell.

The word “condemn” comes from the Greek word, “katakrimo” which is a combination of two Greek words: “krino” means “to give an opinion or to issue a judgment” and “kata” meaning “down.” Thus, *katakrimo* means to pass judgment down from the bench. It is a judicial term referring to a judge’s decision to pronounce an adverse sentence after reaching a verdict; that is, to declare a lawbreaker guilty. It is the opposite of the word “justify.” It is the last word an accused wants to hear. And, if pronounced it means all is lost.

In our system of justice which is built on the Roman judicial process there must be an injury, a complaint, a writ of probable cause signed under penalty of perjury, a warrant, a charge, an arrest, an investigation, a formal complaint in court listing counts of violated laws, a defense, a trial, a verdict, and a sentence. The verdict is either vindication or condemnation. See the Scriptural use of the term condemnation in Matthew 12:41; Matthew 20:18; Matthew 27:3; John 8:10.

There is a question, "Who is he that condemns? The question is "Who" has de jure authority to condemn you if you sin? Who is greater than God? Only God has the authority and power to judge a man eternally. If the Supreme Judge has issued His decision of "justified", who can trump His decision? Can you? Can Satan? Can an enemy? Can your conscience? Paul announced a blessing earlier in his treatise on the gospel: "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ" [Romans 8:1].

For assurance of safety and guiltless before the Throne of Justice, Paul the advocate takes us immediately to the death of Christ: "yes, it is Christ that died." Yes, at one time you were condemned by God!! But, Christ stepped into the courtroom and said to His Father, let me take his punishment. "Agreed" said the Judge . . . and Christ took your sentence and your punishment and died in your place on Calvary. Condemnation fell, not on you, but on Him.

Spurgeon said it well,

"If any confront you with other confidences, still keep to this almighty plea: "Christ has died." If one says, "I was christened and confirmed," answer him by saying, "Christ has died." Should another say, "I was baptized as an adult," let your confidence remain the same: "Christ has died." When another says, "I am a sound, orthodox Presbyterian," stick to this solid ground: "Christ has died." And if still another says, "I am a red-hot Methodist," answer him in the same way: "Christ has died." Whatever may be the confidences of others, and whatever may be your own, put them all away, and keep to this one declaration: "It is Christ that died."" (C H Spurgeon)

Do you understand what Spurgeon said? If you question your standing before the Throne of Justice, stand on the substitutionary death of Christ. Don't plead your baptism! Don't plead your change of character. Don't plead a charismatic experience! Don't plead "Jesus in your heart!" Plead on and stand on the substitutionary work of Christ at Calvary. If Christ

was condemned by God to die for you, how much condemnation is left for you to endure? Ans: "None."

" . . . may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," declared Paul (Galatians 6:14).

Additionally, Paul guarantees our justification at the cross because Christ is raised from the dead: "*It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.*"

The resurrection was the guarantee that God accepted the substitutionary transaction at Calvary; that Christ was punished for our sins; but, that He was personally innocent. Therefore, God raised His innocent Son from the dead to prove to the world the personal righteousness of His Son and the efficacy of His propitiation.

Further, Paul adds another assurance: "who is even at the right hand of God."

The mention of His position at the right hand of the Father informs us of Christ's superior status and position in the universe. He is our Representative, and our Representative has access to the Supreme Judge of all men. Not only this, but He is God's Representative and means of salvation. His position at the right hand of God stresses the efficacy of His Representation. He is not one among many. He is the one person Whom the Father loves and respects; He is the best among men! And, our Representative possesses a superior standing in the presence of the Father than any other.

Further, He is not only at the right hand of the Father, He actively intercedes for us: "He maketh intercession for us." The verb "maketh intercession" (entugchano) is present tense meaning that He constantly advocates for us.

Vincent on his notes on Hebrews 7:25 sees Christ's intercession more of an intervention rather than intercession. But, both are true. Not only does

His life guarantee us “eternal life” by standing between us and death, but He is in some way bringing petitions to the Father on our behalf. Whatever forms of communication exist between the Father and the Son, His intercession appears to be more than just His presence in heaven.

Jamieson informs us,

There was but the one offering on earth once for all. But the intercession for us in the heavens is ever continuing, whence the result follows, that we can never be separated from the love of God in Christ. He intercedes only for those who come unto God through Him, not for the unbelieving world (John 17:9). As samples of His intercession, compare the prophetic descriptions in the Old Testament.

While human prayers are limited in power and effect, the intercession of Christ knows no limit or ceiling within the will of God. Being God, He knows our individual needs. Being man, He has compassion for our infirmities. Being our Representative, His intercession on our behalf is assured. Being God’s Representative to accomplish the divine will, we have assurance the Father welcomes and hears Christ’s petitions for His people. And he hears all kinds of prayers: intercessions, requests, complaints, petitions, imprecatory prayers, pleas for justice, pleas for relief, and appeals to the Supreme Court of Heaven.

In conclusion, Paul the attorney infuses assurance into the hearts of true believers by persuading us that the death of Christ was sufficient to satisfy the claims of divine justice; that the result of His death is not only non-condemnation, but justification; that His resurrection is proof of claim; that His position at the right hand of the Father results not only in a permanent guarantee of our eternal inheritance, but that any deficiencies on our part are pleaded by Christ to the Father on our behalf in His present, risen ministry of intercession.

Fifth Impossibility

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?

Have you ever screamed, “God where are You?” There’s not a serious Christian on earth who has not felt abandoned or at least distant from His careful attention. Here is a blessing of the gospel stronger than our feelings.

The word “separate” (chorizo) means to divide or to put space between. It is translated “leave” or “left” seven times in the NT. When Paul left Athens, he separated himself from the city (Acts 18:1). The ideal marriage, according to Jesus, is not to be separated (chorizo) by man [Matthew 19:6]. The question before Paul’s readers is “Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ?” A search is made and seven possibilities appear:

Shall tribulation separate us from the love of Christ?

The word “tribulation” (thlipsis) means to crush, or press together, or squash, or hem in, or compress, or squeeze. It refers to pressing troubles boxing a man in with no way of escape. In ancient England, those who refused to plead guilty to the king’s charge had heavy weights placed on their chest until they were crushed to death. This kind of pressure can cause a Christian man to doubt God’s love toward him. But, these pressures cannot separate a man from the love of God.

Shall distress (stenochoria) separate us from the love of Christ?

The word “stenochoria” refers to narrow places such as being caught in a military maneuver with no way of escape. It is the opposite of being in an open field. It is the feeling that the walls are closing in on you. But, such distress is not evidence God has forsaken you.

Shall persecution separate us from the love of Christ?

The word “persecution” (diogmos) means defeat or put to flight or hunted. It is like a soldier being overrun by enemy armies. It involves loss of the battle wherein the soldier is required to retreat. Many a good Christian in seeking to serve the Lord has lost his wealth and health in the service of Christ. But, this does not separate a man from Christ.

Shall famine separate us from the love of Christ?

This word needs no explanation as it refers to being homeless and moneyless. It involves hunger and thirst—a feeling of utter abandonment and terror. Being hungry can only happen to the extremely isolated or to the extreme poor. Food is always available for the wealthy. Thus, the one hungering must of necessity be penniless. Yes, good Christian folk have found themselves without money for food and housing. But, this should not be used as evidence of being separated from God’s love.

Shall nakedness separate us from the love of Christ?

Being naked (gumnotes) suggest insufficient clothing for the climate. It would involve being without money or credit, friends or neighbors. This is utter destitution. Many a good Christian man has been dressed in rags but poverty does not separate a man from Christ.

Shall danger separate us from the love of Christ?

The word “danger” (kindunos) refers to peril or threats of sickness or calamity of some kind. Danger? There is always the danger of losing one’s job, or spouse, or friends, or money, or health in one’s service to Christ. There are casualties of war, but these dangers cannot harm the soul.

Shall the sword separate us from the love of Christ?

Paul is probably referring to the executioner’s sword like we read about when King Henry VII order the beheadings of some of his wives. And, this was the manner of Paul’s departure from heaven to earth. Paul was persecuted from city to city, captured, tried, beaten, jailed, and flogged.

Likewise, if you are not on some government's hate list, you aren't following Christ very closely.

Having listed sevenfold adversaries that conjure up the most terrifying fears, adversities which are instruments of Satan to crush all hope in our lives, Paul assures us that none of these trials can divide us from the love of Christ. Furthermore, none of these adverse circumstances can be admitted as evidence into the Court that God has forsaken us. In these distressing life calamities, we may "feel" forsaken, but our feelings are liars and not to be heard. God's promises are greater than our circumstances.

Moreover, the text ought to encourage the afflicted believer who may find himself in the most undesirable circumstance. He is not alone. He is not the first child of God to feel the pains and perils of crushing defeats. Many of God's finest have felt the bray of pain and suffering: Jacob, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and all the apostles. Everyone in the Hall of Fame knows what it is like to be abandoned and to face walls of enemies rushing toward him. When Satan whispers, "See, God doesn't love you," it's a lie. Nothing in this life can separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing! So, don't listen to him! Stop listening to your thoughts about being forsaken. It can't happen!

Finally, if none of these adversities are evidence of being separated from the love of Christ, then neither is good fortune confirmation of His love for you.

Don't mistake wealth and health as attestations of His favor. The assurance of His love is found at Calvary not in cash. Even St. Peter confessed, "Silver and gold have I none . . . !" Stop looking at circumstances as tokens of his love or evidence of His abandonment. Christ, not circumstances, is the evidence of His love. In fact, the opposite is true. God's finest have been counted as sheep to be slaughtered all day long!

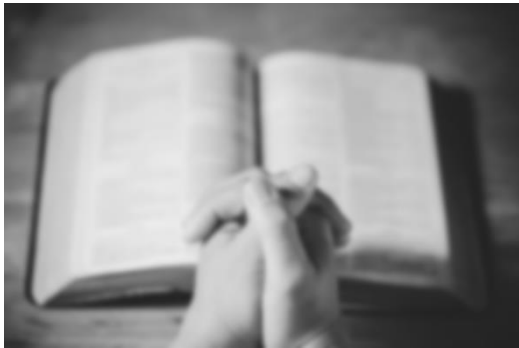
Romans 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Persecution never ceases to hound God's servants. Many saints have found themselves barricaded between a rock and a hard place with no door of escape; and all for the sake of Christ. They endured, not believing their feelings, but by trusting His wisdom and love as revealed in His Word.

We are counted as sheep for the slaughter! It's like God is telling us that Christians are meant to be killed, and made to be victims of treacherous men. Difficulties are not necessarily obstacles for God's children, but His appointed will for them. What? My financial difficulties, relational conflicts, job challenges, church battles, and health crisis is His will? Paul's quotation from Psalm 44:22 remind believers that suffering has always been the lot of godly men, and therefore their own trials are not unique. Whereas the people of God are often perplexed about the reason for their trials, the studied Christian can trace his sufferings back to his decision to follow Christ. He can rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for His name. For he knows nothing shall separate him from the love of Christ. It's just not possible!

WHAT BELIEVING SOULS REALIZE

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain . . . ” (1 Corinthians 15:10).



1. Recipients of grace know that God loves them not because of what they do, but because of who God is—a God of love. Likewise, He commands them to love, not because other people are lovely, but because God’s servant is becoming a man of love.
2. They do not seek to be more worthy in order to be loved, but consent to being loved though they are unworthy.
3. They have stopped trying to be good in order to be accepted because they know they are accepted because Christ was good.
4. They have stopped trying to gain acceptance by their performance because they know they have acceptance because of the performance of Christ.
5. They no longer blame themselves because Christ took all their blame upon Himself.
6. They no longer determine their potential based on their past because they know their potential is based on their position in Christ in the present. They are not products of their past, but of their faith in what Christ has accomplished for them.
7. They have no shame about their past, because they are too occupied with the glory of the present.

8. They overcome defeat because they realize God will not withdraw His favor because of their failure. Victory is rarely final and failure is not fatal.
9. They have a powerful prayer life for God because they understand they already have a right standing with God.
10. They serve Christ, not to be blessed, but because they are already blessed.
11. They do not strive to accomplish great things by being more devoted to Christ, but they accomplish great things because they are more believing in Christ. Discouragement comes, not because of a failure of devotion, but because of a failure to believe.
12. They overcome discouragement, not by trying to be the best before men, but by rejoicing that Christ was the best among men before God.
13. They do not dig around in the graveyard of their past to find reasons God should accept them; Rather, they dig into God's word to discover the wealth and riches of Christ's accomplishments on their behalf.
14. They do not do archaeological journeys into their past to find blame points for present behavior; Rather, they understand that present failures are the result of doubt about the wonder of Christ's accomplishments at Calvary on their behalf; i.e. failure to see one's self in Christ and to claim the benefits of Christ's history is far more serious than moral defeats.
15. They realize that faith is the key to enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel, that doubt is the mother of all evils.
16. They realize that faith in the victory of Christ brings peace to the soul and joy to the heart; and, that a focus on one's personal success or lack thereof yields nothing but pride and, or depression.

17. They realize that past failure is an opportunity to rejoice in the Victory of Christ because our hope is not in how much we change, but how much Christ obeyed God's law on our behalf.

18. They realize that any counseling that takes a person in and in and in is a Hindu Pelagian model and must be rejected; that God's counselors take a man outside of himself, to Calvary, to show him the wonder of Another.

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