

ROM. 5:1 – 8:39

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

A. The Hope of Glory

1. From justification to salvation (5:1-11) - **Therefore, having been pronounced righteous from faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have had an introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³And not only [that], but also we boast in afflictions, knowing that the affliction produces endurance, ⁴and the endurance proven character, and the proven character hope. ⁵And the hope will not put [us] to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶For while we were still weak, at that time, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly. ⁷For someone will scarcely die on behalf of a righteous man, though perhaps someone might even dare to die on behalf of a good man. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died on our behalf. ⁹Therefore, having now been pronounced righteous by his blood, even more shall we be saved through him from the wrath. ¹⁰For if, while being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, even more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹And not only [that], but also we boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

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

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

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

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

e. Having been justified through faith, Christians not only have peace with God but we also "boast" in the hope of God's glory. This means we are joyfully confident (some translate "exult" or "rejoice") that we will enter into the consummated kingdom, that perfect eternal state where we will be all that God intends us to be (see "glory of God" in 3:23; 8:17-18).

(1) Colin Kruse writes (p. 227-228):

The 'glory of God' about which we rejoice/boast in hope is the restoration of the glory lost at the fall. The status humanity enjoyed, being created in the image and glory of God, was marred by sin. In the case of believers, this is in the process of being restored as we are 'being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory' (2 Cor. 3:18). It will be restored fully when our hope of sharing in the glory of God reaches its consummation in the new age (8:18-21, 30; cf. 1 John 3:2-3).

(2) Thomas Schreiner states (p. 254):

The parallels in Romans 8 (8:17, 18, 21, 30) demonstrate that this glory is an eschatological reality, not a present possession. The already-not yet character of Paul's eschatology emerges in this paragraph. Believers are righteous in God's sight, enjoy the eschatological covenant of peace, and stand in the end-time gift of grace. Nonetheless, the full promises of salvation have not yet been realized. We still await future glorification, which will involve moral perfection and restoration to the glory Adam lost when he sinned. . . . Believers are certain now that the glory Adam lost will be restored to them. Indeed, the glory restored to believers will be even greater than the glory Adam once had, for believers will be conformed to the second Adam, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29).

f. "Boasting" in human achievement is excluded by the gospel (3:27), but "boasting" because of the gracious provision of God in Christ is entirely appropriate. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17 ("Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord"); Gal. 6:14; and Phil. 3:3.

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

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

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

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

j. We are saved from wrath "by his life" (v. 10) perhaps in the sense that his life is the glorious life of the resurrection. He is the "firstfruits" of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and by being "in him" we share the blessings of that resurrection life (which excludes wrath). Or perhaps we are saved from wrath "by his life" in that the risen Christ continually intercedes for us before the Father as Paul notes in 8:34 and as is mentioned elsewhere in the N.T. (Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1-2).

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

2. The reign of grace and life (5:12-21) – ¹²**Because of this, just as through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. ¹³For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not charged when there is no law. ¹⁴But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of the coming one. ¹⁵But it is not [a matter of] as the trespass so also the gift, for if by the trespass of the one the many died, even more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abound to the many. ¹⁶And the gift is not as [that which came] through the one who sinned, for the judgment after one [trespass] resulted in condemnation, but the gift after many trespasses resulted in a pronouncement of righteous. ¹⁷For if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through the one man, even more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.**

¹⁸**Now, therefore, as through the trespass of one man condemnation came to all people, so also through the righteous deed of one man the pronouncing righteous that leads to life came to all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous. ²⁰But the law entered in so that the trespass might increase, but where sin increased, grace**

superabounded, ²¹so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

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

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

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

(1) As Kruse points out (p. 243), the claim by some that Paul here refers *only* to spiritual death runs aground on the fact Gen. 3:22 implies that Adam would have lived forever if he had not sinned (i.e., sin is the cause of his death, his not living forever). Also the statement in Gen. 3:19 that man shall now "return to the ground" indicates that physical death is included.

(2) Moo notes (p. 320):

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

(3) Moo, Dunn, Morris, Fitzmyer, Mounce, Schreiner, Osborne, and Kruse are among the modern commentators who recognize that the death Paul had in mind in Rom. 5:12 includes spiritual death. So that understanding is by no means odd.

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

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

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

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

(b) The fact we are mortal as a *consequence* of Adam's sin is not the same thing as being sentenced to die as *punishment*, condemned to die as a judgment for sin. When we sin, our mortality ceases to be a nonpunitive consequence and becomes a sentence. We are at that point *condemned* to die and no longer simply *fated* to die. If husband and wife murderers were sentenced to live on a remote island as punishment, the children born to them on that island would live there as a consequence of their parents' crime, but not as punishment for it. Their state is not a judicial sentence imposed on them even though they live in the same condition as those against whom that state is a sentence. It is one thing to die as a judgment of divine condemnation for having sinned; it is another thing to die without divine condemnation, to die simply because mankind has become mortal.

(c) Though Christians die, Paul declares, "There is now *no* condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Our death (and the death of the unaccountable) is not a death of condemnation (vv. 16, 18 confirm the link to condemnation). It does not end in eternal death (hell, the "second death" of Revelation) but in eternal life through the resurrection. That is what Paul means when he says "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:56). Death as a mere consequence rather than as a punishment, rather than a judgment for sin, is death without the yoke of sin, and death without the yoke of sin is painless. It is a temporary passage to glory that is not to be feared (Heb. 2:15) but anticipated (Phil. 1:23).

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

g. Paul says in 5:12 that in the same way it happened to Adam, "death spread to all people, *because all sinned*." In other words, just as Adam sinned and was therefore sentenced to death as God's judgment, all people after him likewise sinned and were sentenced to death as God's judgment. Death spread because Adam's descendants followed him in sinning and earned the same judgment. There is a great deal to unpack here and substantial room for disagreement.

(1) With what is probably a majority of modern scholars (Moo, 323), I understand the phrase "because all sinned" to refer to acts of sin that people have committed personally and not to Adam's sin being imputed to them because he is their ancestor. Scholars are led to this conclusion largely because every other occurrence of the verb "sin" in Paul's letters, including Romans (see esp. 2:12, 3:23), refers to voluntary sins that people commit themselves.

(a) For example, C. E. B. Cranfield states (Romans, ICC, 1:279):

While the arguments in favour of [interpretation] (iv) and against (vi) are thus by no means compelling, there is on the other side the important consideration that there is nothing in the context or in this verse to suggest that ἡμαρτον is being used in an unusual sense and that in every other occurrence of this verb in the Pauline epistles the reference is quite clearly to actual sin. We conclude that πάντες ἡμαρτον has the same meaning here as it has in 3:23 [for all sinned and come short of the glory of God], and that interpretation (vi) is to be accepted as most probable.

(b) Joseph Fitzmyer states (*Romans*, Anchor Bible, 417): "The vb. *hēmarton* should not be understood as 'have sinned collectively' or as 'have sinned in Adam,' because they would be additions to Paul's text. The vb. refers to personal, actual sins of individual human beings, as Pauline usage elsewhere suggests (2:12; 3:23; 5:14, 16; 6:15; 1 Cor. 6:18; 7:28, 36; 8:12; 15:34), as the context demands (vv 16, 20), and as Greek Fathers understood it (see Lyonnet, *Bib 41* [1960]: 325-55)."

(c) Thomas Schreiner writes (*Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary, 275), "The verb [Paul uses] refers regularly to voluntary sin that people commit in their own persons (cf. 2:12; 3:23; see Wilckens 1978: 316-317; Kasemann 1980: 148-49; Jungel 1963: 51-52; Fitzmyer 1993c: 417). It is quite improbable on linguistic grounds that 'all sinned' means 'all sinned in Adam.'"

(d) Stephen Westerholm writes (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 423), "However we define the relation between Adam's sin and that of his offspring,

πάντες ἥμαρτον most naturally means that all committed concrete sins; moreover, the words are part of a phrase (introduced by ἐφ' ὧ, "inasmuch as") affirming that people's sins led to their death."

(2) Now, I have just argued that infants and the unaccountable die physically as a mere consequence of Adam's sin and not as an act of divine condemnation for their having sinned, either corporately in Adam or personally. Is Paul here contradicting that and saying that infants do in fact die because they in some way sinned, either corporately in Adam or personally? As you might imagine, I do not think so.

(a) I agree with those who conclude that Paul is using "all" in the phrase "because all sinned" in 5:12 in the same sense he used "all" in 3:9-20, 23. When he says "all sinned" in 3:9-20, 23, he clearly is speaking of actual disobedience, so infants are not under consideration; they cannot engage in the acts he describes. Paul means "all" of those of sufficient maturity or mental capacity to be accountable.

[1] As Fitzmyer (p. 413) remarks, to take "all" in Rom. 5:12 to include infants is "a precision that Paul does not envisage." Craig Keener (*Bible Background Commentary*) states regarding 3:23 that "Jewish sources agreed that everyone sinned (with rare exceptions, like a young child)."

[2] Cranfield states (1:279): "It has also sometimes been argued that πάντες [all] must include those who have died in infancy, and that the contention that infants participate by seminal identity in the primal sin of Adam is more intelligible than the contention that they commit actual sins. But those who die in infancy are a special and exceptional case, and Paul must surely be assumed to be thinking in terms of adults."

[3] Moo states (p. 327, fn. 58) that "Paul may want [in 5:12] to describe only the situation of responsible adults." He writes a bit later (p. 331, fn. 75), "As we noted in commenting on v. 12, Paul does not seem even to be considering in these verses the special issues created for the doctrine of universal sin and judgment by mentally restricted human beings."

(b) That Paul does not intend to include infants within the "all sinned" of Rom. 5:12 is confirmed in my mind by Paul's reference to knowledge as a key to culpability (1:19-20, 32, 2:1-3). Infants are not aware of creation (they cannot even see) and do not yet appreciate the moral requirements God has planted in their hearts, so they lack what Paul indicates is necessary for committing acts of sin (which, as I have said, is what the verb "sin" regularly means).

(c) Remember that children were not the center of attention in ancient culture, so Paul's focus on the accountable is not as strange as it may seem to us. He is writing a letter not writing a systematic theology, and thus he should not be expected to address every issue we might wonder about.

(3) Those who include infants within the "all sinned" of 5:12 do so by claiming that, though they did not actually sin themselves, they sinned "in Adam." In other words, they believe that all humans are born under a death *sentence* (not simply "fated" to die), born under divine condemnation, because they share in the *guilt* of Adam's sin; they are sinners by proxy. I think that is incorrect for reasons in addition to the fact it demands that the verb "sinned" carry the idiosyncratic meaning of "sinned by proxy."

(a) First, why would Paul spend so much energy in chapters 1-3 establishing that everyone was condemned because everyone committed sins if everyone was condemned simply by being human? Why not simply say all humans are guilty and condemned because they descend from sinful Adam and be done with it?

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

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

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

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

(d) Finally, if children are born guilty because of Adam's sin, it poses quite a dilemma. Those that die in infancy must be either condemned to hell or saved apart from hearing and accepting the gospel.

[1] I say that because, as I have noted, the death that was imposed on Adam as God's judgment for his sin included spiritual and eternal death. And that is the death that Paul says spread to all men because all sinned. So if the death of infants is God's judgment on them for their having sinned in Adam, it includes spiritual and eternal death.

[2] Now few, if any, proponents of original guilt are willing to accept the notion of infant damnation, so they argue instead that infants are (or may be) saved in some special way. The Bible, however, gives no hint of such a thing. On the contrary, it stresses that salvation comes through hearing and believing the gospel (e.g., Rom. 1:16, 10:8-17; 1 Cor. 1:18). If infants do in fact need salvation, it seems strange that the manner of their deliverance is addressed nowhere in Scripture. If, however, infants are not guilty, the silence is perfectly understandable.

h. Though we all earn our own death sentence by committing our own sin, Paul's argument is more complicated than that. He says we all were in some sense *made sinners* by Adam's sin (5:19); death reigned *through him* (5:17). This indicates rather clearly that Adam's sin is in some way *a cause* of the sins that followed. In other words, all sin after Adam is in some way, shape, or form tied to Adam, is a *consequence* of Adam's sin.

(1) The best way to make sense of this, in my opinion, is to realize that Adam transmitted to all his posterity a bentness or proclivity to sin. We are a fallen race. Though our guilt and condemnation come not merely from the inclination to sin but from our acting on that inclination, the inclination to sin explains how our sin can be said to be a consequence of Adam's sin and why every human has chosen sin over God. Judgment death comes as a result of personal sinning *and* through one man. That, in my view, is preferable to forcing onto the phrase "because all sinned" an otherwise unattested sense of sinning by proxy.

(2) As Moo expresses the view (which he ultimately rejects but grants that it "has much in its favor"), "Death, then, is due immediately to the sinning of each individual but ultimately to the sin of Adam; for it was Adam's sin that corrupted human nature and made individual sinning an inevitability."

(3) Cranfield puts it this way (1:278):

According to [the most probable interpretation], ἥμαρτον [sinned] refers to men's actual sinning (death has come to all men in their turn because all men have sinned in their own persons voluntarily), but . . . their sinning is related to Adam's transgression not merely externally, as being an imitation of it, but also internally, as being its natural consequence, the fruit of the desperate moral debility and

corruption which resulted from man's primal transgression and which all succeeding generations of mankind have inherited.

(4) This understanding is held by a significant number of scholars. Kruse writes, "There is now a tendency among a number of scholars, no matter how precisely they construe *eph' hō*, to identify a primary and secondary cause for human being becoming subject to death. The primary cause is Adam's disobedience, through which death first entered the world, and the secondary cause is the sin of disobedience of all human beings, who likewise bring death upon themselves" (citing Cranfield, Byrne, Fitzmyer, Dunn, and Wright).

i. Whether this predisposition to sin has been transmitted socially, psychologically, and/or biologically is debated, but however it was transmitted, our sin, and hence our death sentence, is traceable to Adam.

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

(2) The psychological idea is that, when man became mortal as a consequence of Adam's sin, he became inclined to overcome the resulting anxiety and insecurity by asserting his control and independence, which inclination leads to sin. See, Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1:174).

(3) The biological idea, expressed in the Cranfield quote just given, is that Adam's very nature was corrupted when he turned from God. This corrupt nature is part of what is inherited from one's parents.

(a) As Adam Harwood writes in his book *The Spiritual Condition of Infants* (p. 153): "The argument of this book is that infants inherit from Adam a sinful nature but not guilt. The sinful nature that infants inherit will eventually result in their becoming guilty by knowingly committing acts of sin. It is at that point that people immediately fall under God's judgment and condemnation."

(b) This was likewise the view of Alexander Campbell, so it certainly is not foreign to those in churches of Christ. He wrote in *The Christian System* (1839, p. 15-16): "True, indeed, it is, our nature was corrupted by the fall of Adam before it was transmitted to us; and hence that hereditary imbecility to do good, and that proneness to do evil, so universally apparent in all human beings." He declared that we are all "[c]ondemned to natural death, and greatly fallen and depraved in our whole moral constitution . . . in consequence of the sin of Adam."

j. Moo remarks (p. 329):

Why do people so consistently turn from good to evil of all kinds? Paul affirms in this passage that human solidarity in the sin of Adam is the explanation – and

whether we explain this solidarity in terms of sinning in and with Adam or because of a corrupt nature inherited from him does not matter at this point. On any view, this, the biblical, explanation for universal human sinfulness, appears to explain the data of history and experience as well as, or better than, any rival theory.

k. Just how it is that we are blameworthy, culpable, for our sinning despite being heirs of the fallenness introduced by Adam is nowhere explained, which has led to divergent speculations about the matter. Paul seems content simply to hold these two truths in tension. As James D. G. Dunn remarks about Paul's discussion in Romans 7 in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (p. 113): "The issue of personal responsibility [Paul] tried to resolve by depicting 'sin' as a power which fully masters the fleshly 'I' (7.14), without really denying the 'I' 's part in the evil it does or exculpating its failure to do the good (7.14-23)."

l. Returning to Romans 5, to appreciate the point I think Paul is making in vv. 13-14 one must appreciate the distinction between sin and transgression. They are not synonymous.

(1) As I have said before, the Mosaic covenant included the grandest and most complete expression to that time of God's moral requirements, but moral requirements did not begin when God gave the law to Moses at Mount Sinai.

(a) Mankind was under moral requirements from creation, as shown by the fact the people of Noah's day were destroyed because of their wickedness. But those moral requirements had not (at least for the most part) been given as "law" in the sense they had not been laid down as specific, express commandments. Rather, they were known intuitively or innately as part of the law written by God on the human heart (see Rom. 2:15). But violating those requirements was sin and was punishable as such.

(b) In other words, the existence of "law" in the sense of specific and express edicts or commandments to be obeyed is not necessary for sin to occur. It is the difference between "You knew better than to . . ." and "I specifically told you not to . . ." That is why Paul can say in Rom. 2:12, "For as many as *sinned without the law* will also perish without the law" and say in Rom. 5:13a that sin was in the world *before* (until) the law was given. Indeed, the Lord said in Gen. 4:7, long before the giving of the Mosaic law, "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

(2) "Transgression," however, is a different story. To *transgress* is to violate the will of God as revealed in an express commandment.

(a) Cranfield states (1:170, fn. 3), "The idea contained in these words [transgression and transgressor], as they are used in the NT, is that of the transgression of a known, concrete divine commandment."

(b) As Moo puts it (p. 277), "Transgression' denotes a specific kind of sin, the 'passing beyond' the limits set by a definite, positive law or command. While every 'transgression' is also a 'sin,' not every 'sin' is a 'transgression.'"

(c) In commenting on Rom. 7:8, Schreiner writes (p. 367), "Twice already in Romans (4:15; 5:13-14) Paul has distinguished between sin without the law and sin committed in violation of specifically revealed commandments. The latter is sometimes called "transgression" (cf. 4:15, *παράβασις*, *parabasis*), and it can be distinguished from sin in general because it involves disobedience to a command revealed by God."

(d) So the existence of "law," in the sense of express commands, is a precondition to transgression but not to sin. That's what Paul means when he says in Rom. 4:15b, "And where there is not law, neither is there *transgression*." As Moo notes (p. 277), Paul in Rom. 4:15 "is not claiming that there is no 'sin' where there is no law, but, in almost a 'truism,' that there is no deliberate disobedience of positive commands where there is no positive command to disobey."

(3) The statement in v. 13 that "sin is not *charged* when there is no law" does not mean it is not sin or that it is ignored and not punished. How could it mean that in light of the Old Testament witness? Rather, it means that without law sin cannot be counted as a violation of specific commands and prohibitions.

(a) As Ben Witherington remarks (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 147), "Paul cannot mean that God simply ignored sin since he surely knows the story of Noah. Thus what Paul seems to mean is that sin was not reckoned as transgression, for the latter involves a willful violation of a known law."

(b) Cranfield writes (1:282):

["Not charged"] must be understood in a relative sense: only in comparison with what takes place when the law is present can it be said that, in the law's absence, sin [is not charged]. Those who lived without the law were certainly not 'innocent sinners' – they were to blame for what they were and what they did. But, in comparison with the state of affairs which has obtained since the advent of the law, sin may be said to have been, in the law's absence, 'not registered', since it was not the fully apparent, sharply defined thing, which it became in its presence.

(c) Schreiner writes (p. 279):

How then do we explain verse 13, which says that sin is not reckoned apart from law? The purpose of that verse is to explain that apart from the Mosaic law sin is not equivalent to transgression (Cranfield 1975: 282-83; Bornkamm 1952: 84). This is confirmed by both Rom. 4:15 and the present context, for Paul notes explicitly in

5:14 that Adam's sin was different in kind from those who lived before the Mosaic law in that he violated a commandment disclosed by God.

m. It is true that prior to the Mosaic law people did not *transgress* as did Adam, but they still *sinned*, and because they sinned, God's judgment of death spread to them in the same way it had come on Adam. In Johannes Schneider's words (*TDNT*, 5:740): "The command which Adam received and transgressed was that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Men who lived in the time between Adam and Moses sinned, but they were not guilty of transgression in the same way as Adam. For in the intervening period there was no express statement of God's commandment. Hence ἡμαρτία [sin] was present but not παράβασις [transgression]."

n. So the point of vv. 13-14, as I see them, is that the extent of Adam's death-producing effect on humanity was not limited by having skipped those generations that lived prior to the giving of the Mosaic law, as though sin and its accompanying death sentence could occur only when there was a "law," an express commandment like Adam had. Adam's deadly effect was realized in people's *sinning* not only in their *transgressing*, and thus he brought condemnation, judgment death, on all of mankind, including those prior to the Mosaic law. (Again, Paul is not considering the case of infants and those with mental defects.) The "death penalty" reigned over humanity from Adam to Moses because it was God's judgment (condemnation, vv. 16, 18) on the sin of those generations, which sin is traceable to Adam.

o. This assertion follows from what Paul has already said about the universality of sin and God's penalty for it and from God's condemnation of sinners in the Old Testament. Paul has made the point that all are "under sin" and that "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God," a fact acknowledged expressly in the Old Testament (1 Ki. 8:46; 2 Chron. 6:36). And God's judgment against sinners was revealed not only in the case of Adam but in such dramatic events as the Flood and the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah. The wages of sin is death, as Paul will say in Rom. 6:23, and that death, judgment death, characterized humanity even before the giving of the Mosaic law.

p. The fact there were people of faith between Adam and Moses who had the death sentence that was imposed on them because of their sin commuted by the grace of God, Abraham being a prime example, does not alter the fact that God's judgment of death spread to all people because all sinned as a result of Adam (by way of transmitted corruption). This is all Paul needs to make his point that just as there exists a death-producing connection between Adam and his own, so there exists a life-producing connection between Christ and his own. Judgment death "reigned" over humanity despite the fact some were freed from it through faith by the grace of God, which grace has now been shown to be rooted and centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

q. Adam's wide effect on mankind is analogous to that of Christ, but there are some major differences, which Paul is careful to point out. Many people died by Adam's trespass, whereas many people received God's grace through the gift of Christ's act. Adam's one sin brought condemnation, whereas the gift of Christ's act brought acquittal after many trespasses.

Through the disobedience of Adam the many were made sinners, whereas through the obedience of Jesus the many will be made righteous. (The statement in v. 18 that the "justification that leads to life came to *all* people" means all people in Christ, those who "receive the gift" [v. 17], i.e., those who believe [1:16-5:11].)

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

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

1. "Dead to sin" through union with Christ (6:1-14) – **What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin so that grace may increase? ²Absolutely not! We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it? ³Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into [his] death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with the likeness of his death, then also we will be [united with the likeness] of his resurrection, ⁶knowing that our old man was crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be nullified, that we might no longer serve sin as slaves. ⁷For the one who died has been pronounced righteous from sin. ⁸But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, ⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, no longer dies; death no longer exercises lordship over him. ¹⁰For what he died, he died to sin once and for all; but what he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So also, you must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but living to God in Christ Jesus.**

¹²Do not, then, let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its passions, ¹³nor present your members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those living from the dead and your members to God as weapons of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will not exercise lordship over you, for you are not under [the] law but under grace.

a. Having said that grace superabounded in the face of the increase of sin occasioned by the law (5:20), some might think Paul is implying that one should remain in sin, remain under its control, so that grace may increase. Recall 3:8 where Paul said, "Why not also say – as we are being blasphemed and as some claim we say – 'Let us do evil so that good may come'?" As in 3:8, Paul summarily rejects the idea as absurd. He declares, "Absolutely not!"

b. It is totally inconsistent for Christians, those who have "died to sin" (i.e., died to sin's detriment, been separated from its power), to continue to live under sin's control. To think otherwise is to ignore the fact that our sharing in Christ's death through baptism was so that we, like Christ, might rise from that death to "walk in newness of life," meaning to live life in a new state, one that is marked by the realities of the new age. Christ walks in newness of life after being raised from the dead in that he lives in a new state, one that is marked by the new-age reality of an

immortal body; he is no longer subject to physical death. We rise from sharing in his death through baptism to walk in newness of life in that we live in a new state, one that is marked by such new-age realities as empowerment by God's Spirit (e.g., Rom. 7:6; ch. 8). For if we have been united with the likeness of Christ's death (through baptism), then we also will be united with the likeness of his resurrection life. The one follows the other.

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

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

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

d. This participation of our "old man" in the crucifixion of Christ has the purpose of nullifying or neutralizing the body as the "body of sin," meaning the body under sin's dominion, a body that is used in the service of sin. This is explained in the clause (v. 6c), "that we might no longer serve sin as slaves." One reason our having died with Christ, our having participated in his death in our baptism, is to have this radical effect on our relationship to sin is given in v. 7: the one who has died with Christ in baptism has been pronounced righteous (or acquitted) from sin. We have been released from the dreadful condemnation that our sinning justly incurred, so the only appropriate response is that we run from sin as a terminally ill lung cancer patient who was miraculously healed should run from smoking.

e. Since it is true that we died with Christ (the sense of "But if" in v. 8) and thus have been pronounced righteous from sin, we *believe* (points to something promised) that we *will live* (future tense, as in v. 5) with Jesus, most likely meaning live with him as resurrected people, as sharers in his resurrection, when he returns. This belief is rooted in our knowledge that the resurrected Christ is immortal, no longer under the power of death (unlike others in Scripture who had returned to life), because his death was a death "to sin," a death that separated him from the power of sin that is manifested in the death penalty that sin brings. And that one-time, sin-separating (and thus death-defeating) death was for all who will share in it.

f. Though his death was "to sin," the life Christ lives is "to God." His sin-bearing (for us) is finished (he was made sin for us – 2 Cor. 5:21); his subjection to the power of sin as sin-bearer is over. He now lives "to God" in that having finished his role as sin-bearer he forever lives free from that temporary intrusion of our sin into his relationship with the Father ("My God,

my God, why have you forsaken me?"). So also, Christians are constantly to *regard themselves* as being dead to sin but alive to God. We must continually lay hold of this reality; we must no longer see ourselves in our relationship to sin as we were outside of Christ. We must see ourselves as having died in Christ to sin's loss, as having been freed from its claim on us, and as being in a relationship with God that no longer suffers from sin's alienating effect.

g. The practical side of seeing ourselves as dead to sin but alive to God is that we must not *allow* sin to rule us (our "mortal bodies") (v. 12) or *offer* our bodily members to sin to be used as weapons of unrighteousness (v. 13).

(1) Now that we understand ourselves to be "dead to sin but alive to God," we must constantly avoid using our bodies in the service of sin. We must not, for example, use our eyes to view pornography, our ears to listen to obscene music, our hands to steal, our tongues to lie, or our private parts to engage in sexual immorality. Rather, we are to offer ourselves in service to God, as those who through union with Christ have been rescued, given spiritual life from the state of death we were in, and we are to offer our bodily members to God to be used as weapons of righteousness.

(2) Moo states (p. 383):

In characterizing the body as "mortal," Paul is reminding us that the same body that has been severed from its servitude to sin (6:6) is nevertheless a body that still participates in the weakness, suffering, and dissolution of this age. Until we are fully "redeemed" (8:23) and "put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53), we will continue to be subject to the influences of this age; and the believer must not let these influences hold sway. The Christian is no longer "body of sin" (6:6) or "body of death" (7:24), but he or she is still "mortal body."

h. The Christian can be bold and confident in his war against sin because sin's dominion has been broken – we are promised that sin will not exercise lordship over us. This does not mean we will not sin; that will only be true when Jesus returns. It means sin will not be our controlling power. We will stumble, but we will not *live* in sin.

i. Paul says in v. 14 that the reason sin will not exercise lordship over us is that we are not under law but under grace. By "under law" and "under grace" he is contrasting the old and new covenants. Not only did sin use the commands of the Mosaic law to arouse sinful passions (7:5), which work of sin God incorporated into his larger purpose of having the law serve as a trainer to lead the people to Christ (Gal. 3:23-25) because it highlighted the need for mercy, but the Holy Spirit's transforming power to live for God was not generally available. To be "under grace" is to be under the new covenant in which we have been separated from sin's power by dying to sin in Christ and being empowered by the Spirit to live for God.

(a) Kruse states (p. 269-270):

To be 'under law' means to live under the regime of the Mosaic law, under the old covenant where the law was something written on tables of stone, and to be 'under grace' is to live under the new covenant, where the law is written on the human heart (cf. 2 Cor 3:3). What was impossible under the regime of the Mosaic law (the fulfillment of the law's own demands) because of humanity's weakness is made possible under the new covenant because of the renewing and transforming power of the Spirit (cf. 8:3-4; Gal 3:23-25; 4:1-7; 5:18). While believers who live under the new covenant of grace no longer live under the Mosaic law as a regime, this does not mean that they are free to flout the moral imperatives found in the law, for these are the moral standards required of humankind by God himself. In fact, in those who walk by the Spirit the 'just requirement' of the law is fulfilled (8:4), for, as Paul says in 13:9, 'the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery", "You shall not murder", "You shall not steal", "You shall not covet", and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Gal 5:14), and, of course, love is included in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

(b) Schreiner states (p. 327): "Paul's point is that Israel did not keep the law as long as they were under the law (i.e., the Mosaic covenant). Now that believers are under the power of grace they are enabled to keep the moral norms of the law by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4). This is precisely what both Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34) and Ezekiel (11:19-20; 36:26-27) foresaw occurring when the new covenant became a reality."

(c) But as I have already indicated, even though we as Christians are empowered to obey these ethical norms in a new way, we do "not yet" do so perfectly. Until the Lord's return, we live in the overlap of the old and new ages, in which we possess a down-payment on the fullness of life yet to come. On that Day our sanctification will be completed, and we who are now being transformed into the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18) will be like him (1 Jn. 3:2).

(d) As Moo notes (p. 390), "The paragraph that began with the question, 'Should we remain in sin in order that grace may increase?' ends with the glad tidings that we are under grace in order that sin may be overcome."

2. Freed from sin to serve righteousness (6:15-23) - ¹⁵**What then? Should we sin because we are not under [the] law but under grace? Absolutely not!** ¹⁶**Do you not know that you are slaves to whom you present yourselves as slaves in obedience, to whom you obey, whether of sin, that leads to death, or of obedience, that leads to righteousness?** ¹⁷**But thanks be to God that, though you were slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching to which you were delivered** ¹⁸**and, having been freed from sin, were enslaved to righteousness.** ¹⁹**(I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.) For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness leading to lawlessness, so also now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.** ²⁰**For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with respect to righteousness.** ²¹**Therefore, what fruit did you have then? [Things] of which you are now ashamed, for the**

end of those things is death. ²²But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit leading to sanctification, and the end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

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

c. But thanks be to God that, though Christians *were* slaves of sin, they wholeheartedly obeyed the "pattern of teaching" into which they were (thereby) delivered. In other words, they obeyed that standardized body of instruction, that pattern of teaching, which is the gospel, and as a result they entered into that teaching and received its accompanying blessings. Specifically, they were freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness. Christian freedom is not autonomous self-direction but deliverance from those enslaving powers that would prevent us from becoming what God intends us to be.

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

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

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

g. For if you serve sin, the wage it pays is death. Grant Osborne remarks (p. 166), "death here is both the physical death that ends earthly life and the eternal death that follows,

though the latter is primary." But if you serve God, he gives the gift of eternal life (and all that entails) in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

1. Released from the Law, joined to Christ (7:1-6) – **Or do you not know, brothers – for I speak to those who know the law – that the law exercises lordship over a person for as long a time as he lives? ²For the married woman has been bound to her living husband by the law, but if the husband should die, she has been released from the law of the husband. ³Now, therefore, while the husband is living, she will be called an adulteress if she comes to belong to another man; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress after coming to belong to another man. ⁴So, my brothers, you also were put to death to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might come to belong to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, so that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions [aroused] through the law were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now, we have been released from the law, dying [to that] in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.**

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

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

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

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

e. The point is that just as the wife was freed to be joined to another by her husband's death, so those championing the Mosaic law had been freed to be joined to Christ by sharing (through baptism) in the death of Christ. The purpose of this union with Christ was that they might bear fruit to God. Paul is not concerned that in the illustration the wife is freed from the law

by her *husband's* death rather than her own. The point is that death removes legal obligations. In addition, the fact the wife remains alive, having been freed from the law by the death of another, allows her to be used for the additional point she is free to belong to another as believers are free by their death to the law through Christ to belong to another and bear fruit to God.

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

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

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

a. Does not mean the law is sinful or evil (7:7-12) – **⁷What then shall we say? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! Yet, I would not have known sin except through the law. For instance, I would not know covetousness except the law says, "You shall not covet." ⁸But sin, having obtained a base of operations, produced in me through the commandment all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin is dead. ⁹And I was alive apart from the law at one time, but when the commandment came, sin came to life, ¹⁰and I died; and the commandment intended for life, this commandment, was found in my case to be for death. ¹¹For sin, having obtained a base of operations, deceived me through the commandment and through it killed [me]. ¹²So, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.**

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

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

(3) When Paul says (7:8b), after noting how sin exploits the command to its own evil purpose, "For apart from law, sin is dead," he means it is "dead" only in terms of its ability to use the law to stimulate sin, to arouse sinful passions. That particular work of sin requires the law. He certainly does not mean that sin is harmless or absolutely inactive apart from the law because he has already explained how *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:23), even those not under law (specific, revealed commandments), and how death reigned (through sin) even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression (5:13-14).

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

(a) Paul does not mention this, but commutation of that death sentence would have been available through faith under the law until the coming of Christ. And Paul, as a blameless (faithful) Jew (Phil. 3:6), would certainly have received it. With the salvation-historical shift effected by Christ's coming, forgiveness is no longer available through the old covenant.

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

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

b. Clarifying the law's role in death (7:13-25) – ¹³**Did, then, that which is good become death to me? Absolutely not! But sin [did], in order that it might appear to be sin, producing death in me through that which is good in order that through the commandment sin might become sinful beyond measure.** ¹⁴**For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold under sin.** ¹⁵**For I do not know what I carry out; for I do not practice what I will; rather, I do what I hate.** ¹⁶**But if I do what I do not will, I agree with the law that [it is] good.** ¹⁷**But now it is no longer I carrying it out, but sin dwelling in me.** ¹⁸**For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for to will [the good] is present in me, but to carry out the good is not.** ¹⁹**For I do not do the good that I will; rather, I practice the evil that I do not will.** ²⁰**But if I do what I do not will, it is no longer I carrying it out but sin living in me.**

²¹**I find, then, the law, in me who is willing to do good, that evil is present in me.** ²²**For I delight in God's law in the inner person,** ²³**but I see another law in my members that is waging war against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin that is in my members.** ²⁴**A wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?** ²⁵**Thanks**

be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, therefore, I myself in my mind am a slave to the law of God but in the flesh [a slave] to the law of sin.

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

(2) Sin's evil work of using the good law to produce death was used to serve the good purpose of revealing the utter sinfulness of sin. Allowing sin to play this hand helped to expose sin as the wicked and ferocious power that it is.

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

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

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

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

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

(4) I previously quoted this remark by James Dunn about Paul's discussion here (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 113): "The issue of personal responsibility [Paul] tried to resolve by depicting 'sin' as a power which fully masters the fleshly 'I' (7.14), without really denying the 'I' 's part in the evil it does or exculpating its failure to do the good (7.14-23)."

(5) Gordon Fee writes in *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (p. 511), "There are three matters which seem overwhelmingly to favor the view that Paul is here describing life before and outside of Christ, but from the perspective of one who is now in Christ." These may be summarized as (1) the only questions raised by Paul here have to do with life under the law, not with life in Christ, which clearly is not under the law, (2) the Spirit, who is key to living under the new covenant, is not mentioned, and (3) the description of this person as being sold under sin and thoroughly captivated by it is completely incompatible with Paul's view of life in Christ, which is a victorious life that is empowered by the Spirit and no longer enslaved to sin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

a. Recapping the situation in Christ (8:1-4) – **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life freed you in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For what was impossible for the law because it was weakened through the flesh, God [did], having sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering. He condemned sin in the flesh ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

(1) Paul declared in 5:12-21 that, for those who are "in Christ," righteousness and eternal life replace the condemnation and death that was their lot in Adam. In chapters 6 and 7 he took a necessary and important detour to explain why this fact does not lead to lawlessness and to defend his claim that Christians are not under the Mosaic law. In the course of defending his claim that Christians are not under the Mosaic law, Paul asserted that sin actually used the law to bring death to those under who were under the law. He then, in the last half of chapter 7, explained the dynamics of the process by which sin used the law to kill those under the law, thereby demonstrating that the blame lay with sin not with the law, which is holy, righteous, and good.

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

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

(4) This shift in governing principles is the result of God's having done what was impossible for the (Mosaic) law to do in that humanity was under sin and thus could not yield the obedience necessary for life. God provided righteousness and life by sending Christ to Earth as a human, in the likeness of sinful man, to be an atoning sacrifice. In this sacrifice, God punished sin in mankind (2 Cor. 5:21 – he was made sin for us), so that "the righteous requirement (singular) of the law" may be fulfilled in those who share in Christ's death.

(a) Christ paid the penalty for all sins and thus brought the salvation that the law could not bring. But just as Paul said in 6:4 that our sharing in Christ's death through baptism was that we might "walk in newness of life," so here he says God's condemnation of sin through Christ's sacrifice was that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us.

With many others, I think the "righteous requirement" he has in mind is probably the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

(b) It is in conjunction with our participation in Christ's saving work that we not only are forgiven but are empowered by the Spirit to obey the moral norms of the law in a new way, on a new plane, a transformation that ultimately will end in our perfect obedience.

[1] As Paul says in Gal. 5:13-14: ¹³*For you were called for freedom, brothers; only [do] not [use] that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be slaves to one another.* ¹⁴*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the [command]: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

[2] And as he makes clear in Rom. 13:8-10, love involves specifics: ⁸*Owe nothing to anyone except the [well known] to love one another; for the one who loves the other has fulfilled the law.* ⁹*For the [well known] "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, in the [command]: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰*Love does not work evil against a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.*

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

(a) To become a Christian means to be transferred from the realm dominated by the flesh to the realm dominated by the Spirit. "Flesh" and "Spirit" stand over against each other, not as parts of a person but as the powers or dominating features of the two "realms" of existence. Paul writes in Gal. 5:16-18: ¹⁶*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will in no way carry out the desires of the flesh.* ¹⁷*For the flesh desires [things] contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires things] contrary to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do whatever you want.* ¹⁸*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

(b) Moo states (p. 485):

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

b. Elaboration on contrasting lifestyles (8:5-13) – ⁵**For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who are] according to the Spirit [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit.** ⁶**For the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace;** ⁷**because the mindset of the flesh is hostility**

toward God, for it is not subject to the law of God - indeed, neither is it able to be. ⁸And those who are in the flesh are not able to please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this one is not of him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹²Now, therefore, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the practices of the body, you will live.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(5) Though the Christian's body is mortal (6:12, 8:11), still subject to physical death because of Adam's sin, the Spirit who dwells in us provides us eschatological life because of the righteousness that has been given to us. And this life is not simply our new spiritual life in the present. God, through his indwelling Spirit, will also raise our mortal bodies from the dead on "that day."

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

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

(a) You see, there is no salvation without sanctification, not because holy living is the basis of our relationship with God but because it is the result of that relationship. If we refuse to be serious about our service to God, we have chosen not to be serious about God himself. Douglas Moo (p. 495) has this to say:

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

(b) It is also important to note that, though we are responsible for this mortification of sins, it is accomplished through the Spirit. Quoting Moo again (p. 495-496):

Holiness of life, then, is achieved neither by our own unaided effort – the error or "moralism" or "legalism" – nor by the Spirit apart from our participation – as some who insist that the key to holy living is "surrender" or "let go and let God" would have it – but by our constant living out the "life" placed within us by the Spirit who

has taken up residence within. . . . Human activity in the process of sanctification is clearly necessary; but that activity is never apart from, nor finally distinct from, the activity of God's Spirit.

2. The Spirit of Adoption (8:14-17) – ¹⁴**For as many as are led by the Spirit, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again leading to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. ¹⁷And if [we are] children, [we are] also heirs; heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, since we are suffering with [him] so that we also may be glorified with [him].**

a. Those who are mortifying misdeeds by the Spirit (v. 13) have eschatological life because those who are led by the Spirit, who have the direction of their lives as a whole determined by the Spirit, are sons of God. And life is inherent in being "sons of God," in belonging to God's people, because God's people, his children, are beneficiaries of the promise.

b. The Spirit received by Christians is not a spirit of slavery, one that leads again to anxiety or an unhealthy fear before God as a slave might have before a harsh master, but the Holy Spirit, a Spirit of adoption. The Spirit engenders within us an awareness of our sonship, which awareness we express in heartfelt prayers and praise, represented by the cry "Abba, Father."

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

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

c. And the fact we are God's children means we are also his heirs. In other words, we are slated to inherit at some future point the blessings God has promised. The statement that we are "fellow-heirs with Christ" reminds us that our inheritance comes only through and in Christ. As Moo says (p. 505), "We, 'the sons of God,' are such only by virtue of our belonging to *the* Son of God; and we are heirs of God only by virtue of our union with the one who is heir of all God's promises (see Mark. 12:1-12; Gal. 3:18-19; Heb. 1:2)."

d. Paul adds that our participation in the inheritance, our sharing in Christ's glory, is conditioned on faithfulness, which he describes here as suffering with Christ. Those who belong to the Master cannot avoid the tensions and persecutions that were his lot. If the world opposed the teacher, what can his faithful disciples expect? As Jesus said in Jn. 15:18-21 (ESV): ¹⁸*"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word,*

they will also keep yours. ²¹ *But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.*

3. The Spirit of Glory (8:18-30) – ¹⁸**For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy [compared] to the glory that is going to be revealed in us.** ¹⁹**For the intense expectation of the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God.** ²⁰**For the creation was subjected to frustration, not willingly but on account of the one who subjected [it], in hope ²¹that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** ²²**For we know that all the creation groans and experiences birth pains together until the present;** ²³**and not only [that], but even ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we ourselves also groan in ourselves while eagerly awaiting [our] adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** ²⁴**For in hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he sees?** ²⁵**But if we hope for what we do not see, through endurance we eagerly await [it].**

²⁶**And likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weakness. For we do not know what is necessary for us to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes [for us] with unspoken groanings.** ²⁷**And He who searches the hearts knows what the intent of the Spirit [is], that he is interceding on behalf of saints in accordance with [the will of] God.** ²⁸**And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to [his] purpose.** ²⁹**For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed with the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers;** ³⁰**and whom he predestined these he also called; and whom he called, these he also pronounced righteous; and whom he pronounced righteous, these he also glorified.**

a. Paul says that what Christians suffer in this present life is insignificant compared to the glory that is going to be revealed in us.

(1) Here I think he moves beyond suffering directly connected to our confession, to our being Christians, to all suffering attendant to our existence in this fallen world. (As Moo points out (p. 511), "The 'travail' of creation, with which the sufferings of Christians are compared [vv. 19-22], cannot be restricted to the sufferings 'on behalf of Christ.'")

(2) Kruse remarks (p. 341-342), "Our future glory will include a glorious resurrection body: the present mortal body will die, sown, as it were, in dishonor to be raised in glory (1 Cor 15:43), for when Christ appears he will 'transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body' (Phil 3:21)."

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

(1) Creation itself, meaning "subhuman" creation, keenly anticipates the unveiling of the true nature of Christians. Though we are "sons of God," that nature is not

apparent in this life because we experience suffering and weakness like everyone else. On the last day, however, our real status will be publicly manifested (the revelation of the sons of God).

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

(a) We and it both are getting the "ultimate makeover." As our mortal bodies will be transformed into bodies that are immortal and glorious, so creation itself will be "heavenized," transformed into the new heavens and new earth that will be our eternal abode. See also, 2 Pet. 3:13 and Rev. 21:1-2.

(b) As Kruse observes (p. 344): "What is clear from all this is that Paul's understanding of salvation is not restricted to humanity but encompasses the whole cosmos. Believers will enter their glorious freedom as children of God, and the cosmos too will be renewed." This same idea of salvation encompassing the cosmos is present in Eph. 1:9-10.

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

(4) We do so because, just as creation was subjected to frustration "in hope," we were saved "in hope." To be saved "in hope" is to be saved in the expectation of that which is not seen, which is "not yet." Such hope causes us to steadfastly await its object (our resurrection) with eagerness. It sustains us in this overlap of ages (and our endurance, in turn, strengthens our hope – Rom. 5:4). As Paul said in Titus 2:13, Christians live "expectantly awaiting *the blessed hope*, the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." That is the time at which we will receive the eagerly awaited redemption of our bodies (v. 23).

c. Just as that hope sustains us in this present world, helps us to endure, so too the Spirit helps us in our "weakness," in our existence in this overlap of ages. In our suffering and longing to be free from the corruption and infirmities that are part of life this side of the consummation, we often do not know the things for which we should be praying. In suffering we become acutely aware of how limited our perception is because if it were up to us this would not be happening, and yet God is allowing it. This awareness that our desires may not match God's will, may not be what he wants us to pray, could have a chilling effect on our prayers, but Paul says this potential hindrance is overcome by the Spirit's intercession.

(1) The Spirit himself intercedes for us with "unspoken groanings." This is a metaphorical reference to the Spirit's ministry of intercession that takes place in our hearts in a manner imperceptible to us. He expresses intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God. Moo remarks (p. 526), "When we do not know what to pray for – yes, even when we pray for things that are not best for us – we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit's ministry of perfect intercession 'on our behalf.'"

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

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

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

(a) In this context, the comment that Christians are destined to be "conformed to the likeness of his Son" refers, at least primarily, to the fact our bodies will be transformed so that "they will be like [Jesus'] glorious body" (Phil. 3:21; see also, 1 Cor. 15:49 [And just as we bore the image of the man of dust, so we will also bear the image of the heavenly man] and 1 Jn. 3:2 [when he is revealed, we will be like him]).

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

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

(3) To paraphrase Paul's words in vv. 29-30, those God knew in advance would be Christians (and remain faithful, which Paul assumes Christians will do), he determined in advance would be glorified. And those he determined in advance would be glorified (i.e., Christians), these he also called to faith through the preaching of the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 10:17). God's calling and our response was simply the actualization of his foreknowledge that we would be Christians, the outworking of what he knew from the beginning. Those called to faith

were pronounced righteous, as Paul has said repeatedly of believers, and those who have been pronounced righteous will be glorified in accordance with his prior determination to do so.

(a) The glorification of believers that Paul has in mind is a future hope, as he makes clear in 8:18 ("the glory that is *going to be* revealed in us"). This glory is identified in v. 23 as our eagerly awaited adoption as sons, which he specifies means the redemption of our bodies.

(b) He refers to this future glorification at the end of v. 30 in the past tense (aorist) because God has already determined to do this for Christians. As we might say, it is a "done deal," the certainty of which is highlighted by referring to it as if it already occurred.

(c) It is also possible, though I think less likely in this context, that Paul uses the past tense because our glorification that will be finalized at Christ's return in our resurrection is a process of transformation that has already begun (2 Cor. 3:18).

E. The Christian's Assurance Celebrated (8:31-39) – **³¹What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over on behalf of us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? ³³Who will bring charges against the elect of God? God is the one who pronounces righteous; ³⁴who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died and, more than that, was raised up, who also is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶Just as it is written, "On account of you we are being put to death all the day [long]; we are considered as sheep for the slaughter." ³⁷But in all these things we are completely victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

1. If God has determined from the foundation of the world that the faithful will be with him forever in glory, whose opposition to us can matter? The God who gave his one and only Son on our behalf, who "pulled out all the stops," certainly will not withhold from us the glories of the eternal state. His giving of his Son shows that he is "all in" to bless us. He will not allow any opponent to thwart his intention freely to give eternal glory to the faithful.

2. No charge brought against any saint will stand up (and thus exclude us from God's presence) because God, the one who counts, has already declared us righteous in Christ. In him we are absolutely immune from condemnation (8:1), not because we do not deserve it but because Christ has already taken it.

3. Not only did Jesus die and get raised to life for our justification, but he is in heaven, at God's right hand, presenting himself to God as our perpetual sacrifice (acting as our High

Priest). As John puts it so powerfully in 1 Jn. 2:1, "My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. *But if anyone does sin*, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

4. Nothing that Christians may experience in this life, no amount of suffering, will alter God's passionate commitment to our welfare (his love), and therefore nothing we experience in this life will (in itself) alter our eternal destiny. That is why we are completely victorious in all these difficulties through Christ. It is not that we do not experience hardships and death, what on the surface can appear to be defeats, but that those things are unable to deny us what God has planned for us. The faithful are completely victorious not in the sense they stop hardships and death from happening to them but in the sense their destiny is secure despite their happening.