

Romans—Chapter 8

The Work of God for Sanctification

Introduction:

I. Context

A. The Book of Romans:

1. Book Theme: Rom. 1:16–17, the power of God to save ... “*the just shall live by faith.*” A corollary theme is “*obedience to the faith,*” 1:5 and 16:26 (bookends). The word “obey, obedience” (*hupakoe/hupakouo*) occurs 11 times.
2. Book Outline: a systematic and doctrinal development of the theme.
Prologue: 1:1–17, the Gospel message and ministry, theme of book.
 - a. Chapter 1:18–Chapter 3:20: condemnation: the need for God’s saving power and obedient faith.
 - b. Chapter 4–5: justification: the provision of saving power to all who believe.
 - c. Chapter 6–8: sanctification: the continuing power of God to save in time. Here Paul develops the “*from faith [justification] to faith [sanctification].*”
 - d. Chapter 9–11: dispensation: God’s power/faithfulness demonstrated by Israel. A very crucial point made—where there is no faith, God will not save!
 - e. Chapter 12–15:13: transformation: the outworking of sanctification in life.
 - f. Chapter 15:13–16: conclusion: final instructions, greetings, and benediction.

B. In the Immediate Context, Chapter 6–8.

1. Chapter 6: Two questions posed and answered regarding sanctification.
 - a. The first (v. 1) based on potential misapplication of 5:20.
 - b. The second (v. 15) based on potential misapplication of 6:14.
2. Chapter 7: The relation ship of Moses’ Law to sin (vv. 1–12) and the believer (vv. 13–25). The main thrust is that the Law cannot produce sanctification for us.
3. Chapter 8: Reaches back to 5:1–2 (“*we have peace,*” “*this grace in which we stand*”), vv. 16–17 (“*reign ... through the One, Jesus Christ.*”) to summarize Chapter 6–7, and specifically to answer the cry of Paul and his conclusion in 7:24–25.

II. The Flow of the Argument, Chapter 8.

- A. Because of the finished work of Christ, the believer is free from all condemnation (vv. 1–11).
- B. By means of the continuing work of the Spirit, the believer is free from the dominion of sin (vv. 12–27).
- C. On the basis of God’s sovereign and eternal plan, the believer is free as a result of the defeat of sin (vv.28–39).

Note: The words “*free,*” (v. 2) delivered, liberty (v. 21) all come from *eleutheroo*, meaning liberation, one of Paul’s favorite words for the effects of justification (cf. Gal.5:1, 13). This word occurs in 6:18, 20, 22, and in 7:3, and is now fully developed in Romans 8. Note that in the three usages in this chapter, the first (8:1) refers to the work of Christ, the second (8:21) to

the final work of the Father, and the third (8:21) refers to the present work of the Spirit in sanctification.

Final Note: It is of value to consider that only one imperative occurs in this chapter aimed at what we should do, and that relates to the duty of prayer (8:26). Here the word “*ought*” is *dei*, a verb of necessity. In the imperative, it implies that which we must do (pray), and follows logically the word “*debtors*” (*opheilo*, v. 12) as the primary means toward an end, i.e., “not ... to live according to the flesh.” This is true because the “command” section for the out-working of sanctification is Chapters 12–13. Chapters 6–8 speak primarily of God’s work for us.

Chapter 8 Outline:

- I. No Condemnation of Sin (vv. 1–11)—by the finished work of Jesus Christ for us.
- II. No Dominion by Sin (vv. 12–27)—due to the present work of the Spirit in us.
- III. No Defeat from Sin (vv. 28–39)—because of the Father’s sovereign/eternal plan.

I. No Condemnation of Sin in Christ Jesus, vv. 1–11.

[Review 7:24–25: “*deliver*” is *rhuomai* (in future, middle voice, indicative). It was used of a soldier who ran to the aid of his comrade to deliver him from the enemy. The effect of Christ coming to our aid in sanctification is the “freedom” we find in the eighth chapter.]

A. Because of our standing in Him, v. 1.

1. “*No condemnation*” means NONE! No charges can be brought against us (v. 33). The “*now*” refers to our justified state (cf. 5:1–2).
2. “*Those ... in Christ Jesus.*” This chapter begins (v. 1) and ends (v. 39) with our position. We cannot begin to change our STATE until we are grounded, by faith, in our STANDING! Remember, the Christian life is “*from faith [justified] to faith [sanctified],*” and “*the just [justified by faith] shall live by faith,*” (Rom. 1:17).
3. “*Who walk not ...*” This is omitted in the earliest manuscripts, included by Textual Reasoning (TR) and Majority texts. If included is expegetical, as the parenthetical of Eph. 2:5 “*by grace you are saved.*” It cannot be divorced from its practical sense in v. 4.

B. Because of the Law of the Spirit of Life, v. 2–7.

1. “*The law of ... life in Christ*” refers to regeneration, both as an accomplished fact, and as an ongoing power (law) of renewal. See Rom. 6:4 and Rom. 7:6, “*newness*” is *kainotes* (dative of advantage), meaning recent, new, strange. Newness of life comes from the “renewing” power of the indwelling Spirit. Newness of life (sanctification) follows new life (regeneration).
2. “*Made me free*” *eleutheroo* (aorist, indicative) a finished, once for all work of liberation, “*law of sin and death.*” This must be distinguished from “*law of sin in my members*” (i.e., indwelling sin, Rom. 7:23), for it speaks of the universal law that sin brings death (5:12, 8:13a). The point is that we are no longer subject to sin’s condemnation.
3. Sin judged in totality. “*For what the law could not do ... God did.*” The law here is Moses’ Law, which could pronounce judgment, but could not execute it. The law could neither ultimately judge sin, nor liberate from its power. God did this by executing His Son in our place, and giving us His righteousness and the indwelling Spirit.

4. Righteousness imparted completely. "... [so] *that* [purpose] *righteous requirement of the law.*" What is the *dikaionoma*?
 - a. That all sin and sins must be judged with death.
 - b. That the law must be fulfilled in righteous obedience in every detail.
 - c. Jesus accomplished the second (b.) by His life (Mat. 5:17) and the first (a.) by His death on our behalf.
 - d. Expiation of sin, justification, and imputation of His righteousness makes it real.
 - e. "*Might be fulfilled* [result] *in us,*" *pleroo* (aorist, passive, subjective).
 - f. The future potential of sanctification produced in us by the Holy Spirit. True spirituality is the life of Christ (Mat. 5:17) lived out in us by His Spirit.
 - g. We do not do it, we allow it to be done! (Cf. "let" Col. 3:15–16.)
 - h. It is the submission of "present yourselves" in 6:13; 12:1.
 - i. "*Walk not ... but according to the Spirit,*" strong contrast (*alla*) with *kata*, according to the standard of the Spirit, i.e., the very life of Jesus Christ.
- C. The Practical Implications, vv.5–7
1. "*Those who live*" *eimi* (present, active, participle), literally "being in accordance with."
 2. "*Set their minds*" *phroneo* (present, active, indicative), to think on, dwell on habitually.

Note: Paul is now explaining a somewhat enigmatic statement ending Rom. 7:25. Only the resolute setting of the mind on spiritual truth, to the exclusion of the things of the flesh, can result in the Holy Spirit having freedom to work in us.

3. "*Spiritually minded ... life and peace.*" We cannot "produce" obedience, leading to abundant life and peace. Only by "renewing the mind" can we be sanctified, or "*conformed*" (8:29) or "*transformed*" (12:2) into the image of Jesus Christ.
 4. "*The carnal mind,*" the mind set on the thoughts, motives, intents, and desires, of the flesh is at war against God, even in the life of the carnal believer. It leads to rebellion and hostility, and ultimately destruction. No one fights God and wins! On this "mindset" and its effects see Mat. 16:16-23, where Peter goes from the spiritual to the fleshly mindset in a few moments.
- D. Because of the Divine Indwelling, vv. 8–11.
Verses 8–9, our new sphere of life.
- [Note the shift here from "*according to*" to "*in.*" Whereas vv.5–7 explain what it means to "*walk according to the Spirit,*" Paul now returns to our positional standing in Christ. We are said to be "*in the Spirit*" (our sphere of life, cf. Gal. 5:25). This is true because being "in Christ" we "have the Spirit" dwelling in us. The idea of a coming of the Spirit after justification is declared in v. 9 to be impossible.]
1. Three great points (take note of "*if indeed ... if ... if,*" in vv.9–11).
 - a. The unbeliever ("those in the flesh," cf. Tit. 3:3) cannot satisfy the "righteous requirement" of the law and so "please God" regarding justification or sanctification.

- b. The believer so far as God is concerned is “*not in the flesh but in the [sphere of] Spirit.*”
 - c. Those not possessing the indwelling of God’s Spirit do not belong to Jesus Christ.
2. Our new power for life, vv.10–11.
- a. “*If Christ ... the Spirit of Him.*” This truth is assumed of all believers. Notice the intricate interweaving of the Trinity. We have the “divine DNA” in us spiritually—it cannot be changed! “Spirit of Christ ... Spirit of God ... *Spirit of Him,*” being so indwelt, it follows that “*Christ is in you*” in the fullest possible sense (cf. Eph. 1:23).
 - b. Three doctrinal/spiritual conclusions:
 - (1) The body (cf. Rom. 7:24, 8:23) must die due to indwelling sin. “The body is dead (mortal).”
 - (2) The Spirit indwelling us is the very presence of the totality of God’s righteousness.
 - (3) Since “*the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus*” (i.e., the Father) dwells in us, He who raised Jesus from the dead WILL give life to this mortal (dead) body through His Spirit. This promise from God is of ultimate resurrection (cf. 8:23), and present sanctification life.

II. No Dominion by Sin in the Spirit, vv.12–27.

Note: Paul has established that the work of Christ has delivered us from all condemnation, and has provided us with the indwelling Spirit, who is able to “give life to our mortal (dead) bodies.” He now explains how this is accomplished.

- A. Due to Power of the Spirit, vv.12–14.
- 1. “*We are debtors,*” *opheiletes* with the present, indicative of *eimi*—we are morally obligated. Remember that in 1:14, Paul applies this debt to himself and his apostleship.
 - 2. “*To live.*” The present, active, infinitive of *zao*, is stated in the negative, “*not to the flesh*” for added emphasis. If not to the flesh, then certainly to live/walk “in the Spirit.”
 - 3. “*If you live according to the flesh,*” the negative potential of believers (cf. v. 5–6).
 - 4. “*You will die.*” This is inevitable because (a) carnality is the death of spirituality, (b) it is also the death of spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22–23), and (c) perpetual carnality will lead to physical death (1Jo. 5:16).
 - 5. “*But if by the Spirit ... you will live.*” To live by means of the Spirit is “*life and peace*” (v. 6). The primary emphasis here is on “*abundant life*” (Joh. 10:10), the “*newness of life*” of 6:4.

The Life-Giving Work of the Spirit:

- 1. The Spirit, given control of our life, “*puts to death*” the works of the flesh, Rom. 8:13 (see Gal. 5:16).
- 2. The Spirit leads/guides all who submit and follow into the will of God, Rom. 8:14, see also Joh. 16:13.
- 3. The Spirit imbues us with the consciousness of our adoption, compelling us to cry out to our heavenly Father in time of need, Rom. 8:15 (see Mar. 14:36).

4. The Spirit assures us of our belonging in the family of God, Rom. 8:16, as regenerate sons.
5. The Spirit testifies to us of our heirship, Rom. 8:17a, and urges us to make the most of our inheritance, enduring our sufferings in fellowship with Christ (see Gal. 3:29, 4:7; Col. 3:24; Tit. 3:7).
6. The Spirit comforts us in suffering by reminding us of the “greater weight of glory” awaiting us (compare 2Co. 4:16–18 with Rom. 8:17b–18).
7. The Spirit creates and sustains hope in the midst of trials, Rom. 8:19–25. Note the triumvirate (rule by three) of the spiritual life in Rom. 5:1–5; 1Co. 13:13; Col.1:4–5; 1Th. 1:3, 5:8; 1Pe. 1:3, 5, 8, 21–22.
8. The Spirit urges us to pray, and intercedes/intervenes for us through our prayers, according to the will of God, Rom. 8:26–27.

6. “... *led by the Spirit ... sons of God.*” The leading and guiding ministry of the Spirit is available to all believers (Joh. 16:13; 1Co. 2:10–13; 1Jo. 2:20, 27). However, only those who follow His leading are spoken of here, and they are called (designated) “*sons (huiioi) of God.*” The word used here speaks of mature, responsible, adult sons. This is crucial to understanding both adoption (v. 15) and heirship (v. 17).
7. Principle: All believers are “*children (tekna) of God*” (v. 16). Only when we submit to and follow the Spirit do we begin to function as adult sons of God. Why does it matter? Because temporal conduct affects our eternal inheritance (v. 17, cf. Col. 3:24).

B. Due to the Promise of the Spirit, vv.15–17.

1. “*You received the Spirit of adoption,*” *lambano*, aorist, indicative—received at salvation. The word *huiiothesia* speaks of the ceremony in which the child is now accepted as an adult son, with full rights and privileges, being included in the Father’s inheritance. Both Jews and Romans had ceremonies for this. In the Jewish ceremony of Bar Mitzvah, the boy became a “son of the Law,” able to read the Torah. In the Roman ceremony, the toga of the child was removed and replaced by the toga *virilis*, the garb of the man.
2. Principle: Every believer is given the position of adult son at the moment of salvation. The question of the Christian life, in fact of sanctification, is will we act accordingly?

The Value of Spiritual Adoption:

1. Some valuable quotes.
 - a. “Adoption (*huiiothesia*, “placing as a son”) is not so much a word of relationship as of position. The believer’s relation to God as a child results from the new birth (Joh. 1:12–13), whereas adoption is the act of God whereby one already a child is, through redemption from the law, placed in the position of an adult son (Gal. 4:1–6), the full manifestation of (this) awaits the resurrection (Rom. 8:23)”—Dr. C. I. Scofield, Scofield Bible.
 - b. “In (Romans) it signifies a deliverance from the flesh (cf. Rom.8:14–17). All of this is directly due to the new, complete responsibility which full maturity imposes and to the divine plan

that the believer's life is to be lived from the start in the power of the Holy Spirit."—L. S. Chafer, Vol. VII, p. 11, Systematic Theology.

2. In practical terms, this means that due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the provision of "*all spiritual blessings*" (Eph. 1:3, i.e., resources), no believer is excused from living a spiritual life from the beginning.
3. God places us as adult sons at the moment of regeneration (Eph. 1:5) that we might also become "*heirs*" (Gal. 3:29, 4:7), and by our conduct, affect our final inheritance (Rom. 8:17–18; Col. 3:24; 1Co. 3:10–15).
4. While it is clear that all believers are heirs and have an inheritance from God (1Pe. 1:4–5), it is also clear that not all will have the same inheritance (Rom. 8:17b; 2Ti. 2:12, 20–21).
5. Scripture is filled with examples of rightful inheritance being lost due to disobedience and misconduct (cf. Esau, Heb. 12:16–17; Reuben, Gen. 49:3–4; and the elder son in the story of the prodigal, Luk. 15:11–32).

3. "*The Spirit Himself bears witness ...*"
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate witness sent from God.
 - b. He testifies/convicts the unbeliever of Gospel truth (Joh. 15:26, 16:8).
 - c. He is a faithful witness to us of our regeneration into God's family.
 2. "*We are children ... and if children, then heirs ...*" (cf. Gal. 3:29, 4:7).
 - a. God has no stepchildren! Every believer is born into God's family.
 - b. At the new birth, every child of God is "adopted" as an adult son.
 - c. Every adult son is possessor of an inheritance from the Father (1Pe. 1:4).
 3. "*Heirs of God ... joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him.*" Note here that "joint-heirship" is conditional, as also in 2Ti. 2:12. This will lead into the section on perseverance in trials (8:18–27) because our role in His reign is determined by our conduct in suffering for His sake (cf. Luk. 22:28–30, regarding the original disciples).
 4. "Glorified together." This is the "greater weight of glory" of 2Co.4:17–18. It is clear that our present faithfulness affects our eternal state. To "*suffer with Him*" is a present option; to be "*glorified together*" is a future potential.
- C. Due to the Perseverance of the Spirit, vv.18–25.
- Note:* In this section Paul develops this thought of "suffering together," so that we know exactly what is required. One of the things I love about Paul is that he introduces ideas, and then develops them in both theological and practical terms. For Paul, theology is never just theoretical, but always leads to experiential living.
1. The whole creation is presently involved in the sufferings resulting from sin. Note especially vv.19–22, where we see that the curse of sin involves the totality of creation (cf. Gen. 3:17–19, 21). It is clear this involves both animate and inanimate creation, in other words, all created things. But creation also has the "*hope*" of being delivered from the curse, for which it has "*earnest expectation*" of being "*delivered ... into the glorious liberty of the [sons] of God*" (vv.19–21). The implications of this are enormous—worth deeper study.
 2. Believers have sufficient biblical information to "suffer with Him" in hope. Paul lays the groundwork in v. 18 that no suffering on this earth can be compared to the glory in eternity, when we use our sufferings rightly! Every

trial of life leads us to a decision whether we will suffer rightly (see Rom. 5:1–5; Jam. 1:1–5) or not. If “[having] *the firstfruits of the Spirit*” (v. 23) we persevere “*in [the sphere of] hope*” (vv. 24–25), then our current sufferings qualify as “suffering with Him” (v. 17b) and “*are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed [unto] (eis) us*” in our glorified state. For this reason, every suffering has the potential to aid and intensify our “eagerly awaiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (v. 23), so that “we hope ... we eagerly wait” and we “persevere” in times of suffering (v. 25).

3. Principle: To “suffer with Christ” does not require physical persecution, nor martyrdom, but only to use the sufferings which come upon us in the course of our lives as opportunities to trust Him, to live in the “*blessed hope*” (Tit. 2:13, 1Jo. 3:1–3), and to persevere in faith in the promises of God.

D. Due to the Prayer of the Spirit, vv. 26–27.

Note: In this section, we find the single imperative directed toward believers in this chapter, and that is that “*we ought [to pray].*” The occurrence of this in its context is significant, for the entire eighth chapter is about what we have “in Christ” and how the indwelling Spirit is the provision by which our Lord will “*deliver me from this body of death*” (7:24). Why then does Paul lay such emphasis on our need for prayer?

1. The Holy Spirit was sent as our “*Helper*” to overcome all our natural weaknesses (v. 26a; Joh. 14:15–18). The point is every spiritual lack we have, due to our fallen nature, is neutralized by the dynamic power of the Spirit.
2. One of the most fundamental of these areas is in the realm of prayer. We (Paul includes himself) simply do not know “*what we should pray for, as we ought.*” *Dei* (present, active, imperative) the verb, in contrast to “*debtors*” (*opheiles*), speaks of a state, focusing on a spiritual obligation due to the nature of our current existence.
3. The chief reason we “ought to pray” is that in contrast to our ignorance, we have the Spirit who “*makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.*” The implication is that this intercession is going on while we pray. Therefore, failure to pray “*as we ought*” forfeits the intercession of the Spirit.
4. In addition, while our prayers may be muddled, the Spirit’s intercession is:
 - a. The result of a divine searching of our heart’s true desires (cf. Psa. 37:4; Heb. 4:12–16). God knows when our request will not fulfill our true desire.
 - b. In accordance with the will of God for us (v.27b). This will is later described in Rom. 12:2 as “*good and acceptable and perfect*” for us in every respect.
5. We conclude then that when believers pray, especially in times of trial, the Holy Spirit enters into our prayers, so that the “[need of] *our hearts*” is transformed by “*the mind of the Spirit*” into a request for the perfect “*will of God*” to be done.
6. The very act of prayer is an expression of faith-dependence on the Spirit and of persevering hope based on the revealed will of God in His Word.

7. This is precisely what Paul means when he writes in Eph. 6:18 ... “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*”
- III. No Defeat from Sin in the Father’s Eternal Plan, vv.28–39.
The plan of God cannot be thwarted, vv.28–30.
- A. Regarding the conditions and circumstances of time (v. 28).
 1. Because His plan covers all possible circumstances and situations, v. 28. The “*all things*” here is consistent with the “*all things*” of 8:32, 37, 11:36.
 2. Paul says “*we know*” (*oida*) with mature and certain biblical knowledge that all possible circumstances “*work together for good,*” *sunergeo*: (present, active, indicative). That is, they cooperate under God’s sovereign power and authority. What we call the permissive will of God always works toward the perfect will of God.
 3. This is true regarding those who “*love God ... are the called according to His purpose.*” While God’s working never changes, the benefits of it are often forfeited by believers who do not love Him or seek to live in His purpose.
 - B. Regarding the scope of infinity (time and eternity), v. 28.
 1. “*Whom He foreknew*” speaks of believers, known in Christ before time began (Isa. 42:1; Luk. 10:20; Eph. 1:4–5; Rom. 11:33–36; 1Pe. 1:2).
 2. What God “*predestined*” is not who would be saved, but that Church Age believers would ultimately “*be conformed to the image of His Son.*” The verb “*predestined*” occurs only six times in the N.T.—all refer to God’s foreordained plan (cf. Act. 4:28; Rom. 8:29–30; 1Co. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11).
 3. The omni-attributes of God (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence) are very much evident in these verses. All His works are spoken of as already completed. Since “*those He justified ... He also glorified,*” how could one possibly lose his/her salvation? Every believer is already seated with Him in Heaven (Col. 3:1–4).
 - C. The plan of God guarantees every believer ultimate victory, vv. 31–39.
 1. No condemnation can stand against us, vv. 31–34.
 - a. Because God the Father (i.) is for us, in the manner v. 28 describes; (ii.) gave His own Son to redeem us; (iii.) has freely (in grace) given us all things (cf. Eph. 1:3); and (iv.) has already justified us of all charges of wrongdoing.
 - b. Because Jesus Christ (i.) died in our place (substitution); (ii.) rose from the dead for us (cf. Rom. 4:24–25); (iii.) is seated at God’s right hand with us (cf. Col. 3:1–4); and (iv.) constantly makes intercession for us (cf. 1Ti. 2:5; Rev. 12:10)
 2. No enemy or circumstance can defeat us, vv.35–39.
 - a. “*We are more than conquerors*” (v. 37), *hupernikao* (present, active, indicative), means to go beyond victory, to win a great and glorious triumph. We are already victorious!
 - b. Because all our sufferings simply identify us with the Lamb of God (v. 36).
 - c. Because in all these things we share in His completed victory (v. 37).

- d. Because none of these temporal enemies can ever separate us from the infinite, eternal, incomparable *“love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Note: Romans 8 begins with “no condemnation” and ends with “no separation,” and both are “in Christ.” Positional truth is the foundation of every truth in this chapter!

Summary:

1. “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.” – 2Co. 1:5.
2. *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created ... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”* – Rev. 4:11, 5:12.
3. Note that while the focus in Chapters 6 and 7 is on the believer (leading to confusion and despair), the focus in Romans 8 is all about Jesus Christ and His provision of the Spirit within the eternal plan of the Father.
4. There is an implication, which proves out in our experience, that the more self-focused we become—even in our desire to live sanctified lives—the more we will be defeated. The more Christ-centered we become (setting the mind on things of the Spirit), the more we will experience victory in life.
5. Jesus’ original demand runs through it all, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”* (Luk. 9:23). The best way to deny self is to forget self—get lost in Christ and in others. We all know experientially that “first love” is to be so absorbed in our beloved that we do not really think about ourselves at all.
6. Sanctification, in Romans 8, is all about ...
 - New law, v. 2;
 - New life, v. 4;
 - New power, vv. 10–11;
 - New Lord, vv.13–14;
 - New hope, vv.18, 23;
 - New perspective, vv. 28–30;
 - New security, vv. 31–37; and
 - New rest, vv. 38–39.

“Behold, I make all things new.”—Rev. 21:5