

Every Christian's State and Walk: A Study on Romans 8:1-9

“[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and of death. For the Law [being] powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in [the] likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous demand of the Law might be fulfilled in us, those not walking according to flesh, but according to Spirit. For the ones that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh. And the ones according to Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh [is] death, but the mind of the Spirit [is] life and peace; because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it [be]. And those being in the flesh are not able to please God. But you are not in flesh, but in Spirit, since [the] Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not [the] Spirit of Christ, this one is not His.”

In the paragraph immediately before Romans 8:1-9, Paul (and thus every Christian) calls himself fleshly, having been sold under sin, being taken captive by the law of sin in his members, and serving the law of sin in his flesh (Romans 7:14-25). How can Paul say this in one breath, and in the next breath say that he and all true Christians do not walk according to the flesh, are free from the law of sin and death, and are not in the flesh? In fact, before the Romans 7:14-25 paragraph, Paul said this: *“What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Let it not be! We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it? ... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with [Him,] that the body of sin might be nullified, so that we no longer serve sin. ... For your sin shall not lord it over you, for you are not under Law, but under grace. ... But thanks [be] to God that you were slaves of sin, but you obeyed from [the] heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness. ... But now having been set free from sin, and having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life.”* (Romans 6:1-2,6,14,17-18,22).

We know these things do not contradict each other, because God never contradicts Himself, and thus His Word never contradicts itself. It must be true, then, that being fleshly does not mean that a Christian walks according to the flesh and that being sold under sin does not mean that we serve sin, are slaves to sin, or live in sin. Being fleshly means that our remaining sin is so great and so repugnant to us as we hold our character and conduct up to the light of God's law that we can only conclude that, in light of this perfect standard, we are fleshly, meaning that the sin in our flesh is ever before us. And being sold under sin means that no matter how much we may try to get away from it, the sinfulness that we inherited in Adam clings to us and harasses us, so we can never be free from the influence of sin.

Let us now go sentence-by-sentence through Romans 8:1-9.

Verse 1 encapsulates the objective and subjective aspects of the life of a believer. It says, in just one sentence, what a believer is all about. Pay close attention to what it says:

Romans 8:1 “[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit.”

We see the word “therefore,” which connects us to what Paul said right before this sentence. Let us look at what the “therefore” refers to by reading Romans 7:24-25: “*O wretched man [that] I [am]! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself with the mind truly serve [the] Law of God, and [with] the flesh [the] law of sin.*”

Having established that God through Jesus Christ shall deliver His people from the body of this death, Paul logically concludes that there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. Believers have just been described as fleshly, having been sold under sin, being taken captive by the law of sin in their members, and serving the law of sin in their flesh – yet there is no condemnation! Believers have just been described as doing what they hate, not doing the good they desire, and doing the evil they do not desire – yet there is no condemnation! Believers have just been described as wretched men, people who disobey God’s law, and people who do not meet up to the standard of God’s law in their own character and conduct – yet there is no condemnation!

The Greek word for “condemnation” is *katakrema*, which comes from two words: *Kata* in this context means “down” or “against.” *Krino* means “avenge,” “condemn,” “damn,” “judge,” or “sentence to.” So *katakrema* is a judgment against, a sentence handed down. When one is condemned, a judgment, a sentence is handed down – a judgment of guilty. Yet believers, who have sinned and continue to sin against Almighty God, whose sins cling to them so they cannot do the good that they want, who, when they desire to do the right, evil is always present with them so that everything they do is tainted with sin, who are wretched sinners, are judged to be not guilty of even a single sin! There exists no sentence against them condemning them for even one of their countless multitudes of sins!

But how can this be? Doesn’t God’s Law say that those who do not continue to obey in all things that the Law demands are under a curse? It sure does. Doesn’t God’s Law justly condemn all those who do not have a righteousness that equals the perfect righteousness of God? It sure does. How, then, are believers, who do not even come close to continual perfect obedience to God’s law, judged to be not guilty? How are believers, who are constantly under the influence of sin, who sin in their thoughts, words, and deeds, judged to be not guilty? It is through the work of Jesus Christ alone. “[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.” For those who are in Christ Jesus, He took all of their sins – past, present, and future – upon Himself, was nailed to the cross, and was condemned in their place. The judgment of guilty came down upon Him, because He was reckoned guilty when the sins of His people were imputed to Him. And when the sentence of guilty comes down from God in His Law, the consequence also comes down, which is a curse. Jesus Christ became cursed because of the sins that were imputed to Him. And while Jesus was cursed, He suffered the full fury of God’s wrath as He was hanging on the cross, even to the point of crying out, “*My God, My God, why did You forsake Me?*” (*Matthew 27:46*). We cannot imagine the intensity of the fury of God’s wrath that was poured out on His Son that day. It was equivalent to the very infinite torments of hell, because all sin is an

infinite offense against an infinitely holy God. When Christ was suffering the full wrath of God, it could not have been said about him that there was no condemnation to him. There was full condemnation to him. It was the condemnation that those for whom He died deserved. His people are the sinners; Jesus was totally sinless! His people are the ones who have broken God's Holy Law; Jesus was the perfect Law-keeper! Yet instead of His people being condemned, Jesus Christ was condemned in their place as their representative and substitute. And when God saves His people in time, the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, so they are counted as holy and righteous as Jesus Christ Himself. So, instead of being condemned for their sin, there is therefore now no condemnation for His people because of what He has done! In Romans 8:33-34, Paul says, "*Who will bring any charge against God's elect? God [is] the [One] justifying! Who [is he] condemning? [It is] Christ who has died, but rather also [is] raised, who also is at [the] right [hand] of God, who also makes intercession on our behalf.*" Those who are in Jesus Christ are not chargeable! They are not condemnable! So, although believers struggle with indwelling sin and will continue to sin in this life, their sin is not charged to them, because it was already charged to Jesus Christ, and the condemnation that their sins deserved has already happened, so all those for whom Christ died will never be condemned to hell! This is the precious truth of the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

Thus far, in the first half of this sentence in Romans 8:1, the objective, positional reality is established – that believers are not condemned; they are declared righteous based on the righteousness of Christ.

Now in the second half of this sentence, we have the subjective, way-of-life reality of believers: "*who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit.*" In the first half of the sentence, God says that believers are declared positionally holy in Christ. In the second half, God says that believers walk in holiness of life. The first half is talking about the imputation of righteousness to the believer, and the second half is talking about the impartation of a principle of righteousness into the believer. Righteousness imputed means that believers are no longer under condemnation. The principle of righteousness imparted means that the Christian walk is one that is characterized by holiness.

Both of these realities are present in every true believer without exception. There is no such thing as a believer who is under condemnation. There is no such thing as a believer who has not been declared righteous. And there is also no such thing as a believer who walks after the flesh, who lives in sin, whose life is not characterized by holiness. But something else very important must be said before we go any further. Even though both of these realities are present in every true believer, it is a deadly error to get the two mixed up. One has to do with the ground of salvation, and the other has to do with the necessary fruit of salvation. To get the ground and the fruit mixed up is to believe a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner.

The ground of salvation is the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. It is the work of Christ alone that is the basis of salvation. That has to do with the first part of Romans 8:1. God's people are declared to be not guilty based on the work of another – the alien righteousness

of Christ. The believer's own life of holiness – his own walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh – makes up absolutely no part of the ground of salvation. Instead, the life characterized by obedience that every Christian has is a fruit of salvation that works itself out in the believer's character and conduct. It is the outcome of, the result of, the product of the new life in Christ. This distinction is vital. If a believer's life of obedience were the ground of his salvation, then his salvation would be based on his works. Even if that imparted principle of holiness were the ground of salvation, then salvation would be based on something other than the work of Christ alone. Salvation is not based on anything in the believer – not even anything that the Holy Spirit produces in the believer, because if it were, then the work of Christ would be of no effect. Salvation is based on something completely outside of the believer. God's people are declared to be righteous, to be perfectly holy, because of the righteousness of another, not because of their own righteousness.

Notice how the verse is constructed. It first says that there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, and then it gives a description of those who are in Christ Jesus: "*who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit.*" It does not say that there is no condemnation because they do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. The believer's state of no condemnation, of being declared not guilty, is not a result of his walk. But this verse is also saying that every single person who is in Christ Jesus is a person who does not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. Both are true of every believer. This one verse confounds both the legalists and the antinomians. It confounds the legalist because it says that the declaration of righteousness is totally apart from the sinner's works. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, even though those in Christ Jesus still sin while they are on the earth. A believer's sin does not bring him back under condemnation. It confounds the antinomian because it says that all who are in Christ Jesus walk in holiness according to the Spirit. Every believer's life is characterized by obedience. No believer walks in sin according to the flesh.

Let us now look at the wording of the second half of the verse. The first part of the second half says, "*who do not walk according to flesh.*" The Greek word for "walk" is *peripateo*, which comes from *peri*, meaning "around" or "through," and *pateo*, meaning "to tread a path." In this context, *peripateo* means "to make one's way," "to deport oneself," or "to be occupied with." It is a walking through one's life, a making one's way through life. It is talking about how one conducts his life. If one walks according to flesh, he is conducting his life in accordance with his lusts. For some, walking according to flesh means living one's life in open immorality, living in obedience to one's unlawful desires to fornicate, steal, murder, or openly and blatantly disobey any of God's law. Christians do not walk in such a way. For others, walking according to flesh means living one's life in outward obedience to God's law, thinking that one's obedience forms at least some part of the ground of salvation or acceptance before God. Christians do not walk in such a way. If one walks according to Spirit, he is conducting his life in accordance with the new life he has been given by the Holy Spirit. His life is characterized by obedience to God's law. This does not mean that he perfectly obeys God's law throughout his life; as Romans 7 makes clear, sin is always present with the believer so that he is unable to perfectly obey God's Law. But, even though sin is present with him, his walk – the way he carries on his life – is characterized by a striving to obey God's law out of love and thankfulness to the One who met all

the conditions for his salvation.

The life of one who walks according to Spirit is also characterized by belief of the gospel. A very important distinction needs to be made here. When it comes to belief of the gospel, a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit always believes the gospel. There is never a time in a believer's life when he does not believe the gospel. In the case of the gospel, a believer cannot fall into the sin of not believing the gospel, even for a nanosecond. We find Scriptures that clearly show this. Also, if you think about it, what is a believer? It is someone who believes the gospel. A believer can never become an unbeliever. There is no such thing as a believer who does not believe.

In the verses that follow, Paul expands on the objective (verses 2-4) and subjective (verses 5-9) realities of a believer.

Romans 8:2 "For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and of death."

Here Paul talks about two laws: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the law of sin and death. The meaning of the word "law" comes from its context. "*The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" is the gospel. The "*Spirit of life*" is the Holy Spirit who gives new life. "*In Christ Jesus*" is the same phrase as in verse 1, which is talking about salvation by the work of Jesus Christ. This is a law of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. What has this law done? It has set His people free from another law, which is the law of sin and death. This law is talking about the condemnation that all people are under by nature. Because the sin of Adam has been imputed to all whom he represented, all whom he represented are sinners by nature. And all to whom that sin is imputed actually sin in their persons. All are born in sin. They are under the law of sin. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. Thus, all who are under the law of sin are under the law of death. So we see it here called "*the law of sin and of death*." It is the law of condemnation. This entire verse is an explanation of the first part of verse 1. The gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ has set us free from condemnation: "*[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus*." That law of sin and of death has been taken away.

Verses 3 and 4 go into how one is set free from the law of sin and of death:

Romans 8:3-4 "For the Law [being] powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in [the] likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous demand of the Law might be fulfilled in us, those not walking according to flesh, but according to Spirit."

The first thing we see is another law. We see that verse 4 says, "*the righteous demand of the Law*"; thus, we know it is talking about God's holy law, God's commandments, the law of perfect righteousness. It is the law that is being talked about in Galatians 3:10-12: "*For as many as are out of works of Law, [these] are under a curse. For it has been written, Cursed [is]*

everyone who does not continue in all the things having been written in the book of the Law, to do them. And that no one is justified by Law before God [is] clear because, The just shall live by faith. But the Law is not of faith, but, The man doing these things shall live in them."

The first thing we see about the law in Romans 8:3 is that it was "*powerless in that it was weak through the flesh.*" How was God's law powerless? It was powerless to save. It was powerless to justify. As we saw in Galatians, no one is justified by law. Romans 3:20 says, "*by works of Law not one of all flesh will be justified before Him.*" God ordained it so that the law would not justify; the law would only condemn. One of the main purposes of the law is to show sin, as the end of Romans 3:20 says. It was never meant to be a means of justification. When God commanded perfect obedience to the law, He was not saying or putting forth the possibility that any human being would be justified by keeping the law perfectly in his own character and conduct. The reason He commanded perfect obedience was to show that perfect obedience is what is required for fellowship with Him and that no one could obey perfectly; thus, no one could be in fellowship with him based on their own law-keeping. This showed the need for a substitute and representative who could and did obey the law perfectly in the place of His people. The law was powerless to justify because God had ordained that it would be powerless to justify in order that Jesus Christ would be exalted in the salvation of sinners.

The second part of verse 3 says that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the fulness of time, at the very time God ordained it, God the Father sent God the Son to this earth as a man. The Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary and conceived a baby who was fully God and fully man. His name was Jesus Christ. Being made in the likeness of sinful flesh does not mean that He was a sinner or that He even had the capacity to sin or had a sin principle in His flesh. It means that He was truly a man in the flesh, subject to all the infirmities of the flesh that were a result of Adam's sin. He was subject to being tired and hungry and thirsty, just like we are. He was also subject to death, just like we are. And since He came to this earth as a man, in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was also obligated to keep God's law. Galatians 4:4 says that Jesus Christ was born of a woman and came under law. But, unlike any other man, He was not under law as a private person; He was under law as a representative and substitute for a people whom God had chosen before the foundation of the world.

Now for us, when we come into this world under law, we are condemned by the law. We cannot meet up to its standards, so it must condemn us. But what happened when Jesus Christ came into this world under law? He was perfectly righteous, so the law could not condemn Him in His character and conduct. In this sense, he condemned sin when He was in the flesh. The law was powerless because of the weakness of those in Adam, which was their inability to keep it. But when Jesus Christ came, there was no weakness of Jesus Christ's flesh that made the law powerless. Christ kept the law perfectly and thus "*condemned sin in the flesh.*" There is another sense in which Christ condemned sin in the flesh, and that is on the cross, when He took the condemnation that the sins of His people deserved and took it away, blotting out the handwriting in the ordinances against them, which was contrary to them, and taking it out of the midst, he nailed it to the cross, as Colossians 2:14 says. Sin was condemned in Him when the sins of His people were imputed to Him, and He suffered the just wrath that their sins deserved. Thus, since

sin was already condemned in Him on the cross, there is no condemnation left for those who are in Christ Jesus, because He took every last bit of condemnation for every single person whom He represented on that cross. So, as Galatians 4:4-5 says, Jesus Christ came under the law in order to redeem the ones under the law. Had Christ not come to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, there would have been no redemption for those in sinful flesh. Jesus Christ came as a man while remaining God so that He would lay his hand upon both God and man and make reconciliation through His blood.

Verse 4 says that Jesus Christ condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous demand of the law might be fulfilled in believers. What is the righteous demand of the law? Is it to try hard to keep God's commandments? If trying hard to keep God's commandments were the righteous demand of the law, then human beings in and of themselves could live up to the righteous demand of the law. Is the righteous demand of the law to not outwardly kill anyone or commit adultery with anyone or steal from anyone? If those things were the righteous demand of the law, then human beings in and of themselves could live up to the righteous demand of the law. And if human beings in and of themselves could live up to the righteous demand of the law, then justification would be by works. The truth is that the righteous demand of the law is absolute, 100% perfect conformity to every single jot and tittle of every single law, both outwardly and inwardly. God demands in His law that people continue in all things according to the law to do them. And any single deviation from that demand, no matter how small, automatically means a curse. Are you able to fulfill the righteous demand of the law in your own character and conduct? Are you without sin? If you say "yes," then God says in 1 John 1:8-10 that you deceive yourself, that the truth is not in you, that you make God a liar, and His Word is not in you. Those of us who have been brought to the end of ourselves know that we are far from being able to fulfill the righteous demand of the law in our own character and conduct. If our justification were based on our fulfillment of the righteous demand of the law in our own character and conduct, we would be justly condemned to hell, because if God marked our iniquities, we would not stand (Psalm 130:3).

How is it, then, that the righteous demand of the law is fulfilled in His people? The righteous demand of the law is fulfilled in His people because Jesus Christ lived a perfectly righteous life, meaning that he was continually, 100% obedient to every jot and tittle of every single law, both outwardly and inwardly, and He was obedient to the death of the cross in the place of His people, thus condemning sin in the flesh, and this perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to every one of His people at regeneration, so they are declared not guilty, not condemned. The righteous demand of the law has been fulfilled in God's people in the person of Jesus Christ. There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because the righteous demand of the law has been fulfilled in them, so they are declared not guilty because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

The end of verse 4 again describes those who have been saved based on the work of Christ alone as those who are not walking according to flesh but according to Spirit. This is a transitional phrase that is the bridge between Paul's talking about the objective, justifying work based on the righteousness of Christ alone and Paul's talking about the subjective work of an imparted

principle of holiness that is the necessary fruit of regeneration.

The remainder of this passage speaks of the Christian's walk, including his thoughts and conduct.

Romans 8:5-9 "For the ones that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh. And the ones according to Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh [is] death, but the mind of the Spirit [is] life and peace; because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it [be]. And those being in the flesh are not able to please God. But you are not in flesh, but in Spirit, since [the] Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not [the] Spirit of Christ, this one is not His."

The Greek word for "mind" is *phroneo*, which means "to think," "to be mindful of," "to be intent about," "to be mentally disposed," "to interest oneself in," "to set one's mind on," "to regard." It is talking about the thoughts of the mind. Here, as well as other places in the Bible, we see that the Christian life starts in the mind, also known as the heart, which thinks, plans, devises, and understands. It is also where the fleshly life starts. When one goes from being in the flesh to being in the Spirit, there is a change of mind. The thoughts are changed. What regenerate people think of, what they are mindful of, what they are intent about, what they are mentally disposed to, what they interest themselves in, what they set their minds on, what they regard, has been changed. If there has been no change of mind, then there has been no change of state. A change of state always results in a change of mind. One cannot go from being unregenerate to regenerate yet remain minding the flesh.

The first word in Romans 8:5 is "*For*," which connects this sentence with what was just said, which is that believers do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. This is a very important connector. Believers do not conduct their lives according to flesh but according to Spirit because they do not set their minds on the flesh but on the Spirit. Here is the connection between thoughts and conduct. Our conduct is the outward manifestation of our thoughts. If someone is "*according to flesh*," his conduct is characterized by his obedience to lusts because his thoughts are characterized by his obedience to lusts. If someone is "*according to Spirit*," his conduct is characterized by his obedience to God because his thoughts are characterized by his obedience to God.

Let us first consider those who are "*according to flesh*." These are unregenerate people. They mind the things of the flesh. They have no ability to mind the things of the Spirit, because the Spirit is not in them. They are totally depraved. Everything they think is sin. Even when they think kind thoughts, they are sinning. They are in a continual fleshly state and thus continually mind their flesh, their lusts, and their disobedience. This does not necessarily mean that they are continually thinking about sexual lust or continually thinking about killing people or any of the more blatantly immoral things. Minding the things of the flesh can also mean an unlawful desire to do what is right in order to gain or maintain God's favor. They could be thinking about doing some kind deed, but as long as they are thinking that their own works form at least some part of the ground of God's favor toward them, they are minding the things of the flesh.

Let us now consider those who are “*according to Spirit.*” These are regenerate people. They mind the things of the Spirit. Because of the Holy Spirit indwelling them and because of the new principle of holiness imparted to them and implanted in them, their thoughts are characterized by holiness. This is not saying that a Christian’s thoughts are perfectly sinless. Christians sin in their thoughts just as they sin in their actions. But their thoughts, just like their actions, are guided by this new principle of holiness, so they rejoice to think the good and hate to think the evil. Christians still lust in their thoughts, but when they do, they do it against the principle of holiness, and they grieve over it and repent of it. And there is one very important way in which their thoughts have completely changed, and that is in the area of the ground of salvation and acceptance before God. Those who mind the things of the Spirit now know that their salvation is conditioned on the work of Christ alone and now know that their best efforts in their character and conduct form absolutely no part of the ground of salvation or acceptance before God. They will never think that their salvation is conditioned on themselves. In this way, their thinking has been totally and irreversibly changed, so that they are continually minding the things of the Spirit, which is the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone.

God says in verse 6 that “*the mind of the flesh [is] death.*” The Greek word for “mind” is *phronema*, which is a noun that means “way of thinking,” “content of thinking,” or “thought.” So the thought, the way or content of thinking, of the flesh, is death. It is death in two ways. First, the disobedient thoughts of an unregenerate person are enough to condemn him to eternal damnation. He can be as outwardly moral and pious and kind as anyone else, but if he sins in just one thought, he is condemned, because the law demands perfection, not only in word and deed but also in thought. Think of Paul’s life before he was saved. He was serving in oldness of letter. He thought that his outward obedience to the law was enough to recommend him to God. He was blameless when it came to outward obedience to the law (Philippians 3:4-6). Yet when the commandment came, and sin came alive, he died, and the commandment, which was to life, this was found to be death to him (Romans 7:8-9).

There is another important way in which the mind of the flesh is death, which is one’s thinking about the ground of salvation and acceptance before God. If one thinks that his own efforts form any part of the ground of salvation or acceptance before God, whether it is to gain salvation or maintain salvation or to make him fit for heaven, his thoughts are thoughts of death. That kind of thinking only leads to death and is only thought by one who is dead in sins. The mind of the flesh is constantly figuring out what he can do to gain or maintain God’s favor. And each time the mind of the flesh figures out something, that something is always dead works and fruit unto death. The mind of the flesh can never figure out that the only righteousness that is acceptable to God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The mind of the flesh is constantly going about to establish the person’s own righteousness and is never submitted to the righteousness of God that is revealed in the gospel. And as long as one thinks that his own efforts are what make the difference between salvation and damnation, he is in a state of death and is bringing forth fruit unto death. This includes everyone who believes that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception. It matters not what else you think or what else you say or what else you do – if you believe that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception, then you do not believe that it is

the work of Christ alone that makes the only difference between salvation and damnation. You think that it is your own effort that makes the difference. And the only kind of mind that can think that is the mind of the flesh. The only kind of mind that can believe universal atonement is the mind of the flesh. The mind of the Spirit cannot believe this, because the mind of the Spirit believes the gospel and is submitted to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel and thus believes that it is the work of Christ alone that makes the difference between salvation and damnation.

The first part of verse 7 says that the mind of the flesh is "*enmity towards God.*" This mind is God's enemy. And we can certainly see why. Anyone who thinks that he can gain or maintain any part of salvation by his own efforts or believes that Christ's blood was shed for those in hell is trampling underfoot the blood of Christ. Anyone who does not believe the gospel does not believe that God is both a just God and a Savior. Anyone who is going about to establish his own righteousness is treating Christ's righteousness as nothing. They think in their heart, "there is no God," – not the God whose righteousness is revealed in the gospel. They shake their fists at God in their minds, calling Him unjust for choosing some to salvation and some to damnation. They believe in a lying god who says he is satisfied with a false christ's sacrifice for everyone without exception, who says his wrath has been appeased through this christ's sacrifice for everyone without exception, but who then sends people to hell for whom this christ sacrificed himself. This mind of the flesh is in league with the devil and does the devil's desires. It believes Satan's lie, "*You shall not surely die*" (*Genesis 3:4*). It is in direct opposition to all the righteous attributes of God.

The second part of verse 7 says that the mind of the flesh is not and cannot be subjected to the law of God. First, it is not subjected to the law of God because it is in rebellion against the law of God. This includes people who have no regard for God's law whatsoever and do whatever they please. But even unregenerate religious people who are striving to obey God's law are actually in rebellion against it, because they do not believe that God requires perfect obedience to His Holy law. In saying that God accepts the best we can do, they are actually rebelling against God's law that says "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things having been written in the book of the Law, to do them*" (*Galatians 3:10*). They take God's law and twist it to make it a means of justification, just as the Jews of old did.

Second, the mind of the flesh cannot be subjected to the law of God. It is incapable of being subjected to the law of God. The mind of the flesh has no free will to choose the way of life. It cannot just decide one day to mind the things of the Spirit. If someone has a fleshly mind, he is unable to come to God for salvation. He is bound by the chains of sin and cannot change. He may have many reformations of character and conduct; he may have many religious experiences; but it is all fruit unto death. He remains in constant enmity against God, and unless God unilaterally acts upon that sinner, that sinner will continue in enmity against God until his final breath. Jesus Christ said in John 6:44, "*No one is able to come to me unless the father who sent Me draws him.*" 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "*But a natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" Unregenerate people have no ability to come to God or to know the things

of the Spirit of God. Their will is bent on evil continually, even the ones who are outwardly moral. Their hearts cannot change. They are dead in their sins, unable and unwilling to believe the truth and to be set free. But when God comes to one of His unregenerate elect at the appointed time, He unilaterally changes that sinner's heart from a mind of the flesh to a mind of the Spirit, and then that person is able and willing to seek after God and understand the things of God.

Verse 8 says that *"those being in the flesh are not able to please God."* If those in the flesh are in continual enmity against God and continually in rebellion against God's law and cannot change, then it follows that those who are in the flesh cannot – are not able to – please God. God is continually displeased with those who are in the flesh. And God's displeasure here does not just mean that He is a little bit upset. God is wrathful toward those in the flesh, because God is a just and holy God who can only show wrath toward those who do not have perfect righteousness, who do not have a righteousness that answers His demands for law and justice. Thus, all who are in the flesh, who do not have such a righteousness, who are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, are under God's curse. *"The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked,"* Proverbs 3:33 says. Everything they do is under a curse. Their rising up, their working, their acts of kindness, their worship, their lying down to bed at night, are all accursed. Nothing they do pleases God. It is all wickedness.

Hebrews 11:6 says, *"But without faith [it is] impossible to please [God]."* Thus, no one who does not have faith can please God. And since those who are in the flesh do not have faith, they cannot please God. And there is no way for them to obtain faith in and of themselves. It takes a divine act for a man to be given faith. And once that person has faith, he is able to please God. Why is that? Is it because his own deeds in his own character and conduct become perfectly righteous? No. It is because he has now received the imputed righteousness of Christ by God-given faith, and God is pleased with the perfect righteousness of His Son. The only way God is pleased with a sinner is if the sinner has a righteousness that answers the demands of His law and justice. And the only way this is done is by imputation. Then, as a fruit of being justified based on the righteousness of Christ, he will do good deeds and will seek to be obedient to God, not out of a fleshly mind that thinks that one's deeds are a ground of God's acceptance, but out of a Spiritual mind that knows that his ground of acceptance before God is based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

In contrast with the mind of the flesh, which is death, the mind of the Spirit is life and peace (verse 6). This is talking about the thought, the way or content of thinking, that is of the Spirit, that is produced by the Spirit, that is minding the things of the Spirit. Verse 5 says that those who are according to the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. They think, are mindful of, are intent about, are mentally disposed, are interesting themselves in, are setting their minds on, the things of the Spirit. And this minding of the Spirit is the way of life and peace, as opposed to the way of death that the mind of the flesh is on.

The mind of the Spirit is life. There are two ways in which those who mind the things of the Spirit have life. First, they have been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. They are no

longer dead in trespasses and sins, no longer totally depraved, no longer walking after the flesh. They are new creatures – old things have passed away, and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Their minds have changed. Before regeneration, they were alienated and hostile in their minds by evil works, as Colossians 1:21 says. They had no spiritual discernment. They believed in salvation conditioned on the sinner. But now that God has changed their minds, their minds are now minds that serve God and desire to obey God. Their minds now discern the things of the Spirit. Their minds believe the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone, which is the only way of life.

The second way in which those who mind the things of the Spirit have life is that they have eternal life. The mind of the Spirit is everlasting life through Jesus Christ their Lord. Whereas those who mind the flesh are dead in sins and will continue that way into eternal death if God does not change their minds, those who mind the Spirit have been given eternal life, even unto life in heaven with Jesus Christ. This life that God has given them will be preserved forever. The mind of the Spirit is also peace. Again, Colossians 1:21 says that the people of God, before regeneration, were alienated and hostile in their minds. There was no peace between them and God in their minds; there was only hostility and alienation in their minds. But now, as regenerate people, they have been reconciled to God in the body of Christ's flesh because of Christ's making peace by the blood of His cross. There is no more enmity against God in their minds. Their minds are at peace with God. Those who mind the things of the Spirit are at peace with God because they know that Jesus Christ made full satisfaction for them and thus there is no condemnation for them. The wall of enmity has been torn down, and we now have uninterrupted fellowship and friendship with God Almighty through the blood of His Son.

Romans 8:9 "But you are not in flesh, but in Spirit, since [the] Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not [the] Spirit of Christ, this one is not His."

When Paul speaks of "you" here, he is obviously talking about believers, because he says that the Spirit dwells in them, and if the Spirit did not dwell in them, they would not belong to Christ.

First of all, this verse says that believers are not in flesh. This little phrase confounds the heretics who say that believers remain in the flesh or go from being in the Spirit to being in the flesh and back again. Regenerate people are not in the flesh. There is not a single regenerate person who is in the flesh. Those who have been born from above are never in the flesh. We see the word "But" at the beginning of this sentence, which we know is a connector word that connects us to what was previously said. Thus, in light of what was just previously said, we know that since regenerate people are not in the flesh, they do not walk according to flesh (verses 1 and 4), they do not mind the things of the flesh (verse 5), their mind is not death (verse 6), their mind is not enmity towards God (verse 7), their mind is subjected to the law of God (verse 7), and they are able to please God (verse 8). We can also look at Romans 6 in light of the present verse: since regenerate people are not in the flesh, they do not live in sin (verse 2), they no longer serve sin (verse 6), sin shall not lord it over them (verse 14), and they are not slaves to sin (verses 16-20). Away with the heretics who say that we who are regenerate still walk according to flesh, mind the things of the flesh, live in sin, serve sin, are slaves to sin, are still totally depraved, and still have

hearts that are deceitful and desperately wicked! When God regenerates someone, He gives that person a new heart and a new spirit, as Ezekiel 36 says. When God gives a person a new heart and a new spirit, that person is no longer in the flesh and will never be in the flesh again.

But what about Romans 7:14 and following? Doesn't it say that believers are fleshly, having been sold under sin, that in the believer's flesh there is no good, that believers do not do the good they desire and do do the evil that they do not desire, that believers are taken captive by the law of sin in their members, that believers are wretched, that believers serve the law of sin with their flesh? Yes, it does say all that. This is a reality for every believer, and no believer will deny this reality of indwelling sin. Yet this is not saying that believers are ever in the flesh, ever walk according to flesh, ever mind the things of the flesh, ever live in sin, or ever serve sin. Does this seem like a contradiction? It is not to those of us who are believers. Our sin is ever present with us; we can never be freed from it in this life; it constantly torments us; we fall time and time again; it constantly wars against our minds. And, at the same time, we do not walk according to flesh. Our lives are characterized by striving for obedience. We hate the sin indwelling in us, and our mind is toward obedience. Our walk is characterized by living unto God, not unto sin. And, most importantly, we are constantly in submission to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, meaning that we constantly believe the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone and never believe a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner. None of this walk or belief forms any part of the ground of our salvation or acceptance before God; yet all believers have this walk and this belief as a fruit of their salvation.

The remainder of Romans 8:9 says this: *“since the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, this one is not His.”* First notice that the Holy Spirit is given two names here: the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son; thus, the Spirit can equally be called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. When the Holy Spirit indwells His people, it can be truly said that they have both the Father and the Son. What is the primary evidence that they have both the Father and the Son? 2 John 9 gives the answer: *“Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. The [one] abiding in the doctrine of Christ, this one has the Father and the Son.”*

Who has both the Father and the Son? The one abiding in the doctrine of Christ. One's doctrine is the primary evidence of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And, from this verse, we know that someone does not have God if he does not abide in the doctrine of Christ. What does “abide” mean? It means stay. If someone does not stay in the doctrine of Christ, he shows himself to be an unregenerate person. Is 50% in the doctrine of Christ and 50% out of the doctrine of Christ staying in the doctrine of Christ? No. Is 99% in the doctrine of Christ and 1% out of the doctrine of Christ staying in the doctrine of Christ? No. The one who has both the Father and the Son, which is the same as the one who has the Holy Spirit, stays in the doctrine of Christ. He will always believe the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the work of Christ alone, and he will never believe a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner.

In the last part of Romans 8:9, we see the word *“since.”* This means that the reason why

believers are not in flesh but in Spirit is because the Spirit of God dwells in them. Here is a direct causal link. The Spirit of God causes all whom He indwells to walk in the Spirit. There is no such monstrosity as a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit who does not walk in the Spirit. And the last part says that if someone does not have the Spirit, that person does not belong to Christ, meaning that he is not regenerate. Here we have a clear distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The regenerate are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and the unregenerate are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you belong to Christ; you are regenerate. If the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you, you do not belong to Christ; you are unregenerate. This confounds the heretics who say that the Holy Spirit can bring an unbeliever under so-called “Holy Spirit conviction” by indwelling the unbeliever and causing him to see his own sinfulness and what his sin deserves and to have great disturbances in his mind about what God requires and to struggle to find relief from the guilt of sin, while, at the same time, causing (or “allowing”) the person to remain ignorant of the only ground of relief and even causing (or “allowing”) the person to seek relief in his own works. This kind of conviction is a false conviction, and this kind of spirit is a false spirit. The true Spirit is one that we find in Romans 8:9. If the Spirit of God dwells in you, then you are not in the flesh. The Spirit does not come into a person and then have that person remain in the flesh. The Spirit of God regenerates a person and immediately causes that person to believe the true gospel and to have no confidence in the flesh.

Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? How can you tell? Is it some feeling inside? Can you feel the Holy Spirit “bubbling up within you,” as some say? The only way you can tell is this: Do you believe the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone? If you do truly believe this, you automatically believe that all other gospels are false and will thus make your judgments based on the true gospel. And if you do believe this, you will not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. You will not walk in sin. Your life will be characterized by a striving to obey God out of love and thankfulness for the One who delivered you from the bondage of sin based on the work of Christ alone. Amen.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19)

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