

Chapter 8

Commentary

The obvious theme of chapter 8 is the presence and indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. In chapters 1 - 7, πνεῦμα, *pneuma* the Greek word which most often translates רוח, *ruach*, Spirit, in the Tanach, is found only five times. In chapters 9 - 16, the same word occurs only eight times. But in chapter 8, "Spirit" shows up 21 times, and the majority of these obviously refer to the Spirit of God. Twice, the word clearly refers to something other than the Holy Spirit, and in some instances there is debate as to how the word should be understood. Nevertheless, it is clear even to the casual reader that for Paul, the life of one who is justified by faith is a life lived in and by the Spirit.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua.

Paul is taking his thought back to 7:1-6, not to 7:25, for 7:7-25 is a clarification of 7:1-6. Having made the clarification (lest any should think the Torah to be evil since it causes sin to have its power), Paul reiterates the general truth of 7:1-6, i.e., that since a death has occurred (the death of the believer in union with Yeshua), the condemnation of the Torah against sin is assuaged and can never again claim rightful authority over the child of God.

Paul has already shown conclusively that mankind carries the penalty of sin inherited from Adam (chapter 5), that as sinners mankind does not seek for God (3:10ff), and that in man's weakness to overcome sin, he stands condemned by the righteous Torah (5:16). This state of condemnation in which mankind exists can be overcome only through the just payment of sin by a substitute, illustrated time and time again by the sacrificial victim within the Temple, and fulfilled by the One to whom the sacrifices pointed, Yeshua our Messiah. Paul's perspective is that only the person who is in union with Yeshua, who is "in" Him, having thus undergone death and resurrection in union with Him—only this person stands as uncondemned in the eyes of Heaven.

Modern Judaisms (by this I mean those of so-called "rabbinic Judaism" following the destruction of the Temple and foundational for the growth of what today is generally referred to as "orthodox Judaism") have, on the one hand, much to say about sin, yet in another sense, consider it almost in a peripheral way.

. . . the concept of sin in and of itself is never fully developed or clarified in Judaism. . . . concern with sin itself occupies an insignificant place in Jewish thought. . . . Sin is viewed as a correlate of mitzva; it is treated not as a separate independent entity but rather as a shadow-essence or even, at times, a reverse image of mitzva.¹⁹²

. . . In every case, that is to say, it [sin] is conceived as the negation of something else, and not as an independent entity in its own right.¹⁹³

Steinsaltz goes on to show that Judaism defines sin as essentially a lack of doing *mitzvot*, which may be conceived in several ways:

- 1) The *mitzvot* are essentially Divine command, so that doing the *mitzvot* is an act of obedience, and thus sin would be viewed primarily as disobedience or rebellion.
- 2) The *mitzvot* are essentially Divine counsel, or the path best for man, and thus sin would be straying from this path or deviation from that which would be the creative order for mankind.
- 3) The *mitzvot* are essentially an act of rectification or completion of the world (*tikkun olam*), so that sin is when man as keeper or guardian of the world does not fulfill his creative purpose and instead blemishes reality or allows it to deteriorate.

Steinsaltz's conclusion is thus:

Nevertheless, a deeper look will show that all these approaches [to defining the *mitzvot*] have a common denominator: they do not see evil as a concrete subject or entity existing in and of itself. Even in these descriptions that view the history of the world or the inner spiritual life of man as a battle between good and evil, evil is not grasped as an essence to be defined independently. It is but the "other side" (*sitra achra*, in the terminology of the *kabbalah*) of reality, which is good, and it has no existence or essential definition of its own.¹⁹⁴

If, then, "sin" is defined as the neglect or distortion of the *mitzvot*, punishment for sin is viewed not as "revenge but rather as the natural consequences of distortion or error."¹⁹⁵ Sin may therefore be overcome through study and appreciation of the *mitzvot*, and personal commitment to their performance. In fact, "the higher mankind's level of consciousness, the less possibility there is for sin."¹⁹⁶

Taking sin in this definition, the obvious conclusion is that one is able, within his own being, to overcome sin through obedience to God and the doing of the *mitzvot*. But what about atonement for sins already committed? In the ancient times the Sages taught that the bringing of the sacrifice itself was accepted by God as atonement for sins:

The offering of sacrifices was conjoined to the duty of confession; and it was implied that the sacrificer was ready to repent, for the confession was the sign of penitence. With regard to the early Chasidim [pious men] R. Judah said: 'Seeing that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not allow an offence to be perpetrated by them, what did they do? They arose and made a free-will vow of naziriteship to the Omnipresent, so that they should be liable to bring a sin-offering to the Omnipresent.'¹⁹⁷ R. Nathan testified that R. Ishmael had written in his account book: 'Ishmael b. Elisha tilted the lamp on the Sabbath. When the Temple will be rebuilt, he will be liable to bring a sin-offering.'¹⁹⁸ The sacrifices only expiated iniquities between man and God, for which it was not in the power of an earthly court to impose punishment. Transgressions that were liable to punishment by a court were not atoned for by sacrifices, and only the penalty brought with it atonement for the sin. Those who were sentenced to death were told to make confession, 'For such is the way of those condemned to death to make confession, because every one that makes confession has a share in the world to come . . . and if he does not know to make confession, he is told: "Say, May my death be an atonement for all my iniquities"'.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, it is stated regarding the penalty of lashes: 'Lashes are precious, for they atone for sins, as it is said: 'according to [כדי] the measure of his wickedness.'²⁰⁰ The Sages even said, "For all who are liable to extinction, if they have received lashes, are exempted from their penalty of extinction."²⁰¹

As one can imagine, with this view of sin and atonement for sin, the destruction of the Temple (which caused the sacrificial system to cease) and the removal of capital punishment from the hands of the Jewish court, caused a sense of despair and the feeling that Israel had

been deprived of the possibility of atonement.

It once happened that Rabban Yochanan b. Zakkai was leaving Jerusalem and R. Joshua was walking behind him, when the latter saw the Temple in ruins. Said R. Joshua: "Woe to us that this is in ruins—the place where the sins of Israel were expiated!" Rabban Yochanan b. Zakkai replied: "My son, be not grieved, we have a means of atonement that is commensurate with it. Which is this? It is the performance of acts of lovingkindness, as it is said, 'For I desire lovingkindness and not sacrifice'" (Hos 6:6).²⁰²

This teaching, after the destruction of the Temple, that the doing of *mitzvot* atoned for sin was taken up by later Sages:

R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: 'Whoever entertains a scholar in his house and lets him enjoy his possessions it is accounted to him by Scripture as if he had offered up the daily burnt-offerings.'²⁰³

According to the normal understanding by the Sages, the atonement of sins depends on the sacrifice of the daily burnt-offerings and the Scripture 'he-lambs' of the first year (Num 28:3), which was expounded by the School of Shammai thus:

Kevasim (he-lambs) are so called because they suppress [כּוּבְשִׁים] the sins of Israel. The School of Hillel said: Kevasim (are so called) because they cleanse [כּוּבְסִין] the sins of Israel.²⁰⁴

Indeed, it was reckoned by the Sages that the death penalty itself atoned for the sin of the guilty, and after the death penalty was removed from the hands of the Sanhedrin, natural death itself atoned for sin.²⁰⁵

Other acts of piety were added to the list of means of atonement:

Rev Sheshet said: Sovereign of the universe, it is known to Thee that when the Temple was in existence, if a man sinned he would bring a sacrifice, of which only the fat and the blood were offered up, and he would be granted atonement. Now I have observed a fast and my own fat and blood have been diminished. May it be Thy will that my diminished fat and blood be accounted as though I had offered them up before Thee on the altar, and do Thou show me favor.²⁰⁶

All of this is a logical and reasoned conclusion if sin is defined as the absence of *mitzvot*. If, however, sin is understood to be fundamentally a rebellion and disobedience against God Who is infinitely holy, and He exacts payment from mankind which he cannot, of his own "afford," then sin surely has a condemning power, and one which man is hopeless to overcome. This primary difference between modern or so-called "rabbinic" Judaism and the teachings of Yeshua and Paul as to the definition and consequences of sin is fundamental to the correlated understanding and definition of atonement.

Paul's exclamation that those who are in Messiah Yeshua are no longer under the condemnation of sin comes forth rather flat if, in fact, no one ever need fear condemnation from sin! Furthermore, from the viewpoint of rabbinic Judaism, the need for a suffering Messiah to atone for sin becomes the invention of the Christian church who, having left her roots in the *mitzvot*, seek rather to have atonement the "easy way," by mere confession apart from careful and disciplined keeping of Torah. Unfortunately, the "dumbing down" of the modern Christian church has made them vulnerable to this line of thinking, and the occasional trickle of people back into the orthodox synagogues of our day is the result on the one hand, while the overwhelming flood of people out of the church into so-called "secularism" (better called paganism)

is the more obvious consequence. After all, if "sin" is simply human weakness, then its remedy can be found in any concerted effort to "be a better person." But, of course, the Scriptures speak otherwise.

Jeremiah writes: (13:23) "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil." And again the prophet affirms: (17:9) "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" Here we find a principle—the inability of sinners to overcome their sin nature, while at the same time be overtaken by it. And Paul has already made this clear by the quoting of passages (3:10ff) from the Psalms.

There is one thing the Sages have right in their view of sin and atonement, and it is this: sin by its very nature requires payment. If they saw the doing of *mitzvot* or the bringing of sacrifice, or personal suffering (even death) as this payment, they were wrong. But they recognized that payment had to be forthcoming, for God is a God of justice and payment is required to satisfy justice.

How then, one might ask, does the Psalmist regularly ask for forgiveness on the basis of God's mercy?

Psa. 25:7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; According to Your lovingkindness remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O LORD

Psa. 25:11 For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

Psa. 25:18 Look upon my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.

Psa. 39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish.

Psa. 51:1–3 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

Psa. 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Psa. 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins, for Your name's sake.

Psa. 85:2 You did forgive the iniquity of Your people; You did cover all their sin. Selah.

Psa. 103:10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Psa. 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Here we have only a few of the examples which abound in the Tanach, of the penitent sinner asking for God's mercy and grace in forgiving of sins. If, in fact, the forgiveness of sins is brought about by the daily sacrifice, or (later) by the doing of the *mitzvot*, why doesn't the Psalmist simply apply himself to these means? Why plead for forgiveness of sins on the basis of God's character (faithfulness, loyalty to the covenant, etc.)? Furthermore, could God be just in forgiving of sins without exacting the penalty / payment He Himself has decreed?

Ezek. 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

Ezek. 18:20–21 The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

What is meant by "die" (מות, *mot*) here (Ezek 18:4)? Are we to make the assumption that the person who repents and lives righteously (Ezek 18:21) will never experience physical death? If

so, how are we to explain a verse like Ps 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones." No, Ezekiel is not speaking merely of physical death here, but of that eternal death to which physical death points. The one who repents, that is, seeks the forgiveness of God and the cleansing He offers, and through returning to Him receives from Him the power to live righteously—this one receives eternal life because he has been cleansed of his sin through the eternal mercies of HaShem, through the means God Himself ordained for forgiveness. Thus God's mercy is not devoid of justice! His mercy is based upon the known fact and reality of Messiah's sacrifice—His death on behalf of sinners. It is only when God's justice is satisfied that He is able to receive the repentant sinner and forgive his sins.

Here we return to one of Paul's basic tenets, namely, the example of Abraham in Gen 15:6, "And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." This statement is, interestingly, reserved by Moses for the very time and place when the promise of the "seed" is made explicit. The object of Abraham's faith was none other than the seed by Whom all the nations would be blessed. The text does not say that it was Abraham's obedience or doing of good deeds (and he did both) that was reckoned by God as righteousness, but his faith. Surely his faith was the fountain out of which flowed his obedience—but it was the satisfaction of HaShem's justice by the sacrifice of the Messiah that Abraham laid hold of by faith, and it was this that rendered him righteous before the Holy God with Whom he conversed.

Indeed, why must the Servant of HaShem suffer (Is 53) in order to justify the sinners? Why must the innocent suffer for the guilty if, in fact, the guilty are able to atone for their own transgressions through the doing of *mitzvot* and the acceptance of due punishment—even death? Why must "Messiah son of Joseph"²⁰⁷ suffer though surely he is righteous?

The obvious answer, gleaned from the sacrificial system itself, is that God intends that sin be paid for through death, for sin, in any of its various forms, is a spit in the face of the God Who is eternally holy, and cannot remain unaccounted for. The innocent animal in the sacrificial ritual metaphorically takes the sin of the guilty, and carries it away (so to speak) through the expiation of sacrifice. The Giver of Life requires a life for the payment of sin in His universe. When John declared, "Behold the Lamb of God. . ." (Jn 1:29) he simply took the obvious metaphor and applied it to the obvious anti-type. The Messiah had come—the atoning Lamb of God was there.

If we, then, take sin for what it truly is—an infinite transgression against an infinitely Holy God, and see how utterly impossible it is to ever pay that infinite debt out of our own resources—then we are able to understand as Paul did that our sin leaves us in the position of condemnation. Brought before the tribunal of God's court we are pronounced "guilty"—and we're not surprised. Our sin lies before us as the obvious evidence of our rebellion against God, and the verdict is therefore anticipated: "Guilty!" "Sentenced to eternal death"!

Somewhere in those moments and days of darkness experienced by Saul of Tarsus as he was blinded by the Shekinah of God's glory, he came to realize the terrible and awful reality of his sin. All of his "righteous deeds" had amounted to nothing, and he sat, condemned before the very God he desired to serve. Deceived by the darkness of man-made religion, he had come now to understand the dire state of affairs surrounding his own soul, and one can speculate that he labored under the "death" that he was now shrouded with as the "commandment" came, and shined its light upon the darkness of his soul. Condemnation without hope of reprieve; damnation without the hope of recovery.

It was out of this experience, no doubt, that Paul sings forth his triumphant refrain: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Yeshua the Messiah!" Paul, Pharisee of Pharisees, disciple of Gamiliel, Hebrew of Hebrews, zealous for his ancestral traditions—this Paul had come to understand and agree with God's assessment of sin. He had come to appreciate firsthand that he stood as a condemned sinner before the throne room of God, and that his only hope was the mercies that HaShem might extend to him on the basis of Messiah's death and resurrection. This he had come to understand, not from some body of Scripture owned by

the “Christian church” (i.e., the New Testament, which, of course, did not exist at the time of his coming to faith in Yeshua) but from the pages of his own Bible—from the Tanach. From these pages the Spirit had taken the inspired word and penetrated his mind and soul with the truth of the Good News. Emerging from his darkness, with eyes renewed to see, Paul began his life's mission of heralding forth the “no condemnation” message of the Gospel of Yeshua. This would become his theme—his hallmark, for it was for Paul the central core revelation of God's faithful, lovingkindness. The blessing promised upon the nations through the seed of Abraham was a blessing of “no condemnation.” God had revealed His way of declaring sinners just, and it rested entirely upon the Messiah.

Far from a meaningless statement of systematic theology, Paul's opening jubilation of 8:1 is the core of the Gospel and central pillar of our salvation.

As stated above, the opening verse in our chapter attaches to 7:1-6, drawing the conclusion that (6:14b) those who have placed their faith in Yeshua are no longer under the condemnation of the Torah because the condemnation which they deserve has already been fully borne for them by Him.

The emphasis upon “now” (*νῦν*, *nun*) is either logical (i.e., within the scope of the argument Paul is able to declare the axiom) or temporal (i.e., that this statement can be categorically affirmed since Yeshua has died and risen, fulfilling completely the necessary sacrifice for the salvation of sinners.) I rather think the “now” is best understood within the scope of Paul's polemic—having explained the manner in which the Torah condemns sin, and how Yeshua stood as the substitute for sinners, he is “now” able to make the sweeping and summary statement of no condemnation.

The Textus Receptus (Authorized text which was the basis for the King James Version of 1611) has a longer reading:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Messiah Yeshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The manuscripts which have the longer reading are \aleph^c , D^c , K, P, 33, 88, etc, *it*^{ar}, *syr*^b, and some of the church fathers. Some manuscripts add “who do not walk according to the flesh,” leaving off “but according to the Spirit.”

Here we have an excellent example of scribal activity in attempting to “fix” what they saw as a possible error. Since 8:4 has these words and since some no doubt took Paul's bold and forthright statement as “too dangerous” to stand by itself, they added the words from v. 4 to hopefully “balance” the Apostle's message. Apparently it was felt that to simply declare one's eternal salvation to be based entirely and only on the work of Yeshua would lead to undisciplined living and the rise of sin in the confessing community. In order to guard against such a thing, the scribes simply took the words of v. 4 and copied them into v. 1 as well.

But the shorter reading is surely original, as all of the major and older manuscripts agree with the shorter reading. What are the ramifications of this textual issue?

First, it highlights once again that salvation by God's grace, obtained through the means of faith, is contrary to our natural way of thinking and seems at odds with the way things normally work. In the everyday course of life, if I make a mistake or otherwise cause harm, I'm obligated to make it right. Would it not seem logical, then, to assume that if I have sinned against God I must, in some way, make it right? Yet this is the very point that even the later scribes missed: salvation must be based upon God's grace because it is impossible any other way. Apart from God's grace all are doomed to be eternally condemned. To add the phrase “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” is, in the scope of Paul's argument, to possibly “muddy” the waters of justification with the subsequent reality of sanctification. Surely the two are bound together, and one follows the other as day follows the sunrise. This is affirmed in *vv*, 2-4. But the point Paul wishes to stress in the opening verse is that our justification—our escap-

ing condemnation is fully and in every way resting upon what He did in the Messiah, not what we do. So pervasive was the idea that sin was not something in and of itself, but that it was merely the absense of the *mitzvot*, and thus it could be overcome through their performance—so pervasive was this idea within the teachings of the Sages²⁰⁸ that Paul needed to state without hint of reservation or possible misunderstanding that salvation from sins was first and forever grounded in the atoning work of the Messiah, not on the pious lives lived out by His true disciples.

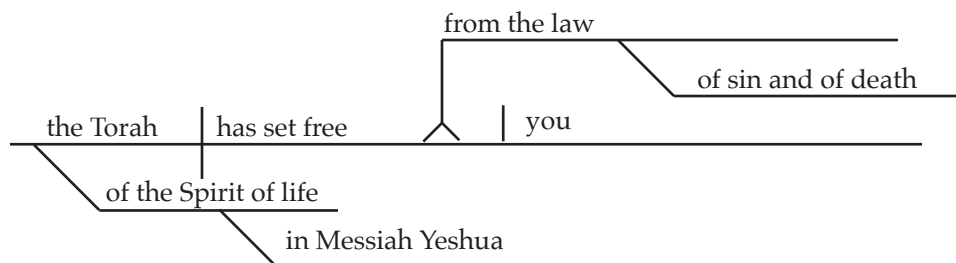
2 For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Having stated clearly that the one who, like Abraham, had believed was no longer under the condemnation which the Torah prescribes as payment for sins, Paul goes on to give further substantiation why this is true: another “law,” another aspect of the Torah now takes precedence. Even as the established *halachah* of marriage lawfully allows a woman to marry after the death of her husband, so the Torah provides freedom for those who have escaped condemnation through the death of Messiah. (Indeed, James considers the Torah the Royal Torah of Liberty, James 1:25; 2:12.)

The opening “For” (*γάρ*, *gar*) surely hearkens back to verse 1, and substantiates why there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Yeshua the Messiah. Since verse one itself is a regathering of the thoughts initially stated in 7:1-6, we might wonder if v. 2 does not likewise pick up a theme from that section—and it does. 7:6 ends with “. . . so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.” Coupled with this is Paul’s strong assertion that the Torah is “spiritual” (7:14) and we see a consistent theme which Paul now desires to stress, namely, that when the Torah is seen through the eyes of faith, it is because the Spirit has opened the eyes and has illumined the text, and has thus opened the Torah to the believer as the pattern for life it was intended to be (cf. 7:10).

Furthermore, the phrase “law of sin and of death” must be speaking of the same thing as “the law of sin” (7:23, 25) and “another law” (7:23), that is, the existing sin nature which wars against the Spirit and the regenerated soul—against which the regenerate heart (which longs for obedience to God’s Torah) must constantly be engaged in battle.

But how shall we understand the words “Torah of the Spirit of life?” First, we need to understand the basic thrust of the sentence and then ask some obvious questions. Diagramming the sentence will help us see its primary import:



When we diagram the sentence we see the primary point: “The Torah has set you free” is the core sentence. Of course, there are decisions which must be made in the diagram:

- 1) does “life” attach to “Spirit” or to “Messiah Yeshua?” Is it “the Spirit” who brings “life in Messiah Yeshua” or is it “the life producing Spirit” Who works

in connection with all that Messiah is and has done?

- 2) Does the phrase “in Messiah Yeshua” go with “the Spirit of life” or with what follows, i.e., the realm (so to speak) in which the freedom exists, i.e., “. . . has set you free in Messiah Yeshua?”

I think that in light of the preceding context, and the identification of the Torah as good, holy, and just, as well as spiritual, what Paul is saying here is that the Spirit of God, Who does the work of regeneration in the heart of the sinner, does His work always in concert with, and on the basis of, the death and resurrection of Messiah. He is therefore identified as the Spirit of life, i.e., the Spirit Who gives life. But the phrase “in the Messiah Yeshua” identifies the realm and covenant in which the Spirit works—it is always in concert with the outworking of God's plan of redemption in His Son, Yeshua.

The Torah of life, then, is the living Torah (Heb 4:12) which, energized by the Spirit in connection with the work of Yeshua, enables the word of God to become active in the life of the believer, changing him and conforming him to the image of Yeshua Himself. This work of the Spirit in connection with Torah (“so that we serve in the newness of the Spirit,” cf. 7:6) in the life of the believer is evidence that a true saving work has been done, and that condemnation is no longer to be feared.

Note well the verb tense of “has set free” (ἠλευθήρωσεν, *eleutherosen* from ἐλευθερόω, *eleutheroo*)—it is aorist active indicative, indicating that as far as Paul is concerned the “setting free” has already been accomplished in the sense that it is as good as finished. The very fact that the believer has a genuine love for God and for His Torah is proof that the sinful nature is being overcome, and will, eventually, be fully subdued by the same power which saved us—the power of resurrection—victory over sin and death (cf. Phil 3:10).

One might rightfully ask how a believer could, at the same time, be both a “prisoner of the law of sin” (7:23) and “free from the law of sin and death” (8:2). The answer is twofold: First, the “prison” of which Paul speaks is the sin nature, which, apart from full glorification in immortality, will always be a foe with which to reckon. Thus, though our efforts may be valiant and our victories over sin sure, we know that the struggle will always be ongoing until “this mortal puts on immortality.”

Secondly, the freedom consists in the fact that the regenerate soul actually is able to wage war against the sin nature and to gain victories over it. While dead in trespasses and sins, the unregenerate is powerless to affect honest strides toward righteousness, the death of the old man and the presence of the new man indicates a foretaste of the inevitable freedom awaiting us in the world to come. Our freedom now is to fight against the sin that remains within us. And the very fact that we both want to fight and are able to engage the battle means that eventually we will be completely free. Our freedom is thus an “already/not yet” entity, real in the present, but full in eternity.

3–4 For what the Torah could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

The translation of verse 3 is difficult, and the translators have inevitably needed to add words to give the sense they believe was Paul's intention. But the overarching point Paul is making is clear:

- 1) The Torah was weak, not in and of itself, but because it could not, on its own strength, bring to life those dead in sin. (Of course, the Torah was never in-

tended to initiate life in the sinful soul. The Torah only benefits those who are already endowed with life.)

- 2) God accomplished the work of giving life to those dead in sin, not through the Torah, but through the work of His Son, Yeshua.
- 3) It was thus through the life-giving Spirit, in connection with the work of Yeshua, that the sinner is made new and given both the will and ability to live life in accordance with the Torah. (This points back to 2:13, “for not the hearers of the law [are] righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be declared righteous”). Thus, since the “requirements” of the Torah are actually accomplished in the life of the believer, this is proof of a position of righteousness before God.

For what the Torah could not do, weak as it was through the flesh – Here, as in chapter 7, Paul affirms that the fault does not lie with the Torah, but with the flesh. The Torah was never given to bring to life that which was dead. The order of the covenants (Abrahamic, followed by Mosaic) is a graphic illustration that the Torah, given on Sinai, expected the faith of Abraham to be intact.

God Himself His Son sent – I have given the literal translation to show the emphasis, first in the addition of the pronoun *ἐαυτοῦ*, *eautou*, and then in the word order in which “Son” (*υἱος*, *huios*) is thrust forward before the verb so as to receive the emphasis. The remedy for the inability of the Torah to affect life where there was death is the sending of Yeshua, something that only the Father could have accomplished. Here we have the heart of the gospel, for had there been any other way for the sinner to be brought to life, then surely God would have preferred it to the agony of His own Son's death. But if the Torah, as eternal and wonderful as it is, could not affect life in the dead soul of the sinner, then only that which was greater than the Torah could accomplish the task—even the Law-giver Himself.

Note well the emphasis upon God's activity in the salvation of sinners. Too often the emphasis is put on the work of the Son to the near exclusion of the Father. But constantly the Scriptures portray the Father Himself as intimately involved in the saving of sinners.

in the likeness of sinful flesh – In the course of the theological debate over the mystery of the incarnation, this phrase (and the similar terms in Phil 2:5ff) have given rise to a number of interpretations. The following are representative:

- 1) the term “likeness” is used because Paul did not wish to imply the reality of Messiah's human nature.
- 2) the term “likeness” is used to avoid implying that the Messiah assumed a fallen human nature.
- 3) the term “likeness” is used to avoid implying that Messiah ever sinned.
- 4) the term “likeness” means “form” rather than “likeness” in order to convey the idea that Yeshua took on the actual “form” of the sinful nature, but was always able to overcome the temptations of sin.
- 5) that the term “likeness” is used to convey the idea that while Yeshua took on a human nature (sinful flesh), He nonetheless remained Himself, the eternal, infinitely holy, Son of God.

Of all of these suggestions, #1 can be ruled out immediately. This was the view of the docetic doctrines, which denied that the Messiah actually came in the flesh. The fact that the text indicates that He actually took on flesh administers a death blow to this explanation. #2 has its difficulties, because though the Scriptures give full evidence that Yeshua never sinned, it does teach us that He experienced other aspects of a fallen, human nature (pain, agony, anguish, sorrow,