



By Don Rumble

Introduction

Our God is the perfect vinedresser. He comes into the midst of His vineyard looking for fruit. He is not impressed with mere words; He desires the actual manifestation of His own nature and character in our lives. The apostle Paul is a good example in Scripture of a man who sought to bear godly fruit in his life. Romans Chapter Seven and Eight stand out as a unique section of the Bible giving insight into his personal struggle to maintain a consistent lifestyle before the Lord. Paul made some startling discoveries in the Spirit as he grappled with issues of sin and righteousness in his own heart. His conclusions give foundational insights for walking in spiritual victory.

First, Paul defines the relationship between the believer and God's Law. We have been released from it and we now serve God in the freshness of intimate spiritual relationship (Rom. 7:1 – 6).

Second, he demonstrates that the problem is not with God's Law; it is with us! The power of sin has been set into motion in us because of Adam's fall. Paul then admits to his own internal conflict as he sought to more perfectly obey the Lord. There were times when he did not do what he should have done. There were also times when he did what he should not have done (Rom. 7:7 – 20). Third, Paul makes a discovery. A law has

been set into motion in his physical body. He calls it the law of sin and death. Basically stated, it says that the flesh always wants to sin and the wages of sin is always death. However, he also discovers another law – the law of the Spirit of life. True spiritual fruit is the result of God’s life within us (Rom. 7:21 – 8:3).

Consequently, as the believer sets his mind on the things of the Spirit he will walk in harmony with Him (Rom. 8:4 – 9).

Finally, Paul points out that God has destined us for His glory. He intends for the glory that has flooded our inner man to permeate our bodies as well. All creation awaits this revelation of God’s sons. Today, His people are characterized by an undeniable hope that this shall soon come to pass (Rom. 8:10 – 25).

The Believer and God's Law

ROM. 7:1 – 4 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married (joined, NASB) to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Just like one is released from marriage vows because of the death of her mate, so also we have been made to die to the Law that we might be spiritually joined to Christ. By the presence of His Holy Spirit, we have been brought into spiritual union with the risen Lord Jesus. Our spirits have been united to His (1Co.6:17). Christianity is not a union of people with commandments, but with the One who wrote the commandments. Union with law produces religion; union with Christ produces fruit! As we walk in intimacy with Him, abiding in His presence and life, we bear fruit and prove to be His disciples (Jn.15:5 – 8). Some believers endeavor to prove they are Jesus’ disciples by intellectually persuading those who listen to them. However, the proof of life is fruit. Conversely, the source of fruit is life. God is looking for the results of His life in His people. He is not impressed with what springs from our human ingenuity and strength. He does not need our ideas to extend His kingdom.

ROM. 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

One bears either fruit to God (vs.4) or fruit to death (vs.5). Those who do not know Him can only bear fruit to death. In other words, the best that the flesh has to offer God has death at the root of it. The problem is that the Lord's commands cause sin's passions to rear up in the lives of the unregenerate. For example, consider this illustration. Children playing with toys are well content with them until someone mentions that their father said they are not to look in a particular box in the corner. Suddenly, the toys are not sufficient. "I wonder what is in that box?" The command surfaces the desire for the forbidden object.

ROM. 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

There are two ways of serving God: either in the newness of His Spirit or the oldness of the letter. Serving in the oldness of letter is reflected in words like these. "What is required of me? Do I have to tithe to eventually get into heaven? Is attendance at meetings really essential? What about baptism? Is it necessary? Well, if Scripture says I'm supposed to do these things, then I suppose I should." However, serving in the newness of the Spirit is a different matter. God has called us to dwell in the immediacy of His presence. He calls us to respond to Him now. "Today is the day of salvation." Intimate fellowship with Him is not to be put off into the future, or only when we are in our "prayer closet"; we must live in His presence in the "eternal now". God wants to fill our lives throughout our day. As we turn to Him, we find that He never gets old; His presence never becomes stale. His nearness is as fresh and vital today as it was the day we were born into His kingdom. Serving in this newness is to reflect the joy and vitality in the heart of God. Worship, tithing, reading the Scriptures, gathering with believers, sharing our faith, etc. should not express an attitude of tired boredom but of the exuberant enthusiasm that expresses God's heart and our joyful desire to please Him.

The Believer and the Struggle to Obey

ROM. 7:7 – 12 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from

the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Both the Old and New Testament commands of God are holy and good. There is no more important book on the face of the earth than the Bible. It is the only book God has ever authored! (Not to mention the living epistles He is presently writing as He etches His word into the hearts of His people.) We must love and study the Scriptures; they have been written that we might know their Author more perfectly. However, they also help to reveal the sin problem in fallen man.

ROM. 7:13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

In other words, the true nature of sin is exposed in us. We see it for what it really is.

ROM. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal (Grk., SARKIKOS) (NASB, of flesh), sold under sin.

The problem lies not with what God has written, whether in the Old or New Testament writings. The problem lies with us! When Adam fell in sin, we were in him and fell too. Whatever Adam looked like before he sinned (He never noticed his nakedness.), afterward, he was of flesh. Immediately, there existed a major problem inherent in that body of flesh. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." (Gal 5:17) The flesh will be part of our makeup till Jesus comes and it opposes God's Spirit in us.

ROM. 7:15, 16 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

In other words, I agree that the Law is right. I really should not be sinning in this particular manner. However, agreeing with the Law is not the same as keeping it!

ROM. 7:17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

This is called isolating the culprit.

ROM. 7:18 - 20 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

This is an apostle saying these things! He fails to do what he knows he should. He stumbles in what he tries not to do. He falls short of the glory of God. Anyone who does not admit that he has struggles is not being honest either with himself or with others. There is no one alive on the earth who has a perfect obedience record. Only Jesus obeyed the Father perfectly. How many times have you determined to fast on a certain day, only to succumb to hunger pains within a matter of hours? Or maybe you decided to express love to someone who persecutes and mocks you concerning your faith only to find your actions toward them expressing anger and resentment. When we recognize that even apostles of Christ battle with sin, we take courage! We are not the only ones who stumble. If Paul struggled like this, maybe he discovered something in the fight that will help us to overcome as he did. Look what he found.

A Look At Two Laws

ROM. 7:21 - 23 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Paul discovered a law at work in the members of his physical body. This inviolable principle was set in motion in the flesh of men and women when Adam and Eve fell into sin. Some might call it a sinful nature; Paul calls it a law. It will not be revoked until Jesus comes. This marks a chief difference between Adam and Jesus. Both were without sin. One was innocent; One was righteous. Adam was innocent; he was untried and untested. When the temptation came, he failed. Some say that Jesus died for us so that we might have what Adam had. No. We are not being conformed to the image of the first Adam, but to the image of the last. Adam's innocence meant he was without sin. Jesus' righteousness meant that He conquered sin! We have been born of His Spirit to conquer as well. Therefore, the battle we face is in our flesh. This is precisely where the enemy attacks us. Some think that warfare is primarily binding the devil in the heavens. However, people can do that a great deal and never change in their own lives. When we realize that ground must be gained in us, the war takes on

very personal implications. We must respond humbly to the conviction of the Holy Spirit concerning our sin.

ROM. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Paul says, “If I could just get free from this body of death, I could really walk in victory.” Just think, fasting would be no problem. Getting up early to seek God would be “a snap”. As a matter of fact, we would not even have to ever eat or sleep again! We could fast and pray for as long as we wanted! Temptation would simply have no more power to it. However, the problem is that we would not be a very visible expression of God's kingdom! God intends to manifest His glory in visible “tents of flesh”. “...we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” (2Cor.4:7) The “earthiness” of our vessels causes us to groan for we have tasted of eternity in the inner man and our flesh is such a hindrance.

ROM. 7:25 I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Basically this verse says, “Well, here I am. Praise the Lord. This is the situation as it exists. I want to serve God in my mind but my flesh has the law of sin written into it.”

ROM. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, [who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit].

Most manuscripts do not contain the bracketed section of this verse. Scripture simply says there is no condemnation for those in Christ. What is condemnation? How does it differ from conviction? Consider a thief who is standing before the judge after his trial. If he has been found guilty, he has been convicted. This is what the Holy Spirit does. He convicts us of our sin. He points His “finger” in our face and says as the prophet Nathan to David, “Thou art the man!” Repentance is the correct response to conviction. On the other hand, condemnation occurs when the judge then looks at the thief and says, “Because you have been found guilty, I condemn you to thirty years in prison.” Condemnation is getting what we deserve! If we got what we deserved, we would all be cast into hell! Thank God Christianity is not based on what we deserve, but on God's grace and what He is doing for His own Name's sake. The basic premise of Scripture concerns God's rights, not human rights.

I do not deserve to be in leadership. I do not even deserve to be in the Church. I met the Lord as a child and grew up in a Christian home. However, I chose to walk away from Him in rebellion in my high school and college years. I gave myself over to much sin and reaped the results in my mind and body. One cannot commit sin and be exempt from the normal reaping process as a result of what has been sown. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Gal. 6:7, 8) I reaped fear, paranoia and physical distress. However, since I have repented and come back to Christ, God has been healing me of the very things I reaped from my wayward lifestyle. Not only that, He has called me to serve in leadership in His Church. How great is His grace! I am so glad I am not getting what I deserve. This is one reason why the early disciples thanked God for the privilege of suffering for the sake of the gospel. Whatever happens to us is much better than hell and is not our right but our privilege.

ROM. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The law of sin and death (The law Paul discovered in Rom.7:21, 23, 25) is still operative in our flesh. However, there is a new law in us set into motion by the power of God. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus. It sets us free from the other law. For example, gravity is a law of nature. It says that whatever goes up must come down. On the other hand, the law of aerodynamics says that whatever goes up does not have to come down as long as the power is flowing. (e.g., an airplane that does not run out of fuel.) So also, since there is no power shortage in heaven, and since we are to live by His power and not our own, we can now live free from the law of sin in our flesh. God has called us to live by His life! We are to live in intimate communion with Him as He lives His life in and through us. Thus, the fruit God looks for is not the fruit of our own self-effort but the fruit of His own Spirit in us. Christianity is not hard; it is impossible! If it was only difficult, then the only successful Christians would be those who are truly strong in personality and constitution. They would then get the glory for their “success”. However, if what God has called us to is impossible, then only those who recognize their total inability to live as God desires will be overcomers. These will humble themselves and rely on His grace and strength. Thus, He will get the glory for the fruitfulness in their lives. Of course, they will then be too perceptive to even entertain the thought that any glory should go to them. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3) The spiritually poor are those who see their absolute inability to do anything of value for God. Therefore, they do

not try. They wait upon Him and then move in step with Him. The result is that God's kingdom (the kingdom of heaven) is extended. Much activity done in His name today reflects the strength and ingenuity of man. Such activity will not extend the kingdom of God; it will only produce something of mixture that gives too much attention to man.

ROM. 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

The Old Testament Law was not able to bring forth godly fruit in His people. It was weak in that it was simply commandments spoken to men in fleshly bodies. God's solution was to send His Son who conquered sin both during His earthly life and ministry and through His death and resurrection. Jesus condemned sin in the flesh; He pronounced sentence on it. Having lived in total victory over it, He was the only One who could declare that its days were numbered. Sin in the flesh will not be a permanent presence in the human condition. When He returns and we put on immortality, our fleshly bodies will then experience the glory that our spirits have already tasted. Sin in our flesh will be a thing of the past. Till then, we are to learn to walk by His Spirit and abide in the victory He attained for us. Victory is not a feeling; it is a position won for us at Calvary.

In Harmony With The Holy Spirit

ROM. 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The requirement of God's law (His commandments) is fulfilled in us. This is not true because we have successfully kept everything written in the Scriptures. But Jesus did. And He lives in us. As long as I walk in harmony with His Spirit, then I am walking in His fulfillment of God's laws. There is no "hole" in my armor for the enemy to get in and undermine my freedom to minister. He cannot point to my past failures and use them against me to keep me from functioning in God's house. If I have repented for my stumblings, I am in harmony with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the attempts of Satan to keep me from service in the purpose of God will fail. God does not ask me to memorize the whole Bible and do my best to keep everything in it. Rather, He asks me to walk in harmony with Him. Then as He brings more light to me from His word exposing areas of darkness, I then have the choice to repent and come into harmony with Him or to harden my heart. Thus, I walk accountable to Him in the amount of light He

has given me concerning His will and my sin. Endeavoring to keep laws and commandments cannot add to my righteousness.

ROM. 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

The focus of my mind indicates if I am living in harmony with God's Spirit or my flesh. Sometimes the flesh can cause us to act in ways that appear spiritual. In fact, what is occurring is religious. Those who sought to kill the prophet Jeremiah were in the religious system of that day. They offered lip service to God but sought to kill His servant. Jeremiah knew God had authored the law system they were part of. However, he also knew these plotters did not reflect the heart of God. Notice the prophet's prayer concerning them. "You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; they grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth but far from their mind." (Jer.12:2) The primary difference between spiritual and religious activity is the focus of the mind and heart. When we set our minds upon Jesus and walk in intimacy with Him, our activities will reflect true worship.

ROM. 8:6, 7 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

We cannot obey God as we should when we set our minds on the flesh. Our lives will reflect the focus of our thoughts. When anger rises up in us due to an argument, we have the choice to either set our minds on the things of the Spirit or of the flesh (Col.3:2). If we decide we have the right to "explode", (After all he wronged me. I deserve the right to "let him have it with both barrels".) then at that point we will lose our tempers. We will act in a way that reflects flesh instead of God's Spirit. However, if in the midst of the situation we repent to the Lord for our sinful response to the one who offended us and then set our minds upon Jesus, our lives will then reflect that focus. There is a higher way than simply "blowing up" and then later asking everyone we hurt to forgive us. We must turn to Him in the midst of our anger.

ROM. 8:8, 9 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

The unsaved cannot please God. Their "best shot" at righteousness is as filthy rags in His presence. However, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. The problem is that we can live with our minds set on the flesh and bear the same kind of fruit as the unsaved. That is Paul's point! We can be

in the Spirit with our minds set on the flesh. Or we can be in the Spirit with our minds set on the Spirit. The choice is ours.

Destination: Glory

ROM. 8:10, 11 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Our bodies are dead. We might think, “No they aren’t. Our bodies move around fine.” The truth is, our bodies really are dead. They contain life. We have the life of God as well as our own natural life within us. However, the body itself is marked by death. It constantly needs rest. It deteriorates because of the aging process. If you do not bathe it, it soon begins to give off the smell of death. However, life is found in our spirits because the Spirit of God dwells there. While our bodies are marked by death today, we have the promise that someday they will be permeated with life! The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the tomb resides within us and at the second coming of Christ will minister to our bodies the life we already have in our spirits. When we experience a healing in our bodies, this is but a foretaste of the fullness of life that will be ours in that day. Till then, we only experience it in part. This is why the doctrine of divine health is incorrect. It is an attempt to experience too early what God intends in the proper time. We do not yet have the fullness of salvation experienced in our bodies and so we wait for it eagerly. “We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” (Rom.8:23)

ROM. 8:12, 13 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We put the deeds of the body to death, not the body itself. Perhaps you have seen people in other faiths who whip themselves bloody as they demonstrate their religion. This is of no value against the sins of the flesh. Inflicting pain upon our bodies does not make us holy. On the other hand, refusing to let our bodies rule our lives requires us to put the fleshly desires to death. This is what God wants. Some have thought, “I know, I will pray on my knees so the pain will keep me awake.” This sounds noble but does not make the seeker any more acceptable to God than the one who prays in a more comfortable position. God sees the heart; man looks on the outward appearance. Of course, praying on the knees is very scriptural. We should

respond with external expressions of what is in our hearts. If we have joy, let us dance. If we are humbling ourselves, let us kneel. If we are praising Him, let us lift our hands and shout. But let us not be deceived into thinking these external expressions are the humility, joy or praise He looks for. They are simply the outward portrayals of what is in our hearts. They illustrate the body's subservience to the heart.

ROM 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons (Grk., HUIOS) of God.

God wants us to grow up in sonship. His children are those born of His Spirit; His sons follow His Spirit. They live according to His desires, not their own. It is one thing to be born of the Spirit; it is another to be led by the Spirit. We will only attain maturity if our priority is following the Spirit of God.

ROM. 8:15 – 18 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children (Grk., TEKNON - ie., ones born) of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

God has destined us for glory. However, notice its connection to suffering. It is only as we suffer with Christ that we will attain to God's glory. Does Jesus still suffer? Yes. He is passionately involved with His people and His purpose on earth. When sin occurs in His house, He grieves over it. It pains Him! When He views the lost, He does so with grief over their lost condition. However, we have the privilege of participating in His sufferings. If we walk through life untouched by what is in His heart, we have missed His purpose for us on earth! We are not called to simply respond to the human need we see around us. We must respond to what God allows us to feel in His heart concerning that need. The needs around us are so many and so great that to try and indiscriminately meet them all would be too much to bear. So God allows us to feel a measure of what is in His heart. As we understand that part we are to carry, definition comes to us concerning our ministry. All of us are to seek this. Then as the body of Christ matures there will gradually arise a people who corporately reflect the full burden of God's heart. Each of us must give ourselves to responding to His Spirit within us. This is the mark of God's sons. The Spirit of adoption (Grk., HUIOTHESIA "the placing of sons") that we have received seeks to place each of us strategically in His house to serve in that area of responsibility that expresses His burden in us. As we respond to His Spirit within us there

will be pain involved. However, the suffering will be far outweighed by the glory that shall be revealed to those who follow Him.

ROM. 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

Creation is not waiting eagerly for a new political program. It awaits the arising of God's sons. This will only occur as we give ourselves to know the Lord and to participate in His burden. As we respond to Him, He will increasingly manifest His word, desires and burden through us. Visibility before men is not something we should seek after. Nowhere do the Scriptures instruct us to try and become more conspicuous in the eyes of men. As a matter of fact, Jesus was quite hidden from the nation's view for the first thirty years of His life in Israel. After He began to minister publicly, He would often heal someone and then instruct them to not tell anyone. Seeking visibility for ourselves undermines the very message God has sent us to deliver. We are called to proclaim Him, not our "ministry". However, when we pursue Him, some measure of visibility eventually comes as a consequence. Jesus did not seek visibility; it found Him. When it did, the pressure, affliction and adversity intensified. The more God makes His purpose visible, the more opposition heightens. The Lord is arising in these days in His people and they will become increasingly conspicuous. The resulting conflict will be the greatest one the world has ever known. It will not be fought with carnal means or human strength; it will be fought in the heavens. In fact, it is already under way! Satan is about to be displaced from the heavenly realms (Eph.6:12; Rev.12) as the children of God take their rightful place as a people of the heavenlies (Eph.2:6). This arising of God's sons will not occur in an instant; it will be gradual. Jesus spoke of it as wheat bearing grain (Matt. 13:26). John spoke of it as a birth (Rev.12:5). It will introduce the day of the Lord. If we walk alert in the Spirit, that day will dawn on us gradually (2Pet.1:19) and not catch us unaware (1Thess.5:4). The fact that it will come suddenly as a thief to some only indicates their lack of relationship with Christ. Of course, the full revelation of God's sons will occur at the full revelation of God's Son. When Jesus appears in glory, we will then be clothed in glory as our bodies put on immortality. This is what creation waits for.

ROM. 8:20, 21 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Freedom and glory are to be two traits marking God's children. Too often, Christians have been identified by laws and religion. However, liberty is found in the glory of God. As we learn to abide in His presence, we

will “know the truth and the truth will set us free”. One of the greatest distinguishing features of the New Covenant is that men are no longer called to try and obey God out of their own human frailty. God gives us His strength to do what He calls us to do! It is indeed true that apart from Him we can do nothing. The Law gave the clearest description of man's total inability to bring forth righteousness. However, the Good News has come liberating all men everywhere from the shackles of sin's power. Now we can embrace the life of God, be filled with His Spirit and receive divine enablement to obey Him. At last, the freedom for men to walk in true harmony with God has been revealed in the earth. This freedom is found in the glory of His presence. If we would be useful to the Lord in these days, we must become people of the glory. We must not seek our identity in methods, principles and programs. It can only be found in Him.

ROM. 8:22, 23 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

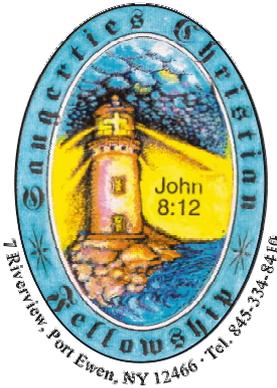
Not only does the creation groan waiting for its release from corruption, God's people do as well. We still await the fullness of our salvation. Our spirits have been cleansed. Our souls (minds, emotions, personalities) are in the process of restoration. However, our bodies are bodies of death. They must be redeemed. One day, the power and presence of God which is permeating our spirits will explode out into every fiber of our physical bodies. In that day, salvation will be fully realized. Until then, we groan waiting for that which is mortal to put on immortality. This groaning is likened to a woman in travail. Even as there is a fullness of time when the baby must be born, so there is a fullness of time when the glory of God within His people must come forth.

ROM. 8:24, 25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Scripture is clear that the consummation of salvation is yet future for us. What we presently have is good; what is coming is better. At the present we have only tasted the powers of the age to come. We have but the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. There is a fullness that awaits us. Scripture says that the Holy Spirit “is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:14). The purchased possession (us) awaits its full redemption. Until then, the Holy Spirit within us points us toward that day. We have tasted the future!

Thus, we are to be known by the presence of hope. While unbelievers will speak of the hopelessness of certain present conditions, we will declare our outlook of the future with confidence. Since we have tasted of the full inheritance, we view the horizon with an eager expectation. Let us bless the Lord for His great salvation!

All Scripture quotes are from the NKJV.



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