
Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XIII** : ASSURANCE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT — CHAP 8 VERSES 1-13

ROMANS 8 AND THE HOLY SPIRIT — “The inner sanctuary within the cathedral of Christian faith; the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden; the highest peak in a range of mountains — such are some of the metaphors used by interpreters who extol chap. 8 as the greatest passage within what so many consider to be the greatest book in Scripture. While the varied riches of God’s Word make any such comparisons precarious, Rom. 8 deserves to be put in the front rank for its rich and comprehensive portrayal of what it means to be a Christian. *Prominent in this description is the work of the Holy Spirit.* The word *pneuma* [spirit, wind, breath] occurs 21 times in Rom. 8, and all but two (those in vv. 15a and 16b [and some argue v. 10b is included in this list]) refer to the Holy Spirit. This means that the Spirit is mentioned in this chapter almost once every two verses, while its closest competitor, 1 Cor 12, mentions the Spirit a little over once every three verses. Nevertheless, despite the prominence of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8 is not really *about* the Spirit. For one thing, the Spirit is not equally prominent throughout, being mentioned 15 times in vv. 1-17 but only four times in vv. 18-39. For another, Paul’s focus is not so much on the Spirit as such, but on what the Spirit *does*. And perhaps this is the best way to learn about the Spirit. For, as important as it may be to define the nature of the Holy Spirit and his relation to Christ and the Father, the Spirit is best known in his ministry on behalf of Christians. It is those blessings and privileges conferred on believers by the Spirit that are the theme of this chapter.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 467f]

THEME OF ROMANS 8 — “*If we were to sum up these blessings in a single word, that word would be assurance. From ‘no condemnation’ at the beginning (v. 1) to ‘no separation’ at the end (v. 39), Paul passes in review those gifts and graces that together assure the Christian that his relationship with God is secure and settled.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 468] “*His theme here is the security of believers.* The salvation of those who have renounced the law, and accepted the gracious offers of the gospel, is grown to be absolutely certain. The whole chapter is a series of arguments, most beautifully arranged, in support of this one point. They are all traced back to the great source of hope and security, the unmerited and unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus. The proposition is contained in the first verse. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. They shall never be condemned or perish.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 247]

CHAPTER DIVISIONS — While the chapter contains no sharp breaks, Moo divides the chapter into four major sections:

- In vv. 1-13 the key word is *life*. “The Spirit of life” (v. 2) confers life both in the present — through liberating the believer from both the penalty (justification) and power (sanctification) of sin — and in the future — by raising the “mortal body” from the dead. Yet this life is not attained without the believer’s active participation in the Spirit’s progressive work of “mortification” (vv. 12-13)
- The Spirit is also the “Spirit of adoption,” conferring on us the status of God’s own dearly loved children and making us aware of that status at the same time (vv. 14-17)
- In the last verse of the second section, Paul makes the transition into the theme of hope, which dominates the last part of Romans 8. To be a child of God means to be his heir (v. 17) — and an heir must wait for the full realization of what has been promised. So believers in this age of warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan suffer and groan — but their groans are not the despairing cries of the hopeless. Rather, they are the impatient yearnings of those who have been saved in hope and hunger for that “glory” which has been promised to them (vv. 18-30).
- Paul celebrates this comforting expectation in vv. 31-39, a hymn of triumph that caps off and applies the exposition of Christian privileges given in vv. 1-30, as well as bringing to a conclusion the exposition of chapters 5-8 generally. [Moo, *Romans*, pg 468f]

BRINGING TO A CONCLUSION WHAT BEGAN IN CHAPTER 5 — “How does this portrait of the new life and hope of the believer relate to what has come before in Romans? The ‘therefore’ at the beginning of the chapter indicates that Paul is drawing a conclusion. What immediately follows is the assertion that ‘there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (v. 1). This language forges a link with Rom. 5:12-21: the word ‘condemnation’ [κατάκριμα, katakrima] occurs only here and in 5:16 and 18 in the NT, and ‘in Christ Jesus’ succinctly summarizes the relationship of believers to Christ that is developed in that great paragraph. Nor do these parallels stand alone. In both 5:12-21 and 8:1-13 Paul assures the believer of the reality and finality of life in Christ, and shows how this life is the product of righteousness (cf. 5:17, 18, 21; 8:10). We are justified, then, in thinking that 8:1-13 or, probably, 8:1-17, restates and elaborates 5:12-21. This restatement is made with particular respect to the threats of sin and the law (cf. v. 2: ‘the law of sin and death’) that occupied Paul in chaps. 6 and 7, and, as we have seen, with a new focus on the ministry of the Spirit. Since the second part of Rom. 8 is closely related to 5:1-11, the result is a ‘ring composition’ in which 8:18-39 picks up 5:1-11, and 8:1-17 does 5:12-21.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 469] This was mentioned as we went through chapter 5 (lesson 10):

Paul’s development might be illustrated as follows:

- A. 5:1-11 — assurance of future glory
- B. 5:12-21 — basis for this assurance is the work of Christ
- C. 6:1-23 — the problem of sin

- C' 7:1-25 — the problem of the law
 B' 8:1-17 — ground of assurance in the work of Christ, mediated by the Spirit
 A' 8:18-39 — assurance of future glory

CHAPTER 8 AND THE REST OF ROMANS — As well as bringing to a conclusion the thoughts began in chapter 5, this chapter also has connectivity with others, both before and after:

- ‘newness of Spirit’ (7:6b) anticipates and prepares for the concentrated focus on the Holy Spirit in chap. 8
- 8:2-4 provides the solution to the dilemma of *egō* in 7:7-25
- God’s work in Christ, mediated by the Spirit, is what overcomes the inability of the law, weakened as it is by the flesh (v. 3a), and liberates the believer from ‘the law of sin and death’ (v. 2)
- although connections with chap. 7 might be found, Charles Hodge argues that this chapter in some ways summarizes and brings to a climax the discussion of the entire epistle up to this point. Moo states it like this: **“Like a snowball rolling downhill, Rom. 8 picks up many of the earlier themes of the letter as it reiterates and expands on the assurance of eschatological life that the believer has in Christ.”** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 470]

PARALLELS BETWEEN ROMANS 8 AND GALATIANS 4 — Note the striking parallels between Gal. 4:3b-7 and Rom. 8:2-17:

Galatians 4:3b-7	Romans 8:2-17
‘we were enslaved under the elemental spirits of the world’ — Gal 4:3b	‘set you free from the law of sin and death’ — Rom 8:2b
‘when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law’ — Gal 4:4	‘God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh’ — Rom 8:3b
‘in order to redeem those under the law’ — Gal 4:5a	‘and as a sin offering, he condemned sin in the flesh’ — Rom 8:3c
‘in order that we might receive adoption’ — Gal 4:5b	‘but you received the Spirit of adoption’ — Rom 8:15b
‘because you are sons, God has sent forth his Spirit into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father’ — Gal 4:6	‘in which we cry, Abba, Father’ — Rom 8:15c; cf. 9b: ‘the Spirit of God dwells in you’
‘so that you are no longer a slave, but a son’ — Gal 4:7a	‘for you did not receive the Spirit of slavery again unto fear’ — Rom 8:15a
‘and if a son, then also an heir through God’ — Gal 4:7b	‘and if children, then also heirs’ — Rom 8:17a

“These parallels might point to the use of a pre-Pauline tradition or a fixed Pauline creed. It may be more likely, however, that Paul has used in both Gal 4 and Rom 8 elements of a common preaching or teaching pattern. In Rom 8, obviously, this pattern is woven into the larger fabric of Paul’s argument in the chapter.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 497f]

TODAY’S LESSON IN A NUTSHELL

“In this first paragraph of Rom. 8, Paul reasserts the triumphant conclusion of 5:12-21: that for those who are ‘in Christ’ eternal life replaces the condemnation and death that were the lot of everybody in Adam. But this reassertion of the believer’s assurance of life takes a new form, being modeled from the material with which Paul has been working in chaps. 6-7. The Spirit now plays the dominant role, as Paul returns to his preparatory reference to ‘serving in newness of Spirit’ in 7:6b. And the ‘powers’ against which the Spirit is ranged in these verses are those ‘authorities’ of the old age that have been portrayed in the two previous chapters. The Spirit battles against and conquers the hostility and power of the flesh (vv. 5b-9; cf. 7:5, 14, 18, 25), rescues the believer from captivity to sin and death, both ‘spiritual’ and ‘physical’ (v. 2; for sin, see v. 3 and chap. 6; for death, see vv. 6, 10-11, 13 and 6:12, 13, 16, 21, 23; 7:5, 9-11, 13, 24), and, accomplishing what the law itself could not do (v. 3a; cf. 7:7-25), enables the law, for the first time, to be ‘fulfilled.’ Thus Paul weaves together various threads from chaps. 6-7 in a new argument for the assurance of eternal life that the believer may have in Christ...

“In vv. 5-13, Paul continues to use this opposition between flesh and Spirit to expand on the life that is given to believers in and through God’s Spirit. He begins by asserting again the unbreakable connection between Spirit and life on the one hand and flesh and death on the other (vv. 5-8). His purpose here is more on the negative side, as he elaborates particularly on the ‘weakness of the flesh’ (v. 3a; cf. 7:14-25). Paul then (vv. 9-11) turns to a more positive point, as he expresses his confidence that the Romans themselves are firmly on the ‘Spirit’ side of this contrast (cf. vv. 3b-4). In the concluding verses of this section (vv. 12-13), however, Paul reminds his readers that the life-giving power of God’s Spirit is finally effective only in those who continue to let the Spirit change their lives.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 471f, 485]

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Rom 8:1-13 KJV)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, (Rom 8:1-13 NIV)

There is, then, now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus did set me free from the law of the sin and of the death; for what the law was not able to do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, His own Son having sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, did condemn the sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh, the things of the flesh do mind; and those according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; for the mind of the flesh [is] death, and the mind of the Spirit — life and peace; because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity to God, for to the law of God it doth not subject itself, for neither is it able; and those who are in the flesh are not able to please God. And ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God doth dwell in you; and if any one hath not the Spirit of Christ — this one is not His; and if Christ [is] in you, the body, indeed, [is] dead because of sin, and the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness, and if the Spirit of Him who did raise up Jesus out of the dead doth dwell in you, He who did raise up the Christ out of the dead shall quicken also your dying bodies, through His Spirit dwelling in you. So, then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; for if according to the flesh ye do live, ye are about to die; and if, by the Spirit, the deeds of the body ye put to death, ye shall live; (Rom 8:1-13 Young's Literal Translation)

The theme of this paragraph is “life.” “The ‘no condemnation’ that heads this paragraph is grounded in the reality of the believer’s transfer from death to life. In vv. 2-4, this transfer emanates from ‘the Spirit of life,’ who applies to the believer the benefits won by Christ on the cross, thereby enabling the fulfillment of the law’s just demand. Verses 5-9 teach that the flesh is necessarily in opposition to God, turning every person into a rebel against God and his law and reaping death in consequence. This explains why it is only by ‘being in the Spirit’ (v. 9) and ‘walking according to the Spirit’ (v. 4b) that life and peace can be had. And the life that the Spirit gives is by no means ended by the grave, for the presence of the Spirit guarantees that the bodies of believers will be raised from physical death (vv. 10-11). Verses 12-13 cap off this proclamation of life in Christ by reminding us that God’s gift of eternal life does not cancel the complementary truth that only by progressing in holiness will that eternal life be attained.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 472]

V 1 — therefore now — “The combination ‘therefore, now’ is an emphatic one, marking what follows as a significant conclusion. As we have seen, these verses pick up various themes from chaps. 6-7 to restate the assuring message of 5:12-21 that Christ has secured eternal life for all who belong to him. The ‘now’ alludes to the new era of salvation history inaugurated by Christ’s death and resurrection (see also 3:21; 5:9; 6:19, 22; 7:6). ‘For those who are in Christ Jesus,’ this era is marked by the wonderful announcement that ‘there is no condemnation.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 472]

no condemnation — “[T]he judicial flavor of the word ‘condemnation’ strongly suggests that Paul is here thinking only of the believer’s deliverance from the penalty that sin exacts. *Like ‘death,’ a parallel term (cf. 5:16 and 17; 5:18 and 21; and 8:1 and*

6), ‘condemnation’ designates the state of ‘lostness,’ of estrangement from God that, apart from Christ, every person will experience for eternity. Those ‘in Christ Jesus’ are removed from this state — and removed forever from it, as the emphatic ‘no’ [Gk. οὐδέν, *ouden*, lit. ‘not one’] indicates.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 472] “This implies that there would have been condemnation to those to whom he wrote, had they remained under the law; but ‘now,’ since they have died with Christ, and thereby given complete satisfaction to the law, both in its penalty and precept, it is not possible that by it they can be condemned.... This ‘now,’ then, distinguishes two conditions of a man, namely, his condition under the law, and his condition under grace, — that is, his natural and his supernatural conditions. For by nature we are children of wrath, but now God has rendered us accepted in the Beloved. Being now in Christ, we are not under the curse of the law, because He has borne it for us in the moment in which we believed in Him, we were redeemed from its curse; we entered into another covenant, in which there is nothing but grace and pardon. That there is now no condemnation to them that are in Him is according to our Lord’s declaration, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.’” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 311] “Those who are in Christ are not exposed to condemnation. And this again is not to be understood as descriptive of their present state merely, but of their permanent position. They are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. They shall never be condemned.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 249]

to them — “The Apostle, discoursing in the preceding chapter of the remainder of sin in believers, speaks of himself in his own person, in order to show that the highest advances in grace do not exempt from the internal warfare which he there describes. But in this verse he changes the number, and does not say, there is no condemnation to me, but to them, who are in Christ Jesus. This was proper, lest believers, who are often disposed to deprive themselves of those consolations which the Scriptures present, and prone either to despair or to presume on account of their own righteousness, should say that such a declaration was right and suitable in an Apostle, who enjoyed peculiar privileges, but it did not follow that they could say of themselves, ‘There is for us no condemnation.’ Paul therefore here changes the expression, and speaks in general terms, to show that he ascribes nothing peculiar to himself, but that he refers to the general condition of believers, in order that each of them might apply to himself the fruit of this consideration.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 311f]

in Christ Jesus — “He was *for us* in the place of condemnation; we are *in him* where all condemnation has spent its force (2 Cor 5:21).” [M. L. Loane, *The Hope of Glory: An Exposition of the Eighth Chapter in the Epistle to the Romans*; q.v. Moo, *Romans*, pg 473]

V 2 — THE GROUND OF OUR ‘NO CONDEMNATION’ — “The ‘for’ indicates that this verse is the ground of the ‘no condemnation in Christ’ announced in v. 1. A liberation has taken place through the Holy Spirit, and this liberation is the basis on which the person ‘in Christ’ is forever saved from condemnation.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 473]

“LAW” ... “LAW” — In describing our liberation, Paul uses the word “*nomos*” [“law”] to describe both sides of the contrast. Why this is stated in such a manner is debated:

- This could refer to a “*dual role*” of the Mosaic law. This implies a misunderstanding of the law in regards to the “*flesh*,” making the law a series of demands only, which leads to death. However, in the context of the Spirit, the law is understood in its “*fuller and truer nature*” as a promise which calls for faith, and therefore leading to life. This interpretation is unlikely however, for while the second usage of the word *law* might be used to refer to the Mosaic law, the first usage definitely could not be used in such a fashion. “*The immediate context stresses the incapacity of the law to do what v. 2 describes. It was God acting through his Son who accomplished ‘what the law could not do’ (v. 3). To make the Mosaic law the liberating agent in v. 2 would be to make v. 2 contradict v. 3. But, more seriously, giving the law this kind of role would contradict a central and oft-repeated tenet of Paul’s theology.* Throughout his letters, and not the least in Romans, Paul pictures the Mosaic law as ranged on the opposite side of the Spirit, righteousness, and life. God’s righteousness has come ‘apart from the law’ (3:21; cf. Gal. 2:15-3:14); the promise can be attained only through faith and not through the law (4:12-15; cf. Gal. 3:15-18); the believer must be ‘released from’ the law through union with Christ in order to produce fruit pleasing to God (7:4-6; cf. Gal. 2:19-20). To be sure, *Paul affirms that the law is God’s law and that it was given with a positive purpose within the overall plan of salvation (7:7-13; cf. Gal. 3:19-4:5). But this purpose is not the liberation of the believer from a misunderstanding or misuse of the law, or from the power of sin and death. The Pauline pattern, enunciated in v. 3, is clear: the impotence of the law has been met not with a new empowering of the law but with God’s gracious activity in Jesus Christ.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 474f] In addition to those arguments is the incongruity of the *law* liberating the believer from the same *law*.

- Others understand the *nomos* in the sense of “*principle, authority, or power.*” This is not an uncommon usage and was used by Paul in 3:27. See below, “*law of the Spirit of life.*” The more difficult question is whether the “law of sin and death” refers to the Mosaic law or if it too relates to the “*principle, authority, power.*” That “the law of sin and death” refers to the Mosaic law is possible since it is in the immediate context (v. 3; 7:7-25; see, e.g., Hodge, Haldane). In favor of it referring to “*principle, authority, power*” is the fact that the similar phrase “the *nomos* of sin” is used in the immediate context (7:23) and is called “the other law” in distinction with the law of Moses (7:22). It would be fair therefore to assume these phrases mean the same thing since there are also relationships between the imprisonment of 7:23 and the liberation of 8:2. “We might, then, paraphrase this second phrase, ‘the binding authority of sin that leads to death.’ The real contrast in the verse is then between the Spirit on the one hand and sin and death on the other. As sin and

death are those powers that rule the old age (cf. chaps. 6-7), so the Spirit and the eschatological life conferred by the Spirit are those powers that rule the new age.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 476]

Options for “law of the Spirit of life” —

- the “law written on the heart” (cf. Jer 31:31-34), the “law” of the New Covenant that is closely related to the Spirit according to Ezek 36:24-32. Possible but it is not clear if the law spoken of in Jeremiah is anything more than an internalized Mosaic law, nor is it the “liberating power” of the new age.
- a new, Christian standard which replaces the law of Moses (as some interpret “the law of Christ” in Gal. 6:2).
- the gospel, the new “rule” of which the Spirit is the author (see, e.g., Hodge, Haldane)
- as suggested above, Paul could use it in the sense of “power, binding authority,” which is followed by the possessive noun specifying that authority or power. ***“This suggests an intentional play on the word, as Paul implicitly contrasts the law of Moses with a different ‘law,’ in this case the ‘law’ of the Spirit who confers life.’ (see Fee; Cranfield) The actor in the situation is, then, the Spirit himself. It is God’s Spirit, coming to the believer with power and authority who brings liberation from the powers of the old age and from the condemnation that is the lot of all who are imprisoned by those powers.”*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 475f] ***“The law of the Spirit of life — The principle or authority exercised by the Holy Spirit which bestows life and which rests ‘in Christ Jesus.’”*** [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 372] ***“The law, the regulative principle; the Spirit, the divine Spirit who inspires the law (compare 7:14). Of life, proceeding from the life of Jesus and producing and imparting life. Compare John 16:15.”*** [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 85]

THE NATURE OF THE BELIEVER’S LIBERATION — “But what is the nature of the liberation Paul depicts here? Since v. 1, as I have argued, has to do with justification, the liberation of v. 2 may also be restricted to the believer’s being free from the penalty of sin (see, e.g., Haldane). Others, however, while not excluding justification, think that v. 2 is focusing more on sanctification; for ‘the law of sin,’ it is argued, is the internal, regulating power of sin (see, e.g., Calvin, Murray). ***But the liberation here is not just from ‘the law of sin,’ but from ‘the law of sin and death.’ And this expanded phrase appears to be deliberately chosen in order to summarize the total situation of the sinner as Paul has described it in chaps. 6 and 7: helpless under sin’s power, doomed thereby to death and condemnation. This being the case, we cannot restrict the application of v. 2 to either ‘justification’ or ‘sanctification’; indeed, the very introduction of these terms at this point in Paul’s discussion may unnecessarily complicate matters. ‘No condemnation’ is the banner of triumphant ‘realm transfer’ that is the presupposition of both. As such, it significantly advances the discussion of chaps. 5-7 by introducing the Spirit as a key agent of liberation from the old realm of sin and death.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 476f]

v 3 — “Nevertheless, as the ‘in Christ Jesus’ in v. 2 — and in v. 1 — has already indicated, the Spirit’s liberating work takes place only within the situation created by Christ. Verse 3 spells this out, showing that ***the Spirit can liberate the believer from sin and death only because in Christ and his cross God has already ‘condemned’ sin. Believers are no longer ‘condemned’ (v. 1) because in Christ sin has been ‘condemned’***: ‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did: by sending his own Son in the form of sinful flesh and concerning sin he condemned sin in the flesh.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 477]

INCOMPLETE CONTRAST? — Those studied in Greek say the language here is unclear, specifically, how “the law could not do, in that it was weak by the flesh” relates to this sentence as well as v. 2. Moo gives an explanation and then concludes as follows: Paul probably intended to use “he did” (or something equivalent to it) as his main verb and thus establish a direct contrast between “what the law could not do” and “what God did.” But Paul does not complete the contrast, perhaps due to the already complicated sentence structure. Instead, Paul moves immediately to the means by which God has accomplished what the law could not do “sending his own Son ... he condemned sin in the flesh.” This is accepted by most English translations, as represented by, e.g., the RSV: ***“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 477f]

for what the law could not do — “Lit., *the impossible (thing) of the law*. An absolute nominative in apposition with the divine act — *condemned sin*. God condemned sin which condemnation was *an impossible thing* on the part of the law. The words stand first in the Greek order for emphasis.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 85]

law — Without question this refers to the Mosaic law, possibly making the most important point about this law in the epistle — that it has proved incapable of rescuing people from the domain of sin and death (cf. 3:19; 3:28; 4:12-15; 7:7-25).

in that it was weak through the flesh — What the law could not do is break sin’s power, but not through any fault of its own. “But the law should not be criticized for [not being able to rescue people from sin and death] — for in a phrase that echoes 7:14b (‘I am fleshly’), Paul reminds us that the law has failed only because ‘it was weakened by the flesh.’ Nor should we think of the flesh as frustrating the intentions of the law, for the law was never given as a means to secure righteousness.... It is [the power of our sinful natures] that the law cannot break; indeed, as Paul has made clear, the law serves to strengthen the power of sin (cf. 5:20; 7:5). Luther uses a very appropriate analogy to make the point: ‘It is as with a sick man who wants to drink some wine because he foolishly thinks that his health will return if he does so. Now if the doctor, without any criticism of the wine, should say

to him, “It is impossible for the wine to cure you, it will only make you sicker,” the doctor is not condemning the wine but only the foolish trust of the sick man in it. For he needs other medicine to get well, so that he then can drink his wine.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 478]

flesh — not the flesh of our bodies nor the bodies themselves but the “this-worldly” orientation that all people share.

God sending — Such a reference to the ‘sending’ of Christ is unusual in Paul, the closest parallels being Gal 4:4 — ‘God sent forth his Son’ — and Phil 2:7c — ‘becoming in the likeness of human beings.’ John is the apostle which speaks most of God sending Christ into the world. **“In all this we see the Father assuming the place of judge against His Son, in order to become the Father of those who were His enemies. The Father condemns the Son of His love, that He may absolve the children of His wrath. If we inquire into the cause that moved God to save us by such means, what can we say, but that it proceeded from His incomprehensible wisdom, His ineffable goodness, and the unfathomable depth of His mercies? For what was there in man that could induce the Creator to act in this manner, since He saw nothing in him, after his rebellion by sin, but what was hateful and offensive? And what was it but His love that passeth knowledge which induced the only-begotten Son of God to take the form of a servant, to humble Himself even to the death of the cross, and to submit to be despised and rejected of men? These are the things into which the angels desire to look.”** [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 324]

his own Son — the “his own” is emphatic. **“He is here emphatically called not only the Son of God, but the Son of Himself, or His own Son — His very Son.”** [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 322] “The term Son here evidently designates the eternal personal Son. He was from eternity, and in virtue of his Divine nature, and not in virtue either of his miraculous birth, or his exaltation, the Son of God. The greatness of the work to be accomplished, and the greatness of the love of God impelling him to our redemption, are strongly exhibited in these words. It was not a creature, even the most exalted, whom God sent on this mission, but his own Son, one with him in essence and glory.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 252]

in the likeness of sinful flesh — “In most references to the ‘sending’ of the Son the focus is on the incarnation. But the sacrificial allusions later in this verse show that, without eliminating allusion to the incarnation, Paul’s application of the language is broader, with a particular focus on the redemptive death of the Son. Paul’s description of the way in which God sent the Son contributes to this sacrificial focus. ‘In the form of sinful flesh’ emphasizes the full participation of the Son in the human condition. Like the phrases ‘born from a woman, born under the law’ in Gal 4:4, it shows that the Son possesses the necessary requirement to act as our substitute. But why does Paul say that Christ came in ‘the *homoiōma* [likeness] of sinful flesh’? Certainly, in light of ‘in the flesh’ later in this very verse, Paul cannot mean that Christ had only the ‘appearance’ of flesh [this essentially docetic interpretation was advocated by Marcion]. Moreover, the word *homoiōma* here probably has the nuance of ‘form’ rather than ‘likeness’ or ‘copy.’ In other words, the word does not suggest superficial or outward similarity, but inward and real participation or ‘expression.’ It may be, then, that Paul wants simply to say that Christ really took on ‘sinful flesh.’ But this may be going too far in the other direction. Paul uses *homoiōma* here for a reason; and it is probably, as in 6:5 and 5:14, to introduce a note of distinction. The use of the term implies some kind of reservation about identifying Christ with ‘sinful flesh.’ ***Paul is walking a fine line here. On the one hand, he wants to insist that Christ fully entered into the human condition, became ‘in-fleshed’ (in-carnis), and, as such, exposed himself to the power of sin (cf. 6:8-10). On the other hand, he must avoid suggesting that Christ so participated in this realm that he became imprisoned ‘in the flesh’ (cf. the negative use of this phrase in 7:5 and 8:8,9) and became, thus, so subject to sin that he could be personally guilty of it. Homoiōma rights the balances that the addition of ‘sinful’ to ‘flesh’ might have tipped a bit too far in one direction....*** Some interpreters think, specifically, that Paul is guarding against the idea that Christ had committed sin (a notion he rejects; cf., e.g., 2 Cor 5:21). A deeper theological implication has been spotted by many, particularly among those (such as Reformed dogmaticians) who stress original sin. According to this view, Paul implies something about the nature of the incarnation itself: that Christ, although taking on real, human flesh, did not take on ‘sinful,’ or ‘fallen,’ human flesh. For had he done so, Christ would have been subject to the penalties of original sin and thus disqualified from vicariously taking upon himself the penalty due our sin.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 479f] “Lit., *of the flesh of sin*. The choice of words is especially noteworthy. Paul does not say simply, ‘He came *in flesh*’ (1 John 4:2; 1 Timothy 3:16), for this would not have expressed the bond between Christ’s manhood and sin. Not *in the flesh of sin*, which would have represented Him as partaking of sin. Not *in the likeness of flesh*, since He was really and entirely human; but, *in the likeness of the flesh of sin*: really human, conformed in appearance to the flesh whose characteristic is sin, yet sinless.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 85]

and for sin — “Sacrificial allusions are probably also present in the next phrase, ‘concerning sin.’ Paul might mean no more than that Christ’s mission generally ‘had to do’ with sin. But the phrase so frequently means ‘sin offering’ in the LXX that it is likely to mean that here too: God sent his own Son ‘to be a sin offering.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 480] Moo further comments that 44 of the 54 times that the LXX uses the phrase *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* [*peri hamartias*, ‘about’ or ‘concerning sin’] refers to sacrifices. The phrase also refers to sacrifices in 3 of the 8 times it’s used in the NT.

condemned sin — *κατακρίνω* [*katakrinō*, ‘condemn’] is a judicial term, usually denoting the act of ‘passing sentence.’ Sometimes, particularly when God is the subject, it includes both the *passing of the sentence* and the actual *execution of the sentence*. The word almost always has a personal object: people are condemned. “But what does Paul mean when he says that God ‘condemned sin in the flesh?’ Putting together the natural meaning of the term with the context, we can conclude that what Paul must mean is a judicial action that was accomplished through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and that had as its object that ‘the just requirements of the law be fulfilled’ in Christians (v. 4a).... ***The interpretation that best meets the criteria above sees the***

condemnation of sin to consist in God's executing his judgment on sin in the atoning death of his Son. As our substitute, Christ 'was made sin for us' (2 Cor 5:21) and suffered the wrath of God, the judgment of God upon that sin (cf. hilastērion in Rom 3:25; Gal 3:13). In his doing so, of course, we may say that sin's power was broken, in the sense that Paul pictures sin as a power that holds people in its clutches and brings condemnation to them. In executing the full sentence of condemnation against sin, God effectively removed sin's ability to 'dictate terms' for those who are 'in Christ' (v. 2). The condemnation that our sins deserve has been poured out on Christ, our sin-bearer; that is why 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (v. 1)." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 480f]

in the flesh — “‘In the flesh’ naturally implies the humanity of Christ, but it also alludes to that sphere of human weakness into which Christ entered to accomplish his work. The flesh that made the law ineffective in dealing with sin was conquered from within.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 480] “Christ took upon himself our nature, in order to expiate the guilt of that nature. The expiation must be made in the nature which had sinned. *As Christ, the apostle tells us, Hebrews 2:14-18, did not undertake the redemption of angels, he did not assume their nature, but took part in flesh and blood.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 253]

v 4 — Verse 4 states the purpose [ἵνα, hina, ‘in order that’] for which God has condemned sin in the flesh: ‘that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us.’

righteousness — Gk δικαίωμα [dikaiōma] This refers to the consequence of “*establishing right*” [δικαίωω, dikaiōō] and is used in secular Greek to mean legal claim or document, judicial sentence or punishment, and statute or ordinance. The last meaning is particularly frequent in the LXX, used over 100 times to designate the “*statutes, ordinances*” of God’s law. “Based on its meaning and use earlier in Romans, it could mean either

- (1) ‘just decree,’ ‘ordinance that decrees punishment’ (cf. 1:32);
- (2) ‘righteousness’ (5:16); or
- (3) ‘just requirement,’ the reference being either to the behavior required by the law (2:26) or to the righteousness demanded by the law.

The first would fit the context very nicely; the sentence of judgment executed on sin in Christ (v. 3) ‘fulfills’ that ‘decree of the law’ which demands death for sin (cf. 3:19). However, it has against it the positive flavor of Paul’s language in the rest of the verse: ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.’ The second is unlikely because the meaning of ‘righteousness’ for this term in 5:16 is very much dependent on the rhetorical contrast in that context. Probably, then, especially in light of the qualifications ‘of the law,’ Paul uses the word with its usual LXX meaning, ‘right or just requirement.’ [note the NIV: ‘in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us’] But what is this ‘just requirement’? And how is it accomplished? ... *We must, then, give the phrase its simplest and broadest meaning: the summary (note the singular, as opposed to the plural of 2:26) of what the law demands of God’s people. Through God’s breaking of the power of sin (v. 3), the ‘right requirement’ of the law is accomplished by those who ‘walk according to the Spirit.’ To quote Augustine’s famous formula, ‘Law was given that grace might be sought, grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 481f] “*Righteousness* — Rev., ordinance. Primarily that which is deemed right, so as to have the force of law; hence an ordinance. Here collectively, of the moral precepts of the law: its *righteous requirement.*” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 86]

HOW IS THE “RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW” FULFILLED IN THE BELIEVER? — “Some think that Christians, participants in the New Covenant, with the ‘law written on the heart’ and the Spirit empowering within, fulfill the demand of the law by righteous living. However, while it is true that God’s act in Christ has as one of its intents that we produce ‘fruit’ (cf. 6:15-23; 7:4), and that the law cannot be cavalierly dismissed as of no significance to the Christian life, we do not think that this is what Paul is saying here. Two points may be made. First, the passive verb ‘might be fulfilled’ points not to something that we are to do but to something that is done in and for us. Second, the always imperfect obedience of the law by Christians does not satisfy what is demanded by the logic of this text. The fulfilling of the ‘just decree of the law’ must answer to that inability of the law with which Paul began this sentence (v. 3a). As we have seen, ‘what the law could not do’ is to free people from ‘the law of sin and death’ — to procure righteousness and life. And it could not do this because ‘the flesh’ prevented people from obeying its precepts (see 8:7 and 7:14-25). The removal of this barrier consists not in the actions of believers, for our obedience always falls short of that perfect obedience required by the law. As Calvin puts it, ‘the faithful, while they sojourn in this world, never make such a proficiency, as that the justification of the law becomes in them full or complete. This [v. 4a] then must be applied to forgiveness; for when the obedience of Christ is accepted for us, the law is satisfied, so that we are counted just.’ *If, then, the inability of the law is to be overcome without an arbitrary cancellation of the law, it can happen only through a perfect obedience of the law’s demands. This, of course, is exactly what Jesus Christ has done. As our substitute, he satisfied the righteous requirement of the law, living a life of perfect submission to God. In laying upon him the condemnation due all of us (v. 3b; cf. v. 1), God also made it possible for the righteous obedience that Christ had earned to be transferred to us. Verses 3-4 then fit into a pattern in Paul’s presentation of the work of Christ that has been called an ‘interchange’ — Christ becomes what we are so that we might become what Christ is. In this sense, then, we may interpret ‘the righteous requirement of the law’ to be the demand of the law for perfect obedience, or for righteousness. And the law’s just demand is fulfilled in Christians not through their own acts of obedience but through their incorporation into Christ. He fulfilled the law; and, in him, believers also fulfill the law — perfectly, so that they may be pronounced ‘righteous,’ free from ‘condemnation’ (v. 1). It is in this way that Paul’s stress on faith ‘establishes the law’ (3:31), for, in grasping Christ by faith, people are accounted as really having ‘done the law.’ Indeed, as Paul makes clear in this letter, it is only through faith in Christ that the law can really*

be accomplished.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 482ff] Notable examples of Christ being an ‘interchange’ for believers are: he ‘became a curse’ to redeem us from ‘the curse of the law’ (Gal 3:13); was ‘born under the law’ to redeem those who were ‘under the law’ (Gal 4:4-5); and the clearest text, ‘Him who knew no sin, he [God] made to be sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Cor 5:21). **“In strict accordance therefore with the sense of the words, we may explain the passage to mean, ‘that the demands of the law might be satisfied in us.’ That is, that we might be justified. Christ was condemned, that to us there might be no condemnation. He was made sin that we might be made righteousness, 2 Corinthians 5:21.”** [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 254]

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR A MARK OF THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST — who walk not ... — If our understanding of the first part of the verse is correct, then the participle clause modifying “us” is not instrumental — “the just decree of the law is fulfilled in us by our walking not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” — but descriptive, characterizing those in whom the just decree of the law is fulfilled — “those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” **“The reference to Christian behavior in this phrase shows that Paul does not separate the ‘fulfillment’ of the law from the lifestyle of Christians. But, this does not mean that Christian behavior is how the law is fulfilled — a conclusion that is incompatible with [comments previously made concerning v. 4a]. Rather, Christian behavior is the necessary mark of those whom this fulfillment takes place. God not only provides in Christ the full completion of the law’s demands for the believer, but he also sends the Spirit into the hearts of believers to empower a new obedience to his demands. Christians are now directed by the Spirit and not by the flesh.”** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 485]

walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit — The “flesh” and the “Spirit” here designate not carnality vs. spirituality but two realms of existence. “[F]lesh and Spirit stand over against each other not as parts of a person (an anthropological dualism), nor even as impulses or powers within a person, but as the powers, or dominating features, of the two ‘realms’ of salvation history. ‘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. 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 eschatological gift.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 485]

V 5 — THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT CONTRASTED — “The antithesis between flesh and Spirit stated in v. 4b in terms of ‘walking according to’ is pursued in vv. 5-9 with several different expressions:

v. 5a: ‘being according to the flesh / according to the Spirit’

v. 5b: ‘thinking the things of the flesh / of the Spirit’

v. 6: ‘the mind of the flesh / Spirit’

vv. 8-9: ‘being in the flesh / in the Spirit’

To begin at the end of the sequence: what Paul says in vv. 8-9 makes clear that the contrast between ‘being in the flesh’ and ‘being in the Spirit’ is a contrast between non-Christian and Christian. As in 7:5, Paul uses ‘in’ to connote the idea of ‘realm,’ with flesh and Spirit denoting those ‘powers’ that dominate the two realms of salvation history. **To become a Christian means to be transferred from the realm dominated by the flesh to the realm dominated by the Spirit.** The ‘mind’ (*phronēma*) of the flesh / Spirit (v. 6) will then denote the mind-set or attitude that characterizes those who belong to these two respective realms, with ‘thinking’ (*phronousin*) the things of the flesh / Spirit (v. 5b) a rhetorical equivalent. Finally, considering the connection between vv. 4b and 5, ‘being according to the flesh / Spirit’ and ‘walking according to the flesh / Spirit’ may mean roughly the same thing: the ‘lifestyle’ or daily conduct of a person. **But the logic of Paul’s argument suggests rather that ‘being according to the flesh’ in v. 5 is the same as ‘being in the flesh’ in v. 8: that is, a ‘positional’ rather than a ‘behavioral’ concept... For those who are ‘according to the flesh’ can never escape death (v. 6); the flesh prevents people from obeying God’s law (v. 7) or pleasing him (v. 8). It is the Spirit, ‘the Spirit of life’ (v. 2), who reverses this situation, making it possible, through Christ, for believers to ‘fulfill the law’ (v. 4) and to be delivered from condemnation (v. 1).** In vv. 9-11 Paul draws out these life-giving consequences of the Spirit. To begin with, however, he notes the basic tendencies of both the flesh and the Spirit (vv. 5-6), and then develops the negative side of the situation in vv. 7-8: the natural situation of the person in this world — life in the flesh — as a situation of death. These verses thus recapitulate the main themes of chap. 7. In vv. 5-6, Paul uses a logical progression to contrast the ends to which the flesh and the Spirit lead. In this progression Paul uses the language of ‘thinking’ as the ‘middle term’ to connect existence determined by flesh or Spirit (‘those who are according to flesh / Spirit’) with the contrasting destinies of death on the one hand and life and peace on the other. Both words, ‘think’ in v. 5 and ‘mind’ in v. 6, come from the same Greek root, a root that connotes not a purely mental process but, more broadly, the general direction of the will, encompassing ‘all the faculties of the soul — reason, understanding, and affections.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 485ff]

A LIFESTYLE OF “IN THE FLESH” NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE BELIEVER —

“Paul’s purpose in pursuing this series of contrasts is not ‘paraenetic’; that is, **he is not warning Christians about two different possibilities they face in order to encourage them to live according to the Spirit.** Paul certainly does this, and in language similar to the language here (cf. Gal. 5:16-26). But, as we have noted, **‘being in the flesh’ (v. 8) is not a possibility for the believer;** and when we add to this the lack of any imperatives and the general, third person, language of the paragraph, we are warranted in concluding that **Paul’s interest here is descriptive rather than hortatory.** In some sense, then, it is fair to say that **Paul is contrasting two groups of people: the converted and the unconverted.** But Paul’s

paraenetic (par-e-net-ic) adj: hortatory; encouraging; persuasive
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main purpose is to highlight the radical differences between the flesh and the Spirit as a means of showing why only those who ‘walk / think / are’ after the Spirit can have eschatological life, is conferred only on those who ‘walk according to the Spirit’ (cf. v. 4b).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 486f]

do mind — “It expresses any form of mental activity, any exercise of the intellect, will, or affections. *They mind*, therefore, means, they make the object of attention, desire, and pursuit. *The things of the flesh*, are the objects on which their hearts are set, and to which their lives are devoted.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 255]

v 6 — ATTITUDES CHARACTERIZED BY THOSE “IN THE FLESH” AND THOSE “IN THE SPIRIT” — “The ‘for’ is neither causal nor explanatory, but continuative. The ‘mind’ of the flesh / Spirit, the attitude characterized and determined by the flesh / Spirit, is simply the substantival equivalent of thinking ‘the things of the flesh / Spirit’ (v. 5b). The accent falls on what results from these contrasting mind-sets. Those who have the mind-set of the flesh, who, we might say, have a strictly ‘this-worldly’ attitude, experience death.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 487]

DEATH ... LIFE AND PEACE — “As throughout Rom. 5-8, this is death in its broadest aspect, certainly including eschatological condemnation (see vv. 1-4), but not confined to that. ‘Death’ reigns in this life over all those who are outside Christ (cf. 5:12, 15, 21). Likewise, ‘life’ and ‘peace’ denote that state of freedom from ‘the law of sin and death’ that begins for the believer in this life, albeit in less than its final and definitive form. The words do not denote a subjective state of mind (e.g., ‘peace of mind and heart’) but the objective reality of the salvation into which the believer, who has ‘the mind of the Spirit,’ has entered. The ‘peace’ here is that ‘peace with God’ given through justification (see 5:1; cf. also 14:17), the state that is in contrast to the non-Christian’s ‘enmity toward God’ (see v. 7).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 487f]

ONLY TWO STATES POSSIBLE — “*These two states of carnal and spiritual mindedness include and divide the whole world. All men belong either to the one or the other. They are either in the flesh or in the Spirit; in a state of nature or in a state of grace.*” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 332]

to be carnally minded — “The idea is not merely that the actual seeking the things of the flesh leads to death; but that a carnal state of mind, which reveals itself in the desire and pursuit of carnal objects, is death. And by death is of course meant spiritual death, the absence and the opposite of spiritual life. It includes alienation from God, unholiness, and misery.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 256] “This is the awful state of the carnal mind — the mind of the flesh without faith in Christ, and renovation of the Spirit of God. It is death spiritual and eternal. All the works of those who are in this state are ‘dead works,’ Hebrews 9:14. ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,’ although the Lord commanded to offer sacrifices, which therefore was in itself a good work. ‘She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.’ All by nature being in this carnal state, are ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ *Let those whose minds are set on the things of the world consider this fearful saying, that to be carnally minded is death, and let them look to Jesus the Savior of the guilty, through whom alone they can escape condemnation.*” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 332]

to be spiritually minded — “To be spiritually minded is *life*, even eternal life. This life is already enjoyed by the believer. ‘Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life;’ and with his Redeemer he has risen from the death of sin to walk in this new life. It is also *peace*, both here and hereafter. This peace is the harmony of all the faculties of the soul with God, and with His will, and is altogether the opposite of that enmity against God, which in the following verse is affirmed concerning the carnal mind. *While there is nothing so miserable for man as war with his Creator, there is nothing so blessed as peace and communion with God.* It is peace in the conscience, in opposition to doubt, for which the Church of Rome contends, as if the effect of being spiritually minded, instead of peace and confidence in God, was servile fear and harassing distrust. That church maintains that the man who is regenerated should doubt of his salvation, and be uncertain of God’s love to him. What, then, becomes of this peace that flows from being spiritually minded — which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus — this peace, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and a characteristic of the kingdom of God? Romans 14:17. The peace here spoken of is opposed to the terrors of conscience which the unregenerate experience, and to the opposition in their hearts to God, as well as to every species of false peace by which they may be deluded. ‘There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.’ And again it is said, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.’” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 332f]

v 7, 8 — “Verses 7-8 explain why the mind-set of the flesh must lead to death. As shorthand for the principle and power of the godless world, ‘flesh’ and the mind-set characteristic of it are necessarily hostile to God and all his purposes. No neutrality is possible; without the Spirit’s mind-set, found only through union with Christ (see vv. 9-10), people can only order their lives in a way that is hostile to God and that will incur his wrath. The second part of v. 7 and v. 8 explain this hostility to God. The ‘mind-set produced by the flesh’ does not, and cannot, submit to God. Those ‘in the flesh’ — the ‘natural’ person apart from Christ — cannot please God.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 488]

law of God — in light of v. 3 and chap. 7, the most natural explanation of the ‘law of God’ would be the Mosaic law, although this may be one of those verses where Paul uses the term to refer to the demands of God generally rather than any specific law.

UNBELIEVERS STILL SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD — It is interesting to note that Paul recognizes unbelievers as still being accountable to the law of God. “[T]he ‘law of God’ remains a standard by which the conduct of unbelievers can be

measured and condemned. Believers are no longer ‘under the law’ (Rom 6:14,15), subject to its binding authority (7:4); but unbelievers are subject still to this power of the ‘old age.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 488]

THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN — “[P]aul’s assessment of persons apart from Christ may just be summed up in the theological categories of ‘total depravity’ and ‘total inability.’ *‘Total depravity’ does not mean that all people are as evil as they possibly could be — that all people commit every possible sin — nor does it deny that there is knowledge of the good within each person. What is meant rather is that every person apart from Christ is thoroughly in the grip of the power of sin, and that this power extends to all the person’s faculties.* This Paul has enunciated clearly by accusing all non-Christians of having a ‘mind-set,’ a total life-direction, that is innately hostile to God (v. 7). *All people, by nature derived from Adam, are incurably ‘bent’ toward their own good rather than the good of others or of God. The various sins to which we are attracted — desire for riches, or station in life, or power, or sexual pleasure — are but different symptoms of this same sickness, this idolatrous bent toward self-gratification.* Once again, we must remember that Paul is not here using ‘flesh’ as we often do, to denote sexual sin specifically. To be ‘in the flesh,’ or ‘carnal,’ or ‘fleshly,’ includes, in the sense Paul is using flesh here, all sins. The person who is preoccupied with his or her own success in business, at the expense of others and of God, is just as much dominated by the flesh as the person who commits adultery. Both persons are manifesting, in different ways, that destructive, self-centered rebellion against God and his law which can be overcome only by the power of God’s Spirit in Christ. Verse 8, on the other hand, plainly shows that no person can rescue himself from this condition. *As long as that person is ‘in the flesh’ — and only the Spirit can rescue us from this envelopment in the flesh — he or she is ‘totally unable’ to please God.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 488f]

Please forgive the extended quote, but Robert Haldane is so good here that I could not bear to remove it from my notes. Here is what Haldane says about total depravity:

“The carnal mind in its wisest thoughts is rooted enmity against God. This is the reason why the carnal mind is punished with death. The mind of the flesh, or of man in his unconverted state, walking according to the flesh, in its best as well as in its worst character — however moral in conduct — whether seeking acceptance with God by its own services, or following altogether the course of this world in its sinful practices — is not merely an enemy, but *enmity* itself against God in the understanding, will, and affections. Every man whose heart is set on this world hates God, 1 John 2:15. ‘If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;’ and the heart of every one who has not been renewed in his mind by the Spirit of God is set on this world. Such men hate the holiness of God, His justice, His sovereignty, and even His mercy in the way in which it is exercised. Men of this character, however, have no notion that they hate God. Nay, many of them profess to love Him. But God’s testimony is, that they are His enemies; and His testimony is to be taken against the testimony of all men. This, however, does not suppose that men may not imagine that they love God. But is it not the true God whom they are regarding, but a God of their own imagination — a God all mercy, and therefore a God unjust; while they abhor the just God, and the Savior, who is the God of the Scriptures. ‘He that cometh to God must believe that He is,’ Hebrews 11:6. He must believe that He is what He is....

“That an unconverted man cannot be subject to the law of God, appears to many a hard saying; but it is the uniform doctrine of the word of God. All men in their natural state, though they boast that they are free, are the slaves of sin. Then Jesus, addressing the Jews who professed to believe in Him, but who understood not His doctrine, said to them, ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,’ they answered, ‘We were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ In the same manner *the unconverted boast of their freedom. They affirm that their will is free; and that, as they can choose the evil, so they can choose the good. If, by this freedom, they intend that they can choose without any external force constraining or preventing them, it is true that, in this sense, they are free. But a moral agent chooses according to his inclinations or dispositions. It should always be recollected that the will is the will of the mind, and the judgment the judgment of the mind. It is the mind that judges and that wills. A fool judges foolishly; a wicked man judges wickedly; a good man wills that which is good. In Scripture, it is said that God cannot deny Himself; that He cannot lie. His nature being perfectly holy, it is impossible that He can do what is wrong. On the other hand, the wicked and condemned spirits cannot choose what is holy. When the devil ‘speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.’ Man, therefore, in his carnal state, chooses what is evil; but he cannot choose what is good, not indeed because of any external obstruction, for in that case he would not be criminal, but by reason of the opposition of his perverse dispositions. He is inclined to do evil, and evil he will do. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ His language is, ‘I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.’ ‘As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.’ ‘My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would have none of Me.’ They say ‘unto God, Depart from us.’ ‘Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.’ ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ ‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us.’*

“It is thus that ‘wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.’ ‘Neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.’ ‘Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God.’ ‘Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God.’ ‘How *can* ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?’ ‘No man *can* come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him.’ ‘Therefore said I unto you, that no man *can* come unto Me except it were given unto him of My Father.’ ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ ‘Their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hearken.’ ‘How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.’ ‘The Spirit of truth whom the world *cannot* receive.’ ‘Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye *cannot* hear My word.’

‘No man *can* say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’

“According, then, to Scripture, the natural man is entirely incapable of choosing what is good, although it is his duty, and therefore fit that it should be enjoined on him. He is ‘ungodly,’ a ‘sinner,’ an ‘enemy to God,’ and ‘without strength,’ Romans 5:6, 10. Men in this state are represented as walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; as being under ‘the power of Satan,’ and ‘taken captive by him at his will.’ They are his lawful captives, because they are so voluntarily. From this slavery they cannot be freed but by means of the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, which the Lord employs; granting to those to whom it seemeth good to Him the blessing of regeneration; ‘distributing His gifts, and dividing to every man severally as He will.’ It is God ‘who hath delivered us,’ says the Apostle, ‘from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.’ ‘Who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ ‘If the Son shall make you *free*, ye shall *be free* indeed.’

“When God purposes to do good to men, He fulfills to them this gracious promise, ‘I will give them a heart to know Me.’ It was this preparation of heart that David prayed to God to grant to his son Solomon. At the same time, he acknowledged with gratitude that his own willingness to offer to God, of which he was Conscious, and that of his people, were from Him. After celebrating the praises of Jehovah, David says, ‘But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their hearts unto Thee,’ 1 Chronicles 29:10-18.

“There is nothing to prevent men from obeying the will of God but their own depraved dispositions, and aversion to the things of God. The natural faculties of men would be sufficient to enable them to do what He commands, if they employ them properly. If they employ them otherwise, the fault rests exclusively with themselves. And as the corruption of our nature does not deprive a man of any of his natural faculties, or of perfect liberty to act conformably to the decision of his own mind, the obligation under which he lies to do right continues in full force. From this we see, first, how justly God punishes men for their crimes, who, unless inclined and enabled by His grace, cannot liberate themselves from the slavery of sin; and further, that the inability of men to obey God, not being natural but moral inability, cannot deprive God of the right to command obedience, under the pain of His most awful displeasure.

“On this subject, the distinction between natural and moral inability should always be kept in view. Natural inability consists in a defect in the mind or body, which deprives a man of the power of knowing or doing anything, however desirous he may be of knowing or doing it. Natural inability, then, can never render a man criminal. Moral inability consists in an aversion to anything, so great that the mind, even when acting freely — that is, without any external impulse or constraint — cannot overcome it. When this aversion exists as to what is good, it is inseparable from blame; and the greater this aversion is, the greater is the criminality. All men are daily accustomed to make these distinctions, and according to this rule they constantly form their opinion of the conduct of others.

“In the nature of things, it is impossible that the justice of God can ever demand of reasonable creatures less than perfect obedience. To say that the moral inability of man to obey the law of God destroys or weakens, in the smallest degree, his obligation to obey that law, is to add insult to rebellion. For what is that moral inability? It is, as has been observed, no other than aversion to God, the depraved inclination of the carnal mind, which not only entertains and cherishes enmity against God, but is itself that enmity. And let it not be said that the view the Scriptures give of the natural depravity of men, and of the sovereign and efficacious grace of God, reduces them to the condition of machines. Between men and machines there is this essential difference, and it is enough for us to know that man is a voluntary agent both in the state of nature and of grace. He wills and acts according to his own dispositions, while machines have neither thought nor will. As long, then, as a man’s will is depraved and opposed to God, his conduct will be bad, — he will fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and, on the other hand, when God gives the sinner a new disposition, and a new spirit, his conduct will undergo a corresponding change. ‘The liberty of a moral agent consists in the power of acting conformably to his choice. Every action performed without external constraint, and in pursuance of the determination of the soul itself, is a free action. The soul is determined by motives; but we constantly see the same motives acting diversely on different minds. Many do not act conformably to the motives of which they yet acknowledge all the force. This failure of the motive proceeds from obstacles opposed by the corruption of the heart and understanding. But God, in giving a new heart and a new spirit, takes away these obstacles; and, in removing them, far from depriving a man of liberty, He removes that which hindered him from acting freely, and from following the light of his conscience, and thus, as the Scriptures express it, makes him free. **The will of man, without Divine grace, is not free but enslaved, and willing to be so.**’

“Is it objected, that if a man be so entirely corrupt that he cannot do what is right, he should not be blamed for doing evil? To this it is sufficient to reply, that if there be any force in the objection, the more a voluntary agent is diabolically wicked, the more innocent he should be considered. A creature is not subject to blame if he is not a voluntary agent; but if he be so, and if his dispositions and his will were absolutely wicked, he would certainly be incapable of doing good, and, according to the above argument, he could not be blamed for doing evil. On this ground the devil must be excused, nay, held perfectly innocent, in his desperate and irreconcilable enmity against God. A consequence so monstrous totally destroys the force of the objection whence it is deduced. But if the objection be still pressed — if any one shall proudly demand, who hath resisted His will? Why hath He made me thus? — the only proper answer is that of the Apostle, ‘Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’

“Some, indeed, taking a different and the most common view of this matter, deny the innate depravity of their nature, and, in spite of all that the Scriptures declare on this subject, persist in maintaining that they have not an inclination to evil, and are under no moral incapacity to do what is right. To such persons the same reply should be made as that of our Lord to the ignorant young man who asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. ‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.’ You cannot refuse to admit that this is your duty. You ought to love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and in all things constantly to obey Him. Have you done so? No! Then, on your own principles, you are justly condemned, for you say that you can do what is right, and yet you have not done it. If, then, you will not submit unconditionally, and without reserve, to be saved in the way which the Gospel points out, in which you learn at once your malady and the remedy of which you stand in need, your blood will be upon your own head. ‘Now, you say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.’ The whole, then, resolves itself into this, that all is according to the good pleasure of God. ‘Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Ye shall know them by their fruits.’ Every man, then, being by nature bad, must be made good before he can do good. In this and the two preceding verses we observe the strong, and expressive, and accumulated terms in which the Apostle describes the alienation of the natural man from God. 1st, He declares that they who walk after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; 2nd, That the minding of the flesh is death; 3rd, That the carnal mind is enmity against God; 4th, That it is not subject to the law of God; 5th, That so great is the corruption of the carnal mind, that this is impossible.

“From the passage before us, we learn how miserable the state of man is by nature, since even his wisdom and intelligence, in his unconverted state, is enmity against God, so that he cannot submit himself to His law. We learn, too, that the ability both to will and to do anything good must be from God. We should adore His compassion and mercy to us, if our natural enmity against Him has been subdued, and we have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son. In proportion to the greatness of this compassion, we should place our entire confidence in Him as our covenant God. For if, when we were enmity against Him, He loved us, how much more now that we are reconciled and His children? Romans 5:10. And, since there are still remains of the flesh and enmity against God and His holy law in our minds, we ought to deny ourselves daily, and flee to Him who can and will entirely deliver us from the body of this death.” [Haldane, Romans, pg 333-338]

is not subject — “[M]ilitary term for subjection to orders. Present tense here means continued insubordination.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 373] “Originally *to arrange under*. Possibly with a shade of military meaning suggested by *enmity*. It is *marshaled* under a hostile banner.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 90]

neither indeed can it be — “‘For it is not even able to do otherwise.’ This helpless state of the unregenerate man Paul has shown above apart from Christ. Hope lies in Christ (Romans 7:25) and the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2).” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 373]

v 9 — CHANGE OF DIRECTION — “Paul signals a change in direction with the adversative ‘but.’ From the situation of those apart from Christ, Paul turns his attention to the Roman Christians, whom he now begins addressing directly: ‘those “in the flesh” can never please God; but you [emphatic] are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit...’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 489]

“IN THE FLESH ... IN THE SPIRIT” HERE IS POSITIONAL — “As we noted earlier, the contrast between being ‘in the flesh’ and ‘in the Spirit’ is a contrast between belonging to the old age of sin and death and belonging to the new age of righteousness and life. So characteristic of these respective ‘ages’ or ‘realms’ are flesh and Spirit that the person belonging to one or the other can be said to be ‘in’ them. *In this sense, then, no Christian can be ‘in the flesh’; and all Christians are, by definition, ‘in the Spirit.’* We miss Paul’s intention if we think of being ‘in the flesh’ here as the condition of morality that continues to characterize even believers, or as the moral weakness and proneness to sin that, more lamentably, we still possess. For the rest of the verse makes absolutely clear that (1) to be a Christian is to be indwelt by God’s Spirit; and (2) to be indwelt by God’s Spirit means to be ‘in the Spirit’ and not ‘in the flesh.’ *Paul’s language is ‘positional’: he is depicting the believer’s status in Christ, secured for him or her at conversion. Paul certainly views the Christian as, in some sense, affected by both realms of salvation history. But it is probably overstating the matter to say that the believer is situated ‘between’ these two ages or realms. For this formulation misses the decisive past transfer of the believer into the new age of life and peace that Paul is celebrating in these chapters. Subject to physical decay and death, prone to sin, tempted to let the flesh take control of us again we may be — but, to do justice to Paul, we must insist that the believer is freed from ‘the law of sin and death’ (8:2; cf. 5:12-21), ‘dead to sin’s power’ (6:1-23), and no longer ‘in the flesh.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 489f] Note this is contrary to the NIV’s interpretation of the passage.

ALL BELIEVERS HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT — “To be sure, a condition is placed on this being ‘in the Spirit’: having the Spirit of God dwelling in the person. But, as 1 Cor 3:16 shows — addressed to the ‘carnal’ (cf. 3:1-3) Corinthian Christians, no less! — *Paul believes that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Indeed, this is just what Paul affirms in the last part of the verse, where he denies that the person who does not have the ‘Spirit of Christ’ can make any claim to being a Christian at all. In other words, for Paul, possession of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with being a Christian. However much we may need to grow in our relationship to the Spirit; however much we may be graciously given fresh and invigorating experiences of God’s Spirit, from the moment of conversion on, the Holy Spirit is a settled resident within.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 490]

THE METAPHOR OF THE SPIRIT “DWELLING IN THE BELIEVER” — “That Paul in the same verse can speak of the believer as ‘in the Spirit’ and the Spirit as being ‘in’ the believer reveals the metaphorical nature of his language. In the one case, the Spirit is pictured as entering into and taking control of the person’s life; in the other, the believer is pictures as living in that realm in which the Spirit rules, guides, and determines one’s destiny.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 490] “What this expression, ‘dwell in you,’ imports is, that being united to Jesus Christ and regenerated, the Holy Spirit dwells in His people not as inactive, but operates in them continually, and leads and governs them. In the indwelling, then, of the Holy Spirit, is included His gracious and continuing presence, and His operations in the soul. The effects of these are illumination, sanctification, supplication, and consolation.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 339] “The Spirit of God is everywhere; yet he is said to dwell wherever he specially and permanently manifests his presence. Thus he is said to dwell in heaven: he felt of old in the temple; he now dwells in the Church, which is a habitation of God through the Spirit, Ephesians 2:29; and he dwells in each individual believer whose body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, 1 Corinthians 6:19. Compare John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16; 2 Timothy 1:14, etc.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 257f] “It is not Pantheism or Buddhism that Paul here teaches, but the mystical union of the believer with Christ in the Holy Spirit.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 373]

now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ — “It is obvious that the Spirit of Christ is identical with the Spirit of God. The one expression is interchanged with the other: ‘If the Spirit of God dwell in you, you are true Christians; for if the Spirit of Christ be not in you, you are none of his.’ This is the reasoning of the apostle. “Spirit of Christ,” therefore, can no more mean the temper or disposition of Christ, than “Spirit of God” can mean the disposition of God. Both expressions designate the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity. The Holy Spirit is elsewhere called the Spirit of Christ, Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11. Whatever the genitive expresses in the one case [Spirit of God], it does in the other [Spirit of Christ]. He is of the Spirit of Christ in the same sense in which he is the Spirit of God. In other words, the Spirit stands in the same relation to the second, that he does to the first person of the Trinity. This was one of the points of controversy between the Greek and Latin Churches; the latter insisting on inserting in that clause of the Creed which speaks of the procession of the Holy Ghost, the words “filioque,” (*and from the Son.*) For this the gratitude of all Christians is due to the Latin Church, as it vindicates the full equality of the Son with the Father. No clearer assertion, and no higher exhibition of the Godhead of the Son can be conceived, than that which presents him as the source and the possessor of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit proceeds from, and belongs to him, and by him is given to whomsoever he wills. John 1:33, 15:26, 16:7; Luke 24:49, etc.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 258]

v 10 — THE SPIRIT, CHRIST AND THE TRINITY — “Paul now contrasts the situation he has just described in v. 9b at the same time as he resumes the main thread of his teaching from v. 9a. Significantly, Paul now speaks of ‘Christ’ being in the Roman Christians, whereas in v. 9 it was ‘the Spirit of God’ who was said to be dwelling in believers. *What this means is not that Christ and the Spirit are so equated or interchangeable, but that Christ and the Spirit are so closely related in communicating to believers the benefits of salvation that Paul can move from one to the other almost unconsciously. Again, it is clear that the believer who by faith has come to be joined with Christ (see Rom 6:1-11) has not only Christ but also the Spirit resident within. The indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Christ are distinguishable but inseparable.* Moreover, the quick and unstudied movement from ‘Spirit of God’ (v. 9a) to ‘Spirit of Christ’ (v. 9b) to ‘Christ’ (v. 10a) to ‘Spirit’ (vv. 10b-11) reveals the *‘practical trinitarianism’* that already characterizes the NT. Note also, once more, the flexibility of Paul’s theological metaphors. The union of the believer with Christ, our representative head (cf. 5:12-21), can be conveyed both by the language of the believer being ‘in’ Christ and of Christ being ‘in’ the believer.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 491]

Christ be in you — there is an emphasis here on individuality, “Christ dwells in each one of you.”

the body is dead because of sin — This could refer to the body (in the sense of “the whole person”) being dead *to* sin, as described in chapter 6. But it suits the context better to think of the body’s “deadness” in a negative sense, as a state of condemnation, a condition that has come about “because of sin.” Taken in this manner, the “body” is our physical body. “Has the seeds of death in it and will die ‘because of sin.’” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 373]

the Spirit is life because of righteousness — many take this in an anthropomorphic sense, “your spirit is alive because of righteousness” (note the NIV, RSV, NASB; see also, e.g., Godet, Hodge). Others understand “spirit” to refer to the Holy Spirit (note the KJV, Young’s, NRSV; see also, e.g., Chrysostom, Calvin, Murray, Cranfield, Fee). The reasons for this is (1) “spirit” has consistently referred to the Holy Spirit throughout this chapter; and (2) v. 11 certainly refers to the Holy Spirit, which explains v. 10b. “*Paul is teaching that the believer, although still bound to an earthly, mortal body, has residing within him or her the Spirit, the power of new spiritual life, which conveys both that ‘life,’ in the sense of deliverance from condemnation enjoyed now and the future resurrection life that will bring transformation to the body itself. All this takes place ‘because of righteousness,’ this ‘righteousness’ being that ‘imputed righteousness’ which leads to life.* (see 5:21).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 492] Grammatically, Moo further comments: “The anthropological rendering requires that we take the noun ζωή [zōē, ‘life’] as an adjective (‘living’) and add a possessive idea (‘your’) that is not in the text.... The weight of recent scholarship is moving toward [the interpretation that v. 10 refers to the Holy Spirit.]” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 492]

v 11 — “In a fourth consecutive conditional sentence, Paul caps off his rehearsal of the life given in and by the Spirit with an affirmation of the Spirit’s instrumentality in securing bodily transformation. Appropriate to this point, the Spirit is now designated as ‘the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead.’ The reference, of course, is to God the Father (see Col 2:12; Rom 6:4),

but the focus is on the Spirit. Since reference to resurrection is so plain in the first part of the sentence, ‘will make alive’ must also refer to future bodily transformation — through the resurrection for dead believers.... Paul certainly stresses the certainty and unbrokenness of life, a theme that is prominent in the rest of the chapter, but the future is genuinely temporal. The cause-and-effect relationship between Christ’s resurrection that God will give life to ‘our mortal bodies’ just as he raised Christ from the dead. And in keeping with Paul’s focus throughout this part of Rom 8, it is the Spirit who is the instrument by whom God raises the body of the Christian. As in v. 9, the indwelling of the Spirit suggests that the Spirit has ‘made his home’ in the believer; and since the Spirit is ‘life’ (v. 10b; cf. v. 2; ‘the Spirit of life’), his presence cannot but result in life for that body which he inhabits. The Spirit’s life-giving power is not circumscribed by the mortality of the body but overcomes and transforms that mortality into the immortality of eternal life in a resurrected body.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 492f] “This clause cannot, with any regard to usage or the context, be understood of a moral resurrection, or deliverance from sin, as it is explained by Calvin and many others. See the analogous passage, 2 Corinthians 4:14. The apostle designs to show that the life which we derive from Christ, shall ultimately effect a complete triumph over death. It is true that our present bodies must die, but they are not to continue under the power of death. The same Spirit which raised Christ’s body from the grave, shall also quicken our mortal bodies.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 260]

v 12 — PRACTICAL APPLICATION — “In vv. 5-11 Paul has delineated the contrary natures and tendencies of the two great powers of salvation history: flesh and Spirit. He has put the Roman Christians — and, by implication, all Christians — on the side of the Spirit, and has drawn out the consequences of that relationship: life, in the full theological sense of the word, life that will transcend and overcome physical death itself. Now, with the emphatic inferential ‘now, therefore,’ Paul shows that there are consequences of this new relationship for the day-to-day life of the believer. Specifically, Paul claims, ‘we’ — Christians generally — have no more ‘obligation’ to the flesh, ‘to live according to it,’ to follow its dictates or obey its will.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 493]

“FLESH” REFERS TO MORE THAN OUR PHYSICAL BODIES — “Once more, we note that flesh refers not only to our physical, or ‘animal,’ appetites (e.g., for food, or drink, or sex); nor does it refer even to a ‘nature’ within us (as the NIV rendering ‘sinful nature’ can imply). *‘Flesh’ sums up what we often call ‘the world’: all that is characteristic of this life in its rebellion against God. It is to this ‘power’ of the old age that we are no longer ‘obliged’ to render obedience. Against Dunn, this does not imply that believers ‘belong to the realm of the flesh, inescapably’; rather, it means that our (definite) rescue from ‘the realm of the flesh’ (see 7:5 and 8:9) has not removed us from contact with, and influence from, the flesh. Still ‘embodied’ (see 8:10 and v. 13), we have in this life a continuing relationship to that old realm of sin and death — but we no longer ‘belong’ to it. Like freed slaves who might, out of habit, obey their old masters even after being released — ‘legally’ and ‘positionally’ — from them, so we Christians can still listen to and heed the voice of that old mater of ours, the flesh.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 494]

v 13 — STIFF WARNING — “Paul abandons the syntactical structure he had used in v. 12 in order to warn his readers (note the shift to second plural — ‘you’) that if they continue to live by the dictates of the flesh they will certainly die. This death is not, of course, physical death, for it would hardly make sense to make physical death, the fate of *all* who do not live until the Lord’s return — believers and unbelievers alike — the penalty only for those who live according to the flesh. *What is meant is death in its fullest theological sense: eternal separation from God as the penalty for sin. We must not eviscerate this warning; Paul clearly affirms that his readers will be damned if they continue to follow the dictates of the flesh. As Murray puts it, ‘The believer’s once-for-all death to the law of sin does not free him from the necessity of mortifying sin in his members; it makes it necessary and possible for him to do so.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 494]

e-vis-cer-ate (i-vīs-ə-rāt) verb: (1) to remove the entrails of; disembowel; (2) to take away a vital or essential part of: “a compromise that eviscerated the proposed bill.”

CALVINIST vs. ARMINIAN UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL’S WARNING — “On this point [that salvation produces holiness and the unholy are unsaved] Calvinists and Arminians are agreed. The difference lies elsewhere. The Arminian believes that a regenerate believer may, indeed, fall back into a ‘fleshly’ lifestyle so that the threat of this verse becomes real. But *the Calvinist believes that the truly regenerate believer, while often committing ‘fleshly’ acts, will be infallibly prevented from living a fleshly lifestyle by the Spirit within.* I believe that the strength of the assurances Paul has given to justified believers through these chapters (see especially 5:9-10, 21; 8:1-4, 10-11), along with the finality of justification itself, favors the ‘Calvinist’ interpretation. But such an interpretation in no way mitigates the seriousness of the warning that Paul gives here. *In a way that we cannot finally synthesize in a neat logical arrangement, 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 as 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. The point of that connection in this passage is the Spirit. The same Spirit that ‘set us free from the law of sin and death’ has taken up residence within us, producing in us that ‘mind-set’ which tends toward the doing of God’s will and resists the ways of the flesh.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 494f]

ye shall die — literally, “about to” die, focusing our attention on the certainty of death and so strengthens the warning. This is brought out in Young’s translation: “for if according to the flesh ye do live, ye are about to die.” “Ye are on the point of dying.” Eternal death.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 374] “The expression is stronger than the simple future of the verb. It

indicates a necessary consequence. So Rev., *ye must.*” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 91]

deeds — “Habitual practices. See on ch. 7:15; John 3:21.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 91]

ye shall live — In the same way as ‘die’ signifies ‘theological’ death, so the life promised to those who ‘put to death the practices of the body’ in the second sentence of the verse denotes spiritual life (as in vv. 10 and 11).

THE BALANCE OF SANCTIFICATION — through the Spirit — *“While the Christian is made responsible for this ‘mortification’ of sins, he or she accomplishes this only ‘through the Spirit.’ Holiness of life, then, is achieved neither by our own unaided effort — the error of ‘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. We face here another finely nuanced balance that must not be tipped too far in one direction or the other. 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. Deidun puts it like this: the Christian imperative ‘demands the Christian’s continuing ‘yes’ to an activity which does not originate in himself, but which is nevertheless already real and actual in the core of his being.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 495f]

“No Condemnation”

“In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” — Jeremiah 50:20

A glorious word indeed! What a perfect pardon is here promised to the sinful nations of Israel and Judah! Sin is to be so removed that it shall not be found, so blotted out that there shall be none. Glory be unto the God of pardons!

Satan seeks out sins wherewith to accuse us, our enemies seek them that they may lay them to our charge, and our own conscience seeks them even with a morbid eagerness. But when the LORD applies the precious blood of Jesus, we fear no form of search, for “there shall be none”; “they shall not be found.” The LORD hath caused the sins of His people to cease to be: He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin. The sacrifice of Jesus has cast our sins into the depths of the sea. This makes us dance for joy.

The reason for the obliteration of sin lies in the fact that Jehovah Himself pardons His chosen ones. His word of grace is not only royal but divine. He speaks absolution, and we are absolved. He applies the atonement, and from that hour His people are beyond all fear of condemnation. Blessed be the name of the sin-annihilating God! [Spurgeon, *Faith’s Checkbook*]