

RIGHT IN ROMANS

Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

by

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CHAPTER SIX

PART THREE – SANCTIFICATION OF LIFE (6:1-8:39)

A. EMANCIPATION FROM SIN (6:1-23)

1. Death to sin, life in Christ (vv. 1-14)

a) Grace is not freedom to sin (vv. 1, 2a)

You will note the horror of the apostle at the very thought of such a perversion of the Gospel. Freedom from sin is not freedom to sin. A great many people, unfortunately, seem to be more interested in freedom to sin than they are in freedom from sin. Away with hoary inhibitions, self-expression at any cost! is the watchword of the hour.

But if we are truly converted, our possession of Christ will be marked by revulsion from sin. We are not saved from the sin we do not hate. Grace breaks the hold which sin has upon the soul. The grace of God streaming from the cross of Calvary melts the imprisoning ice of sin from the heart and life.

b) Death to sin precludes life in sin (v. 2b)

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

We have here a very striking question. Does Paul mean that Christians are sinless? No. What he has in mind is this: Those who have died to sin, who have been saved from sin, do not continue as a deliberate choice to live in sin. To sin is no longer the purpose of their lives.

A crude illustration may help to make our point clear. A person has been cured of tuberculosis which brought him to the very gates of death; after such a deliverance from the impending fatal termination of the disease, he may have colds from time to time, but the deadly germ has been killed; he has died to tuberculosis that he might not die of tuberculosis.

Christians have been saved from sin; the principle of sin has been slain. They have been saved by grace! They fall from time to time, but when they do fall they ask for forgiveness and they are given grace to grow in grace. They may fall in the road, but not from the road, to Heaven.

Grace transports us into a new realm of being. If we have been saved by grace we have died to sin just as the caterpillar has died to his old life when he becomes a butterfly. If he is a butterfly, how can he any longer be a caterpillar? Just picture butterflies habitually crawling on the ground like caterpillars! If we have died to sin, we can no longer live therein. We die to what we hate and we live by what we love. When we have been saved, we breathe in by faith the life that is in Christ. The true Christian is in the world, but not of it.

c) In baptism we have died and risen with Christ (vv. 3-5)

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” We need to get the meaning of verse 3 clearly in mind. Some people might think that that verse taught baptismal regeneration, but such is not the case. The New Testament writers identified baptism with the faith it embodies, just as when we speak of the flag we mean the country for which it stands. The New Testament writers make baptism stand for the faith that it expresses.

Faith in Jesus effects a spiritual oneness with Him and results in a totally new set of reactions to life in general, and to sin in particular. If a Christian is united with Jesus Christ, he has died to sin. We have died to sin through Him who died for sin, and we rise to newness of life through Him who triumphed over death. Jesus Christ gave His life for the sake of mankind that He might live in us, as the soil lives in the seed; and that we might live in Him, as the seed lives in the soil. It is only as we surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ that we find life in Him.

When we give our hearts to Him in faith, the very life of God that is in Jesus Christ becomes ours, and we live in Him who died for us.

Through Jesus Christ we have access to God. Without Him the divine nature is like a sheer cliff, inexorable in its demands; but because Jesus died, we have the glorious privilege of coming into the presence of God, up the gentle slope of faith and trust.

d) Our death with Christ cancels sin's grasp (vv. 6, 7)

“. . . Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

Our old man was crucified with Him. This is a very powerful metaphor to express the great truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. Death cancels all obligations. Sin is personified as a cruel tyrant who taxes his subjects beyond all endurance. The only way some of us can get rid of taxation is to die; that seems to be the only escape. If we have died to sin, we are free; we cannot be taxed by it.

Holders of life insurance policies often exclaim, “You have to die to win.” We can die to sin, through Christ, whenever we choose to do so, and then the riches of Heaven are ours; we need not wait for physical death. When we die to sin, we win Christ and all He means to us. This assurance of salvation should be a mighty incentive to devotion.

e) Dying with Christ means living with Christ (vv. 8-11)

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” There is a wonderful truth in these words. Through Jesus Christ we have eternal life. He died to sin and He rose again; and we who live in Him are delivered from sin and have heavenly life. Jesus Christ rose from the dead and lives forevermore; and we who give ourselves to Him shall live together with Him.

This life in Christ is everlasting because it is eternal in quality. It is the very life of God coming into our souls; and that life can never end. The apostle John constantly refers to eternal life as a present possession. This life is eternal because the life of God in us can respond eternally to God as the infinite object of knowledge, of love, and of service. Because the love of God comes into our souls, we can be responsive eternally to God. Do we harness this faith to our lives, or do we merely think of it once in a while, in a sentimental sort of way, as so many do with every recurring Easter? If we believe in Heaven, how can we help but live the heavenly life here on earth?

f) Let us live for God and not for sin (vv. 12-14)

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The availability of grace means responsibility for grace. If we have this grace to draw upon, we are responsible for using it. We have never done our best for God until we lay hold of the best God can do for us. That which has been wrought for us must be wrought in us. The power plant has been built, electricity is ready for use, but we have to wire our own homes for it. God has put eternal salvation and grace at our disposal, but we must make the connection by faith. We must fulfill the conditions of devotion and trust so that the power of God in Jesus Christ may operate in and through us.

2. An exchange of masters (vv. 15-23)

a) Grace is not freedom to sin (v. 15)

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” The repetition of this question, **“Shall we sin?”** really introduces the second division of this chapter. The first fourteen verses are an unfolding of the truth that if we have died to sin, we cannot live in sin.

In this last section of the chapter we have the contention that if we are freed from sin, we can no longer serve sin. Christian freedom is not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid. The impulsion of grace within should be a mightier force than the compulsion of law without.

b) Servants of sin or servants of righteousness (v. 16)

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:24, where He brings out that no man can serve two masters. Many people do not realize this. They think that they can play with sin, can indulge in it or let it alone just as they wish. Many a man thinks that way with reference to drink, for example, and then wakes up to find himself in bondage to a habit that he cannot check. When we subject ourselves to sin, we find that we are caught in a mighty whirlpool. Trifling with sin is dangerous to self and treacherous to God.

c) A transference of allegiance (vv. 17-22)

“. . . Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Detachment from sin must be followed by attachment to God (I Thessalonians 1:9). Redemption in the heart results in devotion of the heart. If we have been saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot help but seek to grow in Him. We want to make progress in this new life which God through Christ has put into our hearts. If Christ is in our hearts, we shall bend every energy, depending upon God, to grow in our knowledge of Him. We are saved from the dominion, as well as the penalty, of sin.

The bondage of sin has been exchanged for that of love. Since Jesus Christ has bought us from bondage to sin, that should result on our part in the bondage of love. Why should Christians be less zealous in the service of the Saviour than sinners in the service of the devil? Paul says in effect, “Let your spirituality as Christians equal your former sensuality as sinners.”

Christians are to keep spiritually fit. Athletes have to keep in training. What about Christians who break training for Jesus Christ? We never know when some critical contest is coming, some terrific temptation, some challenge, some call for witnessing for Jesus Christ in the face of opposition; and if we have been careless in our Christian life about Bible study, and prayer—if we have broken spiritual training—we will not be ready to meet the foe. Sanctification is both a process and a result.

d) The pay of sin is death, but God's gift is life (v. 23)

Every bondage involves a freedom; we simply choose our fetters. Bondage to one thing is freedom from another. When we were living in sin, we were free from grace, and the law of righteousness had no hold upon us. Augustine, referring to his past life of sin and doubt said, “My life being such, was it life, O my God?” The world glorifies sin as life. The Word stigmatizes sin as death. The world clothes sin with glamour; the Word strips sin of glamour. In our attitude toward sin, are we standing with the world or with the Word?

“For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” The underlying figure of speech in this verse is that of the pay that soldiers receive. Paul, in effect, asks his readers, “Why do men fight for the devil who seeks only to curse and to destroy?” Sin pays full wages. There are no cuts in pay. Not infrequently there are unexpected bonuses in the way of misery. Why not, then, enter the service of God where the reward of grace is eternal life bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ?

What is meant by the free gift of God? It is His eternal life. We might well consider that life from two aspects—quality and quantity. The life which we have through our faith in Jesus is everlasting in duration, because it is eternal in quality. Mere everlastingness would be unendurable. We might regard it under the figure of a musical instrument. Of what use would a costly piano be to one who could never acquire the ability to play it? God gives us His own life through Jesus Christ. This life might be thought of as a gift of spiritual genius which can never be exhausted. Eternal life is the God-given capacity to know, love, and live Jesus Christ with multiplying fullness of joy forever and ever.

B. THE TRANSITION FROM LAW TO GRACE (7:1-25)

1. Release from bondage to the law (vv. 1-6)

a) Manner of this release (vv. 1-4a)

In introducing the next step in his argument, Paul uses the illustration of a woman who is absolved of her marriage vows upon the death of her husband. Just as a widow is no longer under bondage to her husband, so the Christian who has accepted Christ is no longer under bondage to the law. Of course, here we have to be on the watch because the analogy calls for the death of the law; just as a woman's husband dies and she is free, so the law dies and the Christian is free from the obligation of the law. Actually, however, it is the Christian who dies to the claims of the law. The law can never claim the souls of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

b) Purpose of this release (vv. 4b, 5)

“ . . . that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Christ is referred to as having been raised from the dead, because we can only belong to a living Christ. Are we conscious of the living Christ? It is surprising how many Christians do not have the rich and full experience of the living Christ that they should.

We must live for Him who died for us. Our attachment to Christ should be as decided as our detachment from sin, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. The natural result of the seed which is planted is fruit. We plant seed in expectation of a harvest. Why has God saved us? Why does Jesus Christ live in our souls? Among other reasons, that through His living in us we may bear fruit for Him. Do we really think as much about what God wants to do through us, as we do about what we want God to do for us? If we are earnest Christians, we shall be more anxious to have God use us than to use God for our own personal ends.

“For when we were in the flesh, the motions [sinful passions] of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” In the fifth verse Paul brings out a striking contrast. Flesh is not regarded as inherently sinful, but it is subject to sin. There have been a great many people who have held to the view that matter is evil, that the flesh is the seat of sin. Therefore, they practice the severest asceticism in order to find deliverance. Whole systems of philosophy have been built upon that assumption.

People in the Middle Ages mortified the flesh for the sake of the soul. There are multitudes today who mortify the soul for the sake of the flesh. **“The flesh”** may also refer to unsanctified, human nature, not simply our bodies, but all we are apart from our union with God.

There are some things that can be used for good or for bad. Grain makes bread; also it is used for the manufacture of liquid poison. So the things that are ours in our natural state can be used for our moral undoing, or through being laid on the altar they can be made to burn for the glory of God, **“fruits unto death.”**

Only death profits by the fruits of a sinful life. People go as far away as possible from one with a contagious disease; they want to get out of the reach of deadly germs; yet how many men and women seem to delight in getting just as close to sin as possible; playing with wickedness, they get on thin ice (and sometimes the ice breaks). We never know what may be the result of giving entrance to sin.

c) Result of this release (v. 6)

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” We have died to the old life of sin. We find life now in that to which we formerly were dead. Many a small boy lives in the oldness of the letter with reference to a piano when he is taking lessons: but after his musical gifts have really developed, he comes to delight in what was once irksome beyond endurance. When we become followers of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and we live in the newness of spirit.

2. Purpose of the law is to bring to grace (vv. 7-25)

a) By unveiling the sinfulness of sin (vv.7-13)

(1) The law brings sin to light (vv. 7, 8)

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law . . .” Law is not sin, but the law awakens sin. It is something similar to authority in the home. Children are little angels until a set of distasteful regulations are issued from parental headquarters. The regulations that were established were because of sin. The fire of sin was ready but needed fuel. Lack of fuel does not change the nature of fire, which is to burn.

(2) Sin brings death through the law (vv. 9-11)

We need to keep in mind that this whole section is what we might call an ideal biography. In verses 1 to 14 Paul is not describing his own experience at the time he is writing, he is looking back upon his past life from the standpoint of his regenerate life; and so he describes what the natural man is apart from Jesus Christ. The law is not an arbitrary commandment. We cannot bend nature to our whims; we have to bend our whims to nature. The law of God in the moral realm is like the law of nature in the physical.

(3) The law is good (vv. 12-14)

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” How can the law be good if it is the occasion whereby sin brings death? Would we care to live in a world where fire did not always burn, where water was not always buoyant, where gravitation did not always operate? When we violate the laws of nature, the result may be tragic, but our violation of them does not destroy the goodness of those laws. We have to adjust ourselves to the laws of nature to find health and safety. We have to learn about what kind of food to eat and to abstain from if we want to keep well. We have to adjust our bodily habits to the physical world in which we live. It is just as important to bring our souls into tune with our moral environment, with the holy laws of God.

b) By revealing the helplessness of man (vv. 15-25)

(1) The law precipitates what causes the conflict between conscience and practice (vv. 14, 15)

The law of God is holy, and if we let ourselves be kindled by the holiness of God, then we know the fullness of life. Paul describes his terrific struggle before his conversion; and under his own experience he is describing the experience of the natural man, the struggle between conscience and practice.

Beginning with verse 15, the apostle describes the Christian's experience of conflict between the old and the new natures (cf. Galatians 5:16, 17). After we become Christians we have a struggle with Satan. We cannot deny that fact. Before we were converted we had conscience, which told us what we ought to do, but we did not have the strength to do it. After conversion, we not only have conscience, but we have the Spirit of God in our hearts. But even as Christians we experience a struggle between conscience and the weakness of the flesh.

Well, how can that be a blessing? Is pain a blessing? Oftentimes it is, in disguise. Sometimes a headache will send a person to the doctor who discovers he has a serious illness. Pain is a danger signal; the same is true in the spiritual realm. The very fact that conscience makes us uncomfortable when we do wrong should be an occasion for thanking God rather than for bemoaning our hard lot. Far better to have conscience stop us than to drift along to death.

(2) This conflict witnesses to two things (vv. 16-20)

(a) The goodness of the law (v. 16)

“If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.” In other words, the fact that a man knows that he ought to do a thing is witness to the fact that the thing is good, that is, if his conscience is instructed through the revelation of God. Illuminations are of little value if not followed by dedications; they are like unthreaded needles.

(b) The weakness of the flesh (vv. 17-23)

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Paul is not excusing himself in these words. No, our obligations are not governed by our limitations. The weakness of the flesh does not destroy the claims of the moral law.

c) Victory over the lower nature can come only through Jesus Christ (vv. 24, 25)

“O Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul knew by experience that victory could be won only through Christ. The pain of struggle may end in the peace of triumph through Christ. The law brings sin to a head where it can be cured. Sinners must be brought under conviction that they may find assurance in Jesus Christ; and we as Christian workers need to keep that constantly in mind. It is more natural for some of us to extol the grace of Christ than to denounce sin, but we must speak out against sin if we hope to bring people to the Saviour.

C. THE LIFE OF SANCTIFICATION IN THE SPIRIT (vv. 8:1-39)

1. Its origin (vv. 1-4)

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Verse 1 refers back to the triumphant note in 7:25. Condemnation is out of the question. Being in Christ, the believer has been delivered from the claims of the law. If a man moves into another state, he is no longer under the laws of the state in which he formerly lived. When we take Christ as Saviour, we pass from the state of law into the state of grace.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The law of the Spirit is the rule that the Holy Spirit has over those who belong to Jesus Christ. We need to be reborn to see and to enter the kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3, 5). The Spirit who brings the new life also brings a new law for our lives.

It is just as if a person were to be suddenly endowed with a gift of painting; he would immediately come under the law of artistic production: he would have to work in obedience to the laws of perspective, color, harmony, and many other principles of art, or he could not make progress. No more can we succeed in this new life in Christ without following definite spiritual principles; we are under the law of the Spirit whereby we are enabled to reproduce upon the canvas of life with the brush of daily influence the beauties of Jesus Christ which the Holy Spirit unveils to our enraptured gaze.

“God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh . . .” Here is a clear statement of the deity and humanity of Jesus. He was both God and man. Only One who is God and man can reveal God to man, or redeem man to God.

If a man is to translate a classic from one language into another, he must be master of both languages. One who is to reveal God to man must be perfect God and perfect man. He must know God and man absolutely. Jesus Christ as the God-man revealed God to man. Only One who is both God and man could bring man to God in redemption.

To refer to a previous illustration, a bridge has to rest securely upon both banks of the river; so if man is to find his way to God, it must be by the One who is both God and man. Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator. Man's search for God would be fruitless apart from God's quest for man.

“ . . . that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The object of justification is sanctification. We are to bear fruit for Him who died for us. The cross removed the barriers to the fruitage of holiness. The spirit of man can be renewed only by the Spirit of God. It is only in the Spirit that we can live for the Spirit.

2. Its antithesis (vv. 5-8)

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” Darkness is the antithesis of light. Heat is the opposite of cold.

In connection with verse 5 read Galatians 5:19-23, dealing with the fruit of the Spirit. The outer life conforms to the inner life. We order our lives by the goals that govern our hearts. Those who have beauty in their souls seek beauty outside. Those who revel in sin are keen to seek for the bad and are blind to the good. There are people who would rather explore the refuse piles of life than roam around in the flower gardens. We seek in the world what we have in our hearts. We can gauge our spiritual life very largely in that way. Our inward possessions determine our outward attentions.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace . . .” The death referred to is both future and present. Those who live the life of sin are planting the seeds of death in their souls. For those who are in Christ, He is the source, the course, and the goal of living. The life of God is in those who believe in and love Jesus Christ. To be spiritually minded is life because it is the right adjustment to the moral and spiritual universe in which we live. The secret of good health is to govern our physical lives in accordance with the laws of nature. What is the secret of spiritual health? It is to draw constantly upon the life of God, available for us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

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

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” This does not mean the sinner is not responsible or that he cannot be saved. Redemption can be ours in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. God waits to forgive all who will turn to Him in penitent faith. We are responsible not for what we do have, but for what we can have in God, and so while the sinner cannot please God, while he is powerless to save himself, he can lay hold of the grace of Jesus and be saved through faith in Him. It is important to get people to see that. **“They that are in the flesh cannot please God.”** Many people trust in their own good works and try living according to their conscience. We need to be very careful, lest we, as Christian workers, be deceived by outward appearances. It is easier to tell some than to tell others that they need Jesus.

It takes more courage to witness for Christ to a man of power and influence than it does to bring the same message to those who come to the mission halls. Souls out of Christ are lost, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; we must bring men to see this. Failure to do so results in many unconverted people coming into the church.

3. Its motivation (vv. 9-11)

“But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit . . .” We cannot be in the Spirit unless the Spirit is in us, just as we cannot be in the air unless the air is in us, and the air cannot be in us unless we are in the air. Faith is the lung capacity of the soul. The Greek word for Spirit is the same as the word used for air or wind. The more deeply we breathe in God's Spirit, the more strongly can we work for God.

“. . . if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” We cannot have God's Spirit in our hearts without living lives that are Christlike, without showing the righteousness of Jesus Christ in our daily conduct and experience.

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Physical death and spiritual death both come with sin. Paul says that because of this inherited sin, the body will die; but the spirit is life. The spirit inherits eternal life. The body will perish, the spirit never. We know we are to have resurrection bodies. These new resurrection bodies will be perfectly adapted to the new heavenly life.

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [give life] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (See Ephesians 1:18- 20). It is only as the Spirit of God lives in our hearts that we will share in that great resurrection day. Romans 8:11 is one of the best passages in the New Testament involving the doctrine of the Trinity.

4. Its obligation (vv. 12-14)

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh . . .” Destinations govern obligations. The goals we seek are the laws that rule us. Our objectives are our incentives. The thing that we earnestly seek spurs us onward, determines largely how we live. Unfortunately there are Christians who pay heavy tribute in time, strength, and talent to the world which has no claim upon them. We are duty-bound to live for Him who died for us.

“. . . for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die . . .” This death is the final doom in which there is no hope. Those who live after the flesh are out of adjustment with the moral and spiritual universe. We live spiritually by what we feed upon. The spirit can no more thrive on sin than the body on poison. Deeds of sin are seeds of death.

“. . . but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Sin is a deadly cancer which calls for drastic treatment. How foolish people are to let the dregs of sin rob them of the joys of Christ! But it is only in the Spirit that the deeds of the body, that is, of sin, can be put to death. My spirit needs to be emancipated by God's Spirit.

Visualize a boat on a mudflat; it is stranded, helpless. In comes the tide; the boat is lifted and makes its way out to sea without any trouble. And so it is with us—in ourselves we are helpless, but the Spirit of God can lift us above that which imprisons us.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” The word for sons in this verse in the Greek implies in addition to the natural relationship of child to parent, the recognized status and dignity and privileges that are reserved for the son. We are the sons of God. Do we live up to the level of our privileges? The Spirit-filled life is the fruit of sonship, and sonship is root of the Spirit-filled life.

It is both our duty and our privilege to be led by the Spirit. Do we, as Christians, appreciate the wonderful blessing that is ours in having God's own Holy Spirit as our private Teacher in holiness? It is an even more thrilling opportunity than it would be if any one of us could have for our instructor the greatest living master in some chosen calling, like painting, or music, or writing.

To have the Spirit of God teach us day by day, hour by hour, how to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ—it is simply wonderful to realize that that privilege is ours as children of God through Jesus Christ. Our obligation to God can be met only through inspiration from God. That is to say, only as God's Holy Spirit lives in our hearts can we fulfill the duties that we owe as children to our Father in Heaven.

5. Its heritage (vv. 15-17)

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear . . .” The verb **“received”** refers to the time when they were baptized into a new relationship with Jesus Christ. Now the Spirit of God, the third Person in the Trinity, coming into our hearts should banish the spirit of fear as a state of mind. As Christians, instead of shrinking from God in dread, we now cling to God in love and trust; and yet how many Christians do not enter into the full blessedness of their filial relationship with God. How an earthly father is grieved when his child distrusts him! What about our heavenly Father, when His children do not trust Him as they ought?

“. . . but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” What we feel our heavenly Father to be has much to do with what we ask our Father to give. There are some things that we would feel free to ask our father to do for us that we would hardly feel free to ask of our friends or teachers, because of the intimate relation between father and child. If we could just see what our heavenly Father has to give us in the way of wonderful spiritual treasures!

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God . . .” The Greek word for children lays stress upon the reality of the filial nature of our relationship to God as children. The consciousness of this relationship is here referred partly to the Spirit of God moving and prompting us, and partly to ourselves. **“The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”** The closer we live to God in obedience, the stronger will be our assurance that we are His children.

Do we always appreciate, as gratefully as we should, how much we owe to God's own Holy Spirit for the joy, for the peace, for the assurance in our souls that we belong to God through Jesus Christ for all eternity?

It is God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that this is so. This suggests that the best defense against the rising tide of doubt in the world outside of us is to build up a richer world of experience inside of us. We need to have a fuller experience of God's love in Christ. The average Christian perhaps is not competent to meet with scholarly arguments the attacks that are leveled against his faith by critics; but if he will take pains day by day, hour by hour, to live in close contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, then he has an inner defense that is impregnable.

What we prize lightly we sell cheaply; and the more we value those blessed privileges that are ours in Christ, the more tenaciously will we cling to our blessings. We will realize that only God can guard them for us. No matter how fiercely our souls are besieged, we can drink of the water of eternity, as it arises in God Himself. We can always find a secret passage to the heart of God for strength.

“ . . . **and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . .**” Here we have a wonderful hope set before us: an assurance that if we are children, we are heirs of God.

We think of how some people make their lives miserable wondering when a certain rich relative is going to die. How eager people are to get an inheritance of money and property, and yet how utterly indifferent and callous many of these same people are to the inheritance of eternal life through Jesus Christ!

We cannot all be born into a wealthy family for the purpose of inheriting a fabulous fortune; but the way is open for each one to be a born-again child of God, and thereby enter into a heritage which is eternal and incorruptible. We win eternal life when we die to sin. Having received such a heritage, how careful are we of it? Only God can keep that heritage secure (II Timothy 1:12). If we have committed our souls to Jesus Christ, we know that He will keep that treasure for time and eternity.

“ . . . **if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.**” These words were accepted without question at that time because so many Christians had that experience of suffering for Christ. Be simply willing to lose all for Christ if need be. Does Jesus Christ mean so much to me that I will suffer anything rather than let Him go out of my life? If we are not ready to die rather than deny our faith in Jesus Christ, do we really have Christ? It is our readiness to do, dare, and die for the name of Jesus, if need be, that counts.

6. Its expectation (vv. 18-25)

a) Present trouble contrasted with future glory (v. 18)

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Paul has just burst forth in praise over the wonderful privileges that belong to Christians as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. But he no sooner gives expression to that glowing tribute to God's goodness in this regard than he thinks of Christians who are called upon to endure and suffer. Then, he says, "These sufferings, terrible as they are, are nothing compared with the destiny that God has for those who put their trust in Him."

So often we allow temporal adversity to make us forgetful of our spiritual prosperity. It is easy when things go hard to forget the treasures we have in Jesus, which are pricelessly more valuable than those things the world counts dear. We may draw upon the capital of our future hope to meet our present tests. We are to look forward to what God has in store for us.

Pain is often the path to greatness. We have to suffer to conquer. Rugged trails of devotion lead to sunlit peaks of attainment. This is true in many realms, but particularly in Christian living. Let us thank God for the buffetings of life that open the way for the comfortings of Christ. Even here in this life the darkest afflictions for the Christian may be but eclipses that reveal new aspects of the glory of Christ.

In connection with a recent eclipse of the sun, the astronomical societies sent out invitations for laymen to report their findings during the eclipse; by way of response they were bombarded with letters from men and women who had seen the "coroner." What the writers meant, of course, was the "corona," the wonderful glory that streams out from the sun when it is blotted out by the moon.

That is just the mistake a great many people make in life. Trouble seems only to bring the coroner who pronounces death on their hopes and dreams; they do not see the corona, a new aspect of the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is referring here to the coming glory which Christians are to enjoy in Heaven. Let us not, however, forget that our experiences with Jesus in this life are a foretaste of what we shall see in Him after we have been called home to glory.

b) Prospective redemption of the world of nature (vv. 19-22)

These verses have been a source of difficulty to a great many Christians; and there is a good deal in them that is puzzling. It may be of help to bear in mind that Paul is speaking poetically. He is personifying nature, representing physical creation as groaning in anguish, and looking forward to the new creation. Yet there is more than poetry in it.

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17). We cannot explain how or why this should be; it is beyond the power of the finite mind to grasp. It is evident that in some mysterious way the sin of man has affected the physical cosmos. Men who are versed in science have observed that practically all the voices of nature are in the minor key—tides, winds, thunderstorms, and a great many other sounds. We know that, according to the teaching of the Bible, this present physical order will pass away, and a new earth and new heavens will be created.

c) Destined glorification of the bodies of Christians (v. 23)

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” These resurrection bodies of which Paul is writing will be perfectly adapted to the new environment. Take the illustration of water in its various forms. As ice, water is immovable and opaque; we cannot see through it. When ice melts, the water flows in a stream; heat it, and it turns into steam, and rises as vapor. So we are to have the same bodies; but they will be glorified with powers and capacities they do not now possess.

d) Hope that is seen is not hope (vv. 24, 25)

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Faith rests in the love of God; it roots itself in what God is. Faith plants the seed; hope sees the fruit. **“Hope that is seen is not hope.”**

It is better to trust a present God than to break a sealed future. Many people want graces of character without the necessary conditions. Spiritually they want lovely snowflakes with tropical temperatures; they want the beauty of the virtues like hope, patience, and all those things without enough of the cold severity of life to make those virtues possible.

A story is told by Henry Ward Beecher of a certain woman who prayed for patience and the Lord sent her an inexperienced cook. She had to have something that would develop patience.

7. Its undergirding (vv. 26, 27)

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Paul spoke about struggling in prayer, agonizing in prayer. Martin Luther went through that experience. Real praying is work. Often we cannot express what we really mean. Paul says the Holy Spirit will pray for us, will lift us up in prayer, will quicken our minds and hearts. Some of us when addressing an audience have felt as though we were empowered with a force greater than ourselves. If it is important when we preach to men that we be transported out of ourselves, how much more important when we speak to God is it to have the Spirit quicken within us a sense of our need and of the wonderful things God wants to do for us!

The Spirit, being God, can bring us into touch with God in the time of prayer. Do we as often as we should begin our prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to enable us to pray to God acceptably and effectively? How we do need that help of the Holy Spirit! We may not always realize that the Holy Spirit is working within us.

There is a painting of a fisherman, stalwart, rugged, and weather-beaten, and a little girl possibly six or seven years old; they are in a dory and the sea is rather heavy; in the distance a fog is coming in.

The little girl has her hands on two oars, but obviously the fisherman is pulling on those same oars with all his might and main. The little girl does not realize she is not doing it all, and so it is when we pray. The Holy Spirit prays through us, inspiring our thoughts and quickening our consciousness of God's presence; how thankful we ought to be for such divine enablement!

8. Its consummation (vv. 28-30)

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” We do not need to be reminded that verse 28 is one of the best loved verses in the entire Bible. **“To them that love God”**—that part should come first. It is only those who love and trust in Him who can claim that promise.

Things in the process of making often bear but the slightest resemblance to the finished product. Many things work together for good. Some of us may have tried to eat a dinner without any salt. A great many people would like to get along without the salt of life's trials. They might enjoy their own experiences, but how flat, insipid, and unpalatable would be their characters!

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” We are to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful proof of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the millions of Christians down through the centuries who have been transformed into the likeness of Jesus, and yet without any sacrifice of their own individuality! There are as many different varieties of Christlike character as there are flowers in the woods and fields, and yet all of these thousands of Christians who have been brought into Christlikeness are but so many reflections of the beauty that is in Jesus Christ Himself. Think of the beauty of holiness in Jesus Christ, so great that all these thousands of Christians growing into His likeness are but drawing their beauty from Him!

9. Its inexhaustibility (vv. 31-34)

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” The fear of God lifts above the fear of man. On the tombstone of John Knox are these words, “Here lies one who never feared the face of man.” Why? Because he feared God so supremely.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” We find that when God gave us Jesus Christ, it meant that Christ came into our souls through the Holy Spirit.

It is just as if a man had the ability to bestow a gift of genius upon his son, and then provided him with all the equipment necessary for giving creative expression to that genius. When God has given us Jesus Christ to live in our hearts, will He not with Him give us all needed spiritual gifts for living the Christ we love?

10. Its indestructibility (vv. 35-39)

This love of God is as indestructible as the force of gravitation. Just as the sun keeps the planets in their course, just as everything in this physical universe is held together by the power of gravitation, so, if we are Christians, absolutely nothing in time or eternity can separate us from that love of God. It holds us in Him.

What a comforting thing it is to realize that this love of Christ is as strong and deep as the heart of God!

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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