

# FREEDOM IN CHRIST

by

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Prisoners Bible Crusade  
2212 Stonecypher Road  
Lucedale, MS 39452

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## FREE FROM CONDEMNATION OF SIN

Romans, chapter 8, is one of the most inspiring passages in Holy Scripture. Beginning with “no condemnation in Christ,” ending with “no separation from Christ.” It teaches in between “no defeat” in Christ. It is the “Assurance Chapter” of the Bible. I propose that we assure our hearts by a study of that blessed chapter.

What is the source of Christian assurance? The answer to that question is indicated by a review of Romans 8. The name of God occurs 20 times. and pronouns referring to Him occur another 13 times. The name of Jesus Christ occurs 12 times with 8 pronouns referring to Him. There is a total of 21 references to the Holy Spirit. That makes a total of 74 references to some person of Holy Trinity in the 39 verses of the chapter--an average of almost two references per verse! That indicates God is the source of Christian assurance.

Romans 8:1 reads, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

The statement reads like a simple declarative sentence in our English language. It is much more than a simple statement. In the Greek language in which it was first written, there is no verb in the sentence. It is not a simple statement; it is a shout! Do not think of it as just, “There is no condemnation in Christ.” Think of it as an announcement which cries, “No condemnation in Christ!” It is a glad announcement.

The text is an excellent summary of the fifth chapter of Romans. That chapter begins with the affirmation: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Romans 5:1, 2). It continues with the thrice-repeated statement that Christ has died in behalf of and for the benefit of poor fallen sinners. Even though death passed upon all men because all have sinned (5:12), where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (5:20). There is no condemnation to the one who is in Christ Jesus because Jesus has made full and eternal atonement for sin and redeems those who trust Him.

### **“Therefore”**

Look back to Romans 8:1, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. . .”* Note that word *“therefore.”* Any time that word appears in Holy Scripture, it is like an arrow pointing to what has come before. *“Therefore,”* in Romans 8:1, points all the way back to 3:21 and following. God has provided redemption apart from law-deeds. He makes men righteous upon their faith in Jesus Christ. Let man wrestle with his carnality as much as he will, there is no deliverance for any one except the deliverance which God has provided in Jesus. That is the truth testified in all the Christian revelation.

### **“Now”**

Notice also the word *“now.”* *“There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. . .”* The *now* could be temporal or conclusive in its meaning. If the *“now”* has a temporal meaning, it testifies that there is no condemnation *“at this time, for the present, in this moment”* for the one who is in Christ Jesus. Does that bother you with the thought that perhaps one who is uncondemned now might be condemned later? If so, consider Jesus’ words recorded in John 5:24, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* There is no condemnation at the present time nor any future time for the person who is in Christ Jesus.

Of course, the *“now”* could be conclusive in its meaning. The judgment of sin is behind the believer in Jesus Christ. His sins were judged in Christ at the crucifixion of the Lord. Those sins were atoned and eternally forgiven. The conclusion is that there can be no condemnation for sins which Jesus has forgiven.

### **No condemnation”**

Now, consider that statement, *“no condemnation.”* It means *“condemnation in judgment”* and underscores the perfection of our justification in Christ. There is no definite article (*“the”*) connected with the word *“condemnation”*. That means reference is not just to the final judgment when sinners will be consigned to their eternal destiny. It rather means there will be no condemnation from any judgment on any occasion.

Besides that, the *“no”* of *“no condemnation”* is called an *“emphatic negative”* in Greek grammar. It stresses the idea of negation. There is *“no sort of condemnation, not even one bit of condemnation,”* to the one who is in Christ Jesus.

**Condemnation of the believer can not arise from any source,** because God is on his side.

Verse 31 reads, *“What shall we then say to these things? if God be for us (on our side, taking our part), who can be against us?”* No one would dare to stand against us and condemn us so long as God is taking our part. Condemnation can arise from no source.

**Condemnation of the believer cannot arise from any person.** Verse 33 reads, “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*” When the sovereign God of the universe has declared one justified (accepted before Him), who is morally qualified to bring any accusation of condemnation against such an one? No one! There is no person in heaven, earth, or even in hell who can condemn one whom God has justified. Condemnation can arise from no person.

**Condemnation of the believer cannot arise from any cause.** Verse 34 reads, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Look at what Christ has done on our behalf. (1) He has died for our sins. (2) He is raised for our justification. (3) He is at the right hand of God on our behalf. (4) He represents our interests by intercession for us before God the Father. For one to condemn us successfully, he would have to overcome all that Christ has done and is doing on our behalf. Who is qualified to do that? No one can. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, the believer can not be condemned for any cause.

### **“In Christ Jesus”**

Where is all that blessedness received? It is received “*in Christ Jesus.*” To be saved is to be “in Christ” and for Christ to be “in me.” (No less than 164 times in his thirteen epistles, Paul made reference to the Christian’s being in Christ.) The believer in Christ is joined with Christ in His death, in His resurrection, and in the victorious life which He lives on this side of the cross and the empty tomb. Whatever happens to the Christian happens to Christ, for they are joined as one. Say, friend, what is your condition today? Are you “*in Christ*” by repentance from sin and personal faith in Him as your own Savior? Are you free from condemnation from any source, from any person, or from any cause, because you have been justified by God the Father and redeemed by God the Son? I wish with all my heart that your answer might be “Yes” to those questions. If it is “No,” you can make it “Yes” by receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior just now.

“Father, some who receive these words will be constrained by the Holy Spirit to repent and trust Jesus. May their number be great. Thank you for receiving and forgiving each one who resolves to turn from sin and to trust Jesus Christ alone. Thank you for your saving grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

### **FREE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS**

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1 -4).

The Christian is free in Jesus Christ! He is no longer dominated by sin nor legislated by law codes. His is not a freedom to sin, but a freedom not to sin. Romans 8:2 states in a single sentence the basis of Christian freedom, saying, “*The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*” It is a restatement of Romans 7:24, 25, that deliverance from the dominion of sin working through the flesh is found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **“The law of the Spirit of life”**

The “law” to which reference is made (*“the law of the spirit of life. . . the law of sin and death”*) does not refer to the Mosaic legislation recorded in Holy Scripture. “Law” means a regulative principle that exercises control over one. The Bible speaks of “the law of the mind, the law of sin, the law of God, the law of the husband in relation to his wife, the law of Moses, and the law of the Spirit of life.” It refers to the authority and regulation exercised by each “*The Spirit of life*” refers to the Holy Spirit, whose presence brings life and whose power sustains life. There is no spiritual life apart from the presence of the Spirit of God. Eternal life is not something, which God gives apart from Himself. It is the life of God lived in the human spirit and physical body of a person who is trusting Jesus. The Holy Spirit is “*the Spirit of life*” because He is our life.

He is called the Spirit “*of life*” in that the life is particularly His own possession and gift. He is the Spirit whose very life is manifest in Christians. That is why Paul would say that he was no longer alive, but that Christ lived in him (Galatians 2:20). The life of God so surpasses the mortal life of man that it is God’s life, which is our life in Jesus Christ.

The authority of the Holy Spirit has made us “*free*” from the authority which sin and death formerly exercised over us. To be free means to be liberated, emancipated, loosed and unfettered. It is to be delivered from all the power of indwelling sin. A grammatical form is used which that God set us free once-for-all in time past (at our conversion experience). The authority of sin is no longer exercised in the life. It can produce only death. But the Christian is alive in Christ with the life of God lived in him by the Holy Spirit. He is free from the authority of sin and death.

### **“What the law could not do”**

The law of Moses could never effect such deliverance. Verse 3 speaks of “*what the law could not do.*” What was it the law was powerless to effect? Law codes can never break the power of sin in us. It could condemn wrong actions, but that just left us powerless to do any better. It could not overcome sin in us.

But the fault is not that the law is weak. The problem is that the flesh is too weak to keep the law. Law demanded what human nature could not provide. A grammatical form is used here which indicates that the flesh “keeps on being weak.” The flesh will never be able to live a holy life

### **“God sending his own Son”**

But God took the initiative. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (verse 4).

That statement reveals four great truths concerning Jesus Christ. (1) The pre-existence of Jesus is indicated in God’s “sending” Him into the world. He did not begin existence at His birth to Mary, but He was the second person of Holy Trinity eternally. (2) The deity of Jesus is indicated in that He is called God’s “own Son.” He was and is the only and eternally begotten Son of God. (3) The incarnation of Jesus is indicated in the statement that He came “in the likeness (but not the nature) of sinful flesh.” (4) The atonement by Jesus Christ is indicated by His being sent “*for sin.*” The preposition “*for*” indicates He came to remove sin, destroy sin, atone for sin.

### **“Condemned sin in the flesh”**

The result is that He “*condemned sin in the flesh.*” What does that mean? It means Jesus broke the claim and authority of sin over man. Think of it!

The incarnation of Jesus broke the universal dominion of sin over men. Until He came in human nature, every person was a sinner by nature and by choice and by act. But Jesus was sinless. No longer did sin exercise universal dominion over men.

The death of Jesus broke the power of condemnation by sin over men. Apart from His atoning deed, every person was condemned in sin. But Jesus atoned for sin. He redeemed those who believe in Him. Those who are “*in Christ*” by repentance and faith are “*not condemned*” (verse 1).

Yes, Jesus deposed sin from its universal dominion. He dethroned sin. He made it possible for sinners to be saints. He revealed that the purpose of justification is sanctification. He doomed sin so that its claim and authority upon men ends at the point of personal faith in Jesus Christ

### **“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us”**

Verse 4 sets forth the results of His atoning deed in these blessed words: “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” That statement is an excellent summary of what is taught in this eighth chapter of Romans.

Sanctification is evidence of justification. Think of it! The righteousness demanded by holy law is actually fulfilled in those who walk according to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The law failed in its demands because of the inability of us humans to live up to its standards. Therefore, the law condemned us instead of justifying us. On the other hand, the Gospel succeeded because of God’s ability to make us new creatures in Christ, live in us by His Spirit, and accomplish through us what the law demanded. Every right requirement set forth in law is experienced in grace.

That righteousness is “*fulfilled*” in us. Notice that it is not performed by us, but accomplished in us. You see, salvation is not merely a heightening of our natural ability, it is a new creation. We are never sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God (II Corinthians 3:5).

God never intended that justification would be by faith and sanctification would be by struggle. It is grace all the way. It is faith all the way. We fight, but we “*fight the good fight of faith*” (I Timothy 6:12). “*The just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17).

Thank God for the privilege of knowing Him personally through faith in Jesus Christ. Thank God for the freedom we have in Jesus Christ. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who performs in us all that Jesus has secured for God and us the Father has provided for us. Thank God for the assurance that we are now the children of God.

“Father, words fail when we try to express in our limited human language all You are to us. We praise and worship You because of who You are, as well as because of what You have done for us. Now we wish that many others, may enter into the good of Your grace this very day. And we ask that it may be so. In Jesus’ saving name. Amen.”

### **FREE FROM THE FLESH**

There are many different kinds of people in the world. There are young and old, rich and poor, educated and unlettered, cultured and uncivilized, fat and skinny, handsome and homely, and the list could go on. But in very truth, there are only two kinds of people in the world in consideration of spiritual things. There are those who live “*after the flesh*” and those who

live “*after the Spirit*”. The eighth chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans discusses those two kinds of people in great detail. He draws the contrast between them in verses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. You see contrast in these words of verses 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. For to be carnally minded is death, - but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 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.*”

The great emphasis of those verses is that the person who trusts Jesus Christ as personal Savior and yields to Him as sovereign Lord is free from the dominion of the flesh over his life. We will be referring often to the “flesh,” so it is appropriate that we take a moment here to define what we mean. W. E. Vine lists thirteen different usages of the term “flesh” in the New Testament. (See article “flesh” in Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.) I think that can be summarized in five primary usages.

Genesis 2:21 uses “flesh” to refer to the soft substance of the human body which is permeated with blood vessels and covered over with skin. Genesis 2:24 uses “flesh” to refer to the intimate and enduring relationship established between husband and wife in the marriage relationship. Genesis 6:13 uses “flesh” to refer to the animal creation which must breathe air through the nostrils in order to live. John 1:14 uses “flesh” to refer to human nature--that which is tangible and material--in distinction from the divine nature which is intangible and spiritual. Romans 8:4, along with many other passages in Paul’s writing in particular, uses “flesh” to refer to the depraved human nature which is the seat of sin in man. It does not indicate a person is guilty of gross sin nor vicious spirit. It means he is subject to the sin nature rather than to the Holy Spirit of God.

#### **“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.”**

To be “*after*” the flesh means to be governed and controlled by that part of our nature which is subject to sin. The grammatical form (present participle) indicates reference is to a person who is habitually dominated by the sin nature.

Such a person “*minds*” the flesh. That is, he thinks in those terms; the entire bent of his thoughts, feelings, and motives are in that direction. The will of his whole inner being is toward the “*flesh*.” He gives his best thinking to it. His mind dwells on that which is carnal because he agrees with the things of flesh. A man’s reasoning grows out of what he is. His tendency is tied to his nature. So, being controlled by the sin-nature, he deliberately sets his plans and will on that with which the sin-nature agrees. What a terrible way to live.

#### **“The carnal mind is enmity against God”**

The tragedy is compounded by the realization that such a course of life ends in death. “*For to be carnally minded is death*.” Reference is to eternal death, separation from God. The person who is controlled, dominated, possessed by such a nature will experience the tragedy of eternal death in separation from God.

Why is it so? “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (verse 7). Consider that word “*enmity*.” It is built upon the stem of the word for “*enemy*.” Think of it! The person who lives according to the sin-nature called “*flesh*” is proclaiming himself the enemy of God.

Much more is involved here than meets the eye. Reference is to what a person is, not just to what he does. Not just inability to do right, but actual hostility to God in doing wrong is the

point of meaning in “enmity.” It is not just acts of rebellion, but an odious nature; not just a spirit of hating, but a state of being hateful; not just opposing God, but actual contempt for God; not just actions, but nature. Therefore, “*enmity*” is not a verb in our text, but a noun. What is of the sin-nature called “*flesh*” is “*enmity*” against God.

The term “*God*” is without the definite article. That indicates reference is not to the person of God but to the character, essence, and nature of God. “*Flesh*” hates all that is called God.

### **“They that are in the flesh cannot please God”**

That is why “*they that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (Verse 8). The person who is in abiding union with the flesh sin-nature, who is under its controlling influence, absolutely cannot please God (an emphatic negative). He will find that pleasing God is a total impossibility with him. The enemy of God can never please the God Whom he opposes.

The case would seem hopeless if we stopped at this point. But we do not have to stop here. The good news of the Christian gospel comes to view. Every one of us was born with a weakness toward sin so that when we reached the age of responsible choice, every one of us sinned and entered into a state of “*enmity*” with God. The old flesh sin-nature took control of our lives. Thus the whole world became guilty before God (Romans 3:19). But when Jesus entered, there came deliverance from the sin-nature of flesh and we became free from its dominion.

### **“But they that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit”**

A person does not have to be “*after*” the flesh. He can be “*after*” (controlled and habitually dominated) by the Holy Spirit of God. What a difference that makes!

To go the way of the unregenerate nature of the flesh results in death (eternal death, spiritual death, separation from God). To go the way designed by the Spirit of God results in life (an eternal relationship with God which is fullness of true life, John 17:3) and the blessed experience of peace.

The flesh nature continues in a person even after he has been saved. It is no longer his master, but it continues to call for his allegiance. “*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh...*”(Galatians 5:17). It is possible for a Christian to have victory over the flesh through the Spirit of God. Here is the principle: “*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:16). To walk *in* the Spirit means to walk under His government and according to His direction. The flesh nature will call for allegiance so long as a Christian is in this world, but victory is gained over it. The Christian is under no obligation to live after the flesh, but can put to death its deeds by surrender to the Spirit of God “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:25).

“Father, we confess our helplessness apart from the aid of your Holy Spirit. We cannot resist temptation, overcome the flesh, nor engage in spiritual warfare apart from the ability which you give. And we thank you for what you have provided in Jesus Christ, that we can always triumph in Him.”

“We want to live holy lives. We want to put to death the deeds of the flesh. We want to manifest by character and conduct that we truly belong to Jesus.”

“Grant that as a result of such a lifestyle among Christians that the world may know that you have sent Jesus Christ, and turn to Him for salvation. We pray in His great name. Amen.”

**FREE BY THE SPIRIT**

Are you living under the dominion of the flesh or of the Spirit? That is not just a casual question: it is a question of solemn consequence. Romans 8:8 reads, “*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*” To be “*in the flesh*” does not mean to live in human body, but to live according to the dictates of the sin-nature which is within each person. That is why the question is of such solemn consequence: “Are you living under the dominion of the flesh or of the Spirit?”

Hear this reading from Romans 8:9.11, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

### **“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit”**

Consider that statement in verse 9, “*Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*” There is no way to indicate in the English language the full impact of the statement as Paul wrote it first in the Greek language. Even so, let me try to indicate its power.

- (1) The pronoun is in an emphatic position, does not say simply, “You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit . . . It says, “But as for you, you are not...”
- (2) The negative (“*not*”) is an emphatic negative: “You positively are not in the flesh...”
- (3) The conjunction (“*but*”) is the strongest conjunction to be found in the Greek language and means “but on the other hand.”
- (4) The terms “*flesh*” and “*Spirit*” do not have a definite article before them. It is not “the flesh” and “the Spirit.” The intensity of emotion is indicated by the apostle’s writing of “*flesh*” and “*Spirit.*”

The sentence would read something like this, interpretatively translated, “But as for you, you are in no wise in flesh, but on the contrary you are in Spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in you.” And that is the condition of every Christian!

Notice the reference to the Spirit is dwelling in the believer in Jesus Christ. Verse 9 says, “*the Spirit of God dwells in you.*” Verse 10 refers to “*Christ in you.*” Verse 11 speaks of “*the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.*” That is the blessed doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Consider that word “*dwell.*” It is the verb form of a noun which means “home.” “*Dwell*” means to settle down and remain at home. It is to abide permanently, not just to visit. The Holy Spirit is the Host, not the Guest, in the Christian. The present tense of the verbs involved indicates that the indwelling is a continuing relationship which is going on right now. And that is true of every person who is saved.

### **“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**

Did you catch the thrust of the statement? Unless a person has the Spirit of Christ, he is not saved; he does not belong to Christ; he is not a Christian at all. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling the human spirit which makes a person saved. You see, salvation is not a gift which God presents to man apart from Himself. It is God moving personally into the human spirit by the indwelling presence of His divine Spirit and living the life of God in the body of a



man. That is what it means to be saved. Therefore, if a person does not have the Spirit of Christ (or, the Spirit of God as He is otherwise called), that person does not belong to Christ.

**“He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit”**

But on the other hand, what a difference the indwelling Spirit makes. His divine presence does not change the condition or state of the physical body. The physical body is mortal. It has the seed of physical death in it, inasmuch as *“death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). But the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit produces a new and undying life. The Holy Spirit produces and sustains that eternal life because it is His own life which He lives personally in the believer.

The Holy Spirit was the effective agent in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He awakened the dead body of the crucified Jesus and caused it to live again. He is the same power which quickens our mortal bodies and causes them to live.

Is reference to the quickening of our mortal bodies looking toward the resurrection at the last day? Perhaps so. These mortal bodies will be raised up from death, changed into the likeness of Jesus, and we will be caught away to meet Him in the air (I Corinthians 15, Thessalonians 4). What a day that will be!

However, the Christian religion is not a “pie in the sky bye-and-bye.” It is real in the here and now. Therefore, the power of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is not withheld until the resurrection of the physical body.

The same life-giving power of the Holy Spirit which effected the physical resurrection of the dead body of Jesus, and will effect the physical resurrection of the dead body of Jesus, and will effect the physical resurrection of the dead bodies of saints who die before Jesus returns, is effective here and now.

The physical body which could be used for the excesses of sin can be used by the Spirit of God for deeds of holiness and grace. It is the Spirit who “quickens” us with new life at conversion. We are resurrected from spiritual death into spiritual life (Ephesians 2:1, 5). The Bible states it this way. *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses”* (Colossians 2:13). That is what is meant when we say the same Spirit who effected the resurrection of Jesus Christ also effects spiritual life in our bodies now and at the final resurrection of the saved.

The work of the divine Spirit is so great; He is called by various names to indicate the wonder of His person. He is called *“Spirit”* in verses 4 and 5. *“the Spirit of God”* in verse 9, the *“Spirit of Christ”* in verse 10. and *“Spirit of Him who raised Jesus”* in verse 11. Please do not think of the Holy Spirit as one third of God. When you have received the Spirit of God, you have received the whole of deity. There is no more of God to receive when the Spirit of God lives in you. The Spirit is active in the life of the Christian, giving him freedom in Christ. He delivers the believer from the condemnation of sin (Romans 8:1, 2). He delivers the believer from the dominion of the sin-nature of flesh (verses 3-8). He delivers the believer from the bondage of spiritual death and the power of physical death (verses 9-11). He makes us alive with a new quality and quantity of life. He does not merely heighten our natural human talents, he makes us “new creatures” in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17). *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free* (Galatians 5:1).

“Father, thank you for the present reality of the indwelling presence of your Holy Spirit Who lives in our hearts. Thank you that His presence is not dependent upon our Performance, but

upon your grace. We confess our dependence upon Him. We repent of any sin which may have grieved Him and resolve to turn from quenching His divine ministry within us. Having been made free by the ministry of the Spirit of God we resolve to live lives which reflect the glory of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### FREE TO LIVE

Consider this word from God, recorded in Romans 8:12, 13: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

#### **"Therefore, brethren"**

That is the logical conclusion to be reached in view of the argument presented in the ten verses preceding. The theme of the section is the free sanctification which the Christian experiences in Jesus Christ. As a consequence of being saved by repentance and faith, the believer in Jesus is free from the condemnation of sin: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*" (Verses 1, 2). The believer in Jesus is free to live the holy life of righteousness: "*God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us - -*" (Verses 3,4). The believer in Jesus is free from dominion by the sin-nature called "*flesh*" and able to live for God under the direction of the Holy Spirit: no longer does He "*mind the things of the flesh*" but rather "*the things of the Spirit*" (verses 5-8). The believer in Jesus is free because of the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God in his life: "*Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you*" (verses 9-11). That is great, isn't it? Freed from condemnation because of sin, living a life of righteousness no longer subject to the demands of the sin nature, and indwelt by the Spirit of God, the Christian is free to live. He is free indeed!

#### **"We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh"**

Upon that truth, the inspired Apostle makes an appeal to holiness. You are under no further obligation to the sin-nature of flesh, he insists. No person nor principle binds you to a duty of obedience to the flesh. To "*live after*" the flesh indicates a life style which characterizes one's conduct day after day. "Emancipated from' the tyrannous service of sin into the service of righteousness, we owe nothing now to the flesh; we disown its claims, and are deaf to its impervious demands." --D. Brown. To that, we may all say a hearty, "Amen!"

You see, the new birth ended the domination of the flesh. It has no further claims upon us. It may cry to have its desires satisfied with illicit and sinful acts, but it has no power to enforce its demands nor over-rule decisions.

It is no longer the business of the Christian to "*live after*" the flesh. To live after it is to live according to its standards. It is to seek to satisfy its demands. It is to gratify its preferences and satisfy its desires. That is not the lifestyle of the Christian. "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you*" (verse 9).

God does not tolerate carnality. The unregenerate sin-nature called "*flesh*" is the very enemy of God. He who lives according to that sin-nature is the enemy of God. Take note now God is not the enemy of the sinner, sin is the enemy of God. God continues to love the sinner in spite of his

sins, even while the flesh sin-nature causes the sinner to hate God. Spiritual death, eternal death follows a life in which the sin-nature exercises its control.

**“But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”**

The deeds of the body must be “*mortified*,” to use the terminology of Romans 8:13. It is possible for the Christian to “*mortify the deeds of the body*” by the agency of the Spirit of God.

To “*mortify*” means “to put to death.” That is not a small task. The flesh nature will continue with us so long as we live in this present world. Satan will continue to appeal to us and tempt us through the world system which surrounds us and the flesh nature which calls from within us. That flesh nature cannot be put out of operation so long as we live in the body here on earth, but its deeds can be put to death. Therefore, the Christian is called upon to “*mortify*”--put to death--the deeds of the body.

That is not a deed of merit which a Christian accomplishes as a part of his salvation. Not at all. It is not the result of great discipline of mind and of spirit which a person is able to exercise. Never! Listen to the reading of verse 13 again, .... *but if ye THROUGH THE SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*” Notice how the victory is gained. It is “*through the Spirit*,” the Holy Spirit of God. Only the Spirit of God can put to death the deeds of the sin-nature.

That does not mean that the physical body is a thing of evil. Not at all. Men have traditionally had three attitudes toward their physical bodies. (1) Some worship the beauty and strength of the body. That was particularly true of ancient Greeks, and is increasingly true of our present generation with its emphasis on physical beauty. (2) Some saw the body as the source of sin. They either abused it (thinking it was evil) or lived in license because of its desires. (3) But the Bible teaches that the body is neither good nor evil; it is neutral. Subject as it is to the spirit of man, it can be used for God or for Satan. That is why the Bible admonishes, “*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God*” (Romans 6:12, 13). The same physical body can be used for good or evil. But the child of God will want to glorify God by what he does with his body.

Consider I Corinthians 6:15, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ... “Verse 17 continues, “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Verses 19, 20 conclude, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

The Christian does not gratify the flesh; he kills the works of the flesh as they seek to grow in his life. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24, 25).

Does the Spirit of God appeal to your heart that you should renew your personal vows of dedication to the service of God? Do you feel the yearning to magnify God in your body, whether it be by life or by death (Philippians 1:20)? Do you desire to present your body, a living sacrifice, to be used of God where and how He knows is best (Romans 12:1)? If so, that is the evidence of the call of the Holy Spirit to you. Respond to that call. Give of your best to the Master.

You will lose nothing by surrender to God. I speak by experience that there is no manner of life which is as fulfilling and worthwhile as the life which is lived in the will of God. “*But now*

*being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).*

“Father we accept with joy the eternal life which is given to us by Your divine Son, Jesus Christ. We accept with joy the ministry of Your blessed Holy Spirit Who has regenerated us and made us Your dear children through Jesus Christ. We accept with joy Your will for our lives, for the rest of our lives, in every situation. We accept it all with joy because we are sure You love us and will work the best possible thing for us We confirm our love to You and commitment to You. in Jesus’ name. Amen.”