

ROMANS 6 —

KNOW WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

The Key to Victory over Sin



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

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

Romans 6 –
Know Who You Are in Christ

Version 2.0



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Dedication	4
Preface	5
Acknowledgments	6
Disclaimer	7
Public Notice	7
Know Who You are in Christ	8
Part I: Your Identification with Christ	9
Romans 6:1-14	9
Who are You: Sinner of Saint?	9
Two Dynasties	12
Baptism into Christ	16
Destruction of the Body of Sin	19
Dead or Alive?	22
The Reckoning that Counts	24
The Story of Pneumatikos	30
Under Grace	33
Part II: The Man of Romans 7	38
Romans 7:1-25	38
Part III: Flesh and Spirit	53
Romans 8:1-11	53
Addendum	60
Justification and the Book of Romans	61
What is the “faith of christ”?	66
Romans 3:22	66
Five Impossibilities	76
Romans 8:31-36	76
Publications	91

Dedication

This E-book is dedicated to Miles Stanford, Colorado Springs, who mentored me in “Higher-Life” holiness and the power of being identified with Christ.

Preface

Wrestling with how to get victory over sin . . . over the flesh . . . and to live a victorious Christian life?

Having trouble working through all the spiritual jargon associated with terms like “in Christ,” “carnal,” “baptized,” “the law,” and the “spirit-filled” life, then this E-book is for you.



Acknowledgments

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Disclaimer

This book is not anti-government, but it may be anti-corruption in government.

Because the present political climate is pro-Zionism, pro-lawlessness, pro-censorship, antichrist, and antichristian: and, because government employees and government media is more sensitive than a step-mother about criticism, it is necessary to warn government officials of the this work may offend you. So what? Tuffin' up.

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Know Who You are in Christ



◆ It has been said that, “men perform according to their theology whether it be right or wrong.”

Over the past 100 years Christians have been taught there are three types of people in the world: “the natural (unsaved man),” “the carnal Christian,” and the “spiritual Christian.” This categorization has been harmful to the Christian community because it produces Christian minds that think sinning is normal; that “I am carnal, sold under sin” and cannot help but to sin; that there are a few super, spiritual saints that are better off than the rest of us . . . “but not me!”

This flawed theology and misunderstanding of Romans 6-8 has crippled many.

Therefore, this work addresses the difference between saints and sinners; that is, all Christians are called “saints” because they have a holy standing and a regenerate nature that wants to please God; that there is no such beast as a “carnal Christian” (1 Romans 7:14; Corinthians 3:1); that all Christians are in the Spirit (Romans 6:9); and, that all believers are in Christ and need to think this way (Romans 6:11); that once a Christian knows who he is in Christ, he can have victory over sin.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” — Romans 6:14.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” — Romans 8:2.

Part I: Your Identification with Christ

Romans 6:1-14

Introduction to Romans 6

◆ 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? Chicken or eagle?”

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. “You are a sinner,” says one. “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 — “You 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 implication in this last thought is that you are a sinner and sinning is the normal Christian experience.

The doctrine of the “two-natures” of the believer has created more problems than it solves. It has a tendency to produce introspective spiritual schizophrenics— Christians that see themselves as a Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde; as fire and ice; as light at noonday and as dark as midnight.

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. This troublesome doctrine in Evangelical circles has the believer spinning like a compass in a magnet factory.

No wonder Christians are so defeated. They don’t know who they are!

Positional Truth

Another challenge is the phrase “positional truth.” — used by serious Christians in pursuit of holiness.

Q: What is meant by positional truth?

Positional truth is strongly advanced by the dispensationalist, Keswick mystic, Miles Standford. He sought to counter the legalizing of the gospel and the pseudo spiritual Charismatic Movement. His focus on “Christ crucified” is 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 a transcendental mixture of sense and nonsense language. This view advances the idea that you are “righteous positionally” but “sinful conditionally.” This perspective seems to cause Christians to act like a compass in a magnet factory.

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.

Natural Theology

In juxtaposition to the Keswick, DTS two-natures ideology, consider this natural theological position: 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 a 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 does **not** have a carnal constitution. All believers are declared to be “in the Spirit¹” constitutionally and all non-believers are declared to be “in the flesh²” constitutionally (Romans 8:9).

A victorious Christian knows who he is in Christ.

You can soar with the eagles in the clouds of righteous by “counting as true” your identification with Christ as taught in Romans 6; that is, how

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

² The term “flesh” (sarkos) refers to the unregenerated, unsaved man or all that man is apart from Christ.

the Spirit has taken the believer out of Adam and placed him into Christ.

Two Dynasties

First, the Christian in pursuit of holiness must understand Paul's discourse on the history of two dynasties³ (5:12-21).

–The *Dynasty of Adam* which is characterized by the reign of sin, law, condemnation, and death; and,

–The *Dynasty of Christ* 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] ⁴(5:1), regenerated^[5]⁵ (5:5), reconciled^[6]⁶ (5:10) identified with his glorious history (6:3-5), adopted (8:13-16), and glorified (8:30).

Second, the believer must grasp the fact the Spirit has taken the believer out of Adam and placed him into Christ; out of death into life; out of defeat and into victory; that is, your roots have been planted in new soil.

Dead to Sin

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.

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?

The text declares a believer is “dead to sin.” A dead man can’t sin or respond to sin. He is dead to this power. When sin calls, there is no answer from a dead man. This truth means a believer must learn to see himself as dead to sin — that he is free from sin’s dominating power due to his union with the living Christ. As a new creation in Christ, he is no longer dead. He is alive to God.

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 summoned!

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 are identified with risen 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."

Using a question, 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. You can see a shadow, but how can you taste a shadow? It is impossible.

The verb "are dead" is an aorist tense⁷ — a fact 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" — like a cut phone line that severs communication between two parties.

"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. He is no longer in sin's jurisdiction and has no duty or capacity to obey its commands — like an African resident in Peru, he has

⁷ Aorist tense is a punctiliar past tense. It describes a simple, completed action without focusing on its duration, repetition, or internal unfolding drama.

no obligation to the laws in Kenya.

This is not just “positional truth!” He really is free! The cage door is open and the little bird can leave the cage. He need only to flap his wings.

Regeneration

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]⁸ of Almighty God is in him so that he does not want to sin. Paul is **not** saying believers cannot sin. What he saying is that the believer’s identification with Christ grants him benefits that make it possible for him to live a genuine righteous life —as real as sunlight warming the skin.

Greater Heresy

What is a greater heresy? To believe a Christian man can stop sinning, or the belief a Christian cannot stop sinning?

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

⁸ Seed means the “Holy Spirit” and his work of creating a new being in Christ.

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."

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

The believer is born again. He is alive to God and wants to please Him . . . but not all of him is born again. Sin still impacts the body . . . but, the regenerated spirit is under no obligations to obey the flesh.

Baptism into Christ

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

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*:

The Greek phrase, "know ye not" makes an assumption of knowledge; that is, he assumes that all baptized Christians understand that spiritual baptism is an act whereby the Spirit takes a man out of Adam and places him into the history of Christ; out of sin and into righteousness; out of condemnation into justification; out of death into the power of Christ's risen life.

Paul declares the fact that the Christian is "baptized into" the history of Christ; i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord(6:3-4).

The word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω). 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 declared, “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. Water baptism is a public declaration of this private spiritual fact.

An illustration: 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 a U.S. citizen, he can now enjoy a new life.

Before a runner starts a race, he is at rest . . . but this is not totally true. His heart is pumping; roaring to run. Likewise, the heartbeat of the believer is pounding with desire to run the race of righteousness.

This act of “placing” a believer into Christ’s victorious history is effective⁹ 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 as his taskmaster (harmatia) (Romans 6:1-2).

Alive to God means he is responsive to God; that His heart beats to the

⁹ Effective: Being effective means producing the desired result or achieving a specific goal, focusing on what gets done. This is not potential energy, but kinetic energy — energy in motion. This is not lightening trapped in a wire, but sparks flying inside the soul.

tune of “thy will be done.” Therefore, he walks in the light and not in the shadows; his compass always points toward righteousness. When he looks in the mirror, he sees an eagle and not a chicken. Moreover, he does not see a hybrid chicken-eagle.

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”¹⁰ (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 internal moral compass, your inner matrix* or that part of your personality that is truly “YOU!” “YOU” have been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ; out of darkness into the light; out of death into life; out of the tomb and on His throne to reign with Him.

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

¹⁰ From now on the all cap “YOU” refers to the essence of your being, the inner-most “YOU,” the core of your being, your living born-again soul, your internal moral compass, your inner matrix or that part of your personality that is truly “YOU!” The pronoun “you” refers to your whole being: spirit, soul, and body.

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 (and nature 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

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from 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 terms here.

Q: What is meant by the “body of sin?”

“The body of sin” is **not** the “sin nature” as the Kewicks taught. It is **not** “the sin principle” at work within men. The “body of sin” refers to the

physical body (soma). Your soma is your body, your members[8]¹¹, that physical, flesh and blood, mental and emotional part of you which is unregenerated 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]¹².

Q: What is meant by the term “destroyed?”

The subjunctive verb, “destroyed” (*katargeo*), does **not** mean “annihilated.” *Katargeo* means “to render inoperative” or “to make unemployed” or “to put out of business.” At one time a man lived in darkness, but now the lights are on; the fire is lit, and the house is warm; at one time the man’s heart was like a cold corpse, but now he filled with Heaven’s rip fuel eager to please Him.

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

Q: Now who is the “old man” (ὁ παλαιός) 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, unregenerated you under the power of *harmatia* before “YOU” were “placed into” Christ.

¹¹ 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.

¹² With a regenerated soul and an unregenerated 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.

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; “YOU” are off the Penal Colony, and in the Kingdom of God . . . the City of God.

– Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated (aorist tense) *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

– Hebrews 12:22 . . . for “ye are come (perfect tense) unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly **Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels”

Though the born-again “YOU” is still living in an unregenerated body that is capable of being used as an instrument of sin, YOU are righteous by nature and empowered to take charge of your body in such a way as to discharge it for the Savior’s use.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

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 unregenerated part of your constitution needs to be commandeered and “gang pressed” into service by an act of your will.

It is true that justification is inefficient and positional — a true status in the eyes of God.

The Keswicks were correct. Justification is legal and forensic in nature. When a man believes, his 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. Life enters the soul and the timberland of righteousness begs to sprout.

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” to the way of life in Adam, and therefore, “freed from” the reign of sin.

Believe it; think it; act on it.



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.

Dead or Alive?

Romans 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

The word “freed” (dikaioo) means “absolved” or “declared righteous.” It is the same word as “justified.” A dead man is no longer held accountable

for his sins. Death mitigates all claims against him. He can't be charged with a crime and punished. Punishment for crimes is only for the living, not the dead. Likewise, a dead man can not be summoned into man's court, or be a slave to sin.

Paul continues,

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (6:8).

Paul presents an “if then” argument with a conditional statement¹³.

“If we be dead with Christ” (the antecedent) then “we shall also live with Him” (consequent) is assumed true.

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.” If “YOU” are in Christ, then “YOU” share His life. That is, if “YOU” share in the benefits of His death, “YOU” also share in the benefits of His life. Sin and its penalties cannot touch Him, nor can sin and its penalties touch “YOU.”

A bottle can be in the ocean, and the ocean can be in the bottle. “YOU” are in Christ¹⁴ and Christ is in “YOU.”

Since the risen Christ has life and you are in Christ, you share in His life . . . and freedom from sin . . . and freedom from being punished from sin; that is, you will never be punished by the Judge for your sin —

¹³ "If-then" arguments are logical structures (conditional statements). "If P, then Q," where P is the **antecedent** (condition) and Q is the **consequent** (result) — a form of deductive reasoning.

¹⁴ “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.

disciplined and corrected by the Father as a son in the family, Yes! But, punishment, No!

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

In verses 9 and 10, Paul rehearses the history of Christ. Having died, sin and death has lost its power over Christ. Sin was imputed to Him and He paid the heavy price for sin. The penalty of death cannot be repeated.

“Died unto sin once” (ephapax) — “once” is an adverb limiting the action of the main verb “died.” It means “once for all;” or He died “one time only.”

Having been raised from the dead, He has a perpetual, living relationship with the Father. Life reigns; not sin; life reigns, and, not death.

“Unto God” implies —

Likewise, if “YOU” are connected to Christ, “YOU” are dead to sin with all its powers and punishments, and “YOU” are permanently connected to God! Since “YOU” are in Christ, and Christ is alive to God; then “YOU” are alive unto God.”

Likewise, you should live now to promote His glory, His will, and His honor.

You are no longer dead in Adam; YOU are alive to God in Christ; YOU are no longer a chicken scratchin’ in the dirt, but an eagle capable of flying miles above the earth.

The Reckoning that Counts

6:11 “Reckon yourself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God” is the first command in Romans.

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

The reason Christians have so little victory in their Christian life is because they do not understand or believe the importance of the first command in the book.

To have “victory” (nike) one must have nike-faith (1 John 5:4); that is, faith is the victory.

Nike-faith lays hold of the facts of the gospel and reckons themselves to be righteous (Justification by faith), dead to sin, and alive to God.

Further, If you don't know or believe the facts of the gospel, you can't obey it. If you can't obey it, you will live in chaos and confusion thinking like a son of Adam — like a compass in a magnetic storm; like a flickering candle blown by the wind; like a shivering man trying to read a map in a London Fog; like a radio tuned between stations — nothing but static.

“*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; the “YOU” who has died with Christ and is alive to God: the “YOU” who has crossed the bridge and is never going back; the “YOU” whose compass always points due north.

You are no longer dead in Adam; YOU are alive to God in Christ; YOU are no longer a chicken scratchin' in the dirt, but an eagle capable of flying miles above the earth.

Consequently, "YOU" should live now to promote His glory, His will, and His honor.

Paul is saying that since "YOU" are regenerated and identified with Christ, "YOU" are dead, cut off, severed from sin. Sin has no lawful claim on "YOU." "YOU" are "alive to God."

"YOU" are not on probation; "YOU" are not a candle flickering in the dark; "YOU" are a lighthouse proudly beaming your 1,000 watt halogen lamp. "YOU" are connected to a vital, dynamic living relationship with your Heavenly Father. Therefore, **START THINKING THIS WAY!**

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 schizoid 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)



START THINKING that "YOU" are "in Christ," 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!" I am alive; not dead; I

am an eagle born to fly; I am a “pure virgin” that “follows the Lamb wherever He goes” (Revelation 14:1).

For this reason, Paul urges believers to renew their thinking!

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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

The “mind” (tu nous) needs to be renewed and **not** one’s nature (Romans 12:2). That is, the mind needs to catch up with the believer’s existential transformation . . . like a butterfly out of its cocoon; like pure virgins devoted to their Lord; like a storm scattering dead leaves across a darkened field; like Red in “Shawshank Redemption.”

Every married person can probably remember the days following their 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” — inaccessible to sin, deaf to its call, but devoted and loyal to God through union with Christ.

Paul is not teaching sinless perfection here. Remember, “YOU” (a regenerated being) still lives in a “body of sin” (an unregenerated instrument). “YOU” will struggle with sin all through this life, not because something is wrong with “YOU,” but because “YOU” still live in a weak “body” easily tempted 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; that is, get your spiritual radio tuned into the crystal clear frequency of Romans 6.

Therefore, take charge of your body and all its unregenerated parts and start resisting sin —like a lighthouse against a storm —unmoved, shining,

refusing to be swallowed by darkness. (6:12-13; 12:1-3).

“The first and best victory is to conquer self. To be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and objectionable” – Plato.

“The enemy is within the gates; it is with our own luxury, our own folly, our own criminality that we have to contend” – Cicero.

Sin remains in your body and your members, but sin cannot reign over “YOU!” “YOU” are not in one of Stalin’s Gulags with some muscular prison guard barking out orders to you.

*Note: Do not misinterpret Paul and think that he is addressing “self-esteem.” Paul does not condone looking inside for personality assets and to think positive about self. He is not asking a man to believe in himself. Self is the problem. He encourages men to understand the greatness of the Savior and for men to see themselves in Him. Men need more Christ-esteem – not more self-esteem.

6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof

Now we come to **the second command** in the book of Romans: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” Because “YOU” are born again and united with Christ, “YOU” have the authority to say “NO!” to sin.

*Note again that sin reaches you through your unregenerate body and all its unredeemed parts. Therefore, don’t let sin play the tyrant over you.

Romans 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

This is Paul’s 3rd command.

“By members,” Paul refers to those parts of us that are not redeemed – bodily parts et al.

Paul’s fourth command is to “yield yourselves to God;” that is, for “YOU” to captain your ship into the seas of righteousness.

The reason for these two imperatives is the fact that “YOU” “are alive from the dead” and have power to take charge of the helm, to avoid the storm, and to navigate to your vessel to safe harbors between thunderclaps while avoiding rocky hazards, rip currents, and sneaker waves.

Look at Romans 6:14

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

The waves of sin that threaten to capsize our ship are real and powerful, but not as powerful as the man in Christ ruled by grace. Grace unties the knots of sin; unites us to Christ; and supplies the power to prevail over the winds threatening to sink our ship.

Sin is a tyrant – a ruthless mutineer that rules through fear and manipulation demanding perfect obedience, lacking empathy, and viewing “YOUR” crew members as mere tools for its own sensual ambitions.

“YOU” not only have the power to say “NO!” to the ugly sins offered to you by this dictator, but “YOU” have the power to refuse attractive, ribbon-and-bows temptations offered to you – a reminder of how tragic it is for believers to take pleasure in sins for which Christ died.

Paul reminds the Roman Jews 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 – a supplying of power by the Holy Spirit

to do what is right.

Grace always provides gentle winds to fill your sails so you can steer your ship into harbors of peace (Romans 8:4). The law only breaks the main mast leaving the crew with the job of cutting away the rigging in order to save the ship.

This infers the one in Christ cannot turn his ship on auto pilot with GPS sensors and make it through the storm. It takes a measure of knowledge, will-power, and skill at the helm to navigate one's vessel into safe harbors. While taking hold of the wheel, he also has to control the sheets on the sails catching the winds provided by grace.

An illustration of grace-thinking may help.

The Story of 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 asking, "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 replied, "Pneumatikos, 'YOU' are not a chicken, and 'YOU' are not a chicken-eagle. 'YOU' are a pure bred eagle. 'You'r were born to fly, and if you'll just keep on flapping your wings, you'll soar like an eagle." Stunned, 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. He needed only to "reckon" himself to be an eagle.

Likewise, believers are "justified" (Romans 5:1), "regenerated" (5:5), "reconciled" (5:10), "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 pneumatikos-Christians have failed to soar above because they have been

grounded in a chicken coup by chicken-eagle 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 or chicken-eagle at the core of your being. “YOU” are **a saint** with a powerful desire to soar in the heavenlies (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 2:1-10).

It is not improper to say you have a spiritual nature (the regenerated part of you) and that you have a physical nature (the body and the unregenerated 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 . . . a Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde . . . or a chicken-eagle.

“You” are a child of God who wants to please your Heavenly Father; who wants to fly in the heavenlies with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-7).

You may stumble and you may sin, but if you sin, you sin because you are **living inconsistent with your righteous 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;

(b) the “knowing” and “understanding” the fact of what it means “to be placed into” Christ” and His victorious history; and

(c) obedience to Paul’s command to “reckon” or “count” these facts to be

true.

“YOU” are not a chicken nor a chicken-eagle. “YOU” are an eagle. “YOU” are a saint. “YOU” are dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 1:7; 6:11; Ephesians 1:1).

You are not a “carnal Christian” as there is no such thing as a “carnal Christian” – carnal minded, maybe; but, a carnal, sinful nature – No way!



You are a born-again, regenerated saint. 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).

Under Grace

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Q: What does it mean we are not under law but under grace?

Modern Evangelicals interpret this to mean that you are not saved by law, and that once you become a Christian you have no duty to God's law; no duty to the Ten Commandments; and, that under grace you have no obligation to Old Testament commands. The average Evangelical is antinomian; that is, he is hostile to law . . . to rules or codes defining proper conduct in and outside the church.

Unfortunately, this is the American Evangelical mindset. Correction is needed.

John MacArthur got it correct, arguing Christians are freed *from the Law's*

penalty but still bound by its moral principles for spiritual growth, emphasizing holiness through the Spirit rather than legalistic works.

A Corrective to Modern Thinking

The word “law” in Romans 6:14 lacks the article; that is, Paul is not referring to the Mosaic law, but to law in general. An anathrous noun refers to the general “quality” of a thing and not to something specific.

Paul did **not** pit God’s law against His grace.

- By “law,” Paul means any system of law. No legal system, including Judaism or Rabbinical case law, can make a man holy. God’s law is good, but it cannot transform or regenerate a man to enable him to keep the rules of righteousness
- In reference to God’s law, Paul said, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good . . . and spiritual" (Romans 7:14). God is good; and, God's law is good; that is, it is beneficial for believers. It is good for the church because it is good for all men and all of man's institutions . . . but it does not include power to keep it.
- Religion is about man’s fundamental values. Thus, Religion is about law; and, every “law” or statute represents someone’s religious values. Show me a man’s law, and I will show you his religion. Religion is the source of law.
- No man can live without law. At the heart of every true religion is law whether it be restrictive or permissive.
- There is only one Lawgiver, the Lord Jesus Christ (James 4:12). Congress is not a lawmaker. It is a statute-maker for those in contract with the U.S. government.
- The heart of Christian law is the Ten Commandments and relevant case law. The law was given, **not** to save souls, but to create an orderly society based on the rule of law.

- Moreover, the Torah-law reflects the character of God, and defines what is good. If good is not defined by God's law, then what is the standard for good? Man's feelings? Man's opinion? Whacky Congress?
- The opposite of law is **not** grace, but lawlessness. A Christians without law is a lawless person or an antinomian¹⁵ man. The opposite of grace is not law, but personal autonomy and permissiveness (Jude 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 2:8).
- God's law is primarily negative. It tells us what men cannot do. In other words, God's laws are limited; that is, if it is not forbidden, then man is free to act.
- "By law," Paul refers to any general system of law not a specific code. In Galatians, general law would include all rabbinical rulings; that is, rabbinical case law swamped God's law -- a system of law the Jews thought would help them gain merits with God.
- The Jews concluded that Torah-law and Rabbinical case law was a mediator between God and man -- even a means of salvation. Paul refuted this in 1 Timothy 2:5 asserting that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. Jesus did not come to save men from law, but from man's transgressions against the law; that is, because God is eternal, His moral laws are absolute and still in effect.
- If there is a fault with God's law, it is that it tells a man what is right, **but it does not empower the man to do what is right.**

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak

¹⁵ Antinomianism: Antinomianism is a theological stance primarily associated with Protestant Christianity that opposes the idea of adhering strictly to moral laws, particularly those derived from religious doctrine. The term originates from the Greek words meaning "against the law," and it often suggests that salvation granted through divine grace means individuals are not bound to follow moral laws. This belief is generally seen as a heresy within mature Christian thought (EBESCO).

through the flesh,

- This was the problem that faced every Jew. Frustration and guilt ensued. They knew the law was good and holy and worthy of obedience. But, they were powerless to fulfill it because they were carnal sold under sin.
- However, Paul also acknowledged the strength and advantage of the law. It acted like a mirror revealing the ugliness of sin in the heart – a motivation to find deliverance through Christ.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I (Jews) had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Romans 7:19 For the good that I (Jews) would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

- All Jews could find a way out of this death sentence through Christ.

Romans 7:24-25 O wretched man that I (Jews) am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I (Jews) myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- In contrast to the weakness of the law, the gospel teaches us that God gives believers His Spirit, **not** as a substitute for law, but to help them keep the law; that is, no believer should be antinomian or feel he is without resources to keep God's law. Under grace, men receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help them do what the law says. There are no weaknesses under grace. Grace provides all blessing and power to do what is right.
- The purpose of salvation is not only to save men from the penalty and power of sin, but **to give them the power to keep His law** – not for justification, but for sanctification.

Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law, and being saved in order to keep the law.

One mature in grace will keep the law. He not only has a heart that beats for God, the Spirit empowers him with the ability to keep the law.

The law is good, but it is like a candle trying to shine in the rain. Grace provides the mantle so the law can shine.

The new "YOU" has the power to keep the Ten Commandments and relevant case law (NT commands) (John 15:14, Romans 8:4, 13:8; 1 John 5:1-3).

In conclusion, "being under law" refers to an economy where one seeks to earn salvation by keeping the law. Being under grace refers to plan where one is saved by faith in Christ, justified, and then empower to keep the law because God gives His Spirit to believing men.

Part II: The Man of Romans 7

Romans 7:1-25

Introduction

◆ This chapter addresses the question, "Who is the man of Romans 7 that is "sold under sin?" Is this Paul, Christians, or unregenerate Jews?

Many modern Evangelicals use this passage to explain why Christians sin – the difficulty Christians have in keeping God’s law. This view asserts failing Christians are carnal sold under sin and therefore cannot get victory over sin.

“The Bible teaches that the flesh is fallen human nature. It is the corrupt principle of sin, the carnal nature that natural men and women have inherited from their fallen parents” (Billy Graham).

“when you consider the possibility of carnal Christians, Christians who haven't become disciples of Jesus yet” (a quote from the Puritan Board).

Proposition

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 Christian experience. Rather, Paul teaches the Romans that the unregenerate Jew is carnal sold under sin, and that a huge transition from Law to Grace occurred in history in the Christ event.

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 who objected to Paul’s statement in Romans 6:14.

All of Romans 7 is addressed to Jewish believers and not to Gentile-Christians. 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 that includes “gentile” believers is an artificial inclusion that cannot be justified by the context of Romans 7:1.

Paul’s Literary “I”

Paul’s “I” is **not** autobiographical, but an ethopoetic, literary device¹⁶ representing “Israel” or “We Jews.”

Paul’s argument is designed to show how a Jewish believer through the gospel 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 — a deficiency which left all Jews 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.

The “**carnal**” refers to unregenerated Jews and **not** struggling believers.

When Paul says “I am carnal sold under sin,” he is **not** speaking of himself as an Apostle or as a Christian. The struggle is **not** the struggle of a Christian, **but** the struggle of an unregenerate Jew facing Torah without the help of the Spirit. 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.” Such a conclusion is ridiculous!

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

¹⁶ “I” for “we” Jews = “ethopoeia” where a speaker or writer puts themselves in another’s position to explain feelings/situations, or uses their own experience to illustrate a general point about humanity

Under Grace, Christians Have Power over Sin

In contrast to Jewish's defeat under law is the victory of a Christian under grace (7:25). Because the Christian is free from law and in possession of a regenerate life by the power of the Spirit, he is also free from the power of sin (8:4).

Paul set up dualism between Adam and Christ in Romans 5, those under law and those under grace in Romans 6, between the dead and the alive in Romans 7, and between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" in Romans 8. All Christians are "in Christ" and "in the Spirit." All unsaved people are said to be "in the flesh."

More on 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, denigrates the gospel, and disguises the real struggle unregenerate Jews had with trying to keep the law without the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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 believer's struggle with sin in this present evil age as well as the struggle all Jews had with the law.

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:

(1) The Historical Context of Romans 7

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. We error if we are too quick to read our personal experience into Romans 7. We must interpret Romans 7 in light of the 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) erupted in chapter 14 – the 4th Jewish parenthetical diversion. 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, 10 and 11.

(2) The Literary Context of Romans 7

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, but under the resources of grace, i.e, 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).

(3) 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 (Jewish problem)	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)

(4) 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	directly to Jews	to Jew & Gentiles

(5) The Parenthetical Nature of Romans 7

Romans 6:14-8:4 is Paul second great parenthetical thought¹⁷ in the book where he stops to address the place of law in Jewish life. His first parenthetical thought is in 2:17- 3:9. His third parenthetical thought is in Romans 9-11 where he addresses the place of Israel in God’s gospel plan.

¹⁷ A diversion from Paul’s main thought of conveying the benefits of the gospel to discussing the Jewish mind and its challenge to keep the law apart from regeneration.

- **Romans 6** Freedom from sin
- **Romans 7** Freedom from the powerlessness of the law
- **Romans 8** Freedom from sin

(6) 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? God gave us the law on Mt. Sinai. 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 7:1-8:4 is Paul’s answer to the Jewish question. The problem is not the law, but the unregenerate nature of Jews.

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 as a savior to Jews (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 age 12 a Jewish boy 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” (ονόμος παιδαγωγός ημῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν) the law became our schoolmaster unto Christ) he does **not** mean “we Gentiles.” He signifies “we Jews” i.e, those Jews living between Sinai and Calvary.

Paul’s point is that Christ, the Living Torah, has replaced the old *paidagogos*. Torah with its codes was an imperfect objective expression of righteousness – 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 Jew and Gentile into eschatological family. No longer would Torah be the guide.

Christ is the Word, the bread, the life, the shepherd of God’s people – not the law from Mt. Sinai. 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 mind (Galatians 5).

Meaning of "I am carnal sold under sin."

Romans 7 address a Jewish dilemma relating to the law during the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant in the first century. The issue addressed is not a Gentile bone of contention, though the Gentile had much to learn from this historic transition, but a critical Jewish concern.

In Romans 7, Paul addressed the Jewish believers in the church at Rome: "I am speaking to men (Jews) who know the Law (the Torah)."

Before Christ, the Jewish people were married to the Law. The Torah was like a husband who had dominion over them. But since Jewish believers shared in the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, their relationship to Torah as a mediator 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."

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. "I" is Israel.

The virtue of Torah (7:12, 14): Torah is "holy," "just," "good," and "spiritual." If there was a downside to 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 dilemma 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** discussing his Christian experience. He is **not** speaking as “born-again” Christian who struggles to escape 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” (8:1-4, 9).

When Paul uses the verb “I am” (εἰμι), a present, active, indicative, first-person, singular, he uses the present tense to describe the present condition of every Jew facing the demands of Law with the resources of unregenerate flesh. He uses the present tense because in verse one Paul’s audience are ones that presently “know” (γινώσκουσιν, 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 of obtaining verbal-noun agreement in Paul’s discourse without using the pronoun “I.”

The Aorist Tense

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 “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 and 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 lewd, defeated, unspiritual state?

There is no justification 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? Christians are not doomed to failure! Theirs is a life of love and victory over sin.

Paul Speaking as a Jew

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-Christian Ashkenazi Jews 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. God forbid! He is describing the plight of all Israel. The plight of biological Jews was wretched because they faced a pure, true, holy law with only the resources of human nature.

A Preview of Romans 8

In Romans 8:1-4, Paul describes the condition of regenerate men in reference to the Jewish dilemma. 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 embrace Christ by faith (regenerate Jews and regenerate Gentiles).

Paul finishes his argument by saying, “You (Jews in Rome) are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if 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).” It is impossible for a Christian to be “in the Spirit” and “in the flesh” at the same time according to Paul’s argument in Romans 8. All Christians are “in the Spirit” regardless of the degree of their spiritual maturity.

All non-Christians are “in the flesh” regardless of the extent of their wretchedness. 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 emerge: 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.”

History Blossoms into Theology

The doctrine of “flesh and Spirit” emerges from the historical tensions expressed in the Book of Galatians — the historical tension between the gospel and Judaism, Sarah and Hagar, Jerusalem above and Jerusalem below, faith and circumcision, believers and Jews. 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 — flesh and spirit; that is, between the regenerate man and his unregenerate members (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” is still unregenerate.

Sin remains, but it does **not** reign. Neither justification nor sanctification removes sin from the believer. There is a tension between the unregenerate and regenerate part of the believer. For this reason, Paul commanded the regenerate Romans to offer their unregenerate bodies on the altar of worship in Romans 12:1; that is, to take charge of body and employ it in the service of Christ as an instrument of love.

Paul is **not** addressing the individual’s personal gestalt¹⁸ in Romans 7. He addresses the larger issue, the historical transition from law to grace taking place in the first century and the rule of life which is to characterize God’s new society (those “in the Spirit”) — God’s eschatological people who share in the blessing of God’s eschatological Spirit in a firstfruits way. Fulfillment is **now** (justification); consummation (glorification) is not yet. The tension between the Age to Come and the This Present Evil Age is present in the believer’s personal experience because he is a “new creation” living in the body, the “old creation.”

Conclusion

Romans 7 is one of four 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; between Judaism and Christianity; between law and gospel. All of Romans seven addresses the plight of 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. It is a

¹⁸ A German philosophy on determining the meaning of a thing: “the whole is different from the sum of its parts”.

literary device — “ethopoeia” where a speaker or writer puts themselves in another's position to explain feelings / situations or uses their own experience to illustrate a general fact about humanity

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 the powerlessness of law, and from condemnation. Because believing Jews were no longer under Law as a tool seeking to produce righteousness with their own resources, but under grace and the resources of the Spirit wherein Jewish believers could experience freedom from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

When Paul says, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” he 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 speaks as Jew testifying of the Jewish experience of trying to keep God's law without the Spirit — and effort that resulted in frustration and defeat — like shouting in a canyon that refuses to echo; or, striking a match that never bursts into a flame.

Can any competent Bible student take seriously the idea that at the moment Paul wrote to the Romans he was “carnal, sold under sin?”

Remember, he uses the present tense, “I am” — ethopoeia. Paul uses the literary “I” to represent what was generally true of all Jews who faced the demands of holiness in the power of their own resources. He uses “am,” a present tense intransitive verb, 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 Christian-rabbi-attorney, presses his argument about the virtues of the gospel in contrast to vices of paganism and Judaism. Positional, alien righteousness outside the man is available in the gospel when it is received by faith (justification). Practical, resident

righteousness is possible because the Spirit of God takes a man out of Adam and places him into Christ to participate in the benefits of grace (sanctification). Moreover, the Spirit takes up residence in the soul of believers.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Paul was **not** saying that defeat was his normal Christian experience until he found the “second blessing,” or “the deeper life truths.” Paul teaches that deliverance from the tyranny of sin is possible because the believer now participates in the victorious history of Christ (Romans 6:1-14) — because “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost . . .”

Paul is **not** advocating perfectionism; rather, he teaches that believers are indeed “dead to sin and alive to God” by virtue of their baptism into Christ (Romans 6:1-3).

Second, while we regard the doctrine of “sinless perfectionism” a great heresy, we must regard contentment with sinful imperfection a greater heresy. Defeat is not common Christian living; that is, it is not like a clicking clock in a quiet room. Being “carnal” is not the normal Christian experience; but, thinking carnally is another matter (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Victory over sin is proclaimed in Christ when the gospel is believed — the normal Christian experience — like a pair of tennis shoes that fit without thinking.

Unlike justification, there is something efficient¹⁹ about the Spirit regenerating men (Romans 5:5) and “placing them” into Christ’s

¹⁹ Efficient: achieving righteous living, obedience to the law, with minimum amount of human effort.

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, the Christian cannot serve sin any longer (Romans 6:14). 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.

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

Part III: Flesh and Spirit

Romans 8:1-11

Introduction

◆ This section deals with the misinterpretation of the term “flesh” and “spirit” so common among Evangelical expositors; that is, many interpret the term “flesh” as the “sinful nature” and the term “spirit” as a spirit-filled Christian.

^{NIV}Romans 7:25 So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my **sinful nature**^[a] a slave to the law of sin.

^{NIV} Corinthians 5:5 . . .hand this man over to Satan, so that the **sinful nature** may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

The Proposition offered in this section is that the “flesh” represents the unregenerate man or Jews, and that the “spirit” represents all born-again, regenerate men; that Paul is not pitting carnal Christians against spiritual Christians. All believers are in the Spirit whether they are mature or immature.

All Believers are free from Condemnation

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 exhort 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.

All Believers are free from the law of sin

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); 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” 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 traveling 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.

All Believers are set free by Christ

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 man 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, unregenerated 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.

All Believers have the Power to Keep God’s Moral Law

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 penalty and power of sin . . . 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 heretical 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.

There are only Two Kinds of People; those in the flesh and those in the Spirit

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 in Christ.

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 – 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.

Only Unregenerate Men are Carnal

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."

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 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 do 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.

All Believers have the Spirit

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 power 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 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 a real 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.

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 11-28 transitions 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 in subjection to the will of God. He believes in Providence knowing that out of struggles, good comes.

Addendum

This brief is about “sanctification” and how the believer can be holy by taking comfort in the work of Christ; that is, to reckon himself dead to sin and alive to God.

Sanctification, however, rest on justification –the work of Christ on the cross for the believer; that is on the doing and dying of Christ. Thus, the addendum contains articles on justification, the foundation of Romans 6.

Justification and the Book of Romans

◆ **Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.**

The book of Romans is about two great doctrines: justification and sanctification; the doctrine of the gospel (1-11) and the pragmatics of the gospel (12:1ff); the foundation of the gospel, and the fruit of the gospel.

Romans answers at least two great questions: (1) How can a man be right with God and overcome the penalty of sin (Romans 3:22-5:1)?; and (2) how can one be holy and obtain victory over the power of sin (Romans 5:2-8:4)?

- Romans 1:17ff addresses the wrath of God on the nations for their rejection of natural revelation and civilization's plunge into wretchedness.
- Romans 2:1-16 how men can be justified by persevering in doing good.
- Romans 3:10-20 addresses the verdict of universal condemnation because of common unrighteousness.
- Romans 3:22 teaches men can obtain a right standing before God by the doing and dying of Christ on behalf of them that believe.
- Romans 3:22ff teaches that salvation (His righteousness) is a gift of God given to those who place their faith in Him. This is called justification by faith apart from human works (3:24-5:1).
- Romans 5:2-11 introduces us to other blessings of the gospel including regeneration and reconciliation.
- Romans 5:12ff introduces us to two histories: The sin and death of the

First Adam; and, the righteousness and reign of life in the Second Adam.

- Romans 6 is about how men can get victory over the power of sin by taking comfort (reckoning) in their identification with Christ — an act of the Spirit of taking us out of Adam and placing us into Christ to share the benefits of His victory.
- Romans 7:1-8:4 is a parenthetical thought whereby Paul addresses the plight of Jews facing the law in the flesh and how God gives men power to keep the law by His Spirit.
- Romans 8:5ff deals with the redemption of the body and man's ultimate confidence due to the benefits of the gospel.
- Romans 9-11 is another parenthesis whereby the apostle deals with the election of Israel and the necessity of Jews to believe the gospel.
- Romans 12-16 addresses the pragmatics of the gospel in relation to men, government, and differences in the church.

In order to be right with God one must believe the gospel. In so doing one obtains the righteousness of God by faith (Justification). Those right with God have the power of the Spirit to be holy (sanctification). Thus, the foundation of Romans 6 rests on the believer's justification by faith; that is, it is important not to "get the cart before the horse" to think that holiness is the basis of justification.

Romans 1-5:11: This section is about justification. Justification, or *ho dikaios ek pisteos* (righteousness by faith). In this section the terms "faith" and "believe" are used repeatedly. The word *pistis* occurs 29 times. The word "believe" occurs 8 times in chapters 1-4. In chapter 5-8, they occur only 2 times.

Romans 5:12-8:34: This section is about sanctification and glorification. The word *zoe* (ζωή) is used twelve times, but only twice in 1:18-4:25. This section is about the life that justification brings to a man who believes

and identifies himself with the history of Christ, a.k.a. "*identification*." Identification with the history of Christ results in a righteous life, a life of the Spirit, a life of conformity to the image of Christ. The first section of Romans announces the death of man and how man can obtain new life by placing his faith in Christ; the second session announces new life in Christ and victory over sin when one claims ("*reckons*") the benefits of Christ's history for himself.

THE BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION

- Iniquity is not imputed (Psalm 32:2)
- A complete new standing before God based on faith and the imputation of righteousness on those that believe (Romans 4:5)
- The proclamation of peace with God, regeneration, and reconciliation (Romans 5:1)..
- Saved from wrath (Romans 5:9): We have the assurance we will be delivered from the wrath to come.
- Rest (Hebrews 4:1ff): We no longer feel the need to perform for acceptance. We cease trusting in ourselves, and trust totally in Him. We endure criticism because we know our performance is not the basis of our acceptance with God.
- Identification (Romans 6:3-6): We share in the benefits of Christ's history.
- Freedom from law (Romans 7): Our identification with Christ frees us from bondage to legalistic righteousness. Man is never free, however, from duty to law as a Christian man. Love is a fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8).
- Glorification (Romans 8:18): We have the assurance we will share in the glory of the Eschaton by virtue of resurrection.
- Complete acquittal (Romans 8:33): We have the assurance there are no

accusations against us that will stand up in God's Court.

- No condemnation (Romans 8:1): If God has forgiven, and we are "declared righteous," there is no accusation to be sustained before the Court.
- Adoption and sonship (Romans 8:16): We inherit the full rights as Sons of God.
- Worship (Romans 12:1): We glorify God for what He has accomplished. We look away from self and look to Christ. Rejecting all form of self-justification, we adore Him who obeyed the law perfectly for us on our behalf.
- Service: We serve not to be accepted, but because we are accepted. Service spring from grace, not because we must serve to be accepted, but because we are grateful debtors to God's acceptance of us (Romans 12:1ff; Hebrews 12:28).
- Fruits of Grace: Because God treats us as righteous; we treat other believers as righteous. Grace produces optimism, not about sinful man, but about justified children (Romans 15:1-7).

THREE PERSONS JUSTIFIED

The justification of the believer: The believer is justified (Romans 2:24) when he accepts the substitutionary work of Christ as his basis for a right standing before the high court of heaven.

The justification of Christ: Christ was justified by the Spirit (2 Timothy 3:15, 16). When Christ died, he did not die because He was morally unfit to stand in the presence of God. Sin was imputed to him. Imputation changed his standing before the court, but it did not change his character. The resurrection was the Spirit's declaration that Christ was personally, morally, constitutionally without sin.

The justification of God: God was declared just (Romans 3:26ff): God is

not only in the business of justifying people. He is in the business of justifying them justly. His divine law was maintained and honored in the whole process of justifying the sinner.

What is the “faith of christ”?

Romans 3:22.

◆ “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) unto all and upon all them that believe (τοὺς πιστεύοντας): for there is no difference.”

What does the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” mean?

The premise of this brief is that men are saved by the doing and dying of Christ and not our effort to be holy; that the foundation of the gospel rests on His faithfulness and not our faith; that is, God does not save men because they have some kind of nebulous, intellectual faith, but because they trust the work of Christ for salvation on their behalf.

This homily is about why the phrase “faith in Christ” should be translated “faithfulness of Christ.” It is a technical defense where some knowledge of Greek may be necessary to understand the translation challenge contained herein.

THE CONTEXTUAL ARGUMENT

Paul’s treatise on the Gospel in his letter to the Romans is explained in legal terms. It is a courtroom drama with Paul acting as both a prosecutor of mankind and a defense attorney for believers. Prior to this verse, Paul, acting as a prosecutor in the case *God v. Mankind* (Romans 1-3), pronounced all men guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10-20). But, in verse 21, Paul crossed the aisle and put on the wig of an English barrister in order to argue the case for the justification of the believer.

Paul’s forensic argument is as follows: To be justified in God’s Court, a man must possess righteousness (Romans 2:1-13). **First**, the bad news: all men are guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10ff). **Second**, the good news: There is a righteousness that comes from God that enables men to possess

what the Court requires. But, what is this righteousness, and where does it come from?

SEMANTIC ARGUMENT

Semantically, the phrase, “*faith of Jesus Christ*,” is usually interpreted as “*faith in Jesus*.” “*faith in Jesus*” is the default interpretation of Evangelicals because they are eager to prove that men are not saved by works.

But, if this is so, why did Paul say “unto all that believe?” Why a reference to two responses of “*faith*” in the same verse (3:22). Could it be that the phrase “*faith in Jesus*” is a poor translation **and should be translated “*faithfulness of Jesus*”** instead of the “*faith in Jesus*?”

THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Theologically, Paul is saying that sinners are declared “guilty” in His Court; that in order to stand before a holy God, a man needs real righteousness – substantive righteousness, **not** synthetic righteousness; that in the gospel, substantive righteousness is available to the believer, even the righteousness of Christ; that faith is **not** a virtue required by God, **nor** is faith a substitute for substantive righteousness; that faith is the confidence that Christ lived a righteous life on behalf of His elect and that God gives the believer Christ’s righteousness when he trusts Him. For example there is a big difference between being paid a hundred dollars in gold bullion and being paid a hundred dollars in FRNs. When God justifies a man he gives him substance -- the silver and gold of Christ’s righteousness, not synthetic paper notes.

LINGUISTIC ARGUMENT

Linguistically, the phrase “*faith of Christ*” should be translated “*faithfulness of Christ*” for the following **reasons**:

First, the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is a subjective genitive (indicating origin or source), not an objective genitive. The term “*faith*” (πίστεως) is a feminine noun, an ablative of agency. While

it can be translated “*faith*,” it can also be translated “*faithfulness*.” Since “*Jesus Christ*” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is in the genitive, this “*faith*” or “*faithfulness*” must be coming from Christ. Obviously, Paul is not talking about Christ’s faith, but his acts of “*faithfulness*.” Paul is **not** calling for an exercise of faith from the believer at this point in his argument as much as he is informing us that the “*righteousness from God*” that is available to the believer by faith is none other than the “*faithfulness of Christ*.”

Second, Romans 1:17 states: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: As it is written, the just shall live by faith.”

The phrase “*faith to faith*” (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστι) contains two prepositions and is difficult to translate. The first (ἐκ πίστεως) appears to be an ablative of source, or that which is produced by a person. Is this “*faith*” produced by us or does it refer to “*faithfulness*” produced by Christ? Surely, our faith is based on the obedience of Christ to God’s law; i.e. the *faithfulness of Christ*.”

The second prepositional phrase (εἰς πίστι) is either an accusative of purpose or accusative of result.

This phrase appears to be saying that “*our faith produces faithfulness*,” or it could be saying that Christ’s *faithfulness is the foundation of our faith*, or God’s righteousness comes from Christ’s faithfulness to produce man’s faith.

Third, Romans 3:3 says, “*For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*” The phrase “*faith of God*” (τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ) indicates that the “*faith*” comes from God. “*From God*” is a genitive indicating the source. Obviously, this does not refer to “*faith*” being produced by God but the “*faithfulness of God*.” That is, *man’s unbelief does not nullify God’s faithfulness*.

Paul uses the term “ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ” in Romans 3:26: “*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus* (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, faith of Jesus).” Again, is Paul calling

for man to exercise faith or is he referring to the faithfulness of Christ? This could be saying that God justifies the one who stands on the fidelity of Christ.

“faith” (*pistis*) can refer to *“faith”* exercised by the believer or the word *pistis* can refer to the *“faithfulness”* of our Lord to obey God’s law and to die for the sins of the world. It is because of Christ’s faithfulness that God can be *“just”* and the *“justifier”* of believing men. Again, the default translation on this text is *“faith in Jesus.”* (KJV, RSV, ASV, NASB). Even Roberston, the famous Baptist scholar insist the translation should be *“faith in Jesus.”* Thus, translators took the *“safe”* position and translated *“ἐκ πίστεως”* as *“faith in Jesus.”*

The preposition *“ek”* should **not** be translated *“when.”*

“ek” is a genitive of agency implying something coming from Christ; that is, His faithfulness.. Translating *“ek”* as *“in”* seems to be forcing an acceptable doctrine on the text in support of Luther and in opposition to the Catholic position of salvation by human merit.

“ek” is a preposition meaning *“from”* and can be translated *“because of;”* that is, God is able to be just and the justifier because of the faithfulness (*pistis*) of Jesus. Translating *“ek”* as *“in”* mars the translation. While it is true, men are saved by placing their faith in Christ, this does not appear to be what is being announced here. The foundation of the gospel is *pistis* as in the *“faithfulness”* of Jesus.

Doctrinally, Paul asserts men are saved by works (Romans 2:6-16) . . . the works of Christ (Romans 3:22, 26)! Believers are saved by the doing **and** dying of Christ (Ironsides). When a man believes in Christ, the *“obedience of Christ”* is credited to His account (Romans 4:5). This is the gospel. We are saved by the works of Another.

Fourth, Romans 4:16 discusses the *“faith of Abraham”* (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ).

Q: Does this refer to Abraham's response of faith to God or does it refer to faithfulness resulting from his faith?

Here it appears to refer to Abraham's response of faith and **not** his faithfulness. Because Abraham trusted God's faithfulness, God was faithful to justify him.

Fifth, the phrase "ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ" is used twice in Galatians 2:16: "*know that a man is not justified by (his) observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ)*. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, faith of Christ) and not by (our) observing the law, because by (our) observing the law no one will be justified." It appears best to render "ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ" here as the "*faithfulness of Christ*." Paul taught we are not saved by our personal observance of the law. We are saved because of Christ's personal observance of the law. We live because Christ was careful to do all that God requires so believing man can be justified in His sight.

Sixth, Galatians 2:20 also uses the phrase "faith of Christ" (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ).

"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 of the Son of God (ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The title "*Son of God*" is in the genitive indicating that "the faith" comes from Christ (a subjective genitive, not an objective genitive). Paul is not saying that "*I*" continue to live my Christian life by faith, but that *I live before God because the Lord obeyed the law perfectly on my behalf*.

Seventh, Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ) the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Q: Is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God being one who is justified by faith?” or, is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God, not having my own righteousness, but having the faithfulness of Christ credited to my account which comes by faith?”

It appears this ablative of agency refers to the **faithfulness of Christ**.

THE LEGAL ARGUMENT

The word “*justification*” is a forensic term having to do with the courts. In God’s Court, only a man who keeps the law can be justified (Romans 2:13). Christ was “*born under the law*” (Galatians 4:4). He obeyed the law (Philippians 2:9-12), and He was the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Consequently, He was “*justified*” (declared righteous) by the Spirit when He was raised from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Even in God’s Court, faith is **not** a substitute for righteousness. *A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God.* The good news of the gospel is that the righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

AN ARGUMENT FROM SUBSTITUTION

When we say, “*Christ died for our sins,*” we are saying He became our substitute. If Christ took our sins in an act of substitution, then we must take His righteousness. If sin was imputed to him, then his “*faithfulness*” was imputed to us. *In other words, we are saved by works – HIS WORKS! We are saved, not only by his death, but also by His life of obedience to God’s law-word.*

In Summary, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between “*faith*” and “*faithfulness*,” it is at times important to do so. It would be incorrect to always interpret *pistis* (faith) as objective – something being demanded of man. Sometimes, *it is subjective* and can refer to that which is produced by an agent – in this case something produced by Christ; i.e. *His faithfulness*.

It is important to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (πίστεως Χριστου) as the “*faithfulness of Christ*” — something vicarious done on the behalf of another.

I once asked a Catholic neighbor (Mary) if she had any hope of eternal life. She said she did. So, I asked, “Mary, why do you think you will go to heaven?” Pounding on her heart, she said, “I have faith!” For 10 minutes she discussed her great faith and how much she believed in God. Mary did not believe her works could save her. Her hope rested in her faith. However, not once did she mention Christ, His life, His death, His atonement, His redemptive accomplishments or His resurrection. It was all about faith in her heart . . . and because she had subjective faith, God was somehow obligated to take her to heaven.

A few days later, it dawned on me what she was really saying. To her, “faith” was a virtue and she had this virtue that God honored dwelling in her heart. She expected to enter heaven because she had what God required, “*faith.*” But, I asked myself, “*Where was Christ in her testimony?*” And, if faith is all that is required to go to heaven, why did Christ have to live and die?

Peter Kreeft, a Catholic apologist, has this to say:

But many Catholics to this day have not learned the Catholic and biblical doctrine (of justification). They think we are saved by good intentions or being nice or sincere or trying a little harder or doing a sufficient number of good deeds. Over the past twenty-five years I have asked hundreds of Catholic college students the question: **If you should die tonight and God asks you why he should let you into heaven, what would you answer? The vast majority of them simply do not know the right answer to this, the most important of all questions, the very essence of Christianity.** They usually do not even mention Jesus! (Catholic Educator’s Resource Center, Kreeft, 1988)

The answer lies in our ability to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (πίστεως Χριστού).

Our personal faith is not the basis of our salvation. *The faithfulness of Christ is the basis of our salvation.*

What men need in order to be saved is *substantive righteousness*, **not** virtuous faith with warm fuzzies.

The good news of the Bible is that this righteousness is given to those who believe as a free gift. This “*righteousness*” is none other than *the faithfulness of Christ* (πίστεως Χριστού).

As a Judahite, Jesus was born under the law. His obedience was tested and the Spirit declared, “*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8). *Because He obeyed perfectly, we can be justified perfectly.* We are saved by works – not ours, **but** His works. We are saved by obedience -- **His obedience**. When we believe, His “*faithfulness*,” His “*works*,” and His “*obedience*” are credited to us (believers) as a gift of God (Romans 5:15ff).

IMPUTATION V. INFUSION

Roman Catholicism asserts that justification means *the infusion of righteousness into the heart of man*. In other words, the word “*imputation*” is defined as *infusion* in the Roman Catholic system.

To the Roman Catholic, *justification is both a declaration and a creation*; justification is contained in regeneration; that is, when a man is born again and God changes the man, He justifies the man.

The question immediately arise, “*How much change must be produced to be declared righteous in God’s sight? How virtuous does the heart have to become?*” What a quandary! What slavery! This system is nothing more than a sophisticated works program – if you change enough, God may, perhaps, hopefully, possibly take you to heaven.

Who are justified through Christ?

But, though He died for all, yet do not all receive the benefit of His death, but those only unto whom the merit of His passion is communicated. For as in truth men, if they were not born propagated of the seed of Adam, would not be born unjust,-seeing that, by that propagation, they contract through him, when they are conceived, injustice as their own,-so, if they were not born again in Christ, they never would be justified; seeing that, in that new birth, there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace whereby they are **made just** (Counsel of Trent (1547), Sixth Session, Chapter III).

In Romans 4, Paul seeks to demonstrate how the believer can stand righteous before God apart from human merit through a process called “imputation.” The biblical word, *logizomai*, is translated:

- think (9)
- impute (8)
- reckon (6)
- count (5)- account (4)
- suppose (2)
- reason (1)
- number (1)

The word “*impute*” means *to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over, to take into account, and to make an account of*. Metaphorically it means to transfer to one's account, to impute a thing to be something. It is used at least eleven (11) times in Romans chapter four where it is translated “*think,*” “*impute,*” “*count,*” and “*reckon.*” Thus, the word “*impute*” adds more proof that justification is a *declaration of righteousness*, **not** infusion of righteousness.

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him

that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

All Christians believe that Christ died for the ungodly, but many will not accept the position that *God justifies the ungodly*.

In the 16th century, the Catholics fought this truth with ruthless vigor. The doctrine of Christ's substitutionary work demands it. (He was treated as if He were a sinner.) The doctrine of imputed righteousness demands it. (The sinner is treated as if he were the One who lived that sinless life and died on the cross.)

Calvin explains:

For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when, by taking that burden upon himself, he reconciled us to God as if all had kept the law. — (Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 2, chap. 17, sec. 5.

We define justification as follows: the sinner received into communion with Christ, is reconciled to God by his grace. While cleansed by Christ's blood, he obtains forgiveness of sins, and clothed with Christ's righteousness as if it were his own he stands confident before the heavenly judgment seat. — (Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 3, chap. 17, sec. 8.)

Thus, Roman Catholics *subordinated justification to sanctification*; i.e. making justification dependent on living out a life of holiness of being regenerated. When salvation is contingent on being “born again,” we place regeneration before justification. If justification is dependent on “change” and “sanctification,” the question becomes, “*How sanctified do you have to become before you are accepted in God’s eyes?*”

Five Impossibilities

Romans 8:31-36

◆ Following the good news that God's providence is working all things for the good of Christians, the Apostle Paul states the truth that those God has justified, he has also glorified (Romans 8:30). He speaks of justification and glorification as a fact in the mind of God by using the aorist—a completed action in the past. He then proceeds to state five impossibilities for the believer (Romans 8:31-38):

First, it is impossible for a believer to have an unconquerable adversary: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31). This is arguably one of the greatest verses in the Bible. It was John Calvin's life verse.

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

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?"

"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!"

If the greatness and power of almighty God is on our side, who cares what the forces come against us? It is like African pygmies playing the Boston Celtics. Why even read the scouting report on the pygmies? I use have a classmate in sixth grade whose name was Sam. Sam wasn't very smart and he flunked two years in a row. He outweighed other students by 60 pounds. We soon discovered, that no matter the game, whoever had Sam on their side, won the game. Likewise, because Christ is our advocate, we're gonna win the game.

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. 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, it is impossible for a believer not to receive future blessings.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (v. 32). The Son is the most precious and valuable possession of God. If he did not spare his greatest jewel, shall we not inherit all His jewels? The "all things" refer to a future eschatological inheritance, that is, the resurrection of the body.

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.

Notice the word "*above*" (huper). 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.

Notice the word “*give*” (*charizomai*). 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!!

Third, it is impossible for a charge to be brought against us in God's

court. "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. 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."

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 3:1-4; 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!!

Again, who cares about the indictment of men? All charges were placed on Christ. If he died for our sins, there is none left for us to pay for. The judgment is complete. The believer has been declared righteous by the highest court in the land. Who is going to challenge the verdict? There is no double jeopardy. God's verdict is final -- and it is a verdict, not of "not guilty" but one of "justified" -- declared righteous.

Fourth, it is impossible for a believer to be condemned: "Who is he that condemmeth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who maketh intercession for us" (v. 34). 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, "*katakrino*" which is a combination of two Greek words: "*krino*" means "to give an opinion or to issue a judgment" and "*kata*" meaning "down." Thus, *katakrino* 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.

Since Christ has paid all our sin, what sin is there left for us to pay? If he drank the wrath of God on our behalf, how much do we have to drink? If all our sins were placed on Christ, how many are still left on us? When asking for assurance of salvation, don't plead your religious experience, or even your faith. Plead the death of Christ!

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? ". . . *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 that 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 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.

Fifth, it is impossible for a believer to be separated from God. “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” 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:

Understand the nature of the question. What power, circumstance, or predicament is going to halt the completion of God's love program for our lives? Can you think of one thing? He has just asserted the judicial and legal permanence of God's verdict, and now he tests that assertion against all adverse circumstances that penetrate the life of a Christian. Paul now lists possibilities that might enter our minds.

Circumstances that Can't Separate Us from God

Shall tribulation? The Greek word for tribulation is “*thilipsis*” It is used 35 times as a verb depicting the troubles believers experience for the gospel. 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. It would be easy to interpret man's rejection of the Christian message as God's animosity toward us. But, this is "stinkin' thinkin'."

Shall distress? The term distress, "stenochoria," is translated *anguish* in Romans 2:9. The word "stenochoria" refers to narrow places such as being caught in a military maneuver with no way of escape. It refers to an irretrievable loss, to an impossible, irreversible circumstance, to being squeezed by life's difficulties. It is the opposite of being in an open field. It is the feeling that the walls are closing in on you. But, hard places do not separate us from the love of God.

Or persecution? The word persecution, "*diogmos*," means "to make run." It is used ten times in the NT. The hate and animosity of men toward Christ is no indicator of God's disapproval. 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.

Or famine? This word "famine" needs no explanation as it refers to being homeless and moneyless. It involves hunger and thirst—a feeling of utter abandonment and terror. One would think that the Lord's people would be well fed, but not always. Being hungry can only happen to the extremely isolated or to the extreme poor. We must not interpret hunger as a sign of rejection by the Lord. Many of God's people have been through famines. Take the pilgrims, for example and the rationing of three beans a day. They hungered; but, the trusted Christ.

Or nakedness? 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. God's people may not be the best dressed people in the world, but they are the most loved people on earth. A lack of shelter is

not a sign that God has forsaken us.

Or peril? This term is used eight times Scripture. It refers to some type of jeopardy, a hazard. 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. When circumstances are treacherous and there are no good choices, we may be tempted to look into heaven and ask, "Does God love me?" The answer is always "yes!"

Psalm 44:22 As it is written, for they sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Or sword? 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.

Here then is a description of the people of God: afflicted, rejected, hunted, targeted, and helpless like sheep. If rebellious men rejected the Shepherd, they will reject His sheep. If they hated him, they will hate us. From Nero to the Stalin, from the burning stake of the Pope to the gladiator games of the Romans, God's people are stalked and attacked. Even at this present hour many of God's people are jailed and sentenced to die.

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](#) reminds 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.

But, none of these things can divide us from His love. 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! Separation from the love of God? It's just not possible!

Five Affirmations

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquers through him that loved us." This verse is a felicitous interjection. **Note five affirmations found in this verse.**

We are more than "*conquers!*" We are called victors. There are no losers on God's team. There is no circumstance, no trouble, and no difficulty that can defeat us.

The term “*more*” may refer to the fact that Christ has entered the battle for us and on our behalf and we now enjoy the victory of a war in which we did not fight.

The phrase “*in all these things*” refers to nasty, negative circumstances Christians often find themselves. Victory is not always determined by the half-time score. There is no circumstance, no difficulty, for which there is not help.

The phrase “*through Him*” informs us that there is always a way out through Christ. That deliverance comes through a person, and that person loves us. Notice the past tense. The Son is God’s door of escape for the believer.

The phrase “*that loved us*” is stated as an undisputed fact. It refers to a settled conviction in the soul.

Things that Can’t Separate Us from God’s Love

Death: The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger said, “As soon as a man begins to live he is old enough to die.” Even those who know Christ feel the cold chill of death. It is one thing to be rejected by men, it is another to be rejected by our own body. The megaphone of pain can wrongly be interpreted as God’s rejection of us. The Christian knows that he has an appointment with death and that death will not separate him from the love of Christ. Rather, death is only the gateway into the kingdom of God. The last words of James Bairns were, “I’ve been dying for 20 years. Now I’m getting ready to live.” Others have triumphantly stated, “I am getting ready to graduate,” and “I’m looking forward to my promotion.”

Nor life: Sometimes life is more threatening than death. Paying bills, dealing with relational conflicts and limited resources shake our confidence. Debt, illness, pain, or lose of a loved one is traumatic. Fears cannot succeed in dividing us from the love of God. But no matter how dark the future may seem to be, we must resist the temptation to see

circumstances as a sign of God's rejection.

Nor angels: There may be unseen spirits at work against the Christian, but we are assured they have no power to break the cord tying us to His love.

Nor principalities: Whether good or bad, active or inactive, many or few, legitimate authority or illegitimate authority, natural or super-natural, none of these powers, states, governments, or rulers can separate us from Him.

Nor powers: The word here means "*energies*." It is the word "dynamis." It refers to those visible and invisible forces that seem to be against us. No matter how hideous or insidious, demonic or atomic, foul or fare, these forces will not be able to divide us from God's love.

Nor things present: Sometimes present circumstances are so debilitating and demoralizing, but these are not situations that divide us from Him.

Nor things to come: Sometimes we here reports comin' down the pike sort of speak that arouse fears. Oh, the fears we have about what could happen! Obstacles, lack of money, separation from loved ones, and the possibility of dying can suck faith right out of hearts. But, God is greater than the future. Even fears realized are not signs that we are forsaken.

Nor height, nor depth: Here we have the dimensions of space. It matters little if they are linear or vertical; bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional; whether they are above our head or below our feet, none of these shall divide us from Christ.

Nor any other creature: Now in case we did not get the point, Paul throws in the last catch-all phrase- "*any other creature*." Imagined or real, big or small, natural or spiritual, intelligent or beastly, good or bad -- -- none shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

There is nothing that can separate us from Christ, but there is one evil that can separate a man from the full enjoyment of His love and that is unbelief. Unbelief can rob us of the consolation of these verses and the

realization that He will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). Let us, therefore, do all we can to understand the height and depth and breadth of God's love for us at Calvary. Maybe this is why Paul prayed for enlightenment (Ephesians 3:10ff).

Psalm 30:5 Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.(

Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Psalm 37:24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

Romans 8:30 Those He justified, He also glorified.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theol

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