

*Lesson 13 HANDOUT* (Rocky – 04/20/2025) **WALKING IN THE SPIRIT – HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**  
(Romans 8:12-25)

**OPENING SCRIPTURE: THEN GOD SAID TO ADAM:**

*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying: **YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM IT... CURSED IS THE GROUND** because of you.*

***BY TOIL** you will eat of it all the days of your life. **BOTH THORNS AND THISTLES IT SHALL SPROUT FOR YOU**, and you will eat the plants of the field ...*

***BY THE SWEAT OF YOUR FACE** you will eat bread, **UNTIL YOU RETURN TO THE GROUND** – because **FROM IT YOU WERE TAKEN – FOR YOU ARE DUST, and TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN** – *Genesis 3:17-19.**

**PART ONE – [READ ROMANS 8:12-17] –**

[**LIFE in the SPIRIT and HOPE in the GLORY – ROMANS 8:12-13**] – PAUL begins our passage by asserting a responsibility all believers have – **THE OBLIGATION** to ‘**LIVE BY THE SPIRIT.**’

We have learned from our previous lessons ... ‘**HAVING DIED TO THE LAW that brings upon us SIN AND DEATH,**’ **WE NO LONGER are OBLIGATED** to live as **SLAVES UNDER THE DOMINATION OF SIN.**’

- We **DIED TO THE LAW** when by **FAITH**, we **IDENTIFIED** ourselves with **JESUS CHRIST** ... and by that association, we **IDENTIFIED** with Him in every aspect of **THE ATONEMENT**.

From **CHAPTER SEVEN**, we also learned that the **CHRISTIAN LIFE** is characterized by **CONFLICT**.

PAUL summed up his frustration in **ROMANS 7:24** by saying: “*O wretched man that I am, **WHO** will free me from the body of this death*”?

- From this statement alone, we know it is impossible to live and serve God as He would have us do, in the power of our own human strength.
- PAUL said, ‘**WHO will free me**’? He understood that deliverance had to come from A **PERSON**, not from some set of **MORAL PRINCIPLES** or A **LAW CODE** or **ANY OTHER HUMAN INVENTION**. A philosopher might simply say: ‘**THERE ARE NO ANSWERS TO THE HUMAN DILEMMA TO BE FOUND IN HUMANISM.**’

According to **Romans 8:1**, we no longer are **DEBTORS** to the **FLESH** (THE OLD SIN NATURE). Romans Eight begins with the word ‘*therefore,*’ linking **CHAPTER 8** not only to the preceding verses at the end of **CHAPTER 7**, but more importantly, it calls us to consider the entire argument PAUL has made so far in **THE BOOK OF ROMANS**, namely: **THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.**

*[A key to understanding today’s passage will be grasping the significance of being ‘IN CHRIST.’ I have included an overview of this concept in **ADDENDUM I** below.]*

So **Romans 8:12** is drawing a second conclusion that, like **VERSE ONE**, draws on PAUL’S **ARGUMENT** in the first seven chapters of this letter, but particularly on the idea that **THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.**

One of the results of no longer being under condemnation is, *we no longer are under any OBLIGATION to operate under the direction of the FLESH – OUR OLD SIN NATURES.* To ‘live according to the **FLESH**’ means, ‘living a life governed by the **OLD SIN NATURE.**’

Now this may be a bit confusing because we are *not* promised that we will not sin; but we *are* promised we no longer have an **OBLIGATION** to sin. There is a difference. We still have **VOLITION**, and we still have an **OLD SIN NATURE** – so when we sin, it is because we choose to sin – but no longer are we under an **OBLIGATION** to do so. And we do have a **MORAL OBLIGATION**, but it is not to the **FLESH**; it is to the **SPIRIT**.

Now in contrast to this, **LIVING BY THE SPIRIT** results in **LIFE**. **PAUL** explained this in **ROMANS 8:9**: “*You, however, are not in the FLESH but in the SPIRIT, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.*”

Understanding the differences in **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** and **TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION**, as well as the idea that no longer are we **OBLIGATED** to operate **IN THE FLESH** (i.e., under the domination of our **OLD SIN NATURES**) are keys to the interpretation of our passage. (For a more detailed explanation of how the **OBLIGATION** to serve **THE FLESH** has been set aside, see **ADDENDUM I, POINT 1.**)

## **PART TWO – [READ ROMANS 8:18-25] –**

**[Present SUFFERING and future GLORY – ROMANS 18-21]** – Now this is where things get a little complicated because ‘sonship and heirship’ sound pretty good; but ‘heirship’ comes with something we may not consider desirable; *it comes with guaranteed suffering* –

You see, there is an overlap. **OUR HUMAN SPIRITS** were redeemed at the instant we believed the Gospel, and that redemption was perfect in that ‘positionally’ we possess **THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST**, **ETERNAL LIFE**, and all the other benefits we discussed earlier. But there are **TWO THINGS** that remain ‘**UNREDEEMED**’: **(A) OUR BODIES**, and **(B) THE CREATION**. So we have our feet in two worlds:

- One foot is in the heavenlies<sup>1</sup> where ‘positionally’ we stand before God, *forgiven*, possessing **THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST**.
- But our other foot is firmly planted in an unredeemed, fallen world, and we are living in that world in unredeemed bodies that still possess Old Sin Natures.

**JESUS** made it clear we will have to endure suffering when He said: “*If the world hates you<sup>2</sup> – and it will – know that it hated Me before it hated you*” – *John 15:18*.

**TAKE NOTE:** Before **JESUS** was **GLORIFIED**, HE FIRST ENDURED THE CROSS.

In **PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER TWO**<sup>3</sup>, after describing the suffering and sacrifice **JESUS** endured for us, **PAUL** uses this phrase: ‘**FOR THIS REASON**’ (*Philippians 2:9*). The Apostle is intimating that **FUTURE GLORY** for believers will include, *not only identification with JESUS’ Death, Burial, and Resurrection in a spiritual sense*, but also a *real-time, in this fallen world-identification* with His suffering.

**[The GROANING of CREATION and the HOPE of RESTORATION – ROMANS 8:20-25]** – Beginning in **VERSE 20**, **PAUL** mentions something I always have found interesting. He speaks of ‘*the Creation being subjected to futility*,’ then in **VERSE 21** he refers to ‘*a time when the Creation will be set free from corruption.*’ And he uses the analogy of the pain of childbirth to describe the present state of the Creation. When **PAUL** says, ‘*the Creation has been subjected to futility*,’ he is

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<sup>1</sup> See *Ephesians 2:1-6*.

<sup>2</sup> A Greek First-class Conditional Construction that indicates certainty.

<sup>3</sup> For the full context, read *Philippians 2:5-11*.

referring to the consequences of ADAM'S SIN, not just on the earth, but on the whole of Creation. The reference is not to a moral failing of Creation itself – for that would be absurd – but is a reference to *an inherent brokenness* that now characterizes the world. As a result of the Fall, Creation is not functioning as it was designed to function – it is under THE GENESIS THREE CURSE.

#### **ADDENDUM I: WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING 'IN CHRIST'**

Several times in our study we have encountered this idea of being IN CHRIST, and we need to take a moment to focus a little more on this most important concept.

You may recall **1 CORINTHIANS 15:22**: “For IN ADAM all die, but all who are IN CHRIST are made *alive*.” Being IN ADAM and IN CHRIST are presented as POLAR OPPOSITES, each resulting in consequences that are diametrically opposed to each other. SO LET ME PROVIDE A LITTLE ORIENTATION TO WHAT BEING ‘IN CHRIST’ MEANS.

First, BOTH ‘IN ADAM’ and ‘IN CHRIST’ are relationship terms. As far as God is concerned, every human being either is in a relationship with ADAM or in a relationship with JESUS CHRIST.

We are **BORN** into a relationship with ADAM – (SO ‘IN ADAM’ IS THE DEFAULT POSITION OF THE HUMAN RACE) – (THERE ARE NOT MANY BIBLICAL CONCEPTS MORE IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAN THIS) – and it will be of *fundamental importance* to understand this when we get to CHAPTER NINE and THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

So we are born ‘IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH ADAM’ by default, but we are **ADOPTED** into a relationship with JESUS CHRIST by faith. Being ‘IN ADAM’ leads to ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD and ETERNITY IN THE LAKE OF FIRE, *while* ... being ‘IN CHRIST’ leads to a very different DESTINY that involves spiritual blessings, many of which are available to us, even in this earthly life.

SO LET’S START WITH THIS DEFINITION: *Being ‘IN CHRIST’ is a profound spiritual position granted to believers at the instant the sinner puts his faith in CHRIST-ALONE for SALVATION.*

(POINT #1) IN CHRIST is a positional reality but it is **NOT** an experiential reality.

- Positional Reality (or perhaps better) Positional Sanctification means our relationship with CHRIST is PERMANENTLY SEALED and ABSOLUTE before God – and it can never change.
- It is as if when God sees a believer, He sees that person through the lens of CHRIST. He does **not** see our sins or our failures or our short-comings ... He sees us as possessing THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST HIMSELF – because part of ‘being justified,’ is having THE VERY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST imputed to the believer.

PAUL WROTE: “For by one Spirit we were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” – 1 Corinthians 12:13.

As I explained in our study of **ROMANS SEVEN**, the phrase ‘*baptized into one body*’ is **not** a reference to water baptism; rather it follows the more fundamental meaning of the Greek term βαπτίζω (pronounced ‘baptizo’) which means ‘to be identified with something or someone.’ This identification is what Scripture calls, ‘THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,’ and it is **not** something we feel or see. The ONLY WAY we know it has occurred is through the direct revelation of THE WORD OF GOD.

★ This is what Scripture calls ‘**UNION WITH CHRIST**,’ and it is **A UNION** in which believers share **THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST**, **ETERNAL LIFE**, **ADOPTION** into the family of God, and **HEIRSHIP** with **JESUS CHRIST** as **SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD**.

(**POINT #2**) Since our **UNION WITH CHRIST** is **ABSOLUTE** and **ETERNAL**, the **SECURITY** of our **SALVATION** is **CERTAIN**, **PERMANENT**, and **UNCHANGEABLE**. Once God transfers the sinner from a relationship **IN ADAM** to a relationship **IN CHRIST**, that relationship cannot be lost or altered.

**JESUS SAID:**

*My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give to them **ETERNAL LIFE**, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand. My **FATHER**, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of **THE FATHER’S HAND** – John 10:27-29.*

(**POINT #3**) **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** has to do with God’s recognition of our forgiven status **IN CHRIST** that is set-in-place and unchangeable as a result of our **UNION WITH CHRIST**.

It differs from **TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION**, which is a process that takes place in every believer’s life as **THE HOLY SPIRIT** conforms us to be more like **CHRIST** in our life here on earth.

Quite obviously, we never achieve anything close to this goal while still in our unredeemed, earthly bodies – but we look forward to the time when **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** and **TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION** will become one, either at **THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH** or at our **DEATHS**.

(**POINT #4**) **THE IMPUTATION OF ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS** takes place at the instant we believe the Gospel by putting our faith in **JESUS CHRIST** as **THE SON OF GOD** and **OUR SAVIOR**. Sinners are **JUSTIFIED** because, having judicially imputed or transferred the sins of the world to **JESUS** on the Cross, **GOD THE FATHER** also transfers **THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST** to the believer, also under the principle of imputation. ***GOD THE FATHER made JESUS CHRIST, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so we might become THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM ... i.e., IN CHRIST** – 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

(**POINT #5**) **SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS** – Every **SPIRITUAL BLESSING** God bestows on believers is a result of being **IN CHRIST**. These blessings are irrevocable and available to us regardless of human performance.

Just as **THE FULFILLMENT OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT** is not dependent upon **ISRAEL’S FAITHFULNESS TOWARD GOD**, but rather on **GOD’S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS OWN WORD**, so also sovereignly bestowed blessings rest on **GOD’S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES**, not on man’s ability to earn them.

(**POINT #6**) **REJECTION OF LEGALISM – BEING IN CHRIST** means living under the principle of **GRACE**, not **WORKS**. ‘**SPIRITUAL GROWTH**’ is about taking in biblically correct doctrine so we can learn to think like God thinks.

Now these six things barely scratch the surface of what it means to be **IN CHRIST** but hopefully they clarify to some degree how we understand the concept, for it will play a pivotal role in what **PAUL** is teaching throughout **ROMANS**.

***ADDENDUM II – SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR CONCLUDING BELIEVERS CAN GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT BY WALKING IN THE FLESH:***

In **ROMANS 8:12** – We learn about A NEW OBLIGATION – THE OBLIGATION TO LIVE BY THE SPIRIT. Remember, before we were JUSTIFIED by GRACE through FAITH IN CHRIST, we were under a different OBLIGATION – THE OBLIGATION to live under the DOMINATION of our Old Sin Natures. *But now we no longer are compelled to live in that manner.*

Here is the difference: As unbelievers we were under AN OBLIGATION to live under the DOMINATION of our Old Sin Natures; we had no choice in the matter. If we committed ‘overt sins,’ those overt sins were produced by our *Old Sin Nature’s AREA OF WEAKNESS*; and if we performed ‘good works,’ those good works were born out of our *Old Sin Nature’s AREA OF STRENGTH*.

Both the overt sins and the good works of unbelievers are equally unacceptable to God — and so are good deeds – *performed by believers – that originate in the Old Sin Nature’s AREA OF STRENGTH, which still exists both in believers and in unbelievers.*

This is not idle speculation; it is asserted throughout the Bible, even in this very chapter.

For example:

(1) Romans 8:7-8 – *For the mind that is set on the FLESH is HOSTILE to God, for it does not submit to God’s Law; indeed, IT CANNOT. THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD!*

- o Notice the word ‘CANNOT’ – It occurs twice. This is one of the clearest statements in the Bible asserting the inability for anything that emanates from the FLESH (THE OLD SIN NATURE) to please God.

(2) Hebrews 11:6 – *Without FAITH it is IMPOSSIBLE to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him.*

- o FAITH, a quality that does not emanate from the FLESH (THE OLD SIN NATURE), alone pleases God. Without it nothing we do pleases God under any circumstances; FAITH is a prerequisite for producing anything of spiritual value.

(3) Isaiah 64:6 – *We all have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags.*

- o Even (SO-CALLED) ‘righteous deeds,’ if they originate in the Old Sin Nature’s AREA OF STRENGTH, cannot please God.

(4) 1 Corinthians 2:14 – *The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

- o The FLESH lacks the spiritual discernment to comprehend – let alone to submit to – the Will of God.

(5) Jeremiah 13:23 – *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.*

- o THE FLESH, and everything it produces, is relentlessly evil, both the overt sins that emanate from it, and the ‘so-called’ good works that spring forth from the Old Sin Nature’s AREA OF STRENGTH.

(6) Proverbs 15:8 – *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to Him.*



- o Religious acts, if they are born out of *the Old Sin Nature*, are not just inadequate, they are an abomination to the Lord. [Think **CAIN** and **ABEL**.]

*(7) Titus 1:15-16 – To the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

- o This speaks directly to the moral condition of unbelievers; their inner corruption renders them *unfit* for good works, even if those good works outwardly seem righteous in nature.

And I didn't even mention **Galatians 5:17**, where we learn the struggle between **FLESH** and **SPIRIT** does not vanish at conversion; **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**, where **PAUL** directly refers to immature Christians as 'people of the flesh' ... or **2 Corinthians 5:9-10** that affirms **CHRISTIANS** will appear before **THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST** to give an account of our works, whether they originated out of the **SPIRIT** or out of the **FLESH**.

Now you may say, 'but those verses' – at least some of them – 'contrast the actions of unbelievers and believers.' Aren't you going too far when you apply them to believers? The **PRINCIPLE** behind all of these verses – irrespective of the audience to which they apply – is: 'Those who are *'IN THE FLESH'* cannot please God' (**Romans 8:8**).

**THE QUESTION THEN IS:** 'Can this principle be applied – not just to unbelievers – but also to believers acting in the **FLESH** – and are such acts performed *'IN THE FLESH'* equally displeasing to God.' **BUT PERHAPS MORE FUNDAMENTALLY**, 'is it even possible for believers to 'act in the **FLESH**'?

Notice **PAUL** says, '***THOSE OF YOU***.' He is writing to believers in the Roman Church. Then look back again at **ROMANS 8:8** – "Those who are in the **FLESH** (i.e., those operating out of their Old Sin Natures) cannot please God."

In **ROMANS 8** **PAUL** is contrasting two ways of life: (A) **LIFE IN THE FLESH** and (B) **LIFE IN THE SPIRIT** ... While **UNBELIEVERS LIVE IN THE FLESH AS A SETTLED IDENTITY**, believers also can walk in **THE FLESH** – BUT **NOT AS A SETTLED IDENTITY** –

If it were not possible for believers to walk in **THE FLESH**, then **PAUL** would not have exhorted **THE GALATIAN CHRISTIANS**: 'Walk by **THE SPIRIT** and you will not carry out the desires of **THE FLESH**' – **Galatians 5:16**.

**PAUL** knows it is possible for believers to 'walk in the **FLESH**' – after all, remember **CHAPTER 7** where **PAUL SELF-ASSESSED HIS OWN STRUGGLE WITH SIN**? The same issue we discussed in **CHAPTER 7** is the same issue we have to address here: Was **PAUL'S** struggle with sin in **CHAPTER 7** a struggle he faced as an unbeliever in **JUDAISM**, or was it a struggle he faced as a **CHRISTIAN**?

Our conclusion – a conclusion I think was well born out – is that his struggle was a struggle he faced as a **CHRISTIAN**.

**THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS:** *Unbelievers CANNOT 'walk in THE SPIRIT,'* so why would **PAUL** exhort unbelievers to do what they cannot do? He wouldn't. So he must be addressing believers; therefore, it is legitimate to apply the verses I cited as proof that – like **PAUL** – we face a struggle between the **FLESH** and the **SPIRIT** – and this struggle will not be resolved as long as we are alive in these unredeemed bodies.