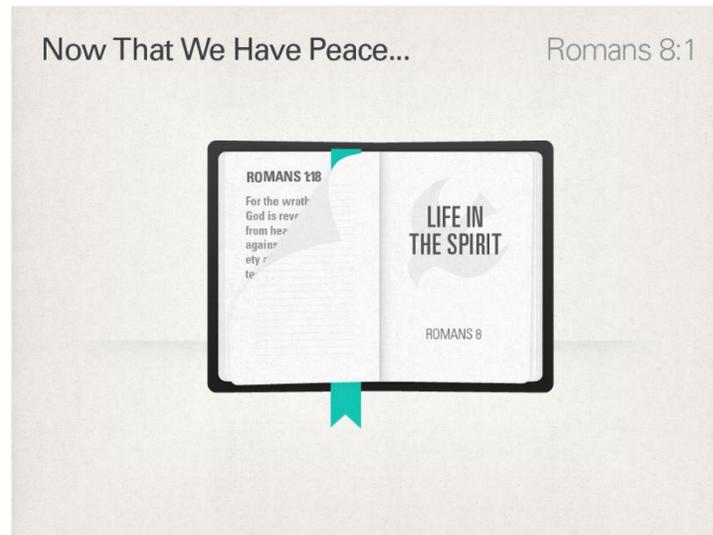


## Romans 7:25b–8:11

Before you read any further, go back and review the commentary on [Romans 7:13–25a](#) in the preceding section. Much of what follows presupposes your understanding of this material.

In this section of Romans, Paul presents practical strategies for overcoming the ongoing problem of our sinful flesh. In [1:18–20](#), he discloses God’s response to our sin: His wrath against all godlessness and wickedness. Most of [Romans 1–4:25](#) explains that Jews and Gentiles alike are under this wrath, and we all share the same need for reconciliation with God. In [Romans 5:1–7:25a](#), Paul addresses the role that God’s righteousness, revealed in the gospel, plays in the lives of believers once they have been reconciled with Him. At the end of [Romans 7](#), he introduces the ongoing problem of sin in our unredeemed bodies. Another important aspect of the gospel’s power is the new life that it opens up to us—not only eternal life here, but life in the Spirit. What follows is the beginning of the next big thematic unit, looking at life in the Spirit as the solution to the lingering problem of sin.



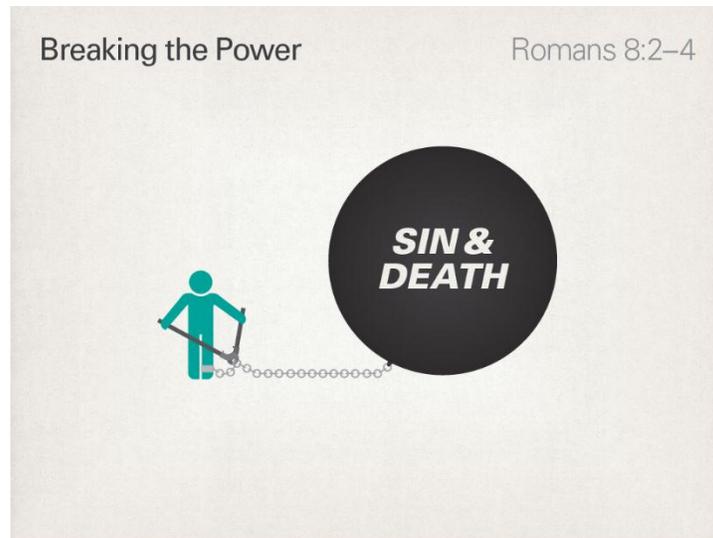
**Now That We Have Peace:** The preceding sections have dealt with all the implications of God's wrath being revealed against all impiety and unrighteousness. Paul has presented the gospel, the revelation of God's own righteousness, to address the penalty of sin. He now transitions from describing life under judgment to talking about the new life believers can experience now that we have peace with God.

When God redeemed us through Jesus' death and resurrection, He knew sin would remain in the flesh. He could have dealt with this problem by bringing about the immediate judgment of the ungodly and the bodily redemption of believers, just as we expect will happen in the future "day of the Lord." Instead, God relied on the very same model that Jesus used to resist the sinful longings of His flesh. He gave us His Spirit to dwell in us and help us live in humble submission.

For us to follow God, we had to be free from slavery to sin and its penalty – that was just the beginning. To build on this foundation, we must actively submit to the Spirit's ministry in our lives. God's indwelling Spirit enables us to be "saved by His life" (5:10); His life is lived out through us as His instruments for righteousness. Since Paul presents a big idea to build on what he has already argued in [Romans 1-7](#), he is able to present a more complete picture now than was possible earlier. He provides a great summary and review, but we must read it in light of all of the caveats and support he has already offered. We must assume all of the rhetorical questions excluding wrong ideas are still true, and we must read the chapter in the broader context of what precedes. [Romans 1-7](#) serve their own purpose, but they also serve as the preamble for Paul's most important teaching about how we can serve God despite the fallen state of our world.

Paul's opening statement for this section is the hinge verse, [7:25b](#). Our inner person/mind is set free to be a slave to God's law; nevertheless, the problem of inherent sin wages a constant battle. [Romans 8:1](#) reiterates the claim of [5:1](#): being justified by faith means peace with God, so there is no condemnation. Verse 2 recasts our

reconciliation with God in legal terms, contrasting the law of sin and death with that of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.



**Breaking the Power:** Paul makes clear that God never intended for the law to address the problem of sin. The law promotes knowledge of sin rather than offering a solution. Paul packs a lot of significant information in one complex sentence. God never intended the law to save us from sin and death. This was not possible because of the weakness of our flesh.



**Breaking the Power:** Paul points out that the law was never meant to offer a solution to the problem of sin. Therefore, any attempt to use the law to obtain freedom from sin or death is doomed to fail.

God accomplished what we could not, through Jesus' work on the cross. He had to come in the flesh, susceptible, as we are, to the effects of sin. In this way, Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law in us and put sin to death once and for all. His death and resurrection broke the power of sin and death.



**Breaking the Power:** In [Romans 8:3](#) Paul says that what the law was powerless to do, God did by sending His Son. He condemned sin in the flesh by being incarnated in flesh just like ours.

Paul gives us a heads-up about where he is headed in [8:4](#) by recasting us as those “who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (LEB). Most Bible translations render “spirit” here as though it refers to the Holy Spirit. However, Paul’s references to spirit in the next few verses seem to continue his contrast between the inner/outer, body and spirit. In other words, he is still referring to the inner, redeemed spirit in contrast with the flesh.

When Paul contrasts living with a focus on the flesh versus living with a focus on the spirit, he is speaking to believers, so he is able to assume that their inner spirit has been redeemed. Nevertheless, he clarifies this in verse 9 with the caveat, **“if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you”** (LEB). If Paul had been talking about the Holy Spirit dwelling within us instead of simply our inner person/spirit, there would have been no need for this clarification. Now let’s take a closer look at the contrast.

**What we focus our minds on has direct consequences for how we live our lives. In 8:5 Paul outlines the contrast between a life focused on the flesh versus a life focused on the inner person/spirit that has been redeemed.**



**What’s Your Mindset?** Paul presents contrasting portraits of the mind set on the flesh compared to the mind set on the spirit. Although there is no longer condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, we still face a choice of where we set our minds.

**The mind set on the flesh cannot serve God because of the inherent enmity, and because the sinful flesh is under judgment leading to death. All flesh is doomed to die; if our life is focused on serving our flesh, we cannot simultaneously serve God. As Paul summarizes in verse 8, those in the flesh are not able to please God.**

In [8:9](#) Paul shifts from the generic exposition to an application. Living our life focused on the spirit changes everything, so long as the Spirit of God lives in us. The Spirit-indwelt life is one of peace. In [8:10](#) Paul summarizes our present state as believers with Christ in us: Our physical body is dead because of sin, but our spirit/inner person is alive because of the righteousness obtained as a free gift from God. Paul recharacterizes God in [verse 11](#) as “the one who raised Christ Jesus from the dead” (LEB). If the life-giving Holy Spirit lives in us, then He will also vivify our mortal bodies through the indwelling of His Spirit. This “making alive” of our bodies gets more attention in [verses 18-30](#), but the point here is that the indwelling of God’s Spirit in our spirit changes everything. Reconciliation and peace with God are just the beginning. Allowing Christ to live in us and through us to serve God is what Paul’s gospel message has been building toward. Through His plan to remove sin and wrath, God prepared the way for His greater design for us.

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## Extra Notes

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### The New Way: Freedom from Condemnation (8:1–4)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Because believers died with Christ, the law has no more power to condemn the believer for violation of God’s standards.*

“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” (7:6).

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).**

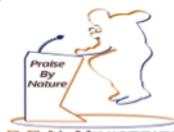
Granted, Paul picks up the reference to “Jesus Christ our Lord” in 7:25 with his reference to **Christ Jesus** in 8:1. But the flow of his argument is clearly to summarize all of Romans 6–7 by saying that those who have died to sin and the law **in Christ Jesus** (6:8, 11, 23; 7:6) are now free from the condemnation incurred by living under the same. F. F. Bruce points out that **condemnation** (*katakrima*) probably should more accurately

be thought of as “penal servitude,” i.e., the results of **condemnation** (Bruce, p. 151). **Condemnation** in a legal sense is the opposite of justification, but Paul is not saying here that we are justified (i.e., “not condemned”). He is in a point in his argument where he is discussing the freedom that comes from being **in Christ Jesus**.

Therefore, if we have been set **free from the law of sin and death**, then we no longer are slaves to sin and death (see Rom. 6:15–23). We no longer have any term of punishment or servitude to fulfill as a result of being declared “guilty” (see *katakrima* in Rom. 5:16, 18). Fittingly, Eugene Peterson (*The Message*) calls **condemnation** “a continuous, low-lying black cloud” which Paul says no longer hangs over us

The body is, of course, the body of Christ, the church (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24). But it is not the membership of all Christendom’s organized churches. Rather, the body of Christ is that mystical body made up of those who have died together with Christ through faith, and have been made “one with him in spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). Not only is there **no condemnation** [penal servitude] **for those who are in Christ Jesus**, they also are ...

- redeemed (Rom 3:24),
- alive to God (Rom. 6:11),
- possessors of eternal life (Rom. 6:23),
- free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2),
- members of one spiritual body (Rom. 12:5),
- sharers in Christ’s work (Rom. 16:3, 9),
- sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2),
- recipients of grace (1 Cor. 1:4),
- secure in death (1 Cor. 15:18),
- bold to speak the truth (2 Cor. 2:17),
- new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17),
- free (Gal. 2:4),
- justified (Gal. 2:17),
- recipients of the blessings given to Abraham (Gal. 3:14),
- sons of God (Gal. 3:26),
- one with others regardless of race, gender, or social condition (Gal. 3:28),
- recipients of every spiritual blessing in heaven (Eph. 1:3),
- seated in the heavens (Eph. 2:6),



- created for good works (Eph. 2:10),
- brought near to God (Eph. 2:13),
- partakers with Jews of the promises (Eph. 3:6),
- forgiven by God (Eph. 4:32),
- encouraged (Phil. 2:1),
- at peace (Phil. 4:7),
- provided for (Phil. 4:19),
- anticipating the resurrection of our bodies (1 Thess. 4:16),
- overseen by providence (1 Thess. 5:18),
- alive (2 Tim. 1:1), and
- saved (2 Tim. 2:10).

Interestingly, none of the above blessings could be true if we were under **condemnation** by God. But being **in Christ Jesus** means we are **free from the law of sin and death** which blocked our way to every other blessing which is ours in Christ. The **law of the Spirit of life** which Paul says has set us free from the **law of sin and death** is more of a principle, or controlling power, than a law (cf. Rom. 7:23)

### B. The New Way: Freedom from Control by the Power of Sin (8:5–14)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Though the power of sin is still present, the Holy Spirit frees the believer from being controlled by what this appetite desires.*

	<b>Those Who Live in Accordance with the Flesh</b>	<b>Those Who Live in Accordance with the Spirit</b>
<b>What they think about doing</b>	Minds are set on the desires of the flesh	Minds are set on the desires of the Spirit
<b>Ultimate end</b>	Leads to death	Leads to life and peace
<b>Attitude toward God</b>	Hostile toward God	Receptive toward God
<b>Attitude toward God's standards</b>	Does not submit to God's law	Seeks to fulfill God's law
<b>Ability to keep God's standards</b>	Unable to submit to God's law	Able to submit to God's law
<b>Ability to please God</b>	Cannot please God	Able to please God



## Romans 8:12-17

Paul shifts gears in [8:12](#) from exposition on flesh versus spirit to how we should respond to this information. The Greek has a marker indicating that this call to action is a consequence of what precedes. After contrasting the effects of our minds set on the flesh versus the spirit, Paul now moves on to our obligations in light of God's Spirit living within us. To reinforce this point, Paul begins in verses [12-13a](#) with what we are *not* obligated to serve. There are no surprises here, just the direct application of the preceding principles to believers.

In spite of the inherent sin in our flesh and the ongoing battle between sin and the indwelling Spirit of God in our spirit, Paul holds out hope to us. In verse [13b](#), he specifically describes what happens when we live with our mind set on the spirit, when we allow God free reign in our lives. When we live in such a way, we are doing more than following God – we are simultaneously putting to death the deeds of the flesh. Instead of living in the behaviors that lead to death, we put those deeds to death so that we have life. Only God's indwelling Spirit enables us to live this way; without His presence, we'd end up being enslaved to sin once again.

When I was growing up, we used to “ditch” people. If someone got completely absorbed in something while we were hiking or hanging out in the hallway at school, the rest of us would quietly sneak off and hide, ditching them. Suddenly the ditched person would look up and find themselves alone. Not very nice, I know. But figuratively speaking, Paul is calling us to ditch our flesh; we should pursue God so avidly, our sinful nature and its desires are left behind. As we pursue God, we are simultaneously putting to death the deeds/desires of the flesh. In fact, we can't do one without the other.





**Fulfilling Your Obligations:** Since we have been set free from sin, we are no longer obligated to obey the desires of the flesh. Those who are led by God's Spirit become heirs of God and put the deeds of the flesh to death.

And just like my ditched friends (or me), our sinful flesh will not be happy. This is why life is an ongoing battle; the flesh is happy when we honor its every whim, but following God means disciplining the flesh. As we pursue God, we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we show ourselves to be sons of God (8:14). This new life in the Spirit is not like the old one; we no longer live in slavery marked by fear.

Paul uses the powerful metaphor of adoption to describe our new life, serving God in His Spirit. Both slavery and adoption involve someone deciding to establish a legally recognized relationship, but the nature of those relationships is radically different.

Instead of slavery and fear leading to death, we receive an undeserved intimacy with our Father (8:15). The Holy Spirit's presence in our spirit provides confirmation of our adopted status (8:16). Note this is the same spirit/Spirit distinction as in verse 4. But this adoption entails much more than being a son or daughter – we also become heirs of all that God has to offer. And as heirs of God, we are also fellow heirs with Christ, His Son. Just as Paul identified us with Christ through His death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-

11), he extends that identification to our suffering together and being glorified together (8:17).

If we are to understand the gospel, we must understand its obligations. Being reconciled with God brings us peace – but it also obligates us to turn away from the deeds of the flesh and be led by the Spirit of God instead. Doing so allows us to enjoy our adopted status as God’s sons and daughters. This status not only makes us fellow-heirs with Christ, but also sharers in His suffering. Just as He was glorified by God through His resurrection and ascension, we too can look forward to the day when our fallen flesh and fallen world will finally be redeemed. In the next section, Paul gives us a preview of what lies in store.

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## Extra II

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### C. The New Way: Freedom from Fear of Abandonment (8:15–17)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The Holy Spirit testifies with believers’ spirits that they will be forever the children of God.*

1 Corinthians 2:12: “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, *that we may understand what God has freely given us*” (emphasis added). Do nonbelievers, those who have the “spirit of the world,” live in fear of God and of the unknown? Yes, in their heart of hearts. They fear death, hell, judgment, eternity, punishment – not to mention tomorrow and what it might take from them. You will not find fear being discussed on talk shows, but you will find it being covered up through frantic forays into materialism, sex, substance abuse, depression, and other denial-oriented diversions. When the children of God recognize their position, instead of being afraid of life and God, their eyes are open to what God has freely given them.

2 Timothy 1:7: Instead of “a spirit of timidity” (fear), we have been given the Holy Spirit, who is love, power, and self-discipline. Rather than living in fear of life and what



it may hold, the Holy Spirit's love, power, and self-discipline through us gives us a whole new perspective on life.

Matthew 7:9-11: Children of God do not receive booby prizes or gag gifts from their Father. Even evil fathers know how to give appropriate gifts to their children; how much more will the "Father in heaven" give his children good gifts?

Paul himself provides the best illustration. Instead of a spirit of fear, we have received a spirit of **sonship**, or adoption. Adoption is a strictly Pauline metaphor, one common to him and his readers in Rome, due to the practice of adoption in the Roman Empire. Paul says in Ephesians 1:5 that adoption is a sovereign act of God, the result of his predestined pleasure and will. In Galatians 4:5-7, he repeats much of what he says in our Romans text, with one important addition: "That we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal. 4:5). Therein lies the heart of sonship, or adoption. One who was not a natural son is adopted by a father and given every legal right of sonship held by the natural sons. He is made an heir of the father, and given equal standing (often a more privileged standing) with the father's natural progeny.

As an adoption record in a court of law receives a stamp, seal, or signature verifying its authenticity, and validating the adoptee's rights from that day forward, so the believer is given a seal by God. The Holy Spirit is given to believers to be a "deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 1:22). "Having believed," Paul says, we were "marked in [Christ] with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). In Romans Paul says that the Holy Spirit plays a unique role, testifying with the spirit of the believer that **we are God's children**. By the presence and power of the Spirit, we call out to God in a personal way – *Abba, Father*. The Spirit gives us that liberty in our spirits because we know from him **that we are God's children**.

**But the believer is not just a child of God, but an heir of God as well. Being a child means that I have a family now; being an heir means I am included in the family forever**