

The Fulfillment of the Law by the Spirit: Tracing Paul's Eschatological Thought in Rom. 8:1-11

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Paul has established that the law produced paradoxical results—powerlessness to destroy sin but also increasing power of sin (5:20).¹ Salvation therefore is not to be found in the law, for with the law came only the knowledge and power of sin. Where sin increased in death, however, grace increased much more, which is found only in the righteousness of Christ. Salvation then is found in union with Christ, in His death and resurrection (6:4). Having died to the law through Christ, believers now serve the law no longer, but “the new life of the Spirit” (7:4, 6).² It is at this point that Paul introduces the eschatological gift of the Spirit in fulfilling the requirements of the law. The gift of the Spirit of Christ signaled the new era of deliverance from the power of sin. Paul builds on the role of the Spirit in breaking that power, using the nouns, πνεύματος and πνεῦμα, “spirit,” seventeen times in Rom. 8 alone, while using them only seven times throughout the letter. While Christ’s death on the cross provided the basis for fulfilling the law’s requirement (8:1-4), the gift of the Spirit transferred believers into a new epochal reality—the realm of the Spirit, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in them (8:5-11).³

The aim of this study is to trace Paul’s thought on the eschatological role of the Spirit in fulfilling the requirements of the law in believers, and in giving life to them. That Rom. 8 introduces the new reality of the Spirit is seen in Paul’s use of νῦν, “now” (8:1),⁴ which stems from 3:21 and 7:6 and concludes with the declaration of deliverance in 8:1-2. It marked a new epoch of the Spirit in replacing the old era of condemnation.⁵ The pericope is dominated by much discussion on the antithesis of the law of the Spirit of life and the law of sin and death, and that of the flesh and the Spirit. My concern here is how Paul weaves the eschatological strand of the Spirit in connection with the law, and how the law is fulfilled in believers. In what follows, I shall attempt to thresh out this thought in a two-part grammatical and theological analysis of the text.

The Basis of Fulfillment: Christ as Sin Offering (Rom. 8:1-4)

Paul asserts the conclusion that ἀρα νῦν, “now therefore,” there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (8:1). The question is, at what point Paul brought

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; ed. Moises Silva; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 395.

² All Scripture is taken from *The ESV Classic Reference Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

³ Schreiner, *Romans*, 395.

⁴ The lexicon used throughout this study is that of F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983).

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* (NAC27; ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 174; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC38; ed. Ralph P. Martin; Dallas: Word, 1988), 412-413; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 343-344, 481; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SPS; ed. Daniel J. Harrington; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), 235; Schreiner, *Romans*, 397, 399.

up this eschatological *νῦν*. C. E. B. Cranfield points back to 7:6 from 8:1. J. A. Fitzmyer however goes farther back to 3:21,⁶ where Paul first used it to refer to the new era of God's righteousness gained apart from the law, but through faith in Christ. Connecting 3:21 with 8:1, those who trusted Christ are now in Christ. Yet there is a deeper dimension to the dative, *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, "in Christ Jesus." Upon faith in Christ, believers were brought into union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (6:1-11). It is thus a dative of sphere or realm. Believers are now in the sphere of Christ, by virtue of their union with him. There is therefore now no condemnation for believers who are united to Christ.

The noun, *κατάκριμα*, "condemnation," relates to judgment, "including both the sentence and its execution."⁷ It is both a judgment and punishment of it. Those who are under the law are condemned in the law. Sin holds power over those under the law. The penalty of sin is death. Yet in 8:2, Paul gives the reason for the state of no condemnation with the coordinating conjunction, *γάρ*, "for." The aorist indicative verb, *ἠλευθέρωσέν*, "set free," indicates past action in summary fashion. The law of the Spirit of life has released believers from the tyranny of the law of death. Thus, Paul argues that those in Christ are no longer under condemnation of sin and death (8:1). By their union with Christ, the law of the Spirit has freed them from the bondage of the law (8:2).

In 7:24, Paul expects a future deliverance from his "body of death." He declares that deliverance in 8:1-2, saying that "now," the law of the Spirit of life has set believers free from the law of sin and death. In seeing a connection between 7:24 and 8:1, T. J. Schreiner thus ingeniously notes that Paul's eschatology is the invasion of the future in the present.⁸ It is not so much the presence of the future for Paul, but the future reality in the present age, in that our deliverance from death, which is yet future, has intruded into the present, through the new law of the Spirit. In this "now" framework, sin loses its power, death loses its grip, and the law of sin and death, like the tiger, loses its teeth. Hence, "now," in this in-breaking of the righteousness of God apart from the law, in the epochal arrival of the new age of the Spirit, marks the end of sin, death, and law. Believers are therefore now no longer under condemnation, for sin no longer has power over them.⁹

That the Mosaic law exacerbates sin and produces death for those under it is clear in Rom. 7. As to whether *ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς*, "the law of the Spirit of life," refers to the Mosaic law or in a symbolic sense, is debated. Cranfield, D. J. Moo, Fitzmyer, and B. Byrne think that *νόμος* here is metaphorical, not literal.¹⁰ If it were the Mosaic law, it would contradict Paul's point in Rom. 7—that the law, though promising life, only produced death due to the power of sin in the flesh (7:10-14). With J. D. G. Dunn however, Shreiner posits that the law of the Spirit may refer to the Mosaic law in the sphere of the Spirit, which frees one from using the law in a way that results to sin

⁶ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (vol. 1; ICC; ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 373; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 344.

⁷ Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s. v. "*κατάκριμα*."

⁸ Shreiner, *Romans*, 398.

⁹ John Murray, *Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 275; Byrne, *Romans*, 235.

¹⁰ Cranfield, *A Critical*, 374; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 473; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 483; Byrne, *Romans*, 234.

and death. Without the Spirit, the law in Rom. 7 only leads to death. But with the Spirit, it brings life, fitting the picture of the law in Ps. 119 and 19:7-11.¹¹

That this is unconvincing, however, is seen in Rom. 7 itself. The motif of release from marriage to a dead husband indicates a cutting off of believers from the law of death (7:1-3). Having died to the law, believers are released from the law (7:4). They no longer serve under the *παλαιότητι γράμματος*, “the old written code,” but *ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος*, “in newness of the Spirit” (7:5). This is sharp antithetical language. The Mosaic law which bound believers in Rom. 7 cannot suddenly morph into the law of the Spirit that released them in Rom. 8. Byrne rightly notes that Paul already expanded the meaning of *νόμος* in 7:21-23.¹² Cranfield captures the main subject, which is not God’s law, but the new element in the human condition, viz., the gift of the Spirit and his power and control in the believer. The law of the Spirit is thus most likely, either the authority of the Spirit¹³ or the Spirit of God himself. He is the new operating power bringing release from the powers of the former dispensation of condemnation.¹⁴

In the genitive chain, “the law of the Spirit of life,” is most probably an attributive genitive, in that the genitive substantive, “life,” describes an attribute or quality of the head noun, “Spirit.”¹⁵ In this case, the “Spirit” depends on the “law.” Hence, “the law of the Spirit of life,” may read, “the law of the living [or life-giving] Spirit.” It is this “law,” the law of the living Spirit that now gives life to the believers, evoking the images of the life-giving breath of the Spirit in Ezek. 37:5, 6, and 14. In Rom. 8, it produces a mind set in obedience to the law of God (8:4). Thus, the law of the Spirit does not merely execute judicial release from the guilt of sin and the law of death, but also deliverance from the enslaving power of sin.¹⁶

If 8:2 explains 8:1, 8:3-4 now explains 8:2, with the repeated use of the conjunction, *γάρ*, “for.” In the first clause in the Greek, the phrase, “could not do,” is actually an adjective describing the law as *ἀδύνατον*, “incapable.” It literally reads, *τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός*, “for the incapability of the law, weakened through the flesh.” Paul then adds the phrase, *ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας*, “God sending his own Son” (8:3).

Since the law only worsened the exercise of sin in the flesh, it failed to destroy the power of sin (Rom. 7). Thus, the law was powerless to execute judgment against sin and to obliterate its power.¹⁷ The point of the verse is that where the law could not mete judgment against sin and destroy its power, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh. That was his main judicial act. The means of that act is the sending of his Son. Thus, the negation of condemnation of believers is caused by the divine initiative to condemn sin in the flesh through the sending his Son. The old era of condemnation in the law is broken by a decisive judicial act of condemning sin in the flesh—the very flesh which caused the tyranny of the law. This act was accomplished through Christ. Through Christ in turn,

¹¹ Shreiner, *Romans*, 400; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 416-417.

¹² Byrne, *Romans*, 242.

¹³ Cranfield, *A Critical*, 375-376.

¹⁴ Moo, *The Epistle*, 474-475; also—Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 483-484.

¹⁵ See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 86.

¹⁶ Murray, *Romans*, 277; Shreiner, *Romans*, 401.

¹⁷ Murray, *Romans*, 278-279.

God provided the eschatological law of the Spirit of life, which set us free from the law of sin and death.¹⁸

The clause ends with a crucial statement which is no less difficult. God sent his own Son *ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, “in the likeness of the flesh of sin and for sin.” The dative, *ἐν ὁμοιώματι*, “in the likeness,” may be considered a dative of sphere. The dative is not merely in reference to the likeness, as if *πέμψας* is detached from *ὁμοιώματι*, rendering it only as, “sending in reference to the likeness of sinful flesh.” The participle, *πέμψας*, “sending,” is part of the realm of the likeness of sinful flesh. Hence, God condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the realm of the likeness of sinful flesh, and not apart from it. The battleground was in the flesh.

The genitive phrase, *ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας*, literally reads, “the likeness of the flesh of sin.” Since in the context of Rom. 7 the flesh is sinful, we thus take the phrase as an attributive genitive. The substantive, “sin,” describes a characteristic of the flesh; hence—“sinful flesh.” In the likeness of sinful flesh then, God sent his own Son. Dunn sees an irony in Paul’s concept of the divine purpose in sinful flesh. Instead of viewing the flesh “as in itself sinful,” Dunn suggests, the phrase refers to humankind “as flesh” that can never escape the enticements of sin (7:5, 14, 18).¹⁹ This view is untenable, however, in that Paul consistently describes the flesh as sinful from Rom. 7-8. As *σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας*, the attribute of the flesh is sin itself. Sin dwells in the flesh (7:25). It is not merely a proneness to sin, but the quality of the flesh to sin. It is the nature of the flesh to sin, being “sold under sin” (7:14). It is “captive to the law of sin” dwelling in the flesh (7:23). The flesh serves “the law of sin” (7:25). Humankind is thus not merely enticed by sin, but is held captive by and to it.

The theological question arises as to whether the “likeness” here denotes a real and complete likeness, or mere resemblance to sinful flesh. With W. Sanday, A. C. Headlam, and C. H. Dodd, R. H. Mounce posits that the phrase speaks of similarity but not identity, citing Phil. 2:7. He argues that had Christ become like us totally, i. e., “had he sinned,” he would be disqualified as Savior.²⁰ G. Fee posits identification with sinful flesh, but not complete identification, asserting that sinful flesh characterizes our flesh, but not Christ’s. Christ shared flesh with us in his incarnation, but only in the “likeness” of our sinful flesh.²¹ That this is unlikely is seen in the lack of dualism in the text—whether our flesh or Christ’s flesh. Whether Paul refers to the incarnation, the text is not explicit.

With Mounce, Cranfield, and C. K. Barrett, Dunn affirms that in the form of sinful flesh, Jesus served the divine purpose, but in this form nonetheless, sin did not overcome the Son.²² However, with Cranfield, Schreiner, Fitzmyer, D. J. Moo, and Barrett, Dunn avers that God worked through fallen human nature, making the flesh of

¹⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 524.

¹⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 421.

²⁰ Mounce, *Romans*, 175, 175n 124; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 193; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Fontana, 1959), 136.

²¹ Fee, *God’s*, 532, 532n 181.

²² Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 421; Mounce, *Romans*, 175; Cranfield, *Romans*, 381; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (rev. ed.; BNTC; ed. Henry Chadwick; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 146-147.

the Son subject to the attacks of sin and death. Yet by his death on the cross, God broke their power, making the Son a source and giver of life beyond death. Hence, it must include the element of the total identification and participation of the Son with sinful flesh.²³ Cranfield explains that the use of **ἁμοιωμάτι** is to show that Christ's human nature was like ours, and only like ours. Yet the difference between his sinlessness and our sinfulness is not a question of whether his human nature was unlike ours, "but of what He did with His human nature."²⁴ Thus, the Son assumed the same fallen human nature like ours, sharing fully in its weaknesses, struggles, and temptations, and vulnerable to sin and sickness, but was never subject to the law of sin and always came out victorious over it.²⁵ The NJB captures it: "in the same human nature as any sinner." What this means is that in the form of sinful flesh, there was a dispensational change from the old reality of Adam to the new era of the second Adam, God's own Son. It is an epochal invasion of holy divinity into the sinful human condition. This intrusion made possible the eschatological entrance of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ, facilitating the law of the Spirit to create a God-oriented mind-set in them, and to the end, to give immortality to their mortal bodies in the resurrection.

The next phrase, **περὶ ἁμαρτίας**, "for sin," completes Paul's thought. It literally reads, "for sin," and not "to be a sin offering" (NIV), "as an offering for sin" (NASB), or "to be a sacrifice for sin" (NJB). It can either denote reference—*concerning*, or representation—*on behalf of, for*.²⁶ W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam suggest that though **περὶ ἁμαρτίας** refers to sin-offering in Leviticus more than fifty times, it could also refer to every meaning related to the incarnation and death of Christ.²⁷ Cranfield admits that **περὶ ἁμαρτίας** is often used to denote a sin offering in the LXX (Lev. 14:31; Ps. 39:7; Isa. 53:10). Yet with Barrett and J. Murray, he sees no support for a propitiatory interpretation in the context, suggesting instead a general reference to the mission of Christ concerning sin.²⁸ Byrne notes however that the phrase in the LXX indicates both the purpose and outcome of sacrificial rituals "for the expiation of sin," and also, as a specifically a sin-offering.²⁹ In light of its predominant usage in the LXX, as well as God's sending of the Son for the purpose of redemption by means of his sacrificial offering on the cross (Gal. 4:4-5), it is but fitting to consider **περὶ ἁμαρτίας** as a sacrifice for sin.

The Pauline thought flow here is that God condemned sin **ἐν τῇ σαρκί**, "in the flesh," which is the flesh of Jesus, not in the incarnation, our flesh, or both, but on the cross.³⁰ God judged sin in the flesh. The sacrificial offering of his Son was the means of that condemnation. Hence, by the Son's sin-offering on the cross, God judged sin. This

²³ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 421; see also Cranfield, *Romans*, 379-382; Shreiner, *Romans*, 403; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 485; Moo, *Epistle*, 479; Barrett, *The Epistle*, 147.

²⁴ Cranfield, *Romans*, 381.

²⁵ Barrett, *The Epistle*, 147.

²⁶ Wallace, *Greek*, 379.

²⁷ Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 193.

²⁸ Cranfield, *Romans*, 382; Barrett, *The Epistle*, 147; Murray, *Romans*, 280.

²⁹ Byrne, *Romans*, 243.

³⁰ Shreiner, *Romans*, 404; Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 194; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 422; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 487; Contra—Moo, who sees a reference to the humanity of Christ. Moo, *Epistle*, 480; Fee supposes that it refers to both the incarnation/crucifixion and our flesh. Fee, *God's*, 533. However, the flesh of Jesus on the cross fits well the context of Christ's flesh and God's judgment of sin on the cross.

means that in effect, the sin-offering of Christ carried the condemnation of God against sin. The Son took both the penalty and punishment of sin on the cross. The text in 8:3 thus connects with 8:1.³¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ, for the condemnation that they deserved by their subjection to the law of sin in the flesh, was borne by the flesh of Christ on the cross. Such a judicial act paved the way for the eschatological gift of the Spirit, whose law of life has set believers free from the law of sin and death.

Paul proceeds to state the purpose of God's act of sending his own Son for a sin-offering. The conjunction, *ἵνα*, "in order that," points to the divine intent—*δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῆ*, "to fulfill the regulation of the law" (8:4). The regulation of the law requires righteousness from those under the law. It is thus a righteous requirement, not because the law is righteous, but that the law requires righteousness, as Barrett notes.³² This righteousness may refer to the righteous life required by the law (2:26), as Moo, Byrne, and Mounce claim.³³ What makes this view doubtful though is that Paul uses the singular, *δικαίωμα*, "regulation," not regulations. The singular is significant, Cranfield clarifies, in that the law's requirement is an integral whole—an entirety. The fulfillment of the law in believers therefore is the establishment of the law in its totality in us, thus fulfilling the promises of Jer. 31:33 and Ezek. 36:26.³⁴ The passive verb, *πληρωθῆ*, "be fulfilled," expresses, not our act, but God's act of fulfilling the regulation of the law in us, through Christ's sacrificial offering. Thus, Christ's sin-offering on the cross becomes the basis for the Spirit of Christ to release those in Christ from the law of sin and death, so as to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in them.

The dative, *ἐν ἡμῖν*, "in us" (8:4), points to the sphere of this fulfillment. It is in the realm of those in Christ—those who walk in the Spirit—that the realization of the law's requirement takes place. Although God fulfilled the law's regulation in us, it is demonstrated in those walking in the Spirit. The last clause is revealing: *τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα*, "those walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The present participle, *περιπατοῦσιν*, "walking," indicates that the continued living of believers according to the authority of the Spirit proves the fulfillment of the law in their lives. Connecting 8:2 with 8:4, the Spirit-worked freedom from the law of sin is the freedom to walk in the Spirit. Having been released from the law of sin and death, the Spirit-created mind-set in believers now enables them to live in the Spirit.³⁵ Thus, with Schreiner, the role of active obedience is not ruled out.³⁶ Yet against Shreiner, we note that the emphasis of the text is not in human obedience to fulfill the law, but in the divine initiative to fulfill it in the liberated human condition. Then again, with Shreiner, Moo, and Cranfield, but against Fitzmyer, we note that the believers' walk is not conditional ("provided"), as if we need to cooperate with the Spirit to fulfill the law, as Fitzmyer seems to suggest,³⁷ but evidential ("demonstrated")—the

³¹ Murray, *Romans*, 282; Shreiner, *Romans*, 404.

³² Barrett, *The Epistle*, 148.

³³ Moo, *Epistle*, 481-482; Byrne, *Romans*, 237; Mounce, *Romans*, 176.

³⁴ Cranfield, *A Critical*, 384.

³⁵ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 488; Shreiner, *Romans*, 405-406.

³⁶ Shreiner, *Romans*, 405.

³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 488.

mark of fulfillment in the walk of those in the Spirit.³⁸ The dative, *ἐν ἡμῖν*, refers to the realm of those who walk in the Spirit. Thus, the law is fulfilled in the realm of those who walk in the Spirit, not instrumentally—*through* their walk, but locatively, *in* their walk in the Spirit. It is therefore not because of their walk, but in their walk in the Spirit that fulfills the law.

The life of believers in the realm of the Spirit then is evidence of the fulfillment of the law's requirement. If the fulfilling of the law is the divine act accomplished by the cross, living in the Spirit is the human showcase demonstrating the efficacy of that act. It can thus be argued that the Spirit-transformed life of believers shows the outcome of their deliverance from the law of sin and death. Thus, in Pauline theology, the realm of the believers' walk in the Spirit demonstrates the fulfillment of the law's requirement. That this fulfillment is eschatological is evident in the epochal sin-offering of Christ on the cross and the eschatological presence of the life-giving Spirit in believers, which moved them from the former era of condemnation to the new age of living in the enabling power of the Spirit.

The Description of Fulfillment: Flesh and Spirit (Rom. 8:5-11)

In 8:5-11, Paul describes the fulfillment of the law in those who live according to the Spirit. Paul presents a sharp antithesis between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit. Our main concern here is how the eschatological fulfillment of the law is evident in those who live in the Spirit. In 8:5, the NASB renders the text clearly, *οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν*: “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.” The present participle, *ὄντες*, indicates a continuing existence of living in the flesh. The genitive construction, *τῆς σαρκὸς*, “the [things] of the flesh,” can be a possessive genitive—“the things belonging to the flesh.” It can be genitive of source—“the things coming from the flesh.” It can also be genitive of production—“the things produced by the flesh;” a genitive of description—“the things characterized by the flesh;” or an attributive genitive—“fleshly things.” The language is ontological.³⁹ Paul here is describing not the behavior of those who live in the flesh,⁴⁰ but their very *being*—they *are* of the flesh. Those who live according to the Spirit are of the Spirit. Hence, they behave according to the flesh or the Spirit, because they are of the flesh or Spirit.⁴¹ They think according to the flesh because they have the mind of the flesh. They desire the things of the Spirit because they have the nature of the Spirit. They are, therefore, they do. They do, because they are. Thus, Paul's purpose here is not behavioral—how those in the flesh or Spirit thinks or lives,⁴² or devotional—exhorting readers to think in the Spirit and avoid fleshly thinking. Rather, Paul's intent is categorical and eschatological—to show how the flesh is in a different class from the Spirit,⁴³ how the law is fulfilled only in those in the Spirit, and why they are recipients of the impending eschatological immortality at the resurrection.

³⁸ Moo, *Epistle*, 485; Shreiner, *Romans*, 405.

³⁹ Moo, *Epistle*, 486-487; Shreiner, *Romans*, 410; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 488; Contra—Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 425.

⁴⁰ Contra—Dunn, who thinks that the flesh is a propensity to sin. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 421, 425.

⁴¹ Shreiner, *Romans*, 410.

⁴² Contra—Cranfield, *A Critical*, 385.

⁴³ Moo, *Epistle*, 486; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 425.

Paul then depicts the mind and the flesh in terms of adversative terms of “death” and “life” in 8:6. The mind-set coming from, belonging to, and is characterized by the flesh is **θάνατος**, “death.” The way of thinking coming from the Spirit is **ζωή και ειρήνη**, “life and peace.” That death and life are the “results” of the mind-set is overwhelmingly assumed.⁴⁴ Death could refer to the eschatological outcome of the flesh, and life, of the Spirit.⁴⁵ Yet the text literally reads, **τὸ γὰρ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς θάνατος**, “for the mindset of the flesh [is] death.” Since those of the flesh are dead in sin, they already reflect the condition of death. The present state of the flesh already holds the seeds of death.⁴⁶ The fleshly mindset does not therefore initiate and bring death.⁴⁷ In that Paul presents the radical disparities of flesh and Spirit, it seems more fitting to consider death and life as ontological characteristics of the two realms. Death characterizes the old age of those in the flesh. Life and peace typify the new age of those in the Spirit. Against Byrne and Shreiner, who think of “death” in its eschatological sense, Moo and Dunn rightly note both the epochal reality of death for those in the flesh and their direction towards an eschatological death.⁴⁸

How **ζωή** denotes the status of deliverance from the law of sin and death, as Moo suggests, is difficult to sustain however.⁴⁹ There is no connection with the concept of life and the state of freedom there, except for the “Spirit of life” who caused such release. We may take “life” in the context of 6:23, where Paul also presents the antithesis of death as the wages of sin, and eternal life in Christ. Yet in 8:2, it is the “Spirit of life” that sets free. It is the living Spirit who gives life. His life shall raise their mortal bodies. Hence, “life” here must be the “life with God,” as Fitzmyer suggests succinctly,⁵⁰ or more aptly, the life *of* the Spirit, which enables believers to live in the Spirit. This Spirit of life is the Spirit **ειρήνη**, “peace,” (what Fitzmyer calls, “friendship”) with God brought about by justification, as Moo well notes, as contrasted with the state of hostility to God for those in the flesh (8:7).⁵¹

The conjunction, **διότι**, “because,” in 8:7 gives the basis for why the mind-set of the flesh is death. The mind-set of the flesh is **ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν**, “hostility toward God.” It is the innate nature of the fleshly mind to be hostile to the nature of God. This characteristic affects the total person, in that every part of a person’s being is totally corrupted by it.⁵² The preposition **εἰς** with the accusative, **θεόν**, indicates a goal or direction “toward” an object. In this case, the enmity of the fleshly mind is directed toward God. Hostility toward God is the operating principle of the fleshly mind, making God its enemy. It is thus characterized by a state of death.

Paul elaborates this hostility toward God in three ways in 8:7-8, with the use of the conjunction, **γὰρ**, “for.” First, **νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑποτάσσεται**, “the law of God it is not being subject to [present indicative passive].” The fleshly mind does not submit to the law of God (7:22). A refusal to submit to the law hence reflects the extent of such

⁴⁴ Moo, *Epistle*, 487; Shreiner, *Romans*, 412; Mounce, *Romans*, 177.

⁴⁵ Byrne, *Romans*, 239.

⁴⁶ Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 195.

⁴⁷ Murray, *Romans*, 285.

⁴⁸ Byrne, *Romans*, 244; Shreiner, *Romans*, 412; Moo, *Epistle*, 487; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 426.

⁴⁹ Moo, *Epistle*, 487-488.

⁵⁰ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 489.

⁵¹ Moo, *Epistle*, 488; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 489-490.

⁵² Mounce, *Romans*, 178; Moo, *Epistle*, 488-489.

hostility. Murray makes the point that since God’s law mirrors God’s character and will, the rebellious attitude of the fleshly mind thus becomes the “index” of its relation to God.⁵³

Second, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται, “for it is not able by itself [present indicative middle].” The fleshly mind is not able upon itself to be subject to God’s law. In that the power of sin controls human nature, the flesh cannot surpass its fallen situation.⁵⁴ It does not only refuse to submit to God’s law, but also it cannot. That it cannot, coupled with its innate hostility to God, signifies that it is unwilling to obey God. Its willingness to go against God is equated by its unwillingness to obey him. Total hostility produces total unwillingness to obey God. Likewise, total corruption results to total inability to do so.

Third, οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύνανται, “and those who are in the flesh is not able to please God” (8:8). To please God is the goal of the Spirit. Yet the fleshly mind cannot give pleasure to God. Those rooted in the flesh and ruled by sin cannot respond to the Spirit and please God. It is impossible to be rooted in the flesh and be rooted in the Spirit at once. It is thus next to impossible to be hostile to God and please him at the same time.

Paul shifts to a direct address to his readers in using the nominative pronoun with the adversative particle in, ὑμεῖς δε, “but you,” in 8:9, which contrasts those in the Spirit and those in the flesh. The focus is now on those in Christ who are the recipients of the eschatological gift of the Spirit. The realm of their being is, οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, “not in the flesh but in the spirit” (8:9). The mark of that realm is the indwelling Spirit—πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, “the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Paul then adds that if anyone does not ἔχει, “have,” the Spirit of Christ, then he does not belong to Christ. Those without the Spirit belong to the realm of the flesh. Yet since the Spirit of God lives in them, then they belong to Christ. The main point is that having the Spirit living in them, believers exist therefore in the realm of the Spirit.

Paul builds up his argument to an eschatological conclusion. Christ lives in them, but, τὸ μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν διὰ ἁμαρτίαν, “on the one hand the body is dead on account of sin” (8:10). Barrett thinks that the phrase, σῶμα νεκρὸν, is the state of believers, being dead to sin (6:2-11).⁵⁵ However, διὰ ἁμαρτίαν, is accusative—“on account of sin,” not dative—“in sin.” It is most likely then that it refers to the physical death of all believers because of sin.⁵⁶ That the next verse (8:11) speaks of physical resurrection buttresses the argument.

Thus, Christ lives in them, but the physical body still dies because of sin. Yet Paul adds, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωὴ διὰ δικαιοσύνην, “but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness.” The indwelling Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life in 8:2, the source of the mind-set of the Spirit in 8:6, is life. Connecting it with 8:11, this indwelling Spirit of life in Jesus’ resurrection shall also give life to the bodies of believers in their resurrection. Hence, the Spirit is life because of “righteousness,” which Christ secured by the cross. The basis of God’s righteousness is the work of Christ. In sum, Christ is the subject of the

⁵³ Murray, *Romans*, 286.

⁵⁴ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 489.

⁵⁵ Barrett, *The Epistle*, 149.

⁵⁶ Cranfield, *A Critical*, 389; Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 197-198; Moo, *Epistle*, 491; Shreiner, *Romans*, 414; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 431.

protasis, as Fee well points out. The Spirit is life in the apodasis. If Christ lives in us, we still die because of sin. But the Spirit now dwells in us. Thus, the Spirit is life for us, because of the righteousness Christ secured for us.⁵⁷

Paul expands on the crucial eschatological role of the Spirit in 8:11. He connects the Spirit twice with the raising of Jesus from the dead. The Spirit who *οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν*, “dwells in you,” is the same Spirit who is *ἐνοικοῦντος ἐν ὑμῖν*, “dwelling in you.” He also repeats God’s raising of Jesus two times, using the same word, *εγείρω*, “to raise up.” Paul’s logic is evident. Jesus’ resurrection was an epochal act marking the beginning of a new age. The next epochal act is the end of death for believers at the close of the age (1 Cor. 15:26). The first resurrection is a guarantee of the last.⁵⁸ The last then is inevitable for believers, because they live in the realm of the Spirit. Because God raised Jesus, he shall also raise those in Christ through the Spirit. Because the Spirit dwells in them, his indwelling presence confirms their coming resurrection.

Conclusion

Paul’s eschatological thought is like a thread that ties the fabric of law and Spirit. The gift of the eschatological Spirit solves the problem of the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law only aggravates the power of sin and generates death. But God has condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son into the sinful human condition. The sin-offering of Christ on the cross was the beginning of the realization of God’s eschatological purposes. It brought in a new law—the law of the Spirit of life. This law of the life-giving Spirit has liberated those in Christ from the law of sin and death. It has created in believers a new mind-set, enabling them to fulfill the law. The purpose of God’s condemnation of sin on the cross is to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Mosaic law in believers united to Christ. Yet the law is fulfilled in those who walk in the Spirit, not in their behavior in obeying the law, but in their being in the realm of the Spirit. Their walk in the realm of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of such fulfillment.

The law of the Spirit of life now operates in us. That we now live in the realm of the Spirit shows that we have been transferred from the old era of condemnation to the new age of the Spirit of life. That the eschatological Spirit dwells in us both now and forever proves that we belong to Christ. Although the Spirit lives in us, and sin holds no power over us, we still die on account of sin. We live in the eschatological tension of now but not yet, in that we are liberated now from the power of sin in the flesh, but not yet fully liberated from the power of death in our mortal flesh.

Yet the time shall come when the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead, shall also raise our mortal bodies (8:11). Because of sin, our bodies are mortal. But because of the Spirit, our bodies shall become immortal. The presence of the Spirit is the sign of things to come, when we will no longer endure the body of sin and death. The indwelling Spirit of Christ thus guarantees our eschatological immortality.

⁵⁷ Fee, *God’s*, 459.

⁵⁸ Barrett, *The Epistle*, 150.

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