

I'M SAVED
But Struggling
With **SIN!**



**Is VICTORY
Available?**

ROMANS 6-8

DENNIS M. ROKSER

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with Sin!
Is Victory Available?**

Romans 6–8 Examined

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*I'm Saved but Struggling with Sin! Is Victory Available? Romans 6–8
Examined*

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1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has 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 did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

Note to the Reader:

As you begin reading, please keep in mind that at the back of this book there is a very helpful glossary of terms to assist you in understanding new words or phrases related to living the Christian life by grace.

As you read this and you are already a believer in Jesus Christ as your Savior then you have come to know and believe that your eternal salvation is all by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Your eternal life can never be lost because it depends solely upon the unfailing person and promises of Jesus Christ, His finished work, and God's grace, which is His unmerited, undeserved favor. God's gift of salvation is available to the very worst of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) and requires no commitment to obedience, no promises to keep, no pledges to uphold, no repentance from sins, no asking Jesus into your heart, no religious rituals to perform, no efforts to try to keep the Law, and no good works to obtain or maintain your free and forever salvation by God's grace. Salvation from a Hell you deserve to a Heaven you don't is simply a matter of trusting in Christ alone and His substitutionary death and resurrection from the dead. Salvation is free to all who believe in Christ alone because He has already paid for all sin fully, freely, and forever upon the cross when He died in your place to save you! What a blessed assurance to realize that all of your sins are paid for and you can know with absolute certainty that you have eternal life as a free gift from God simply by faith in His Son as your Savior (1 John 5:9-13)!

But perhaps you are reading this and you have lost some of the joy of your salvation as you've faced the reality that though your sin is fully paid for by Christ, you still struggle practically with sin in your Christian life from day to day. Or perhaps you find yourself grateful to God for being saved forever from sin's penalty (Hell), but you are still in grief or confusion over sin's power in your life. Then again it could be that you have wanted to walk in fellowship with the Lord and are seeking to keep your sins confessed but you are tired of using 1 John 1:9 because your attempts to resist sin have been unsuccessful time and time again. If you are like most believers, you have wondered at times, is practical victory over sin really available? Thankfully, just as the Word of God guarantees all believers eternal life, it also promises us that an abundant life of practical victory over sin's power is also available to us each day of our Christian lives. Our Lord clearly stated,

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Dear believer, though you may feel like throwing in the towel of defeat or waiving the white flag of surrender and just giving in to sin in your life, God wants to assure you that His power, plan, and provisions by grace for the Christian life really are sufficient! You may feel like you've lost the battle, but keep in mind that the Christian life is actually a war made up of a series of battles, and Christ has already won the entire war for us at Calvary! As the Risen Savior He is the victor over sin's penalty, power, and presence, and now He views you as a victor in Him and calls you to walk with Him through the daily battles you face, the same way you were eternally saved – by grace through faith in Him as your all in all. That is why the Word of God exclaims,

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:57)

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Rom. 8:37)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)

God knows all about sin in the human race and in your life, and He has provided the perfect plan of deliverance to deal with it through His Son, Jesus Christ. Don't forget that God is for you, dear believer, not against you (Rom. 8:31); and He has provided in Christ all that is necessary for you to have practical victory in your daily battles with sin. And no passage in the Word of God explains this truth more clearly than the book of Romans, chapters 6-8, which is the focus of this booklet. But before explaining from this key section of Scripture why and how you can have practical victory over sin's power in your Christian life, let's lay a little groundwork and briefly

review what was explained in my previous booklet, *I'm Saved! Now What?*, which was the first booklet in this ongoing series about various aspects of the Christian life.¹ Below are 14 biblical truths worth reviewing that all believers should know as they begin the Christian life.

YOUR NEW IDENTITY – “IN CHRIST”!

As a believer in Christ and a new creation in Him (2 Cor. 5:17), you are no longer viewed by God as being lost and dead in sin in Adam's family but now you are spiritually alive and positionally “in Christ” (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1-3, 12-13).

YOUR NEW SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST!

Being “in Christ” means that God has also given you all spiritual blessings by virtue of being in His Beloved Son and you are complete in Him (Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10).

YOUR NEW OPERATING PRINCIPLE TO GRASP – GOD'S GRACE!

Now that you have been eternally saved by God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9), God also wants you to mature by His grace from day to day—to live, grow, serve, become established and strengthened by His grace, since He is the God of all grace (Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Heb. 13:9; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 3:18).

YOUR NEW SECURITY – SAVED AND SECURE FOREVER!

God wants every one of His children to know that they are unconditionally loved and eternally secure in their family relationship with Him, with no possibility or fear of ever losing their salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:35-40; 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-39).²

YOUR NEW PRIMARY MOTIVATION – THE LOVE OF CHRIST!

The love that Jesus Christ has for every believer in Him as demonstrated through His sacrificial death for you should

1. See Dennis M. Rokser, *I'm Saved! Now What? The Beginning and Basics of Christian Living by Grace* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2013).

2. For further explanation of this biblical teaching is available in my book on eternal security. See Dennis M. Rokser, *Shall Never Perish Forever: Is Salvation Forever or Can It Be Lost?* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2012).

now be the greatest motivator to live a life that is pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; 1 John 4:19).

YOUR NEW PERSPECTIVE OF PEOPLE—IN ADAM OR IN CHRIST!

As believers, if we allow the Word of God to impact our thinking and perspectives in life, the Lord will transform how we view Him and ourselves, and we will begin to see others as either “in Adam” or “in Christ,” with a burden to see the lost won to Christ (2 Cor. 5:16-17).

YOUR NEW MINISTRY AND PRIVILEGE—AN AMBASSADOR FOR JESUS CHRIST!

As a new creation in Christ, all believers have been left here on Earth by the Lord as His ambassadors and have been given the ministry and privilege of sharing the Gospel, God’s message of reconciliation, with all who are lost and still in Adam (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Tim. 2:4-6).

YOUR NEW MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH GOD—THE WORD OF GOD & BELIEVING PRAYER!

As a child of God now in the family of God forever, believers can relate to God and communicate with Him moment by moment throughout each day by means of His Word and prayer (Phil. 4:6-7; Jam. 1:5-6; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 John 5:14-15).

YOUR NEW UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S PLAN FOR YOU—THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION!

God has already saved in the past every believer in Christ from the penalty of sin (Hell) at justification (Luke 7:50; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), and now in the present He wants to save you from sin’s power in your life in the process of practical sanctification (Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Tim. 4:16; Jam. 1:21) as you anticipate with certainty that He will also save you one day in the future from sin’s very presence at glorification (Rom. 5:9-10; 8:30; 13:11).³

3. Further explanation of the three tenses of salvation is also available in my book, *Salvation in Three Time Zones* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2013).

YOUR NEW OPPORTUNITY – TO GROW SPIRITUALLY!

While the Christian life begins with a new birth at the point of salvation from sin's penalty, God desires all believers to grow in grace and spiritually mature into Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Peter 1:23–2:3), which involves time, truth, teachers, trials, and trust (Heb. 4:1-2, 9-11; 5:12-14; 11:6; Jam. 1:2-4).

YOUR NEW KEY TO FRUITFULNESS – ABIDING IN CHRIST!

The Lord desires to produce spiritual fruit in the lives of all believers, which is accomplished by means of the Holy Spirit rather than legalistic self-effort. As believers abide in yielded dependence upon Christ, our spiritual Vine, He produces His fruit in and through us and we simply bear it (John 15:1-8; Gal. 5:22-23).

YOUR NEW ACCOUNTABILITY – THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST!

Though believers are neither saved nor spiritual by means of our good deeds, God desires and plans good works as part of every believer's life (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-8). There is a day coming when each believer will stand before Christ and give an account to Him of how we lived our lives as a new creation in Christ after we were saved (1 Cor. 3:10-15, 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

YOUR NEW PROVISION FOR WHEN YOU FAIL – CONFESSION OF SIN!

When believers sin and fail to walk by faith and do His will, and we all do, God has provided forgiveness and the means of restoration to fellowship with Him via confession of our sins based on the blood of Christ (1 John 1:3-9).

YOUR NEW WONDERFUL FUTURE IN CHRIST – BLESSED HOPE!

Every believer in Christ can look forward to the day that Christ will come to receive us to Himself at the Rapture of the Church prior to the Tribulation, to transform our sinful bodies like His glorious, sinless, immortal body, so that we may be with Him forever in glory (1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-13).

As you can see from this survey of what God has graciously provided for all believers, your struggle with sin did not take God by surprise. He has provided for you in His grace all that is necessary to have spiritual victory over sin. But how is this possible? The New Testament book of Romans contains three chapters that are one of the most important sections in the entire Word of God for you as a believer to understand how to live the Christian life as God designed it. Romans 6-8 will be something you will need to read over and over again in order to glean and grasp the vital and valuable truth of Christian living by God's grace-design and provision. In this section you will learn how to respond by faith to:

- the truth of your identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (6:1-5)
- the truth of your freedom from the sin nature's ruling authority in your life (6:6-7)
- the truth that you are alive to God in Christ your Lord (6:8-11)
- the truth that you no longer need to let the sin nature rule as a king in your life (6:12)
- the importance of your daily decisions to present yourself to the Lord to do His will (6:13)
- the truth that "you are not under law but under grace" for your progressive sanctification or spiritual growth in time, and not merely for your justification before God (6:14ff)
- the truth that the Christian life is not lived by law, performance, sheer will-power or your own self-effort to conquer the flesh and produce practical righteousness (7:14-25)
- the truth that you are not condemned to live a life of practical defeat or bondage to your sin nature because of your position in Christ and His liberating work on the cross (8:1-3)

- the truth of the liberating and enabling power of the Holy Spirit in keeping with a walk of faith in Christ as your Life (8:4ff)

Dear reader, positional and practical victory in Christ is available over sin in your life. Don't believe the lies of the flesh, the world, the devil, or false teaching that may tell you otherwise. In fact, while God does not want you to fail in your Christian life, He will even utilize your failures to show you that "you can't do it" when it comes to living a victorious Christian life and how He must do it for you, in you, and through you. But since the Christian life is lived by faith (2 Cor. 5:7), and "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17), read on!

YOUR NEW FREEDOM IN CHRIST—YOU HAVE DIED TO THE SIN NATURE!

The teaching of grace is not only foreign to our natural thinking but it was rejected and hated by the Pharisees of Jesus' day and many in our day who also want to earn God's salvation, which is contrary to grace. The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul anticipates the first objection to the Gospel of grace, namely, that it is a license to sin or leads to fleshly indulgence. Thus, he writes,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (Rom. 6:1)

While there are those who abuse the grace of God, which is folly, this verse anticipates an objection by grace-haters who fail to understand the truth of the believer's freedom and position in Christ. Paul's response to this logical question is an emotional answer and a theological reason:

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Rom. 6:2)

Does God want you to abuse His grace and live a life of ongoing bondage under the practical control of your sin nature? Never! Certainly not! Perish the thought!

For brethren, you were called to liberty; only use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh but by love serves one another. (Gal. 5:13)

Your freedom in Christ is not merely designed to assure you of Heaven by God's grace but to encourage you to enjoy spiritual progress and service for the Savior! And though God saves you just as you are, He doesn't want to leave you just as you are—serving your sin nature. This recognizes that believers still sin (1 John 1:9) and still retain a sin nature (1 John 1:8), and can even live in ongoing carnality (1 Cor.3:1-4) in which God will divinely discipline them in love (Heb. 12:5-11). In fact, some believers still live just like unbelievers (1 Cor. 3:3) and may return to pursuing the vomit of the world (2 Peter 2:18-22). Others still experience and succumb to pressure to run with the herd in licentious living and are slandered when they don't (1 Peter 4:1-5). Yet this is not God's design for His children, nor is it necessary to do so. So why should the redeemed sinner not continue to live in sin? While many reasons could be offered, the specific answer of this verse is because the believer has "died to sin." But what does this mean?

Understanding the Meaning of "Sin" in this Passage

The word "sin" throughout chapters 6-8 is a noun, not a verb (except in 6:15), and it refers to the "sin" nature that you received from your first birth in Adam. Our sin nature is our naturally-born disposition to sin. We naturally rebel against God. You were born a slave to the sin nature. This is why you still sense a pull toward sin in your life. This is why believers still struggle with such sins as pride, covetousness, sexual lusts, sinful addictions, religious external performance, lying, drunkenness, pornography, self-dependence, and other things. Consider the case of Mike, who came to faith in Christ with a background of being a rebel and a self-made man. Now as a believer, he still is prone daily to slip into thinking "I can handle it" and to rely on himself instead of the Lord in his daily walk. Why is this? It is because he has a sin nature that naturally gravitates in that direction, as well as sinful thought patterns which he has nurtured for years. Can you relate? So

keep in mind that Romans 6 isn't so much about victory over your sins in the Christian life as it is about how to have victory over the root cause of your sin problems—the sin nature.

The good news of Romans 6 is that because of the cross-work of Christ, we have been judicially freed in God's eyes from the sin nature's position of dominion and authority in our lives. Thus our new position in Christ ("we who died to sin") is now to affect our daily condition ("live any longer in it"). Let me illustrate.

Distinguishing Your Position and Condition

If you live in the USA, you then are to drive on the right side of the road. Your position (living in the USA) is now to affect your condition (driving on the right side). However, if you were to move to England (new position), then as a result you would drive on the left side of the road (new condition). The point is this: your position is to affect your condition. However, the reverse is not true. For if you were to drive in the USA on the left side of the road, you would still be located in the USA, though you would probably experience some tragic results in your condition because of this decision. Do you see the parallel? Your new position in Christ ("died to sin") is designed to affect your condition ("live any longer in it"). However, if you make sinful choices as a believer, your position will remain the same—you will still be eternally saved by God's grace in Christ—though you will reap what you have sown in terms of the damaging, practical consequences of sin.

However, let me emphasize again that this does not mean that we no longer have a sin nature (though we also have now a new nature that naturally desires the things of God. See Rom. 7:15-18).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body,
that you should obey it in its lusts. (Rom. 6:12)

Why would Paul give this command if we had no sin nature? The sin nature prior to salvation has ruled as a king in our lives. What has changed now in Christ is not the sin nature but our relationship to it. Before salvation, we had no choice

but to obey sin as our master. We obeyed its selfish and sinful dictates. But now as believers, we are identified forever with Jesus Christ—even though our sin natures still seek to rule our lives as a king.

What Changed When You Were Placed in Christ?

When you were saved, did your sin nature change? Does your sin nature get better as a result of spiritual growth? No, your sin nature is still as incapable of righteousness and capable of sin as it was before salvation. This also explains why you still sin daily, and why believers may live in prolonged carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-4) or even commit some terrible sins when they live out of fellowship with the Lord. (Consider the adultery and murder that King David committed in the Old Testament while he was a believer who was out of fellowship with the Lord.)

Dear believer, keep in mind that the grace of God and your freedom in Christ have never been designed to be a license to sin. As a believer in Christ, you have been saved FROM sin, not TO sin. This principle can be illustrated by your possession of insurance. Do you have car insurance? If so, do you now drive off bridges? Do you have life insurance? If so, do you do things that put your life in danger? Why not? It is because the purpose of insurance is not to abuse it but to utilize it only when you need it. The same is true with your eternal salvation. You are covered by the blood of Christ when and if you fall into sin, but you shouldn't use your freedom in Christ as a license to sin, because you have "died to sin." In other words, you have been eternally separated from the sin nature's ongoing authority to rule in your body. Thus, you should not "live any longer in it"—under its practical control.

But this raises the question, "How or when did you die to the sin nature?" The doctrinal answer is found in the following verses:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him

through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:3-5)

Is the “Baptizing” of Romans 6 Dry or Wet?

When you became a new creation “in Christ,” God the Holy Spirit “baptized” or identified you with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The word “baptized” in this passage has nothing to do with a ritual but with a reality; it is a dry baptism, not a wet ritual. (Consider the chart on the following page.)

Today, water baptism for believers is a privilege designed to be a means of public testimony of the believer’s faith in Christ which acts as a picture of his identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Yet water baptism cannot save the sinner, nor sanctify the saint (Rom. 4:1-12; 1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 3:1-5; Eph. 2:8-9). What you have just read in Romans 6:3-5 is referring to a spiritual baptism, being “baptized into Christ Jesus” not into water, though it is pictured and proclaimed through water baptism. The baptism by the Holy Spirit described in Romans 6 is true of all believers in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) which occurs at the moment of salvation (Gal. 3:26-28) in which the Holy Spirit places you into union with, or identification with, Jesus Christ.

Because of your identification with Jesus Christ, God sees the death that Christ died as also being your death with Him; the burial that Christ experienced, God now sees as your burial; and the resurrection that Christ experienced, He sees as your resurrection with Christ. You are no longer in Adam; you are in Christ. You are now a new creation in Christ, co-crucified, co-buried, and co-risen with Christ. This explains how, and even when, you “died to sin.” It was through your spiritual union with Christ. And what is the practical purpose of all this? Romans 6:4b says it is “that we also should walk in newness of life.”

BAPTISM	SCRIPTURE	SUBJECT	SPHERE	RESULTS
Baptism of Moses	<i>1 Corinthians 10:2</i>	Israelites who fled from Egypt	<i>Cloud and Sea</i>	Identified with Moses (Sea) and the Lord (Cloud)
Baptism of Cup	<i>Matthew 20:22</i> <i>Luke 12:50</i>	Christ	<i>Suffering</i>	Christ identified with sins of mankind
Baptism by Holy Spirit	<i>Acts 1:5; Rom. 6:3-4</i> <i>1 Cor. 12:13;</i> <i>Eph. 4:5; Gal. 3:26-28</i>	All church-age believers	<i>Body of Christ</i>	Believers identified with Christ as His body
Baptism of Fire	<i>Matthew 3:11</i> <i>Matthew 13:25ff</i> <i>Luke 3:16b</i>	All unbelievers	<i>Judgment Fires</i>	Unbelievers identified with God's judgment
Baptism of John	<i>Matthew 3:1-11</i> <i>John 1:25-33</i> <i>Acts 19:2-4</i>	John's and Jesus' Disciples (Israelites)	<i>Kingdom</i>	Disciples of John's or Jesus' message of repentance — Kingdom message
Baptism of Jesus	<i>Matthew 3:13-17</i>	Jesus	<i>Will of the Father Resulting ultimately in the cross</i>	Personal identification with repentant remnant, national manifestation of Messiah to Israel, and divine coronation of the King
Baptism of Church-age Believers	<i>Acts 2:41; 8:26-40</i> <i>10:47-48; 18:8</i>	Obedient believers	<i>Public identification with Christ</i>	Public proclamation of salvation and identification with Christ and other believers
D R Y / R E E A L				
W E T / R I T U A L				

What Is the Objective of Your New Identity in Christ?

The objective of your identification with Jesus Christ is so that you would walk in newness of life. To “walk in newness of life” refers to your daily condition or practice being dramatically different than the way you lived before you were born again as a new creation in Christ. You now have the daily opportunity to live in victory over sin (Rom. 6:11-13; Gal. 5:13-16); to live a life being filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23); to live a life of daily fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3-4); to live a life filled with all joy and peace in faith-resting and abounding in hope (Rom. 15:13); to live a life of godly testimony and witness for Jesus Christ that glorifies God and benefits man (Phil. 2:13-16). This is an abundant life indeed (John 10:10)!

What Are the Spiritual Ramifications of Your Co-crucifixion, Co-burial, and Co-resurrection with or in Christ?

Our passage continues:

[K]nowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Rom. 6:6)

God wants you to personally “know” (6:3, 6, 9) these very important truths. He wants you to know that your “old man was crucified with Him” so that your history in Adam has ceased. You are no longer viewed by God as an “old man” since you were crucified with Christ and are now a “new creation” in Him (6:2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11; Gal. 2:20). Was our sin nature part of our old man? Yes, but our sin nature still remains and still wants to run and rule our lives. So what does becoming a new creation in Christ mean if the sin nature no longer has a right or the authority to dominate your life any longer?

[K]nowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, *that the body of sin might be done away with*, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Rom. 6:6)

The phrase, “that the body of sin might be done away with,” means that the sin nature’s previous rule over your physical body as its master has been legally broken; it has been stripped of its authority as your master. It does not refer to annihilation or the eradication of the sin nature but of it being stripped of its past legal domination or ruling power in your body. Who dominated your body as an old man in Adam before you were saved? It was the sin nature! The sin nature may have dominated your body by producing what was considered “good” by human standards. You may have been a moral person doing “good” works; but God declares that all the good works we produce under the control of the sin nature are considered “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6) in His sight. On the other hand, you may have been an immoral person with a life characterized by overt sins. In both cases, you were in total bondage to your sin nature. What this verse is saying is that by virtue of your crucifixion with Christ, the sin nature’s right to rule in your life as a master has been broken.

An Illustration to Remember

Let me use a military illustration to help you grasp this wonderful truth. If you have ever been in the military, you know that the drill sergeant had total mastery over you in boot camp. What he said you did. He said, “Give me 50 pushups” and you gave him 50 pushups — immediately. He demanded, “Run 10 laps,” and you ran 10 laps. This was the reality of your existence in the military. However, on the very day you left the military, you were no longer under the mastery of the drill sergeant. Imagine that you as a civilian then met this sergeant on the sidewalk. As you saw him coming, you begin to raise your hand to salute him. Why? It is because he had been your total master while in the military and your thinking had learned to obey his every dictate. But while you began to raise your hand to salute, your thinking kicks in and says in effect, “Dude, you are no longer under this sergeant’s authority.” You are no longer in the military. You have died or been separated from this man’s authority and you are under new management in order to live differently than in your military days. If you passed by him on the sidewalk, you could thumb

your nose at him and walk right by. Why? Because the drill sergeant's right to rule your life is over you are no longer in the military.

Do you see the comparison? The sin nature has been stripped of its right to rule in your life from now on. The moment you became a child of God and were placed into union with Christ your relationship to the sin nature changed forever. Now, you can still choose to listen to your sin nature just like you could still obey the commands of your previous drill sergeant, but you are no longer obligated to obey him. In fact, if you choose to do so you will live a life of misery and misdirection, for apart from a right vertical relationship with God, man is miserable and life is meaningless. (This is the message of the biblical book of Ecclesiastes.) So what is the purpose of your death with Christ and freedom from the sin nature?

[K]nowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, *that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*
(Rom. 6:6)

Yes, dear believer, you are no longer enslaved to the sin nature. Why?

For he who has died has been freed from sin.
(Rom. 6:7)

Since you died with Christ, you then “died to sin,” making you legally freed from the sin nature as your ruling master. This is not a *feeling* to experience but a *fact* to be believed. This occurred the moment you became a new creation in Christ as God accomplished this through the cross of Jesus Christ; and you have this freedom from that first day until the present. This is indicated by the perfect tense of the phrase, “has been freed,” which means you were freed in the past with the results continuing up to the present, i.e., you remain freed! Whether you are a new believer or have been saved for many years, whether you are a spiritual believer or carnal, your position in Christ and identification with His death and resurrection

remains the same—you have been freed from the sin nature's right to rule your life. Unfortunately, there are many believers who do not know they are free and are still living like slaves, either trying to get rid of their sin nature or trying harder to live the Christian life in their own strength only to fail over and over again (Rom. 7:14-24).

Key Word #1: KNOW

Imagine being a black slave in one of the southern Confederate states during the 1860s when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation which legally freed all slaves from their former masters. But if you did not “know” about this legal freedom, you would not enjoy it and you would continue to live like a slave. In the same way, if believers do not know of their position in Christ and freedom from the sin nature's ruling authority in their lives, it is fairly certain they will continue to live practically as slaves to it. This is why the key word in Romans 6:1-10 is the word “know.” Unfortunately, many pastors and teachers have failed to accurately teach (if they teach Romans 6 at all) or systematically emphasize these wonderful truths of your emancipation proclamation in Christ. And there is even more that God wants you to know about your identification with Jesus Christ!

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Rom. 6:8-10)

Notice, that when Jesus Christ died, He didn't die to forgive our sin nature but our personal sins. Instead, He died to condemn the sin nature and its right to rule in our lives (8:2-4)! He deposed it as king. Consequently, God has legally freed us from the sin nature's right to rule. And because we are identified with Christ in His resurrection, we are now alive unto God, just like Christ is alive unto God. We have a relationship with God that consists of an eternal union (versus sepa-

ration) with Him. It is wonderful to know that what has been true of Jesus Christ is also true of you and me since we are “in Him.” He died and we died with Him. He was buried and we were buried with Him. He was raised and we were raised with Him. He died to the sin nature and we have died with Christ to deliver us from the sin nature. He is alive unto God the Father and we are alive unto God the Father. This is how God views us and how we must now view ourselves. These are crucial and critical truths to know and know well. May you pray to God for a clearer understanding from the Holy Spirit of these wonderful truths (Eph. 1:15-23).

This reminds me of the story of two sisters who were renowned for their fleshly indulgence in the party scene prior to their salvation. However, after they became new creations in Christ, they responded to an invitation to a party, saying, “We must inform you that neither of us will be attending your drinking party, for we both recently died.”

YOUR NEW DAILY PERSPECTIVE—DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS MY LORD!

So what does your identification and freedom in Christ mean practically to you in living your life from day to day?

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:11)

Key Word #2: RECKON

The first response and command in the book of Romans related to your Christian life is not to DO anything for Jesus Christ. Instead God asks that you simply believe something He has already done and accomplished for you in Christ. The word “reckon” refers to the need for exercising a logical daily faith in the wonderful truths that He has just taught you in Romans 6:1-10. The word “reckon” is an accounting term, which is an appeal to a logical faith; an appeal to believe something; to write it down in a ledger as true. That ledger is to be your mind.

This is the logic that you must “know”: If Christ died to the sin nature and is alive unto God – and I am in Christ, so that I died to the sin nature, and I am alive unto God – this is something I am to believe. I am to write it down as so; I am to count on it as fact.

You may say, “Well, I did that once!” No. The word “reckon” is in the present tense. It carries the idea that something is to be continually done. It is to be an ongoing mindset; this is how we are to think repeatedly. We are now to approach life from this perspective. The word “reckon” in the present tense carries the idea that you are to embrace these truths as a daily perspective BECAUSE THEY ARE TRUE! Reckoning yourself to be dead to sin and alive to God does not make these things true for God states that these are the facts whether you believe them or not. But believing them will deeply affect how you think and live from day to day. Thus, reckoning on the fact of your co-crucifixion with Christ to sin and your co-resurrection with Him is to be an ongoing mindset; it is how you are to think repeatedly. You are now to approach life each day from this perspective. You have been saved; you are now in Christ; you are united to Him; you have died with Him; you have been buried with Him; you have been raised with Him. You have died to the sin nature and it no longer has any right to rule your life; you have been raised with Jesus Christ and are now alive forever to God.

It is interesting that Paul does not say, “Now that you’re a believer, the first thing I want you to do is get baptized and join a church! And I want you to get a haircut, a new set of clothes, and start looking like a Christian [as some legalistic churches would tell you]. You need to get that cigar out of your mouth; throw away your booze and get with God!” No, that’s not what Paul says. Unfortunately, that is the approach often taken by many churches. I am not saying that as a result of salvation God doesn’t want to make many changes in our lives. In fact, I am convinced that God has so many changes to make in our lives, He only shows us one at a time; otherwise, if we knew everything at once, we couldn’t handle it. So, the fact is we are going to have to be totally transformed from the inside out; it is going to be a process. Your destiny was

changed in a split second; however, changing your character is going to take the rest of your life. God will be working in you the rest of your life to make you more and more like Jesus Christ.

This dual reckoning (that you have died to the sin nature and are alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord) involves an ongoing attitude of *faith*. It is not a *feeling*. This divine imperative appeals to your volition, not your emotions. This is true and is to be believed whether you feel like it or not, for “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). I say this because you might be thinking, “But I don’t *feel* like I have died to the sin nature, for I still sense its daily pull in my life.” The biblical fact is that you have died to sin by virtue of your position in Christ. This you must take by faith. But this doesn’t mean you still don’t feel the sin nature’s presence, for like the game “hide and seek,” you can still say, “I know you are still in there!” Dear friend, the sin nature has not died, but you have died to its ruling authority in your body. But how was all of this accomplished for you?

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. (Rom. 6:11)

Thus, your first objective every day in your Christian walk ought to be focusing on Jesus Christ and your identity and freedom in Him. When you get up in the morning, you need to calibrate your thinking by reckoning these facts to be true. When you are tempted to sin, you are to reckon yourself dead to the sin nature and alive to God as the sin nature is only defeated by means of the cross of Christ. You must not get careless in this and forget or fail to reckon upon these crucial truths.

The Daily Battle Is Not Over; but Victory Is Available in Christ

Yes, you are now in Christ and He is your new Lord. You believed in the Lord Jesus Christ when you were saved and now He has every right each day to rule in and direct your life into the perfect will of God. Although the sin nature has been

deposed, it still wants to keep your life in practical bondage to legalistic self-righteousness, carnal indulgence, or mystical pseudo-spirituality. But you now have a basis on which to say, “No,” to your flesh.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. (Rom. 6:12-13a)

Now some will say, especially those who believe in Lordship Salvation,⁴ “You are saved by grace, but if you live in continual sin, it is proof that you were never saved.” This false doctrine raises all kinds of problems:

- How much sin must someone commit in order to conclude that he was never originally saved? (1 Tim. 1:15-16)
- What about carnal Christians? (1 Cor. 3:1-4)
- Why does God divinely discipline? (Heb. 11:5-11)
- What about the sin unto death, namely, maximum divine discipline when God takes believers home, prematurely, because of their sins? (1 Cor. 11:30-32)
- Why are there exhortations for believers to live holy lives if it is guaranteed and automatic for all believers to do so? (1 Peter 1:13-18)

These questions highlight the serious biblical problems with the teaching of Lordship Salvation. Can there really be such

4. Lordship Salvation is the false teaching that in order for a person to be eternally saved he or she must not only trust in Christ for salvation but must also live a life characterized by obedience, faithfulness, and good works in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the will of God, either to obtain or maintain salvation or to prove that one had it in the first place. In Lordship Salvation, the condition for eternal life is more than faith alone in Christ alone and is practically something that is earned by believer’s walk instead of Christ’s finished work and the grace of God as Scripture teaches.

a thing as a “carnal believer”? Yes! That is the whole implication of Romans 6:12. Sin can reign in your body, but you don’t need to let it any longer! Do you still possess a sin nature? Yes. How could sin reign in your body if you don’t have a sin nature to reign? The invisible sin nature wants a visible body to work through. It gives you impulses and temptations, saying to you, in essence, “Why don’t you lie in this situation?” or “Why don’t you steal that?” or “It’s fine if you covet that,” or “Why don’t you get proud about that and take the credit?” It wants your brain, or your hands, or your feet to go along with the temptations it offers you each day. The sin nature wants to utilize your body to fulfill those objectives. So what keeps the sin nature off the throne of your life practically? Promises to obey? No! Resolutions to do better? No! Small group accountability friends? No! What does this passage say? It is reckoning yourself daily to have died to the sin nature and to be alive to God in Christ Jesus your Lord and then choosing to “present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

YOUR NEW CHOICE—TO PRESENT YOURSELF DAILY TO GOD!

Key Word #3: PRESENT

There is a progression in Romans 6:11-13 that is very important, namely, that if you don’t “know” the truths of your identification with Christ and freedom from the sin nature, and if you don’t “reckon” yourself dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus your Lord, then why would you “present” your members as instruments of righteousness to God? Therefore, presenting or yielding yourself to the Lord is a logical outcome of the fact that you have died to the sin nature. Being “alive from the dead” reminds you that you are alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord, having been raised with Christ. That is why the most logical thing for you to do in light of your position in Christ is to daily reckon these facts to be true and present or yield yourself to the Lord—to say in effect: “Lord, you have every right to rule in my life. You have the

right to run my life. You have the right to dictate policy in my life. Lord, I want to live the way You want me to live. I want to live on *Your* terms—not on my terms. I present myself to You for that purpose.” And unlike that tyrannical military sergeant, God’s will for you is always “good, perfect, and acceptable”; it cannot be improved upon (Rom. 12:2)!

In Romans 6:13, the second use of the word “present” is in the aorist tense in the Greek. The idea is that of an urgent and decisive decision in which the believer says in effect, “Lord, I am making a decision; I present myself to You.” This is a decision you must make daily (not once for all) as you choose who you are going to serve. It is not a one-shot dedication as some erroneously suppose. When you present yourself to God, you are yielding to Him on His terms, and you can start to enjoy some fellowship with the Lord. That’s why the word, “present,” is in the active voice, which speaks of a choice you need to make. The word “present” is also in the imperative mood, which gives a command or necessity that reflects something that is not optional. The grace appeal is made here: “In light of your position in Christ [you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ], won’t you present yourself to the Lord? Won’t you yield to His will for your life today?” Unfortunately too many believers say in effect, “NO! I will run the show today.” Others say a qualified, “YES, Lord, but only if Your plan agrees with what I want to do.” But in such a case, who is still controlling your life? It is the sin nature that is practically on the throne, not our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

These truths of Romans 6:1-13 are so very practical for daily Christian living and facing temptation each day. You can say again, “Lord, thank you that I have died to the sin nature; I am alive unto You; I do not have to yield to the sin nature in my life. Instead, I present myself to You to walk by means of the Holy Spirit.”

J. F. Strombeck wrote in his classic book, *Disciplined by Grace*, these insightful words,

“Yield” is the key word to sanctification. In a yielded person there is no resistance to the will of God. There is no self-planning, nor insistence upon

one's own ideas or rights; but complete dependence upon God.⁵

Prevention or Correction of Sin – Which Would You Rather Have?

Imagine a very dangerous road which had many sharp curves on it that created a serious traffic hazard along with having a steep cliff if you drove over its edge. Now a person could address this problem by having a well-staffed and well-trained medical team at the bottom of the cliff with a well-equipped hospital to immediately address the injured drivers of the car crashes that are certain to happen. This would merely be a corrective approach (after the accident occurs) to this problem. But wouldn't it be better to have a preventive approach (before the accident happens) to this dangerous situation? One could put up flashing signs that say, "Slow Down. Sharp Curves Ahead" or "Take It Slow and Save a Life." Thus, the hospital and staff would only be needed when these signs were not believed or heeded. In the same way, Romans 6 is like the flashing sign that says, "Know; Reckon; Yield; Obey," while 1 John 1:9 is like the hospital at the bottom of the cliff. Both are needed and have their right place, but don't we all agree that we would like to bypass tragic accidents and the hospital as much as possible?

Key Word #4: OBEY

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doc-

5. J. F. Strombeck, *Disciplined by Grace* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2013), 40.

trine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:14-23)

God wants you to know that you are not under the authority of the Law for your sanctification but under the liberating authority of grace because of your identity in Jesus Christ your Lord (6:14)! But this is not designed to encourage even one act of sin now that you are free from the Law (6:15). Yet it interesting to observe that “obey” is the fourth key word in this passage, not the first. Legalism is prone to put obedience first, in order to be spiritual, instead of viewing it as the result of walking by faith in yielded dependence upon the Lord in light of your identification in Him.

In addition, keep in mind that you are going to serve someone or something every day of your life (6:16). Will it be the sin nature, resulting in a death-like existence as a carnal believer, or will you choose to reckon yourself dead to the sin nature and alive to God in Christ your Lord and present yourself to Him in order to live a righteous life in which He is willing to direct, enable, and mature you to do His will (6:16)? All of this is possible because you believed the Gospel (6:17) and were freed from being a slave to the sin nature and are now a servant of Christ (6:18). Thus the appeal is made again in light of your position in Christ:

For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now *present* your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (6:19)

Keep in mind that the Christian life is a moment-by-moment walk of faith, and the last moment's victory by grace does not guarantee the next moment's triumph, or vice versa. At any given moment you can still yield to the sin nature or yield to the Lord. So, is victory really available over the sin nature and thus from the sins that originate and stem from it? Romans 6 answers with a resounding "YES" because of Jesus Christ and your identification in Him. But does this mean that all of your problems will now be resolved and godly living and fruitfulness for Christ will occur automatically? Read on dear believer!

YOUR NEW STRUGGLE—THE SIN NATURE VERSUS THE NEW NATURE!

Many believers in Christ begin their Christian lives with great joy and gratitude that their sins are forgiven them because of the blood of Christ. They now have great resolve in desiring to do God's will. Their expectations to serve the Lord are high, but their understanding of the Word of God (such as Romans 6) and their sense of their own total inadequacy is low. Because they want now to do God's will they think that they can and will (with God's help). At first everything is new and novel. But as time goes on they begin to realize that something is terribly wrong inside. As they start to grasp the will of God as set forth in His Word, they begin to realize how far short they fall. So they try harder to perform and produce the Christian life, only to fail more. If they are undiscerning, they may get persuaded to go down the Hansel and Gretel trail of mysticism, trying to speak in tongues, becoming slain in the Spirit, and so forth. Or perhaps they think becoming busy in the church will be the answer, only to find that their busyness has led to barrenness. And then there are some who just hang it up saying in effect, "I can't live this Christian life." Their disappointment leads to discouragement, and in some cases, to

depression. In other cases, they may turn again to the world to find happiness out of the details of life only to come up empty on the dead-end streets of life. What they don't realize is that they are trying to live the Christian life in their own wisdom or strength. What they don't realize is that they have been trying to live by law and not by grace in their daily walk or service to the Lord (Rom. 6:14-7:13). They have been trying to produce the Christian life instead of learning to abide in Christ as their Life, by faith, so that He could produce His fruit through them. Jesus Christ said, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). You must come to realize every day that you are totally inadequate in yourself to live the victorious Christian life, just like you were totally inadequate to save yourself from sin's penalty so that you needed to trust in Christ to save you. This means that you must yield to, and depend on, the Lord to produce spiritual fruit for you, in you, and through you.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (2 Cor. 3:5)

Thus, every failure in your Christian life is allowed by God to show you that either you did not believe God's Word, or you yielded to your own will instead of God's, or you tried to crank out the Christian life by your own flesh or sheer will-power. This was the stark reality that Paul came to experience after he was saved, as expressed in Romans 7.

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (Rom. 7:15-18)

Notice that the word "I" dominates these verses. It is found 24 times in the last half of Romans 7 while the word "Spirit"

is completely absent. This is Paul as a new creation in Christ with a new nature attempting to live the Christian life but failing miserably. While the new nature gives you godly desires to do God's will, it does not give you the *power* to glorify Jesus Christ. What was Paul's problem in Romans 7? He was trying to do God's will in his own strength ("I") and was being defeated by the "sin [nature] that dwells in me." He was living by law and self-dependence. Yet he was coming to know an essential truth through his failures—"that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells." Consider the following truths to be learned from the latter half of Romans 7:

- **Can the inner conflict you experience as a believer be baffling at times? (7:15a) YES!!!**

For what I am doing, I do not understand. (Rom. 7:15)

You might be baffled, saying in effect, "I finally want to live for Jesus Christ. So why am I defeated?"

- **Can the Christian life be lived by your sheer willpower and strength? (7:15b) NO!!!**

For what I am doing, I do not understand. *For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.* (Rom. 7:15)

The apostle Paul had great willpower prior to and after his salvation. Yet he transparently admits here that he is failing miserably as his willpower was not enough for spiritual victory.

- **Can you actually end up doing the opposite of what you desire in your Christian walk? (7:15c-16) YES!!!**

If, then, *I do what I will not to do*, I agree with the law that it is good. (Rom. 7:16)

This can be very discouraging and unfortunately some believers give up on the Christian life right here. But praise the Lord that He does not give up on us (Phil. 1:6; 2:13)!

- **What is the real source of your spiritual defeat?**
(7:17) THE SIN NATURE!

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but *sin* that dwells in me. (Rom. 7:17)

The word “sin” has an article before it in the Greek referring to “the sin” nature. Your problem is not ancestral residential demons like some false spiritual warfare “experts” may tell you. Rather, your problem is a failure to appropriate the victory that is available over the sin nature by faith.

- **Who is your greatest problem? (7:18a) YOU!!!**

For I know that *in me* (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells. (Rom. 7:18)

No, your greatest problem is not your spouse, nor your upbringing, nor the environment, nor even the government. And though all of these may and can affect us, your greatest problem is you and your failure to depend upon the Lord to have victory and bear fruit for Jesus Christ. So stop blaming others for your carnality and sinful decisions and start pinning the tail on the right donkey. Paul is being very honest about himself here, admitting that the enemy is within. This is why it’s so harmful to depend on ourselves. We can’t rightly blame others for our carnality. We may have been wronged or offended, but God holds us personally responsible for our own decisions and attitudes.

Carnality may:

- be impulsive or decisive.
- be overt or covert.
- be the result of weakness or willfulness.
- have limited or great consequences.
- happen with great zeal for the Lord in your own strength.
- show itself in your mental attitudes, perspectives, or relationships.

But the root cause of all these issues is the sin nature.

- **Does God change your flesh at salvation? (7:18b)**
NO!

For I know that in me (that is, *in my flesh*) nothing good dwells. (Rom. 7:18)

Though God does not change your flesh and sin nature at salvation, we learned in Romans 6 that He does change your relationship to it. Now it is one thing to know that evil resides in your sin nature; it is another to understand that no good dwells in you. Thus, it is utter folly for you to rely on yourself to live the Christian life through your own willpower and strength. Yet Paul was confused as he stated that the “will is present with me” to do God’s will, because he possessed a new nature; but he was still mystified, stating, “but how to perform what is good I do not find.” Notice, it was still *him* who was trying to “perform what is good.” While we can fall into the same thinking as Paul in Romans 7 at any time in our Christian lives, God does want to get us out of the seventh of Romans and into the eighth chapter where we can have spiritual victory over sin as we walk by faith in Christ according to God’s Spirit.

- **Why do believers live in spiritual defeat? (7:18c-20)**

For I know that in me (that is, *in my flesh*) nothing good dwells; for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (Rom. 7:18-20)

Sometimes spiritual defeat is due to ignorance (as they don’t know the truths of Romans 6-8); it may be due to false teaching such as legalism or mysticism (Col. 2:16-23); it may be due to willfulness (they just choose to sin though knowing the truth); or it may be due to self-dependence as Paul was guilty of here in Romans 7.

- **What will the believer experience when he seeks to live the Christian life by law and seeks victory and fruit through his own strength? (7:21-25) FAILURE AND FRUSTRATION!**

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* (Rom. 7:21-25)

Before Paul can move on from Romans 7 to Romans 8 in his experience, he must come to the end of himself and his own efforts to perform the will of God. Thus, he cries out in despair,

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:24)

Paul is now looking for deliverance from the sin nature *apart from* his own strength and sheer will power.

- **While knowing the truth of Romans 6, and desiring to serve Jesus Christ, how did Paul end up in Romans 7?**

He defaulted into self-dependence instead of dependence upon the Lord! In doing so, he focused on himself instead of Christ as His life and began living by law instead of by grace.

God wants you to recognize and remember that the Christian life is a supernatural way of life, not lived by self-effort but through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. You must come to realize that the Christian life is to be lived in active dependence upon the Lord resulting in passive production on your part!

Paul, as a believer in Christ, finds himself confessing that he is wretched and in need of deliverance apart from his own wisdom and will. What a grand condition of heart to reach in

our lives when we finally start hating our chains instead of hugging them; when we finally quit trying to do great things for God and start learning to faith-rest in Him to do His will through us in the power of the Holy Spirit; when we finally start seeking to do God's will, God's way, instead of trying to help Him out. Believer, God does not need your wisdom or help. Jesus Christ is fully sufficient to live the Christian life through you if you reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Him and present yourself to the Lord to be enabled by the Holy Spirit to do it. Thus, Paul moves from self-occupation and self-effort, living by law ("I"), to crying out for divine deliverance. And his S.O.S. results in him focusing again upon the Lord:

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. (Rom. 7:25)

Who shall deliver me? *Jesus Christ* has delivered me and *He* will! Thus, Paul's focus is now on Jesus Christ and his position in Him. Only this time he recognizes his total inadequacy in himself to live the Christian life and instead realizes and trusts in Christ as his Life and resource for everything (John 15:1-5).

C. I. Scofield wrote years ago regarding Romans 7:

Not everyone, by any means, has had the experience of the seventh of Romans, that agony of conflict, of desire to do what we cannot do, of longing to do the right we find we cannot do. It is a great blessing when a person gets into the seventh of Romans and begins to realize the awful conflict of its struggle and defeat; because the first step toward getting out of the struggle of the seventh chapter and into the victory of the eighth, is to get into the seventh. Of all the needy classes of people, the neediest of this earth are not those who are having a heart-breaking, agonizing struggle for victory, but those who are having no struggle at all, and no victory, and who do not know it, and

who are satisfied and jogging along in a pitiable absence of almost all the possessions that belong to them in Christ.

Christians in the main groan and strive and struggle largely on the basis of human effort where the grace of God, though acknowledged, is scarcely operative — only to come to grief. Even at their best, they find the purpose of the Lord Jesus remains an ideal infinitely beyond their reach. The trouble lies in the fact that they are proceeding on the wrong basis. God does not expect them, as a result of their own endeavors, to be like the Lord Jesus. He expects them to realize the utter impossibility of such a thing (as in Romans Seven, where Paul comes to the end of himself). He expects them to know the Lord Jesus as their very life, disowning any other. He expects them to realize their position of absolute oneness with Christ, for He “has blessed them with every spiritual blessing in heavenly palaces in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). — F.J.H.

Dear struggling believer, regardless of your past failures, God has brought you to this point by His grace for such a time of practical victory as this! Don't believe what some popular radio Bible teachers tell you, namely that Romans 7 is the normal Christian life. It may unfortunately be the average Christian's life but it was never designed to be the normal Christian life. Instead, Romans 8 is to be the normal Christian life. So read on!

YOUR NEW POWER SOURCE TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE — THE HOLY SPIRIT!

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1)

Paul did not have to wait until he went to Heaven to enjoy victory over the sin nature; it was available “now.” The word,

“condemned,” does not refer to being condemned to Hell as if this was an eternal security verse (though you will never be condemned once you have been saved, according to John 5:24). The nuance of “condemned” in this context refers to not being condemned to a life of slavery to the flesh, which is the essential truth of Romans 6. As Paul focused once again on Jesus Christ, his thinking was flooded with the wonderful truth that he died to the sin nature and was now alive to God in Christ his Lord. But this time, there was a needed addition—a sense of his own inadequacy and his vital need for the power of the Holy Spirit! Why was Paul not condemned to live a life of either legalistic or licentious servitude to his flesh?

For the law [principle] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has 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 did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:2-4)

Yes, dear believer, God condemned the sin nature’s right to rule in your body. But God did not do this so that you could now successfully live the Christian life by your own strength or sheer willpower and self-dependence but through the liberating power of the Holy Spirit. This is critical to understand and to believe daily. To live a life of love towards God and others (“the righteous requirement of the Law”) is not fulfilled “by” us but “in” us when we walk according to the Spirit—a walk of faith in Christ by His grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You were indwelt (Rom. 8:9), sealed (Eph. 1:13), baptized (1 Cor. 12:13), regenerated (John 3:3-7), and gifted (Rom. 12:4-7) by the Holy Spirit the very moment you were born again and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. The Holy Spirit now wants to minister to you each day by:

- teaching you the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:12-13)
- enabling you to have victory over the flesh (Gal. 5:16)
- giving you power to live the Christian life (Eph. 5:18-20)
- producing spiritual fruit in your life (Gal. 5:22-23)

What was the rationale and need behind God giving the Holy Spirit to permanently indwell and empower you?

SOLVING THE “POWER PROBLEM” OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PERSON	MISSION	ABILITY
Believer:	to glorify Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:20-21)	totally inadequate (2 Cor. 3:5)
Holy Spirit:	to glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:14)	totally adequate (Zech. 4:6)
God’s Solution:	to place the Holy Spirit permanently inside every believer (Rom. 8:9)	

Let me illustrate the potential and power for victory and fruitfulness by using the analogy of a jet airplane. In order for a jet to travel in the air from one location to another, it is in need of a jet engine. Why? It is because there is a force (gravity) that hinders the jet’s ability to fulfill its mission. How can the force of gravity be overcome so that the plane rises above the ground, flies, and arrives at its destination and thereby fulfills the purpose of its existence? Is it by the pilot exercising his sheer willpower to do it? Never! (This was like Paul’s efforts in Romans 7.) Is it by him gathering a group of pilots to check on his weight training and strengthening exercises each week, or maybe even assisting him in his effort to move the plane?

Not at all! (This is the weakness of accountability groups.) Is it by denying the existence of the force of gravity or relabeling it? Impossible! (This is the problem of those who deny that the Christian has a sin nature and believe we only have one nature.) Is it by painting the outside of the jet so it didn't look like a jet any longer? That would never work! (This is the problem of legalistically changing external appearances without inner transformation and victory.) Is it by hoping that over time the force of gravity would somehow change? Foolish! (This is the problem of thinking that just more Bible study, prayer, or witnessing will change the sin nature and win the day – though these spiritual activities have a place in the Christian life.) Instead the solution would be to access and activate the jet engine which alone could provide the needed power to overcome the existing force of gravity. In the same way the Scriptures teach us,

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16)

Yet, the moment that the pilot no longer utilizes the power of the jet engine, the force of gravity defeats and controls the plane again. Do you understand the point?

The Holy Spirit's desire is to now teach you God's Word and occupy your thinking with Jesus Christ and His Word so that you can "abide" in faith and fellowship with Him, for Jesus said to his believing disciples that "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Thus, the apostle Paul says that you now have the potential for either a wonderful or a miserable life, depending on how you are responding:

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. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom. 8:5-6)

What are some of the "things" of the *flesh* that you can, but should not, set your mind on?

- a focus on SELF
- occupation with human viewpoint
- living for the temporary
- desiring the world's purposes and pursuits
- operating out of pride and self-dependence
- living as if you are still "in Adam"

What are some the "things" of the *Spirit*?

- a focus on Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21)
- occupation with divine viewpoint (Rom. 12:2)
- living in light of eternity (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
- desiring the Lord's purposes and pursuits (Rom. 12:2)
- operating out of humility and Christ-dependence (grace thinking – Rom. 12:3)
- living in view of your identity in Christ (Romans 6 & 8; Col. 3:1-4)

As a believer, you can choose to walk according to the norms and standards of the flesh and set your mind on the pursuits, pleasures, and perspectives of this ungodly world system and live a death-like existence out of fellowship with your Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Or, in contrast, you can choose to live according to the Holy Spirit and set your mind on the purposes, principles, and promises of the Word of God and enjoy life and peace daily. Which will it be?

The Christian Life Is a Walk of Faith in Christ as Your Life through the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

What does the word "walk" remind us of and what is the only thing consistent with God's grace? It is a step-by-step walk of faith

in Jesus Christ and the provisions and promises of His Word.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. (Col. 2:6-7)

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jer. 17:5-9)

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (2 Cor. 3:5)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

Dear believer, is there victory available over sin and the power necessary to be fruitful for Jesus Christ? Yes, but only by God's grace!

YOUR NEW APPEAL BY GOD – STOP BEING CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD BUT BE TRANSFORMED TO DO HIS WILL!

When we trusted in Christ as Savior, we were not only co-crucified, co-buried, and co-resurrected spiritually in Christ, but God “made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). You are now a member of the Universal Church or Body of Christ made up of all believers in Christ from the Day of Pentecost till the Rapture of the Church. Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven for a specific purpose and gave you a specific promise:

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:2-3)

Where did Jesus Christ go? He died for your sins, rose again, and *ascended into Heaven* (Acts 1:11). He presently has gone to the Father's house to prepare a place for you in Heaven. You are now a member of His Heavenly bride – the Church –

and one day Jesus Christ will come again. God now wants to develop in you a heavenly mindset so that you can live an earthly existence of spiritual significance for His honor and glory. Thus, the Word of God reminds you that:

- You have a Heavenly destiny and home which you should look forward to (John 14:1-3)
- You have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3)
- You have a heavenly inheritance that can never be lost or forfeited (1 Peter 1:3-5) which should cause you to view yourself as a stranger and pilgrim on earth (1 Peter 2:11)
- You have a heavenly citizenship which should cause you to eagerly wait for the Savior to return (Phil. 3:20-21)
- You have a heavenly calling in Christ that you should now walk consistent with (Eph. 2:6; 4:1)

Thus, it should not surprise you to read,

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

Because you are now in union with the Heavenly Christ, God now wants to develop in you a divine viewpoint and heavenly perspective of life. This is in stark contrast to the huge doses of human viewpoint and earthly perspective that have dominated your thinking over the years prior to your salvation. But notice how God appeals to you on the basis of His grace or mercies to accomplish this:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And *do not be conformed to this world*, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

The appeal to a transformed life is set forth earlier in Romans in light of the mercies of God and the grace of God:

- in justifying you and saving you from the penalty of sin (Rom. 3:21-31)
- in giving you peace with God (Rom. 5:1)
- in providing you access into God's grace (Rom. 5:2)
- in granting you assurance of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2)
- in having divine purpose to your trials (Rom. 5:3-4)
- in placing the love of God into your heart (Rom. 5:5)
- in giving you the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)
- in Christ having died for you (Rom. 5:6, 8)
- in promising you salvation from God's future wrath (Rom. 5:9)
- in reconciling you to God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:10)
- in guaranteeing your future salvation through Christ's everlasting life (Rom. 5:11)
- in translating you from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ" (Rom. 5:15-16)
- in receiving an abundance of God's grace (Rom. 5:17)

- in receiving the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17)
- in being now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ your Lord (Rom. 6:1-11)
- in being under grace instead of law (Rom. 6:14)
- in not being condemned to a life of slavery to your sin nature (Rom. 8:1)
- in possessing the Holy Spirit to enable and lead you (Rom. 8:2-16)
- in promising you that “all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28)
- in guaranteeing your future glorification as if it was already accomplished (Rom. 8:30)
- in guaranteeing that no one and nothing will ever separate you from God’s love (Rom. 8:35-39)

God now appeals to you again (like He did in Romans 6:13) to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). The word “reasonable” comes from the Greek word for “logical.” When you add up the divine facts, it is reasonable and logical for you now to present yourself to the Lord daily to do His will and not your own any longer. And with an attitude that is yielded to Him and dependent upon Him moment by moment, God is willing to bring you through the process of transforming your thinking over time from human viewpoint and the standards of the world to divine viewpoint and God’s standards in order to do God’s will. Keep in mind that just like trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior was the best decision you have ever made with eternal benefits, now letting God transform your thinking through His Word and responding by faith will allow you to do God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will. It doesn’t get better than that!

This is how you can enjoy the spiritual transformation that is available to you through your identification with Christ and

the Holy Spirit's power in your Christian life. Are you willing to let the Lord do just that? It is your reasonable response and service!

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

Finally, let me encourage you to read Romans 6-8 over and over to let its truths sink in, and even reread this booklet if necessary, since these truths do not come naturally to our thinking and the Holy Spirit must illuminate our understanding to grasp and appropriate this vital truth in our lives. You may also want to consider reading the next booklet in this developing series on various aspects of the Christian life that began with *I'm Saved! Now What?* The next booklet is titled, *I'm Saved and Want to Be Fruitful for Christ! But How?*

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Advocate – one who defends another, usually in a courtroom scene

Apostasy – the turning away from sound doctrine or biblical truths

Apostles – specific leaders with ultimate human authority in the early Church who served under Christ's Headship

Begotten – one of a kind

Believes – personal trust, reliance or confidence in some object of faith

Beloved – a special object of God's love

Blessed hope – the blessed anticipation of Christ's future coming for church age believers at the Rapture

Blood of Christ – Christ's violent, sacrificial death upon the cross when He died to save us

Bodily transformation – the instantaneous process in which the believer's physical body will become like Christ's resurrected body in a glorified state

Born again – a spiritual birth from God that happens only once, the moment a sinner places his trust in Christ alone

Carnality – the state in which the believer is living under the dominating control of the sin nature or flesh

Chosen – that God has personally chosen and designed a special plan for you

Condition – a person's spiritual state in time

Confession of sin – the believer's honest admission to God of his sins in order to be restored to fellowship with God

Crowns – the analogy taken from athletic contests in which the victor receives a reward for finishing the race or winning the fight

Dispensations – successive divine economies during human history in which individuals are tested by God concerning their faith and faithfulness to the divine revelation they have received (They are not different ways of salvation.)

Divine viewpoint – a perspective that is shaped by the norms, standards, and principles of God’s Word

Eternally secure – that one’s eternal salvation can never be lost, forfeited, given back, etc.

Evangelistic – the desire or attempts to preach the Gospel to the lost

Evangelists – specific individuals who preach the Gospel, planted local churches, and equip others to evangelize

Everlasting life – a right relationship with God that will last forever

False doctrine – false teaching that does not correctly interpret or agree with God’s Word

Fellowship – to have a joyful relationship and mutual compatibility/friendship with someone

The flesh – a synonym for the sin nature

Forgiveness – the divine releasing of the guilt of one’s sins because of the blood of Christ

Glorified – to obtain a state of glory with God in Heaven that involves the absence of sin and presence of righteousness

Gospel – the good news from God of Jesus Christ and salvation through Him

Grace – God’s unmerited or undeserved favor or blessing because of Who God is and what Christ has done

Great White Throne Judgment – the last judgment of mankind where all unbelievers will be judged by God for their unbelief in Christ resulting in every one being cast into the Lake of Fire

Heaven – a literal place of God’s presence and total freedom from sin

Heavenly places – the believer’s new realm of spiritual existence

Hell – a literal place of God’s fiery judgment

Holy Spirit – the third person of the Triune Godhead whose ministries are important to every believer

Human viewpoint – a perspective that is shaped by the norms, standards, and philosophies of the world system

Imputing – an accounting term that describes the placing of a debt or asset to one’s account

In Adam – the unbeliever’s position or identity as viewed by God

In Christ – the believer’s new position or identity as viewed by God

Intercessor – one who prays for another

Jesus Christ – the second person of the Triune Godhead who willingly became a man without sin to die for our sins and be raised from the dead to save us

Judgment Seat of Christ – the time following the Rapture in which Jesus Christ will evaluate the believer’s post-salvation life to determine whether or not each one will receive a reward

Justified – to be declared righteous by God in His courtroom because of the finished work of Jesus Christ

The Law – the law given by God to Moses which includes the Ten Commandments

New nature – the nature received with the new birth which now has desires for the things of God

Oracles of God – the authoritative Word of God

Parental forgiveness – the specific forgiveness that God offers to His born-again children when they sin

Pastors – spiritual shepherds of God’s flock who were to feed believers sound doctrine and oversee local churches

Peace of God – the believer’s state of inner tranquility when he casts his cares upon the Lord instead of carrying his own burdens

Peace with God – the changing from a relationship of hostility to harmony because of Jesus Christ

Position – a person’s spiritual standing before God

Positional forgiveness – the spiritual forgiveness God offers the unsaved when they place their faith in Christ

Powers – a term usually used also for angelic beings of a high rank like principalities

Prayer – communicating with God either mentally or verbally

Predestined – to predetermine the believer’s destiny in Christ, namely to be “glorified” (Rom. 8:28-30)

Principalities – a term usually used for angelic beings of a high rank

Prodigal son – the son in Luke 15 who rebelled against his father, wasted his life and inheritance by indulging in sin, but eventually came to the end of himself by returning to fellowship with his father

Progressive sanctification – to be daily and progressively set apart to God from sin and the world in true holiness

Prophets – specific individuals who received direct revelation from God that was oftentimes predictive in nature

Rapture – the future event when both believers in Christ who've already died and believers who are still alive are resurrected and caught up to meet the Lord in the air to return to Heaven

Reconciled – to be brought into a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ

Redeem – to purchase out of a slave-market through the payment of a price

Redeem the time – to buy out of time the opportunities God gives you to serve Him

Retrogress – to backslide in one's spiritual state

Rewards – the recompense from God for faithfulness in the earthly lives of believers which determines each one's place of future, eternal service for the Lord

Saint – one who is set apart to God, thus a term for every believer since all believers are in the Holy One, Jesus Christ

Salvation – being delivered or rescued from some danger or peril to a state of safety or blessing

Sanctified – to be set apart unto God

Saved – to be delivered or rescued from the penalty for sin, which is eternal separation from God in Hell

Scriptures – another term for the Bible which consists of sixty-six divinely inspired books

Sin – the act, motive, word, or deed that is contrary to God's will and holy character

Sin nature – the naturally-born tendency or propensity to sin and rebel

Sound doctrine – healthy scriptural teaching based on the Bible

Spiritual blessings – the divine favors that have been bestowed upon every believer in Christ

Spiritual growth – the process of spiritual maturation that should occur after one is born again

Spiritually baptized – the believer is baptized or placed into union with Christ by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation

Spiritually dead – the unsaved are separated from God

Substitutionary death – Christ died in our place and for our sins

Supplication – to make an intense petition or request to God

Transformed – to be spiritually changed from the inside out

Trials – tests designed or allowed by God for the believer's good and spiritual growth to refine his faith

Unregenerate – the spiritual condition of all unbelievers who are without spiritual life in Christ

Verse-by-verse exposition – explaining the Bible verse-by-verse in its context in a systematic way

Walk – to conduct yourself step by step in a certain manner

The world – while it may refer to the earth or its inhabitants, it is often used in Scripture to describe the world system controlled by Satan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Dennis M. Rokser (M.Div., D.Min., Grace Biblical Seminary) has pastored Duluth Bible Church since 1985. The focus of his teaching has been the Gospel of God's grace as it relates to salvation, eternal security, the believer's identification/position in Christ, and living by grace through faith-resting in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

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