

“Our Opportunity Today Under Grace Is to Live After the Spirit”
The Normal Christian Life – Paul’s Testimony Still Speaks, Part 4

Review: “The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory”

- ***Our Constant Hope and Comfort Is That We Shall Never Be Condemned***
- ***The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory***

- ***Our Constant Hope and Comfort Is That We Shall Never Be Condemned:***

Romans 8:1-4

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

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

○ *The keys to our understanding here are these:*

- The stark contrast between the believer and the unbeliever established in chapter 7 continues now into chapter 8. This will become especially clear later in this chapter. But it is true here in the first verses as well.
- Verse 1 draws a conclusion from the earlier verses, where the apostle confesses regarding his life before, when he had given up his liberty in Christ for bondage to a law. The conclusion is as we have seen, that though believers do place themselves under laws and by so doing give themselves over unwisely to the power of the flesh, they nevertheless, as believers with the indwelling spirit and a new nature, are still walking after the spirit and as verse 25 of chapter 7 says, serve with the renewed mind a law of God. They are lawful as God sees them.

We do not lose our righteous standing before Almighty God when we turn aside from his gracious provisions for a time. The last verses in the previous chapter confirm this:

Romans 7:24-25

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the [a] law of God; but with the flesh the [a] law of sin.

- And so he concludes in chapter 8, verse 1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

He is clearly continuing the same subject, and there should be no chapter division here.

So he cannot be writing as some believe, only of the mature or the more spiritual believers who are habitually observing a legal principle, but rather of all those who are “in Christ Jesus”. That, of course, is all believers, not only some. All believers are, in fact, therefore “walking” after the spirit, though they are not always pleasing God. Careful attention to the exact wording of the apostle protects us from many misunderstandings and errors. Sadly, modern translations often omit half of verse 1 due to the corruption of the manuscripts from which they are translated.

- Verses 2 - 4 explain in terms much like those in the earlier chapter what the facts are regarding what has been accomplished in the perfect work of our blessed Lord Jesus and in his resurrection. By that completed work all believers have been transformed by God through salvation.

Those facts are these, all of course stated in the past tense:

- Verse 2: We have all been set free from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus! This is wonderful indeed and provides the spiritual foundation for what is in verse 4, “... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
- Verse 3: How that was accomplished is written clearly here, for God’s own Son took upon himself “the likeness of sinful flesh”, not human flesh corrupted by sin itself. But from God’s point of view, it was enough. There is a lot there, but we must save it for another time, Lord willing.
- Verse 4: The requirement of the law, therefore, was met; it was fulfilled. There is an ending on the Greek word here, conveying the meaning that he is not talking about the hundreds of “acts” of righteousness that the law required, but rather what could fulfill that law.

Verse 3 explained what that was, what the law required, for only that perfect sacrifice that had already been offered for the sins of the world could make the difference, for all our sins. Amen.

So we who are “walking”, whose entire “way of living” is “after the spirit,” have by God’s unlimited grace fulfilled in us the “righteous requirement or judgment of the law” through Christ’s perfect offering, for we are, as the Lord God sees us, “in Christ Jesus”. So now we better know what it means to be in Christ Jesus, do we not? Amen. Praise God.

Romans 8:5-8

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

- Now, as he has written here in these verses, Paul shows the contrast, not with carnal or unspiritual believers, but with the unsaved. He writes of those “... that are after the flesh” as opposed to those “... that are after the Spirit”. His conclusion regarding them is simple: they live in the realm of death and not life, and are not even able to be subject to the law of God. They have no spiritual capability of any kind. Again, we see that he is boldly contrasting believers and unbelievers and not spiritual or maturing believers with believers who are carnal and fleshly. It is so clear.

Unbelievers are “after the flesh”, are “in the flesh”, and “walk after the flesh”, all three. They, therefore, have no hope and only have condemnation ahead, while we shall “never be condemned” for “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” What a promise we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- ***The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory:***

Romans 8:9-11

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

- Here, our apostle turns to us and our unique and detailed blessings, dispensationally considered. In so many ways, he teaches us how very distinctive our blessings are now, under grace. There are two fundamentals detailed here, and both are called indwelling, first the Spirit in verses 9 & 11, and then Christ himself, in verses 9 & 10. These are described differently here than what is often taught:

- “The Spirit of Christ”: Verse 10 gives us the focus on Christ’s resurrection life, which we possess. Verse 2 summarizes what the apostle has taught us in chapters 5 and 6. There are many verses there and elsewhere to teach us these glorious and liberating truths, such as in Galatians chapter 2:

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is Christ’s life dwelling in us that is revealed. Praise God. And there are so many references to similar teaching. Consider also Romans 5:17, 21; 6:4, 23; Colossians 3:3, 4.

- “The Spirit of God”: He is our great enabler, as verse 11 indicates. It seems to me, though, that it is the application of Christ’s life in us and through us that is the focus here. But surely both spirits work together in unison to accomplish the purpose of God through us.
- There is much teaching compressed here in a few words, but having both the Holy Spirit and Christ indwelling us is most wonderful indeed. We should expect some differences in their ministries to us, and such there are. Galatians 5 outlines some of them as we shall soon see.
- Paul now draws a very practical conclusion about our lives with the blessings and provisions for our lives as believers living by grace, with its many critically important distinctions. We are most blessed!

Our Outline Today: Our Opportunity Today Under Grace Is to Live After the Spirit

- ***We Are No Longer Debtors to the Flesh but to the Spirit***
- ***As the Sons of God, We Have a Godly Leading Always, So Rejoice!***
- ***Now We Are Free Indeed to Walk in the Spirit Rather Than the Flesh***

I. We Are No Longer Debtors to the Flesh but to the Spirit:

[READ] Romans 8:12-14

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 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.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

- Again, a “therefore”, for he is continuing the previous thought of a resurrection quality of life as verses 10 & 11 say so well. The implications of this are so very great indeed, as the rest of this chapter well demonstrates. We will see that as we continue. And so what does the “therefore” reveal about what was already taught here?
- That “we are debtors ..., not to the flesh, but to the Spirit indwelling.” Indeed. Such great blessings poured out upon us so freely asks of us a reasonable response, do they not? And we must have liberty, therefore, for the apostle to make this otherwise amazing statement.

It will help us to comprehend better Paul’s intent with these words here if we consider the contrary truth being shared here: that as unbelievers we were debtors, not to the Spirit but to the flesh! In other words, as the first verses in the previous chapter show, the bondage to the nature of the fallen nature derived from our father Adam was unbreakable. It may have seemed to us otherwise, but we were deceived.

- The implied exhortation here in verse 13 troubles some, as what kind of punishments might be appropriate for carnal living for those saints living under grace? Surely not what the law of Moses demanded, for failures to keep that law often even required the death penalty. But that seems to be the understanding of the KJV translators here in using the future tense: “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.” This is just as it would have been under Moses.

The Greek text, though the language does have future tenses, here in this text we do not find future tenses of the verb “to live” as implied in the translation here, but rather future tenses of the verb “to be about to be”.

It is helpful to render it quite literally in this way: “For when you are living after the flesh, you are about to die, but if you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.”

- Therefore, since we are now liberated and no longer debtors to the flesh, we have the privilege of living after the Spirit. Sin had bound us before,

but now we have been liberated by the full consequence of abundant and free grace. Amen.

- What we are learning here is the greatest of encouragement indeed, especially in contrast to Paul's teaching concerning his time as a believer living under the supposed condemnation of the law that went before. For as sin has reigned unto death, now grace may gloriously reign unto life in its place, as Romans 5 proclaims in its closing verses:

[READ] Romans 5:20-21

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Sometimes it seems that the best is saved for last. In our verses here today, verse 14 is such a verse. A conundrum for many who think its wording is strange and difficult to comprehend, it is really quite simple and powerful in its teaching, as we shall now see:

II. As the Sons of God, We Have a Godly Leading Always, So Rejoice!

[READ] Romans 8:12-14

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 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.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

- So now we reach verse 14, this wonderful statement, again, like the others, true of ALL of us who have believed and have been so transformed by God as Paul has so faithfully shared with us here: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." This leading is something we all have by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God and not therefore some only who have a special enabling from God, as the charismatics and pentecostals are so willing to boast. Indeed, as he writes next, "they are the sons of God", and indeed we all are. Praise God.

The essence of Paul's teaching on the Normal Christian Life is that grace and its full knowledge have the power to transform one's life apart from any of the legal structures of religion. So that bold statement about our sonship, implying full rights and privileges over our inheritance, is intended to be such a motivator that, together with all the helps of God Almighty, we shall shine like lights in the world. These are precious words indeed:

Philippians 2:15-16

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

III. Now We Are Free Indeed to Walk in the Spirit Rather Than the Flesh:

- This restates in very concrete and practical terms the blessings we have under grace to “walk in the spirit” not any longer fulfilling “the lust (or desires) of the flesh”, as written so powerfully in Galatians 5:

Galatians 5:16-18

16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under [the] law.

- Lord willing, we will reach this teaching in the Galatians letter when we near the end of our “Normal Christian Life” series. But these verses and the context here in Galatians give us the heart of Paul’s teaching. In particular, he explains the part played by the Holy Spirit of God in our normal walk. This teaching is so needed today, with charismatic and Pentecostal teachings so prevalent and with legalisms abounding even among respected Bible teachers. Additionally, Paul here in Galatians makes clear how with the sin nature still present in us.
- The tone now shifts significantly from doctrinal teaching with a very practical perspective. That now becomes the major subject here in this foundational Pauline letter: the suffering of believers, its purpose, and its glorious consequence. That is a large subject indeed, and we will save it for next time.

For the suffering of God’s dear children is the basis for the enemy’s lies so often, isn’t it? How many have been led astray and their faith shattered as a result?

So let’s conclude on this glorious note, where we plan to begin in our next fellowship here:

[READ] Romans 8:15-17

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Conclusions / Exhortations:

- Such encouragement we have received here at Paul's feet in this study.
- Praise God that Paul's mind and heart were in the heavenlies where ours should be also.