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Romans

...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:4

The previous verse noted that Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh." This verse is follow-up to that. By coming in the likeness of sinful flesh (being found in the appearance of man - Philippians 2:8) He prevailed over the flesh for us. In reality, in Him "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." This is the Bible's doctrine of substitution, one thing taking the place of another in order to accomplish an act or provide a benefit.

In the Old Testament, an animal was sacrificed in place of the sins of the people. The animal had done no wrong, but the sin was transferred to it as a temporary means of expiation and propitiation. These sacrifices looked forward to the coming Christ who would die on behalf of fallen man. In like manner, the righteousness of Christ is transferred to us. He did the work, fulfilling the law's righteous requirement and that is granted to those who trust in His work.

Because of the work of Christ, we have the ability to move from Adam to Jesus. The sin transfers to His cross; His righteousness transfers to us. This fulfillment of the law is granted to those "who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." This is the same concept as verse 8:1 which said that there is "now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

To understand this often misinterpreted phase, refer to the comments on 8:1. In short though, believers are in Christ positionally the moment they call on Him. We are justified and have moved from Adam to Christ. However, we can and often do walk contrary to this positional change because we are still in our fallen bodies. When we fail, it isn't the fault of the Spirit who has sealed us, but our carnal selves working to satisfy their own lusts.

How will this affect us if not for salvation? The answer is through rewards and losses. We all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and receive our rewards for our proper living and losses for our failures. Therefore, it is important for us to walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Life application: Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf. It is finished and nailed to the cross. Why would we attempt to go back and try to merit His favor by reintroducing that which He has fulfilled? It is a slap in His face and a rejection of what He has done. Let us rest in His work and be satisfied that through Him, the law which was contrary to us is fulfilled and now obsolete.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Romans 8:5

A good complimentary passage to this verse can be found in Galatians 5:19-26 and will help one understand the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Also, in Matthew 15:19, we see Jesus' words concerning such things - "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

These are things which could be described as "according to the flesh." It should be noted that some of them are a result of our humanity and not necessarily our physical being itself. In other words, the word "flesh" which comes from the Greek word sarx, gives the idea of something physical and tangible, but the things

Jesus mentions like "thoughts," "false witness," etc. are not physical in nature. Instead they come from the mind.

This then is tied into what Paul is saying. Those who live "according to the flesh" will inevitably "set their minds on the things of the flesh." This is the state of man, even those who are believers. The state of our walk with the Lord can be determined by how much of our mental capacity is spent mulling over the things which are flesh-directed. But it's important to note that being "in the flesh" isn't the same thing as the flesh being in us.

When we receive Christ as Lord, we move from being "in the flesh" to "in the Spirit." The old man is crucified and our headship changes from Adam to Christ. The flesh is still in us and it will remain so until we die or until the Lord comes at the rapture. Until one of those events occurs, we should attempt to live the life we have been granted. As we develop and mature as Christians we should "live according to the Spirit." This is an attitude where our minds and our lives are directed away from worldly things and lusts and toward the heavenly, eternal things.

For some, the change never really takes hold. For others, it may be delayed for even years and then suddenly grasp them. And yet others may have a profound change in their lives from the moment they receive Christ. In the end, the sadness of a life saved by the Lord and then never bearing fruit for Him will be realized in many when they stand before His judgment seat. Let us endeavor to not be in this position on that day.

Life application: If we are "in the Spirit" then we should endeavor to have the Spirit in us. Be filled with the Spirit through right thinking, reading and studying of the word, a healthy prayer life, and fellowshiping with others in praise and worship of the Lord. This is certainly pleasing to God and is His desire for your life.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Romans 8:6

This continues the explanation of 8:2 - 8:5. It is now the fourth "for" in those verses. Paul's idea here is the building up of a storehouse of knowledge concerning his thought in verse 1. It is a logical defense of the difference between being in the Spirit and being in the flesh and what the benefits of being in the Spirit are.

Two thoughts to reconsider are that anyone who has called on Christ is positionally "in the Spirit." However, we can and often do live in the flesh actually. Paul is giving this instruction to show us the importance of living in the Spirit. As he says today, "to be carnally minded is death." Those who haven't called on Christ are already condemned (John 3:18) and they cannot please God because the wall of sin and death from Adam remains.

Those who have called on Christ are the ones with the dilemma to resolve. If we remain carnally minded and don't give up on life in the flesh, it can only lead to death. A person who returns to drugs after calling on Christ will eventually suffer the results of the addiction. This is true with whatever carnal sin captivates our mind. It leads to corruption and death.

On the other hand, Paul says that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Calling on Christ is what restores us to God. It is the bridge we need to move to peace and fellowship with Him. If this is so, then the obvious path to peace and life would be to live in the Spirit which was granted when we made the call. God will not work contrary to His own will! Therefore, what He wills us to do is what is right and proper.

This train of thought is the obvious conclusion of what Paul is saying as is evidenced by verse 12 which still lies ahead. There he says that "we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." The choice must remain or he couldn't even make this statement. Yes, we are saved, but we can and far too often live as if we are not. It is our choice and so we should endeavor to choose wisely.

Life application: It is often said that the Bible is a book of "don'ts." This is true to an extent, but every "don't" is given by the One who created us and therefore it is an admonition which looks to our ultimate good and for our benefit. Don't get bogged down in the mire of dismissive people's comments about the negative side of the Bible. Instead, know that for every negative, there is a resulting positive. God loves you and has blessed you with valuable instructions for life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Romans 8:7

This verse reiterates the phrase used in Romans 8:6, *phronēma tēs sarkos* or "the carnal mind." This is more often than not misunderstood to refer to the mind itself as if it is an authoritative statement on the depravity of man. But Paul is speaking of the minding of the flesh rather than the state of it. Whether a man is in Adam and minding the flesh or dead to Adam and alive in Christ, either way he can mind the flesh. When he does, this avenue is one which is at enmity with God.

There is a second problem with the misuse of this verse. Far too often it is used as a text to claim that any person who hasn't called on Christ is unable perceive any good at all or even understand the contents of the Bible in an real capacity. It becomes a tool of "superior knowledge and spiritual depth" for the believer against the lesser "unregenerate mind." This is problematic, because it would then logically imply that nobody could call on Christ. The message would be beyond fallen man's ability to grasp. This leads to the misguided Calvinist doctrine of being "regenerated" in order to believe. After this according to Calvinism, the belief is then what leads to salvation. This concept is found nowhere in the Bible.

If it were true, then after being regenerated the Bible should suddenly be completely understandable to the "now regenerate" soul. This is the last thing seen in believers. There is more disagreement about biblical doctrines among faithful believers than there are grains of sand on the sea.

Another validation of this can also be found in Old Testament verses such as Genesis 5:22-24 - "Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." If Enoch and many others prior to Christ walked with God, then it is obvious that the Calvinist viewpoint is untenable on this issue. "The carnal mind" is the minding of the flesh, not the state of it.

Such things as those found in Calvinist doctrine on this issue are not taught by Paul, nor does the Bible imply them at any point. In fact, throughout the Bible, those who have the Spirit - (David for example in the Old Testament and the Corinthian believers in the New) continuously fail to meet the law of God, and often they even fail to properly grasp it at all. Instead, they mind the flesh - even though they have the Spirit and thus "are not subject to the law of God." When minding the flesh, indeed, they cannot be. This truth is even seen in the apostles as times.

Where this verse says, "for it is not subject to the law of God" the "it" is speaking of the carnal mind, not the person. This carnal mind, be it in a believer or in a non-believer, is not and cannot be subject to the law of God. This is the reason why we are asked to think on that which is noble, reject that which is evil, fix our thoughts on Jesus, etc. When we fail to do this, our minds are obviously not subject to the law of God.

Life application: When you are born as a human, you can never get "more human," but humanity can get more of you. When you are born into Christ, you can never get more "born again," but Christ can get more of you. This is what Paul is speaking of. A person in Christ is in Christ, but Christ is in people in varying degrees. This is a state that we allow based on our obedience to Him, our proper knowledge and yielding to Him, and our fellowshiping with Him. If this is the state you desire, then fix your thoughts on Him and allow His Spirit to fill you and guide you.