

ROMANS 6 TO 8 -

PAUL'S KEY TO THE LIBERATED LIFE

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PART 1

I suppose every eager searcher after God's truth for the liberated life knows that the biblical key to opening the door lies in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters six to eight. I have been a persistent searcher for years, and these pages of my many Bibles have been well worn! I think now, in my nineties, as never before, I have in working focus what Paul is saying. So I am writing this for those who are also diggers and hopefully finders.

I will assume that we are already born-again knowers by God's Spirit (Rom. 5:5). As confessed sinners, in our guilty and lost condition, we found "peace with God" through Christ, who was "set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood" and "Raised again for our justification" (Rom. 3:25; 4:25; 5:1,5,10). Now we come to the practical question of Rom. 6:1, as up to date today as when it was first posed. Is there such a sure provision for daily consistent and holy living as for having the past blotted out? "Yes, surely," says Paul. "Don't you know that it is all part of the gift of a full salvation?" So in these chapters he begins to explain himself, and we will follow along.

INTO DEEP WATERS

Paul starts by taking for granted that his readers have a deeper quality of spiritual understanding than most of us today had at our new birth. "Know ye not," he asks, "that when our Lord Jesus Christ hung on that cross, he represented us all, and therefore His dying there means you and I died there?" Water baptism -- our being immersed beneath the waters and lifted out again -- is a symbol of the fact that when He died on the cross and was buried in the tomb, by faith we died, were buried, and then were raised with Him (Rom. 6:3,4). And as the Holy Spirit entered the resurrected body of Jesus, which represented all ours, the same Spirit has entered us, delivering us from Satan,

whose sin nature had entered our bodies and taken us over at the Fall (Rom. 6:5,6).

Therefore, we have died in Christ's death to the indwelling and operation of Satan's nature in us: we are "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:7-11). Sin, however, isn't dead to us as an operating power in our world, and thus we experience its pressures on us. But in our bodies we have died to its false claims to be still dwelling in us and thus expressing its self-for-self nature by us. Equally, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is dwelling in us and living His quality of other-love by us. Thus, we are expressers of God's holy nature, just as formerly we were expressers of Satan's sin nature (1 Jn. 4:4,6).

"So," Paul says, "based on the historical fact that Christ settled the sin question once for all" (Rom. 6:9,10), "we now reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God" (Rom. 6:11). We therefore no longer yield ourselves as agents of that self-for-self sin nature, but as agents of God's other-love nature. This is strong meat, packed into a few sentences. But does it really work out in our lives?

A STARTLING STATEMENT

A much deeper problem needs to be solved in order to make workable the life of being dead to sin and alive to God through Christ. We must be dead to law, as well as to sin. But why? Is not the law a safeguard to keep us from running into loose living? "No," Paul maintains. "You have a much deeper reality to learn -- that you have no independent human self, which keeps or doesn't keep the law. You are really just a slave to the deity who owns you, and it is his law you keep."

Paul slips in a statement here which sounds startling, but which turns the key in the lock for us when we know it. "Sin shall not have dominion over you," he states, "because you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). But what does that mean? Many would ask, "Is not the law the standard for right living, announced by Moses in those Ten Commandments and demanded of us by God, with the penalty of judgment and wrath if we disobey it? Is not the Law the means by which God exercises His control over us and by which we

endeavor to live? Obviously, we would go wildly into lives of self-gratifying license, if the conditions of the Law were removed."

But this is our vast error. We have been under the Satanic delusion of being independent selves who can and must respond to law. And while we think this, we are actually still slaves to Satan, who compels us either to try and fulfill or to resist God's laws, thereby obeying his own law of sin and death. So the more we think we should obey God's Law, the more Satan is aroused to make us break it. And we shall always have this problem while we blindly think we are independent selves who can keep the law.

THE GREAT DECEPTION

The main consequence of our yielding to Satan at the Fall was that he deceived us all (Rev. 12:9) into thinking that we have a human self which can operate and manage itself, even as he lyingly thinks he can manage himself. In fact, we are only operated and managed by the deity self -- Spirit of Truth or spirit of error (1 Jn. 4:6) -- who owns us. This was symbolized in the Garden by receiving the fruit of one or the other of the two trees. So when the Law, which is meant to expose Satan's lie, comes to us in our deluded condition, Satan has the laugh on us. We obey his self-for-self sin laws, being his slaves, and cannot obey God's laws.

We who are saved admitted our sins in their outer forms and received forgiveness and justification through our Lord Jesus Christ and the new birth of the Spirit. But we were still too blind to recognize the depth of Satan's deceit in us. We thought that as saved and new creatures in Christ we could still take a share in managing ourselves.

Paul explains the full meaning of redemption through our dying in Jesus' death to Sin-Satan's indwelling and becoming alive in His resurrection to God's Spirit now indwelling us. But it is meaningless to reckon and say that we are now dead to sin and alive to God while that root deception is not yet out of us and we think we are more than a people managed only by the deity spirit in us as vessels, branches, temples, slaves, or wives.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

In order for us to learn this indwelling principle to its depths, Paul challenges, "Just try to keep the Law, and you'll find the very opposite occurring. You have been a slave to Satan and sin and are now a slave to Christ and His righteousness. But that change of owner and indweller doesn't truly lay ahold of you in its reality while there remains some sense of self-relying self in you as if you are not just a slave. So just try to keep the law and live the Christian life; and you will find you can't, because there never was a 'just you'."

Your trying is really the remnant of Satan's deceit on you that you are an independent self. Then you will respond to his sin controls and fall on your face in your failures to keep the law; and that failure will at last expose to you this lie that you can act and respond independently. There is no such thing. your "I can" is still Satan having his lying hold on you.

Ten at last, it can become real to you that Jesus' dying for us and as us, and His rising by God's Spirit for and as us means a change of ownership. But we never did own ourselves. Satan owner is out for keeps and Christ owner is in for keeps. Now we just need to know we are Christ-managed, never self-managed, and no longer Satan-managed. The outer Law is now meaningless. We are dead to it because our "I" is solely the expresser of God's life; and he operates His laws and nature spontaneously in us, by us, and as us. That is our answer to every false claim in this Satan-infected world that Satan has a hold on us. Christ in us is our law; and He fulfills it by us, just as Satan used to fulfill his by us. Satan is out for keeps, Christ is in for keeps and now we can actually live what we said we do live in Romans 6:11 -- dead to sin and alive to God in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11).

THE BASIS OF THE SOLUTION: ONLY CONTAINERS

In eternity, God begat His Son, thereby transmuting His own fire self into a light self and becoming the self of other love. We understand from Genesis that our first parents were created in God's image, to be containers of His Spirit and expressers of His nature by means of their humanity. To symbolize

this planned union, the Tree of Life with its precious fruit was set in the midst of the Garden.

Satan, on the other hand, his self of fiery desires into the self-for-self nature of consuming love. And this nature of his is what he infused into us all at the Fall, as though it were ours. So man, who was designed to be united with the Spirit of self-for-others, was tricked into yielding to the Satanic spirit of self-for-self (Eph. 2:1-3; Jn 8:44).

In the present, we have learned and by faith put into practice our Lord Jesus Christ's Calvary identification with us and as us. As a result, a tremendous change of indwelling spirit has taken place in us; and that deceiver no longer indwells and controls us.

NO SEPARATE SELF

When Paul tells us that we are no longer under that former outer law of Moses, doesn't that mean that we shall be given over to a spirit of license? "God forbid," pronounces Paul. In our new life our human selves are motivated, controlled, and spontaneously express the nature of God, by His Spirit united to our spirits. Laying the foundation for this assurance in Romans 6:16-7:6, Paul there presents one strong evidence after another that there is no intermediate, "independent me" to be taken over, unless we foolishly believe it.

"First," he says, "we were always slaves; and a slave just obeys his owner." We had handed ourselves over to owner Sin-Satan, to express his sin-nature. Now, however, we have become God's willing slaves through the obedience of faith which takes Him at His word, and we express His nature of holiness.

"Put it this way," Paul explains. "We were free in our sinning, with no response to God's law. Now we are free in our right living, with no response to Satan's law. And there is no 'you,' with an in-between or independent life of your own (Rom 6:16-20)."

Next Paul introduces a second illustration: a fruit-bearing tree. he describes how we are now producing right, good fruit in our lives, whereas we were ashamed of the former fruit (Rom 6:21,22). He wants us to understand that we

are only branches which have changed trees. We never produced fruit without a tree!

To sum it up, we learn through the slave and branch analogies that we never exercised any kind of in-between life as self-operators. We are slaves of either one owner or another, or branches of either one vine or the other. Therefore, the idea that we humans were self-operating selves and had a "nature" or quality of life of our own has been a vast human illusion -- there never was such a thing. We have been created to produce the way of life of our Deity Creator and Operator. Only first we had to experience and discard through Calvary that false deity operator, who produced that opposite, negative way of life.

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul uses one further powerful and convincing illustration - the law of marriage, which he speaks of here as the "law of the husband" (Rom 7:2). The wife is legally bound to her husband so long as he lives, and he is her "lord" (1 Pet 3:6); she receives his seed, conceives by it, and produces their family.

We humans were "married" at the Fall to our Sin-satan husband and became his sin family, he working in us the "motions of sins" which produced "fruit unto death" (Rom 7:5). We had to do this according to the law and demands of marriage, as any change of husbands would have been an "adultery." It looked hopeless; our husband was not going to die.

But there was One, representing the whole human family, who died as us. So the marriage was dissolved because we died "wherein we were held" (Rom 7:6). The dissolution of the first marriage and release from that husband meant that in Christ's resurrection we were immediately married to another, our risen Saviour, and are now under His law.

The law of marriage in Romans 7:1-6 is therefore a continuation by Paul of his two illustrations from Romans 6. For just as we have always been slaves to an owner and branches producing the fruit of a tree, we have always produced the fruit of a husband. We have never been widows conceiving without a husband.

A FRUSTRATING COMPLICATION

Now comes the burning question. If the new relationship has replaced the old, and given us fully-satisfying life, rich fruit, happy service, loving union and communion, and the conscious ability to be who we long to be and help others to be the same, why doesn't it happen? What is wrong? Where is this completion in Christ, loving as He loved, walking as he walked with the faith that overcomes, being more than conquerors, easily living out the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus said we would, as lights in the world? Hasn't Paul made it plain to us that we have been crucified, raised, and ascended with Jesus and inwardly confirmed by the Spirit? Then where is the snag?

This burning question has greatly disturbed and seemingly disrupted our first faith statements, by which Paul told us to "reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God." It has also caused many sincere, born again, Bible rooted believers to use a nice little cliché: our position in Christ is one thing, but our condition in its outworking is quite another. And they usually add, "Of course, our condition does not level up to our position." But this is precisely what Paul's says does level up! Our position in Christ and our condition in living this Christ-Life are one and the same.

Next Paul reaches the least understood and most misused section of his Romans letter, or of all his writings. But when understood through Paul's own explanation and experienced by the inner confirmation of the Spirit, this section gives the desperate believer the one key that turns the lock and the whole freedom he seeks. In his need, the believer must find the full and final meaning of life, for which he was created and is now redeemed by grace. This section (which we shall cover in Part II) extends from Romans 7:7 through 7:25 and then is fulfilled in Romans 7:26 right through chapter 8.

Part 2

In Part One of this article, Paul had pointed out that in our redeemed experience of justification by faith and new birth of the Spirit, we do not continue in sin. The reason is that as our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose

again as representing us, we then died with Him to being sin-indwelt and rose with Him to being Christ-indwelt, as symbolized by our burial and rising in water baptism. So now we live yielded to God and expressing His right living in our members.

But this is based on a further startling fact of a different kind -- that we are no longer "under law, but under grace," and that we are "dead to law" as well as "dead to sin." We are thus not only freed from the guilt of broken law, but from responding to and having to operate law at all!

But, steady! If we are not under law, do we mistakenly conclude that we shall easily slip back into sin living? Paul then opens to us the basic radical delusion that we have lived in since the Fall, under the Satanic lie of us being independent self-managing selves who must therefore see to it that we respond to law by our self-efforts. But the actual fact is that we were never created to be independent human selves, but were deceived into that delusion by Satan at the Fall.

Paul then points out that in fact we have always been just slaves, either to the sin-owner or the righteousness-owner: branches bearing the fruit of either the false vine or the True Vine: married and producers of the seed of either Satan-husband or Christ-husband. There has never been such a lie and delusion of us being independent self-acting, self-producing human selves, and responding by ourselves to a law of evil or good. Paul now proceeds to explain his own experience of discovery and release from his false deceived bondage to this radical misconception, and thus his freedom in Christ to a totally liberated life.

BACK TO HIS BEGINNING

In Romans 7:7-25 Paul turns from general statements to the strictly personal. How do I find that the Christian life works? How do you? To explain this and to identify with us all, Paul does a big thing. He deliberately backtracks from his actual present experience as "dead to the law," and aligns himself with every

born again believer, using the present tense of "I, I, I." He starts with his new-born experience, then shares with us his early years of spiritual adolescence, and finally his searchings and wrestlings right through to the final answer for himself, and thus for us all.

Paul's use of the present tense about himself, in sharing what he had long left behind, has been misunderstood through all these succeeding years by millions of sincere believers, who have themselves not entered into the release of the liberated "I." Thinking that the furthest a believer can know in lie is humiliation, struggles, and constant failures under sin's apparent dominion, they have falsely deduced a "two-nature" condition, as if we humans are permanently caught up in the opposing strife of sin and holiness natures. If, as they say, these natures were both a part of our very selves, then we would have to oscillate despairingly between them and take them for granted as our normal experience.

The truth is that our God-created human self is merely a neutral vessel, or container. In Romans 7:19 Paul described it as being in itself neither the good nor the bad, which he was only then discovering was the sin dwelling in him. It is merely the fruit producer of whichever vine it is a branch, and can never be a branch of both at once (Rom 6:20-22). And though vast numbers of God's people still labour under that mistaken interpretation of Paul's present tense, we say he boldly stepped back in order to identify himself as a true intercessor with what all believers must go through to find their permanent deliverance. So he is now saying, "I see myself with you. I am back with you confronting that old outer law, to which in actual fact I am dead." In order to underline the final necessary confrontation with the law and its final depth surgery on him, as on us all, Paul describes in detail his past dramatic experience. It was the sudden impact of that tenth commandment, with its "Thou shalt not covet," which so rudely awakened him. He had been blissfully ignorant of its having any personal impact. "I was alive without the law once," he says (Rom 7:9); and that is how all the world lives until confronted by the law. Paul had been "delighting in the law" (Rom. 7:22), as every new-born of the Spirit delights. But

under the lie of independent self, when that "Thou shalt not covet" struck him, he blindly thought: "No, of course I won't and don't." He was under that fatal delusion of us all that there is such a thing as self-management and selfcontrol.

TROUBLE WITH "I"

Then the blast hit him. Paul found an inner uprising over which he had no control, which he named sin and which "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom 7:8). he was devastated, not that there were these sin drives, but because he thought he ought to be able to control them. That was his condemnation and bondage.

This is how Paul put it: "In my newly-born and responsive condition, in which my whole desire is to fulfill the law and produce the fruit of the Spirit, there is this disturbing experience that when I want to do good, there is an evil presence controlling me (Rom 7:22). Yes, I want to and will live by God's law. I would do the good and not the evil (repeated in verses 15, 16, 18, 19, and 21), but I am driven by this humiliating condition to say that something grabs and enslaves me.

"I am carnal and sold under sin," Paul continues (Rom 7:14), "and there seems to be no escape. Here is the law, which I delight in, hammering at me with its godly standards. But I find myself helpless and hopeless. I have the will; but there is nothing in my flesh -- my human makeup -- which has the capacity to combat this negative power drive, which has me in its grasp (Rom 7:18). I am a wretched man (Rom 7:24): newborn, but still as sin slave! Where lies the trouble? Is there a remedy?"

The trouble is in that deceived, independent "I" (popping up thirty-two times in those nineteen verse) -- the enormous delusion, which the law came to expose. Independent self reaction is first of all Satan's delusion about his own created selfhood, and then the lie which he imparted to us all at the Fall.

SELF-EFFORT IS SATAN-EFFORT

We are all forms of God's fire-self, the self of infinite desire. But God, by the begetting of His Son, transmuted His fire-self into the Light-self which is eternally the Self of other-love. Satan, however, turned his self of fiery desires into the consuming love of self-for-self, and imparted his own fallen nature to us as though it were ours.

So all self-effort is actually Satan-effort, whether good or bad in appearance. Paul's good self-efforts to combat his uprising sin desires, unknown to him, were still Satan masquerading as Paul. And our desires and self-reactions, good or bad, are still Satan's self-for-self expressed as us. Paul described his experience this way: "When I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom 7:21).

The great light is lit when we finally see that our precious humanity has every ability to respond on soul and body level; but the forms the responses take are not ours. There is no such thing as plain self-reactions. Through the Fall, our responses formerly expressed Satan's self-for-self nature, whether in apparent good or evil form. But now through Calvary, having learned that our Romans 7 delusion of independent self-reaction is Satan, our responses express Christ in His self-for-others nature. This is who we really are, as we shall see further in Romans 8.

SLAIN BY THE DELUSION

In his self-delusion Paul was so ashamed and humiliated that he said he was like a slain man (Rom 7:7-11). In fact, that was what had happened. He had been slain by the delusion that he was an independent self who could manage himself, when there is no such thing and it was really Satan's self-effort. So he

said, "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment (as if he could obey it), deceived me, and by it slew me" (Rom 7:11).

What a universal deceit in all us humans, and what an exposure and deliverance! The shame and humiliation of Paul's defeat was just the necessary negative God used to make him desperate enough to find the answer, and thus that final usefulness of the law in exposing the lie of self-effort. So down Paul had fallen by the exposure of his self-relying self, not yet knowing that self-effort is Satan.

Having used his own dramatic experience to underline the necessary negative operation of the law on us, Paul then asks, "Does such an exposure by the law make it a death-dealing and dangerous weapon? The very opposite!" (Rom 7:12-14). Only by that sharp, personal law exposure of his helpless self in response to those self-gratifying desires could the roots of the independent-self lie be exposed. At first he struggled, wrongfully condemning himself instead of Satan-sin. But this drove him to the great final discovery: not of an evil human self, with the false self-condemnation, but to the great light of a right, God-made human self, with the sinner in him really being the sin spirit.

Paul knew, by the revelation he had when in Arabia (Gal 1:11,12,17), that Satan-sin had been cast out by Christ's body death on Calvary (2 Cor 5:14,21). (We shall explain this in detail in Part III). But he had not yet come to the necessary point of personally appropriating that tremendous fact. He was still confused by the self-condemnation of false, independent self, instead of laying the rightful blame on sin. So by the use of the vivid present tense, as though he were a young, struggling believer, he underlines the value of the law in its disturbing effects on "me, me, me!" But finally there would be a right adjustment of the human "me" (See Part III).

A DESPERATE DISCOVERY

Have not I, like Paul, vainly thought there should be some way in which I could combat and overcome this evil bias in myself? Does not the whole world

operate by doing its own stuff? Isn't "I must," "I can," "I will," or "I'm going to" the sole, absorbing incentive of human living?

Yes it is. That is humanity's vast, lost, blindness, even though sin is not imputed when law hasn't yet confronted us (Rom 5:13,14). All of us in this fallen world, with no exceptions, really live by that Satan lie, with which we were inoculated at the Fall: that self by itself, in its apparent independence, can run its own life.

While in our deceived, self-relying state -- "living in pleasure (and yet) being dead while we think we live" (1 Tim 5:6) -- we have to be confronted with the law and the standards by which the universe was created to function.

These laws were first embodied outwardly for our enlightenment in those Ten Commandments, from which any deviation finally brings total destruction. We are forced to accept the realization that first we didn't (conviction of sins), and second we cannot fulfill it, which is the final discovery of this Romans 7 chapter.

Why are we not able to keep the law? It is because we created humans can only function by the deity self who manifests his nature through our forms: our Creator-Father's "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), or alternatively, so that we might experience and get the opposite into focus, Satan's self-for-self nature (Eph 2:1,2). Always, we humans are vessels, branches, slaves, body-members; or in modern terms, we are computers, who can only develop what is programmed into us. There never was such a thing as a created selfhood which could operate by itself.

Paul, recounting in this Romans 7 crisis statement his former experience, was compelled to discover that he could not manage himself. And now we all, with whom Paul links himself, are compelled to discover that we cannot manage ourselves. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). Precisely. Yes, I am a slave, "sold under sin" (the nature of self-for-self), with no escape. However much I want to, resolve to, or try to

keep God's law, I CANNOT because I was never created with the ability to manage myself. I am a managed person.

Through the law's impossible demands on me, I have to discover that I started my human life in sin. "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5), as a slave, a branch, and a vessel. Of whom? Of that false upstart "god of this world," that "spirit working in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). he is that "spirit of error," that "father of lies," that devil "who sinneth from the beginning"; and it is his lusts I have been doing and can't refrain from doing (Jn 8:44).

Then at last, as Paul says in Romans 7:14-25, I am driven to my limit. I am finally among the desperate ones who seek the highest and then I find I can't reach it. The poet Browning wrote, "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" But in my desperation, at last I can see my deceived limitations. A tremendous seeing!

I see plainly now that the disrupter is not the law, for the law is "spiritual" (Rom 7:14). And it is not "me," because I hate these things I do. It is the intruder: the sin that dwells in me! Paul says that twice (Rom 7:17,20). This is a radical revelation, because all my trouble and the whole world's trouble is the deception that we are the operators of our lives. We are not! We are the containers, the manifesters, the vessels of wrath or mercy (Rom 9:22,23).

A vast weight, which burdens every believer in his false self-condemnation, lifts off us when this understanding comes. In our former delusion we would say: "I'm the culprit. I'm the trouble. I'm ashamed of myself. I should be better." No. That is a lie, and a delusion; it never was I. The whole intent of the cries of "I, I, I," in Romans 7:14-25 is that I don't like myself. I hate what I'm doing, when actually I am a God-made, beautiful self (Gen 3:26-28). At last I see it; and I had to be brought to my limit to be able to see it.

A BIG DIFFERENCE

All the world's people, including us the born-again, have always taken it for granted in their delusion that they were self-operating and therefore self-responsible persons, who could and would improve themselves. And at last I find that there never was such a person! Now I see I was always a slave of Satan-sin - "sold under sin"- and it is he who is to blame. In my unsaved days I went along with Satan's sin activities. In my saved days I have hated my slavery, been ashamed of it, and wrestled vainly against it.

Sin is the "other law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members" (Rom 7:14-23). Now I have it clear that it is not I, but this evil power controlling me. Paul cries out for us all, as he had cried out for himself, "Am I tied and bound to this death in my body, or is there a deliverance?" (Rom 7:24). At last I have come to my limit. In my hatred of this intruder of my body, I find that I am not to blame, but sin. Is there a deliverance from sin for me?

Now I can see what Paul had already revealed in it completeness in Romans 6:1-13, and which had become his own liberation. Yes, thank God, there is deliverance for me now by the personal application in my desperate need of what I had accepted in my head and reckoned on as told to do (Rom 6:11). But while I remained ignorant of there never having been such a thing as human self-effort or human independence, I had not realized that all my own efforts to live a victorious life were really Satan expressing himself as me. And I had not realized that until I had made such a failure of attempts to live it. Only then was I ready to see that the only way to live the life is if Christ live my life as me, in place of that self-effort which was really Satan -- "good" or bad.

Paul had explained the key to total liberation (Rom 6:1-13), and we had reckoned on it as fact as best we knew how. It was this: my death in Christ's death to indwelling sin power, and my life in freedom from that power in His resurrection. But now I also have the human self in true focus as only the container and expresser, but never the originator. So I could see that the death and resurrection union with Christ which I had reckoned as fact and not

He AND me in action in place of Satan and me, but only He AS me, and I the human expresser, replacing only Satan as me, and I as his expresser.

The big difference and final liberation comes when, after my exposure by the law, I have myself in my true eternal relationship to Him: not as kind of co-living with Him (or formerly Satan) as two on the same level of action, but as only He living His life in me as me. I now spontaneously, delightedly, and easily express Him with all the vigor of my God-endowed humanity. That is different! Seeing this as my total life, I move in from reckoning to realizing. Yes, I thank God through Jesus Christ me Lord (Rom 7:25).

FREE AT LAST

The doors of my prison swing open by this one key turned in the lock! It is now possible for me, as it was with Paul, to do one simple thing. And it is not some self-effort act of consecration, as if getting out of the prison depended on me. But it is recognizing, by heart affirmation now combined with my understanding, that I have always been a person released from sin, as from sins. Jesus settled that 2000 years ago on Calvary in His body death, in addition to His blood death. But I have been slow to recognize and receive what He had settled for me, as me, because I still had that Romans 7 delusion about myself.

But what is that prison? I had to find what I was blinded to at first: my only prison was myself. Taken captive by my false owner, as we all were at the Fall, I had been deceived into thinking I managed myself, as he thinks he manages himself.

THE LIE OF LIES!

So down I had to fall in my many failures of self-management, compelled to follow in many false directions, until at last it dawned on me that actually I was the one who was managed and utilized by my thieving owner. At last, in my misery, I was ready to call for help. Was there any way out of this prison? It

was already provided. My True Owner had already paid the full redemptive price to release me, so that the false one has no further claims on me. So now I am joyfully free from that wearisome lie of self-management (which in fact never was), and love every new interest and enticing adventure of my True Owner. He is really not so much Owner, as Father and Lover. And along with multitudes of other freed prisoners, I share with Him in His simple multiple plans for the blessing of His whole huge universe.

With the veil of that independent-self lie removed, I can and do see that Christ freed me, a servant who had changed his owner - not change of me, but change of Him! I AM free. I just recognize, affirm, and thankfully praise. I say, along with Paul in Romans 8:1, that there is no more condemnation, because there is no illusory self-effort self to be condemned. The reckoning of Romans 6:11 is now Paul's and my word of realization in Romans 8:2 -- the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ has entered and indwells me as He did Christ in the tomb, and has set me free from those lying claims of the law of sin and death. No longer a prisoner, I am now free forever in Christ by His body sacrifice on my behalf (Rom 8:3).

The Spirit bears witness to what I affirm in faith (1 Jn 5:10). Once I affirm, the settling in of that witness is His timetable. For me, it was two years; for my wife, it was two weeks. But hold steady, maintain your affirmation, and HE makes you a knower.

Part 3

In this final part of our Romans 6 to 8 -- Paul's key to the liberated life -- let us start by reviewing briefly what has been said in the previous two parts. In essence, the lost secret now revealed is that we humans were never created to be self-dependent or self-operating. There is no such thing as an independent human self. We were marvelously created in God's likeness to function spontaneously as expressers of Himself. Ultimately we will manage His universe as co-heirs with His Son, permanently operating in His perfect other-love nature.

But by the law of the universe, referred to in the previous sections, we understand that nothing can function except by having its opposite, just as light operates by swallowing up darkness. So we can only know and operate of human personhood by being confronted with the opposite: the false deity of the opposite "sin" nature, which is self-for-self.

We started our fallen human lives from the Garden of Eden by being occupied by that false deity and expressing his nature as though it were ours. Then our Saviour Christ, in His other-love nature, took our place as our Last Adam, representing us in His Calvary death and being "made sin" as us. In that death as us, out went that sin-spirit; and in His resurrection as us, in came His Spirit of self-giving love.

COMING HONEST

Paul's main point then, in Romans 6 and 7 has been to expose how we were deluded by Satan into thinking that we were self-operating selves. In actuality, however, it was Satan expressing his self-for-self (sin) nature as us. Then Paul tells us at length how God sent the law with its requirements to expose us when we come honest. We first had to learn that we had not kept the law as lost sinners, and then that we could never keep it because we have never been independent self-relying selves. We were deceived by Satan to think we were, but actually we were only expressers of Satan's self-for-self nature.

In unfolding the value of the law in Romans 7, Paul makes a unique contribution to exposing and removing the main blockage to effective Christian living. At last, in our agony and desperation at our failures, light dawns upon us. We are then capable of seeing that the evil was not in our beautiful, God-created humanity, but in the lie of the independent self (sin dwelling in us). Through Calvary, we now move in by faith to see and recognize that it is He, the Spirit of Truth, expressing Himself in our vessels -- branch containers -- in us and by us, in place of that evil one.

So by faith in the revealed fact, we find ourselves free just to be our human selves with no fears or condemnations. Through the Spirit's certain inner witness, we are expressers of Him: Christ in us as us. And now, after a brief law interlude, we go into chapter 8 of Romans, not as in our walking-Satan forms, but as walking Christs -- "more than conquerors."

A CRISIS MOMENT

Now we move with Paul into Romans 8. Here he comes right out with who he is. What he said he had "reckoned" on in Romans 6:11, he now says he "realizes" (Rom 8:2). The governing principle, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," has set him free. So there is a settled knowing. In "reckoning," you SAY it is so; in "knowing," you KNOW it is so. There is a crisis moment. The lives of the great men of the Bible -- Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, right through to Jesus Himself -- bear witness to this knowing.

So do I know? And how do I know? I began my new knowing at my new birth, and the Spirit bore witness. Now this is a total knowing. If you have seen this change through Calvary, from being Satan-sin indwelt and Satan expresser to now being Christ indwelt and Christ expresser, then be sure you have spoken the word of faith and recognition, as Paul did. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," he says, "has set me free." And in Galatians he proclaims, "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

Say YOUR word now, and say it to someone else! Then what you say echoes back to you, and you know (1 Jn 5:10). Maybe you cannot yet give a date for when you received that knowing, just as I mentioned (in Part II) about Pauline and myself. Only be sure not to pull back, if you do not yet know. What you have said, you have said. You stand on such a word as Galatians 2:20 or Romans 8:2, and God in His time makes you a knower.

THE CHANGE

Now at the summit there is no condemnation. We are freed from that false self guilt, for there is no wrong human self! We are Spirit people in outer bodies. There is nothing to condemn (Rom 8:1). Our human selves are fixed expressions of the Deity Self, where we were formerly fixed expressions of that false deity self. That is the change.

Law (principle) is the way a thing works, and works no other way. We used to be under Satan's law with no escape, and now we are under Christ's law with no escape. There is this change of governing principle controlling our lives. Strong terms! (Rom 8:2). That makes it easy and normal to walk this new way.

On Calvary, Christ put the old sin indweller behind bars on death row (condemned sin in the flesh), from where he is able only to shout at us. That old law standard, which had seemed unattainable, is now our normal way of living -- "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:3,4). This is the Sermon on the Mount top standard of living, and the one who lives it in us is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

SPIRIT PEOPLE

Paul lays unique emphasis on life being the Spirit in us. Nowhere else in the New Testament is this said in such plainness. There are fifteen mentions of the Spirit in Romans 8, in place of those many "I's" in the previous chapter. Paul says, "Get this clear: we are now Spirit people. Christ is living our life. We are walking His way (Rom 8:3). We think His thoughts" (Rom 8:5,6). He in us counteracts those former self-for-self thought patterns, which set us at enmity with God.

"IF you walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh..." Paul begins, for he could not speak our word for us. But speaking for ourselves we say, "SINCE we walk that way..." Again, when Paul says in 8:11, "IF the Spirit dwells in you,..." we say, "He DOES dwell in us." And the Spirit puts those old body habits to death (Rom 8:13).

DAILY LIVING

Because we live in a world of self incitement all around us, to which our normal humanity (our flesh) has been formerly geared to respond, Paul does lay stress on walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Does that mean we had better be very careful, for surely we are inclined to flesh walking? The lie again! That would be guarding against independent self uprisings which might respond to those "ought to's." But that is not our Spirit drive. We don't walk fearfully, as if we still plenty of flesh. No! Our human selves are now Spirit kept and Spirit driven.

Certainly there are flesh pulls -- sin's self-for-self nature getting at us through all the world's atmosphere around us. But we don't resist them by any false self-effort. We recognize and admit them, but then we affirm who we ARE and know we are -- Spirit expressers, Christ in our forms; and our faith affirmation puts to death those "deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13). Light swallows up darkness. (See Norman Grubb's leaflet entitled "How to Handle Temptation".)

The Spirit, says Paul, also now permeates our physical bodies, though we remain mortal. The Spirit is the Quickener. So we walk not as body fussers. We accept where there are physical infirmities, but our bodies are His Temples; and in freedom of faith -- not in negative unbelief or foolish questioning -- we often experience His quickenings and healings (8:11).

The normal background to our daily lives is the Spirit's witness with our spirits that we actually are God's children (8:16). By the Spirit we are at home now with our Father/"Daddy," which is very difficult from our former fears of Him in our old false self-condemning life (8:15). We are naturally Spirit-led in the affairs and decisions of our lives, and take that for granted (8:14).

PERMANENT TENSION

From the moment in Romans 8:17 when he opens up the incredible destiny of us humans being co-inheritors of the universe with God's Son, Paul changes the tone of what we are to experience in our daily lives. This comes as a shock, until we see at the end of the chapter that those are devastating conditions in which we, as sons, operate triumphantly as "summit" people.

For the glory living, which will be our permanency through eternity, is first built strongly on a continual "suffering" condition. That sounds terrifying, until we find by experience that there is glory now in the suffering (Rom 5:3-5). The coming "exceeding weight of glory" is the product of these earthly "afflictions," which Paul called "light"! (2 Cor 4:17). These "sufferings" are first on a physical level. Face it, Paul says, the animal and material creation around us is engulfed in suffering -- "red in tooth and claw" -- living in permanent tension. And that, Paul continues, is a God-ordained necessary opposite to the "glorious liberty," which will swallow up the "groanings." The deliverance will come through the sons of God, but the methods are not explained in detail (8:19-22).

Then Paul makes very plain that physical perfection on our human body level is not for our present life: a warning note to those who offer complete physical healings and major on a physical healing ministry. Paul tells us that our bodies remain corrupted and mortal. The replacement of corruption by incorruption is only at the Lord's coming (1 Corinthians 15:42-44;52-55). meanwhile, let's not fool ourselves on the physical level. We "suffer" with all the creation, and our "salvation" on that level is by hope, not faith. It is a prospect not within our present reach (8:23-25).

UNSHAKABLE CONFIDENCE

Added to the physical sufferings, we live in a sea of frustration of every kind, and inhibitions we cannot handle by ourselves. We are "compassed by infirmity" and "groan" in distressing experiences, about which we do not even know how to pray for deliverances (8:26-27).

Obviously, Paul is now speaking of the varied disturbed conditions of our daily living: not just the physical, but family problems, economic shocks, fatalities, social problems in our communities, crying needs of every kind, malicious personal hurts, family losses, and whatnot.

In these distresses we "groan"; but we people of the Spirit know that the Spirit Himself is carrying our groanings to the Father in intercession. This gives us our one solid unshakable confidence that, however totally confusing and apparently humanly inextricable, ALL THESE THINGS are actually working out for GOOD. Meanwhile we love our God, no matter how painful the situations, because we know the path of our calling, with outcomes always GOOD, GOOD, GOOD! What a word of faith, which has upheld millions! We might say that the air is full of verbal quotations of Romans 8:28, that great favorite.

TRAINING YEARS

Then Paul goes a glorious step further. He opens up the hidden purpose behind our sufferings and disturbed conditions. "Your destiny is to be a Co-Son with the Son in the development of His vast universal inheritance!" So these are necessary TRAINING YEARS on earth. "You have begun recognizing and realizing that you already are Christ in your human form (Gal. 2:20; Col 3:4); and it is necessary that you are brought, by the maturing grace of the indwelling Spirit, to exact conformity to Him." What a destiny! What a conformity, which John also foresaw (1 Jn 3:2). So there is a steady gradual

conforming process in action by the Spirit, who is already indissolubly joined to our spirit (1 Cor 6:17). And we are being "changed into His likeness from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3:18).

We must not confuse God's transforming operations, taking place in us through those constant trials and pressures (which James said are used to establish us "perfect, wanting nothing" (Ja 1:2-4)), with the total basic transformation already taken place. We escaped from the lying independent self outlook of Romans 7 into the permanent liberation of Romans 8:1-2 by our faith recognition of the finished work on Calvary. Growth in conforming us to the image of Christ, which Paul is now speaking about (8:29), is the spontaneous development of Christ fixed in us as us: union fact.

Folks often do try to escape the necessity of the crisis and exchange of the independent self lie of Romans 7 for that glorious fact of Christ having replaced Satan as the fixed one now living our lives, by majoring on the subsequent changes conforming us to His likeness. These changes are constantly taking place in us merely as products of that crisis. They are not to be mistaken for it or used as a gradual improvement method, as though to escape from the rugged confronting of the necessary faith crisis.

POINTING FINGERS

Se we go on now, Paul says (8:30-39), through these processes being fulfilled in us under the cloak of human pressures. We are being conformed marvelously through predestination, justification, even to present glorification (8:29,30). There is a glory even in our attitudes and on our faces, which really glow like Moses as he came down from the Mount; and others see it. And in this transforming process we are bold. We take ourselves to be blameless as God's chosen ones. We neither live in false self-condemnation (8:1), nor are we disturbed by the pointing finger of others: certainly not of the world, but also not of our brethren.

We all need to learn plenty about not pointing fingers at our brothers in Christ, when we may think they don't measure up. See Christ in our brothers, and leave the Great Transformer to get on with His transforming work in them as in us. Where anything does disturb us, let our contribution be faith in God-in-action in our brother (8:31,33,34). We need a new quality of boldness, both about who we NOW ARE -- walking Christs in place of walking Satans -- and of saying and seeing the same faith of our Christ-indwelt brethren!

"MT. EVEREST" SCALED

The conforming process also includes appearances of need and necessities of life abundantly supplied by Him, who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (8:32). But does Paul sum up his great victory chapter by our being immersed in a sea of prosperity and popularity? Just the opposite! His summation includes the rough, rough seas of every form of outer distress, persecution, material necessity, and subjective assault -- "killed all the day long" and "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Constant physical dangers dogged Paul, and today most likely face modern-day oppositions to our "pilgrim" walk, and experience, as did Paul, by lost reputations as Christ's fools (8:35,36).

Do we wilt? Do we question, "Why does God allow that?" Do we murmur about hard experiences, manifesting more disturbed feelings than enjoyment and praise? Paul used just one word: "conquerors." He stands, as it were, on HIS Mt. Everest, having scaled the jagged peaks of suffering and persecution (2 Cor 11:21-31) which had defied his ascent. How? Because it was Christ in Paul's form. A prisoner of Nero? No, a prisoner of the Lord; and his fiery trials were called the "sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet 4:12,13). Even Jesus Himself, when suffering came to Him by Satan's agents, called it "the cup which my Father hath given me" (Jn 18:11).

"COME ON UP"

So by faith we see Christ in the garments of our outer tragedies and maltreatments, and stand on OUR Everest summit as "conquerors." And more than standing as "conquerors," Paul says we stand as "MORE than conquerors" (8:37). We have the extra -- "the cups running over" -- to help others climb their summits, when our own inner conquests are complete.

To all toiling climbers, we call out, "Come on up. Drop your heavy equipment." We invite them to step out by faith right where they are now, and they will find by a miracle, grace leap that they are already on the Summit. Christ has already carried them there in His own crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension two thousand years ago. And the Spirit, Who came at Pentecost, will cause them to know their eternal inseparable love-union with the Father and Christ living in them as them -- MORE THAN CONQUERORS!

TO SUM IT UP

The main point has been the startling discovery that we have had really only one problem since the fall of man, and that has been our vast delusion about ourselves -- the lie of Satan concerning his own independence which he has imparted to us concerning ourselves. As a consequence, even when we are sinners saved by grace and in the new birth of the Spirit, and we have been taken further in the sixth chapter to know that through Christ's death and resurrection the control of us by Satan in his sin nature has been replaced by the control of Christ, we still deludedly regard ourselves as independent persons responsible for living our new way of life and therefore equally responsible for living our new way of life and therefore equally responsible for discarding the old.

The shock then comes when Paul says that old way of life will have no further control over us because we are "not under the law, but under grace." But our immediate reaction is, "Why, that is putting the cart before the horse! Don't we need the law to stop us from responding to the pulls of that old life? Take away the law and we shall be caught out again." "Not so," says Paul. "The opposite is true. Your great basic deception is that we are self-managed selves.

Therefore what the law will do while you are still under that delusion, is to expose your helplessness and that you never were created to manage yourself, and your old sin-manager will take advantage of the law to show you that you can't obey it, but keep obeying him. But because you are too blind to see this until we have been shocked into it, first I will show you some facts."

Then Paul drives that home by three illustrations which certainly settles the matter when our eyes are sufficiently opened to see these facts; but actually they are not until we have had the necessary radical shock. But anyhow here are those three plain facts. First, we all are slaves and therefore compelled to do what our owner demands of us, and there is no middle condition in which we are just independent free humans. Second, we are branches and bear the fruit of the tree of which we are a part, and there is no such thing as we being independent, and not branches of either of the trees. Third, we are married wives under the marriage bond of our husbands and bearing his children. If our marriage is dissolved by the death of either husband, then we are immediately married to the other husband. We never were just single and unmarried. All of these illustrations, of course, mean that we are slaves, branches, wives, formerly of Satan in his sin nature, but now are the same to Christ in His holy nature, and there never has been a JUST OURSELVES in imaginary activities of our own.

But that point must be driven home never to arise again -- that in actual fact we never were self-operating and never did or could manage our own affairs; and it was in that point the Satan has so grossly deluded us, as he himself is deluded. So that shock has to come, as Paul tells of it in his own experience, and the means in his own experience was the impact of that pouter law on him. So down came the law on newborn Paul in its tenth "Thou shalt not covet" commandment: and because he was very much alive to that illusion of independence, back came his quick response, "Of course I won't and don't covet. I am a new man in Christ." And he found all kinds of what he called "concupiscence" very much alive in him which he could not resist. He surely fell flat on his face and called himself a "slain man."

But Paul had made a unique discovery, to which he refers as his special revelation in his Galatians letter, when he spent three years alone in the Arabian desert. It was that there is this sin virus deposited in us since the Fall (to which he refers in Romans 5:12-21), and that as our Lord Jesus Christ has represented us on the cross, His body was as ours in God's sight, as though the sin-expresser just like ours ("made sin"); and when he died, out went that sin spirit and so out of us, and in the tomb in His resurrection in came His own Spirit, and so into us. Now with the impact of the law and his inability to obey it through the apparent power of indwelling sin, he saw the great lie of the independent self, and that he was only able to respond to the drives of the false deity in him and the lusts, and it was the impact of the law with its demands that awakened him to this delusion. But now he also saw the great deceit of sin on him, because in Christ the sin-indweller had been replaced by the Holy Spirit indweller, which had been revealed to him in Arabia. So now suddenly he saw his freedom. All he had to do was to recognize and affirm as fact in himself that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death," and now the Spirit already in him since his new birth inwardly confirmed that to him.

So the key had been turned in the lock by the exposure of the lie of independent self through the law. This was the great value of the law for him and us. The claims of the law exposed the lie of his supposed ability to respond to it as though independent. The other lie now exposed to his new born self was that sin power still had its right and presence in him. No. "Dead to sin" in Christ and now alive in Christ to live by the Spirit.

As simple as that when the law had done its Romans 7 work by forcing Paul to find that there never was a Paul-self who could obey that law, and this his Arabian revelation of the body death of Jesus representing us and body resurrection, took Paul right out of Romans 7 into Romans 8 liberty. Then he shares what follows as the fruit of that liberty outlined in chapter 8 in the Spirit-operated life, in the glory of the family relationship with the Father and the Son, the sharing of the eternal inheritance, and the present prolonged

period in which we still have the full impact of the consequences of the Fall on our humanity and world conditions, and live the life of overcoming faith, as Jesus Himself did. The sufferings of this present life give us our great constant opportunities for the conquests of faith in every kind of adverse conditions. In the walk and warfare of faith we are experiencing new ways of proving the goodness of God in all kinds of deliverances, though sometimes the highest is that martyrdom and extremity of suffering in the faith of the resurrection, as is says in Hebrews 11:35-38, "of whom the world was not worthy": and in all these the watching hungry world is seeing the inner victories outwardly demonstrated in peace, joy, hope, faith, and love for our enemies, by which Christ is manifested in our bodies "whether by life or by death," and countless others have been inspired to follow the same way.