

In the previous text, Paul has told us about the struggle everyone who desires to be good faces. It is especially applicable to those who knew the Scriptures. We want to live them. We want to please God. But we find the more we try the more we fail (6:18-19). This frustration leads us to Jesus, the only One who can truly change us from the inside out (6:24-25). Then Paul began explaining how that works. First we must realize that we are no longer under condemnation because Jesus paid the penalty of sin that we incurred. God has provided a way for us to be credited with the righteousness of Jesus (2Corinthians 5:21). We literally trade our sins for His righteousness. That produces in us a heart of gratitude, but even more effective and powerful is the fact that we can then be recipients of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). In this chapter, Paul calls it being in Christ (8:1). In Him, we are enabled to fix our thoughts on the things of the Spirit (8:5). We are no longer enslaved by the ungodly passions of our body. We can take them up again at any time, but Paul has told us to consider them dead and buried with Christ in His death and burial (6:6). We have the opportunity to choose life in Christ moment by moment. We can let the mind of Christ be in us (1Corinthians 2:16).

I recently read a book by a man who has a great ministry. He wrote of how the whole understanding of the church was completely wrong. He claimed we don't need to meet together and we don't need pastors and teachers. As I read it I wondered what Bible he was reading. Then I thought to myself, he has probably never seen a Biblical church, one with equal and accountable elders who are there to serve and protect the flock of God, one that encourages the body to let the Spirit of God lead them into service rather than just insisting they join programs. That must be why he dismisses all the passages in the Bible that speak of the function of the church as an organized entity (Titus 1:5; Acts 16:2; Acts 20:17).

The same kind of thinking can be true when we read this passage. We don't see very many people living it, and those that do often don't understand what is taking place in the way Paul describes it. So because we don't see it exemplified or understand it is at work in some people we do see, we just wonder if maybe it's not true.

Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Spirit about his experience in Christ. He has seen it at work in his own life and the life of others. It wasn't just for the first century. It's for everyone who by the grace of God yields to the prompting of God's Spirit to live a life pleasing to God. Previously they couldn't please God, and that drives them to Christ and what He accomplished for us.

<sup>8</sup> *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* In the preceding verse Paul explained that those living by the sinful nature are unable to submit to God's law (8:7). That is a

**Commented [notes1]: Romans 7:18-19 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

<sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

**Commented [notes2]: Romans 7:24-25 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

**Commented [notes3]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Commented [notes4]: Acts 2:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Commented [notes5]: Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**Commented [notes6]: Romans 8:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

**Commented [notes7]: Romans 6:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

**Commented [notes8]: 1 Corinthians 2:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

**Commented [notes9]: Titus 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

**Commented [notes10]: 1 Corinthians 16:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

**Commented [notes11]: Acts 20:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

**Commented [notes12]: Romans 8:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

succinct way to sum up chapter seven. Now he repeats it in a different way. If your life is simply of the flesh, which means your physical being, or as NIV put it, the sinful nature, then there is no way you can please God. That is because we are fallen (Genesis 3:7).

That is hard for the natural person to accept. They might ask, "Do you mean to tell me you have to be a Christian to do a good thing?" It depends on what you mean by good. If you mean helpful to others, no, anyone can do that. This verse says, "pleasing to God." The heart motivation is a major factor in whether or not God is pleased. If you give a meal to the homeless, it is a good thing, but whether or not it pleased God is another matter. Did it enable the person to avoid changing? Did you do it to feel good about yourself? Should you have done it regardless because God blessed you with the money and put the person in your path? Then it is just what you should have done and woe to you if you didn't.

What pleases God (12:1; Hebrews 13:16)? Connie shared a sermon on that topic. Paul is saying you can't please God if you are merely operating out of your carnal nature. To please God we must live by faith (Hebrews 11:6).

*<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit; in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* What is the source of your actions? Are you running on auto-pilot? Then it very well may be the flesh, just doing whatever you desire. Paul was convinced the believers in Rome were in the Spirit, at least it was true of those who could say the Spirit of God dwelt in them.

This is another of the many black and white passages of the Bible. **You are indwelt by the Spirit of God and live in the Spirit OR you live in the flesh and do not belong to Christ** (John 14:17). Some believe that the Bible teaches salvation is one experience and the indwelling of the Spirit is another. At some time in your Christian life you may surrender a greater part of your life and know His infilling where you had not before. You might receive a greater sense of His presence and power to help you in the time of need, and that can be called a baptism of the Spirit, which means to be immersed in Him (Acts 4:31). But you are indwelt by the Spirit of God the moment you believe and give Him your life. If you don't have the Spirit of Christ you don't belong to Him (Jude 19). I hope you belong to Him and are indwelt by His Spirit. It is the power to live in a way that is pleasing to Him, to live by faith.

*<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* The presence of the Spirit in you means that Christ is in you. That means you died with Him. Your body is no longer your master. Your old nature no longer enslaves you with its desires. Your physical body is no longer an instrument of sin leading to spiritual death but of righteousness (6:18). So that old nature is dead. The new nature is your life. That life desires to live in a way that is pleasing to God and

**Commented [notes13]: Genesis 3:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

**Commented [notes14]: Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**Commented [notes15]: Hebrews 13:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

**Commented [notes16]: Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

**Commented [notes17]: John 14:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

**Commented [notes18]: Acts 4:31 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

**Commented [notes19]: Jude 1:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

**Commented [notes20]: Romans 6:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

is empowered to do so. We simply yield moment by moment to the life of Christ in us. Then we stand amazed at the opportunities and things that He does in and through us. We know we can't take any credit because it is all of Him. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone. The new has come."* 2Corinthians 5:17

As we've seen before, this life of the Spirit is a different from just breathing and your heart beating. It is a whole new quality of being. Life is Jesus. He is eternal. It's to be in a relationship with your Creator and serving His purposes. It's being in community with those who belong to Him. Peter said it is joy unspeakable and full of glory (1Peter 1:8).

*<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* This new quality of life that is in sync with God's will and purposes, to live in a way that is pleasing to God, can be the power at work in your physical body. Here Paul uses a different word than the previous word "flesh" (sarx). That word was used to describe our carnal nature that did control the body. Now he uses another word for "mortal body" (thneta somata). He has already told us that if we identified ourselves with Jesus in His death, we have also been raised with Him (6:4). If the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus lives in us, then our temporal earthly body will also have that newness of life (Ephesians 4:23-24).

That doesn't mean we will be raised someday, although that is true. It means that our physical being is empowered by God's Spirit to submit to His leading. Our mind begins working in a new way. At times we may even experience supernatural endurance to serve. We can tell our body to submit to the Spirit and it does. That is life working in us.

Old habits can be hard to lay to rest, but this verse is telling us we are empowered to obey. We don't have to put up with the Romans seven struggle of wanting to do good but then not being able to carry it out (7:19). We have the life of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living in us. Think of that power! **If He can raise a lifeless corpse, certainly He can give that new life of the Spirit to our living physical body.**

I've seen people healed physically, their minds enabled to memorize God's word when they weren't able to before, the need for psychotropic drugs eliminated, physical addictions broken, and more. That is the life of the Spirit in us giving life to our mortal body so that we can serve God. It is powerful and often jaw dropping amazing. But a word of caution is due here. Some believe God will deliver people from every physical affliction. In another letter Paul tells us that is not the case. He suffered with some affliction (2Corinthians 12:7). He wrote of a co-worker that was near death (Philippians 2:27). The Psalmist tells us that we learn from affliction (Psalm 119:71). Some afflictions keep us dependent on God, and some are used to take us home to glory. Every person that I've ever met that insisted they had divine health always made an

**Commented [notes21]: 1 Peter 1:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

**Commented [notes22]: Romans 6:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

**Commented [notes23]: Ephesians 4:23-24 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,  
<sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Commented [notes24]: Romans 7:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

**Commented [notes25]: 2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

**Commented [notes26]: Philippians 2:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

**Commented [notes27]: Psalm 119:71 (ESV)**

<sup>71</sup> It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

excuse for some malady, while insisting that it didn't need to be there. As I said a few weeks ago, truth will line up with experience or you need to re-examine your experience or interpretation. Life for our mortal bodies is more about the ability to serve God than it is about being in perfect health.

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* You don't owe your old nature anything. You don't need to submit to its demands. It may tell you that you have to obey. If you are in Christ, then that is a lie that has been exposed by the new life of the Spirit in you. The wages of sin is death (6:23). If we keep yielding to that nature it will take us to eternal separation from God. That is what Paul means when he says you will die. We will all die, but those who live for the flesh die a second death (Revelation 2:11).

Our real obligation is to live now and forever with that newness of eternal life, which is union with God. That's because of the Spirit who He has allowed to live in us. To do that, we must allow the Spirit to put to death the misdeeds of the body. That is referring to the natural ungodly inclinations of the body. The world teaches us that to do so causes us to be frustrated and unfulfilled. They tell us to experience a full healthy life we must self-actualize, in other words to not stifle your desires. Paul is saying just the opposite. Both can't be true. Of course Paul is saying there is only one way to put to death the misdeeds of the body. If a person is not empowered by the Spirit of God, they can't put to death the misdeeds of the body. We need the power of the Spirit. We will be frustrated trying to do so. I'm not saying that all natural desires are ungodly. Paul is speaking of *misdeeds* of the body.

We have life and death presented to us once again in Paul's letter. Life is to yield to the Spirit of God and put to death the misdeeds of the body. Death is to simply to let your old nature do as it pleases. Only by the Spirit of God living in you can you know life. (John 3:36) That is a claim that we must consider. Do you know life? What is the driving force of your life? Do you even have any desire to live in a way that is pleasing to your Creator and be in a relationship with Him?

This is the message from the beginning. Adam was called the son of God (Luke 3:38). He and Eve walked with God and enjoyed His fellowship. Everything was perfect until temptation entered. Eve was tricked into thinking she was missing something (Genesis 3:5). Satan promised fulfillment but it ended in death, a separation from God (Genesis 3:24). Paul is telling us God has provided a means of restoration. He sent His Son to take the punishment we deserve so that we can be vessels of His Spirit and live in a way that is pleasing to Him. By His Spirit we can put to death the misdeeds of the body and once again walk with Him. Then the relationship that Adam lost can be restored (2Corinthians 5:19).

**Commented [notes28]: Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Commented [notes29]: Revelation 2:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. -

**Commented [notes30]: John 3:36 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

**Commented [notes31]: Luke 3:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

**Commented [notes32]: Genesis 3:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

**Commented [notes33]: Genesis 3:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

**Commented [notes34]: 2 Corinthians 5:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

*<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* We are all led by our old fallen nature we inherited from Adam *or* by the Spirit of God. Yes, it's that black and white. Who is the center of your life? Is it you or is it your Creator? What should we be living for, and what kind of life is really the most meaningful and rewarding?

It is strange that a life that is lived for another ends up being the most rewarding. It's counterintuitive. But if you think about a God who loves us enough to do what Jesus did for us, then it makes perfect sense (8:32). The message of Scripture from cover to cover is that life is all about our loving and just Creator. God loves us and has the best life for us. His commands are for our good. But when we rebel against Him and go our own destructive way, we will have to face His righteous judgment. Ultimately it all brings glory to Him. It's all about Him. It's all for Him. The wonder is that He wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to lead us by His Spirit in the way that will bring Him glory and that is best for us (Jeremiah 29:11). Those led by His Spirit are His children. Are you His child?

*<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* The church in Rome received the indwelling Spirit of God at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). That is the proof they were God's children. His presence in us is our proof as well. It wasn't a spirit that made them slaves of the law of God, afraid of judgment if they failed. No, it was the Spirit of adoption. It was God choosing them and calling them His own. It is having a loving Father we can cry out to who provided atonement for sin and will help us overcome our weaknesses. Paul is still helping them to realize that their ultimate commitment is to Jesus, not a legalistic interpretation of the laws of Moses.

**The Aramaic word Abba means daddy. What a tender, loving expression!** Yes, we fear His discipline, but we trust in His provision, His love, His tender care, and in His plans for us. We can cry out to Him at any time and know our Daddy will come running with grace, mercy and love to help us in our difficulty. He will help us put to death the misdeeds of our body. He is the one that gives life to our mortal body. He speaks to our hearts and leads us by His Spirit. He sets us free to live as we were meant to live, in a loving relationship with Him.

#### Questions

- 1 Why is it difficult to believe this passage?
- 2 Why can't those in the flesh please God?
- 3 Who belongs to Christ?
- 4 How do we please God?
- 5 What is life?
- 6 How is this life applied to us?
- 7 What does it look like?
- 8 Will God always heal us?
- 9 To whom are we obligated?

#### Commented [notes35]: Romans 8:32 (ESV)

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

#### Commented [notes36]: Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

#### Commented [notes37]: Acts 2:10 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,

10 What is the choice God puts before us?  
11 Who is a child of God?