

# Life in the Son

Discovering Your Spiritual Heritage

by Doug Brown, Lead Pastor



Transforming Lives to Transform the World

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# P Preface

The goal of this book is to help believers unlock the potential and tools that they already have in Christ to live a life of joyful transformation.

A few years ago, I returned from a family vacation in Colorado with a surge of inspiration.

Although I saw God's beauty in creation, that wasn't what captured my imagination. While traveling the state, I learned that its population had been ranked No. 1 in physical fitness. My mind raced to 1 Timothy 4:8: *"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come"* (NIV).

It led me to this question: What if we changed the paradigm to think about fitness as spiritual? Instead of merely looking at outward attributes, could we survey the fitness of the soul? This idea led me to challenge my congregation to become the most spiritually fit church in America. Although it is certainly unquantifiable, I felt the challenge was worthwhile. Why? Because God is calling every one of His followers to become spiritually transformed, not merely converted. I'm not discounting a "six pack of abs" or the importance of a healthy lifestyle, but we must approach fitness with an eternal perspective.

God is seeking true change in us. The Bible describes this process as *"Christ ... formed in you"* (Galatians 4:19, NIV). James 1 says God is at work in our lives "so that you may become mature and complete."

Many believers have been motivated by similar challenges, only to have their pursuit dashed on the rocks of failure. The reasons these efforts often fall short is because they are rooted in the philosophy of "try harder." The goal of this book is to help believers unlock the potential and tools that they already have in Christ to live a life of joyful transformation. Spiritual breakthroughs are occurring everyday. With God's help, they are possible! We'll do this by examining Romans chapters 5 through 8, getting to the root of our spiritual problem and discovering its ultimate solution.

My prayer is that misunderstandings and pain from your past will be replaced with the ultimate source of truth and strength: God's word. ■

*Doug Brown*  
*Lee's Summit, Missouri*

# 1 Identity is Everything

*Romans 5:1-11*

“Who in the blazes are you anyhow?”

—Ezra Pound, poet and critic,  
in a letter to his fiancé

An American farm family was struggling.

After inheriting property and livestock from relatives, they worked from dawn until dusk, but still couldn't make ends meet. Debt began to pile up to the point that they had a family meeting to discuss their options.

“I think the best we can do is sell the whole place, cut our losses and get out,” said the father. Just a few days later, before the “for sale” sign had gone up, there came a knock at the door.

“Excuse me sir, but I'm with the oil company and we are convinced that there are vast untapped oil reserves beneath your property,” said a gray-suited man. “With your permission, we'd like to do some exploratory drilling on your property. We'll compensate you for the use of your land. And, if any oil is found, we can negotiate an agreement at that time.”

The farmer saw no downside to the agreement, so consented. He decided not to put the “for sale” sign outside just yet. Two months later came another knock at the door. The same businessman appeared, but this time he had a contract in hand. “We found what we were looking for,” he said. “I'd like to talk to you about the sale of your property.” After papers were signed, fortunes changed dramatically for the once downcast family.

Many believers in Christ find themselves in a similar predicament. They don't realize they are living as spiritual paupers when an incredible spiritual heritage awaits them.

Our enemy, Satan, desperately wants to keep us from discovering these life-transforming truths. He is the distorter of truth and wants us to live according to lies we have been taught by him, our world system and our sinful nature. The Bible describes him as a “thief” who wants to “steal, kill and destroy.” In contrast, Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10, NIV).”<sup>1</sup>

What is the great spiritual heritage God has given to us? Before we can grasp this, we must understand the heritage of destruction that God has saved us from. Only then can we appreciate the spiritual treasure that is awaiting us through our relationship with Him. Let's examine Romans 5 and its candid description of the human race. It's important to understand that, if you are a believer in Christ, these are things that were true of you before you became His follower.

<sup>1</sup>Read Appendix A: Identity Theft.

## Powerless

*“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6, NIV, emphasis mine).*

The Scriptures tell us we were **powerless** to gain God’s acceptance or approval by our own efforts at goodness or morality. The pious church attendee and the death row inmate are both “**helpless**” (to quote another translation) to live a life that is pleasing to God. We may protest that we have attended church faithfully, given to charity and only been angry with our children when we were short on sleep. But God’s word responds: “*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away*” (Isaiah 64:6, NIV). Our attempts at morality don’t measure up to God’s standard of holiness and perfection. It’s like trying to use oil-stained rags to polish fine china.

The fact that God calls us powerless doesn’t deny that fact that we have done some good deeds. It testifies to the fact that we have also failed so often that it’s impossible to count. The Bible says that “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23, NIV). All of us must admit that we’ve not lived up to the highest and best standards we know. We’ve failed to always do what we knew was right and – at times – have willfully chosen to do what we knew was wrong.

We may counter that we’re certainly more righteous than the embezzler at the office or the man who abuses his children. But God doesn’t give us the opportunity to compare ourselves with one another. His standard – one of absolute holiness and total moral purity – is the bar that we are measured by.

## Enemies of God

*“For if while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10, NASB, emphasis mine).*

It’s hard enough to hear that we don’t measure up to God’s standards, but verse 10 tells us that we were **enemies** of God. Our lives were oriented in a direction that was 100 percent contrary to God’s goals and desires. The entire human race, apart from believing in Christ, are rebels against God’s just cause. Whether people are conscious of this fact or not, the Scripture tells us that it is true.

Although many calamities threaten the human race, the greatest and most destructive of these is sin. It is behind all of the genocide, war, child abuse, torture, and rape that plague our planet. God will not overlook sin. Only those who are in a relationship with Him are safe from His just judgment.

Our attempts at morality don’t measure up to God’s standard of holiness and perfection. It’s like trying to use oil-stained rags to polish fine china.

## Enemies no longer

Because of the work of Christ alone, those who believe in Him are no longer enemies or powerless. Romans 5:1 and 5:9 relay the good news:

*5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (NIV)*

*5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! (NIV)*

Notice what is written in past tense: “*We have been justified.*” This tells us that justification is not something believers are still waiting for or must strive for. What, then, does this term mean? We learn in Romans (chapters 1–4) that the entire world is condemned because of its sin and rejection of a holy God. But God sent Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sentence of spiritual death and eternal separation from God. Jesus lived, died and rose again to change our standing with God. In short, His holy life and victory over death paid the penalty for our sins. He stood in our place, took our punishment and made us just before God. Because of the work of Christ, God has declared us to be righteous.

This does not mean that believers no longer sin. But it does mean that because of the payment of Christ on the cross, God no longer holds those sins against us. We are accepted in His sight. Not only that, the apostle Paul tells us that God’s love for us is so great that it is beyond description. This love is evidenced in that He gave His one and only Son for us.

God didn’t just hit the delete button and erase our sins. A penalty for the wretchedness of humanity had to be paid. Jesus died as a pure, sinless being, taking the awful magnitude of the sins of past, present and future upon Himself. It is because of His death and resurrection that we can have right standing with God. Those who trust in the truth of Jesus’ work are transformed – once for all – from enemies of God to friends, from outsiders to insiders, from those declared as sinners to those declared to be righteous.

The work of Christ gives us a new identity, one that is not based on our failure or performance, but on the work of Christ.<sup>2</sup> We could spend eternity recounting

our new heritage in light of Christ, but we'll focus in on eight promises described in Romans 5:1-11.

## 8 things that are true of the “New Me” created in Christ

### 1. We have peace with God.

*“We have peace with God” (Romans 5:1, NIV).*

When we trust in the work of Christ on our behalf, we are no longer in conflict with God. Instead, He offers us a divine embrace.

### 2. We have received God's grace.

*“Through [Christ] we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:2, NASB).*

Grace is a concept associated only with Jesus Christ. Many world religions focus on the disciplines and merits of an individual. In these traditions, a follower can enter Heaven only if he or she has met a certain number of religious obligations and moral duties.

Others say that, by default, all people will go to Heaven because God has no wrath and no objective standards. Christianity is at odds with both of these belief systems. First of all, it says no one is able to be good enough or do enough good to satisfy God's standards. Apart from the work of Christ, no one will enter Heaven. Christianity also clashes with the idea that all will go to Heaven. The book of Romans alone is replete with the idea that sin is real, wrong and deserves punishment. Only those who admit their wrong and turn to Christ will find forgiveness, although the offer is open to all. This open offer of forgiveness is God's grace, or special favor, extended to all.

Grace is God's unmerited, undeserved favor, blessing and power in our life. It is because of grace that we can say, “God is for us.” As author Phillip Yancey points out, grace means there is nothing I can do to make God love me any more or less than He already does. This is because our favor with God

is not, never has been and never will be based on our performance. Our performance can never be good enough, under any circumstances, because *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, NASB)*. Jesus Christ lived and died on our behalf precisely because of this fact.

Certainly God cares about our behavior. But Christ-like behavior can only flow from someone who has received the free gift of God that results in eternal life and spiritual intimacy with the Father. What we do flows from who we are. The opposite of this statement is not true. We cannot say, “Who we are flows from what we do.” If our identity is based upon our good works, then all of us are doomed, because no one can live up to God's holy standard.

Fortunately for us, the idea of a performance-based relationship with God is absolutely, unequivocally false. We do not stand on our good works for *“... we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Romans 5:2, NIV)*. A Christian is who we are, not what we do. Once we become a Christian, then we become empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to see genuine character transformation. But even then, God does not accept us based on our character (which, though changing, is still deficient), but on the unshakable work of Christ on the cross.

### 3. We have a bright future.

*“And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2, NIV).*

Because of the work of Christ, we have a guaranteed reservation in Heaven. The Scriptures tell us that *“eye has not seen and ear has not heard... all that God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NASB)*. The eternal celebration that awaits us defies even our most vivid imaginations.

**continued...**

<sup>2</sup> Read Appendix B: Who I Am in Christ.



...continued

#### 4. Our struggles are not pointless.

*“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:3-5, NIV).*

We not only have a bright future, but the difficulties we face in this life serve a purpose: God uses them to transform our character to become more like His. Most of us can agree that trials, though unpleasant at the time, serve to help us learn, grow and draw closer to God.

#### 5. We have received the Holy Spirit.

*“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5, NIV).*

Instead of relying on our own strength and willpower, we now have God Himself dwelling within us, strengthening us, by the presence of His Holy Spirit. We are no longer powerless against temptation.

#### 6. God really loves us.

*“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8, NIV).*

This verse destroys doubts we may harbor that God is angry with us or that our relationship with Him is based on our performance. Clearly, He gave His life for us when we were “ungodly” and “sinners.”

If God could love us in that condition, how can we possibly think He does not love us now that we have been justified (to be declared in right standing with God) by Him?

#### 7. We have been saved from God’s wrath (anger).

*“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Romans 5:9, NIV).*

God, who is just, is demonstrating and will demonstrate His wrath against those who reject His great overture of unconditional love. However, those who have trusted in Christ will not taste one ounce of His anger. The reason? It’s certainly not because of something good on our part. It is because Jesus Christ Himself fully satisfied the wrath of God when He died to pay the penalty for our sins and rose again.

#### 8. We have been reconciled to God.

*“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:10-11, NIV).*

There is no longer conflict or distance between God and those who trust in Him for salvation. Indeed, the Scriptures call us “friends,” “sons,” and “members of His household.” We can have an intimate relationship with the Creator of the universe if we simply agree with, acknowledge and respond to the work of God through Christ. The gift of this relationship is not depending on any good work we have done or failed to do. It is 100 percent dependent on the once-for-all death and resurrection of Christ. ■



Meditate on these truths. Study them. Believe them. Apply them to your life. Satan and this world system teach us to find our identity and happiness in our income level, skills, prestige, and power. They teach us a false philosophy that we can somehow work or pay our way to Heaven and favor with God. At the

same time, others say that sin isn't real and that our actions don't matter. The Scriptures are clear on these points. We blew it, but God fixed it and is offering us a relationship with Him that begins immediately and lasts forever. He is offering us purpose and peace in a world that is aimless and self-centered.

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## Your relationship with Christ

Have you entered into a relationship with God by trusting in the work of Jesus Christ? Are you absolutely certain? If not, understand that:

- God created us and loves us (*Romans 5:6-8*).
- All of us have sinned against God (*Romans 5:8, Romans 3:23*).
- Our sin has earned us a sentence of death, which is eternal separation from God in Hell (*Romans 6:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9*).
- Because of His great love, Jesus Christ died and rose again to pay the penalty for our sins (*Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-6*).
- If we admit that we have sinned, seeking God's forgiveness, then we immediately receive God's forgiveness and eternal life (*1 John 1:9*).
- This forgiveness comes from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Jesus wants to take our life away from sin and in a new direction – His direction (*Acts 3:19*).

If you do not yet have a relationship with Christ, you can join me now in this prayer of spiritual restoration:

*God, I know that I have sinned and failed You, and I realize that the punishment for this failure is eternal separation from You in Hell. I am grieved by the ways I have hurt You and others and I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank You for dying for me and for paying the penalty for my sins and rising again to live forevermore! Thank You for Your forgiveness. Please help me to live, with Your power, in a new direction. Help me to live my life following You.*

If you prayed this prayer sincerely from your heart, then rest assured that you have a new identity. You are now a child of God and are accepted into His family. His Holy Spirit is alive in you to help you live a new life. Tell a trusted Christian friend of your decision and partner with others who are serious about following Christ. You have chosen the path of joy. ■

## 2 The Tale of Two Men

Romans 5:12-21

“Grant that the old Adam in these persons may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them.”  
—Book of Common Prayer

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

So opens Charles Dickens’ classic, “The Tale of Two Cities.” The story, a tale of two men and how their paths cross, occurs during the French Revolution. At the end of the story, one man gives up his life for another.

The story of the relationship between Christ and Adam has a similar theme. Adam appears in the book of Genesis in the opening pages of the Bible as the first man. Later on, the Bible refers to Jesus as the second Adam, the One who set the human race back on its intended course. The worst of times resulted from the first Adam and his plunge into sin. The best of times came from the second Adam, who reconciled the world to God.

Jesus Christ came to restore mankind into an intimate relationship with God, but He’s done much more than that. He has restored the original design of God, the image that is implanted in the core of our beings.

As discussed in the previous chapter, our identity is paramount. Without it, we are lost. Jason Bourne is the lead character in the spy novel, “The Bourne Identity,” which later became a movie of the same name. Bourne is an amnesiac who struggles to find out who he is, and why an assassin and the CIA are both trying to kill him. Only when he discovers his true identity is he able to confidently respond to his challenges.

We think and behave based on whom we believe we are. If we misconstrue our identity, then our jobs, marriages, spiritual lives, and friendships all suffer because we’re not living in alignment with who we are in Christ. A person who loses his identity through amnesia is lost in the world. If we don’t embrace God’s identity for our lives, we will wander through life, never quite sure of who we are, where we are going or how to respond.

Please read Romans 5:12-21 (below) before continuing. Ask God to open your eyes to reveal His truth to you.

### Romans 5:12-21 (NIV)

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned — 13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and

brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. 18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. 20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. ■

This passage tells us that God views humanity by its roots. God has made it so that we are under headship. Mankind was under the headship of Adam, but now can be under the headship of Christ. And in this chapter there is a marvelous truth that will set you free. Let me paraphrase it this way: “As in Adam, so also in Christ.” (See Romans 5:18). In other words, in the same way that we were under Adam’s shadow, we now can be under Christ’s. You no longer need to be identified with Adam’s heritage, but with Christ’s. Adam is the representative head of fallen man – in sin and separated from God. When you and I come to Christ, we are transferred to Christ’s headship, and what is true of Christ is now also true of us.

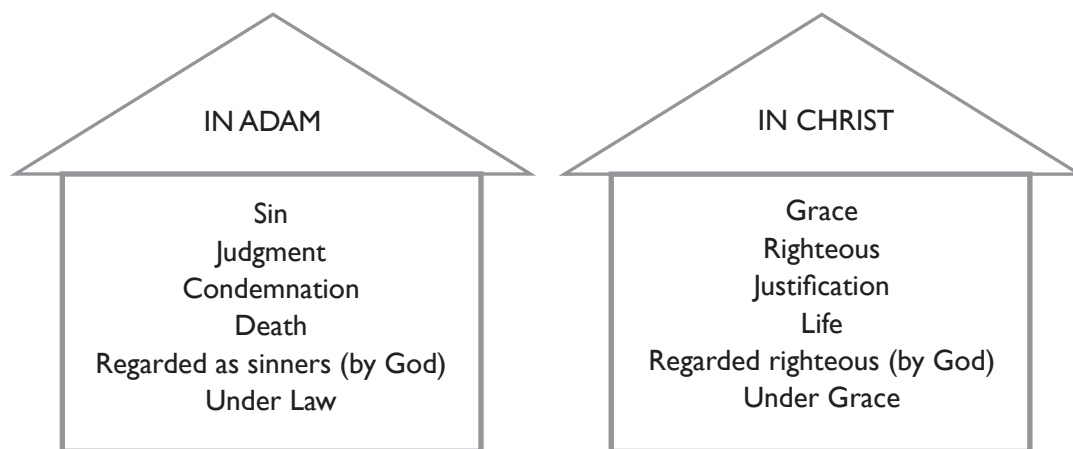
The tragic story of Adam culminated in his sin and expulsion from the Garden of Eden and (more importantly) the presence of God. From that moment on, all of mankind was born into a sinful condition requiring repentance and salvation. Romans 5:12 tells us: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one

*man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (NIV).*

Fortunately for us, the story does not end there. Romans 5:17-19 tells us that just as Adam’s sin brought death and separation to the human race, Christ’s death and resurrection brought salvation as free gift to all of the world. God regards anyone who has trusted in Christ as no longer a sinner, but a saint. In this context, saint does not mean a “super Christian,” but a member of God’s family, the church.

God identifies us as either in Adam or in Christ; as a sinner or a saint. And these designations are not based on our own personal morality (or lack thereof), but on whether we have trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Those who trust in Him will experience life change as a result. There is no middle ground here. Either we are in Christ or we are not. We are either related to Adam’s family or we are related to the Last Adam – to Christ. The offer of salvation is universal, but the choice to accept or reject it is ours.

## Contrasting our roots in Adam or in Christ



*“As in Adam, so also in Christ.”  
(Romans 5:18 paraphrased)*

If you are a saint, then it’s important to view yourself that way. How do you think God views you right now? It’s critical that you have the right answer to that question and that your answer is based on the objective truth of God’s word, not your subjective thoughts and changing emotions.

The Scriptures say that you are loved by God, accepted by God and declared righteous in His sight. When we understand His love and affirmation, it leads us to desire to please Him out of love. Our motivation no longer comes from fear of judgment, but from a healthy desire to please the One who gave His life for us.

We need to view ourselves through our new lenses. As Proverbs 23:7 tells us, *“For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (NASB)*. How we see ourselves determines how we will live. As a believer, see yourself as a friend of Christ, a member of His household, His child and

one on whom He has showered love and grace. View yourself as one declared “not guilty” in God’s court of law. This verdict was rendered because Christ acted as a substitute on our behalf, laying down His life for ours. Which list below defines your life?

<b>Which list defines your life?</b>	
<b>Guilty</b> Separated from God Unable to approach God	<b>Declared right with God</b> In a personal relationship with God Friends with God

This short list above can change your life. Apart from Christ, we retain the fate of the first Adam, who was sentenced to eternal death, guilt, judgment, and separation from God. In Christ, we have received the gift of righteousness and eternal life. God has imparted the righteousness of Christ to us so that our standing with God is not based on our performance, but on Christ. God has shown us His grace, or favor, simply because His nature is to love us. 1 John 4:8 tells us that “God is love.” We can approach God without shame, guilt, fear, or condemnation. It is through this relationship with God that we can experience His life-changing power.

In the children’s movie “Toy Story,” space ranger Buzz Lightyear becomes despondent when he realizes he is only a toy. Yet when he looks at the sole of his boot, he finds the name of his owner – he is Andy’s. At that moment, Buzz’s identity is rejuvenated. He realizes that he is not just a toy, but that he belongs to someone. You belong to God. You are not “just” a person. In fact, in Christ, there are no ordinary people. Each person is distinct, valued and dearly loved by God. He is for me, knows my name and is committed to my best interests.

We can view ourselves through the lens of the first Adam or the second. Which will you choose today? ■

# 3

## Dead to Sin — Alive to God

Romans 6:1-13

“Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin  
but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”  
(Romans 6:11, NASB)

The 1970s were a key time in my life. That’s the period in which I came to know Christ personally while in college. I began reading the Bible and saw dramatic changes in my life. Yet I reached a point of discouragement that revolved around misunderstanding the Bible. You could say I was a spiritual schizophrenic. The term *schizophrenia* originates from a Greek word that means “splitting of the mind.” My beliefs and behaviors were incongruent.

Please take a moment and read Romans 6:1-13, asking God to speak clearly to you:

### Romans 6:1-13 (NIV)

**1** What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

**5** If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—  
**7** because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

**8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

**11** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. **13** Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ■

This passage tells us that we are “*dead to sin*.” This was the point that caused me great anxiety. I knew that I had received Christ into my life, yet it was also apparent that sin still appealed to me and that I was still sinning. I would begin each day saying, “OK, I believe. I am dead to the sin of jealousy. I believe I am dead to lust.” Then I go off on the campus and see myself fail in these areas. I would ask myself, “What kind of Christian am I?” I’d be riddled with shame and guilt.

My mistake was not understanding that Romans 6:1-10 describes my position in Christ. The Apostle Paul is describing our legal standing that we now have before a holy God in Christ, not our inner experience with sin. It is a description of my identification with the Last Adam – Jesus Christ – and how God transferred me from Adam to Christ. This is not something you or I can do. This was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

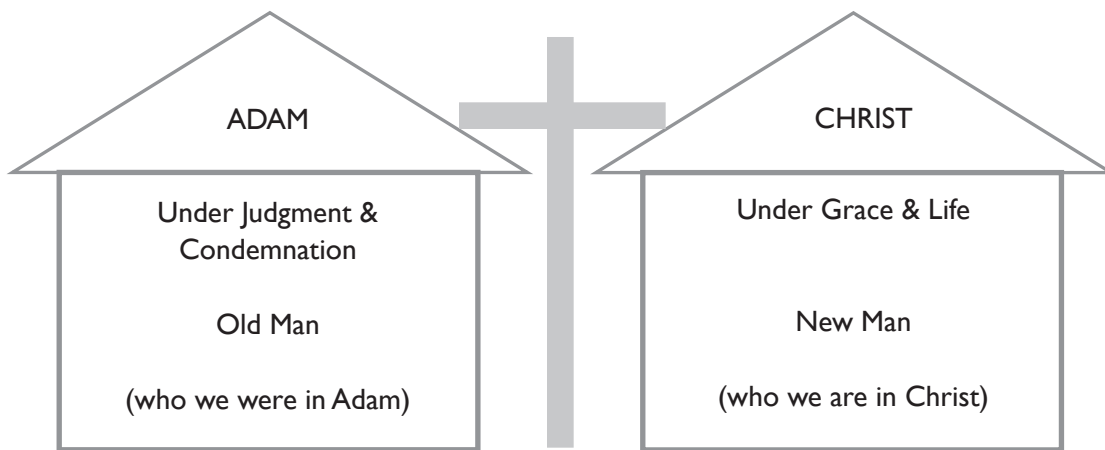
Verses 1-10 describe *justification*, which is our right standing with God. It has nothing to do with our spiritual maturity or character. God has declared us righteous because of the work of Christ. We are now forever dead to sin

and alive to God. This is true of every believer the moment he or she receives Jesus Christ. This is not based on spiritual maturity or how long I have been walking with the Lord. The moment a believer responds to Christ, that believer is now once for all dead to sin and alive to God! We are no longer under sin and under condemnation. Every believer is now justified and alive to God.

Read verses 6:1-11 carefully. The verb tense is all past tense. Because of the cross of Christ, *“our old self [the human race as in Adam – Romans 5:12-21] was crucified [dead] with Him, in order that our that the*

*body of sin [the whole human race in Adam] might be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin. He who has died is freed [literally justified] from sin” (Romans 6:6-7, NASB, emphasis mine).* Through the cross of Christ, we have been emancipated from God’s righteous judgment and condemnation.

In Romans 6, God reveals to us how He has transferred us from Adam (the old self) to Christ. It is through the cross of Christ. Through the cross, God judged the whole human race in Adam and poured out His divine wrath (John 12:31). Let me illustrate:



*“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is justified from sin.” (Romans 6:6-7, NASB)*

It is through our union to Jesus Christ as expressed in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that we have been made righteous from our sin condition. Those who identify with Christ have been baptized into His death and have been buried with Him in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). This is what Paul means when he says we are dead to sin. We are no longer “in Adam” but “in Christ,” so that we can walk in a new way before God!

This is a new way to think, and maybe a little difficult to get your mental arms around so let me use a few illustrations to help you.

In ancient Egypt, the Israelites lived for 400 years in captivity. As slaves, they were forced to perform brutal work under punishing conditions. Through a series of miracles, God liberated the Israelites from captivity and made them a nation, calling them His people. They were still the same individuals with

problems and challenges, but now they were free. They had a new identity. They were alive to God and were no longer enslaved in Egypt.

God took the Israelites from Egypt (like being in Adam) through the Red Sea (death) to be the people of God living in a right relationship with Him. Israel’s rescue is a picture of the idea of justification.

Now, it only took one day for the Israelites to leave Egypt – justification. But it took a lifetime to get the “Egypt” out of the Israelites – sanctification. The Jewish people were not changed into new individuals when they left Egypt. They didn’t leave bad habits and attitudes behind. The Bible is replete with stories of how they complained and stumbled. And in the same way, although we are positionally righteous before God, we spend our entire lives growing and being transformed so that our character more closely resembles that of Jesus Christ.



Another analogy is that of a commanding master, Mr. Stern found in Romans 6:17-18. He is a master who is extremely strict. You don't argue with the standards. In fact, you agree that they are ideal. Yet you cannot keep them and find yourself failing again and again. You know that you face certain condemnation and judgment from Mr. Stern, no matter how hard you strive to meet his rules. You are his slave, so what are you going to do? While you are stuck in the land of misery, along comes a new master – Jesus – who purchases your freedom from Mr. Stern. You now belong to a new master and are dead to the old one. Your new master has the same requirements, but gives you all you need to do your job with joy.

Paul gives us another analogy in Romans 7:1-4. You are married to a just but harsh husband named Mr. Law. You are “stuck” in this marriage because your husband, Mr. Law, won't die. However, God made you to die to Mr. Law and then raised you up so that you might be married to a new husband, Mr. Grace (Romans 7:4).

You now have a new husband, Mr. Grace. But Mr. Grace has the same standards as Mr. Law! The difference is in the relationship you have with our new husband. Mr. Grace not only tells you what the standard is, but helps you to achieve it each day and is coaching you along. He empowers you to meet the ideals. When you fail, Mr. Grace accepts you, helps you get back up and strengthens you to get closer to the goal. Mr. Grace has high expectations of you, but is not leaving you alone to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You know that he has your best interests in mind.

This is the essence of Romans 6. We are now dead to Mr. Law, but alive to Mr. Grace – even as we are dead to sin and alive to God!

## Our Emancipation Proclamation

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, a legal document declaring the freedom of all slaves in the areas of the Confederate States. Although the document declared all slaves free, for many months slavery remained until the Union armies were able to penetrate victoriously into the South. Our emancipation document is the cross of Jesus Christ. We have been set free from sin (Romans 6:7). However, many believers still live under the tyranny of the sin master because they do not know they have been set free.

Romans 6 tells us we are to know three important truths:

- 1) we are to know we have been baptized into Christ Jesus (v. 3)
- 2) we are to know that in Christ our old self (who we were in Adam) is crucified (v. 6)
- 3) we are to know that death is no longer master over Christ for by His death He died to sin once for all and the life that He lives, He lives to God (v. 9)

Even so, we are to consider ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God (Romans 6:11). The *even so* of verse 11 means that even as Christ is dead to sin, we are to consider (or reckon) ourselves dead to sin. How is Christ dead to sin and alive to God? Once for all. And so are we. We no longer live under sin as our master to rule and reign over us. We have a new master, a new husband and a new relationship to God. He sees you in Christ and completely accepts you. And He loves you so much that He will change and transform you from the inside out. But we must not move on too fast. We must be clear about who we are in Christ before we can move on to how we are to live for Christ, for our doing flows out of our being.

Only when we “know” who we are in Christ can we begin to “*present ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead*” (Romans 6:13) and begin to experience the inner process of transformation. Maybe this diagram will help.

<b>Positional Truth</b> Who I am in Christ	<b>Practical Response</b> → How I behave
<b>Key Words:</b> Know (6:3, 6, 9)    Consider (6:11)	<b>Key Words:</b> Present yourselves (6:13)
6:1-----Romans-----6:11	6:12-----Romans-----6:13



Romans 6:12-13 closes out this section with an exhortation to “*not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires*” (NIV). Instead, we are told to “*offer [ourselves] to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*”

This passage tells us that, recognizing all that Christ has done on our behalf, we must make deliberate choices to reject sin and choose obedience. We must reject the idea that we are sinners with no choice and embrace the fact that we are saints who are loved and accepted by God.

We have a new identity – we are in Christ. God no longer regards us as sinners but as saints “*set apart*” ones, holy ones). We are *in* Christ (our new identity and position with God) and Christ is *in* us (our sanctification). For example, read Ephesians 1-3 and note every place where Paul says “*in Him*” and “*in Christ*” or the equivalent, and discover what He says became true of you the moment you were placed in Christ. Learning to understand this incredible

truth is the fountain of transformation. Then, as we learn to live out who we are, we experience actual transformation.

A day is coming when our experience will be congruent with our position in Christ. That day will come when we enter His presence at the end of the age. Until then, we are partners with God in becoming more like Him each day.

Let’s make a practical application here. First of all, present yourself to God. Acknowledge to Him that, by His power, you are not going to let sin be in charge. Submit all of the areas of your life and all of your desires to God. You are not promising that you will never fail, but are acknowledging your desire to obey Him and are expressing your dependence upon Him.

Remember that you are a member of God’s family, set free from slavery to sin and embraced by the Father. Trust in Him to transform your life each day in big and small ways. He promises that He will. ■

# 4

## The Enemy Within

Romans 7:1-22

“It is hard to fight an enemy  
who has outposts in your head.”  
—Sally Kempton

Several years ago, my mom was diagnosed with cancer. She fought, battled and wrestled with the disease. Less than a year after her diagnosis, the cancer won. Billions of dollars are spent each year to combat and research cancer. Anyone who has battled cancer or seen a loved one struggle will agree that the search for a cure is a worthy endeavor, yet you and I have a disease inside of us that is much more serious than even cancer.

This disease is called sin. Many times our experience with it, even as Christians, is very similar to fighting cancer. No matter what we try, the disease progresses. We experience defeat after defeat. This does not have to be the typical experience of believers in Christ, but sadly it often is.

Romans 5 and 6 describe our standing and new identity with Christ. Chapters 7 and 8 relate to the practice of living out our identity.

We’ve examined how we are radically loved by God in a way that has nothing to do with our performance. A few years ago, I gave away my oldest daughter in marriage to a fantastic young man. During that time, I felt God saying to me, “Doug, the way that you feel right now toward your daughter, is just a little taste of how I feel about you every day of your life.” The Apostle Paul tells us that he lacks words to convey the depth of God’s love for us. Because of His great love for us, we love Him in return.

Yet we face a dilemma. We find ourselves saying, “Okay, God, I am yours. I belong to You and You love me. But what do I do about these wrong desires that are inside me? What about these desires that control me, provoke me and have power in my life that I cannot seem to conquer?” These are the issues raised in Romans 7.

Let’s take a moment to read the passage, asking God to open our eyes to its truths.

### Romans 7:1-25 (NASB)

**1** Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? **2** For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. **3** So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. **4** Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. **5** For while we were in the flesh, the sinful

passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

**6** But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

**7** What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” **8** But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

continued...

...continued

**9** I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; **10** and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; **11** for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. **12** So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. **13** Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. **14** For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. **15** For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. **16** But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. **17** So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which

indwells me. **18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. **19** For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. **20** But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. **21** I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

**22** For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, **23** but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

**24** Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? **25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin ■

Romans 7:14 tells us that God's law is good, but that Paul (and we) are "sold into bondage to sin." In the next verse, Paul tells us that "what I want to do I do not do." All of us can relate to this statement and to this dilemma. There is a conflict – a cancer – raging within us. We want to be better parents, employees, supervisors, and friends, but we don't know how to do so. The type of battle we face is different for each of us – nonetheless, all of us are in it. For one person, it may be overeating. Another person may struggle with explosive anger. Still another may battle lust. Regardless of the sin, the outcome is the same.

In verses 17-21, Paul tells us that sin is not merely an action, but a condition. It dwells in us.

Romans 8:7 says "the sinful mind" (also translated "flesh") is hostile to God. The flesh is a pull inside of us that urges us to live our life in independence from God and in rebellion to His ways. Although we are positionally in Christ, we are still infected by sin. This passage gives us the apparently bleak outlook that we can never win.

But there's an observation here that is key to unlocking the hope that lies ahead. In Romans 7, Paul uses the pronoun "I" 38 times. "Sin" is mentioned numerous times. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned once in verses 7:14-25.

The problem of the Romans Seven Man is that even though he is *in* Christ and has a right standing with God (justification), he does not have the power in himself to live it out (sanctification). He realizes he has a deep-seated problem within him – indwelling sin.

This indwelling sin is not what is commonly referred to as the "old nature" but it is more like a "poison" that has permeated every aspect of our being – spirit, soul and body. This indwelling sin principle is what Paul calls the flesh.<sup>3</sup>

Our problem is not a battle between an "old nature" we inherited from Adam and a "new nature" from God. Our problem is that within each one of us (notice Paul's use of the word "I" all the way through Romans 7:14-25) is this flesh; this poison that is still active within us.<sup>4</sup>

If the indwelling sin problem is the so-called "old nature," then why is it still alive in us since it was supposed to be crucified and done away with (Romans 6:6)? If Paul is referring to an "old nature" in us that battles against some new nature, then what is actually transformed in us? What I mean is this: the "old nature" will never be transformed. It is entirely corrupt. The new nature that we are supposed to have received is pure and incorruptible. So, if the new nature cannot be corrupted and the old nature cannot be transformed, then what is actually transformed in us? Yet the Scripture teaches us we are being transformed — "But we *all*, ... beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB, emphasis mine).

What Paul is saying in Romans 7 is that "I" have a problem. It is "I" against the pull of the indwelling sin principle or flesh in "me" – not some part of me – but in "me." In "me" there is both the desire to do what is good and the desire to do evil. The only problem is that "I" do not have the power to do the good, so, "I" end up in despair.

<sup>3</sup> Read Appendix C: Identity Project.

<sup>4</sup> Read Appendix D: Lines of Defense.

## What is this “flesh” that dwells in us?

The word flesh is used in three ways in the New Testament. It refers to:

1. all of mankind (*Luke 3:6*)
2. our physical body (*John 3:6*)
3. our natural tendency to live our lives independently from God which leads to evil (*Romans 7:7-8*)

The flesh is stated in various ways in Romans 7. It is:

1. sin which indwells in me (*Romans 7:17*)
2. the principle of evil in me (*Romans 7:21*)
3. the law of sin in my members (*Romans 7:23*)
4. the body of this death (*Romans 7:4*)

The flesh is like a toxin permeating our entire being or a poison that has affected all the members of our bodies. Before we were saved we lived in the realm of the flesh (*Romans 7:5*) where the flesh permeated every part of our spirit, soul and body. Now that we are in Christ, we live in the realm of the Spirit (*Romans 8:9*). In our *standing* we are righteous and holy, but in our *practice* we still have the flesh living in us. But now we have a greater power than the flesh living in us. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit who strives against the flesh (*Galatians 5:16*).

The battle that takes place within us is the Spirit (with our cooperation) against the flesh. It is not our old nature battling the so-called new nature. If we are living according to the dictates of our flesh we will die, but if we are living according to the Spirit then we will put to death our fleshly deeds (*Romans 8:13*).

When I try to battle my flesh in my own effort and power, I fail – miserably. Overcoming the flesh takes place when we learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit—our tag team partner. We are no match for the flesh. The flesh is too strong of an opponent for us to conquer. Notice in this section of Romans 7 that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. He is completely absent. However, the personal pronouns *I, me* or *myself* are mentioned 38 times from verses 14-25. Where do we end up? We end up as the “*wretched man*” in utter defeat.

Imagine you are leaving home for work and instead of getting in the car to go to work, you get behind the car and try to push it all the way to work. What will you be like if you make it to work? What is the problem here? You haven’t discovered the truth that the car was designed to be powered by the engine, not by you. The problem is the what I call “*I*” problem.

Paul writes to the Galatian believers who are being tempted to live out their Christian life according

to their own ability. He says to them in Galatians 3:3, “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh (in your own physical strength)?*” (*NASB*). Paul uses his own life to demonstrate to them how to live. He tells them in Galatians 2:20, “*I have been crucified with Christ [the ‘old man’ is dead to sin and alive to God, as in Romans 6]; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [self is no longer independent from the Lord, as in Romans 7]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me*” [he learned how to live in the Spirit, as in Romans 8].

How I can overcome the sinful desires in my life and experience real change? The beginning of change is repentance. “Repentance is a complete turnabout in our thinking. We must scrap the foolish idea that life is available on our own and with humble contrition embrace the life Christ offers. We must identify where we live independently of God; identify where we protect ourselves from personal pain more than obeying God; replace self-protective manipulation with vulnerable obedience. Forgiveness and transformation will be the fruit of deep repentance.”<sup>5</sup>

We must learn to walk in step with the Spirit which is where Paul directs us into the next chapter, but I get ahead of myself. We conclude this section with the question that cries out in each one of our hearts. “*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*” Notice that Paul does not ask *what* will set him free, but wonders *who* will do it. He is not seeking a method but a person. The difference between what and who reveals whether you are on the right track to experiencing victory and freedom in your life.

The answer to this question is in Romans 7:25: “Jesus Christ our Lord!”

*Only Jesus is more powerful than the flesh. ...  
When we change the question from “What shall I do” to  
“Who can help me?”, we find help in our time of need.*

Only Jesus is more powerful than the flesh. He is the partner you can “tag” in the wrestling match with your sinful desires. When we change the question from “What shall I do?” to “Who can help me?”, we find help in our time of need. Relying on Christ, instead of our own feeble willpower is the answer. We’ll learn more about how to do this practically in the chapters that follow.

But I want to say more about our common strategy of fighting the flesh. We put a lot of hope in our will power and we rely heavily on various tips and techniques to help us do battle with the flesh. In many ways, we have reduced or truncated the very Gospel of Jesus Christ to set of tips and techniques for us to master.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Larry Crabb, *Understanding People*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 149-150 paraphrased.

As a result, we unintentionally turn Christianity into a self-help, moralistic, Buddhist way of life instead of experiencing real fellowship with God.

The essence of Christianity is not moralism, though we should be growing in our morals as we mature in Christ. Christianity is not a set of rules or rituals for us to follow, though there are rules and traditions within Christianity. Christianity is a relationship with the personal God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We were made by God for fellowship with Him – to walk with Him, to enjoy Him, to talk with Him, to hear from God, and to have companionship with Him.

We were designed to be God-centered people, but instead we have become self-centered people as a result of the fall (Genesis 3). The center and circumference of our being is not to be defined by tips and techniques of self-improvement, but by Jesus Christ. He is the One who lives in us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. He is the One we live with and for. And He is the One who takes our new identity in Christ and transforms our experience. ■

# 5

## The Summit: Life With a New View

Romans 8:1-39

*“Whatever the struggle, continue to climb.  
It may be only one step to the summit.”*  
—Diane Westlake

When my children were young, they loved it when we would read the book “Heidi” to them. Heidi was a young girl who lived in the Swiss Alps with her grandparents. When she reached school age, she left the grandeur of the mountains for the city to live with her aunt, uncle and cousin Clara. Clara was disabled and unable to stand. She suffered from other ailments as well.

Heidi became homesick, but then physically sick. Her doctor recommended she return to her grandfather. Once she returned there, her spirits and health revived. She also persuaded her grandfather to bring her cousin Clara there, in hopes that the purity of the alpine would rejuvenate her health. The families consented and Clara joined them in the Alps. After several months, she started gaining an appetite and eating more. Then she gained the strength to stand, then walk, and finally to run in the mountain fields.

When Clara’s parents met upon her homecoming, they were stunned to see their daughter full of life. She had a new identity. This story is a perfect metaphor for our spiritual life and what it means to be alive in Christ. Romans 8 provides more rich details on our spiritual identity and offers a new view of life.

When examining Romans 7, we learned that the wrong question to ask is, “What will save me from my sinful inclinations?” The right question is to ask is, “Who will save me?” Romans 8 tells us more about that person as it explains in detail about God’s love, promises and saving power. Romans 7 is in the valley. Romans 8 is at the summit. As we have ventured through Romans 5, 6 and 7, we have been scaling the rocky slopes. Now we have reached a point where we have a panoramic view of our identity in Christ. Read the chapter below, and then we’ll visit the summits one by one.

### Romans 8:1-39 (NASB)

**1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. **3** For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **5** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6** For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, **8** because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God;

for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, **8** and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **9** However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. **10** If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. **11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. **12** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

continued...



...continued

**13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. **15** For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" **16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **19** For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. **23** And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. **24** For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? **25** But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. **26** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for

words; **27** and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. **28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. **31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? **33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; **34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. **35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36** Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." **37** But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ■

Romans 8 continues to help us realize our identity in Christ and what it means to live in union with Him, the second Adam. Let's look at this rich chapter section by section to discover what it means to our identity and the life we are called to live.

## Peak 1: We are no longer condemned.

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-34, NIV).*

Left to ourselves, we were powerless to fulfill the law of God. For that, we faced condemnation from

God Himself. Yet because of God's mercy, He sent His Son Jesus to take the punishment we deserved upon Him. Jesus, through His life, death and resurrection, freed us from condemnation. We can now stand before God without fear, knowing that He loves and accepts us.

In Romans 7:24, Paul asks, "Who will set me free?" In Romans 8:2, he reveals the answer: Christ Jesus. It is in Jesus that we are introduced to a new law. It is the law of the Spirit of life. This law enables us to overcome the law of sin and death. In our flesh, the law of God became a principle of sin and death in us for we were not able to perform it. But now in Christ, we have a new law – the power of the Spirit dwelling in us, by which we are able to overcome and rise above the pull of the flesh.

Each one of us is governed by the law of gravity. If we sincerely think that by our own efforts we can overcome gravity by simply jumping off a cliff, we will be sincerely wrong. But we have discovered a higher law – the law of aerodynamics. It is because of this law that we have discovered how to overcome the law of gravity and fly into the heavens. Even so, as we learn to



live by the Spirit, we learn how to overcome the gravitational pull of our flesh and rise above it so that we, too, can fly in the heavenlies.

An important side note is that, while there is no condemnation, there is conviction. God will still remind us about areas we need to change because He loves us and wants the best for us. The Holy Spirit is holy and one of His major roles is to change and transform our lives so that we become holy in our practice as we are in our standing before God.

## Peak 2: We have a new walk.

*“...in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4, NIV).*

In “His Deeper Work In Us,” J. Sidlow Baxter points out that “to walk according to the Spirit is to live continually under His gentle persuasion, in glad one-mindedness with Him. How many of us, then, are walking in the Spirit? A walk is a reiterated step. ... It is in this consecrated walking with the Spirit that He renews our mind itself.”<sup>6</sup>

How can we become one-minded with the Spirit? By renewing our mind and setting our mind on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-8), we can have a mind that is sanctified or set a part to the Holy Spirit.

The mind set on the flesh is death, is hostile to God and cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8).

The mind set on things of the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

### Some characteristics of a sanctified mind

- a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2)
- focuses on Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)
- single minded (2 Corinthians 11:3)
- denies the flesh and lives according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25)
- renewed at the very source of the mind (Ephesians 4:22-24)
- a protected mind (Ephesians 6:17)
- a spirit of humility (Philippians 2:5)
- dwells on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, good .... (Philippians 4:8)
- set on eternal truths (Colossians 3:1-4)
- considers godly qualities (Colossians 3:5-17)
- a pure mind (Titus 1:15)

How do we set our minds on the things of the Spirit? We learn to live in fellowship with Jesus. Jesus modeled for us what it means to live in fellowship with the Father. Jesus’ words, His works and His wisdom all came from His communion and the relationship He had with the Father. He said, “...I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (John 8:28, NASB).

So as we learn to live daily enjoying fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Spirit, we will be able to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. Mastery over our minds cannot be done by power of the will, but only by the power of the Holy Spirit – by grace. For God says He is at work in you both to give you the desire and the ability to do His will (Philippians 2:13).

By setting our mind on the things above our minds, God goes to work and renews them; only then we will be able to gird our minds to obey God and by faith act on what God says is true (1 Peter 1:13).

## Peak 3: We have a new power.

*“Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ... You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:2, 9-13, NIV).*

One of the first high points of this chapter is that the Holy Spirit is our new power source. He dwells within us the moment we trust in Christ. In Greek, the word *dwells* means “to take up residence.” The Holy Spirit is not a guest or an outsider, but a permanent resident in a believer’s life. The Spirit imparts life-changing power to us.

Romans 7:6 tells us, “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (NIV). Instead of trying to pull ourselves up by our spiritual bootstraps through our own determination, we rely on the Holy Spirit. It is determination versus dependence. It is through the Spirit that we experience victory. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force but a being. He is God. He is personal. He is eternal. He is powerful . . . and He lives and dwells in you! As you cultivate a relationship with God, you will discover the transformational power that comes from the Holy Spirit.

<sup>6</sup>J. Sidlow Baxter, *His Deeper Work In Us*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 157.

## Peak 4: We have a new relationship.

*“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:15-17, NIV).*

Not only does the Holy Spirit indwell us, but we are able to relate to God personally. Because of the work of Christ, we are able to call God “Daddy.” He is holy and infinite, but He is also our Heavenly Father. We are sons and daughters of the King. We are members of His household.

Do you call God “Father” or “Dear Daddy?” Even though God is the Eternal Father, rarely is He called Father in the Old Testament. The Israelites never referred to God as Father in a personal sense. Not until Jesus that is. Jesus changes everything. He calls God His Father many times throughout His life as recorded in the Gospels. In the Gospel of John, for example, Jesus calls God, Father, at least 67 times! What fascinates me is that 40 of these times take place in John 13-17. These five chapters are referred to as the Upper Room Discourse. These are Jesus’ last words privately with His disciples before He is arrested and crucified. Throughout His ministry and especially at this time, Jesus reveals God to His disciples and introduces the Fatherhood of God to them.

We are like one of the two brothers in the parable known as The Prodigal Son. Both sons have the same Father, but the youngest becomes prodigal (reckless, wasteful, extravagant). By asking for his inheritance, he was wishing that his father was as good as dead. He leaves home to go to the far country (Luke 15:13). He was the one who was dead (Luke 15:24). The older son, even though he remained with the father, was also prodigal. He allowed the far country to dwell in him and could not rejoice when his brother returned and came to life again. In either case, both had the same father, but for different reasons were not experiencing the father in their lives.

In a similar way, God is our Father but in our prodigal state we don’t experience the Fatherhood of God. But Jesus has changed all of that.

It is through Jesus we have come alive again and now we can experience fellowship with the Father as Jesus experienced the Father in His life. After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus told Mary, *“I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God!” (John 20:17, NASB emphasis mine).* You can know God as Dear Daddy!

The Bible does not whitewash the sorrows of our existence.

...There is a day coming when sin, suffering and death will be banished. In that day, we will be so caught up in the love of God and the celebration of His glory and reign, that our sorrows will not even be a faint flickering on the horizon.

## Peak 5: We have a new hope.

*“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

*“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:18-23, NIV).*

This passage says that we indeed face suffering and loss in this life. The Bible does not whitewash the sorrows of our existence. But there is more than pain. The Bible tells us that there is a day coming when sin, suffering and death will be banished. In that day, we will be so caught up in the love of God and the celebration of His glory and reign that our sorrows will not even be a faint flickering on the horizon.

At that time our physical bodies will be redeemed as well and the whole of creation will be set free from the curse and corruption of sin.

If you are in Christ, your destination is Heaven. It’s guaranteed, it’s secure and it’s reserved. You have a place reserved for you in Heaven. There is a place for you reserved at the heavenly banquet table, purchased for you through the blood of Christ. So, hang in there. Don’t throw away your faith but fight the good fight. Keep your mind set on the things above where Christ is seated (Colossians 3:1-2). God is using the “fires” of your life to fit you for the eternal country (2 Thessalonians 1:5). As you keep your eyes on the prize these momentary light afflictions are producing for you an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

## Peak 6: We have a new intercessor.

*“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:26-27, NIV).*

It sounds too good to be true, but we have a powerful prayer partner in the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit who knows all things, even the depths of our hearts. Have you ever thought, “I wish somebody could understand how I am feeling right now”? There is somebody, in your life – the Holy Spirit who lives in us. He understands us even better than we know ourselves. He knows us and He offers prayers on our behalf, even in even in our weakest moments when we are unable to vocalize our requests.

## Peak 7: We have a new confidence.

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30, NIV).*

God is in control. If we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that He is ordering events for our good. The events themselves may not be good. There are no guarantees from God that we will not face hardships. But God does guarantee that He will use even hardships for our good. There is no pain without a purpose. In the midst of sorrow and anxiety, we can be assured that God is with us, lives in us, is for us, and is working out events for our good and His glory. Corrie Ten Boom, survivor of Nazi prison camps, has been quoted as saying, “Every thread has a purpose.”

## Peak 8: We have a new defender.

*“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:31-34, NIV).*

God is not only with you, He is for you and defends you. Look at it this way: If God pursued you, fought for you and died for you on the cross while you were a sinner, how much more will He fight for you now that you are His child? He is your rock, shield and defender.

## Peak 9: We have a new source of security and love.

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39, NIV).*

Nothing can separate us from His love. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. God loves us because He is love. It is His nature. Instead of seeking to find love and security through people or position, we find it in His unwavering commitment to us. He alone is the anchor of our souls.

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Do you remember the Mother Goose nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty”?

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall  
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men  
Couldn’t put Humpty together again

In light of Romans 8, I’ve got a much better version in mind:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
Humpty Dumpty shouted, “Amen!”  
“God can put me together again!”

In the next chapter, we’ll learn what it means practically to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. ■

# 6

## Powered by God

### *The Four Roles of the Holy Spirit*

*“The man who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it.”*

—Woodrow Wilson

A few years ago I opened my car door to an amazing stench. Puzzled and overwhelmed by the fumes, I looked under the seats and found nothing. I vacuumed the car, yet the smell remained. I cleaned the windows and the vinyl. Now it looked great, but still smelled awful. I popped the hood and found nothing. The last place I checked was the trunk, and there it was: a head of broccoli baking in the sauna that was my car.

No matter how clean the car looked, there was something rotten inside. This leads us to a discussion of the human condition, specifically Romans 7:24: *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (NIV).*

Paul is acknowledging that he cannot obey God and meet His requirements by human effort. Our best efforts, like sun-baked broccoli, still stink. Paul looks to the right place by asking, *“Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* He needs a power beyond himself to come to his aid.

This statement contrasts sharply with what Paul says a few verses later in Romans 8:37: *“... We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”* The difference between Romans 7 and Romans 8 is the introduction of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes all the difference between defeat and victory in the Christian life. Let's examine four key roles the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.

### **Role 1: The Holy Spirit is real and personal.**

Who is this mysterious partner that older translations of the Bible referred to as the “Holy Ghost”? Well, first of all, He is no ghost. Beginning with His name, we learn that He is holy. This sets Him apart from us. Although He dwells within us as believers, He is not our spirit, but God's. The Spirit is sinless, pure and perfect. His holy presence in our lives helps us to grow in holiness. If we give the Spirit permission to work in our lives, we will see change.

It's also important to note that the Holy Spirit is not an “it,” a force or even a principle, but a person. The Holy Spirit is God. Because the Spirit is a person, you can communicate with each other. He can understand you. He is your partner and unfailing constant companion. The Spirit is with you in the ring of life through the good, bad and ugly. He is with you and for you.

### **Role 2: The Holy Spirit lives within us.**

Romans 8:2 refers to Him as *“the Spirit of life.”* The Holy Spirit is the only person who can reproduce the life or character qualities of God in you. Romans 8:9 tells us: *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.”* You may recall that the Greek word for “dwell” means “to occupy a house” or “take up residence.” We have a choice to bar the Spirit from some rooms of our lives. Perhaps something is hidden in the closet or even the bedroom. We may not want the Spirit to clean those rooms for fear that He will rob us of what we enjoy most in life. But this is a complete misunderstanding of God, making Him out to be a celestial killjoy. Jesus said He came that we may live life to the fullest. The only way we can experience true joy – joy as God intended it – is to



open our lives fully to Him. The Holy Spirit needs to feel that He is at home in your spirit, mind, will, and emotions. When you go to a party or watch television, He needs to be invited. Understand, however, that the Spirit is a “gentleman” and will not crash down the door.

You and I have the power to resist the Holy Spirit. Yes, we can stop the work of God in our lives by resisting His will. But why would we want to do such a foolish thing? The real issue for believers in Christ is not whether they have the Holy Spirit. That is spelled out clearly in Romans 8:9. The question is, whether the Holy Spirit has you? Author J. Sidlow Baxter comments, “Whatever you give Him, He takes. And whatever He takes He cleanses, and whatever He cleanses, He fills, and whatever He fills, He uses.” Our responsibility is to hand over the keys of our lives to the Spirit. Only then can we experience the fulfilling, joyous life that God intended for us to live.

### **Role 3: The Holy Spirit changes our thinking.**

Can there be a harder assignment than to change the way someone thinks? Some people are immovably set in their ways and will not even consider the evidence against their point of view. Yet God is in the business of changing minds – even our own. Through the Spirit, He transforms our self-centered thinking to become more like His.

Romans 12:2 says: *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will”* (NIV).

Real transformation begins with renewing our mind. Instead of letting the world (television, radio, public opinion) determine how we think, we need to give God the opportunity to inform our thoughts.

Why is it so important to change our thinking? Because our actions flow from our thoughts. We speak and act from what we believe. We must believe and think the right things in order to live in a Christ-like manner.

The fundamental change in our thinking must come in our identity. We must understand that God does not condemn believers in Christ (Romans 8:1). We are united with Christ. We are God’s children, His beloved sons and daughters. Renewing our mind is not something you do once. The concept of our identity in Christ is a truth that permeates the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. It is simple, yet complex enough to continue giving us “aha!” moments for the rest of our lives.

What does renewing our mind look like? First of all, it includes a regular intake of the Scriptures. There are many ways to do this: reading the Bible, listening to the Bible on tape, listening to messages

*The concept of our identity in Christ is a truth that permeates the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.*

*It is simple, yet complex enough to continue giving us “Aha!” moments for the rest of our lives.*

and Christian radio. You renew your mind on your own with God, but you also renew it in community with other followers of Christ, by hanging out with someone who can model the faith to you, through prayer, through living out God’s truth in your ordinary daily life – your eating, working, sleeping, your dreams, your disappointments, your friendships. Renew your mind by being aware of the God who is with you.

On our own, we cannot “discipline” our way to holiness. However, God has given us the Scriptures, His family (the church) and spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, etc.) as tools to partner with us in the pursuit of transformation.

God is calling us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to a process of continual renewal and change. When it comes to renewing our minds, there is no such thing as a crash course or “cramming” for an exam. It is a lifestyle change. It’s a lifelong commitment. But not only are we committed to God – He is committed to us for the long haul. That’s why He has chosen to indwell us with the Holy Spirit.

### **Role 4: The Holy Spirit enables us to a new way of life.**

When it comes to changing our lives and habits, everyone wants a quick fix. We want to lose weight now without all of the exercise and effort that it requires. We want to learn a new language, but don’t want to commit to the years of study and practice required. In our haste to change, we end up changing nothing at all. In the same way, we can short circuit God’s plan to change us.

All too often we focus on the behaviors prescribed in the Bible without spending time learning what the roots of our problems are and how we must think differently. Only then will transformation come.

Romans 8:4 talks about those *“who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit”* (NIV). God is seeking a new pattern of living. This requires not only dependence on God, but interdependence with the Holy Spirit. This is a daily challenge and joy, not a quick fix. God’s responsibility is to change us. It’s our responsibility to cooperate with Him to do so.

My focus and responsibility is to be in a close relationship with God. As I grow in that relationship, God changes me. My character becomes transformed. I become a more loving person.

Romans 8:12-13 tell us: *“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (NIV).*

You *can* live victoriously. You can rise above the pull of sinful desires. It’s all because of the Holy Spirit.

One way we can grow in our relationship with God and renew our minds is through memorizing and meditating on His word. I challenge you to memorize Romans 8, starting with small chunks, such as one verse per week. With God’s word in your mind, it can be with you wherever you go. You can meditate on it on a more consistent basis. Meditation leads to transformation. ■

# 7

## What's Behind That Door?

### *The Four Doors We Must Unlock*

*“When you have shut your doors and darkened your room, remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not alone.”—Epictetus*

Over a recent Christmas, we welcomed some international students into our home for a party. When they arrived, we showed them all of our rooms. Then we enjoyed a great meal and some wonderful conversation together. Wouldn't it have been strange if, after dinner, they wandered our house unaccompanied? That would have been inappropriate. After all, they are friends and acquaintances, but not family.

It's possible for us to treat the Holy Spirit as only a guest and not a permanent resident in our lives. He needs to be able to have access to all of the rooms in the house, to be able to inspect the closets and to peek under the bed.

You may recall Romans 8:9, which says, *“the Spirit of God lives in you”* (NIV). If we have received Christ into our lives, there is no question that we have the Holy Spirit living within us. The question for each one of us, then, is “Does the Holy Spirit have us?” That is, are our lives under His influence? As we discussed previously, it is possible to shut even God out of our lives. But why would we want to do such a foolish thing when God is good and has our best interests in mind?

Does the Holy Spirit have the “run of your house”? Can He inspect your mind, will, emotions, hopes, and dreams? Here's a startling revelation: Not only should the Spirit have the run of the house, He owns the house! We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19, *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own”* (NIV). Walking harmoniously with the Spirit is a matter of recognizing that Christ paid the price of His life to buy us as His own.

The Bible uses several metaphors to describe a life that is led by the Holy Spirit. These include:

- walking by the Spirit
- living by the Spirit
- being filled with the Spirit
- being indwelt by the Spirit

The idea (as you can see) is that the Holy Spirit relates to us in the most personal of ways. We should not “punch a clock” in terms of our relationship with Him.

Ephesians 5:18 helps paint another picture of what this relationship can look like: *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit”* (NIV). There is no doubt that a person's entire being can be influenced by excess consumption of alcohol. They become a different person, but certainly not a more desirable one. God turns this idea on its head and says, in effect, “Be drunk with the Holy Spirit.” This means to be filled to overflowing the things of the Spirit in a way that each thought, word and action is influenced by the One who dwells within.

Did you notice that this verse is not a suggestion, but a command? It is God's will for us to be filled to the maximum by the Holy Spirit. What God is seeking is an interdependent relationship with Him. I John 5:14-15 helps us to understand what this means: *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him”* (NIV).

This verse is telling us that when we walk closely with the Spirit, we will pray for the things that God desires. And God promises to answer those prayers.



The opposite of interdependence on the Spirit is to resist Him. To describe human effort to ignore Him, the Bible uses terms such as:

- “resisting”
- “putting out the Spirit’s fire”
- “grieving the Spirit”

By doing these things, we leave the Holy Spirit in the “breezeway” of our lives. Technically, He’s inside. But His presence has no bearing on life inside the house. In Revelation 3:20, God spoke to the church in Laeodecia, which was located in present day Turkey. God’s message to them was: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me”* (NIV).

The church was meeting, but a key person wasn’t invited: the Holy Spirit. There is certainly application for us today. We can even be sitting or serving in church, yet we may have refused the Holy Spirit permission to enter our lives or we’ve blocked His access to sensitive areas. We must realize that the Spirit is not a burglar, but a friend. He is not an angry landlord, but the loving healer of our souls. When we deny Him entrance, we deprive ourselves of true joy.

Let’s examine some of the rooms that we need to unlock for the Holy Spirit.

*We can even be sitting or serving in church, yet we may have refused the Holy Spirit permission to enter our lives, or we’ve blocked His access to sensitive areas. ...When we deny Him entrance, we deprive ourselves of true joy.*

## Door 1: Unconfessed sin

Behind door No. 1 is unconfessed sin. The issue here for the Christian is not obtaining God’s forgiveness. The issue is that unconfessed sin grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit, and our fellowship with God is hindered. Our natural tendency is to hide our sin, to bury it, deny it, and/or suppress it. Unconfessed sin can ruin our lives socially, emotionally, spiritually and even physically.

In Psalm 32:3-4, we read about David’s battle with secret sin:

*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.  
Selah [pause and think about it]*

I stole a set of tools from a car parts store when I was in high school. A few years later, after I had come to know Christ as my Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit

convicted me about those tools I had stolen a number of years earlier. My conscience was not clear but I was too afraid to do the right thing and make restitution. So, to help me carry through what I needed to do, I told my girlfriend and asked her not only to pray with me and for me but to go with me to the store.

We pulled up into the parking lot, prayed together and I asked her to go with me into the store. She said, “No, I will stay in the car. You need to do this.” With shaking knees, I walked into the store to pay for the tools I had stolen.

There were only two or three other people in the store at the time, with one person in line ahead of me. The attendant asked me if he could help me and I softly asked if I could talk to the manager. He was busy at the moment, so I had to wait what seemed to me for an eternity.

After a few moments, he came to the counter and asked what I wanted. I took a deep breath, offered a quick arrow prayer to God and told this man about the tools I had stolen from his store a number of years ago. I was sweating bullets and I could feel the eyeballs of the two other customers bearing in on me, but I was resolved to finish my story. I told the manager that I had become a Christian and that God had convicted my heart about the tools I had stolen. Now I wanted to make it right by paying for them and some extra for the inconvenience it must have cost them.

I did not know how he would receive my story, but I never expected the response he gave me. He took a pen and wrote out a receipt for the tools with words written on it, “Tools stolen eight years ago, paid in full!” He handed me the receipt and then extended his hand and thanked me.

I walked out of that store (though I felt like I was leaping and jumping) with the biggest smile on my heart — for the first time I had a clean conscience! Wow. There is nothing like that! *“A tranquil heart is life to the body but passion is rotteness to the bones”* (Proverbs 14:30, NASB).

Have we let poor attitudes lead to grumbling and complaining? Have we let lust, bitterness or anger consume us? Are relationships in our lives suffering because we are too proud to make peace? Are there things that the Holy Spirit is putting His finger on for us to get right?

In Proverbs 28:13, Solomon also extols the benefits of confessing our sins to the Lord: *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy”* (NIV).

David and Solomon were crushed under the load of secret, unconfessed sins. When they finally confronted them, they found peace and deliverance. In the rest of Psalm 32, David says, *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the guilt of my sin”* (NIV).

This is why he starts another Psalm with these words: *“How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,*

*whose sin is covered*” and then ends with, *“Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all who are upright in heart” (Psalm 28:1,11 NASB).*

God is not asking us to merely confess our sins to Him and then repeat them. He is saying that in the act of confession, we *accept* God’s forgiveness, *renounce* the sin and *ask* for His help in defeating the sin.

The key to unlocking this secret door is *honesty*. Be honest with yourself about the true condition of your heart as David was. Talk to God about the unconfessed sin in your heart — He already knows about it and He really wants to help you deal honestly with it. Then be honest with others. Make restitution, ask for forgiveness, if necessary and confess your sins to someone you trust in your life and pray together (James 5:16).

## Door 2: Unforgiving spirit

The unforgiving spirit is behind door No. 2. The book of Ephesians tells us that unreleased anger can halt the work of God in our lives and give Satan an opportunity to corrupt our character. Ephesians 4:30-31 tells us: *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (NIV).*

An unforgiving spirit shuts out the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we do not forgive people who have offended us, our soul becomes a cold, dark place that God cannot work through. Unforgiveness and bitterness are like cancer that seep into all of our relationships and ruin them. We must not seek revenge, but release. Our example must be Jesus Christ, who did not seek revenge, but forgave those who slaughtered Him. Because we live in a fallen world, all of us experience pain at the hands of others. It’s important to note that all of us have also inflicted emotional (and possibly physical) pain on others as well. Only by the supernatural act of forgiveness can bitterness be released and the cycle of hatred stopped. It takes the filling of the Holy Spirit to forgive.

Ephesians 4:32 shows what our response should be like: *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (NIV).* We must look in the mirror and understand that *we* need forgiveness, not only from God, but from people we have hurt. When we realize that we are forgiven, we are released to forgive others.

A word of clarity here. It is not wrong to be angry. Look at Ephesians 4:26-27: *“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (NIV).* Anger in and of itself is not wrong. However, if the anger remains and burns, then we have a problem. We must be honest with ourselves about our emotions. If the mention of a person’s name elicits feelings of anger, then we have a forgiveness problem. We must release the offense. We

must pursue peace and not let relationships decay. If we take the wrong path, this verse tells us that we give Satan an opportunity to cause further havoc in the situation and in our lives.

We must also realize that some relationships are not salvageable. God’s word tells us this in Romans 12:18: *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (NIV).* This indicates that peace may not be possible. You may offer an unqualified apology and lay your soul bare, accepting 110 percent of the blame for a situation, only to find that the party who is offended may not release you. They may refuse to allow the relationship to mend.

In such a situation, we can have peace, knowing that we have done all that we can possibly do to restore it. Even then, we must be vigilant to show kindness and pray for a thawing of tensions.

## The key to unlock the secret door of an unforgiving spirit

The key necessary to unlock this secret door is forgiveness. When you read Jesus’ response to Peter about how often you should offer forgiveness when your brother sins against you, you discover several vital truths about forgiveness. (Read Matthew 18:21-35.)

- Giving forgiveness is and will be a way of life, not just a one time act (v. 22).
- Forgiveness is an act of love which releases the person out of your debt (v. 27).
- In light of how much we have been forgiven we really have no right to be unforgiving (v.32-33).
- Forgiveness leads to mercy (v. 33).
- Forgiveness comes from the heart (v.35).
- We imprison ourselves when we are unforgiving (v. 34).
- Forgiveness is free to those who receive it but is costly to those who give it (v. 27).

Forgiveness is releasing the offender from the heart and resolving to live with the consequences of another’s sin. It is the soil for which trust may be rebuilt and the relationship restored. Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened to you. When God says He remembers our sin no more (Hebrews 10:17), He means that He no longer holds it against us (2 Corinthians 5:19). Forgiveness is not tolerating sin nor ignoring, sin but it is giving mercy to those who have sinned. Forgiveness means that we are taking the offender off our hook and putting him or her on God’s hook, letting God deal with that person however He deems best (Romans 12:17-21).

Have you received forgiveness and mercy from God? Isn’t it time you shared that gift?

### Door 3: Uncontrolled thoughts

Behind this door are uncontrolled thoughts. As we discussed earlier, our thought life is important because our thoughts inform our actions. If we think about revenge, we'll eventually end up taking revenge or at least ruining our health due to anger. If we let our mind focus on lust, then lust will consume us and we will act out our lustful desires. If we allow ourselves to become proud (or conversely, to think we are worthless) then our lives will reflect those false beliefs. This is a most important battle for us.

We may believe that this area is secret; off limits. Yet God knows what is hanging in the hidden gallery of our mind. Nothing is hidden from His sight. He wants to replace the stench of the garbage that has piled up in this room with the aroma of His truth. How is this done?

It all goes back to renewing our minds (Romans 12:2). Meditation and memorization of Scripture transforms the computer program running in our minds.

I suggested in a previous chapter that all believers should memorize Romans chapter 8. Have you started? I'm not saying it's easy. But what worthwhile thing in life is easy? In "Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life," author Charles Swindoll says of memorization: "No other single discipline is more useful and rewarding than this. No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened, your witnessing will be sharper and more effective, your counseling will be in demand, your attitudes and outlook will be changed. Your mind will become alert and observant, your confidence and assurance will be enhanced, your faith will be solidified through the spiritual discipline of memorization and meditation." Reading, contemplating and memorizing the Scriptures will bring order to the chaos behind door No. 3.

*"No other single discipline is more useful and rewarding than [memorizing Scripture]. No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened, your witnessing will be sharper and more effective, your counseling will be in demand, your attitudes and outlook will be changed. Your mind will become alert and observant, your confidence and assurance will be enhanced, your faith will be solidified through the spiritual discipline of memorization and meditation."*

—Charles Swindoll

In Ezekiel 8, the elders of Israel were carving on the walls in God's house every form of things detestable to Him. They did so in the dark, thinking that no one would see. But God sees. He sees both in the light

and the dark; in the public and the private; nothing is hidden from His sight. Even so, God sees in the deepest recesses of our heart and He knows what we have carved in the gallery of our minds. Nothing is hidden from His sight.

So how can we gain mastery of our thought life and bring every thought under the lordship of Jesus Christ?

#### Keys to unlock the secret door of uncontrolled thoughts

- Understand the devil's strategy to lead your mind astray from simple and pure devotion to Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3).
- Don't allow your mind to wander or stray but as Peter encourages us, tie up the loose ends of your mind and actively pursue a holy life (1 Peter 1:13-16).
- Identify the strongholds (sin that has mastery over you) in your life.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this to you and pray for insight to follow the everlasting way (Psalm 129:23-24).

The goal you should have is to be able to gain control of your thoughts and actions in such a way they bring honor to God and others. As David says, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14, NIV). Wash your mind with the Word. Purify your heart with worship. Yield your spirit to the Holy Spirit so that you may be renewed in the very spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23).

I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, very close to Lake Erie. In the days I grew up there, Lake Erie was contaminated and extremely polluted. We hardly ever went swimming in Erie even though we would play by the Great Lake many summer days. The city of Cleveland tried all kinds of ways to clean the lake, but nothing prevailed until they went to the source of the pollution. They cleaned up the steel mills and factories that were dumping chemicals into the Cuyahoga River and other tributaries. Once they cleaned up the source, the lake came back to life and is amazingly cleaner today than when I lived there. Even so, God goes to work at the very source of our thoughts and does His purifying work there! Cooperate with Him. Invite God in the gallery of your thoughts and ask Him to help you post a "no entrance" sign down the hall of corrupt memories and to replace those old scenes with His truth, His word and with new pictures of experiencing Him in your life so that when you go down memory lane we have your own "hall of faith" to visit.

We explored the doors of unconfessed sin, of unforgiveness and of uncontrolled thoughts. Are you ready to open Door No. 4?

## Door 4: Unresolved conflicts

This is the room of unresolved conflicts. We all experience conflict. This is a part of this life. But we don't have to live with unresolved conflicts — we should take the initiative to resolve conflict if possible. We are not responsible for how others respond to us, but we are responsible for the attitudes, words and actions of our own life. Paul instructs us, *“If possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men”* (Romans 12:18, NASB).

### Keys to unlock the secret door of unresolved conflicts

- Make sure that you are getting your strength and encouragement from your relationship with the Lord (Philippians 2:10).
- Take responsibility for your own character and seek to meet the needs of those around you (Philippians 2:2-5).
- Stay on fire in your love for each other, for your love will cover many of the hurts and sins against you (1 Peter 4:8).
- Do not allow hurts to pile up because if you do you are giving the evil one room to divide you (Ephesians 4:26-27).
- If you find that you cannot let go of the hurt, you then need to go and speak truth in love to pursue peace and reconciliation (Ephesians 4:15, 26).
- If you discover that you are at fault, ask for forgiveness.
- Watch over your heart diligently, and be vigilant, for your life flows out of the spring of your heart. Keep the spring clean and pure (Proverbs 4:23). ■

# 8

## A Whole New Approach to Life

*Romans 8:2*

*“For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus  
has set you free from the Law of sin and death.”  
(Romans 8:2)*

I remember reading a story about a young lion cub resting with his mother in the forest, when out of nowhere loud noises startled both the mother and the cub. The mother jumped to her feet while the cub hid in the bushes. The little cub heard a frightening “boom,” and then watched his mother fall to the ground and be taken away by two-legged creatures.

Alone and scared, the cub was paralyzed with fear as he hid in the bushes. At sunset, he noticed four-legged creatures moving out of the jungle and into a green meadow to chew on the lush grass.

With his stomach aching for food, the trembling cub got up the nerve to move from the bushes to the meadow. Would these creatures would let him join them? One of the larger and older ones spoke to him: “You are welcome to stay with us. We are sheep, and we can teach you how to eat grass.”

The little cub was glad to be welcomed by the sheep. He ate grass with them, but he noticed that the sheep both young and old were much better at it than he was. Still, because he was so hungry, he learned to eat grass even though it never became natural to him. He even learned how to “baaa” like the sheep.

As time went by, he became one of them (even though he was never quite like them in their habits, in their eating and in their “baa-ing”). Though he felt at home with the sheep, he still had an emptiness on the inside. Something was not as it should be. He struggled with this and wondered why he felt like an outsider.

Several years later on a sunny day, the young lion played with his adopted sheep family in the green meadow. Then a piercing scream came from the mother sheep. “Hurry!” she cried. “Everyone into the forest, *now!*”

All the sheep ran and hid in the trees of the forest, but the young lion paused and wondered what had made all everyone else so afraid. He turned away from the forest, looked back toward the meadow and stopped cold in his tracks. He had found his answer. Coming right at him was a massive creature unlike any he had seen before.

Without a sound, this mighty creature slowly came closer and closer to the young lion. Its head was huge. Its teeth were long and sharp. Its feet were large and its eyes stared right at him. The young lion wanted to run away as fast as he could, yet he also had a sense of wonderment and even a strange sense of peace. So, amid conflicting emotions, he stayed.

The massive beast spoke just two words in a deep, rumbling, sonorous voice: “Follow me.” Then it turned, walked across the green meadow and moved deep into the forest. The young lion paused, but then decided to follow in the footsteps of this golden beast.

The creature finally stopped near a small pond, looked at the young lion and said, “Come here beside me.” The young lion edged close to the creature’s side.

“Look down,” the creature thundered.

The young lion turned his head from the creature and looked down onto the still surface of the water in the pond. He recognized the reflection of the large creature, but not that of the smaller one next to it. He shook his head. The smaller creature in the pond also shook its head. Scared and confused, the young lion sat back, looked at the golden beast next to him, looked again into the water, and saw both the large and small creatures looking at him.



Then he slowly turned his head and looked yet again at the large creature next to him. He stared intently into its eyes. Then it hit him! Time seemed to stand still as he pondered this revelation. Then, lifting his head high, the young lion opened his mouth and let out a powerful “RRROOOAAARRRR!”<sup>7</sup>

If you are in Christ, you are a new creature. You have a new identity! The old things have passed away, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Identity is who you are.<sup>8</sup>

Identity theft is big business today. It is in the news. Credit card companies have commercials making us aware of the severity of the problem. If you have had your identity stolen you know how hard it is to get it back.

Jesus said the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. The identity we have in Christ is where we get our strength to live fully, for who we are influences how we behave. Our ancient foe is out to steal our identity – our spiritual birthright.

My question is, who are you? What is it that makes you *you*? Who (or what) gives you your identity? Where do you get your identity validated? Is it your job? Your clothes? Your job description? Your athletic abilities? Your humor and entertaining personality? What would happen if you lost all these things? Who would you be then? As in Erin Fromm’s words, “If I am what I have, and if what I have is lost, who then am I?”

So again I ask: who are you? You are much more than what you have and what you do. You are uniquely created by God in His image for His purposes. The devil has come to make you think you are someone you are not. He is the liar and he has lied to you about who you are. He certainly does not want you to discover who you are in Christ.

Identity is given to you by your heavenly Father. He is the One who has called you out. He is the One who gives you your name. The Lord called *Abram* and changed his name to *Abraham*. God inserted the letters “*b*” and “*a*” which come from the Lord’s name – Yahweh. He not only changed Abram’s name – He also changed his identity by sharing a part of Himself with Abram. Abram means “*exalted father*,” while Abraham means a “*father of a multitude*.”

He changed Sarai’s name to Sarah. Sarai means “*princess*.” God again shared a part of Himself with her so that she was called Sarah. Sarah also means “*princess*,” which suggests that God was affirming and validating her true identity.

He changed *Jacob*’s name to *Israel*. He changed *Simon*’s name to *Peter*. He has a new name for you.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul: God’s Restoration of Men to Real Manhood* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), pp. 222-223 paraphrased.

<sup>8</sup> Go to Appendix A and complete the Identity Project.

You are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are now defined not by what you have done or what you have accomplished, but by who you are in Christ.

Read through the “Who I Am In Christ” list in Appendix B to see what God has to say about who you are. Is this the way you think of yourself? Do you understand these things to be true of you? Be honest ... what does your heart say?

*You are much more than what you have and what you do. You are uniquely created by God in His image for His purposes.*

## Remember David and Goliath

How did David overcome this giant? The story is in 1 Samuel 17. He picked up “*five smooth stones*” from the brook of Kidron. Stones are not normally smooth, but these were because over time the water of Kidron had smoothed them out.

In the same way, I encourage you to pick out five identity statements from Scripture and commit them to memory so that you can recall them anywhere and anytime. Memorize them so that you can meditate on them. Meditate on them so that your mind and your heart become saturated with these “God statements.” In so doing, you will take these truths and “smooth” them out in your heart. Memorize them; meditate on them, pray them; speak them out loud in your own voice and embrace them. Use them to fight the good fight. Let them encourage you to be in daily fellowship and communion with Lord and you will be on the journey of being transformed to be more like Christ.

The way of a Christian is to be a Christ-centered man or woman of God. The Christian life starts with Christ, ends with Christ and is Christ (Philippians 1:21).

- It is in Christ that we are alive to God.
- It is in Christ that we have a new identity.
- It is in Christ that we have forgiveness of all of our sins.
- It is in Christ that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.
- It is in Christ that we have an eternal relationship with God.
- It is in Christ that we have an eternal inheritance.
- It is in Christ that we have everything pertaining to life and godliness.

This is what God wants us to do with His help – center our life in, on, around, for, and through Christ so that we are transformed by the power of God! God does not want us to be molded or conformed to this world but to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 8:29).

What is being renewed and transformed? The answer is that God transforms you! He makes you alive in Christ (*justification*) and restores you to spiritual and moral health and holiness (*sanctification*).

He transforms hate to love; self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness; unrighteous anger to mercy; bitterness to forgiveness. God changes you from the inside-out. He is restoring you so that you may gain the glory of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

I am regenerated. I did not have a new nature added to me. I have been made alive in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He (the Holy Spirit) is doing His work of transforming *me!*

### Important input for your identity

*“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind”*  
(Romans 12:2, NIV).

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”* (2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB).

*“... but though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4:16, NASB).

*“... be renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (Ephesians 4:23, NASB).

*“And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him...”* (Colossians 3:10, NASB).

*“I [the apostle Paul] have been crucified with Christ [Paul in Adam]; and it is no longer I who live [Paul in Adam], but Christ lives in me [Paul is still Paul; he does not lose his personality or individuality as in Buddhism]; and the life which I now live in the flesh [Paul in Christ], I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me [Paul as Paul] and gave Himself up for me”* (Galatians 2:20, NASB).

Paul – as a new man in Christ, positionally – no longer lives an self-centered, flesh-controlled-life, but he lives a Christ-centered life which produces a transformation of Paul experientially.

Some have asked, “If we have one nature, then what about what Peter says in 2 Peter 1:4?” That verse reads: “For by these [His own glory and excellence, v. 3] He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in

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self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness;  
unrighteous anger to mercy;  
bitterness to forgiveness.  
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may gain the glory of Christ  
(2 Thessalonians 2:13).

*order that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”* (emphasis mine).

### Understanding being a “partaker of the divine nature”

Becoming a partaker of the divine nature does not mean that we become God. We do not partake in God’s essence as deity. This also does not mean that we now have a new nature added to us. It means that we are able to share in the life of God.

Peter is saying that now we have faith (salvation, 2 Peter 1:1), we now are able to share in (partake of) the life of God. We don’t share in deity, but we now get to share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). We now get to share in His glory (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). We now get to share in His body (Ephesians 5:30). We now are “sons” of God (Galatians 4:5-7). The term “sons of God” is a term meaning that both men and women are recognized by God as adult children in His family. As a result of being “sons,” we now have full rights and privileges as heirs in God’s family. It is on this basis that God declares us as “sons” and sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

The way we partake in the divine nature is through God’s promises and by applying all diligence to our faith to establish clear lines of defense.<sup>9</sup> In this process, we make a full commitment to mature in our faith (2 Peter 1:5-10).

So once again, this is what God wants us to do with His help: Center our lives in, on, around, for, and through Christ so that we are transformed by the power of God!

Mankind used to think that the universe revolved around earth. Now we have come to the realization that actually our planet, along with the other planets in our galaxy, revolve around the sun. We are heliocentric instead of earth-centered. In the same way, mankind in sin has bought into the lie that life revolves around us, when actually our lives were made to revolve around the Son!

Paul describes his new life this way: “I have been crucified with Christ [Paul in Adam] and it is no longer I



*who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh (Paul in Christ) I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20, NASB).*

### Understanding this new approach to life

The new approach to life is to live in fellowship with Jesus Christ. We are made to have fellowship with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit. We are made to enjoy Him, to talk with Him, to listen to Him, to walk with Him and to experience Him in our daily life.

Jesus invites us into fellowship with Him. He stands at the door of the church and knocks. He stands at the door of your house and knocks. If you open the door to Him, He promises to come in and share a meal and friendship with you!

The way of this new life is faith or trust in Jesus Christ — total trust. It is a crossing-the-Jordan-River-like faith: “*When the soles of feet of the priests ... rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off...*” (Joshua 3:13, NASB). It’s a child-like faith of utter abandonment of trusting one’s father and mother (Matthew 18:3-4).

It’s a faith that is not just an intellectual understanding of the Christian life, but a response of obedience to the character and word of God (John 13:17). God has given us a holy standing with Him and the power to experience it in our life. Now, let’s “*enter this and and possess*” it (Joshua 1:11).

### Understanding why we can and should trust Christ

The reason for trusting Christ is love. The reason for utter abandonment is love. The reason for us to live according to God’s word is love. No one has ever loved you more. No one will or could love you more than He has loved you. He loved you by giving Himself up for you on the Cross. He loved you by coming to live and dwell in you. He loved you by promising to come back for you and so that you will be with Him forever! No one has ever (or will ever) love you like that!

When you live in fellowship with Christ by faith and are in love with Him, you will experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. His power will enable you to walk or live a life that is pleasing to God. As you continue in fellowship with Christ, you will experience the power of His Spirit not only overcoming the power of your flesh, but also the transforming power of God. This transformation is not a once-for-all-transformation of your life, but the beginning of a journey that will transform the desires of your heart. As you enjoy breathing the fresh air of fellowship with the Lord, you will be

changed from the inside-out. You will begin to be restored to spiritual and moral health. You will start to think differently. Your desires will be purer and purer. You will go and grow from glory to glory as you behold the glory of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Are you ready to let the Spirit take over your heart?

What you give Him, He takes.

What He takes, He cleanses.

What He cleanses, He fills.

What He fills, He uses.

— J. Sidlow Baxter

Follow Me! — Jesus ■

<sup>9</sup> Read Appendix E: Lines of Defense.

# A Appendix A: Identity Project

God's word is not intended to be merely informational, but transformational. Experience transformation in your own life by making this study real and relevant on an everyday basis. Begin by getting together with family or friends and interacting on the following.

1. Write down every adjective you can think of that describes you, who you are, both positive and negative. This equals your self-concept.

2. Now read Ephesians 2:1-10 below before going further.

## Ephesians 2:1-10 (NIV)

**1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is

by grace you have been saved. **6** And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9** not by works, so that no one can boast. **10** For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ■

3. Based on those Scriptures, now write down what God says *was* true of you and *is now* true of you since you are in Christ. Also read *Appendix B: Who I Am In Christ*, to see what God says about you. Compare your lists.

Old you

New You

---

4. Read the Scriptures below.

**Genesis 32:22-30, NIV**

*That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.*

*So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.*

*Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."*

*But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

*The man asked him, "What is your name?"*

*"Jacob," he answered.*

*Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."*

*Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."*

*But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.*

*So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."*

**Matthew 1:16-17, NIV**

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

**Galatians 3:26-4:7, NIV**

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. 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. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

5. As a group, discuss the importance of identity by answering these questions:

- a. Why did Jacob covet God's blessing so tenaciously?
- b. What does God's blessing mean to you?
- c. What do you think God the Father's affirmation meant to Jesus?
- d. What is significant to you about being called a son (adult child) of God?

6. Finish these sentences. For each bullet point, limit your answers to 15 letters.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

- I am:
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ ■

## **B** Appendix B: Who I Am in Christ

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”  
(Romans 12:2).

### From A to Z: Affirming statements of our identity in Christ

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| A. I am <b>alive</b> in Christ.                               | <i>Ephesians 2:5</i>      |
| B. I am <b>blessed</b> with every spiritual blessing.         | <i>Ephesians 1:3</i>      |
| C. I am a <b>citizen</b> of heaven.                           | <i>Philippians 3:20</i>   |
| D. I have been <b>delivered</b> from the kingdom of darkness. | <i>Colossians 1:13</i>    |
| E. I have <b>eternal</b> life.                                | <i>John 3:16</i>          |
| F. I am <b>forgiven</b> of all my sin.                        | <i>Colossians 1:14</i>    |
| G. I am already <b>glorified</b> with Christ.                 | <i>Romans 8:30</i>        |
| H. I am an <b>heir</b> of God.                                | <i>Galatians 4:6-7</i>    |
| I. I am <b>in</b> Christ.                                     | <i>John 14:20</i>         |
| J. I am a <b>joint heir</b> with Christ.                      | <i>Romans 8:17</i>        |
| K. I inherit the <b>kingdom</b> of God.                       | <i>Colossians 1:13</i>    |
| L. I am a <b>light</b> to the world.                          | <i>Matthew 5:16</i>       |
| M. I am a <b>member</b> of God’s chosen race.                 | <i>1 Peter 2:9</i>        |
| N. I am a <b>new</b> creation.                                | <i>2 Corinthians 5:17</i> |
| O. I am an <b>overcomer</b> .                                 | <i>1 John 5:4</i>         |

- P. I am a holy and a royal **priest**. *1 Peter 2:5, 9*
- Q. I am the **quintessence** of His grace. *Ephesians 2:8*
- R. I am **righteous**. *2 Corinthians 5:21*
- S. I am a **saint**. *Ephesians 1:1*
- T. I am a **temple** of the Holy Spirit. *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*
- U. I am **united** to the Lord. *1 Corinthians 6:17*
- V. I am a branch in the true **vine**. *John 15:5*
- W. I am God's **workmanship**. *Ephesians 2:10*
- X. I am called by His glory and **excellence**. *2 Peter 1:3*
- Y. I am **yoked** to Christ. *Matthew 11:29*
- Z. There is no **zenith** ... it will take an eternity to fill out this list of who we are in Christ. ■



## C Appendix C: The Romans Seven Man

“So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:25b).

### The Civil War: Two Desires in One Nature

Although we don't have two different natures battling within us, we do have two opposites desires at war within our mind and being. The Apostle Paul refers to this civil war within us in Romans 7. He does not say that we have an old nature battling a new nature. Instead, he indicates that within each one of us (notice the personal pronouns) we have opposing desires.

Before going further, take a moment to read the text below from God's word.

#### Romans 7:14-25 (NASB)

**14** For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. **15** For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. **16** But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. **17** So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. **18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. **19** For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. **20** But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am

no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. **21** I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. **22** For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, **23** but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. **24** Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? **25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Paul's conflict in Romans 7:14-25		
The Mind	verse	The Flesh
--	14	But <b>I</b> am of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin,
-- <b>I</b> do not understand  <b>I</b> would like to do  -- <b>I</b> hate	15	for that which <b>I</b> am doing  for <b>I</b> am not practicing what  but <b>I</b> am doing the very thing
<b>I</b> do not wish to do, I agree with the law confessing that it is good,  so now, no longer am <b>I</b> the one doing it	16	but if <b>I</b> do the very thing  --
For <b>I</b> know that noting good dwells in <b>me</b>  for the willing is present in <b>me</b>	17	but sin which dwells in <b>me</b>
For the good <b>I</b> want that <b>I</b> do not want.	18	that is in <b>my</b> flesh  but the doing of good is not
<b>I</b> am no longer the one doing it	19	<b>I</b> do not do, but <b>I</b> practice the very evil
<b>I</b> find then	20	but sin which dwells in <b>me</b>
the one who wants to do good.	21	the principle of evil is present in <b>me</b>
For <b>I</b> joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man	22	-- --
--  the law of my mind and making <b>me</b>	23	but <b>I</b> see a different law in the members of <b>my</b> body, waging war against  a prisoner of the law of sin which is in the members of <b>my</b> body.
--	24	Wretched man that <b>I</b> am! Who will set <b>me</b> free from this body of death?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand <b>I myself</b> with my mind am serving the law of God	25	but on the other, with <b>my</b> flesh, the law of sin.

In Paul's description of the "*wretched man*," we discover that there is a civil war waging inside him. He himself is experiencing this battle not between two natures: one unredemable and one divine. The flesh is not an old nature located somewhere in us. It permeates all through us. It is the fallen aspect or depravity of our very own self – our own nature. The flesh dwells in us and works through the body (which is not evil in and of itself).

The flesh is like an infection that permeates our moral system. We all have the "disease" but we are not the "disease." The "disease" makes us sick, but that does not imply that the person is not responsible for the way he or she acts.

The Romans Seven Man discovers that although he desires to do right, he has no power to do it, so he ends up a prisoner to the law of sin. He joyfully agrees with the law of God, but the law of sin is too powerful for him. As a result, he ends up as the wretched man.

Is there any hope for him?

What is cool to notice is that the Romans Seven Man concurs with the Law of God! Even though the flesh is hostile to God, the mind can be renewed! He wants to do what is right. Now, if only he can find help to do it, he could be set free. There is a cure for this flesh – Jesus Christ and the "helper" (the Holy Spirit) – whom Jesus gives to indwell those who are the justified (Romans 5:1-5). ■

## D Appendix D: The Flesh

*The flesh is a sinful perversion within us that is contrary and hostile to God and His law. ...But God has regenerated us and is now renewing us by the Holy Spirit. We are being metamorphosized to Christlikeness!*

### The Flesh

1. In the New Testament, the word **flesh** (Greek: *sarx*) is used primarily in three ways:

- a. the physical body                      *“...the life that I now live in the **flesh**...” (Galatians 2:20, NASB)*
- b. humanity or mankind                *“...and all **flesh** will see the salvation of God...” (Luke 3:6, NASB)*
- c. our evil desires                        *“...for the **flesh** sets its desire against the Spirit...” (Galatians 5:17, NASB)*

2. The flesh is not a **nature** (Greek: *phusis*) within us, but an active depravity within our nature. The flesh is within me; not a separate entity in me.

*“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Ephesians 2:3, NASB).*

3. The flesh dwells within me – the entire human self; not some part of me, but through me and throughout my members. The “I” that wants to do good is the same “I” that does evil. There are not two different “I”s.

*“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (Romans 7:18).*

4. The flesh (this evil proclivity) is *not* the physical body. The body is not sinful or evil. The body is good. The Lord is *for* the body.

*“... yet the the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13, NASB).*

*“For while we were in the flesh...” (Romans 7:5, NASB).* Obviously we are still in our bodies, but we no longer live in the *realm* of the flesh. We now live in the realm of the Spirit. *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9, NASB).*

*“...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God...” (Romans 8:7, NASB).* Our bodies are not hostile to God, but our sinful desires are.

5. The flesh which lusts is an aspect of our spirit and soul. *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16, NASB).*

6. The battle is between the Spirit and the flesh, not two natures. *“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (Galatians 5:17, NASB).*

7. The flesh is a sinful perversion within us that is contrary and hostile to God and His Law. We are totally depraved, which means that every part of us is infected and corrupted. We are spiritually dead. (Ephesians 2:1); morally corrupt (Ephesians 2:2-3; 2 Peter 2:10) and physically mortal (Romans 8:11). But God has regenerated us and is now renewing us by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). We are being metamorphosized to Christ-likeness!<sup>10</sup> ■

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<sup>10</sup> Much help on this subject comes from two books by J. Sidlow Baxter. *A New Call to Holiness: Listening for the Call of God to Personal Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993). *His Deeper Work in Us: The Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer's Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1993).

# E Appendix E: Lines of Defense

“Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

## Draw a line in the sand: “Here I stand in P.U.R.I.T.Y.”

### P Line 1: Prepare

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- the heart *Proverbs 4:23*
- a plan of attack *Proverbs 21:31*
- to “put on” Christ *Romans 13:14*
- pray *Matthew 26:41*

### U Line 2: Unite

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- with others in a fellowship of the heart *2 Timothy 2:21-22*

### R Line 3: Renew

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- your mind with God’s word *Ephesians 4:23*
- your heart by rejoicing *1 Thessalonians 5:23*
- your strength by relying on the right source *Zechariah 4:6*



**I** Line 4: Identify

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- your weaknesses *Luke 4:1-13*
- your times of temptations *Luke 4:13*

**T** Line 5: Truth

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- about temptation *1 Corinthians 10:13*
- about your identity *Ephesians 2:10*
- about consequences of sin *Galatians 6:9*
- understand forgiveness *2 Peter 1:9*

**Y** Line 6: Yield

---

- your heart to God daily *Luke 9:23*

**Draw a line.**

*Here's my heart commitment empowered by grace:  
By the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God  
in community with God's people, I commit to be in  
training to pursue purity.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ ■