

Essentials for Life 1:

Life through Christ (Romans 5)

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Is justification all there is to salvation?
- What difference does justification make in a person's life?
- What does it mean to be saved, and can salvation be lost?

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 represents the beginning of a new section of the letter, as Paul has concluded his discussion of justification, and now begins to consider its results. So far in the letter he has dealt with the issues of mankind's sin, God's wrath against sin and the future judgement, the atoning death of Christ, and the principle of faith. From chapter 6 onwards he will deal with various aspects of the Christian life and Christian relationships. This chapter links between the two. It can be easily divided into two parts:

vv1-11 The results of justification & our assurance of future salvation

vv12-21 The reign of death in Adam and reigning in life with Christ

OUR SALVATION (vv1-11)

The gospel does not end with justification, although we have perhaps been guilty at times of presenting it as if it did. It has a great deal to do with this present life as well as hope for the next. Too often we have been guilty of presenting the gospel as a "fire insurance certificate" – in other words that if you believe in Jesus you won't have to go to Hell, but can live forever with God in heaven. Whilst this is true, it is NOT the whole gospel! The danger is that we leave people thinking that once they are saved they might as well just sit back and wait for God to take them to Heaven. We are in danger of limiting the gospel to being just about the "next life" and little to do with this life. Paul knew no such distinction. He saw justification as the beginning of a new life with God right then. God has a great purpose for our lives in this world, and we have far too much work to do for Him to be lazy or complacent!

It is important to notice that in these verses justified is in the past tense, but "we have" is in the present tense. In other words, our justification is a past event – we have been saved, made right with God, forgiven for our sins, brought into a new relationship with Him – but we continue to enjoy the benefits of it on a daily basis. This is Paul's consistent teaching – we have been saved once for all (justified), but we continue to enjoy God's salvation as He sanctifies us. At this point it is worth defining the three tenses of our salvation, commonly described as justification (past), sanctification (present) and glorification (future).

WHEN?	PAST "have been saved" Ephesians 2:8	PRESENT "who are being saved" II Corinthians 2:14	FUTURE "the coming ... salvation" I Peter 1:5
FROM	The PENALTY of sin	The POWER of sin	The PRESENCE of sin
TERM	Justification	Sanctification	Glorification
RESULT	We have been made RIGHT <i>Ephesians 2:5</i>	We are being made HOLY <i>II Corinthians 3:18</i>	We will be made PERFECT <i>I John 3:2</i>

In these verses Paul refers to all three aspects of our salvation:

JUSTIFICATION

• **Peace with God (v1)**

This is the first result of justification – that we, who were at war with God, are now at peace with Him. Sin is rebellion against God, as we declare ourselves independent from Him, kings of our own lives. Justification deals with this problem of sin, and brings us into a new position where we are at peace with Him. This peace is an absolute reality – like a country declaring peace after a war – that is that it describes our objective position before God rather than a subjective feeling on our part. However, as we live the Christian life God's peace can become experiential to us (the "peace of God" of Philippians 4:7). Trust in God brings great peace, because we know that He is ultimately in control and that our lives are secure in His hands. This peace is only possible because we know that we have peace with God. We can lay down our arms and stop struggling against Him or to impress Him, and we can rest in the assurance that the war is over!

• **Access by faith into grace (v2a)**

Justification becomes effectual in our lives through faith, but it is not earned by faith – it is a free gift from God. Grace is the undeserved favour of God towards us, and it is not just something we receive when we are justified – our entire Christian life is lived in the realm of grace. We stand in grace, which we have gained access to through Christ – the word “access” really means “introduction”, which puts more emphasis on the fact that it is Christ who introduced us to the position we now enjoy. Not only is the war between God and us over, but we now have permanent residency in God’s Kingdom, which is a Kingdom of grace. As we continue to live in relationship with God we daily experience His grace as we discover day by day that He loves us unconditionally.

- **Reconciled through His death (vv10&11b)**

Because of our rebellion against God we were His “enemies” – members of an opposing force, fighting against His rule. The idea of reconciliation is to break down the barriers that divided us, and to bring us into a new relationship with God. This is what Christ’s death has achieved for us. So, not only are we at peace with God (on “ceasefire”), but we have de-commissioned and are now in alliance with God, on His side. Christ’s death did not just cancel out our sin, saving us from Hell; it brought us into a new living relationship with God, a whole new kind of living.

SANCTIFICATION

- **We rejoice in our sufferings (v3a)**

The word translated “rejoice” actually means to “boast”. In other words, according to Paul, our sufferings are not something to be ashamed of, as if we should expect that in this life we will have no problems and get embarrassed when things aren’t smooth. Even the most faithful follower of Christ will experience suffering in this age. The word “suffering” does not mean minor inconveniences, it refers to major hardships. It is interesting as we read the New Testament to see how the writers deal with the theme of suffering. So often we see sufferings as something to be endured, to “grin and bear it”, but Paul sees them as something to be positively boasted in, because he recognises that it is through suffering that we grow. Each suffering is an opportunity for God to be revealed and His grace to be experienced. Paul will return to the theme of suffering in Ch 8. It is vital that we, as God’s people, develop a Biblical theology of suffering, especially in this present age when many would suggest that suffering is always a result of a lack of faith on the part of the believer, or that the normal, victorious Christian life should mean health and wealth (the “prosperity gospel”). Such a message is simply not Biblical. As Christians we should not seek suffering, but neither should we scorn it.

- **Suffering – perseverance – character – hope (vv3&4)**

Paul shows us how suffering can lead to growth. As we persevere in the face of suffering – that is as we keep on trusting in God and living for His glory – we develop character. “Character” is the result of being tested – like a piece of metal that has been tempered in the fire, and so becomes stronger. As Christians it is through the tough times that we become stronger and that our faith is refined. This character increases our hope – presumably because it gives assurance to us of God’s work in our lives. So, then, the Christian life is far from sitting back enjoying the benefits of our justification and waiting for the return of Christ, it is an active engagement with the realities of life in a fallen world. It sees every experience, no matter how painful, as an opportunity to know God more and grow in Christian character.

- **The Holy Spirit brings God’s love into our hearts (v5)**

The Holy Spirit has been given to us by God (the Greek tense indicates a single, decisive act) – this is one of the benefits of our justification. Paul consistently maintains that every true believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit (see 8:9) – in fact, without Him there is no Christian life, since relating to Him is the essence of true Christian living. But the Spirit also gives something to us – He pours out the love of God into our hearts. The language of pouring suggests abundance, and reminds us of the sheer greatness of God’s love towards us. But this love becomes ours as the Spirit brings it into our lives. This is the supreme work of the Spirit – creating in us Christ-like character, the greatest expression of which is love. Sanctification depends on the ongoing work of the Spirit in us (see II Corinthians 3:18).

GLORIFICATION

- **Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (v2b)**

“Rejoice” again translates a word that means “boast” – in other words, we have confidence in the hope we have. The true believer, who has received the free gift of justification and is being sanctified, can have absolute confidence that one day he will be glorified! The word “hope” in English normally expresses a degree of uncertainty, but in the Bible it carries a sense of confidence. The future glorification of the believer is not in doubt – we confidently look forward to it because we have peace with God and now stand in His grace. Paul has already told us that we have fallen short of God’s glory in our sin (3:23), but now because of Christ we have the hope of glory which will, according to 8:18 be “revealed in us”. One day we will be made perfect in Christ.

- **We will be saved from God's wrath through Him (v9)**
Because we have already been reconciled to God by Christ's death, we will be saved from God's wrath by His life. There is no doubt here – the future salvation from God's wrath follows on automatically from our reconciliation. For the true believer there is no fear of future judgment or condemnation (see 8:1).
- **We will be saved through His life (v10)**
The resurrection is surely in mind here. It is not enough that Christ died to reconcile us to God, but we now share in His life. Because He lives forever, we are assured of our future salvation – if He cannot die, then we cannot be lost! The assurance of the believer rests in the life of Christ.

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE (vv6-8)

This section brings us back to the centre of the gospel – it is a powerful reminder that God's salvation is absolutely undeserved by us, and that it comes to us only because of the scandalous love of God demonstrated by Christ's death for us. Verse 6 tells us that this death was at "just the right time". Christ's death was part of God's plan through the ages, not a divine after-thought, and it happened at just the right time, when we were sinners. This is the supreme demonstration of the extent of God's love for us, and if we ever doubt it we should remember the cross of Christ. Far from seeing God as unloving, allowing His Son to suffer dreadfully on the cross while He kept distant, we see the Father deeply involved in the suffering of the Son, feeling with Him and making the ultimate sacrifice for us. Paul explains how amazing God's love for us is by making us think about exactly what it meant for Christ to die for us:

- *A righteous man* would be completely sinless, having kept the requirements of the Law to the letter, BUT even for such a brilliant man few people would be prepared to die
- *A good man* is not perfect, but he is respectable and likeable, SO you might just be able to find someone who would die for him

BUT we were NOT righteous or even good – we were:

- **Sinners** (v8) – we had fallen short of God's standard and rebelled against His rule over us
- **Powerless** (v6) – we could not do anything to help ourselves and did not have anything to offer to God
- **Ungodly** (v6) – we were completely unlike God in our nature and character
- **Enemies** (v10) – we were enemies of God, and He was against us (the reference to wrath in v9)

God loved us enough to send Christ to die for us!!! This is the extent of His love: when we were filthy in His sight, with nothing at all to offer Him, actively rejecting Him and rebelling against Him God loved us enough to give the most precious thing He had for us (that is Christ). So, God's love to us is:

- **Intentional** – it was at "just the right time" (v6) that Christ died for us. God put His love into action in a plan to rescue us from our sin. Although He loves us just the way we are, He is not prepared to leave us that way, so He sent Christ to save us.
- **Unconditional** – it does not depend on what He can get in return from us, He loves us just the way we are. We do not have to do anything to earn God's love or to try to please or impress Him. We are already precious in His sight. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do will make Him love us less.
- **Sacrificial** – it sacrificed the most precious thing it had for us so that we can receive all of His blessings. The result of this death was our justification (as verse 9 is linked to verse 8 by the word "therefore", which is omitted in the NIV). The atonement for sin through the death of Christ is the ultimate expression of the love of God. In the next section Paul will explain how this one death can have these results for so many people.

SECURITY AND ASSURANCE

Martyn Lloyd Jones entitled his commentary on vv1-11 "Assurance". It is not difficult to see after learning what we have how this could be an appropriate title. These verses are full of evidence of our eternal security in Christ, and should give us great assurance that if our lives belong to Him they cannot be lost.

THE BASIS OF OUR ETERNAL SECURITY

As we continue to study Romans we will see further evidence of this great truth, that once a person is truly saved they will always be saved, or more correctly, once a person is justified they will inevitably be glorified. The evidence for this in vv1-11 is multiple:

1. **We have been introduced by Christ into the realm of God's grace (v2)** – this is undeserved, and does not depend on our works
2. **We boast in our hope of the glory of God (v2)** – this phrase contains language of absolute certainty, based on the meaning of the word "hope", and the fact that we can "boast" in it
3. **Hope does not disappoint us because the Spirit indwells us (v5)** – the Holy Spirit is the guarantee and seal of our salvation
4. **God's love for us is unconditional (vv5-8)** – if God loved us unconditionally even when we were sinners, His love for us will never end. To suggest that we can be saved then lost is to misunderstand

the nature of God’s love for us. He knew before He reconciled us to Himself exactly what we were like, and He does not make mistakes.

5. **Christ is alive, and we will be saved through His life (vv9&10)** – the risen life of Christ is unending, and our life is with Him

To simplify this, we can think of eternal security in terms of the three persons of the trinity. Our salvation is secure because of the attributes and work of the three persons of the Godhead:

- **The love of God (v8)**
- **The death and resurrection life of Christ (vv9&10)**
- **The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (v5)**

Paul summarises these ideas in v11, where he simply says that we “boast in God”. In other words, our assurance rests entirely in Him, just as our salvation originates entirely with Him. We have nothing to boast about in ourselves, but everything to boast about in Him, since He is able to keep us secure in Himself.

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO FALL AWAY?

So, then, the person who has truly been justified and reconciled to God through Christ will certainly be saved from the wrath of God and share in the glory of God. Of course, the question is often asked what about the people who have become Christians, but in whom there is no evidence of a change in their lives? Sanctification is inevitable in the life of a justified person. In other words, the true believer’s life will change. If a person professes to be a Christian, but there is no evidence of increasing Christ-like character in their life, there must be serious questions about whether their faith is genuine. Of course, there may be times when a true believer grows cold or wanders away from God, but this person will never deny Christ, and will eventually be restored. Keeping our salvation does not depend on our effort any more than receiving depended on our earning it. It is the free gift of God, and our security rests in His power and life.

CAN WE HAVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION?

Although our security rests in God, many Christians lack “assurance”. While security is the objective fact, assurance is a subjective experience of feeling secure. The benefits of justification have a great deal to do with assurance, as they describe our confidence in our salvation:

- **Peace with God** – this is our positional standing, and the peace of God can become our experience
- **Joy in suffering** – this confidence is ours because of the Holy Spirit who is active in us
- **Hope of glory** – this certain hope is ours because Christ lives forever

How often our lives lack peace, joy and hope! Perhaps it is because we are not confident of the love of God towards us, or perhaps because we have not fully appreciated the nature of justification and the efficacy of Christ’s death to save. It is possible for us to have assurance as we boast in God!

DEATH AND LIFE (5:12-21)

Paul contrast’s Adam with Christ. These are the only two people who could represent the entire human race:

	ADAM	CHRIST
The One Man	Represents all mankind as he is our ancestor, created perfect but falling in sin	Represents all mankind as He is our Lord, eternally perfect and dying for ALL mankind
His action	In DISOBEDIENCE , he sinned and so sin entered the world	In OBEDIENCE , He died (the act of righteousness – v18)
Results for mankind	As his descendants, we share in DEATH (v12)	If we receive God’s gift of righteousness we reign in LIFE (v17)
The principle	Death is the result of God’s condemnation of sin	Eternal life in Christ is a gift of God’s grace

It is worth commenting that Paul’s references to Adam assume that he was a real historical person, just as Christ was a real historical figure, and that his act of disobedience was a real event, just as the death of Christ was. In fact, Paul’s logic breaks down if this was not the case. This realisation has implications for our reading of Genesis 1-3, which would then be difficult to read as purely allegorical. There are a few important themes in these verses that require further examination:

The origin of sin & death:

Sin entered the world through Adam. The word “world” is used her in the same sense as in John 3:16 to describe the world of human existence and society. That sin came into the world through Adam does not mean that it began with him – in fact, it suggests that sin already existed outside the “world”. The Bible does not explicitly tell us about the origin of evil, but we know that Satan was a sinner before Adam fell, and so evil originated before the creation of mankind. Sin brought with it the result of death – spiritual and physical. Death passed to all people, every descendant of Adam (v12). There are several ways in which the phrase “and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned” can be understood:

- a) **Adam's descendants inherit sin and death from him because of his one sinful act.** In other words, the whole human race sinned in Adam.
- b) **Adam's descendants inherit a sinful nature from him, which leads them to sin, and this sin leads to death.** In other words, individuals become sinners because of the sinful nature inherited from Adam, and acting on this nature commit sinful acts, which lead to death.
- c) **Adam's descendants repeatedly make the same choice to sin as he did, bringing death on themselves.** This view does not see human beings as inheriting anything from Adam, but simply suggests that every human being has made the same choice as Adam independently, and so has sinned and brought death upon himself.

In one sense which interpretation we take makes little difference, since all positions agree that all people are sinners and will die, but in another sense it is important, as Paul makes a parallel between Adam and Christ, and if the third reading is taken this could suggest that just as we earn death by replicating Adam's action, we can earn life by replicating Christ's obedience. Verses 18 and 19 help to settle the argument, since Paul there clearly states that Adam's one trespass resulted in condemnation for all mankind. Thus the text itself rules out the third option above, since it demands that we see Adam's one act as having had a result for all human beings. I believe it is correct to say that all human beings stand condemned to death because in Adam the entire human race sinned, but that it is also true to say that we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam, and that this leads us in time to commit sinful acts. We inherit death from Adam, **and** deserve death because of our own actions. Perhaps this position could be best described as "original sinfulness".

The relationship of the Law to sin:

It is important to notice here that Paul does not equate sin with breaking the Law of God. In fact, sin was already in the world before God gave the Law to Moses (vv13&14). The Law simply increased "trespass" (v20), meaning that it made the sinfulness of mankind all the more obvious since each individual sin became clear. Verse 13 seems to suggest that sin cannot be held against a person if they did not know that their action was wrong ("when there is no law"). We should bear Paul's teaching here in mind when we define sin to non-Christians. It is far more accurate to describe sin as rebellion against God or a falling short of God's standard than to place the emphasis on our actions. This is similar to saying that a doctor should explain the cause of the disease to a patient rather than emphasising the symptoms. It is not to say that people should not realise that sinful deeds are wrong, but that they need to progress beyond this to realise that the greatest sin is lack of faith in Christ.

Righteous through the obedience of one man:

These verses emphasise the "once for all" nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Just as it was through one action of disobedience by Adam (eating the forbidden fruit) sin and death came into the world, so through one action of obedience by Christ (His death) many will be made righteous. When Paul says in verse 18 that the justification "brings life for all men" he is not suggesting that all people will be saved (which would directly contradict his teaching so far in Romans). Rather, the contrast is between those who (to borrow Paul's words from his parallel passage in I Corinthians 15:22) are "in Adam" (that is every human being) and those who are "in Christ" (that is every true believer, or those who have received God's gift – see verse 17). Paul is not suggesting that all people will be saved through Christ, but emphasising that one action by Christ can really have a spiritual repercussion for many people, just as one action by Adam affected many. Paul again emphasises that the righteousness of God is a free gift to us (v17).

Death reigning and reigning in life:

The contrast here (v17) is between people who are ruled over by death and people who now rule in life through Christ. To have death reign over us is a miserable position to be in – it means that our lives are dominated by death and decay, in constant uncertainty and fear (see also Hebrews 2:15), and at the mercy of our circumstances. Christ changes our lives from being subject to death to reigning in life, which means to be victorious over our circumstances and confident of eternal life. What a contrast between the unbeliever and the believer! This is another reminder of our eternal security, and paves the way for some of the major themes of chapters 6-8. Sadly, we too often allow ourselves as Christians to fall under fear again, and to lose sight of the victory we have in Christ. We allow circumstances to rob us of our joy. We need to come to a fresh realisation of God's love for us and enjoy the peace, joy and hope that brings us, and so face life with confidence. Paul returns to this theme of victorious Christian living in Ch 8 (especially verse 37).

CHALLENGE:

- Have you been reconciled to God, or are you still at war with Him?
- Are you experiencing the peace, hope and joy (confidence) God wants you to have?
- Have you realised God's unconditional love for you and the assurance that should bring?
- Is the Holy Spirit continuing to produce Christ-like character in you?
- How do you view suffering and problems in your life?

Essentials for Life 2:

Slaves to Sin or Righteousness (Romans 6&7)

KEY QUESTIONS:

- If our salvation is secure, why bother living a godly life?
- If glorification is inevitable for those who have been justified, is sanctification important?
- If we live in the realm of grace, why can't we just keep on sinning?

INTRODUCTION: The Accusation of Antinomianism

In Chapter 5 Paul convinced us that our salvation is secure because of the unconditional love of God for us, the reconciliation achieved by Christ for us in His death, and the resurrection life of Christ that guarantees our future glorification. The Holy Spirit witnesses to this security by bringing assurance of salvation (peace, joy and hope) to our hearts. Paul will return to some of these themes in Chapter 8. In Chapter 6 he reverts to the literary style of diatribe, and answers objections he anticipates his readers asking. It is worth remembering that Paul's primary concern in writing Romans was to help the church in Rome to appreciate the truth of the gospel, especially as it impacted the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile groups in the assembly. This explains why he focuses much of his teaching in this section on the Law of God.

In Chapter 5 Paul has shown that glorification is inevitable for the person who has been justified, but this raises the question of whether sanctification is important at all. Perhaps as you thought about the teaching of eternal security in the last section you thought to yourself, "If we are saved forever, why does the Bible put so much emphasis on holiness?" or "If we cannot lose our salvation, can we just do whatever we like?" Paul anticipates exactly these questions. The doctrine of eternal security leads to the accusation of antinomianism [*nomos* = the moral law] – the suggestion that those who teach it reject the Law and encourage sin. People who do not believe in eternal security are at risk of being accused of legalism – the suggestion that we must be very careful about keeping the Law so that we can avoid sin and keep favour with God. Antinomianism and legalism are at opposite extremes, but Paul refutes both of them in his New Testament letters. The true way of Christian living is neither licentiousness (carelessly doing whatever we want with no restraints) nor legalism (living life subject to fear and the demands of the Law). Rather it is liberty – the freedom the Spirit brings to live in obedience to Christ. In Chapters 6&7, Paul is primarily concerned with the accusation of antinomianism, probably because this would have been the greatest cause for concern among the Jewish Christians in the Roman church in view of their high regard for the Law. The fact that Paul takes this amount of time and space to answer the charge of antinomianism is proof that his gospel was one of grace not works, and that he taught the eternal security of the believer based on God's grace rather than man's holiness. To quote John Stott:

If we are proclaiming Paul's gospel, with its emphasis on the freeness of grace and the impossibility of self-salvation, we are sure to provoke the charge of antinomianism. If we do not arouse this criticism, the likelihood is that we are not preaching Paul's gospel.

In Ch 6:1-7:6 Paul presents three pictures of our new position in Christ and how we who are under God's grace should view sin, using three images:

1. **Death and life (6:1-14)**
2. **Slavery and freedom (6:15-23)**
3. **An illustration from Marriage (7:1-6).**

In each of these three sections Paul corrects their misunderstanding of his teaching with the words "Don't you know?" The accusation of antinomianism is based on ignorance of the truth of the gospel, and Paul returns the reader to a proper understanding of justification and of grace. He makes no apology for His emphasis on the free gift of God's grace. Throughout the passage sin is spoken of as if it were a person. It is worth noticing that there are a number of parallels between the first two of these arguments:

	6:1-14	6:15-23
The question asked	"What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?" (6:1)	What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? (6:15)
The question prompted by Paul's focus on grace	"grace might reign" (5:21)	"we are not under law but under grace " (6:15)
Paul's emphatic response	By no means!	By no means!
The question stems from ignorance	"don't you know that all of us who were baptised ..." (6:3)	"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves ..." (6:16)
Paul contrasts their past with their present new life	"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (6:2)	"set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (6:18)

This parallel clearly demonstrates that Paul's major concern in 6:1-23 is to defend his emphasis on grace against the charge that he is weak on sin and holiness. 7:1-6, although not following this same parallel pattern is an additional example of the freedom from sin that is ours in Christ. It serves both as an illustration of Paul's teaching in Chapter 6 and as a bridge linking it to 7:7-25. In particular, in this section Paul introduces two ways to serve God – the old way of the written code, and the new way of the Spirit (7:6).

In 7:7-25 Paul describes the old way of the written code – the life he (and many of his Jewish readers) lived before Christ set him free – torn between his desire to obey God's Law and his constant failure to be able to keep it because of the sinful nature inside him. This section sees Paul, faced with two accusations that he is making the Law out to be a bad thing, defending the Law but high-lighting its limitations. In Chapter 8 he will continue to describe the new way of the Spirit.

PAUL DEFENDS GRACE (6:1-23)

A] We are dead to sin, but alive to God (6:1-14)

In verse 1, Paul asks, *Shall we keep on sinning so that God's grace may increase?* In other words, if God has forgiven our sins, why not just do whatever we want? This is the classical antinomian argument – God has forgiven us, we are free to live however we chose. Of course, Paul has told us in 5:2 that we now stand in God's grace, and in 5:20&21 that where sin increased, God's grace increased more so that "grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". If we live in the realm of God's grace, enjoying His undeserved favour to us, irrespective of how we lived before we were justified, why not keep on sinning now that we have been justified? After all, God's grace is certain. It is worth noting that Paul's argument in 6:1 makes no sense if we deny the truth of eternal security – it is because he has so clearly taught that our salvation cannot be lost that he must now explain why that is not a license to sin. Likewise, he does not answer this challenge by warning us that if we keep on sinning we will fall from grace (which he surely would have done had he not believed in eternal security).

Paul's answer to his own question is emphatic: **We have died to sin, how can we live in it any longer (v2)?** This is the essence of Paul's argument for holiness throughout his letters. He consistently calls us to match in our lifestyle the position we have already been brought into by Christ. We have been made right with God (our position), we should now live in a way that pleases Him. We have been made righteous (our position), we should now live righteous lives. We are dead to sin (our position), we should not live in sin any more. When we correctly understand what God has done in our lives in justifying us, we realise that continuing to live a life of sin is basically incompatible with the Christian life. We can summarise this argument in one simple sentence:

Be what you are!

Paul builds this argument further through two examples:

(i) The argument from Baptism (vv3&4):

We have died with Christ, we are dead to sin

Paul reminds these Christians of their baptism, and its meaning. Baptism symbolises:

- a) Dying with Christ and being buried with Him (going under the water)
- b) Being raised from death to live a new life (coming up out of the water)

It must be said that Paul is not suggesting here that baptism in itself causes the believer to be justified (this would conflict with his entire argument in Chapters 3-5 that justification is received through faith alone and not through works), but is speaking of what it symbolises for the Christian. Of course, Paul's intention is not to teach about baptism itself, or to challenge people about their need to be baptised, since he is writing to believers who have already been baptised. However, his comments do help us in our understanding of the meaning of baptism, and it is difficult to see how his description could apply to any form of baptism other than the baptism of believers by immersion. If it was not for believers, how could it have the significance Paul links with it, and if it was not by immersion, the imagery Paul employs of being buried with Christ is lost.

Paul reminds them that in their baptism they had joined with Christ in His death – their old self had been crucified with Him (v6). The "old self" refers to their old way of life, and it is worth noting that Paul does not only say that the sinful nature was crucified with Christ – the whole person we were before we became Christians was crucified with Him. Likewise, they will share in His resurrection, Paul says in v5, using the word "certainly". He has in mind here the future resurrection of our bodies that will precede our glorification (since "we will" is in the future tense), and his absolute certainty continues his insistence on eternal security. However, Paul's main emphasis in these verses is not on the past (that our old self has died with Christ) or the future (that we will be raised with Him), but on the present. The "body of sin" (probably referring to the physical body steeped in sin) has been done away with and we are no

longer slaves to sin. Paul is proclaiming our freedom now in the present. This is his mandate for our sanctification.

It is important to point out that the word translated “freed” in v7 is actually the Greek word “justified”, showing more clearly than the NIV does that Paul’s arguments here carry on from his discussion of justification. Paul connects our death with Christ with our justification. We do not only believe that Christ died in our place, as our substitute, but also that we have been united with Him in His death, and so we have already died. Sin no longer has any power over us, as we have been justified by Christ – declared not guilty. Why, then, would we continue to sin?

(ii) The argument from Christ’s resurrection life (vv8-10):

We are alive in Christ, we live to God

Again in verse 8 Paul expresses his confidence that those who have died (the Greek tense means a decisive past act) with Christ will live with Him. His words here probably echo 5:10, speaking of our future salvation (glorification) based on Christ’s resurrection life. However, again Paul’s emphasis is on our present living, which parallels Christ’s resurrection life. Christ died once for sin, and has been raised from the dead – death has no power over Him. If Christ cannot die again, we can have confidence that we too will live with Him. His resurrection life assures our preservation. Since He was raised, we too will live with Him, and if Christ lives now to God, so should we. If Christ died to sin, so have we, if He lives only for God, so should we.

IMPLICATION: LIVE THE REALITY OF WHO YOU ARE (vv11-14)!

In verse 11 Paul challenges us to live out these realities. He compares us with what he has said about Christ in vv8-10. “In the same way” as He died and now lives to God, so should we count ourselves dead to sin. **“Count yourselves” is Paul’s first exhortation in this letter** – so far he has been describing what has already happened to us as Christians, but now he challenges us to act in keeping with these realities. Paul has already said that we are dead to sin (v2) – this is the positional truth – now he challenges us to live out that reality in our behaviour – the experiential expression. Before we were justified we were slaves to sin – we could not resist its urges, and were unable to live a sinless life. Although non-Christians are capable of doing many good things, and of resisting evil to some degree, they do not have the power to resist sin entirely, and ultimately are under the shadow of death it brings. For the believer, however, there is freedom from sin. **We no longer need to sin, since we now have the power through the Holy Spirit to resist temptation and to obey God.** Paul will elaborate the nature of this power in Chapter 8. The Christian, when he sins, can never claim that he was unable to resist temptation, or that he could not help himself. Although many believers live their lives as if they were in bondage to sin, trapped by habitual or recurring sins, the truth is that we are not under sin’s control. We have everything we need (as Peter writes in II Peter 1:3) for life and godliness – we must proclaim and experience the victory Christ has already won for us. The challenge before us is to willingly choose day by day to live out the reality of what God has done in our lives and what we expressed publicly in our baptism. Of course, it takes time for us to experience freedom from those sins that tend to entrap us so easily, and this is the process of sanctification, but in Christ and through the Spirit we have power to do so. If you feel that your life is trapped by habitual sins, you may benefit from the help of a Christian counsellor or pastor, and from the prayer of close Christian friends, but you can know the freedom that Christ has won for you. Do not despair, and do not let the evil one deceive you into thinking that victory is impossible.

Of course the believer can still be tempted and can sin, but, to quote Leon Morris, *“the sin of the unbeliever is the natural consequence of the fact that he is a slave to sin, whereas the sin of the believer is quite out of character”*. It is equally ridiculous for a Christian to willingly sin. It is now up to us to decide how we will live – we have the freedom not to follow sin, but we can submit to it – God will not force holiness on us. Paul will develop this in vv15-18 – the choice is ours who we will offer ourselves to – sin or obedience. This is in keeping with his teaching in Galatians Ch 5, where Paul says “you ... were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:13). We can either offer our bodies to sin – in which case they will produce wickedness – or to God – in which case they will produce righteousness (v13).

B] We are free from sin, but slaves to God (6:15-23)

Verse 15 opens with another question, related to Paul’s question in verse 1. *Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?* Again his answer is an emphatic no! In verses 1-14 Paul argued that sin has no mastery over us because we have died to it. Now his image changes to an analogy with slavery. Before we were justified we were slaves to sin, but now in Christ we have been set free from sin, and have become slaves to righteousness. Notice that Paul is not comparing slavery with freedom but one type of slavery with another – the picture is of one master buying (redeeming) a slave from its old master so that he now belongs

to him. When we receive freedom in Christ it is not that we are now our own master – our ownership changes from sin to righteousness. The freedom we have in Christ is the freedom to do what is right. So, verse 18 presents the positional reality – we are free from sin and slaves to righteousness – but Paul then challenges us again in verse 19 to live out this reality in our daily choices. To emphasise his point, Paul reminds the Roman Christians of their past – before they were Christians, when they were slaves to sin (v20) and they used to offer their bodies to impurity (v19). He asks them “What benefit did you reap?” (v21) – the answer is simple – death, which is the wages sin pays. Now, however, they have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God (v22), with the result of eternal life, which is a gift from God, not earned. They should therefore offer their bodies to righteousness, which will lead to holiness (v19). They must serve their new master, not their old one. Since we are not under the Law, but under grace, sin cannot be our master (it has lost its power over us), why then should we chose to serve it? Can you imagine a slave who has been set free from a terrible, cruel master who is known for working his slaves to death (the only wages he pays them) and now belongs to a kind master who offers him life and health, choosing to serve his old master again rather than working for his new owner? Of course not! We now belong to God, but the choice we face is between serving sin and serving God. Which will you choose?

It has been suggested that because verse 23 was written to Christians it teaches that they can either receive eternal life if they continue to live holy lives or death if they do not. This suggestion completely misses the context of the verse, which is that Paul is referring back to what they used to be by comparison with what they now are. Even the verse itself shows that eternal life is a free gift from God that does not need to be earned or kept by us. Paul is not suggesting that a true believer can miss out on eternal life, but emphasising the futility of sin, since its only result is death. Even if the believer goes back to serve his old master, his ownership does not change – he still belongs to God, his new master – sin in the life of a true believer cannot make him a slave to sin again, God holds the certificate of ownership over his life.

As Christians, then, why would we want to continue to sin? We have seen in our past lives its destructiveness and futility, and have recognised that its wages are death. We have received God’s free gift of eternal life, and rejoice in the freedom from sin we now have. We have demonstrated this in baptism (vv1-4), declaring it to the world. We are now slaves to God and righteousness. Why then would we ever want to offer our bodies to sin?

C] We are dead to the Law, but belong to Christ (7:1-6)

This is Paul’s third illustration of our freedom from sin and from the Law. He has described sin as our slave master, now he describes the Law as a husband. When a husband dies his wife is free from the law of marriage and can remarry. In a similar way, we have died, and our marriage to the Law has now been dissolved, so that we are free to “belong to another” (v4). The Law was our husband, but now we are united to Christ. Again the emphasis is on Christ’s resurrection (v4). The goal of this freedom is that we should bear fruit to God, in contrast to our past when we were controlled by the sinful nature and could only produce fruit for death. For the Christian to sin is like a wife committing adultery against a loving husband who as provided everything she needs. How can we sin when we realise we belong to Christ?

The Christian no longer needs to live in sin, but can live a life of righteousness, serving God “in the new way of the Spirit” (v6) – Paul will expand on this new way of living in Chapter 8 but suffice to say that

True freedom is not being free to do whatever we want but the freedom to offer ourselves as slaves to God so that we may produce fruit for Him and serve Him in the way of the Spirit.

This new way of serving God is not centred on obeying any particular list of commands or requirements, but following the leading of the Spirit who indwells. In the Old Covenant (“the old way”) the people sought to obey the Law’s demands, but in the New Covenant (“the new way”) God’s laws are written on the mind and heart of the believer by God’s Holy Spirit. The essence of Christian life is not following a rule, but a relationship with the living God. Holiness **does** matter to Christians, but we have the power through the Holy Spirit to achieve it.

PAUL DEFENDS THE LAW (7:7-25)

Different writers have interpreted these verses differently, some seeing them as a description of the struggle in the heart of a Christian, and others seeing them as a description of the struggle of a non-believer to keep the standard of God’s Law. Although the Bible does teach that Christians have a struggle between the sinful nature and the Spirit of God (see Galatians 5:17 for example), I am convinced that this passage describes a struggle in the heart of a Jew who knows and loves God’s law but is not yet a believer in Christ (in fact that this was the struggle Paul himself had faced before he became a Christian. My reasons for believing this are as follows:

1. **It fits best with the context**, as it contrasts with Chapter 8 where Paul describes the life led by the Spirit that is “free from the law of sin and death” (8:2). This passage shows the limitations of the “old way of the written code”, but Chapter 8 shows the real nature of the “new way of the Spirit” (7:6).
2. **The person in 7:14 is described as “unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin”**. This could not be said of a Christian, as in 7:17&18 Paul has already explained that those who have “wholeheartedly obeyed” the gospel are no longer slaves to sin. In the life of the individual in these verses sin is undefeated, and cannot be resisted. The description in 7:7-25 must, therefore, describe an unbeliever.
3. **There is no mention of New Testament truth**. If Paul is describing a struggle in the life of a believer, why does he not mention the Holy Spirit or the gospel at all in 7:7-25? In fact, his whole discussion is about the Law and sin. Even his delight is in the Law of God (v22), rather than in Christ or in the gospel. The major objection to this understanding seems to be that Paul says he delights in God’s law in his inner being (v22), which is said to conflict with 8:7, which says that the “sinful mind is hostile to God”, and the claim is made that a non-believer cannot take delight in God’s Law. However, it is surely true that Paul before his conversion delighted in the Law of God, as did many Jewish people, including many Old Testament people. Paul never teaches that people without Christ are incapable of any good actions, but that they are incapable of pleasing God by their actions because the sinful nature has control over them (see 8:8).

Whichever understanding we have, we should not lose sight of Paul’s reasons for writing 7:7-25, which are twofold. Firstly to explain the true purpose of the Law (vv7-13) and secondly to show how helpless a person who tries to obey the Law in his own effort really is (vv14-25). Paul writes in an autobiographical style (he uses the personal pronoun “I” throughout), but what he writes is clearly relevant to others.

A] The true purpose of the law (vv7-13): To reveal sin for what it is

While in 6:1-7:6 Paul defended his position on grace, he now defends his position on the Law. He begins by reminding us of the true purpose of the Law. He has already told us in 3:20 that the Law makes us “conscious of sin”, and here he develops this theme. His argument in these verses is structured in reply to two imagined objections. Someone might accuse him of saying that the Law leads to sin (v7) or that the Law is responsible for causing death. Again these objections would have been likely to come from a Jewish person, who would have a great respect for the Law. We can imagine the absolute indignation of a Jew reacting to Paul’s discussion to date, and especially to the fact that he seems to equate freedom from sin (6:18) with freedom from the Law (7:6)! The Jewish person would, quite rightly, object that the Law originated with God. How, then, can it be a bad thing?

Paul’s answer is clear – the Law was not a bad thing, and it was not responsible either for sin or for death. In fact, the Law was excellent at doing what God intended it to do – revealing our sin to us. The commandments make sin much more obvious, as they reveal all kinds of activities that may otherwise seem innocent to be sinful (v11). The Law itself is holy, and the commandments are good (v12). So then, even if the Law is holy, did it have a bad result – causing death for us? No, Paul says, it was **sin** that caused death, and the Law simply gave it the means to do so – the Law was the instrument sin used to execute us. The Law actually reveals how “**utterly sinful**” sin is (vv7-13).

B] The limitation of the “way of the written code” (vv14-25): Our sinful nature

Paul changes his focus now to himself as he was before Christ set him free (the Jewish person without Christ). He concludes that the problem is not with the Law, which **is** spiritual, but that the actual problem is with himself – that **he** is NOT spiritual! In other words, the Law is perfect, but he finds that he did not have the power to keep it! The word structure of vv15-20 is famously complicated (so many “do’s”!), but Paul’s argument is clear: **Paul lacks the power to do the good things he wants to do**. His intentions are good, but his sinful nature lets him down – it is completely evil, and nothing good lives in it (v18). In verse 21, Paul pictures evil sitting beside him every time he wants to do good, waiting for the opportunity to influence him and spoil his good intentions. This is the reality of sin’s effect on us – it corrupts every part of our being, and even our attempts to serve God become polluted. As Isaiah said, “our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Paul knows that his inner being delights in God’s Law (v22), but he despairs at the way sin works in him. He is a “wretched man” in need of a rescuer. Who could rescue him? Only one person can – Jesus Christ, our Lord (v25). With this declaration Paul sets the scene for Chapter 8, where he will describe the wonderful freedom of a life lived in the Spirit. The weakness of the old way of the written code is not in God’s Law, but in our inability to keep it (see Paul’s comment in 8:3).

Although Paul’s arguments in 7:7-25 are all about the Law and the sinful nature, since he came from a Jewish background and was writing for the benefit of Jewish believers, the whole section is also applicable to Gentiles since it shows just how corrupt the sinful nature is. This is our inheritance from Adam (remembering 5:12-14). The phrase “sinful nature” translates the Greek word *sarx*, which means literally “flesh”, and is a major theme in Paul’s writings. Every human being has a sinful nature, and Paul’s teaching here proves just how futile it is to suggest that people can please God by their actions or achieve righteousness through works.

No matter how good our intentions, we find sin there in us ready to spoil our efforts. Although Paul says there is nothing good in the sinful nature (v18), this is not to say that man is as bad as he can possibly be (the very fact that it is possible for him to “delight in God’s law” (v22) proves this), but that every part of his being is corrupted by the sinful nature (this is the meaning if the doctrine of “total depravity”). Sinful man, fallen short of God’s glory, is corrupted and ruined by sin, but not completely corrupted to the point of being unable to do any good. The image of God is spoiled, but not utterly destroyed. Nevertheless, we need to be restored to the glory of God, and this is impossible in our own efforts because of the sinful nature. How true that we need a Saviour, and how much we too should praise God for Christ! In Chapter 8 we will see just what life in the “new way of the Spirit” (7:6) is really like for the person who has been justified through faith in Christ.

SIN, THE LAW AND THE BELIEVER

It is important to clarify one potential misunderstanding about Paul’s teaching about our freedom from sin. As any Christian will know, after being justified we continue to be tempted to sin, and we sometimes give way to that temptation and sin. How is this possible if we are set free from sin and are no longer its slaves? Furthermore, how can it be possible when Paul has said that we have died with Christ? To answer this question we must understand the whole of the New Testament teaching about sin and the sinful nature in the life of a Christian. Although it has been crucified, the sinful nature that we inherited from Adam is still alive in us, and it is still possible for us to follow its desires. There is now a battle between the sinful nature, which always wants us to sin, and the Spirit who lives in us, who always wants us to do the things that please God.

Perhaps the clearest New Testament chapter on this topic is Galatians 5. Paul’s theme in that chapter is the freedom that we have in Christ. He tells us not to let ourselves “be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (v1). Paul does not want the Galatians to become slaves again to the Law, but he also reminds them in v13 that, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love”. So, we are free from slavery to sin (Romans 6) and to the Law (Galatians 5), but God gives us the choice about how we use this freedom. We can use it to return to the sinful nature and “indulge” it, pretending that we are still sin’s slaves, or we can use it to serve God and one another in love. In Galatians 5:16-26 Paul develops this theme further. He describes a constant struggle inside every Christian who wants to live a holy life. The sinful nature and the Holy Spirit are at war in us, and our will decides which will predominate. These two have very different results – the sinful nature leading to all kinds of sin (vv19-21) and the Spirit producing His fruit, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (v22). Paul challenges us to keep on living by the Spirit (v16) in classically “Be what you are” terms: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (v25). Galatians 5 also clarifies for us the fact that the Law is not irrelevant for us as Christians. He tells us that “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’”, and that there is “no Law” against the fruit of the Spirit (v23). In other words, if we live according to the Spirit, allowing Him to control us, the fruit we produce will be love, which fulfils the Law. Christians take the Law seriously, but do not try to keep it by their own effort, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, then, when Paul says in Romans 6 that we are no longer slaves to sin he is not saying that a Christian cannot sin, but that sin cannot control us any more against our will. We **do** have the power to resist temptation, and to do what pleases God. A slave does not always have to obey his master, although, of course, he might be punished if he does not do so: he can still make choices about what he does. When Paul speaks about slavery to sin and to God he is talking about whether sin or God has ownership over our lives. Who do we belong to? We now belong to God, so we should not do the things that sin (our old master) wants us to do, but the things that God (our new master) wants. We belong to Christ, but we do not always obey Him – He is our Lord, but we do not always honour Him. Because Christ is our master does not mean that He will force us to do His will – He is not a master who coerces us or forces us to be holy, but One who gently calls us to follow in His footsteps (“in step with the Spirit”).

As Christians, then, we **will** sin (see I John 1:8&10), but this should be abnormal for us and we will be more aware of sin when we do fall. It is, in fact, impossible for a true believer to habitually live a life characterised by sin (I John 5:18), and if the life of a person who professes to be a Christian does not manifest any change the truth of their profession must be seriously doubted. As believers, we need to confess our sins to God (see I John 1:9, which was written to Christians) to keep good fellowship with Him, but sin will never break our relationship with God. So, if you struggle with sin, do not think that this means you aren’t a true believer or that you are a failure – in fact, the fact that you feel this struggle is a good sign, because it means you have the desire to serve God (I would be very worried if a Christian told me that they never struggled with sin). Remember that Christ died to set you free from sin, so that it has no claim to own your life anymore, and that the Holy Spirit will give you strength to resist temptation. Confess your sin to God, and resist

temptation in His strength. When Christ returns, the old sinful nature will finally be destroyed and we will be made perfect in Christ. Then our struggle against sin will finally be over. So, Paul's teaching in Romans 6 could be paraphrased something like this: "You don't belong to sin any more, and it cannot control your life, because Christ has set you free and you now belong to Him. So, keep on living for Christ and don't go back to serve sin as if you still belonged to it."

SUMMARY: Paul's View of Sanctification

In summary, we can say that Paul defended His emphasis on grace, he did not apologise for it. Chapter 6 does not introduce any uncertainty about the security of our salvation – in fact Paul's use of words like "certainly" (v5) continue to show his confidence that when a person has been justified they will one day be glorified. God will bring to completion what he has begun. However, he also emphasises that the only way of living that is congruent with the work of God in justifying us is to live a holy life. We have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it since we now live to God? Our slave-ship has been transferred from belonging to sin to belonging to God, how can we now willingly offer ourselves back to sin to serve it? Our baptism and our memory of the futility of our past life should constantly remind us of what we are now, and our response should be to "count" ourselves dead to sin. When we are faced with temptation, our response should be to remember who we are:

- How can I sin when I am dead to sin and my life is for God alone?
- How can I sin when sin was such a cruel master and God has redeemed me to be His slave?
- How can I sin when I belong to Christ?

To quote Vaughan Roberts, "How can I keep telling lies, looking at pornography, spreading gossip or getting drunk when I remember who I am?"

However, Paul's teaching does not just expect holiness of us; it reveals how this is possible in our lives. It is not by the way of the Law ("the written code" – 7:6). The Law was good, in that it revealed our sinfulness, but even those whose delight was in the Law were powerless to keep it because of the sinful nature at work in them. However, there is now a new way – the way of the Spirit (7:6) – which is possible through Christ who rescues us from sin and death (7:24). The scene is set for Chapter 8 where Paul reveals this new way in all its glory. Christ has set us free – now Paul will show us how we can enjoy that freedom in our daily lives. Christian living is about holiness, but that flows from our relationship with God and the work of the Spirit in us, not from our own efforts to earn or keep God's favour.

For the Christian then, sanctification is:

- 1. Vital** – we must continue to be sanctified because:
 - a. It is prefigured in our baptism (6:3-7)
 - b. We live to God, not to sin (6:8-12)
 - c. Grace, under which we live, demands it (6:14)
 - d. We are slaves to righteousness (6:25-23)
 - e. It is the purpose for which we were saved (7:1-4)
- 2. Possible** – we can be made holy because:
 - a. Sin is not our master any more – we are not bound to obey it (6:18)
 - b. We can serve God in the "new way of the Spirit" (7:6)
- 3. Dependent on our choices** – God does not force sanctification upon us, we must continue to count ourselves dead to sin (6:11) and offer ourselves to righteousness (6:19)

CHALLENGE:

- Have you experienced the freedom from slavery to sin that comes through faith in Christ?
- Have you been baptised? If not, why not?
- Are you living the reality of who you are in Christ? Are you counting yourself dead to sin?

Essentials for Life 2: Life in the Spirit (Romans 8)

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How is sanctification possible in our lives?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- How should Christians view suffering?

INTRODUCTION – The role of the Holy Spirit

This chapter contrasts starkly with the hopelessness of 7:7-25. The “wretched man” under the Law is replaced by a victorious, confident, hopeful person. The reason for this difference is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned no less than 19 times in these 27 verses. This is the “way of the Spirit” Paul spoke of in 7:6. There is much we can say about the Holy Spirit from this passage. It is not Paul’s intention to write a summary of the person and work of the Spirit – he is rather describing the life led by the Spirit. However, we can draw out the following points from this passage both about his person and his work.

WHO HE IS:

1. **He is the Spirit of life (v2)** – He brought life to our Spirit when we were justified, and will bring life to our body on the future day when God raises our mortal body to life.
2. **He is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (v9)** – the language Paul uses is utterly trinitarian. The Spirit can be described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Paul can say that the Spirit lives in us (v11) and Christ lives in us (v10), showing the closeness of identity between the persons of the Godhead. The Father, Son and Spirit are one. The Holy Spirit is a person, and He is God.
3. **He is the Spirit of adoption (v15)** – the NIV reads “Spirit of Sonship”, but “adoption” is a more direct rendering of the Greek. The Spirit is the One who brings us into relationship with God as Father and who gives us assurance of this relationship.

WHAT HE DOES:

1. **He sets us free from the law of sin and death (v2)** – the Holy Spirit is the agent of justification. He is the One who begins God’s new creation in us when we trust in Christ. The Bible uses many different terms to describe this event – regeneration, new birth, adoption – and the Spirit is the One who causes all of them.
2. **He communicates His desires to our minds (v5)** – the Spirit is a person, who has desires for our lives. He is the One who communicates God’s will to our minds. It is interesting that Paul sees the mind as the seat of decision making, and the primary place of activity of the Spirit. This is surely part of the promise of the New Covenant that God will write His laws on our minds (see Hebrews 8:10).
3. **He brings life and peace to the minds of those He controls (v6)** – the Spirit renews our minds, and brings peace to us. This is, of course, in response to faith on our part, but the picture is of a healthy mind, full of true and good thoughts, and at peace. If we are worried or anxious, we should rely on the Spirit to bring us the peace of God.
4. **He indwells every believer (vv9-11)** – these verses are quite clear that the essence of belonging to Christ is to have the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for a person to be a Christian but not to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
5. **He will be the agent through whom God will raise our bodies (v11)** – not only has the Spirit already brought life to our spirit, but He will one day bring life to our mortal bodies. He is the agent of regeneration, but He will also be the agent of resurrection. He is responsible for our past justification, our present sanctification and our future glorification.
6. **He brings us assurance of our relationship with God as Father (v16)** – this inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is the primary source of our assurance. Often people emphasise the truth of God’s promises as the basis for our assurance – urging us to know we are saved because we have believed them – and although there is some truth in this, it is not the full picture. The Scriptures speak much more clearly about the inner testimony of the Spirit (see also I John 3:24).
7. **He helps us in our weaknesses by interceding for us according to God’s will (vv26&27)** – the Spirit intercedes in our weaknesses when we do not even know how to pray. He brings God’s will to play in our lives.

So, then, this chapter can truly be viewed as a description of “life through the Spirit”. As John Stott writes: “Thus the Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit, that is to say, a life which is animated, sustained, directed and enriched by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit true Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, indeed impossible”.

LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT (8:1-27)

Notice again that as Paul describes the new way of the Spirit he does so again in “be what you are” terms. He tells us that we live according to the Spirit (v4) and are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit (v9), and that therefore we have an obligation to live according to the Spirit (v12). However, it is noteworthy that **throughout this passage Paul does not give any exhortation to the believer**. This is not to say that we have no part to play in how we live the Christian life (indeed Paul will issue numerous exhortations in Chapters 12-16), but that the power for the Christian life is not found in the strength of our will or the purity of our intention, but in the Spirit of God. What a great encouragement this should be to us as we continue to live for God, often in the face of troubles and suffering. We are victorious because God is at work in us! Paul describes at least 7 aspects of the new way of the Spirit:

1. New freedom from condemnation (vv1-4)

- **There is now no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus (v1)**

The old way of the written code brought condemnation for us – we fell short of God’s glory (3:23), and so deserved death. However, now that we have been united with Christ in His death (6:5), we are now “in Christ” (a favourite phrase of Paul). As a result there is no condemnation remaining for us. The new covenant promises that God will not remember our sins any more (Hebrews 8:12), and this means that we can never be tried and found guilty for our sins. The forgiveness we received in Christ means that we have no fear of ever being condemned. As John 3:17&18 says: “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already”. In Adam we faced condemnation, but in Christ there is no more condemnation. Our salvation is eternally secure.

- **The principle of the Spirit of life sets us free from the principle of sin and death (v2)**

The law (or “principle”) of sin and death used to dominate our lives, but we are now free from it and subject to the law of the Spirit of life. It was the Holy Spirit who brought life to us, making us a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). The use of “me” contrasts this comment with 7:7-25.

- **The sinful nature left the Law powerless to save us (v3) BUT now the Law’s requirements are met in us (v4)**

Verse 3 summarises Paul’s argument in 7:7-25 – that the Law was powerless to save us because of the weakness that was in us because of the sinful nature. God, however, made a new way for us by sending His Son “in the likeness of sinful man” (Jesus was fully human, but was not sinful Himself – He had no sinful nature and never sinned – II Corinthians 5:21) to be a “sin offering” (Paul has already maintained this truth in 3:25 – the death of Christ was not only a demonstration of God’s love, but a sacrifice to God for our sins). Because of Christ’s sacrificial death sin has been condemned in us (God’s judgement upon it fell on Christ in His sacrificial death), so that the righteous demands of the Law can be met in us. In other words, although we fell short of God’s standards, now the demands of His Law are fully met in us – we stand perfect in Him, in His righteousness, and we have the Spirit’s power to live this out in keeping the moral Law (as the New covenant promises, God will write His Laws on our minds – see Hebrews 8:10). In God’s sight we are no longer rebels but sons. No wonder there is no condemnation for us! Notice that verse 4 ends with a “be what you are” type statement – we do not live any more according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. This is not presenting two alternative ways for the Christian to live, but describing the positional reality of what we are in Christ, as verse 9 proves. Because we are alive according to the Spirit we should live according to Him; because sin in us has been condemned, we can meet the full requirements of the Law in our lives. As John Stott writes, “The moral law has not been abolished for us; it is to be fulfilled in us. Although law-obedience is not the *ground* of our justification ... it is the fruit of it and the very meaning of sanctification”. So, then, the Christian should not have disrespect for God’s moral Law, but should respect it all the more. The Spirit-led life will, by definition, fulfil the requirements of God’s Law, for that is the very definition of holiness.

2. New priorities – a new mind (vv5-8)

- **The mind controlled by the sinful nature is set on natural desires (v5) and cannot please God (v8) because the sinful mind is hostile to God’s Law (v7)**

When the sinful nature controls a person’s mind, it is impossible for them to please God since they are incapable of keeping God’s Law. This echoes Paul’s teaching in 7:7-25. It is interesting to see Paul’s emphasis on the mind in these verses. He teaches that the actions follow where the mind is set. Our thoughts are vital, as our mind can lead our feelings to follow it. Right thoughts will lead to right desires, which lead to right actions. We must learn to allow our minds to lead our actions, and so the battle for our minds is central. The phrase “live according to the sinful nature” in verse 5 means literally “are according to the sinful nature”. In other words, Paul is describing the difference of what we were before we were justified with what we are now – we were “according to the sinful nature”, now we are

“according to the Spirit”. It is a positional truth of what God has done in our lives. It is our nature that will determine our mindset, not our mindset determining our nature.

- **Our minds are now set on what the Spirit desires (v5)**

The Holy Spirit has desires for our lives. This is how God’s will is communicated to our minds – through His work in us. When our mind is controlled by Him, it will be fixed on doing the will of God, living a life that honours Him. To set our minds on what the Spirit desires is to set our ambition on serving God.

- **The sinful mind is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace (v6)**

The result of the Spirit’s control in our minds is life and peace. This is the experiential peace of God (as opposed to the positional peace with God of 5:1). When the Spirit controls our minds there is peace from anxiety, worry and stress. He assures us of our relationship with God and our position in His grace, and brings a new assurance that God is in control and that we can triumph in every circumstance through Him. Perhaps one reason we often miss out on God’s peace in our thought-life is because we are not preoccupied with holiness.

3. New life (vv9-11)

- **Everyone who has the Spirit is not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit (v9a)**

If the Spirit of God lives in a person they are controlled by (actually, the Greek is less forceful, “in the Spirit”, rather than the NIV’s “controlled by”, which might imply to some a form, of coercion) that Spirit, not by the sinful nature. This is a parallel with Paul’s teaching in Chapter 6 about slavery. We are either slaves to sin (controlled by the sinful nature) or slaves to God (controlled by the Spirit of God). Every person who has the Spirit living in them is controlled by Him – that is that every person who is indwelt by the Spirit is a slave to God not sin. Of course this is not to say that the person who is indwelt by the Spirit always does what He desires – He never forces His will on the believer – but that every Christian finds the Spirit ready to empower him / her whenever he sets his will to do God’s will. Those people who do not believe in eternal security, to be consistent in their reading of Scripture, should teach (based on this verse) that every time a believer falls from grace the Holy Spirit leaves him / her.

- **Every true Christian has the Holy Spirit (v9b)**

Not only is it true that everyone who has the Holy Spirit is a true Christian, but Paul also maintains that every true Christian has the Holy Spirit. The New Testament is clear on this matter, as every Christian is addressed as having the Holy Spirit living with them. Paul’s words here are clear – that the person who does not have the Holy Spirit cannot belong to Christ. By definition, therefore, every person who belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit. No New Testament passage suggests that it is possible to have the Spirit in two different degrees, and so I maintain that every true believer has received the Holy Spirit. Of course, it is possible for us to have a deeper relationship with the Spirit, and for us to be filled repeatedly by Him (Ephesians 5:18), but it is not possible for us to lose Him or to have Him but not have been baptised with Him. The Spirit is a person, not a thing, and it is possible for Him to have more control of us, but not for us to have different amounts of Him. He can have more of us, but we cannot have more of Him. I believe that the Scriptures use the terms born again, justified and baptised in the Spirit to describe the same process by which we acknowledge Christ as Saviour and Lord, are brought into relationship with God as His children, and receive the Holy Spirit to indwell us. We may have many subsequent experiences of deeper intimacy with, fuller yielding to, or special empowerment by the Spirit, but we received the Spirit once for all when we were brought into relationship with Christ.

- **The Spirit brings life to our spirit now, and will bring life to our body in the future (vv10&11)**

Paul explains here that our redemption is in two parts. Our spirit has been made alive because of righteousness since Christ is in us, but our bodies are still dead because of sin. The effect of sin on our bodies, which is disease, ageing and death, has not yet been reversed. One day, however, God will give new life to our mortal bodies through the Holy Spirit (v11). Paul continues this teaching in verse 23, where he describes the redemption of our bodies as future. This may seem obvious to us, since we know that as Christians our bodies will still die one day, and that we are still prone to disease, but it is important that we firmly understand that in this life God does not promise us healing from illness or prolonged life. God may heal in specific cases, but the redemptive work of Christ on our bodies awaits a future day when we will receive a new body (see I Corinthians 15). Until that day Christians should expect that we will experience illness and death in much the same way as our non-Christian friends. Those people who teach a gospel of “health and wealth” or who claim that physical healing can be ours if we claim it by faith because Christ has born our infirmities are not preaching Paul’s gospel. A Christian theology of suffering has much more to do with perseverance and grace in suffering than with healing or deliverance from it. Paul will expand this thinking in vv18-27. The words “if” in these verses do not express doubt about the indwelling (at least not for the true believer), but could be translated “since” – they describe results of the indwelling of the Spirit, not doubt about it.

4. New obligation (vv12-14)

- **We are no longer obliged to the sinful nature, but to the Spirit (v12)**

Again this verse refers back to Chapter 6 and our freedom from sin. We have no obligation to do what the sinful nature wants – sin is no longer our master, and has no claim over us, we owe it nothing – but we do have an obligation to follow the Spirit – since God is our new master. The decision is ours – will we live according to the one we are obliged to, or the one we are not obliged to?

- **Those who live according to the sinful nature will die, but those led by the Spirit will live (v13)**

This verse, if taken out of context, is open to misinterpretation. It has been suggested that because Paul is writing to Christians he is suggesting that they can live one or other of these ways, and therefore either receive eternal life or die. However, when we understand what Paul has already said in verse 9, we realise that every true Christian has already “put to death the misdeeds of the body” by the Spirit (this also refers back to 6:6 – where Paul says that “our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with”). Notice that Paul does not speak of the body itself as evil, but that the deeds done by it are evil – the body in itself is good, but our actions in it can be “misdeeds”. This verse then becomes a reassurance of our eternal security – we will live because we have already died with Christ. Those who live according to the sinful nature, on the other hand, will die, but this cannot be true of the believer, since we “do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” (v4). However, the mark of a true believer is not a confession of faith that makes no difference in their life – rather the true disciple of Christ will take up their cross and deny themselves to follow Him (Matthew 16:24). True discipleship involves death to self – true repentance is to turn from self to God.

- **Those led by the Spirit are the sons of God (v14)**

Paul now brings his focus onto the new relationship we have with God by the regenerating work of the Spirit. We are Gods sons, and it is by the Spirit that we put to death the misdeeds of the body. Again, those who teach that a person can be saved and then lost must accept that every time a person falls from grace they cease to be a son of God (it is correct to use the word “son” here rather than “child”, since the thought is one of inheritance, which in the ancient world was exclusively for sons). This makes God into a Father who repeatedly disowns His children and then adopts them again when they return to Him – a thought that is incompatible with New Testament teaching on the Fatherhood of God (not least in the parable Jesus told about the lost son, whose father never disowned him – Luke 15).

5. New relationship – children of God (vv15-17)

- **No longer slaves to fear, but sons of God (v15a)**

The Spirit has been received (a single past event, as in 5:5) by these Christians, and His work is not to make us slaves again to fear, but to make us God’s children, since He is the Spirit of adoption. The Christian life should never be dominated by fear – either fear of Satan, of death or of losing our salvation. As God’s children we are secure and safe, and this should give us a new peace to live a life devoted to God without fear that perhaps we might fall from grace or lose our relationship with God. Notice that this verse begins with “for” – in other words it is the proof that Paul’s comment in verse 14 about them being sons of God is true.

- **We have an intimate relationship with our Abba (v15b) – the Spirit assures us of this (v16)**

The word *Abba* was similar in Aramaic to our word “daddy”, and its use here speaks of an intimate, tender relationship. The confidence we have to call God our Father, and to relate to Him in this way, comes from the Spirit Himself, just as He poured out God’s love into our hearts (5:5). It is He who makes this ongoing, close relationship possible. Furthermore, He brings us assurance of this relationship, testifying with our spirit. This is the basis of our assurance of salvation, that the Spirit gives us an inner witness (see also I John 3:24). It is right, then, that when we pray we pray “Our Father”, just as Christ taught His disciples (Matthew 6:9-13). The word “cry” suggests joy and confidence as we call out to God in prayer. This assurance is not something for a privileged few (as some commentators have suggested, based on the experience of some believers), but is and should be real for every believer.

- **Our position is now as heirs of God – to share in Christ’s sufferings and in God’s glory (v17)**

In the Roman world the process of adoption signified the appointment of heirs. Even the natural children had to be adopted if they were to share in their father’s inheritance. So, Paul links the fact that we are adopted as God’s children with the fact that we are heirs together with Christ of God’s glory. Our future glorification is assured because we are in a new relationship with God as Father. First, however, we must share in Christ’s sufferings. This may be either a reference to being united with Christ in His death (see 6:5) or may refer to sharing in physical suffering in Christ’s name (which would tie in with verse 18). In the second case, this would not mean that all Christians must physically share in Christ’s sufferings to be saved, but would tell us that we should expect to suffer for our faith. Throughout Church history,

persecution has been the norm for those who have lived godly lives in Christ. Of course, we should also be careful not to read this phrase as a condition for us to keep our salvation – that is, if we fail to suffer physically with Christ that we will lose it. Rather, the fact of our sharing in His sufferings is the proof of the genuineness of our salvation.

6. New hope: Redemption of our bodies from the curse of Sin (vv18-25)

• Our current sufferings cannot compare with the glory that will be revealed in us (vv18&19)

These verses form the clearest statement so far in Romans of Paul's belief about our future glorification. He urges us, when we face suffering, to look forward to the glory that will be revealed in us. When we compare these two, there is no doubt at all that the future glory outweighs all suffering we might possibly face. Since we have the hope of Heaven and the confidence that one day we will be made perfect in Christ's presence, we should continue to persevere. For the Christian, suffering and death are not ends in themselves, but stepping stones to greater glory. Furthermore, verse 19 pictures the entire created universe waiting eagerly for that future day when God's sins will be revealed. Now the children of God are indistinguishable from other people on earth – we share the same bodies, sufferings and deaths – but on that day all creation will recognise those who are God's adopted children.

• God subjected creation to the curse of decay and death so that one day it can be set free with His children (vv20-22)

Paul now speaks of the created universe being "subjected to frustration ... by the will of the one who subjected it". He is speaking of the effect of mankind's sin on all creation. Genesis 3:14-19 reveals God's curse on the serpent, the man and woman, and the ground as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. Because they sinned the entire universe is in "bondage to decay". We see this principle at work everywhere we look. Death affects not only mankind, but every living creature. Things have a natural tendency to decay, rust and crumble over time. The world is moving from greater order to less order as time passes by. Genetic material is prone to mutation and aberration. However, when the children of God are revealed, all creation will share in their glorious freedom. The gospel is not just about God's redemption of human beings – it has cosmic implications. God is reconciling all things to Himself through Christ (Colossians 1:20) – the gospel is the story of the universe and God's relationship to it.

• Our bodies are also subject to this curse, and we hope for the future redemption of our bodies (vv23-25)

We see here the reason for Paul's doctrine of suffering. The redemption of our bodies is still future. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit, since He lives in us, and has given life to our spirits (verse 10), but on that future day when glory is revealed in us the same Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies (verse 11). In this sense, the presence of the Spirit in our lives is a guarantee of the future completion of God's redemption of our entire person – if we have the firstfruits now, we will reap the entire harvest in future. The gospel brings hope for body, soul and spirit, but these do not all come at the time of our justification. Christians must understand that they cannot expect certain healing from disease or preservation from death in the present time. Yes, we believe that the curse will be reversed, and that then there will be no more suffering or death (see Rev 21:1-4 & 22:3), but until that day we must endure suffering and triumph in it. We hope for this future redemption of our bodies because we do not have it yet, but in the mean time we wait for it patiently. It is worth noting that Paul's teaching here (as with I Corinthians 15) is clearly that our eternal existence will be in a body. The notion that is so prevalent in Western thought that we will somehow be disembodied spirits in the afterlife derives entirely from Greek philosophy, and not at all from Scripture. The Bible is consistent in teaching that we will live on a new earth in a restored universe (creation will not be destroyed but renewed) in physical bodies (see Isaiah 65:17ff, II Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21-22). Our eternal life will be much more like our current existence than we often imagine – it will be a perfected human existence free from the taint of sin and death. What an amazing hope we have – this is the hope in which we "were saved" (the past tense indicates our justification, or liberation from sin)! Meanwhile we may "groan inwardly", as we long to be what we will be on that day. This yearning for glory is the common experience of those who seek to live godly lives and love the Lord.

7. New help: the Spirit intercedes for us (vv26&27)

• The Spirit helps us in our weakness (v26a)

God does not leave us helpless in our sufferings and weakness. He does not simply tell us to "grin and bear it"; somehow to endure and hope that one day it will come to an end. He has given us a very real help in our need – the Holy Spirit. He is an ever present help to us, and a source of strength. When we are weak – whether in the face of trials or temptations – He brings divine power to us to sustain us. What an amazing help we have. As Christ said to His disciples, speaking of the Holy Spirit who would come to them, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will comfort you" (John 14:18).

• The Spirit intercedes for us when we do not know what to pray (v26b)

This is the primary way in which the Spirit helps us in our suffering and weakness. He prays for us, even when we cannot find the right words or the right way to pray. Have you ever experienced that feeling, when you don't know where to turn or how you can make it through (especially when you do not know whether to pray for deliverance from or sustenance through suffering)? Paul is very honest about the feelings we may face when enduring trials (he knew from experience!), but he reveals the Spirit as our great helper (our "Counsellor" at this time). He pleads for us (intercedes for us) before God, translating our deepest needs to Him with "groans that words cannot express" (actually the Greek reads literally "groans that are not expressed" – they **will not** be expressed rather than that they **cannot** be expressed). This is not a reference to praying "with my spirit" (I Corinthians 14:15), as some have suggested, for in I Corinthians it is Paul's spirit that is praying, but here it is the Holy Spirit who prays. To read here a reference to speaking in tongues would be to read into the text. There is nothing to say that the groans here are audible to the human ear at all, and if they are they are groans rather than intelligible, translatable words (as speaking in tongues is in Scripture). What a blessing to know that when we are deeply troubled the Spirit prays for us, bringing God's mercy to us.

- **The Spirit makes God's will effectual in our lives (v27)**

God ("He who searches our heart") understands the mind of the Spirit, even if we cannot, since the Spirit always prays for us in accordance with God's will. Not only does the Spirit plead for us before God, but He also communicates the will of God to us. Through His power and intercession we can follow God's perfect will for our lives. God's purpose can be completed in our lives because the Holy Spirit indwells, leads and empowers us.

OUR SECURITY IN CHRIST'S LOVE AND GOD'S PURPOSE (vv28-39)

So, then what is God's will for us? Is it that we should be free of suffering, living lives of no trouble? No! In these verses Paul teaches us that God always works for our good in **everything** that happens to us (v28). We must be careful not to minimise the force of Paul's statement in verse 28. While it is true that Paul is NOT saying that all things that happen to us are good in themselves (to claim this would be to suggest that sin itself is good, since clearly much of our suffering is a result of sin), but he does say that God works in all things for our good. In other words, God will bring something good out of even the worst situation for us. How wonderful! Even the most painful, destructive experiences of our lives find meaning in God's plan for us. With Him, every circumstance becomes an opportunity for us to grow and for Him to be glorified. The scope of the gospel embraces our whole lives and makes sense of them. Without God suffering and death are a cruel joke, but with Him although they remain painful and bad, good can come from them. Verse 28, then is a wonderful statement of the goodness and universal application of God's plan for us. He always wants what is best for us, and will use all things towards that end as only He can. To fully grasp Paul's teaching in this verse, and to avoid any misunderstanding, it is worth examining each clause in turn:

- **We know that** – this should be the confident knowledge and experience of every believer
- **in all things** – there are no exceptions to this rule – all of life is embraced
- **God works** – we are **not** simply saying that things will turn out OK in the end by themselves
- **For the good** – God's purpose is always good from every situation
- **Of those who love Him** – this promise is not for all people, only for the Lord's own people

We can be sure of God's good intention towards us and confident in our hope for two reasons:

1) Predestination (vv29&30)

In these verses Paul presents the doctrines of predestination and election. These are two of the most hotly debated doctrines of Scripture. We must be careful on an issue such as this, over which godly Christians disagree, to attempt to stick to what Scripture does say, and not speculate in trying to fill in the gaps. On one extreme are those who claim that God did not choose those people who will be saved. This view is common among those who deny the doctrine of eternal security. Some even suggest that God may not have complete knowledge of those things that will happen in the future. However, this view lessens our understanding of God's power and knowledge. The Scriptures, not least here, see Him as the one who can foresee the response of people to His call to repentance and offer of life. Furthermore, however we understand it, we should recognise that the Scriptures do teach some form of election ("choosing") of His people on God's part. However this is understood, I firmly believe that it adds to the doctrine of eternal security. If God knows who will be saved in the end, He would not save any who could or would subsequently be lost. If He has chosen those who will be saved, how could they then become un-chosen? The doctrine of election negates the claim that we can be saved and lost.

On the other extreme are those who believe in "double predestination" – the claim that those who will be in Heaven have been chosen by God and those who will be in Hell have been predestined to that end. This is not taught anywhere in Scripture. While the Scriptures do teach (as here) that God has predestined those who will be glorified, they nowhere suggest that He has chosen other people to be damned in Hell. God wants all people to be saved (I Timothy 2:4, II Peter 3:9), and those people who are lost finally will be lost because they have rejected His call to repentance. The people who take this

extreme have a view of God's grace as being irresistible and of God's election being unconditional – that is, that the elect will be saved irrespective of their own will. Again, both of these claims lack explicit warrant from Scripture. To understand the Biblical teaching, and to limit ourselves specifically to it, we must look carefully at what Paul actually says. He presents five steps in the process of God's work in His people: foreknowing, predestination, calling, justifying and glorifying.

- **Foreknowing** – This is the starting point of God's work in us. He knew before the creation of the Universe that some people would respond in repentance and faith to His mercy and grace and that others would not. Knowing this, God prepared a way of salvation for those who would respond to Him. Understanding this stage is key to understanding the following steps. Paul is not suggesting that God randomly chose some people for salvation and others for Hell. He is simply saying that God, in His infinite knowledge and wisdom, knew us before He created us. We cannot answer the question why God then continued to allow sin to corrupt His perfect creation – the answer to that question is for the mind of God to know – we should simply be thankful that God, knowing this, still chose to create us and to offer salvation to us. This was not a painless decision for Him – in fact it brought the greatest pain to His heart, since it involved the death of His own Son.
- **Predestination** – This step means that God set a destiny for those people He foreknew. In other words, God provided a solution for those who would have faith in Him. He prepared a gift of life, a hope of glory, for these people. This in no way removes the requirement for repentance and faith on our part, since God never over-rides our will to force His salvation on us, but simply assures us that if we have received God's gift it will not disappoint us! God does not make mistakes. The purpose of our predestination is that we shall be conformed to the likeness of Christ. This work will be complete when we are glorified, but it is the object of our present sanctification. If this is what God has predestined us for, we should proceed with it now. As Paul says elsewhere, we are being "transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18).
- **Calling** – This is the first step that happens during our life. God called us to Himself by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for a person to come to Him unless He calls them in this effectual way. This is distinct from the general call of the gospel, which calls "whoever" will believe to respond. As we proclaim the universal command to repentance (Acts 17:30), the Spirit calls those who will be saved to faith in Christ. The work of salvation belongs to God from start to finish.
- **Justifying** – When we respond to God's calling in faith we are justified.
- **Glorification** – Having been justified, we will be glorified. There is no doubt in this, hence the use of the aorist (past) tense. If God has already completed 4 steps in His 5 step plan, why would we doubt that He will complete the fifth?

When we face trouble and suffering, should we fear that God has or will abandon us? No, of course not, God's plan is certain – He has foreknown, predestined, called and justified us, and He will finish His work by glorifying us. Far from bringing confusion to our minds, the doctrine of predestination should give peace. We must not step beyond Scripture to claim that those who will not be saved were predestined for Hell or that God's calling cannot be resisted, but we must not fall short of Scripture by denying our eternal security in God's purpose. It is God who saves, and he does all things well! Take courage then!

2) God's grace (vv31-34)

In these verses Paul asks a series of 5 rhetorical questions that illustrate the grace of God to us:

a) **God is for us – no one can be against us (v31)**

If God is on our side (as shown in vv28-30), who can stand against His purpose? If He is bringing good from every situation, can anyone turn these situations against us? If His plan is to glorify us, can anyone interfere with it? The answer depends on our confidence in God's power and faithfulness! Is He powerful and faithful? Yes! Then we can have confidence.

b) **God has given us Christ – He will also graciously give us all things (v32)**

If God has already given us the most precious thing He had in this way, we can have confidence that He will give us everything we need by His grace. God's grace did not end with our justification (or with His gift to us of Christ), it continues to be the principle under which we live. We are kept and sustained by grace alone. He will not fall short in fulfilling His promises and His work in us.

c) **God chose and justified us – no one can bring any charge against us (v33)**

What does justification mean? It means that God has declared us not guilty in His court. How, then, can anyone else bring any charge against us? This is one of Satan's great tactics – to accuse the brothers (Revelation 12:10 – the very name "Satan" means "accuser"). He will do anything he can to make us believe that our justification was not complete – that our sins after conversion or after baptism will negate what Christ has done for us, or that we might commit an unpardonable sin and so fall from grace. He tries to bring us down, and make us ineffectual in guilt and shame. If he tries this tactic on you, rejoice in your justification. Revisit Romans 3 and 5, and realise again what Christ has accomplished for you. Leave sinful ways behind, and move on in the freedom of the Spirit.

d) Christ is risen and lives to intercede for us – no one can condemn us (v34)

If Christ has risen from the dead our salvation is certain. The resurrection proves that Christ's death accomplished full justification for us, but because our lives are united with His, His resurrection life also assures our final glorification. No one can condemn us, because Christ died for us (in His death, our sin was condemned – verse 3) and now lives to intercede for us. No one can speak ill of us before God, as His Son is speaking in his ear good things about us. Not only does the Spirit intercede within us in our weakness (verse 26), but Christ intercedes for us at God's right hand. How vital the resurrection life of Christ is to us. Because He lives forever, our salvation is secure.

e) Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ – nothing in all creation! (vv35-39)

Paul's final source of confidence in God's purpose for us is His love for us. He has already proclaimed the unconditional love of God in 5:5-8, and now he describes it as "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verse 39). He triumphantly proclaims that nothing (none of the examples he gives, nor anything else) can separate us from God's love. Some writers, who deny eternal security, have suggested that while nothing else can separate us from God's love, we can do this ourselves. I do not find this argument convincing for a number of reasons. Firstly, I believe that we ourselves (both in the present and the future – verse 38) are covered in the statement "nor anything else in all creation" (verse 39). Secondly, I believe that this suggestion makes God's love conditional on our behaviour, which, as 5:5-8 has shown, it is not! Thirdly I believe this suggestion misunderstands the nature of our salvation, which, as Paul has shown in the 8 chapters so far, depends entirely on His work and character, and not on ours. A salvation that must be kept or maintained by our efforts is a salvation of works. Nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ!

ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY IN ROMANS 8:

The two great themes of this chapter are the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (see above), and our security in Christ. Paul presents a number of convincing reasons why we can be assured of our salvation:

- 1. No more condemnation for those who are in Christ (vv1&2)**
- 2. Christ's death has condemned sin in us, so that the Laws demands can be met in us (vv3&4)**
- 3. The indwelling Holy Spirit has given life to our spirit (vv9-11)**
- 4. We are the sons & heirs of God – the Spirit assures us of this (vv12-17)**
- 5. Our destiny is to be revealed as the glorified sons of God – this is a certain hope (vv18-27)**
- 6. God's purpose for us is good, even through bad circumstances (v28)**
- 7. God has predestined us to be like Jesus (vv29&30)**
- 8. God is for us, no one can be against us (v31)**
- 9. God freely gave us Christ – He will also give us all things (v32)**
- 10. Christ has justified us – no one can accuse us (v33)**
- 11. Christ intercedes for us – on one can condemn us (v34)**
- 12. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (vv35-39)**

With so many powerful statements of our security, all of which rest in the person and work of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and none of which rest on our own lifestyle or deeds, how can we doubt that our salvation is eternally secure. Let us give thanks to God for what He has done for us, and live out our salvation as we allow the Spirit to lead our minds and deeds.

CONCLUSION: More than conquerors

In conclusion, then, the "way of the Spirit" presented here is a triumphant life in the face of all life's circumstances. We are "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (verse 37). In every situation we can have victory because of His love and purpose for us. He will bring good for us from every situation. This goodness is made effectual in our lives by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. He has made our spirits alive, he enables us to know and seek God's desires, He brings us into relationship with God as sons and assures us of this relationship, He helps us in our weaknesses, especially in suffering, He intercedes for us with God and enables us to know and do God's will, and He will finally bring life to our mortal bodies at the future resurrection. The Christian life is a life of daily relationship with God, enjoying the benefits of Christ's death for us as we live empowered by the Spirit. What an exciting, amazing life to live! How superior is this triumphant life to the "old way of the written code" described by Paul in 7:7-25. Praise God for his love and purpose for us. Let us continue to live for Him in this present age.

CHALLENGE:

- Are you living in daily relationship to God through the power of the Spirit?
- How do you view suffering in your life?
- Do you have confidence in God's love and purpose for you?