

Our Glorious Inheritance In Christ

A Comprehensive Summary of Romans 5-9

Introduction

Every man and woman on the face of the earth has a weight hanging over them. For some this is a heavy and frightening weight of guilt and sin; for others who have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, this weight is far different.

As a result of our disobedience to God we all have, by nature, the wrath of God hovering above us just waiting to be released and growing larger by the day (Jn 3:36; Rm 2:5). This is the due recompense in the justice of God for our wrongdoing. Every idle thought and every good thing omitted, as well as actual evil committed is worthy of the wrath of God. Just imagine that: every unworthy thought, every loose word, every guilty action is worthy of death. Just one sin is enough to damn us.

The wonderful power of the Gospel is that the salvation we have in Christ releases us from this burden. Paul explains in Romans 4 and 5 that God put Jesus forward as a propitiation by his blood. This means that the sacrifice of God's Son at Calvary turned away God's just anger towards sinners (Rm 4:25). God is rightly angry (wrathful) towards sinners and says that the souls which sin shall die (Ezek 18:4). Each of our sins justly deserves death. Jesus was put forward by God as a substitutionary sacrifice for all the sins we would ever commit. He died in our place. God freely offers this sacrifice to us to believe in. As we believe in Jesus dying for us we are justified by His free grace (Rm 4:24). This means that we are legally pardoned of our guilt, declared not guilty, freely forgiven.

Paul explains that our faith in God's provision of salvation in Christ is reckoned to us as righteousness. It is as if we owed a huge debt which weighed down heavily upon us and one day we were dragged into court to pay the price one way or another. The first blessing of justification is that this debt is removed and what was owed is paid for by someone else. We then legally stand in court cleared of all that we owed. The slate has been wiped clean.

But justification is more than this. God does not leave his blessing there. We do not remain with just a clear balance ready to fall into debt again. God gives us a huge credit in our bank account so that we could never fall into debt again. We walked into the courtroom

with a weight of debt; we walked out with a weight of credit, treasure. We are given an inheritance.

Paul shows that justification gives us the righteousness of Christ (Rm 4:3-6). The righteousness of Jesus Christ is the most powerful and deep righteousness there could possibly be. This is imputed (credited) to those who believe in him or, reckoned to our account. We come to Christ as paupers, steeped in blackness and sin; but Jesus takes that blackness and loathsome sin, dies the death of deaths in our place, and rewards us with his perfect righteousness. It is this which enables us to stand in the presence of God in the beauty of Christ's life, legally able to stand before God in the position of a son (Rm 8:1; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9).

Paul then explains that this good news goes further. God's promise to Abraham was that he and his descendants would inherit the earth (Rm 4:13). The righteousness of faith was how Abraham himself entered this promise. We also become heirs of this promise by our faith (Rm 4:16). We, as it were, share the faith of Abraham and become his offspring since Christ is the seed of Abraham who inherits the promise, and we are in Christ (Gal 3:6-7, 26, 29).

There are numerous results of this justification by faith which Paul begins to explain in Romans 5. For instance: peace with God, access to grace and sharing God's glory. Paul goes on to argue the case for the great doctrines of identification (our union with Christ), sanctification (our progress in holiness), life in the Spirit, freedom from the law, election etc. all of which flow from the initial justification by faith. In Ephesians Paul talks about the immeasurable riches of the grace of God towards us (Eph 2:7) and the unsearchable riches in Christ (Eph 3:8). This is a description of the weight that a Christian now has hovering above him and residing in him, instead of a burden of sin.

It is the devil's intention to prevent Christians from understanding this. He will use any means to keep believers from understanding their position in Christ, the greatness of his power in us (Eph 1). He is quite happy to encourage Christians to celebrate the fact that the slate has been wiped clean, so long as they do not discover that they have an inheritance in Christ to utilise to his glory.

Jesus obedience secured for him all the promised blessings of the Old Testament to the righteous man. Take a look at the Psalms alone to see an inkling of what this means. Just Psalm 1 contains promises of blessing, fruitfulness and prosperity. All of these are Christ's and he has shared this inheritance with us because we are IN HIM.

This little booklet is an attempt to scratch the surface of these promises with a view to encouraging Christians to be more aware of the greatness of this salvation in Christ and the resources that are available to meet the enemy.

Glory now

In Romans 8:30 Paul states categorically that '... those whom he justified he also glorified'. Matthew Henry pithily sums this up a '*grace is glory begun*'.

Paul did not get his tense wrong (Biblical inspiration is plenary – complete in every sense.) Although our bodies wait to be changed at Christ's return, the package of salvation is complete. There is no further work to be done in heaven; there is no doctrine of purgatory in the Bible. We have been glorified. We have been given a full share of the inheritance Christ received at his ascension. Part of us is in the heavenlies, seated with Christ (Eph 2:6). Our real life is not tied to the earth, we have died to this world and its fading

splendour (Gal 6:14). We are seen by God as placed in Christ and he is seated at the right hand of God, hence Paul could say that we have been 'blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' (Eph 1:3). Not that it is heavenly places, not earth. That is why the Christian life is one of continual faith. We look to the consummation of our salvation at Christ's return and live our lives here as if we are only camping temporarily (2 Cor 5:1-5; Heb 11:13, 13:14; 1 Pt 2:11). The focus is not here, but Christ and heaven.

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. (Col 3:1-3)

One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind. (Phil 3:13-15)

We have so little understanding of what this glory is. The key is that Christ is glorified and we are in him. What is true of Christ as our head is true of us (apart from his personal glory as God). Is he blessed? So are we. Is he loved by God the Father? So are we. Does he have access to the power of God? So do we.

The problem is that we do not see this as being true for us, so we do not lay hold of it and we live such weak lives. Paul tells us to apprehend the fulness of Christ (Eph 3:18). He explains that we have come to fulness of life in Christ in whom the fulness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:9-10). How often do we cry to God in self-pity for blessings that he has already given us in Christ. The fruit of the Spirit worked out gradually in our lives is only the character of Christ which we have in seed form from the time of our justification. We need to learn about this life and nourish it by trusting God and acting upon his word. Instead we ignore Christ's life in us and then cry for patience or love or self-control as if God will drop some package out of heaven to answer our prayer. These things are not items to be called down but character traits to be grown up. This is why our sufferings are so necessary – suffering is the ground in which these things develop.

Just look at texts on glory and you will often see texts on suffering close by e.g: Rm 8:30 - glory, Rm 8:26 – weakness, Rm 8:28 – circumstances (including suffering), Rm 8:35 distress, persecution, tribulation; Rm 8:18 suffering and glory in the same verse; 1 Pt 4:13 both in the same verse; 1 Pt 5:10 both in the same verse; Heb 2:9 both in the same verse; 2 Tim 2:12 suffering and reigning in the same verse.

Suffering is necessary for glory. Could this be why there is often such a poor understanding of our glorious inheritance in Christ? This current age seems to want to avoid all possible suffering by teaching an unbiblical prosperity message; over-emphasising signs and wonders, or a wrong focus on various healing and counselling ministries.

Modern Christians seem to think that suffering is abnormal, a failure which should be obviated as soon as possible by submitting to some power ministry. However, the New Testament has a larger theology of suffering than of healing or counselling and the subject deserves renewed study. Many Greek words are used to describe suffering, most meaning: endure, sustain, remain under, bear long or suffer. These words are used 65 times in the Greek New Testament, not counting associated words like: adversity, tribulation, affliction, bear or trouble. This is not the place to investigate this doctrine, but suffice to say that it is an important Biblical truth which is much neglected and misunderstood. True Christians are guaranteed suffering (Phil 1:29) and it is even said to be a proof of real faith. This is the opposite of what is often taught today where suffering people who are not healed are viciously told that sickness is due to their lack of faith! Our interest here is that suffering is

part of our experience of glory. It helps us to realise that we are not of this world and encourages us to seek a city which has foundations – God’s kingdom, our inheritance in Christ.

History is replete with examples of people who knew about this glory, experienced its fulness, at least to a degree, and yet were people despised by the world, who had little in worldly property and suffered much. Were not Jesus himself and Paul examples of the same thing?

The Inheritance

So, there is an inheritance for all those who have been justified; but what is it? Obviously this is a huge subject that would require many books to do it justice; all I can do here is point to key elements and offer guides to further study. Essentially my aim is to show readers that they are wealthy beyond description. They are even constitutionally different to unbelievers, a new order of mankind (2 Cor 5:17), and could be considered as supermen by comparison. But those who apprehend the inheritance do not view this wealth in worldly terms. Those who know its secrets are those who deny themselves; they are prepared to lose their lives and endure suffering. They have let God have complete control over every aspect of their lives and are prepared to take even their best attributes and gifts into death. They have a loose hold on life and this world and have no desire for worldly position, rather they are servants of all. Let us first look at what Paul delineates as important aspects of the power of the Gospel which follow justification in his letter to the Romans.

The Fruit of Justification

(Rm 5:1-17)

Peace with God

Therefore, since we are justified by faith we have peace with God. (Rm 5:1)

Man by nature is God's enemy (Rm 5:10). We are sinners by nature and God is angry with such. Nowhere are we told that God loves sinners, rather the Bible says that God hates sinners (Ps 5:4-5; 11:5-6; 34:21; 37:20; Prov 3:33; Jn 5:42; Eph 2:1-12). This is the underlying cause of unbeliever's unease. Man is separated from God, disobeys his conscience and knows that one day he will have to give an account of his life. Man can expect only judgment, hence we are described as '*children of wrath*' (Eph 2:4). The first benefit of justification is that we are now at peace with God, no longer at enmity.

The world is racing from one experience to another to find peace. These experiences, which supposedly offer inner purity, outward wholesomeness and overall peace, become crazier each passing year. If you had told your great grandfather that people would be foolish enough to believe that they could improve their lives by staring at crystals, chanting to a demonic foreign god with a bald head for hours, or cleaning out their bowels by colonic irrigation, he would have thought you were mad. Yet these things are all around us and well known personalities line up to try them.

There is no peace for the wicked (Isa 48:22). A sinner cannot salve his conscience without having his sins forgiven and getting right with God. Nothing man can do alone can bring lasting peace. For the justified believer, however, he is immediately aware for the first time of a deep peace between himself and God. Not only that, God promises to keep him in *perfect peace* (Isa 26:3); perfect peace is part of the inheritance. Isn't this the foundation of all else - peace in all circumstances; no matter how violent or fearful? The Christian can know peace at all times if he trusts in Jesus who gives us His peace (Jn 14:27).

Access to grace in which we stand

... through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand (Rm 5:2)

Peace with God is a direct result of complete reconciliation with God. The barriers to relationship have been taken down so that we have complete access into the presence of God. Not only that but we are warmly welcomed into heavenly fellowship and even told to draw near with full assurance of faith (Heb 4:6, 10:22).

We stand before God in a position of grace, unmerited kindness. We don't deserve it, but it's true. Nothing can hold us back from enjoying a welcome into God's presence apart from our own lack of faith. Even sin can't stop us. We have an advocate with the Father, someone who stands on our behalf. This someone is Jesus (1 Jn 1:12) who has provided a sacrifice that deals with all sin. As we trust in His blood to cleanse us and confess our sin we are ensured of fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:5-120).

You have a standing in heaven. There is a place for you and there always will be a specific role for you in the fellowship of God. God wants you by his side! God always welcomes his Son as the apples of his eye and He sees you as in him!

In addition, we have access to God's supply of grace for all that we will ever need (Heb 4:16). Those who are near the throne of God will receive kingly supply.

Rejoice in the hope of sharing the glory of God

Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rm 5:2)

The justified believer is entitled to a confident hope in sharing God's glory. Peter tells us that God called us to His own glory and excellence. There are two aspects to this glory. There is a future prospect - when we will be caught up with Jesus and changed in the twinkling of an eye to share the physical glory of eternal life, immortality in the presence of God (1 Cor 15:43; Col 3:4). Then there is also a present experience where Jesus' glory is seen and felt in many ways in our lives when we put him first, e.g. in suffering obediently (1 Pt 4:13).

This gives us cause for exultation and rejoicing. If we die we go to be with Christ (Phil 1:23). If we survive until His coming, we are caught up in the clouds with Christ and changed to be like Him (1 Jn 3:2; 1 Thess 4:17). If we suffer, we can rejoice that we are glorifying our Saviour by our testimony.

Jesus was full of glory but it was hidden from view. His glory was seen in his character by those who knew Him. John says that he beheld his glory (Jn 1:14) and associates that with Jesus' grace and truth. This disciples saw the glory of God in the way Jesus lived his life, not just in the Shekinah glory at the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus' continual obedience to all that the Father said and did led to the glory of God being seen in many ways. Likewise, we can be full of glory now and glorify God in what we do if we follow him.

Rejoicing in sufferings

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rm 5:3-5)

We are assured that all suffering will have a point, We are not at the whim of fate. Our sufferings are part of God's plan for our lives to build character. Only by suffering can we learn endurance, depth of character and hope. Suffering is necessary for us; indeed the New Testament sees it as a proof of faith. Paul even introduces suffering here by saying 'more than that'; more than what? More than rejoicing in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, Paul says, we rejoice in our suffering. Not, 'can rejoice' but 'we rejoice'. The hope of sharing God's glory is amazing, but more than that we have confidence in our trials and tribulations knowing that it is these that produce character, i.e. work out the glory of God in our lives now. Paul does not dismiss suffering, or gloss over it with expectations of miracles, he endorses it as a grace of God to teach us.

See further: Rm 8:18, 30; 2 Cor 4:17; Col 1:27; 2 Tim 2:10; 2 Pt 1:3.

Assurance

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Rm 5:6-9)

How could we be better assured of our new relationship with God than by what Paul says in these verses? It was while we were dead in sin, helpless, lost and in enmity towards God

the He saved us. We were no more than rebellious dust before him when he sent his Son to die in our place.

God shows his love towards us supremely by justifying his own enemies. We deserved death, but God chooses us, calls us and saves us. Are the present weaknesses and failures of our lives worse than this blackness he saved us from? Of course not. God will not desert us now after doing so much for us.

In calling us to come into his presence, God says that we can be not only assured, but fully assured. We must believe this since it is an assurance of **faith**:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. (Heb 10:22)

God loved us, even when we were in the filthy rags of sin, and proved it by sending Jesus to die for us. He will not stop loving us now we are clean in his sight (Rm 8:30-38; Heb 10:10).

Saved in Jesus' life

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rm 5:9-10)

God is now looking after us as his own sons. He justified us as sinners by the blood of Jesus and we are now his special possession. Jesus is at God's right hand working on our behalf. His ministry as our Saviour continues in what theologians call, 'his heavenly session'.

Pre-eminently Jesus is interceding for us all the time (Heb 7:25, 8:1, 9:24). Do you ever feel, like Elijah, that you are struggling for the testimony of God alone? That no one is lifting you up towards God? Well Jesus is always lifting you up, always praying for you and his prayers are always answered.

More than that, verse 10 says that we shall be saved **in** his life. Jesus' death reconciled us to God but Jesus is now actively working for us. His death gave us peace **with** God, his life enables us to have the peace **of** God. Our salvation and all its benefits are secured **in him**. Jesus' death paid the penalty of our sin but now his life, his power and presence in us, is saving us from the power and presence of sin by giving us a new life to live (Jn 3:36, 10:10). We are untied to Christ. We live because we are in him. We are not living on the old level any more. Paul will go on to explain this more fully in Chapter 6.

Jesus is the king of kings. There is no greater authority in the universe. God has committed to him the government of all things and you are found in him. His life is working on your behalf. What could be more assuring than that?

Reign in life

For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) (Rm 5:17)

Man was created at first to rule the earth under God. At his fall man ceased to rule and became subservient to everything: the devil, sin, nature and even his own desires. Salvation in Christ has changed all that so that we can once more start to reign. We first learn how to rule our own nature. This means conquering sinful desires and natural tendencies, a subject that Paul now develops further for three chapters. To those who learn the principles of ruling, God entrusts authority in further areas. Some have an abundance

of grace to dominate the enemy in various spheres; others learn how to take souls captive in evangelism, others still learn to shepherd the flock and safeguard the Lord's people, yet others resign in their own lives in the face of tremendous odds, and serve as a powerful example to the church and a witness to the world.

In the future kingdom we will all have scope to rule in various capacities and even judge angels (1 Cor 6:3).

The Headship of Adam and the Headship of Christ (Rm 5:12-23)

As Paul leads up to explaining the great truths of our liberty in Christ from sin and law, he outlines the fact that there has been a tremendous transfer of life for the Christian. The changes that occur in us and the benefits we receive from justification are because we have been given a new life which is wholly other than that which we were born with. Those who are born again have left the life of Adam and have become one with the life of Jesus Christ.

Paul here draws comparisons and contrasts between two federal heads: Adam and Christ. We can best illustrate this as follows:

ADAM	CHRIST
Disobedient	Obedient
Natural life	Resurrection (eternal) life
Entrance of sin into the world	Entrance of righteousness
Entrance of death through sin	Entrance of life through righteousness
Law magnifies the transgression of sin	Righteousness is given as free gift of grace
Condemnation	Justification
Death reigns	Believers reign in life
Sin reigns	Grace reigns

The life of Adam and the life of Christ, God's new man, are seen as two opposing forces, two opposite columns of life. We were all in Adam, the elect are now all in Christ and were always seen that way by God (Eph 1:4).

Paul is making it clear that we are not of the old life any more. The blessings of justification, the inheritance of Christ, are for those in Christ, who himself is the firstborn of a new race of people. We must think Biblically about ourselves. Believers are not in the old life (Adamic life) who then get washed in the blood of Jesus every time they sin to clean that life up. Believers are not an old wineskin that gets patched up every time they sin.

The glory of the Gospel is that Christians have been completely taken out of this Adamic life, this old nature, this flesh, and have been made a new creation after the likeness of God in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17). The old life is dead. We are now IN CHRIST.

Having made this clear in chapter 5, Paul can now go on to apply the amazing benefits of this principle in the next three chapters.

Deliverance from the power and rule of sin (Romans 6)

Paul has shown that there are two federal heads: Adam and Christ. The one is the source of death and condemnation; the other the source of life and grace. So far we have seen that faith in Christ has reconciled us unto God and given us peace and grace. We stand before God forgiven, but what about the problem of internal sin - the root of our iniquity? Our sins are forgiven but is sin dealt with? If we are fully forgiven for all time then we could keep on sinning, there is no obligation to be holy since the more we sin, the more grace will

abound. This question has to be asked of all true Gospel preaching because the good news is so staggering in its presentation of grace and forgiveness.

The answer is: 'of course not'. 'God forbid', Paul says. Such a thought is the very opposite of God's purpose. Sin must not be allowed to reign in the Christian; grace must reign (Rm 5:21). The sinful principle and root of our lives must not just be deposed but destroyed. How does this take place? This is what this chapter is all about. Part of the inheritance for believers is that the sinful root of our lives is completely undermined as a result of death. Only our death can remove this polluted nature. Justification deals with forgiveness of sins committed and allows us to stand before God as legally righteous in Christ but identification with Christ in his death and resurrection enables us to be free from the dominion of sin now. This chapter has been described as the Magna Carta of the Christian life. To see this and live in the good of it totally changes the way you live. No Christian can properly function in life without understanding this teaching. It is absolutely critical in living the abundant life which Christ promised us.

Dead in Christ

Paul first makes clear that the believer HAS died in Christ. It is presented time after time as an historical fact:

- v2 How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
- v3 As many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death.
- v4 We were buried with him through baptism into death.
- v5 We have been united together in the likeness of his death.
- v6 Our old man (old nature, Adamic life, sinful flesh) was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away with (destroyed).
- v7 For he who has died is free from sin.
- v8 If we died with Christ.
- v11 Likewise you also must reckon yourselves dead to sin.

So Paul emphasises that we died with Christ on the cross 2000 years ago. Obviously we are still alive so this must have been in a spiritual sense appreciated by faith at this point in time. This is true of us but we must see and believe it so that we can live in the practical good of it, God identifies us as with Christ at the cross. Paul says in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life I live in the flesh I live in the Son of God.

Paul calls this identification with Christ's death a baptism, a putting into, just like you dip your finger into a jar of honey. We were placed into Christ in his death and resurrection at Calvary. In Colossians 2:11 Paul calls this a circumcision, a cutting off of the sinful flesh:

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.

So Paul has made clear that the Christian has died with Christ by being placed into Christ's death and buried with him. This is the first point.

Deliverance from slavery to sin

Why was this done? Answer: to deliver us from the power of sin. Only by taking us out of the old Adamic nature altogether could we be free of sin's power. The old nature is the stomping ground of the Devil. It is this nature which is tempted and lured to sin. God does not reform or patch this life up - he kills it. It has to go. The Devil rules Adam, God reigns

in Christ. We have to be taken out of the one and placed into the other. This ends the dominion of sin:

- v6 Our old man (old nature) was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.
- v7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.
- v10/11 For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life that he lives he lives to God, likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin.
- v12 Therefore do not let sin reign.
- v14 For sin shall have no dominion over you.
- v15 Shall we sin ... certainly not.
- v17 You were slaves of sin.
- v18 Having been set free from sin.
- v19 Now present your members as slaves of righteousness.
- v20 You were slaves of sin.
- v22 Having been set free from sin and become slaves of God.

The believer is no longer a slave of sin and the devil. All who are in Adam are slaves to sin. The only escape is to die to that life and be born and raised into a new life where there is no Adam. The Christian is IN CHRIST In him you are a slave to righteousness, not sin.

You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 1:3)

Where is the blessing of God? It is in Christ (Eph 1:3). We cannot patch up our old life - it has to die. Christians must not strive to make their Adamic flesh better and better - it gets worse and worse (Eph 4:22). The only solution to life is to realise that you are dead to sin because your Adamic life is dead and buried.

Alive in Christ

That is one side of the coin, but Paul also emphasises that as we died with Christ, we were also raised with him too.

- v4 Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- v5 We also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.
- v8 If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.
- v11 Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- v13 Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.
- v23 The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are placed in Christ by God. Just as he died, we died. Just as he was buried, we were buried. Just as he was raised, we were raised. In the Greek original, Paul says that we were co-crucified (Gal 2:20), co-buried (Col 2:12), co-raised (Col 2:12), co-quickened (made alive Col 2:13).

And you have come to fulness of life in him ... In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ [i.e. death] and you were buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God; who raised him from the dead. And you who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him. (Col 2:10-13)

For the believer, the old life of Adam has gone, the new life of Christ is now ours. But this has to be believed and acted upon or it is of no value. Many fail to see this and are

continually struggling in their lives trying, and failing, to make their Adamic old life more acceptable to God. It is hopeless. Others, recognising it is hopeless, try to bring God's standards of righteousness down to the level of ability and excuse all sorts of sin eg 'white' lies. This is hypocrisy.

The need for revelation

Only by seeing that our old life is dead and that we are raised with Christ can we have power to reign in life. The Holy Spirit cannot bring grace to the old nature. No matter how long and hard you pray for strength, patience, love etc, if you are seeking to bless the old life, that prayer will never be answered. The life you wish to strengthen has been declared by God to be dead. The Holy Spirit will not bless the Adamic life and cannot give power to a corpse killed by God. There is no grace in the old nature! On the contrary, there is no sin in the new nature made in the likeness of God (1 Jn 3:6,9). The new life in Christ is the place of blessing (Eph 1:3) and the place where grace is not only present, but lavished upon us (Eph 1:8), grace abounds upon this life. The key to all our problems is to get out of Adam and into Christ on a practical day to day basis.

How to make this practical

So first all this must be believed. Paul says: 'Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God.' (Rm 6:11). There is no choice here, we either obey or don't. We must reckon that what God says is true, is true of us. We have seen the word 'reckon' before in Romans. It means: to take into account, count, reckon. You must believe, take into account that God says you are dead to sin and alive to God because he has taken you out of Adam and put you into Christ through death and resurrection.

If a spoonful of sugar is dipped (baptised) into warm water it becomes a soluble solution, the two become one. The sugar is in the water. If that jar of water is moved from the kitchen to the lounge where is the sugar? It is in the lounge. No one walked into the lounge with a spoonful of sugar; but because the sugar is in the water, the sugar goes where the water is. Likewise we are seen by God as in Christ. Christ is raised from the dead and filled with grace so we are also.

Finally we must act upon our faith. It is no good just believing. We are faced with choices all the time and must act upon the basis of this teaching. All my problems are in Adam. The old me. That is where sin abides and where the Devil tempts me. I must determine to believe he is dead and put it off day by day. In other words, act on the basis of what God says is true.

Look to Christ

Firstly, direct your vision to godly things not earthly:

If then you have been 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 of the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:1-3)

Put off the old nature

Secondly, determine always to put off what is the old you:

Put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt ... and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and that you put on the new man. (Eph 4:22-24 NKJV)

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt ... and put on the new nature. (Eph 4:22-24 RSV)

Each day as you feel temptation begin to rise in that old life say no to it. Declare the truth that God says, 'It is dead'. The Holy Spirit will then come with strength and grace as you stand on the truth of God's word.

For example: you have always had a bad temper. It's your main weakness and has always been so. Before, as it rose within you getting hotter and hotter, you struggled and strived to hold it down. You succeeded for a while, but eventually it exploded with all its vehemence and anger. Your struggling to resist it always made it worse. What's more you are confused because, since you became a Christian, the struggle was added to prayer for God to stop this rising up of temper - it always failed. You always then said sorry to God and believed you were forgiven - you experienced justification but not identification. Now, as your temper rises up you declare that the old nature which feeds this temper is dead. (Do it verbally if it helps). Take the stand of faith that your old nature is dead. Declare that you are now alive in Christ who does not have a bad temper. Praise God that this is true. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live this truth then resist the temper by refusing to yield to it - on the basis of the new life.

Determine not to allow sin to reign

Thirdly, resist sin:

Therefore [i.e. because we are dead to sin and alive to God] do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. (Rm 6:12)

If we do, we again let sin make a slave of us. We cease to be God's slave in practise and become sin's slave (Rm 6:16). We must resist the tendency to sin as we saw above. Not as a struggle with the old nature, but on the faith basis that the old nature is dead. This truth does not eliminate effort to be holy which Paul calls a 'good fight of faith' (1 Tim 6:12). The struggle intended by Paul is the one to take hold of eternal life in the face of opposition to receive it (1 Tim 6:12). The Devil will do everything he can to prevent Christians from experiencing the truth of Romans 6. The fight is not a struggle to reform the old nature. This is the critical difference between truth and error, success and failure, spiritual striving and fleshy struggle, Biblical sanctification and human effort.

Determine to obey God

Fourthly, present your life to God. Make a declared stand that you will now follow God, obey him, do what is right. Set a new direction on the basis that the old tendencies are now dead.

Just as you presented your members (of the body) as slaves of uncleanness, leading to more lawlessness. So now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (Rm 6:19 NKJV)

Just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. (RSV)

This bears fruit of righteousness and results in a greater and greater experience of eternal life (Rm 6:22).

This is God's plan for a proper life. It is the basic foundation of godly living. It is the crux of Paul's theology and the centre of Paul's doctrinal teaching in Romans (ie chapter 6 in the midst of chapters 1-11). This needs to be understood before one can go on to experience deliverance from a legalistic lifestyle (ie one that depends on following rules instead of the Holy Spirit see Rm 7) and to fullness of life in the Spirit (Rm 8).

Appendix

Some may question how our old nature is still with us if it is dead.

The Christian life is to be lived by faith. God says many things are true of us which we will not fully experience until we die or Jesus comes again. Perhaps the greatest is John's statement that: 'as he is so are we in this world' (1 Jn 4:17). Yet earlier he says: 'it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him' (1 Jn 3:2).

Like the kingdom of God, it is 'here and not yet'. The fulness is to come. The transaction and accomplishment is finished in God's eyes but the practical fulfilment is future. The same is true of the defeat of Satan and rulership of the world. Both are said to be complete, Jesus is Satan's victor and the King of Kings, yet we see a world and the Devil in continuing opposition to him at this time. There is no more work to be done. 'It is finished', Jesus cried at the cross; but he awaits the perfect timing of God for its consummation.

Until we have a renewed body to go with our new heart and spirit, there will be a tension in our lives. This tension is used by God to test us and train us for righteousness. It builds character. Peter calls this the 'salvation of the soul'. Our spirits are changed and saved. Our bodies will be saved at Christ's coming and our souls are being saved as we make right choices now by believing God's word. As we win in one area of our character, God starts dealing with another. But always, the way to win is by using Rm 6. At the moment God may be teaching us victory over one level of temper. Tomorrow it may be a new level of love etc.

Furthermore, the word 'dead' means separation. When we die our spirit is separated from our body. We have been separated from our sinful nature but it has not been removed (see 1 Jn 1:8). We can choose to live in that nature and disobey God.

The word 'destroyed' in Rm 6:6 puzzles many:

We know that our old man [old nature] was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

The Greek word destroyed means: to render idle, inactive, inoperative, unemployed, to cease. So the meaning is that our old Adamic nature was crucified with Christ so that our physical body - a vehicle prone to sin as a result of the control of the old nature itself dominated by sin, might be made inoperative. We no longer have to be enslaved to the domination of sinful flesh.

To illustrate: through death, God has engaged the clutch on the gears of the old nature so that the body (the car) is disengaged from the control of sin. The body is obviously not physically destroyed at this point.

A New Relationship to the Law

Romans 7

Introduction

We are still looking at the benefits of this new life in Christ which Paul has been explaining in the book of Romans. We have seen that Justification has resulted in tremendous blessing. We have been lifted out of the old Adamic life by dying with Jesus. His death was not only substitutionary (i.e. he died for my sins in my place), but it was also representative (I died with him on that cross). As a result, the power of sin in the old life has been undercut; the root cause of sin in my old nature has been dealt with. I do not have to be dominated by sin anymore, I have a choice as to which life I will express in my body: the new, resurrection life of Christ or the old sinful life of Adam. Paul continues this teaching by explaining our new relationship to the Law as a result of having a new life that is spiritual, not earthly.

Paul has already mentioned in Rm 6:14-15 that our position to the law has radically changed as a result of death:

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

In chapter 7, Paul launches into a full exposition of what this means for believers. As we have seen before, his fulness of thought and his style of argument can be hard to follow, particularly here. To aid understanding, I am again breaking the chapter down into blocks of thought.

An utter failure to live life right

Paul is anxious that no one drags themselves around struggling and striving to be godly. He pictures a person desperate to do good and trying hard to obey God by observing his commandments but finding that there is an evil principle inside (the old nature) which continually drags him down to utter failure. The more he tries, the worse it seems to get:

- **The very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. (v10)**
- **For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. (v11)**
- **I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (v15)**
- **For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. (v18)**
- **For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. (v19)**
- **So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (v21)**
- **For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, (i.e. spirit) but I see in my members (i.e. body) another law at war with the law of my mind (i.e. choice, will) and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am. (v22-24)**

Surely this picture is clear. This man is a believer and this chapter is for Christians.

A short word is necessary here as some dismiss this passage as hard to understand, depressing in content and explain it away by referring it to unbelievers.

- Paul is following a clear pattern which started with unbelievers in chapter 1 & 2 and moved progressively forward. His theme is to demonstrate the power of the gospel. It makes no sense for Paul to suddenly switch to thinking of the unbeliever half way through enumerating the blessings of this gospel.

- It's obvious that Paul is speaking from experience here, some find it hard to think that Paul could feel this bad and suffer such defeat. But God trains his servants to learn by experience and to teach from what is real to them, not some theory learned from others.
- When Paul was unregenerate, he considered himself blameless under the law (Phil 3:6). Legalistically he had done what was necessary but he had no inner reality, no regenerated spirit leading him towards God's perfection. In other words, his standards of good were low enough to achieve. As an unbeliever he did not feel 'captive to the law of sin', so this chapter is Paul talking as a Christian.
- Therefore, this chapter is written to Christians, and is an essential part of the argument for the blessings of the gospel, written to those who desperately want to do good and are aware that there is another power within them that leads them astray. Romans 7 explains what happens when Christians fail to apply the teaching in Romans 6 which should lead to the blessings of life in the Spirit shown in chapter 8. Romans 7 is necessary for all of us who have tried to live up to God's standard **in the flesh, in the strength of the old nature, in the power of the old life, and failed. It leads to despair.** This chapter explains this situation. Far from it being unnecessary for Christians, it is vital. Every Christian I meet finds himself or herself in this situation sometimes. Sadly some seem never to escape.

To return to the teaching; the picture Paul paints is clear: it is possible to live life like this experiencing continual and total failure; overcome by sin because you strive to be good by keeping the law in your own strength. This chapter is part of Paul's argument because we all do this. If this chapter wasn't here we would be bemused and confused. As Christians, we want to do good and easily fall into the trap of trying to live up to God's standard by trying as hard as we can without grace. In God's great plan and because he cares for us, this chapter is included in the explanation of how to live in the power of God's gospel.

Perhaps you don't relate to all this talk about The Law, which after all relates to Jews. But what about new years' resolutions? What about your continual measuring yourself against a code you have developed which is your opinion of Christian standards? What about the arbitrary rules which Christians and churches establish to identify those who do right? For instance, in some circles it is said that Christians do not drink, do not dance and do not go to the cinema. In yet other Christian circles you would appear strange if you failed to do these things. Living like this is living under law. It is looking to rules and regulations legalistically to hold on to life. Paul is showing us that firstly, this doesn't work; secondly, it depends on the flesh, the strength of our old life; but most importantly, it fails to utterly depend upon the grace of God in Christ for power and guidance to live a right life. We will look further into that shortly. Let us return to Paul's method of explanation here.

What is the purpose of the law

Paul shows clearly that it is to reveal and clarify sin.

- If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'. (v7)
- Apart from the law sin lies dead. (v8)
- When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. (v9)
- It was sin, working death in me through what is good (i.e. the law), in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (v13)
- Through the law comes [full] knowledge of sin. (Rm 3:20)
- Sin indeed was in the world before law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. (Rm 5:13)
- Law came in to increase the trespass. (Rm 5:20)

The law was given by God as a revelation of his will for mankind. It is a measuring rod of right behaviour. If you want to be like God then you must not kill, not commit adultery, not covet etc. It is an external code of behaviour expressed in commands to do and not do certain things. It also contains penalties for failing to obey or for disobedience. Those under the law are committed to keep all of it.

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. (James 2:11)

There is no Biblical ground for just picking out certain convenient parts and ignoring others. The law is a whole and is not just the 10 commandments (called the moral law, see App.1).

It was given as a way to life, a pointer to the fulness that was to come with God's promised Messiah:

- **The very commandment ... promised life. (v10)**
- **But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. (Rm 3:21)**
- **For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified. (Rm 10:4)**

It contained sacrificial offerings which pointed to the great offering of Jesus upon the cross. He fulfilled all that these offerings typified (symbolised); ie Jesus was the ideal burnt offering who gave himself completely to God. Jesus was the sin offering which completely dealt with sin. It contained a worship system in the tabernacle so that Israelites could draw close to God and God could dwell with them. All of its functions and structure points to Jesus' life and ministry. The feasts of the law (festivals) point to significant events in the life of Jesus and his ministry. All of these have been fulfilled in Jesus and there is no longer any place for the continuance of what is external. Paul says: *'we serve not under the old written code'*. (See the arguments in the letter to the Hebrews.)

In itself it was an administration of death:

The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the dispensation of death ... (2 Cor 3:6-7)

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by *all*/things written in the book of the law, and do them'. (Gal 3:10)

If a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (Gal 3:21)

For the law made nothing perfect. (Heb 7:19)

The law cannot impart life! It demands a certain kind of living but does not enable anyone to do it. This is why Christ came. He not only brought the truth of God (the word, law of God), but he also brought grace (the free power of God to achieve that word).

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, *full of grace and truth* ... and from his fulness have we all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus. (John 1:14-17)

The law condemned, but Jesus justifies. The law demanded, Jesus empowers. The law points forward, Jesus fulfils. The law kills, Jesus saves. The law curses, Jesus releases.

Do you ever feel bound up in your desire to serve God? Does living the Christian life feel like you're cursed? The more you try, the worse you feel and the less you achieve? This is living under law. It is a bondage which Christ came to free you from.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. (Gal 3:13)

The Christian life is not legalistic. It is power to serve. The gospel is the power of God unto

salvation, and that salvation includes living correctly now. But more of this later.

A Biblical symbol for the law is a mirror:

For if any one is a hearer of the word (e.g. the law) and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing. (James 1:23-24)

A mirror shows us what we are like, warts and all. The law was a means of measuring character and performance. It showed man what he was really like and how far he had fallen from God's standard.

When Bezalel made the items of the Tabernacle, he made the laver out of the bronze mirrors of the ministering women. (Ex 38:8). Priests had to wash in this laver before approaching God. Bronze is a type of judgment upon the flesh and mirrors identify blemishes. This was the purpose of the law. Anything going into the presence of God (in this case the Tabernacle), had to be scrutinised and judged by the rigours of the law.

We have said enough to show that the key purpose of the law was to reveal sin by comparing our actions with God's standard. It had no power to help us reach that standard.

Is the law good and spiritual?

This question naturally arises in the light of the above; but Paul makes the position very clear:

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! (v7)

The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. (v12)

The law is spiritual. (v14)

Do we overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law. (Rm 3:31)

It is a manifestation of the character of God so it cannot be anything else. As an expression of his will for mankind it will also continue forever in the sense that God's character and desire for man will never change. It will always be right to not covet. However, the manner of expression of that will has changed as Hebrews makes plain. The form of the law of God given in the Old Testament economy has been abrogated (cancelled).

In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first (inc. the law) as obsolete. (Heb 8:13)

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of these realities, ... He abolishes the first in order to establish the second (the new covenant in Christ). (Heb 10:1-9)

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. (Heb 7:12)

The whole argument of Hebrews should be studied to pursue this.

Christians are dead to the law

This brings us to the crux of Paul's argument. The law of God is good. It reveals and provokes sin in unbelievers and shows man how he ought to live; but it is not for Christians in the terms of the Old Covenant:

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this that the law is not laid down for the just (righteous) but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners... (1 Tim 1:8-9)

The law is for unbelievers. What could be plainer? Why? Because Christians have died to the law:

You have died to the law through the body of Christ. (Rm 7:4)

But now we are ... dead to that which held us captive ... the old written code. (Rm 7:6)

For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. (Gal 2:19)

The law has exacted its full demands upon a believer in Christ. It demands the life of a sinner. We have judicially died with Christ, as we have already seen in earlier studies. The law has put forth its sanctions on us and killed Christ in our place. We are no longer subject to this law since we have died in Christ. We are now in a whole new ball game of service to God, one that does not depend upon external, formalities but upon internal motivations.

Paul uses the example of marriage to put the point across: (see Rm 7 verses 1-4)

- The law is binding upon a person only while they are alive.
- Similarly, a married woman is bound to her husband only while he lives.
- If the husband dies, the woman is free from her husband, discharged from the law concerning her husband.
- Likewise, in Christ, we died to the law, it no longer has power over us.
- We now are married to Christ, we belong to him.

Since we are now discharged from the law through death, we are not to serve God in legal striving to obey a written code or any formal rules and regulations any more. We serve God in the new life of the Spirit (Rm 7:6).

Christians are not UNDER Mosaic law

You are not under law but under grace. (Rm 6:14)

But now we are discharged from the law ... we serve not under the old written code. (Rm 7:6)

You are not under the law. (Gal 5:18)

(Jesus has abolished) in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances. (Eph 2:15)

Christians are under the law of Christ, life in the Spirit.

If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. (Gal 5:18)

Fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal 6:2)

For God has done what the law ... could not do: sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rm 8:3-4)

I (am) not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ. (1 Cor 9:21)

The life of formal, legal obedience to do good is said by Paul to lead to absolute wretchedness:

Wretched man that I am ! Who will deliver me from this body of death. (Rm 7:24)

Remember, he is writing to people in Rome who were familiar with the Roman games and gladiatorial fights. Paul has in mind here the situation where a gladiator has killed his opponent, perhaps a friend, and is now forced to drag the body on his back around the amphitheatre for all to see the grisly spectacle. He cannot wait to escape and searches for an exit tunnel, eager to get out as soon as possible. Paul then shouts:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus is the escape from this awful dragging around of a dead nature. In him we can be free from capitulation to the law.

Why is this so important

Obviously it is the difference between a life of struggle, worry, failure and a life of power,

assurance and success. This has been made clear. But what is vital is that living in the good of a life motivated by the Holy Spirit and energised by grace is the ONLY way to bear spiritual fruit:

You have died to the law through the body of Christ ... in order that we may bear fruit for God. (Rm 7:4)

It is impossible to glorify God by living under law! The result is only dead works. Lots of work, lots of effort, lots of results (even seemingly religious ones), but it's all dead! This verse is either true or it's not (and there are many others saying similar things).

We can only bear fruit for God if we are abiding in Christ and remaining on the vine (to use Jesus' analogy in John 15). Good works are only of God if they emanate from the life source of Jesus Christ (the new nature) and energised by His Spirit done His way (ie in grace: God supplying the strength not our old life).

Living under law is trying to do what seems to be right to you by your own power. It can only result in fleshly enterprises, dead works. Only by dying to the law and living by grace can we bear fruit for God.

Does this mean there is no struggle at all in the Christian life? Of course not. Paul talks about the fight of faith. The struggle is to continue to walk God's way not ours. This is by no means simple and easy since we have an enemy continually trying to get us to live in our old life and walk by the law. We also have our flesh trying to dominate us since the flesh loves to walk by law. It goes against the grain of the old nature (flesh) to walk by faith, to live by grace. Consequently, there will be a continual need for determination and striving, not to try to do our best for God (our best work in the flesh is still only flesh), but to put off our old nature and live by God's grace in Christ.

Does this make us antinomian?

Antinomian simply means 'against law' (*nomos* = law). Some charge that believing what I have written above makes us antinomian, ie lawless, and will result in reckless living. What they fail to understand is that being dead to the law of the old covenant, does not make us without law like Gentiles, but we now serve the law of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God (see App. 2). The demands upon Christians to behave well are much higher than the demands of the law. Without the grace of God in the power of the Spirit we would be unable to live any of them at all. Even our thoughts must be taken captive.

No, we are not without law, not antinomian; we uphold the law of God as a representation of the will of God for man; but we do not live by its power, we do not try to live the precepts of the law in our own strength, in the flesh. We believe that we are dead to that way of life; that we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection and live by the power of his life, enabled to fulfil his law which is higher than the old covenant law and contains all its principles.

The key difference is best illustrated by a medical analogy. Man is a sinner. He is sick. Let us say that it is like a person with a boil on their arm. The law recognises the sickness, identifies it and prescribes a cream to deal with it. Though it has the appearance of a treatment, the inner condition is not cured. The new covenant in Jesus is like antibiotics prescribed for this person. When taken, the boil goes and the inner problem destroyed.

The law is external. That dispensation of God has now gone. Life in Christ, [the new covenant, the law of Christ] is an internal manifestation of the power of God to change lives. To go back to the external way is exactly that - going backwards. We must move on to

life in the Spirit, which is what Paul will now go on to in chapter 8.

Appendix 1

Notes on the Christian's position to the law

1. The unity of the law

If keeping any, you must keep all (Jm 2:10, Gal 5:3). Why?

The law is a whole, it is not distinguishable into moral, legal and ceremonial. There is confusion among many Christians who see clearly that Hebrews states that the law is cancelled and that this seems to contradict the eternal quality of the law stated in the Old Testament. To get round this many theologians arbitrarily divide the law into three sections: moral (i.e. the 10 commandments), ceremonial (laws pertaining to the sacrificial offerings worship system and feasts) and civil (laws pertaining to the government of Israel (e.g. the cities of refuge). They say that the civil and ceremonial laws were cancelled, but the moral law was not. We still need to formally keep the written code. The problem is that there is absolutely no evidence in scripture that this is so, No Jew would have ever conceived that this could be the case. The Hebrew *Torah* and the Greek *Nomos* are singular. So, the law as a whole has been superseded. The rabbis identify 613 commandments, if you intend to obey some, you must obey all e.g. don't eat pork.

2. Jesus fulfilled and internalised the law

Jesus clearly stated that he did not come to destroy the law but fulfil it. This is the key: the law has been taken into Christ and elevated. Not destroyed but spiritualised and fulfilled in Christ so that it now operates on an infinitely higher level which is called in the New Testament: 'The Law of Christ'.

The law (as manifested in the Old Testament) is now inoperative to a Christian. It has been fulfilled in Christ. The law was the external manifestation of God's will for human behaviour. No man could keep it thus it condemned him. Jesus fulfilled all the law, was a perfect representation of God's will for manhood (Rm 10:4). We must now keep the law of Christ. This is worked inwardly in us through grace by the Holy Spirit. The law of Christ, or the law of the Spirit of life (Rm 8:2), incorporates the moral law of the OT but is much more because it is Christ's life: hate is as evil as murder for instance. We must not go back to legalistic, formal obedience of something that has no grace but ends in death (2 Cor 3:2-11). The written code was external and could not change the inner disposition of the worshipper. The New Covenant, containing the law of Christ, is internal and is operated within the believer by the power of God so that the Christian can obey it (Phil 1:12). Not only external actions are demanded (the limit of the old covenant law), but there is power in the gospel to deal with inner dispositions, in fact the Christian must achieve victory through Christ over his thought life (2 Cor 10:4-5) since this is the origin of external actions. The law of Christ contains power for Christians submitted to the Holy Spirit to deal with the root as well as the fruit.

Is this antinomian?

This does not make us antinomian. Christians are upholding all the principles of the moral law and more as they obey Christ. The Holy Spirit will not allow our freedom to be a freedom for the flesh, to become disobedient to God's previous revelation of his will for man (see Rm 6).

2. Can we keep Jewish festivals if they are to last forever?

Jesus said that the law would not pass away whilst the earth remained (Matt 5:18). Some Messianic teachers use this as a basis for legalistic practices. Some others try to tack on a spiritual aspect saying that Jesus fulfilled the law now we can keep it (i.e. feasts or commandments) to glorify him, eg celebration of the Passover is to glorify Jesus as the lamb of God's deliverance today.

The law is in operation as a manifestation of God's will for human conduct in this world. As such it will never pass away. It remains as an objective guide for godly behaviour. But it is for those who are lawless inside. Those who have no inner law stand convicted by God's objective law. The law is not for those who have the law of Christ written on their hearts (1 Tim 1:9). Christians are dead to the law and to this world (Rm 7:4, Gal 2:19, 6:14). We live in the light of a new spiritual world to be inherited in fulness at the return of its spiritual king. This new world has a new law - internal and spiritual. We have died with Christ, and this present world with all its features is dead to us. The principles behind the OT law rest on the character of God and are incorporated into the law of Christ which will never pass away because God never changes (Gal 5:18).

Jewish feasts are part of the external written code which has been cancelled (Heb 8:13, 10:1-9). It must, therefore, be wrong for Christians to return to that which God has abolished. This can be hard for Jewish believers, as Paul discovered, and so he gave specific teaching on the dangers of returning to Jewish practices in the letters to the Galatians and Colossians. The letter to the Hebrews also deals with this.

In Col 2:16-23 he warns believers not to submit to Old Testament regulations and specifically mentions Jewish festivals (feasts). He suggests that the idea of elevating the celebration of these to a 'spiritual' level is 'empty deceit' and 'not according to Christ' (v8). He argues that in Jesus we have the reality of what feasts represented in Christ and, therefore, should not go back to the shadow. The context speaks of spiritual warfare. Satan will try any means to prevent believers from appropriating Christ, especially means that seem religious or superficially spiritual.

Note:

Rm 10:4 : the law has ended, Christ fulfilled it all and he is now our standard.

2 Cor 3:2-11: The law is the administration of death and condemnation (including the 10 commandments v3, 7: i.e. that which was carved on stone tablets), it has now passed away (Gk 'rendered inoperative'). The law of Christ replaces it by an internal, spiritual law (Gal 6:2, Rm 8:2).

Gal 2:16: the law cannot justify, we do not produce works of the law.

Gal 3:2: effort under the law is antagonistic to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is only received by faith.

Gal 3:10: Relying on the law puts you under a curse.

Gal 3:19: It was never meant to be permanent, it lasted until Jesus came to fulfil it and inherit God's promise.

Gal 3:21: Righteousness cannot come by law because it is the strength of the old nature which achieves it. It results in works not fruit.

Gal 3:23-4:11: The law was a tutor until the Messiah came only; we are now 'in-lawed' to Christ (see appendix 2). Paul's argument here is clear. Before faith came in the Gospel we were under law as a restraint. It was tutor, custodian or guardian. This is a person who took children to school and looked after them until they became of age. Now that faith has come in Christ, we are no longer under a custodian, we are sons of God with authority. While we were under the custodian, we were no better than a slave in the master's house, even though we were the heir of the master. Now we have received adoption. This is not

just sonship but the attainment of legal rights as a son; a position of authority. Consequently we are no longer slaves but heirs. No longer in bondage, but free.

Eph 2:11-16: the law was a wall keeping the Gentiles from Jewish blessings which has now been broken down.

Heb 7:19: the law cannot make anything perfect. It cannot sanctify.

Heb 7:11-12,18: Christ's priesthood is based on Melchizedec not Aaron. The law was the basis of the Aaronic priesthood. Melchizedec's priesthood requires a new law (Heb 5:1-10).

Appendix 2

The different applications of the law

1 Cor 9:19-23

... To the Jews I became as a Jew ... to those under the law I became as one under the law ... To those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ.

In this passage Paul explains that there are different relationships to the Old Covenant law. Every person fits into one of three different applications of responsibility. This is brought out more clearly in the original Greek words used here.

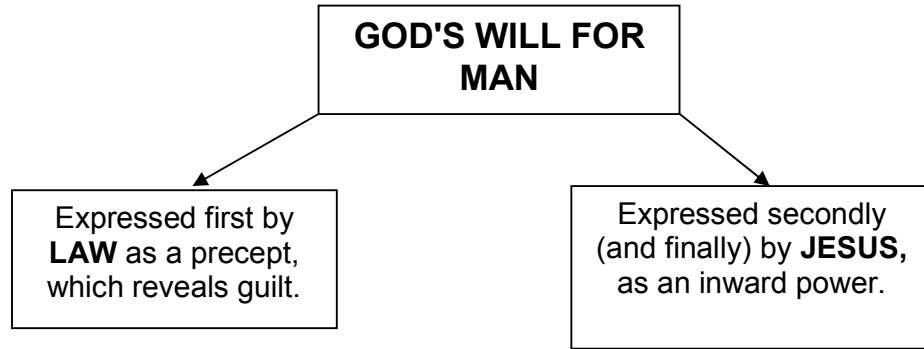
- 1 Jews are **under** the law (*hupo nomos*)
- 2 Gentiles are **without** law (*anomos*)
- 3 Christians are '**In - lawed**' to Christ (*ennomos Christou*)

As Gentiles, before we became Christians we were without law. As Paul explains in Romans 1-3 we were subject to our conscience for moral guidance not having a legal code to follow. We were **without law**.

Jews are still **under** the law of Moses which represented the will of God in formal, inflexible terms which depended upon ability and had sanctions for the disobedient. As we have seen it was a precursor and shadow of the reality which came in Christ who fully and clearly represents God's mind for human behaviour.

The Gospel Jesus brings not only releases believers from a mere formal, external code of behaviour, but having given them a new life principle to live in power by, Christians are now **In-lawed** to Christ. They fulfil the will of God by living their lives in the resurrection power of the Son of God. They live in the good of the inheritance provided by God's Christ and, as such, have a much higher requirement: e.g. they must not lust in their mind let alone commit adultery, as well as not killing, they must not be angry. It is a backward step which displeases God (and ruins his plan for Christians) to fall into merely fulfilling the Old Covenant law, either morally or ceremonially (e.g. feasts). His purpose for his children is much higher than that, it is to be like Jesus.

God's purpose for mankind can be expressed as:



(Gal 5:13-14; 1 Tim 1:8; Heb 8:8+)

God's purpose for mankind can be seen in history as:

Fall → Covenant (promise of grace) → Law → Calvary → New Covenant (Life in the Spirit)

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Do it and live, blessed. Fail and die, cursed.	Jesus internalises and fulfils law.
External	For Christians the law is: Internal.
Outward ordinances, and rituals.	Done in grace by living in his life by the power of the Spirit.
Works / Legalism.	Grace.

Jewish Distinctive.

- The old way of doing God's will (in the flesh) is abolished (Rm 6:14, 7:6; Eph 2:15; Heb 10:9).
- But the essence of the law (doing God's will, in his Spirit) continues (Mt 5:17-19; Rm 3:31,7:22+).
- The moral value of law remains and is enhanced to include motivations, thoughts and inner disposition in the Law of Christ.

Life in the Spirit

Romans 8

Paul has been explaining to these Roman Christians, whom he has not yet met, the fulness of the power of the Gospel of God. It is centred in a new position, being **IN CHRIST**. All the blessings God gives us through the Gospel result from a new life in his son. We have been taken out of the old Adamic life and placed into Christ, the source of this great inheritance.

From Rm 5:12 to 6:23 the argument was to set forth this objective truth: that our problems stem from a sinful old nature and that our blessings arise from the resurrection life of Christ available since the cross. As we have seen, Paul shows the opposition of life in Adam with life in Christ. The outcome of seeing this truth, and believing in its power, brings deliverance from sin and slavery (Rm 6) which should then lead to life in the Spirit (Rm 8). However, we are all aware of a war in our bodies and a tendency to be dragged down. Romans 7 explains the result of failure to apply Romans 6 and Paul begins to explain the subjective aspect of our walk with God. Instead of the terms 'in Adam' and 'in Christ' we now start to see the terms 'in the flesh' and 'in the Spirit'. In Romans 8 the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit comes to the fore as Paul explains how to apply this teaching to have a life of victory. Romans 8 depends on the earlier doctrine of identification (Rm 6), and Romans 6 must lead to the victory seen in an expression of life in the Spirit (Rm 8).

Rm 5-6	In Adam / In Christ - Objective truth - Our Position / Standing
Rm 7-8	In the flesh / In the Spirit - Subjective truth - Our walk / experience

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus v1-2

This chapter asks the question: 'Am I living in the flesh or in the Spirit?' We have seen, in Romans 7, that life in the flesh is the expression of the old Adamic nature. The root of that is what I can do in my own strength. The essence of that life is sin; the law arouses these sinful desires and lusts which bear fruit in death:

While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. (Rm 7:5)

Walking in the Spirit is the outworking of the new nature, the resurrection life of Christ. The essence of this is: what Christ can do in me.

But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. (Rm 7:6)

If I fail to walk in the Spirit I will express in my life the opposite of what God says my position is. Paul shows us this experience in Romans 7.

The flesh serves a law, the law of sin (Rm 7:25). There is an irresistible pressure downwards in the old nature which leads to death. Just as there are physical laws in the universe, like the law of gravity or the first law of thermodynamics, there are eternal spiritual laws. Only a greater law can free us from the downward pull of the law of sin and death (Rm 8:2). The law of sin occupies the flesh. The body and mind is the scene of a conflict (as we saw in Rm 7). The law appeals to the mind but the flesh attacks the mind, drawing it after fleshly lusts.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the only power which can contravene the law

of sin and death. Life in Christ, resurrection life, undercuts the law of sin and releases us from its power. As we live in Christ's life by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the tendency to evil.

For example: if a balloon is filled with helium it will rise because helium gas is lighter than air. A physical law demands that it should rise. Left alone it will have a tendency to lift. If a child holds this balloon in his hand, the balloon will not rise. A new power has entered the scene, the power of a life which is greater than the power to lift the balloon. Life overcomes the previous law. So the life in Christ Jesus also sets us free from the tendency to sin and death.

Alternatively, the tendency to sin is like gravity which pulls down. The power of the Holy Spirit is like magnetism which can hold heavy metal objects (e.g. a car) in mid air opposing the force of gravity.

In Christ, therefore, there is no condemnation. The realm in Christ is totally free from guilt. However, outside of this realm there is always condemnation. Can a Christian commit sin wilfully and live in the good of this verse (Rm 8:1)?

Firstly we must issue a warning, the life that God gives contains power to overcome sin (the law of the spirit of life). A person who feels no need or desire to act godly cannot have this life. Grace always leads to holiness; we cannot simply trust in a cheap grace and easy Gospel which endorses sin. Genuine conversion will result in a growth in sanctification. This must be stressed in these superficial days. However, legally before God a Christian is declared not guilty despite his actual condition; were it not so we would all be condemned. At the day of judgment a genuine believer will be declared righteous by faith even though he still sinned. At that time he will be given a new body which does not have the tendency to sin but which matches his inner new nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring discipline to a Christian to prevent continuance in habitual sin and, in God's grace, backsliders will be brought back. In the present, the benefits of salvation are in the new nature. It is those in Christ who are free of condemnation. If you are living in the old nature, you are living in the realm of sin and condemnation. Paul insists that we put off this old nature as it continues to decline:

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and *is being corrupted* through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God. (Eph 4:22-24)

If a Christian walks in the flesh, lives in his old nature, and commits sin, he is guilty. There is obviously condemnation. This is why John explains that we have to deal vigorously with sin. Call sin, sin and then confess it to God seeking forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ. (See 1 Jn 1). Holding on to this verse (Rm 8:1) is not a licence to live as you please. It is those **In Christ** it pertains to.

[Jesus explains this in picture form in John 15. The Christian is a part of the vine. He is told to remain there, to abide. All the time he does so, the sap, the power of an inner life, rises from the stem and brings a continual supply of life to the branch. The branch then bears fruit. This is what God is after. If a branch comes away from the vine, it is still a branch, it doesn't become a cabbage, but it has no life and is only fit for burning in that state. (The picture cannot be pushed too far and is not talking about hell but about life. If Jesus commands us to abide in him it must be possible that we can fail to do so. He doesn't say that branches cannot be grafted back on. He is simply making the point that fruit for God can only come where the branch remains on the vine.) Paul makes the same point in 1 Cor 3. A man's work will be tested by fire. Wasted lives which did not build on the

foundation with the power of the Spirit (gold, silver etc.) will be burned up. He will be saved (v15) through fire but lose all his work and reward. A life built on the foundation of Christ (i.e. a Christian) will be tested by fire (the tribunal of Christ at the end 2 Cor 5 :10). There is no suggestion of losing your salvation in these passages but a warning that you can let God down, fail to glorify him, fail to bear fruit and lose your rewards.]

The key is, therefore, to abide in Christ. In him there is abundant life, blessing and no condemnation. In the old nature is sin, death and wretchedness. Romans 8:1-2 concisely covers the ground we saw in Romans 6.

The law fulfilled v 3-4

The Holy Spirit takes care of our inward lives. As we walk according to the Spirit, he fulfils the law in us (Rm 7:6). The law cannot be fulfilled by work, only by a walk. We must be completely subject to the Holy Spirit. The flesh cannot obey God's law. At the cross Jesus condemned that whole system to death. It is now over. The way to follow God now is by living in Christ and following the Holy Spirit.

Note this continued antagonism between the flesh and the Spirit. The law is only fulfilled by those who are walking according to the Spirit not by those who walk according to the flesh. In verses 1 to 17 we see the following contrasts between the two spheres:

ACCORDING TO THE FLESH	ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT
Condemnation	No condemnation
Law of sin and death	Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
Law can't achieve good	Law fulfilled in us
Mind of the flesh is death	Mind set on the Spirit is life and peace
Hostile to God	Spirit of God
Does not belong to Christ	Christ is in you
Bodies dead to God	Life to our bodies through his Spirit
You will die	You will live
Enemy of God	Sons of God
Spirit of slavery	Spirit of adoption
Slaves	Heirs

The focus of the mind v 5-8

It is vital that we fix the focus of our minds on the things of God. We have noticed this before (Col 3:1-3). Probably everyone would accept this, but does everyone understand what is at stake? Paul says here that to set the mind on the flesh **IS DEATH!** Not will end in death but is in the realm of death now. Death is separation from God it does not mean annihilation. The realm of the flesh is the realm of death. Works done in the flesh are worthless to God. A life of religious service done in the flesh is just dead works. Paul gives a similar warning in Galatians:

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:7-8)

Furthermore, a mind set on the flesh is hostile to God! You could find that you are God's enemy if your life is spent outworking that old nature. It is impossible to please God if you live in the flesh. This is simply working out the logic of the truths we have already seen in

Romans 5-6. The flesh is the expression of your old Adamic life which God has already sentenced to death. We can choose which nature we will live in. To live in the flesh is to die to spiritual values and to dishonour Christ. It is worse than a dog going back to his own vomit (2 Pt 2:22).

However, to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. This is the realm of the abundant life which Jesus promised. It has nothing to do with outward circumstances. In scripture it is often the poor and persecuted who obtain the blessing of the Lord. This is the peace which the world's outward circumstances cannot give. It is the peace which can enable Paul and Silas to sing praise to God in chains in prison after harsh treatment (Acts 16:25).

Life and peace is an equilibrium where all fits together and the grace of God simply flows through one completely submitted to God. The problems of life don't drag you down and the successes of prosperity don't puff you up. It has been said that if two angels were sent by God to do two jobs, one to be a great king, the other to be a poor street cleaner, it would be a matter of complete indifference to them which one had which job. This is the sort of settled peace God gives to one whose mind is set on the Spirit. But notice that the mind must first be focused. This must happen before events overtake us. We must be convinced of the teaching, believe it for ourselves and be determined to follow it, no matter what transpires.

This same teaching is everywhere in Paul's letters, for instance:

Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. (Gal 5:16)

Put off the old nature (flesh) with its practices ... put on the new nature. (Col 3:10)

These passages give a clear indication of what living in the flesh is since Paul lists the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Works of the flesh (Gal 5)	Fruit of the Spirit
Immorality	Love
Impurity	Joy
licentiousness	Peace
Idolatry	Patience
Sorcery	Kindness
Enmity	Goodness
Strife	Faithfulness
Jealousy	Gentleness
Anger	Self-control
Selfishness	
Dissension	
Carousing	

What is earthly (Col 3)	What is of the new nature
Immorality	Compassion
Impurity	Kindness
Passion	Lowliness
Evil desire	Meekness
Covetousness	Patience
	Love
	Let the peace of Christ rule
	Be thankful
	Let the word of Christ dwell richly

A detailed word study of each of these words would pay dividends but we cannot enter into that here.

v 9-11

Paul expresses confidence that his hearers are genuine Christians. Only those with the Spirit of Christ belong to him. The Spirit dwells in such and keeps them from living in the flesh. Having the Spirit of Christ is the same as having Christ in you. When Christ came to us he regenerated our human spirit to enable it to become his dwelling place. Natural man's spirit is dead since it is separated from God. A Christian's spirit is alive because it is in communion with God. Ordinarily, our bodies would be as good as dead since it has been the continual expression of the flesh, a body of sin (Rm 6:6). However, those in whom Christ dwells by the Holy Spirit will receive life in their mortal bodies by the Spirit. The body of a Christian becomes a temple to be used to glorify God. What once manifested sinful desires now becomes an expression of the life of Christ. Our bodies are vessels. They are not to be abused but controlled so that, by grace, they reflect what is true inwardly in our spirit.

v 12-17

As a result of this we owe the flesh nothing. If we follow it we will die, our spiritual life will immediately wither. We must put to death the deeds of the body to live. We must lose our lives to save them, we must deny ourselves and carry the cross (not a trial but death). We are not wise enough to understand this and do it ourselves. We can only succeed by trusting the Holy Spirit to do the work in us:

By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body. (Rm 8:13)

He must lead us in all things, a constant trusting of our lives to God moment by moment.

- Led - not dragged, we have to walk and follow, he won't force us against our will.
- Led - not just guided, but under the Spirit's power.
- Led - not carried, we are involved, we must do our part, effort is involved.
- Led - under the total control of the Holy Spirit.
- Led - we are going to his destination, by his path.
- Led - we will experience the ups and downs of the route but he is with us.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

As we let the Spirit lead us forwards we show ourselves to be sons of God, but more than that, we have received the spirit of adoption (not Sonship). It is one thing that we are God's children and know God as our father, but adoption is a legal Roman term which means more than the English word assumes. It means to place a son in the position as rightful,

legal heir, one who has come of age to take authority. Paul immediately says this openly:

If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. (Rm 8:17)

We are able to share in the authority of Christ, legal representatives of God on this earth to take control by prayer and faith as God directs. This is not the taking up of causes, lobbying Parliament, seeking positions of power, political manoeuvring etc. It means living like Jesus did. Seeking to obey the Father's every word, doing what he was doing. This means that we will bring life to those we touch, pray for situations to be released, meet the practical needs of those we can help, preach the Gospel to those in darkness. As we walk in the Spirit we do all these things with power.

But notice a qualification here: 'provided we suffer with him'. We will only see Christ's glory in our lives as we willingly follow him into suffering. The Holy Spirit will certainly lead us in a path that includes suffering for that is the way that Jesus walked. Even he was only made perfect through suffering (Heb 2:10) and learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb 5:8). Jesus promised that the way of salvation involved many tribulations. These are necessary to sanctify us. Without our problems we will not grow. For instance, if we want to be patient and steadfast we must be tested with trials (Jm 1:2-3).

The sort of claims, heard in some Christian quarters, about total peace, prosperity and complete healing all the time is unknown to the writers of the New Testament. A simple look at Paul's life alone shows this. He suffered dreadfully (2 Cor 11:22 ff) and worked to support himself yet God bestowed on him a deeper knowledge of his ways than anyone had ever seen, even more than he could tell us (2 Cor 12:4). Paul knew the deep things of God because he knew that weakness enabled God's power to work in him.

He [the Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9-12)

Suffering and glory go continually together in the scriptures as we have written elsewhere. A Gospel that does not include a doctrine of suffering is not the Christian Gospel. A Gospel that insists upon continual healing in the atonement, miraculous provision of finances by faith without encouraging honest work and saving, and reliance upon miraculous prosperity claims more for itself than the apostles knew. It is at best an error, at worst downright dangerous heresy.

This does not preclude healing or miracles from our experience; but it does mean that as the Holy Spirit leads us (not Satan mind you) we should accept suffering and learn from it to be like Christ. This means discernment is required to know when our leading is from God and when it is from us or the enemy. The more we lean upon the Spirit day by day, the more we will get to know his ways and become ever more sensitive to his operations.

Suffering, Futility and the Hope of Glory

Rm 8:18-27

Suffering

Suffering is nearly always connected with glory in the New Testament, as we have already noticed. It is simply not scriptural to identify the Christian life with a worldly perception of glory. Teachers are right when they tell us that God has a glorious future for us, but are wrong when they then imply that this consists in the ability to have faith for anything we desire in material terms (cars, money, houses etc). The very example of the NT saints and even Jesus himself shows us this. God was to be glorified through Lazarus (Jn 11), and Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus, yet he died, even though Jesus could have hurried to his rescue. There was suffering involved. God's ideas and ours are very different. His reign has been described as an 'upside down kingdom'. It is a place where the first are last and the last are first. Our human ideas simply do not fit.

The subject of suffering forms a link in Paul's argument from the previous section on life in the Spirit to this one where the vision is broadened. Paul wants to talk about glory. The entrance to that is by suffering. Perhaps glory could be described as the perfection of grace. Certainly Matthew Henry felt that *'grace is glory begun'*. Yet God's grace is made perfect in our weakness, not our strength, or our faith. (2 Cor 12:9).

Nature

This applies both to us and to the creation. Glory is going to be revealed, not only to us in the grandeur of God's plan, but also in us as the executives of that plan. Man was originally given a mandate to rule creation as the ambassador of God. That plan has never changed, we are currently in a holding position awaiting the full outworking of redemption. Jesus, as the perfect image of God in man, will head up a new creation that will see a glorious release of all creation into the fulness of the plan of God. The realm of nature is awaiting this revelation of the sons of God with eager longing.

Futility

At this present time, creation is subject to futility. There is no purpose or point in things as they are ruined by sin in the world. The natural order is rushing headlong into chaos and devastation. Man has successfully utilised creation's resources to satisfy his lusts on himself at the expense of destroying the natural order. New reports are publicised every week about the imminent dangers of global warming alone. Time magazine (26 Sept 1995) detailed new 'conclusive' evidence that ocean levels will be raised by one metre by the turn of the century. This will result in many major rivers overflowing, destroying the habitat of people and wildlife. Forests will suddenly be in the wrong place and increasing aridity will result. It cannot now be stopped or slowed down. Time suggests we start making plans. Its headline is even apocalyptic in nature.

Glorious liberty

But there is no despair for nature or those who trust in God. Nature was subjected to this futility in hope. The end result is freedom from this suffering of bondage to decay. Nature will be included in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. At the moment nature patiently obeys God's sovereign commands. It is a testimony to the creator, and reveals his glory because it does as it is told. The creation is not in rebellion like man, it is *subjected* to futility. It inherently knows what it was created for and longs for that release as if in child birth.

Adoption

We also share in this pain as we wait for the return of Jesus. We have a hope set before us. One aspect of the Gospel is to give a future to those with no future, to give a purpose to those with no purpose. To replace hopelessness with hope. Hebrews tells us that this is an anchor to our souls. It keeps us steadfast. It stops us wandering. There is a point to it all. God's eternal plan is being worked out, even in my suffering. In fact my suffering is a vital component to receiving the glory.

The hope of glory is not something that we can see. It is not something available now. Whatever the glory of signs and wonders may be, this hope is not referring to that, or any other experience in the Christian life. It is referring to the *'adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies'* (v23). Hope enables us to be patient. We can wait for this because we are certain that it is going to happen.

Part of our inheritance is the changing of our bodies to be like Jesus' glorious body. In the twinkling of an eye we will be changed to be like him at his return. The New Testament teaches this consistently (see 1 Cor 15; 1 Jn 3:2; 2 Thess 1:10, 1 Thess 5:16-18).

But doesn't Paul teach that we are already adopted? Yes. We have already seen Paul show that we have the Spirit of adoption now (Rm 8:15). Like other blessings, we have them all in our spirit. The new man is spiritual, it is the life of Christ and it contains all the blessing that we will ever need in spiritual form. That's why Paul can say that we have *'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places'*, *'blessed in Christ'* (Eph 1:3). The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a guarantee of our inheritance. There is one sense in which we have it now, in the Spirit, and another in which we are waiting for it in fulness (Eph 1:14). Like the kingdom it is *'now and not yet'*. At the Second Coming the adoption becomes physical. I am given a new body to suit my new nature. The consummation of salvation is when my entire being becomes a complete reflection of Jesus' nature: no old nature, no selfishness, no lust. Nothing to spoil the radiance of God - Christlikeness.

Intercession

Since we are currently experiencing weakness in suffering, we need help. We don't even know how to pray properly. How often do we pray only to end up feeling unfulfilled, that our burden has not been released. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit much more for an adequate prayer release. The promise here is that he will intercede for us as we trust ourselves to him. We have already learned that we must be led by him ethically; we must equally be led by him in prayer. We can only pray in the will of God as we let the Holy Spirit lead us inwardly, sometimes only by releasing groans and sighs. We must be so overtaken by the Spirit in prayer that words cease to be able to express what we feel, so deep is the burden.

This is what the Puritans called the return of prayers. The only prayer worthy of God is that which God himself inspires deep within our spirit. By the Holy Spirit we receive the burden of God to pray. We trust the Holy Spirit to express that through us and he intercedes for us according to the will of God. The burden has come full circle. In that process we have become identified with the purpose of God and he has seen an incarnation of his desires in a person.

Furthermore, we are here assured that God is praying for us. In some circumstances we feel completely alone and uncared for, but we are never overlooked by God. Jesus is always interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. The word 'help' (v 26) is a compound verb meaning that the Spirit 'does for us and along with us'. We are not alone.

The Sovereignty of God in Election

Rm 8:28-39

Introduction

Having spoken about our weakness and suffering Paul moves on to give absolute assurance that God is in complete control over these straightening circumstances. We are not just able to pray about our problems and know that God is himself interceding for us, but Paul declares that we are a vital constituent in God's eternal plan. We are not subject to the whim of fate or accidents; neither are we under the control of Satan and his cohorts. No! God is in total control of our lives because he predestines all that comes to pass. Though this may be an unpopular doctrine in these days, it is the only conclusion we can arrive at after a study of God's decree in the Bible. It everywhere shows that he not only elects a people for his Son out of his good pleasure, but he foreordains all things. If this were not so, how could he be God? How could he be sure of what would come to pass? How could his people be guaranteed safety?

All circumstances are predestined and under god's control for us

God is not only bringing about, in time, his eternal purpose, but the promise here is that the elect can be certain that everything that happens to them works for good. Nothing is wasted. Everything has a purpose. Not most things but all things. This enables us to give thanks. Our God is in control.

Rejoice always, pray constantly. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thess 5:16-18)

Does this promise pertain to everyone? No! It is only for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. It is for the elect alone. What about evil? Can God be behind that? God is not the source of evil but he does control it. If God is God, all things must be under his control, including the Devil and evil circumstances. Some dislike this thought and deny it saying that God didn't want such and such to happen. The logic of this is that there is something outside God's power; that the wickedness of men and Satan can thwart God. How can this be true?

Fortunately God has not left himself without witness on this subject. There are many scriptures which clearly state that God controls evil things, e.g:

- I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, [Heb. 'making peace and creating evil'] I am the Lord, who does all these things. (Isa 45:6-7)
- Who has commanded and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come? (Lam 3:37-38)
- Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord. (Ex 4:11)

God is not the author of wickedness but, as the almighty sovereign, all things are under his control. Even Satan cannot strike God's elect without permission (See Job 1). While Satan attempts to make things work his way, God uses this permitted evil to either discipline us, or demonstrate some point to angelic spectators, or fulfil some part of his plan which we are not yet knowledgeable about. We may not, therefore, see what the good is that is being worked out. We should always remember that God is working towards eternal purposes. He is working on his people for their future in a city which has foundations. The fulness of God's purposes will be seen in the new heaven and earth, they may not necessarily be seen

now. This is why this promise is so precious to us. Nothing is wasted in our experience, even if we don't ever get to understand it all. He is building our character with heaven in view. All things may not work towards our comfort, but they will work towards our ultimate good.

What about our sin and rebellion? God will still work for our good but it will be by chastening rather than blessing. We are still children, and like a disobedient child, we may require discipline. We may experience things that may seem 'evil' to us. God's hand may be heavy upon us, but it will eventually work to our good.

What about 'evil' tragedies that overcome the Lord's people? We may think of the loss of a loved one or the desertion of a spouse or the betrayal of friends. These situations indeed seem evil, and very painful at the time. Only by going through such a situation can one be aware of the depth of pain even the Lord's people suffer. Did God ordain this? The answer is yes. If he isn't in control of all things, he cannot be in control of anything. The way out of such suffering is to trust that God is working it for good, even if you can't feel at the time that any good can come of this. There is no comfort or support in believing that God is not behind it, that it is the Devil's work, that human beings have got out of God's will and hurt you and God is upset about it. Where is the help in that? No. The only support in devastating tragedies is that God is not only in control, but also that before time he planned this circumstance as being absolutely right for you to make you what he wants you to be. After a time, you will see that this indeed is comfort, though in the heat of extreme pain, like grief, nothing may be of much help. At that time you must simply wait, and hope. Trust will come later.

God's purpose

But what is God's purpose in all these things? It is to conform us to the image of his Son. God foreknew his people, he loved them utterly, and then predestined their whole lives so that they may become like Christ (v29). Note that even Jesus learned obedience through suffering. If it was necessary for him, how much more is it necessary for us? The character that God is building is the standard of Christ - that is why it is sometimes so hard. The goal is so great.

Because God is in control of everything in our lives, Paul can write with certainty that God will finish the work that he started in us (Phil 1:6) so Paul shows us the outworking of the plan of God in our lives - its root and fruit are all in God. First he *predestines*, then he *calls*, then he *justifies* and finally he *glorifies*. If God is not in control of everything in the universe, how could Paul be so sure that this indeed would take place? No! God has brought us a measure of glory and is bringing us to glory. Grace is that glory begun. He has ordained all that occurs in our lives so that we are being fashioned more and more into the image of his Son to partake of his glory.

Particular redemption

We must also note the specific teaching of this passage on the atonement. A person cannot simply become a Christian by deciding for Christ whenever they feel like it. There is no atonement hanging around in the air waiting for people to accept or reject it. Salvation is not at the whim of man, it is all of God.

The basis of becoming a Christian is justification. It is justification which changes our lives and makes us acceptable to God. Is this available for all mankind? Does God love everyone indiscriminately? Verse 30 makes the position clear. To be justified you must be called.

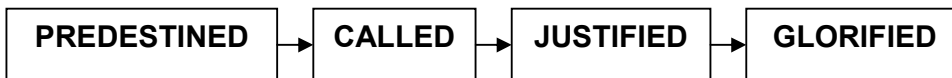
The proclamation of the Gospel is a calling, but there are two sorts. One is a general,

external call to repent which is addressed to everyone. It is God's prescriptive will that everyone must repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. God prescribes this action, it is a command (Acts 17:30) for all people.

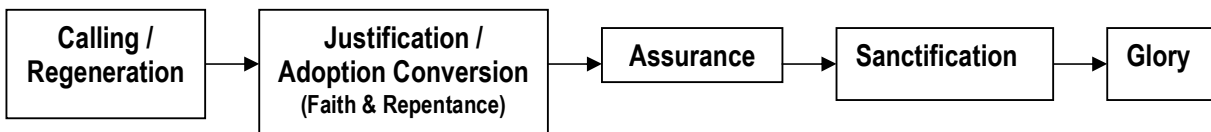
However, there is also an effectual call, an internal calling by the Holy Spirit that contains an irresistible power. It is this call which opens up a person's heart and changes them (Acts 16:14). The Holy Spirit regenerates them and enables them to believe and repent. This is God's decretive will, i.e. his counsel or decree; the choosing of a specific people. Without God's help we could never respond to the Gospel because, as Paul has shown earlier in Romans, we are completely unable and lost in wilful sin. Faith to believe is not of man but is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). Salvation, therefore, becomes all of grace.

But God's purposes go further back than even this effectual call, only those who are predestined are called. Only those chosen by God's electing purposes will be saved. Jesus died to save a specific number of people for whom his death was completely effectual. He did not die to procure a potential salvation for an unknown amount of people who would respond in faith by their own efforts.

Those elect to salvation are the ones whom were given to Christ by the Father in a covenant which took place before time began. In this covenant (of redemption) God the Father chose a group of people to manifest his mercy. He chose them out of love and gave them to his Son. God the Son agreed to die in the place of these people to provide a deliverance which upheld God's justice - a life was paid for the sins committed. God the Holy Spirit accepted the task of applying that salvation to the specific people chosen. This is the consistent teaching of the whole Bible, though it may be out of fashion now.



From an individual point of view we could see this as follows:



From God's point of view the end is already complete because the matter is settled in eternity. Hence Christians are said to be already glorified, adopted etc when the fulness has not yet arrived in practice. Yet still, God calls us 'saints' while we do not deserve the term. (Note that even the wayward Corinthians are greeted with this term.) This is because God sees his decrees in their final outworking. God has finality in view.

Is this fair?

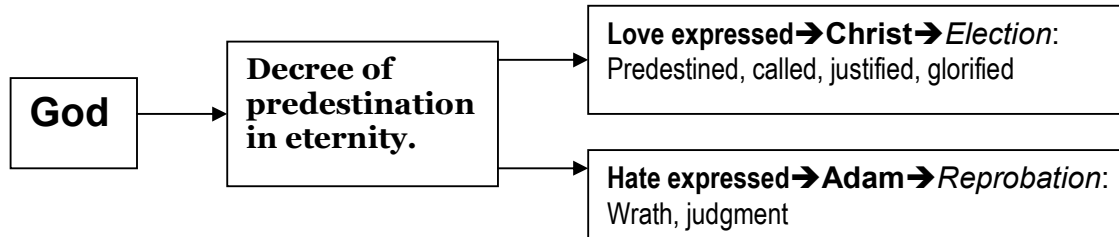
Our understanding of what is 'fair' in any situation, is often jaundiced and one sided. Our presuppositions and experience affect our judgment. Also we don't have access to all the facts in any given situation. Only God could understand all that is involved in this eternal and cosmic issue, and we know that he is just. Therefore, our first duty is to trust God in what he has revealed to us.

Secondly, God was under no obligation to save anyone at all. The whole of the race decided to rebel against a loving heavenly Father who had provided a paradise. Not only that, but

they threw in their lot with God's bitter enemy. In his holy justice God could have just simply ended the race there and then. But God is a God of love and mercy. His justice must be satisfied, his wrath against sin must be demonstrated but in his love he elected a group of people to be saved. This demonstrates both his love and his wrath, his mercy and his justice. Without darkness there can be no understanding of light. Without black, we would not know what white was. The full orbit of God's character and attributes are to be shown to the universe. This requires an expression both of his love and his wrath. The universe is to witness a complete manifestation of the being of God in his works.

In Christ

Again we see the importance of this little phrase. The key to election is that God's people are seen as *in Christ* from before the foundation of the world. They are not like ordinary people. They are God's chosen people. In chapter 9 Paul explains this more fully by using the example of Israel and its history. This has always been God's way. Israel was not chosen because of her nobility or faithfulness. Not for her strength or size. She was the smallest of nations and proved to be utterly faithless. Yet God chose her. We are not chosen because God saw something good in us, or that we would be faithful. He chose us in his good pleasure and put us into Christ. His love is always upon his Son, his love can therefore be upon us since we are in his Son. God cannot love sinners. The Bible everywhere says that he hates sinners. Neither can we avoid the issue by unscriptural statements like, '*God loves the sinner but hates the sin*'. That isn't true. The Bible says that the soul that sins will die. Sin is inextricably tied up with the person committing it. The sin arises from the corrupt root of the Adamic nature. That is why judgment will be upon *men* who will be sentenced to Hell. If God loves the sinner but hates the sin, Hell would be empty. Graphically this can be demonstrated as follows:



The reprobate are those who are passed by in the decree of election. As God chose some to life, of necessity this means that others were not so chosen. Again this is unpopular today yet it has been a cardinal issue of faith for hundreds of years. (I can spend no more time on this matter here. Further discussion can be found in my booklet: *Does God Love Everyone.*)

Comfort and assurance

We must draw to a conclusion. Paul lays all this teaching down as a foundation for our comfort and stability. He is not in the business of encouraging with empty words and we should learn from that. He gives clear explanation of the doctrinal issues involved, refers the matter back to the character of God, and shows us our involvement in Christ and how that is applied by the Holy Spirit. This should be our pattern also.

The doctrines of God's election and sovereignty give us complete assurance. There is no uncertainty in this salvation provided by God, because it does not originate with us, is not continued by our strength and will not end by our merits. Salvation is all of God. He called us because he loved us before time, even though we did not deserve it. We will persevere to

complete glorification and adoption because the Holy Spirit is working in us, even to pray for us. Christ is also interceding for us (v34). Well does Paul say:

If God is for us, who can be against us. (v31).

We can be assured that we will be given all things in Christ (v32, Eph 1:3) because God has already given up his son for us. Nothing can separate us from his love. Why? Because we are in his Son. In this fallen universe there is only one thing God can love – his beloved Son. We are loved because we are in him. Nothing can separate us from him (v39). Nothing outside Christ can be loved. This is the great encouragement in persecution. That we are in Christ and assured of eternal life. This makes us more than conquerors, literally 'hyper-conquerors'.

We can deal with persecution. We can cope with tribulation. We can overcome our distresses (v35-36) because in Christ we overcome. Even if we are slaughtered like sheep, we win an eternal crown, reserved in heaven for those loved by God.

Conclusion

We can see the huge job that God has undertaken for us in sending his Son to achieve salvation for us, and the Spirit to apply this work for our benefit. Much more could be said about the further aspects of the inheritance we have in Christ, over and above what we have already seen, but that will have to wait for another time.

God pours out his grace in Christ upon us for an eternal purpose - to glorify him for evermore. May we not be found wanting.

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