

Romans 8:5-14

Rom 8:5 NKJV - 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.

Following the logic of a text is not my strong suit. But in this case it becomes obvious how these verses must be interpreted. We start with the fact that there is no condemnation, none, ever to a set group of people. That group is those who are in Christ Jesus as opposed to those who are in Sin. Then the text moves on to describe how this was accomplished—through Christ who was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, sent as a sacrifice for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled through us.

Now the text speaks more of those who are “not condemned”. The For assures that the topic has not changed. So those who are **not condemned** are necessarily those who **live according to the Spirit**.

Those who **are condemned** are those **who live according to the flesh**. It is impossible to follow the logic of the text and regard this as two options of the outcome of the Christian life. Clearly there are two classes of people. One class of people is identified as “those who live according to the flesh.” There is another class of people who are identified as “those who walk according to the Spirit”. It is important that we follow this logic from beginning to end. The text talks about what a Christian will do and what a non Christian will do. Any attempt to make it say anything else is to miss the point of the text.

We are also moving from reading about the benefit of justification to the reading about the dynamic of what happens with the Holy Spirit being infused in a person’s life. Christ’s work on the cross was for Justification. The Holy Spirit’s work in our lives is for sanctification. We’ve seen a lot of the benefits derived from justification. Now we are going to see the dynamics created by the new birth.

And how is the righteousness from verse 4 fulfilled in us? It is by a mind and mentality that we are given by the new birth. We now have the capacity and desire to mind the things of the Spirit. By this new capacity we are enabled to live righteous lives and do righteous deeds, all to the praise of God.

For those who live according to the flesh

According is the word Kata. It pretty much means “according to”, similar to the way the English words mean according to. King James says those

that are after the flesh. The meaning is that there are people that are of the flesh, fleshly, in line with the flesh. Flesh defines them and what they are about and what they pursue. The word for flesh is Sarx. The words "who live" are not in the text but are inferred from the verb tense. So we have one set of people who live fleshly lives. Their focus is here and now and what they can experience in this life.

Now we are given great insight into the mindsets and hearts of these people. The position is fleshly but the heart activity shows with great clarity where their lives are centered.

set their minds on the things of the flesh

The word for "set their minds" is phroneo- to be (mentally) disposed more or less earnestly in a certain direction. This is describing the bent of a person's mind and heart. It isn't talking about an isolated thought. It is truly a mindset. It is an inclination in a direction that a person will not vary far from.

So what we see here is that those who are in the position of flesh seek after the flesh operationally. What they are determines where they are headed. Flesh describes their aspirations and inclinations.

but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Here we find the same thing is true. What a person is "according to" is what they seek. A person who is positional-ly in Christ and living according to the Spirit will have a bent, a mindset, a seeking for the things of the Holy Spirit of God. They will have a supernatural direction that they will not significantly vary from.

Notice here that the mind is the window to a person's position. Our religious world has created a huge mystery in determining a person's likely status as a believer or non-believer. It is as if we are to believe that new life can exist with no effect. It is as if the wind can blow without the leaves ever moving. Paul had greater clarity than that. He knew that the mind fixates on the things most central to who we are. And our minds are a very good video screen of how our hearts are bent. We think according to what we are.

Position parallels operation. The two are inseparable. That has probably been the thing that has become most clear in this study. Paul puts what **we are** in Christ, and what we **will do** in Christ, together in such a way that you can't undo one without undoing the other. His theology will not

allow Justification without Sanctification. It will not allow Justification without rebirth. It will not allow being In Christ without walking in the Spirit. It is a parallel to James where you cannot have faith without works. It all comes in a package in such a way that **God is Just** and **God is Gracious** and **God is powerful** and **God gets all the credit for what a believer is and does.**

We will find as we go that **justification puts us on the starting block but the new life empowers us to run the race.** And they both are always packaged together.

Rom 8:6 NKJV - For to be carnally minded [is] death, but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.

To be carnally minded is death. Notice that it doesn't say that for a non-believer to be carnally minded is death. But a believer can be carnally minded and it is really a shame. No- It is saying that for anyone to be carnally minded is death. To be Carnally Minded is describing a non-believer. It has to be. A believer cannot be carnally minded the way that this passage is defining it. Now what is carnally minded? The word for carnal is flesh. The word for minded is the same word used earlier- phroneo. It means a bent of the mind. It means the driving force and the animating power.

If the Spirit you are **of** results in you being primarily absorbed with things of the flesh, you are in a deadly condition. That life direction is death. If that describes any of us, we are in a great deal of danger. It doesn't matter what doctrine we would check on a multiple choice test. It doesn't matter that we could pick all the right answers. What matters is a changed heart that results in a changed mindset. A person whose life can be categorized by the pursuit of things that appeal to the flesh is dead.

On the other hand, to be Spiritually minded is a miracle. If you find in your heart of hearts that you want to **know** what pleases God so you can **do** what pleases God, that is a miracle. Spiritually minded is actually The Spirit minded. When you want what the Spirit wants, when your mind is absorbed with that which the Holy Spirit is absorbed, that is life and peace. That is what happens to a believer in Christ. He aligns himself with the Holy Spirit and finds that the result is life and peace in this life in the Kingdom of God here on this planet and ultimate eternal life and absolute peace in heaven.

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

Now why is being minded of Sarx, of the things of here and now so bad? Why does it result in death? It is due to the nature of a person **apart from God** being exercised. It is their life force in play. To be in the fleshly state and the resulting desires and inclinations is oppositional to God. James 4:4 uses the same word when it says friendship with the world is **enmity** with God. It is also the same word used when talking about the fact that Herod and Pilate had been **enemies** but they became friends on the day of Christ's crucifixion. The mind that is bent in a fleshly direction is entrenched in the Adamic state and makes the here and now its home. It has no true God- mindedness. It was not given the capacity that the believer was given. It was not given the mindedness to obey the law and fulfill righteousness. It cannot obey the law. It cannot live righteously. The law of God is an obstruction to the driving fleshly desires. The carnal mind will not and cannot submit to the law of God willingly. It **can** be made to display an external conformity. But it can never do the right thing for the right reason. It is impossible. It is in Adam, not in Christ.

Now this is not to say that a fleshly person cannot be religious. But it can't, for example, obey the law the way Jesus laid it out in the sermon on the mount. It may do religious things but it is always for a fleshly motive, a subtle fleshly payoff.

Rom 8:8 NKJV - So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

First we know from the context that this cannot mean that those who are physical bodies cannot please God. The next verse tells the Roman believers that they are not in the flesh. So this must be talking of the state of being fleshly.

Let's combine this verse with the previous verse in another way that might help connect the dots. **Since the carnal mind can't be subject to the law of God, those with the carnal mind cannot please God.** Notice how Paul brings the law of God back into his flow of logic. He is not someone who says the law has no importance in the life of a believer.

The spiritually minded person **can and will** obey the law of God. Therefore they will please God, their Sanctification by the Spirit being congruent with their Justification by Christ's work.

The carnally minded person **can't and won't** obey the law and therefore they **cannot** please God. Their **birth in Adam** and **living in the flesh** being perfectly congruent.

Rom 8:9 NKJV - But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

There is some debate on whether this word Spirit should be capitalized. There is no way to know for sure in the Greek. The context usually determines this. And in this context it is difficult to me at least. I tend to think it is the Holy Spirit and apply it accordingly.

Again- “not in the flesh” is talking about their spiritual condition. Skin and bones is no longer that which best defines them. The Holy Spirit is that which best defines them. That is, if the Holy Spirit is in them. If the Spirit dwells in them. I Cor 3:16 tells us the same thing. Paul says to a group who are chock full of problems “Don’t you know that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?”

The way he taught it, the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. And the Holy Spirit’s dwelling is a delineating factor. If He dwells in you, you are Christ’s. If He does not, you are not.

You have either been reborn or you have not been. You either have the power over sin or you do not. You are either in Adam or in Christ.

Rom 8:10 NKJV - And if Christ [is] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness.

Here too the Spirit may be the Holy Spirit or our spirit. In this case the logic makes more sense to me if it is speaking of our spirit.

Now if Christ is in us this is our state: The body is dead because of sin. We understand that the body we dwell in has not been redeemed. It still has the death penalty lingering over it. And we must live in it until it dies.

Now the obvious contrast to a person’s body would be our spirit. So this verse may well be speaking of the believer’s spirit that dwells in his body. The flow of the logic makes most sense that way. The logic would go on...Even while our bodies are as good as dead because of sin, our spirits live because of righteousness. How is this done? By the glorious combination of the righteousness Christ gave us at the starting block and the righteousness he fulfills in us through His Spirit as we run the race. So our spirits are alive here and now.

So with our bodies dead and our spirits alive we are left with a problem. We are going to need a body. This requires a contrast to how things are now. We are alive and our bodies will die. A “but” statement would fit here indeed. And here it comes:

Rom 8:11 NKJV - But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So Christ is in you. Your body has the death sentence because of sin. Your spirit has life because of God's work in you. But that isn't all. If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He isn't done yet. He did, what He is going to do again, when He raised Christ from the dead. Now He is going to raise your bodies from the dead and give life back to them through the Holy Spirit that lives in that body.

This isn't just an explanation, it is a promise. If Christ is in you, your body will be resurrected. The epistles often emphasize this message.

I Cor 15: 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body (*the one we live in, the body with the death penalty*) is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, "**The first man Adam became a living being.**" **The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.**

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.** 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. **57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Now notice the conclusion Paul makes based on the what has come before.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul emphasizes in this passage that our spirits aren't going to be left in bodies that will die. Our spirits aren't going to be drifting around bodiless. Our old bodies are going to be resurrected as incorruptible bodies, free from sin.

And what is the response that is fitting to that truth? Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Knowing that whatever we do- it is worth it. The truth of our resurrected bodies is used to inspire faithful behavior. And that is what we find in the next verse in Romans.

Rom 8:12 NKJV - Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

Given everything that was said so far, the fact that we are no longer condemned due to our justified state. Given our reborn condition, given the fact that the Holy Spirit lives in us, given the fact that we are being given life and we **will be** given life, given the fact that we will live forever in new bodies, given all this

Therefore:

We have a debt. We have something we owe. We have a moral obligation to perform. And what are we indebted to? Do we have a debt to our flesh, to the old nature, to our bodies in which we are housed? No. That body is going to be replaced. We have no debt to it. Living according to the flesh has never done us any eternal good. We shouldn't feel we have any moral obligations to do what our flesh tells us to do. We have no debt there. We can tell fleshly impulses to hit the road and we have done nothing immoral in doing so. There is simply no moral reason to live according to the flesh, to live like here and now is all we have.

Rom 8:13 NKJV - For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We not only don't owe the flesh obedience and homage. If we live according to the flesh we will suffer dire eternal consequences. The only way we can live according to the flesh is if we are **OF** flesh. If we have been born again, we will have different **appetites**. We will have different **drives**. We will have a different **focus**. So if we continue living for the here and now, if we continue living as if this life is all there is, if we continue saying yes to what flesh says and no to what God says, we will show ourselves to be one of the devil's children. And as such we will deserve the judgment we receive. If our lives can be categorized by the **flesh saying "jump" and we jump**, we reveal what we really are. And it is not a child of God.

BUT, there is an alternative. There is a different way of living. And what is it? The alternative is a battle whereby we **put to death** the deeds of the body **by the Spirit**.

Put to death-

2a) to make to die, i.e. destroy, render extinct

2b) by death to be liberated from the bond of anything, literally to be made dead in relation to (something)

Deeds a doing, a mode of acting, a deal, a transaction

of the Body- the body both of men or animals. When Paul says he disciplines his body he used this word.

There is no other place in scripture where this phrase “deeds of the body” is used. It looks to me like the deeds of the body is referring to those actions that we are tempted to do by the influence of our old flesh. I think it is describing the same thing that James describes: James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

So we have here a description of how a Christian deals with the deeds of the body. Notice that the deeds of the body don't just die. We see here that it takes action to put them to death. And it is not some natural action. It isn't just some natural discipline. It is a spiritual exercise. It is something that is done **BY THE SPIRIT**. Let's start with **By the Spirit**. What does that mean? My opinion is that it at least has to do with **Who or What the Holy Spirit is**. We know that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And the Spirit leads us into Truth. So far in Romans we have learned that we must, as Romans 6 tells us) **11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**. This was the only instruction that we were given so far in Romans for overcoming sin. So “by the Spirit” at least means that we by the Spirit believe the words that the Holy Spirit inspired and do what we are told to do. We don't wait for some supernatural experience. Rather we receive the words that were supernaturally **given** into our hearts which have been supernaturally **changed** and believe them. And then we act as if they are true. So by the Spirit we act **according** to the Word of God and act as if what God says about the power of the flesh is **true**. **WE CAN SAY “NO” TO SIN!!**. We can say no to sinful things our bodies tell us we must do. We can say no to what our flesh desires. We can put to **death** that which says **it must live**. Our perceptions lie. Our desires lie. Our feelings lie. But the Holy Spirit tells the truth and nothing but the truth. And what are the deeds of the body? There are two passages I'd like to read that are at least similar to what Romans is talking about.

Gal 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the **flesh lusts** against the **Spirit**, and the Spirit against the

flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19Now the **works of the flesh** (*I think at least similar to the deeds of the body.*) are evident, which are: (*listen to the list in light of how the sermon on the mount defined sin.*) **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;** of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22But the fruit of the Spirit (what living *according to the Spirit will produce*) **is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control.** Against such there is no law. 24And those who are Christ's **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** 25If we live in the Spirit (*like in Romans 8- our condition as a result of our position*), let us also walk in the Spirit. (*Application of who we are in Christ.*)26Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Here is another text from Col 3:

Col 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2Set your mind on things above** (*Notice the importance of the mind in the battle*) , not on things on the earth. 3For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (*Note here the reference to resurrection. And what should we do in light of this promise?*)

5Therefore **put to death your members** (*I think in this passage members is a synonym for deeds of the body*) which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8But now you yourselves are to **put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9Do not lie to one another,** since you have put off the **old man with his deeds** (*This looks like a statement of the position we are in. We can now put to death our members in day to day living operationally like we are told to do in verse 5 because we have already put off the old man positional-ly by*

coming to Christ), 10 and have put on the new man who is **renewed in knowledge** according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

So Paul is not bashful about telling us to be involved in this battle against fleshly living. And he makes no statements that we should just relax because it will take care of itself. It is certain that we must exercise our faith and apply effort to this process of putting off the activities of the old man, the holdover of the new man because we have already positionally done this by coming to Christ.

Rom 8:14 NKJV - For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

This is the summary up to this point in Chapter 8 and the foundation of what is to come in the next few verses.

Notice what verifies a believer. It is not agreement with a set of doctrines, even though doctrines are important. It is being led by the Spirit of God. And a man can't accomplish that feat. A man can't lead himself to belief. A man can't accomplish the change inside him that is necessary. A person has to be led by the Spirit of God to faith in Christ. A person has to be led by the Spirit of God to a life in Christ. A person must be led by the Spirit of God to the obedience of faith. And as many as are- these are in God's family.

This is a very blessed verse. It tells us that if we are those who are believing God, if we are those who are obeying God, if we are those who trust what God has said more than what we have seen or perceived, if we are led by the Spirit of God, we can rest in confidence that we are God's children.

Led by the Spirit of God- If the Spirit is leading us into following Christ, if we are leaving that which displeases Him and moving into that which pleases Him, if we are saying yes to the direction that Scripture gives us and No to the direction that flesh is giving us, we can rest assured that this could not happen except for a supernatural cause. We must be born again. We must be the **Sons of God**.

Notice how personal Paul makes this. He has talked about our position in Christ in almost scientific terms, justification, propitiation, reconciliation. And these are all so important for understanding how God can be the justifier of all those he saves. But here he begins to use new language- family language- relationship language. He begins referring to those who have no condemnation, those who walk according to the Spirit as the Sons of God. Now he is talking a language that conveys the blessed relationship we have as being children of God. What a wonderful closing

note to begin our week. Those who are led by the Spirit are most assuredly the Sons of God.