

Lesson 9

Chapter Eight

After explaining our despair without Christ, Paul shouts in crescendo the marvelous blessing—“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

The Climax of the Epistle

Chapter eight is one of the most beautiful sections of this entire epistle. It is the climax toward which the entire book has been building to this point. The Holy Spirit has led Paul to explain the universality of sin (chapters 1-3), then the problems that sin creates in our relationship to God (chapters 5-7). Finally, after explaining the utter despair man faces without Christ, he shouts in crescendo the marvelous blessing available in Christ, declaring, **there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus** (8:1a). With these words he begins to explain the glorious deliverance from the condemnation of sin that is made available to those **who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit** (8:1b).

Chapter seven explored the way of life that “walks” according to the flesh. It is hopeless. It is enslaved.

Now Paul explains a better way. He proclaims a life that “walks” according to the Spirit. Let us note a few points as we begin this section:

1. “The Flesh.” Throughout this and the previous chapter, the first edition of the New International Version, in one of its most blatant demonstrations of Calvinistic bias, rendered the Greek word *sarx*, which means simply *flesh*—“sinful nature.” This is inexcusable! While the “flesh” is used here in the sense further modified in verse three as “sinful flesh,” this mistranslation serves to perpetuate the false doctrine that man’s very nature is sinful. We must understand that the appetites of the flesh can be channeled either toward righ-

teous service to God or sinful rebellion against Him (see p. 41). We do not sin because it is our nature but because it is our choice.

2. The Conditions of Deliverance.

This marvelous privilege of being freed from condemnation, does not come to man without condition. Namely, we must *not* walk “according to the flesh” and we *must* walk according to the Spirit. Even though some manuscripts omit the last half of verse one¹, this condition is included in the majority of manuscripts and is repeated throughout this chapter. We cannot imagine that we can pursue the ways of sinful flesh and still escape condemnation.

3. The Holy Spirit or our Spirit.

The editors of some translations employ the custom of capitalizing all divine references as a gesture of respect. In the case of references to the “Spirit,” the student of the Bible must recognize that there are many occasions in which this is a matter of personal judgment. At the time the New Testament was written Koine Greek was written with all capital letters. In most cases the context makes it clear when the “spirit” being referenced is the Holy Spirit and when it is our own spirit. Simply because a translation capitalizes a reference to “spirit” does not mean that it is necessarily a reference to the Holy Spirit.

The Law of the Spirit of Life (8:1-11)

What allows the Christian to move from spiritual death to a condition of “no condemnation”? What he referred to as the “gospel” in 1:16, he now refers to as the **law of**

¹ The oldest extant papyri manuscript (P⁴⁶) is missing the page that has this entire section. In three of the major parchment manuscripts we find the following: the Alexandrian manuscript has “who do not walk according to the flesh;” the Sinai manuscript is missing the last part of 8:1 but has “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit” written in the margin; the Vatican manuscript omits the phrase. The majority of surviving manuscripts have the complete verse.

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (8:2a). This law of grace, by which the faithful obedient soul may receive the “gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38) allows one to be made **free from the law of sin and death** (8:2b). Although the next verse will speak of “the law” in reference to the Law of Moses, the “law of sin and death” likely refers to the principle of sin leading to spiritual death rather than the law of Moses exclusively. The gospel frees all souls from this *sin unto death* process, whether they were ever under obligation to Mosaic law or not.

The Law’s Weakness

Paul moves to address the Law of Moses and its role in this *sin unto death* process as a means to illustrate deliverance from this process. He writes, **what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son** (8:3a). Paul explained in the previous chapter that the Law, while “spiritual” (Rom. 7:14) and



A Roman religious procession from the Augustan “Altar of Peace” in Rome. Early Christians were considered “atheists” because they did not believe in the many gods the Romans worshipped. Courtesy of Bill Thayer.

“good” (Rom. 7:16) through bringing knowledge of sin (7:7), produced desire to sin (7:8). The fact that it was dependent upon weak flesh, was how it was itself “weak through the flesh.” Through God sending Jesus, **in the likeness of**

sinful flesh (i.e., he bore the same flesh possessed by those who sinned in the flesh—cf. Heb. 2:14-17), **on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh** (8:3b). Jesus followed the same Law. Yet, in the face of this same law that was weakened by the flesh, He overcame the *death through sin* process. Paying our sin debt Himself, He allowed **the righteous requirement** (Gr. *dikaiōma*—“that which has been deemed right, so as to have force of law,” Thayer) **of the law to be fulfilled in us** (8:4a). Under what circumstances can we accept this payment “on account of sin”? If we **do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit** (8:4b). This is the condition of verse one restated.

Living According to the Flesh or the Spirit

In this passage Paul defines exactly what it means to “live according to the flesh” as well as what it means to live “according to the Spirit.” Many have imagined that to live “according to the Spirit” means that the Holy Spirit personally and directly dwells in and empowers the believer. Some have gone so far as to say that this is outside of the choice or control of the one who lives “according to the Spirit.” Paul explains

that, **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on** or simply “mind” (ASV) **the things of the flesh** (8:5a). This is a personal choice regarding the focus of the mind. These are, as Paul describes to the Philippians, those “whose

end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). This is not simply having a fleshly body. Nor is it that man’s flesh carries with it a “sinful nature.” It is to “love the world” (cf. 1 John 2:15). It is to pursue “sinful flesh” (8:3).

Living “according to the Spirit” is a choice. It is a decision. Paul commands, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

Paul goes on to also define what it means to “live according to the Spirit.” He declares, **those who live according to the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit** (8:5b). Inference may be drawn here from the first part of the verse. Just as those living “according to the flesh” *set their minds on* the “things of the flesh,” those who live “according to the Spirit” *set their minds on* the “things of the Spirit.” This is a choice. It is a decision. Just as Paul commanded the Ephesians “do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). He commanded the Colossians, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). Living, walking, and being led by the Spirit is not a possession or a forced empowerment. It is a conscious decision to allow the things revealed by the Holy Spirit to dwell within and affect our behavior.

This is described as being **carnally minded**, a condition whose end is **death**, the opposite of which is being **spiritually minded** whose end is **life and peace** (8:6). Being

“carnally minded” (i.e., setting our mind on the things of the flesh) is **enmity** (Gr. *echthra*—“hostile, hating and opposing another,” Thayer) **against God** (8:7a). Paul began this epistle with a declaration of a state of war. God’s wrath is “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth through unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). To pursue “sinful flesh” is not simply making a mistake or going one’s own way it is an act of warfare! To live in such a condition, by its very definition is rebellion against God. Paul teaches that the “carnal mind” (again, setting the mind on the things of the flesh) **is not subject to the law of God** (8:7b).

This is not describing one with a body of flesh, who is not in rebellion to God. The innocent child or those mentally incompetent have a body of flesh but are not in rebellion to God. They are not setting their mind on the things of the flesh, thus they are not “carnally minded.” Yet, the accountable, competent soul who walks according to the flesh, is not only out of subjection to divine law, but in such a state Paul adds **nor indeed can be** (8:7c).

Does Man Have a “Sinful Nature”?

Is Paul teaching with these words that human beings, by our very nature are incapable of doing good? That is what some have argued from this statement. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, after arguing that Adam’s sin was “imputed” to all of his descendants, claimed, “from this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions” (6.4). This is not what Paul

is teaching! On the contrary, Paul is simply addressing the definition of the carnal mind. One who sets his mind on the things of the flesh cannot consider himself in subjection to the law of God. It is in this sense that Paul declares “it is *not* subject” nor “indeed *can be*” subject to divine law. He goes further to explain, **those who are in the flesh cannot please God** (8:8). We cannot set our minds on the things of the flesh (which is to be “in the flesh”) and please God.

Allowing the doctrine, which the Spirit revealed, to live in us leads to life. This is the Spirit in us.

It is clear that Paul’s teachings on the flesh are not describing simply human nature, nor having a fleshly body, because of what Paul says about the Romans themselves. He declares, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit** (8:9a). They still had fleshly bodies and they still had a common human nature. What then was different about them? They were not in the flesh **if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in them** (8:9b). How was the Spirit dwelling in them? By “setting their minds on the things of the Spirit.” This also is a choice and a commitment. It was a condition of deliverance from the *death through sin* process. He declares, **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His** (8:9c).

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

These verses help to explain how the Spirit dwells in the Christian. We see that not only does the “Spirit of God dwell in us” (8:9b) but when this takes place it is the same as having “the Spirit of Christ” (8:9c). This is not to say that there

is no distinction in the different persons of the Godhead. The Son is not the Father, and the Spirit is not the Son, in spite of the fact that they are each God. Yet, the sense in which the Spirit dwells in the believer is the same as having Christ dwell in the believer. Paul told the Ephesians, “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). When we allow the system of faith revealed by the Holy Spirit to dwell in us it is the Spirit dwelling in us. It is Christ dwelling in us.

This is essentially no different than the word dwelling in us. Paul goes on to say, **if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of** (Gr. *dia* literally

“through”) **sin, but the Spirit is life because of** (Gr. *dia* literally “through”) **righteousness** (8:10). Allowing this doctrine, which the Spirit revealed, to live in us leads to life. Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63b). When the believer allows these words of Spirit (which is exactly what the living word of the gospel is), to live in us it will lead to eternal life. Paul declares, **if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you** (8:11). It is in this sense that the implanted word dwelling in believers becomes the earnest of the Holy Spirit unto the Day of Judgment (2 Cor. 5:5).

“Brethren, We Are Debtors” (8:12-30).

The soul who has been redeemed becomes indebted to the one who paid his redemption price. Paul explains this in spiritual terms declaring **brethren, we are debtors**

(8:12a). Interestingly enough, he never expressly says to what (or to whom) we are debtors. He simply explains in the negative that we are debtors, **not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh** (8:12b). The inference is that we are debtors to Christ, and what He has provided for us spiritually. Thus we are debtors to the spirit and not to the flesh. Why is this the case? To put it in Jesus' words, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63a). Service to sinful flesh, which is to say walking "according to the flesh," offers nothing but death. Paul says, **if you live according to the flesh you will die** (8:13a). This, once again, is the condition expressed in verse one, we must—"not walk according to the flesh" (8:1b). To the very Christians to whom he declared, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1a), he now says "if *you* live according to the flesh *you* will die." There is no doctrine of "once saved always saved" taught here! The child of God must, **by the Spirit** (i.e., by setting their mind on the things of the Spirit), **put to death the deeds of the body** and only then does he declare to them **you will live** (8:13b).

When we as human beings influence our children, it could be said that the "spirit" of the parents lives in their children when they follow what the parents instill within them. John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). This was not a reincarnation or transmigration of souls. He had the same character and disposition that Elijah did. In the same way we should note how the next few verses illustrate that the Spirit living in the believer is one and the same as



Inscription with the name of emperor Domitian from Delphi. Domitian initiated the second Roman persecution of Christians and the first that was widespread. Because of this, few inscriptions bearing his name have survived that have not been defaced. Photo: Kyle Pope.

allowing the character and disposition revealed by the Spirit to live in the believer. Paul said, **as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God** (8:14). Jesus said, "If you abide in My word you are my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). He illustrates this speaking of the fact that in Christ we did not gain **the spirit of bondage again to fear** (8:15a). In Christ, although we have reverence for God, we are granted confidence through the promise of the message. In Christ we have gained **the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father"** (8:15b). "Abba" is an Aramaic intimate term for "father." The child of natural birth, who encounters his or her parent, cries out in some of its

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earliest sounds, "mama" or "dada." What is it that allows the new convert to recognize the change of relationship that occurs in his conversion whereby God becomes his father? It is the understanding of the truth of the gospel. This is the "spirit" of adoption, the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit. This dwelling within us leads Paul to explain the

Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (8:16). This is not possession, nor a direct operation, but dwelling through the implanted word. The testimony which this word confirms allows us to be considered **heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ** (8:17b). There is a condition. We are heirs **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together** (8:17c).

The Christian and Suffering

The suffering that Christians must endure must be taken in perspective. No matter how grievous or oppressive it may appear in the present, suffering is nothing compared to what awaits the child of God. Paul says, **I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us** (8:18). Paul elsewhere spoke of the sufferings of the present time as "light affliction" that is "for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17). What a powerful statement in light of what we know about Paul's trials (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28)! What a lesson to us. Whether it is suffering we must endure, persecutions we must face, or trials that come from our commitment to serve the Lord, no matter how difficult these may feel now—it will be worth it in eternity.

Paul may be likening the pains and hardships of the whole present creation to “labor pains.”

The Creation Subjected to Futility

Paul moves to make some profound statements about this glory and its relationship to our current condition. He declares that the **earnest expectation** (“anxious longing,” NASB) **of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God** (8:19). He tells us that this “creation” was **subjected to futility** (8:20) by God, until the time when **the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God** (8:21). According to Paul, the **whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now** (8:22).

The word “creation” in this text is the Gr. word *ktisis* and can refer to the “creation” (in an abstract sense) or the “thing created” (in a specific sense). The King James Version rendered this “creature,” as if to say one part of the creation, namely man. Yet, verse twenty-three speaks of the “whole creation.” Is there any sense in which the “whole creation” has “anxious expectation” (19), was “subjected to futility” (20), “groans and labors with birth pangs” (22) until it shall be “delivered from bondage to corruption” (21)?

The Bible does not address what (if any) specific changes occurred to the creation as a whole when Adam sinned and was cast out of the garden, however, the curses that were pronounced upon the man, woman, and the serpent describe differences which affected both humans and the world around them. The serpent was changed to a creature that moved on its belly and was cursed more than

other creatures (Gen. 3:14). Enmity was placed between the serpent and mankind (Gen.

3:15). There is no indication that such a relationship existed between the serpent and man before this. The woman was given pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and in punishment of the man the ground itself was cursed so as to bring forth “thorns and thistles” and food only by toil and sweat (3:17-18).

In contrast the picture of eternal life is one in which there is “no more pain” (Rev. 21:4), but the godly shall “rest from their labors” (Rev. 14:13) because God shall “make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). This is not simply a rejuvenated version of the present creation, since the Lord promises that the present creation will “pass away” being “burned up” and “dissolved” (2 Pet. 3:10-12). However, it may be that Paul is likening the pain and hardship of the creation as it now exists to the “groaning” of labor pains. The present creation, that is now subject to corruption and futility, will one day give way to the “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). If this is Paul’s point, the very futility of this creation may be seen as a resounding testimony calling man to long for a new, and better creation.

Paul says that the truth of the gospel, given by the Holy Spirit allowed those who in their day had **the firstfruits of the Spirit to groan within themselves eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body** (8:23). The person with no knowledge of anything better than the life he currently enjoys has no reason to long for something different. When man learns that there is

a place and condition better than the present, it makes satisfaction with the present difficult. In the same way, the Christian “groans within.” We know that this world is not what it should be. Here there is sin. Here there is death and pain. Yet, in Christ, through the gospel by revelation of the Holy Spirit, we have learned of a better place. This place and condition we set before our mind’s eye daily, now recognizing “this world is not our home.” Now, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

Setting this hope before us, Paul declares, **we were saved in this hope** (8:24a). This is not hope alone, any more than salvation is by faith alone. Rather, the one stands for the whole. True hope is the sum total of the faith, obedience, love, and grace which abandons trust in oneself and wholly submits in faithful obedience to God. These promises cannot be seen and verified with the senses. Paul explains, **hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?** (8:24b). But, this hope that motivates us on toward the goal of heaven, must be something which, while **we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance** (8:25).

The Holy Spirit’s Role in Prayer

In the course of this discussion about hope and the glory to come, Paul uses an example concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. He writes, **likewise** “and in like manner” (ASV) **the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered** (8:26). This is the only text that speaks of this role of the Holy Spirit making “intercession.” How does this harmonize with Paul’s

declaration that, “there is One Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 2:5)? Although God the son and God the Holy Spirit are equally divine, we should not understand their work as the same. It is only Jesus who allows man to have “boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19-20). In this role, Jesus, “ever lives to make intercession for the saints” (Heb. 7:25).

Perhaps the last part of this passage, helps us to understand its meaning. This intercession occurs “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” This is not describing some “Holy Spirit” language (as our charismatic friends would imagine). It is silent. This describes a connection that takes place silently from within. Notice the next verse, **He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is** (8:27a). The book of Proverbs teaches, “the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (Prov. 20:27). As spiritual beings, the spirit within us is the “lamp” which allows the One who “searches the hearts” to know the mind of man. The Christian can pray to God silently and yet God, through the contact which His Spirit makes with our own spirit knows the thoughts of

Well-intentioned believers have often used 8:28 to misrepresent God’s activity in human life.

the heart. This is especially important when we struggle with how to articulate the concerns of the heart.

Nothing is lost. God is not unaware of our needs. The Holy Spirit **makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God** (8:27b).

All Things Work Together For Good

Paul then offers one of the most beautiful promises of Scripture. He writes, **we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are**



The Colosseum in Rome was built by the emperor Vespasian near a “colossal” statue Nero had erected of himself. Many Christians faced the kind of persecution Paul describes in the Colosseum. Photo:FreeStockPhotos.com.

the called according to His purpose (8:28). While this passage should bring great comfort to the child of God, it has often been misused by well-intentioned believers to misrepresent God’s activity in human life. For example, a Christian who faces illness, the death of a loved one, or some other severe hardship may hear from well-meaning brethren “it is for the best” or it is “God’s will.” It is true that God’s providential will is such that even when it comes to the life of a bird, “not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will” (Matt. 10:29). Yet, this does not infer God’s direct involvement,

nor that every minute occurrence in life happens “for the best.” There are things that happen simply because of “time and chance” (Eccl. 9:11). The sinful actions of enemies of God which lead to persecution do not happen in accordance with “God’s will.” Yet, in God’s permissive will he allows it to be that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Paul is teaching that the Christian is in the unique position of being able to view even the most horrible of circumstances as capable of bringing about positive results. In the face of hardship, we may gain strength to help others who face the same (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4). Tribulations we face can produce perseverance that can lead us to develop the character that is Christ-like (see Rom. 5:3-4). This is not to say that the hardship or persecution itself is “good” but that the outcome which a godly perspective on the difficulty can produce is good. The Hebrew writer said of Jesus that He, “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Jesus did not *enjoy* the cross. Nor was His sinful mistreatment a “good thing.” Yet He, like us, could look ahead to the “joy set before him” and recognize those things which “worked together for good.”

Foreknowledge and Predestination

Paul declares, **whom He foreknew, He also predestined** (8:29a). The apostle shows here that it is different to *foreknow* something and to *predestine* something. “Foreknow” in Gr. is *proginōskō*—“to have

knowledge beforehand” (Thayer). We get our English word “prognosticate” from this word. It is simply to know what will happen ahead of time. God knew Abraham’s behavior ahead of time. God says, “I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Gen. 18:19). God didn’t make Abraham act, but he knew what Abraham would do.

On the other hand, “predestine” in Gr. is *proorizō*, from *pro*

The apostle shows here that to foreknow something is different than to predestine something.

(“before”) and *horizō* (“to define, to mark out the boundaries or limits of any place or thing,” Thayer). This is more active. This is more determined. The death of Jesus was *predetermined* (Acts 4:27, 38). God did not directly cause the actions of those who killed Jesus, but He put in the right place at the right time, those whom He knew would of their own freewill choose to do what He determined must take place in order to fulfill His purpose. In the same way God has “appointed a day on which He will judge the world” (Acts 17:31). Nothing that any human can do will alter this. It is pre-determined by God’s choice alone.

Paul says that those whom God “foreknew” (i.e., knew ahead of time would obey the gospel) He has “predetermined” certain things about them. Namely, He has pre-determined that they are **to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn**

among many brethren (8:29b). There are two ways this may be understood. First, God has pre-determined that those who turn to Jesus in faithful obedience should look to Jesus as the example of behavior. Jesus set Himself forth as the example of behavior. He said, “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). John taught, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

A second way that God has pre-determined that the Christian should be “conformed to the image of His Son” has to do with the resurrection.

All those who are in Christ, on the Day of Judgment shall “bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Cor.

15:49). John wrote, through the Holy Spirit, “when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). While this is not saying that Christians will be gods in the age to come, it is teaching that we will bear some aspect of Christ’s image in the resurrection.

The apostle goes on to describe the further blessings God has bestowed upon those whom He has foreknown and predestined to conformity to Christ’s image. He writes, **whom He predestined, these He also called** (8:30a). This is not a specific and personal calling but the call of the gospel. Paul told the Thessalonians, “He called you by our gospel” (2 Thess. 2:14). In the same way the Romans were “the called of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:6). Paul continues, **whom He called, these He also justified** (8:30b). God is the One who, by granting forgiveness to those who clothe themselves in the blood of Jesus, can account

them as forgiven of sins. This condition establishes them as acquitted of guilt and grants them the legal status of being “justified” (or “righteous”) before God (see p. 23). Finally, **whom He justified, these He also glorified** (8:30c). The text quoted above from 2 Thessalonians 2:14 continues, “He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In one sense, the Christian is *glorified* in this life in that God has “raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6). In the ultimate sense, eternal life will be the absolute way in which the Christian is glorified. Paul says of the resurrection of the mortal body, “it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory” (1 Cor. 15:43).

When God is On Our Side (8:31-39)

In this life it often appears that the Christian is at a disadvantage. Our faith may lead to persecution. Our faith may keep us from gaining certain advantages in comparison to the ungodly who disregard ethics and morality. Paul calls upon the brethren in Rome to recognize that this apparent disadvantage is only superficial. In fact, **if God is for us, who can be against us?** (8:31b). If this life does not always demonstrate that God is “for us” what evidence do we have that this is the case? The sacrifice of Jesus! In this amazing gift to mankind God **did not spare His own Son** (8:32a). What greater demonstration could be offered? This serves as proof, that in the age to come God will **freely give us all things** (8:32c). What does this include? We cannot now know all that this entails. Yet, at the very least it tells us that anything we might sacrifice here; any desire we deny ourselves in this age, or any pleasure from which we must

turn away, in the age to come will either be satisfied or so far surpassed that all sacrifice in this life will have been as nothing.

The kinship that the believer gains to God in Christ puts him in a unique position. The Lord of all the universe sent His own Son on our behalf. If God is willing, in Christ to forgive our sins, who else has any power to accuse? Paul asks, **who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies** (8:33). We noted earlier in our study that God has always been and ever remains the only One who can move one from condemnation to justification. When He has set terms for this justification, **who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us** (8:34). The Son of God paid the price for our sins and "ever lives to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25). He stands as our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). There is no one greater who can have any power to bring a charge against God's people.

This exalted position which the Christian attains in Christ, means that all power human beings hold

over the Christian is diminished. No other human being has the power to sever the relationship of adoption and sonship that is granted in Christ. Paul asks, **who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** (8:35a). To which he asks further, **shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?** (8:35b). If our relationship to God in Christ was a relationship "according to the flesh," the destruction of our flesh through "persecution" or "sword" would destroy that relationship. Since it is a relationship that is "according to the spirit" our flesh may perish yet our relationship continues.

Christians are **more than conquerors** (8:37b) not through our own merit but **through Him who loved us** (8:37c). Our master conquered death. Our king has all authority. As a result, those who follow Him can have the assurance that **neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God**

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:38-39). What comfort this should bring to the child of God. What hope in the face of all the dark times in this life. No external force can impose itself upon the soul of the Christian and rob him or her of the

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hope that is brought in "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." It is imperative, however, that we do not separate ourselves from God's love. Jesus taught, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Jude, through the Holy Spirit, commanded, "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word *sarx*, which the first edition of the New International Version inaccurately rendered "sinful nature" (8:1)? _____
2. Why do some translations omit the phrase "who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"? _____
Do the majority of manuscripts have this phrase? _____
3. How does Paul define what it means to "live according to the flesh" (8:5a)? _____
_____ By inference how may we define living "according to the Spirit" (8:5b)? _____

4. Fill in the blanks from Romans 8:7: “Because the _____ is _____ against God; for it is not _____ to the _____ of God, nor indeed _____ be” (NKJV).
5. What does the Greek word *echthra*, rendered “enmity” mean (8:7)? _____

6. What did the denominational document called the *Westminster Confession of Faith* claim about human nature? _____
Does the Bible teach this? Why or why not? _____

7. How was it that the Romans were not “in the flesh” (8:9)? _____

8. Whom does Paul say “dwells in us” which he equates with the Spirit dwelling in the believer (8:9)? _____
_____ How did he tell the Ephesians that this One dwells in the Christian (Eph. 3:17)? _____
9. What does Paul say in 8:13 that refutes the idea of “once saved always saved”? _____

10. Explain how the “Spirit of adoption” which the believer receives allows us to cry out “Abba, Father.” Is this some internal feeling or a truth taught? (8:15) _____

11. What does Paul teach is unworthy of comparison with the glory to come (8:18)? _____

12. In what sense has the “whole creation” been subjected to futility? _____

13. What is different about what is said about the Spirit’s intercession in prayer and Christ’s intercession (8:26)? _____

14. Does Romans 8:28 teach that everything that happens to the Christian is from God and “for the best”? Why or why not? _____

15. Explain the difference between “foreknowledge” and “predestination” (8:29). _____

16. List the ten things that Paul declares cannot separate us from the love of God (8:38-39):
a. _____; b. _____; c. _____;
d. _____; e. _____; f. _____;
g. _____; h. _____; i. _____;
j. _____ What is not listed that can separate us from the love of God? _____
_____ (cf. John 15:10; Jude 21).