

## **Lesson Thirteen**

(8:1-11)

### **VICTORY OF THE SPIRIT**

The eighth chapter receives more praise than other chapters of Romans. Erdman, building upon words of praise for the entire letter writes, "If the Roman Epistle has been rightly called the cathedral of the Christian faith, then the eighth chapter is its innermost shrine." Spencer states, "If the Holy Bible were considered a ring, the book of Romans would be a gem. The eighth chapter would be its very most sparkling point." This chapter is greatly praised because it contains so many blessings for God's children and ends with a declaration of certain victory for them. Much of the content of the eighth chapter must be left for consideration in a second volume. It may seem strange to some that this first volume introduces a limited portion of Chapter Eight. Why not conclude at the end of Chapter Seven? The opening paragraph of Chapter Eight and Chapter Seven cooperate beautifully in shedding light and understanding upon each other. They belong in the same volume.

### **THE POWER OF SIN REMOVED**

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made

me free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The chapter opens with a major blessing in which every Christian revels. Christ accomplished that which the law could not do. The sting and power of sin has been removed through Christ's death at Calvary and there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The first Adam committed one sin which brought sin and death to all whom he represents (the human race). The second Adam performed one act of grace which removed condemnation for all those who come to Him in faith in His redemptive role. Paul did not write in chapters and verses and his thought progression extends beyond the end of Chapter Seven into Chapter Eight. The word "law" in 8:2-4 reflects its usage in 7:21-25 where "law" means an operative principle or force which has negative effects in man. The "law of the Spirit of life" is identical with the "law of my mind" in 7:23. (See the closing paragraph and diagram of the preceding lesson.) It is unfortunate that most English translations capitalize the word "spirit" in verse 2. It is far more likely that the word "spirit" should not be capitalized because of the trend of the discussion in the general context. At the close of Chapter Seven the "law of the mind" (spirit) and the "law in my members" (flesh) are contrasted and in the opening verses in Chapter Eight it is obvious that Paul is contrasting flesh and spirit. The "spirit" therefore, has reference to the spiritual life principle, (a combination of soul, heart, mind), resident in man. It is the spirit of a man, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, alive in Christ and free from sin and death. The Holy Spirit has only been mentioned once with certainty thus far (5:5). It is open to question whether "Spirit" should or should not be capitalized in 1:4. The word "spirit" need not be capitalized in Chapter Eight until its second appearance in verse nine where it is the "Spirit of God." These observations about the possible use of a capital or a small "s" are in no way intended to minimize the person of the Holy Spirit nor to depreciate His presence and work. The prominence of the Holy Spirit and His work has been emphasized in Lesson Nine. The truth stands out as if written in letters of neon lights. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (v. 9). The attempt here is to determine what the apostle Paul means to say to us through his choice of words. Of course, we would not be faced with the problem of choice of upper case or lower case letters if the Greeks had capitalized proper nouns as we do today. The

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON ROMANS

question can only be decided on the basis of context and other comparable teaching in the Scriptures. "The law of sin and death" (v. 2) surely reflects "the law in my members" and "the law of sin" of 7:23. All three of these designations point to the lower nature in man. Distinct, then, from the man whose spirit is controlled by the Holy Spirit is the carnal man who is under the control of Satan. The law in verse three is identical with "the law of God" in 7:22. The motivational force of this law, though dynamic, is thwarted from accomplishing its purpose by the weakness in man which Paul chooses to call "flesh" (v. 3). The intent of the law of God as expressed in its ordinance (requirements) is satisfied by those who walk by the inner drive of the mind and spirit and not according to the influence of "the flesh" which for Paul is also a motivational force in men (v. 4).

### THE ANTITHESIS OF FLESH AND SPIRIT

5 For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: 7 because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: 8 and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Before proceeding further in this section of study, it would be well to pause to look at a Pauline antithesis of flesh and spirit and to investigate more fully into Paul's use of the word "flesh."

#### Flesh

1. After the flesh,  
vv. 4, 5, 12, 13
2. The mind of the flesh,  
vv. 5, 6, 7
3. In the flesh,  
vv. 8, 9
4. The mind of the flesh is death,  
v. 6

#### Spirit

1. After the spirit,  
vv. 4, 5
2. The mind of the spirit,  
v. 6
3. In the spirit,  
v. 9
4. The mind of the spirit is life and  
peace, v. 6

Progression is probably intended in the above phrases relating to both flesh and spirit. To have the "mind of the flesh" would express a

greater degree of influence of the flesh than being "after the flesh" and to be "in the flesh" would actually place one in the "conditioning sphere" of the flesh where all that is done would be under fleshly influence. All that is said here of the flesh would apply to the phrases relating to the spirit.

Flesh (*sarx*) is a versatile word with a variety of meanings. The little work, *Flesh and Spirit*, by William Barclay is worth far more than its size would indicate. In this book Barclay says of "flesh," "It is a word of which there is no adequate English translation, a word of which the meaning cannot be sharply and simply defined, a word towards the meaning of which we have to grope our way, and yet a word which stands for certain facts in the human situation which are part of the basic experience of life of every man."

1. The broadest meaning of *sarx* is the whole of humanity (Romans 3:20; 8:3; I Corinthians 1:29; Galatians 2:16).

2. Sometimes "flesh" is used of the human body or to indicate some physical condition (Romans 2:28; Galatians 2:20; 4:13).

3. "Flesh" is used on occasion to refer to human thought patterns, as man sees it, or from a human point of view (Romans 1:3; 4:1; 9:5).

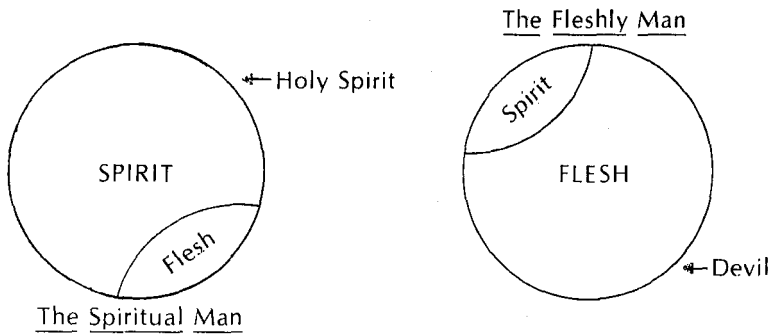
4. "Flesh" is also used to mean "evaluations or judgments based on human standards" (I Corinthians 1:26; II Corinthians 1:17; 5:16).

5. There is yet another usage of "flesh" by Paul which must be considered. As G. B. Stevens writes, "no definition of *sarx* can be given which will be equally applicable to all the uses which Paul makes of that word." If this last definition of "flesh" is missed, however, the student will have difficulty understanding the content of Romans. Flesh is a great deal more than the body (Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 8:8). "Flesh" is a deadly enemy of the spirit (Galatians 5:17).

- a. "Flesh" is hostile to God and cannot please Him (Romans 8:7, 8). The body may be saved (I Thessalonians 5:23), but not the "flesh." All that can be done with the flesh is to put it to death, crucify it.
- b. It follows then, that to live in the "flesh" is the exact opposite of being spiritual or Christian (Romans 7:5; 8:5, 9; Galatians 5:24).
- c. To be dominated by the "flesh" is the equivalent of being under sin (Romans 7:5, 14).
- d. It is with "flesh" that one serves "the law of sin" (Romans 7:25).
- e. The "flesh" has never done anything good for any man and no man is in debt to the flesh (Romans 8:12). Such a statement cannot be accurate if made about the body which houses man's spirit and with which he serves God. The body (members) can be instruments of righteousness (Romans 7:13) with which to glorify God and no man has ever rendered any service for God apart from his body.
- f. Finally it should be noted again that it is "flesh" which makes the law of God incapable of functioning successfully in man (Romans 8:3).

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON ROMANS

Because of the clarity of the illustration this citation is made from *Flesh and Spirit*. "The essence of the flesh is this. No army can invade a country from the sea unless it can obtain a bridgehead. Temptation would be powerless to affect men, unless there was something already in man to respond to temptation. Sin could gain no foothold in a man's mind and heart and soul and life unless there was an enemy within the gates who was willing to open to sin. The flesh is exactly the bridgehead through which sin invades the human personality. The flesh is like the enemy within the gates who opens the way to the enemy who is pressing in through the gates."



The circles above are intended to represent men in exact opposites of spiritual life. The one on the left is the man who is living under the controlling principle of the spirit. He has subdued the flesh to the point that it is no longer a controlling factor in his life. "Flesh" is still present within the man and it will be there until he dies. If that were not true, he could no longer be tempted. A man will continue to struggle with "flesh" until the release of death places him wholly in the spirit world. Today business enterprises make their sales through the use of telephones. There was a time when all such sales work was done house to house by knocking on doors. Salespeople were instructed on how to approach the resident so as to gain entrance to the home. The slogan was popularized, "Get your foot in the door." The Devil knows how to approach man and gain entrance into his life. If it were not for the "flesh" there would be no door for the Devil's entrance. As man is, however, the Devil just keeps putting his foot in the door. Every man must decide whether he will or will not open the door. There is no sin in being tempted but to welcome or throw open the door to temptation results in sin. When Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" he was slamming the door to temptation. The circle above on the right represents the man

who has thrown the door of his life wide open to the input of the Devil. He is not only "after the flesh" but he has the "mind of the flesh" to the degree that it may be said of him he is "in the flesh." Thus, he lives in a "conditioning sphere" and there is a causal relationship, that is, the "flesh" is what a man has made himself to be by deliberately dwelling in the sphere of the flesh rather than in the sphere of the spirit. A seamstress follows "after" a pattern as she cuts out a dress. Later she may be clothed "in" that dress. It should not be said that "flesh" is what God made man to be. Rather, "flesh" is that which becomes a controlling force in man when God is shut out of his life. The "flesh" is an enemy of God, and God cannot communicate with "flesh." One who follows the flesh quenches the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19). The Holy Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. If a man quenches his own personal spirit, he concomitantly destroys the possibility of receiving communication from the Holy Spirit. Thousands of circles would need to be drawn to represent men in their various conditions of spiritual life. It is possible for a man to be so controlled by the flesh that God no longer has access to his life and without any line of communication, God gives him up. (See the previous discussion on Romans 1:24-28). Day by day the Christian is involved in eradicating the flesh and opening his life more fully to the Lord. The whole paragraph of Galatians 5:16-25 is pertinent to this discussion. If you "walk by the Spirit" you will "not fulfill the lust of the flesh." One whose spirit is under the direction of the Holy Spirit is not under the law of the flesh nor is he condemned by the law of God. There is no law or force of any kind which can destroy the life of one who is so open to the Spirit of God that he is bearing the "fruit of the Spirit." "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."

### FINAL RESURRECTION VICTORY

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The content of verse ten takes us back to the physical death of 5:12. "If Christ is in you" the body is still dead because of sin. Christians, just like all other members of the human race, continue to die. It has already been noted in lesson ten that men, good or bad, and any who

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON ROMANS

are at any point between those ethical poles have died and will continue to do so because of Adam's sin. Man is given no choice in this matter. Some claim the word "dead" in this verse to have a good connotation and refer it to conversion or being dead to sin. If that were true, however, one would expect the verse to read, "dead because of repentance" and not as is stated, "because of sin." So the better understanding is that even if one is living in union with Christ, he cannot avoid the universal experience of physical death. But man does have the choice of subduing the flesh and living according to the spirit which produces life. The spirit is equated with life in verse ten because when the spirit of man responds to God in faith, God counts that one to be righteous and God has access to that life to shepherd it "in the paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3). That is not the end of the story. It would be proper to introduce the apostle's own expression of "much more" at this point even though Paul does not use it here. Not only does the spirit of a man direct him to life through God's plan for man to be righteous, (only the spirit of man can respond to that plan) but "much more" than that, the Spirit of God who dwells in the Christian will give life to the dead, mortal body. All three members of the Godhead are associated with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In Acts 2:32; 17:29-31 it is God who raised up the Lord Jesus Christ. John 2:19 and 10:17, 18 make it clear that Jesus had power to take up His life again. In this verse it is the Holy Spirit of God who is the agent of life. He is mentioned in connection with the raising of Jesus from the dead and is cited to be the life giving Spirit who will infuse life into dead mortal bodies in the final transcendent resurrection.

### READER'S REVIEW:

1. Why is the eighth chapter praised above all others of Romans?
2. How is the opening paragraph of Romans connected to the closing discussion of Chapter Seven?
3. What is the major problem in determining the meaning of the word "spirit" in this paragraph as well as in many other Scriptural passages?
4. What are the two sources of assistance which aid the reader to determine whether Paul refers to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit?
5. How many times has the Holy Spirit been mentioned in the first seven chapters of Romans?
6. How far may one proceed in the study of Chapter Eight before he is forced to capitalize the word "spirit"?

7. What is the difference of meaning between the phrases, "after the flesh" and "in the flesh"? Include in your answer the terminology, "conditioning sphere."
8. Cite some of the meanings of the word "flesh" other than the distinctive meaning which is uniquely Pauline.
9. What is the definition of "flesh" which the author indicates is essential to the understanding of Romans?
10. What is the figure used by Barclay to illustrate the meaning of "flesh"?
11. At what time does man have the potential of being released from the force of "flesh"?
12. What is the first blessing promised in Chapter Eight?
13. What is the meaning of the clause, "that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us" (v. 4)?
14. What are the two laws of 8:1-4 which have been discussed in Chapter Seven?
15. What truth is stated so specifically, pointedly, and clearly by Paul that the author observes that it stands out "as if in letters of neon lights"?
16. Is it physical or spiritual death referred to in 8:10? Support your answer.
17. How can Paul equate spirit and life (v. 10)?
18. Which members of the Godhead are said to be involved in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?