

The Apostle Paul now speaks to the governing role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the redeemed. They are no longer governed by their flesh because they are “after the Spirit” (vs. 4-5). The unredeemed are governed by the sinful desires of their flesh, a path that will lead to death, while the presence of the Spirit of God in the lives of the redeemed will lead them to the ways of God and life.

Romans 7:1-25: Paul uses the principle that the law only applies to us while we are alive to illustrate the fact that the law no longer has power over us because of Christ’s death on the cross. Because we were “in Christ” when He died on the cross, we are now dead to the law and are free to live in the newness of life of His resurrection. He then points out that the demands of God’s moral law are righteous and just, despite the fact that it condemns us to death. The problem is not the law but in our ability to meet the law’s righteous demands because of the sin nature that is present within our flesh. Paul acknowledges that he is incapable of living completely without sin despite his sincere desire to do so, and then thanks God that Jesus Christ has rescued us from this predicament.

Romans 8

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.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” – At the end of the previous chapter Paul explained that we are helplessly condemned to death because of the sinfulness of our flesh. He now opens chapter 8 with the statement that those who are in Christ are not under condemnation. The “therefore” points back to the immediately preceding verses: **Rom. 7:24-25** “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*” Christians are not under the condemnation of the law because of what Jesus Christ did for us.

“who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” – Walking after (in accordance with) the Spirit is not a condition or a prerequisite of being in Christ Jesus but a description of those who are. Paul is making a distinction between those who are not redeemed (“who walk...after the flesh”) and those who are (“who walk...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” – Here is the reason why the redeemed are no longer under condemnation. He cites two different “laws” (principles) in play. These laws are like the law of gravity – they are absolute and human governments are not able to enforce or repeal them. Paul has described the “law of sin and death” in previous chapters and is summarized by **Rom. 6:23a** “*For the wages of sin is death...*” The other law is the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” and Paul expands on this subject later in this chapter. It refers to the new birth, when the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer and begins working in the believer’s life to produce righteousness. Because of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross in our place, the law of the Spirit of life supersedes the law of sin and death and sets us free from its penalty. Paul explains how this works in the next verses.

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.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh” – The law could never produce righteousness or holiness in us – it could only demand that we be righteous and then punish us when we weren’t. That is the limit or “weakness” of the law: our flesh’s inability to be righteous. Since we are sinful and cannot perfectly keep the it, the law is powerless to save us. Paul made this point in chapter 7: **Rom. 7:14** “*For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*”

“God sending his own Son in the likeness [resemblance; representation] of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” – The “what” that the law could not do was to make us righteous. Since the law could not do that, God sent His own Son to earth in a human body similar to ours except for the sin nature. The Greek indicates that Christ did not come in sinful flesh; He came in flesh that resembled our sinful flesh but was completely sinless. He came “for sin” (for the purpose of dealing with sin) and through Him, God’s wrath for our sin was fully poured out. God exhausted His wrath for our sin on His Son, and now there is no longer any wrath left for us to bear. See Isa. 53, particularly v. 11, where it states that God was satisfied with the price His Son paid on the cross.

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” – Here is the reason God sent His Son: so that the righteousness that the law demanded and yet could not produce in us would be fulfilled in us through Christ’s imputed righteousness.

“who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” – Paul again describes the believer as someone who is not walking after the flesh but is walking after the Spirit (v. 1). The believer has been transformed from being governed by the flesh to being governed by the Spirit.

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.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind [understand; to seek after] the things of the flesh” – The unredeemed (those who are “after the flesh”) can only relate to things that can be understood in a natural sense and these are the things that they seek after. They follow after wealth, pleasure, ego and the other things that the flesh desires. They have no understanding of spiritual things except in a superficial or natural sense. Nicodemus was confused when Jesus spoke to him about being born again (John 3:1-10).

“but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” – “After the Spirit” refers to those who have been redeemed and now have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. They are able to understand and seek after the things of the Spirit of God.

“For to be carnally [fleshly] minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace” – Following a carnal (fleshly) mind will lead to death. Those who are “spiritually minded” (which only those who are “after the Spirit” can be) will enjoy 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.

“Because the carnal [fleshly] mind is enmity [to be hostile toward; to have hatred toward] against God” – The unredeemed follow their carnal (fleshly) minds and the carnal mind is hostile toward the things of God, whether they are conscious of it or not. Some are openly hostile toward God (particularly the atheists) while others do not believe they are hostile to God but their actions say otherwise. They are passively hostile to the things of God because they have little or no interest in Him or obeying His word. Even the so called “religious” people believe they are following God but instead they tend to follow their superstitious ideas about God. If they truly belonged to God then their faith would be in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation and not in their superstitious observances.

“for it is not subject [to submit oneself] to the law of God, neither indeed can be” – Those with carnal minds do not submit themselves to the law of God and it is impossible for them to do so. Redeemed Christians are only able overcome the sin nature of the flesh and submit to the law of God because of the presence of the Holy Spirit but the unredeemed are totally unable to do so since they do not have the help of the Spirit.

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” – Only those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (which happens at the moment of the new birth) can please God. The rest of humanity are unable to please God because it is impossible in the strength of the flesh.

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.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” – Paul has made the point that the unredeemed have no chance at pleasing God and now states that his readers who are redeemed (evidenced by the fact that the Spirit of God dwells in them) are not “in the flesh” (governed by the flesh) because they are “in the Spirit.” The reason that they are able to please God is because the Spirit of God dwells in them.

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” – The indwelling of the Spirit is not something that happens after salvation as Pentecostals teach. It happens at the moment of salvation. We are born again by the Spirit and at that moment the Spirit takes up residence in our life. Paul states it very clearly: “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” It is impossible to belong to Christ and not have the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

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

Paul treats the indwelling of the Spirit as synonymous with salvation. He does not say “if you are baptized” or “if you have performed these certain religious works” then you are saved. Instead, he says “if Christ be in you” then certain truths of salvation will be present. The truths specified here are 1) the body is dead because of sin; and 2) the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Our bodies are still under the death penalty of sin because they are not yet redeemed (**Rom. 8:23** “*And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*”). However, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us assures us of eternal life because of the righteousness of Christ that we have inherited.

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.

Christ was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit and that same Spirit now dwells in us. Just as the Spirit raised Christ from the dead, He will also “quicken” (make alive) our mortal bodies that are “dead because of sin” (v. 10). We will be raised from the dead just as Christ was raised (**1 Cor. 15:20** “*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept*”). Paul may also be including the rapture, when the bodies of the saints of the church, living or dead, will be transformed into glorified bodies at Christ’s coming (1 Th. 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-55) by the Holy Spirit.

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.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” – We owe a debt, but it is to Christ and not the flesh. The world says to live for yourself because “you owe it to yourself.” However, we Christians are not indebted to ourselves or our flesh. Our debt is to God for redeeming us and giving us eternal life and we ought to live for Him, not for the flesh. **2 Cor. 5:14-15** “*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*”

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” – The end result of those who live after the flesh (the unredeemed) will be death.

“but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live” – However, those who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, do not allow themselves to indulge in the sinful deeds that the body desires, then that is the evidence that they have been redeemed and they will live eternally. They do not mortify the deeds of the body in order to be saved; they do it because they are saved and have eternal life.