

**ROM. 7-8 THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT BY CHRIST BEING "IN" US**



As we continue in Rom. 7, we come to a *crucial section* about God's law, where Paul clearly *exalts* it, calling it "holy...just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). He then describes *our carnal human nature* as the real culprit behind the cause of sin—and certainly not God's law. This is nothing new, it started with Adam and Eve lusting and taking of the forbidden fruit through Satan's instigation (Gen. 3:6). Also, after the Flood, God concluded about mankind's carnal nature: "I know that from the time they are young their thoughts are evil" (Gen. 8:21, GNB).

Indeed, Paul defends the positive function of God's law, which is to define *what is truly sin* and *what is righteousness*. He asks, "Has then what is good [God's law] become death to me [become bad]? *Certainly not!* But sin, that it might appear sin [by the breaking God's law--1 Jn. 3:4], was producing death in me [the death penalty] through what is good [by God's law accusing him of sin], so that sin through the commandment [of God, by breaking it] might become exceedingly sinful [by showing in the Bible all the degrees of sin, from the mental to the physical and from the smallest sin to the greatest]. For we know that the law *is spiritual* [since it comes from God and is based on His eternal spiritual principles], but *I am carnal* [having wrong and evil desires], *sold* under sin [captured by its power]" (Rom. 7:13-14).

Thus, he denies the accusation leveled against him that the problem of sin is God's law--which supposedly has to be "done away." Instead, he shows it is *our own carnal nature* that is the problem that has to be *admitted* and *overcome*.

As James 1:22-25 explains, God's law is like a *spiritual mirror* that can *show* us our spiritual faults, but can't *prevent* us from *sinning* or *remove* its *penalty* (it can only be done by Christ's sacrifice and having God's spirit). James shows the better we know God's law and apply it ("being a doer of the law and not just a hearer"), the better we can identify all that sin is--from inner spiritual sin, like lust, to external physical sin, such as adultery and murder. We can then become more *sensitized* and *repelled* by sin. Just as in sports, we can know all the rules, but that doesn't make us into an excellent player, for that depends on *how well we can perform* while *respecting* these rules.

Paul, in probably what is *the first example* of written introspection in world literature, reveals his inner struggle against sin. He says it was mainly "lust" (Rom. 7:7). He then confesses of breaking the Tenth Commandment: "For what I am doing, [yielding to sin] I do not understand. For what I will [in my mind] to do [to resist temptation to lust], that I do not practice; but what I hate [by yielding to temptation], that I do. If, then, I do what I *will* not to do [yield to this sin], I agree *with the law that it is good* [for it tells me to avoid lust], it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me [that carnal human inclination to lust]. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh [my carnal human nature]) *nothing good* dwells; for to will [to do good] is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I *will* not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin [the evil nature] that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:15-20).

Here Paul explains we all have "two different natures" struggling inside of us, one with an evil attraction toward this sinful world, that he earlier called "the old man" (Rom. 6:6), and the other one, that is converted and attracted toward good, which he calls "the new man" (Eph. 4:24). The "old man" (that old carnal nature) wants us to yield to sin and break God's law, while the "new man" desires to obey God and do what is right before Him. So, there is this constant struggle inside of us between these "two natures." Paul warns us of the power of the carnal mind, even after conversion, should not be underestimated. As Jesus had said: "The *spirit* [within us]...is willing, but the *flesh* [human nature] is weak" (Mt. 26:41).

Paul concludes: "I find this law [this carnal pull] that evil is in me. For I *delight* in the law of God according to the *inward man* [that "new man" guided by God's spirit]. But I see another law [the pull of the self, the world and Satan] in my members, *warring* against the *law of my mind*, and bringing me [with its downward pull] *into captivity* to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man [he says in frustration] that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:21-24). He knows

he can't overcome these evil pulls on his own—and desperately needs God's help and spirit.

Such is the true state of affairs of mankind, here portrayed in all its raw carnality and rebellion against God's law. This has brought countless sufferings, curses, and even a universal Flood upon the whole world. So, what is the real solution to this human wretchedness and despair?

Paul answers: "I thank God—*through Jesus Christ our Lord!* [It is He who makes it possible!] So then, with *the mind* I myself serve the law of God, but with *the flesh* the law of sin" (Rom. 7:25). Yes, it is through Christ living powerfully *in* us by God's spirit that we can overcome in this struggle against sin. Yet, we know the ultimate victory will only come when we *are born into* God's kingdom!

In chapter 8, Paul now explains *how* we can defeat sin by Christ living *in* us. (The term "in" is a key concept here and *fully* described in Gal. 2:20.)

He explains, "There is therefore now *no condemnation* [no application of the death penalty] to those who are *in* Christ Jesus, who *do not walk according to the flesh* [the old carnal self] but according to the Spirit [the new way of life]. For the law of the Spirit of life *in* Christ Jesus [the new legal standing before God] has made me *free* from [the condemnation of] the law of *sin and death*. For what the law could not do in that it was weak *through the flesh* [due to our carnal nature], God did [it] by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin [for that purpose]: He condemned sin in the flesh [by applying His sacrifice to our past sins and extending it forward as long as we are obedient to God by respecting His law], that *the righteous requirement* of the law [obeying it properly] might be *fulfilled in us* who *do not walk according to the flesh* [the old, unconverted and unforgiven self] but according to the Spirit [by true conversion]" (Rom. 8:1-4).

Paul thus mentions having God's Spirit guides us, but this does *not* require *spiritual perfection*, which is impossible, to please God. It is rather the constant and faithful obedience of His way of life that counts, for we are now "under grace" in the sense that Christ's sacrifice and power are available to us after a sincere confession and an earnest effort to fight sin, by continuing to keep God's law. As Christ said in Rev. 2:26, "And he *who*

*overcomes*, and keeps My works *until the end*, to him I will give power over the nations."

So, we must recognize, in this spiritual struggle between our two natures, we will not win every spiritual battle, but we must *persevere* to the end. That is why Paul is encouraged and hopeful, in spite of the carnal nature he is fighting--that he will overcome and enter God's kingdom--as we also can with the help of God's spirit, Christ's sacrifice and by constantly following God's way of life. Paul tells us we do not have to worry about the law's condemnation, for we are now under a new "regime" of grace by walking *in* the Spirit.

He stresses: "For those who live according to the flesh *set their minds on the things of the flesh* [by continuing to violate God's laws and live worldly], but those who live according to the Spirit, [who focus on] 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, nor indeed can be*. So then, those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*" (Rom. 8:5-8).

This is a very revealing and vital statement--that the carnal mind *cannot submit* to God's law. This means all of man's religious efforts are ineffective as long as they are not converted to God's truths nor have His spirit. That is why we have such few members in our Church compared to the churches of this world. They have so many people because they are, under God's definition here, *still unconverted*, despite all their good intentions.

Paul states, "But you are not in the flesh but *in* the Spirit [living in this way], if indeed *the Spirit of God dwells in* you. Now if anyone *does not have* the Spirit of Christ, *he is not His*" (Rom. 8:9).

This is a strong declaration! It means no matter all the good a person does, if he doesn't have God's spirit, he is *not converted*. But those who are part of God's true and original Church deeply respect and *keep God's laws* and *have His spirit* in them. This is why Christ defines His Church as "those who *keep* the commandments of God and the *faith* [or spirit] of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). John adds: "Now by this we know that *we know Him, if we keep His commandments*. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, *is a liar*, and *the truth is not in him*. But whoever keeps His

word, truly *the love of God* is perfected in him. By this we know that we are *in* Him. He who says he abides *in* Him *ought himself also to walk* just as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6). Here John highlights the "love of the truth" (see also 2 Thes. 2:10-12) that is another *vital component* of true conversion.

True conversion is this, "And if Christ is *in* you, the body is dead because of sin [by us dying to "the old man" at baptism], but the Spirit is life ["the new man" after baptism] because of righteousness [or the obedience to God's laws (Ps. 119:172)]. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead [God the Father] *dwells in you*, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give [eternal] life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [that] dwells in you" (Rom. 8:10-11).

We again see that what identifies a true Christian is *having* the Holy Spirit. This practically disqualifies all those who have not been baptized as adults nor are repentant of breaking God's holy laws. It normally means the need to have the laying on of hands ceremony by a minister who has God's spirit (see Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:1-6). Thus, much of traditional Christianity has not met those requirements for receiving God's spirit, and therefore, the vast majority of Christians, not knowing they are still deceived by a false mixture of teachings, still have in them that "old man" that doesn't want to submit to God's law and resists it.

Paul now explains about becoming part of God's growing Family: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors [to God]—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live *according to the flesh* you will die; but if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body [by living God's way], you will live. For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, these are *sons of God* [this is the *first stage of a rebirth* by receiving God's spirit (1 Jn. 3:1-3). For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear [the second death], but you received the Spirit of *adoption* [or better--*of sonship*] by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:12-15).

Thanks to being "in" Christ, we have God's grace, and He treats us as His beloved children. We can go before Him as His *begotten* children and call him "Daddy," as the Aramaic word "*Abba*" means.

Note the Greek term for *sonship* or *adoption*, *huiiothesia*, can mean either one according to the

context. But in this section, it is best to take it as *sonship*, which is *superior to adoption*. As *Vine's Theological Dictionary* points out, "[In] the KJV, 'adoption of children' is a *mistranslation* and *misleading*. God does *not* 'adopt' believers as children; they are *begotten* as such by His Holy Spirit through faith."

Our booklet, *Why Were You Born*, adds, "This is important to recognize—as it *directly impacts our destiny*. In human adoption, the adopted children are *human* just as much as the new parents—yet only because the children were adopted from other human parents who physically begot them. But if God merely adopted us and did not truly beget us in His image, we would be different kinds of beings from Him altogether—as He would not be adopting us from others like Himself. It could be likened in some sense to adopting a pet as a family member (albeit one that could talk).

"Sadly, this is close to what many envision—that we are and forever will be totally different, lesser kinds of beings than God. And so, they have no problem with taking the Greek word in question in the verses we've seen to mean *adoption*. But this notion of God's purpose for us is *not the truth*, as Scripture makes clear that God actually *begets* us spiritually in His own image—with the intention that we ultimately become *the same kind of beings* He and Jesus Christ now are. So, what was Paul talking about? While *huiiothesia* (placing or setting as a son) was certainly applicable to adoption, Paul obviously meant it *in a different sense*.

"We can start to see what he means in Gal. 4:1-5, where the NIV translates the word as 'full rights of sons.' Notice why from the context: 'What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.'"

"Note that in the parallel the one receiving the *huiiothesia* (the setting as a son) was already the child of his father who was setting him as such. So, this circumstance *was not adoption*" (pp. 18-19).