

**The meaning of Romans 8:13, and its function in Paul's
argument**

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PREFACE

Many thanks to David Peterson for his wise and constructive help concerning both exegeting Romans and writing a dissertation, and thanks also to Meg for her patience.

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years Romans 8:13 has intrigued and unsettled me. Ostensibly, eternal life depends on the mortifying of our sin. If this is so, how is this not salvation merited by our “works”? And, given our ongoing sinfulness, how can we be assured of salvation (8:1 cf. vv.35-39) when it is contingent on mortification?

I propose the following:

- a) 8:13 teaches that ongoing killing-off of sin *is* a necessary prerequisite for final salvation.
- b) This is not a meritorious cause of salvation.
- c) Whilst struggling with sinful behaviour the Christian can know the same certainty and confidence about eternal life as Paul himself expresses in Romans 8.

To substantiate my proposal, I aim to exegete Romans 8:1-17, concentrating particularly on the flow of Paul’s argument. This will enable me to embed v.13 in its context, and thereby ascertain its meaning and function. In the light of these findings, I will conclude with reflections on a) “works” and salvation, and b) assurance.

Whilst I aim to understand 8:1-17 in the light of Romans as a whole, due to this dissertation’s brevity I will not explicitly discuss the much-disputed identity of ἐγὼ in 7:7-25, and thus the exact nature of the connection between 7:7-25 and 8:1ff.

I. THE ARGUMENT OF 8:1-17, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF V.13

1. *Structure and language*

In these Spirit-dominated verses¹, some see the major structural break in the section at the end of v.11. Having spoken about life in the Spirit, Paul shifts, in a new paragraph starting in v.12 (signalled by Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί,) to consider “the Spirit of adoption.”² However, I prefer to take vv.1-13 together.³ Within vv.1-13, an antithesis between the conjoining pairs of Spirit and life, and flesh and death, is prominent. So, πνεῦμα is paired positively with ζωὴ (8:2, 10, 11, 13) and is antithetical to σὰρξ (8:4, 5, 6, 9, 13), which itself is paired with θάνατος (8:6), the opposite of ζωὴ (8:2, 6). These antithetical pairings stretch to v.13, where all four terms appear together. Vv.14-17 then drop the vocabulary of flesh, death and life and concentrate on Spirit and sonship.⁴ Semantically, Ἄρα οὖν (v.12) might then indicate not a new subject, but rather “a compelling conclusion drawn from what has just been said”⁵ in vv.1-11.

2. *8:1-4*

Paul declares, in v.1: Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα. An emphatic conclusion⁶ is in view. As in 3:21, the νῦν carries a pregnant eschatological weight, referring not to an individual’s moment of conversion but to “the new era of salvation history inaugurated

¹ The Spirit is mentioned 16 times. See vv. 2, 4, 5x2, 6, 9x3, 10, 11x2, 13, 14, 15x2, 16.

² See e.g. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980), 212; James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1988), 413, 446.

³ Following Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich. / Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1996), 468.

⁴ See Moo, *Romans*, 468.

⁵ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 447.

⁶ Gk. ἄρα νῦν.

by Jesus' death and resurrection."⁷ κατάκριμα is a judicial word.⁸ Its use in 5:16 and 5:18, in the light of 2:1-16,⁹ indicates a primary reference to “the final judgement that God, the righteous judge, will mete out at the last.”¹⁰ In both 2:1-16 and 5:12-21, κατάκριμα is linked with and marked by death (2:1 cf. 1:32; 5:12-17), in contrast with δικαίωμα and life (5:17-18; 2:6-13¹¹). This life/ death contrast will become important as we proceed. τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ¹² designates those for whom there will be, and now is, “no condemnation,” and recalls the motif of union with Christ in 6:1-23.¹³

⁷ David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament theology of sanctification and holiness* (NSBT. Leicester: Apollos, 1995), 165n41. See also C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans I, I-VIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1975), 373; N.T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians* (vol. 10 of *New Interpreter's Bible*; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 575; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 415.

⁸ “Judicial pronouncement upon a guilty person” is in view. BAGD, 518. We note also: “When κατακρίνειν refers to human judgment there is a clear distinction between the condemnation and its execution, but this is irrelevant in the case of divine κατακρίνειν, where the two can be seen as one.” Büchsel, “κρίνω,” *TDNT* 3:951.

⁹ We note a verbal usage in 2:1 - ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις. This is in the context of the future day of wrath (2:5).

¹⁰ Wright, “Romans,” 575.

¹¹ In 2:13 Paul says that those who receive eternal life (2:7) “will be justified” (δικαιωθήσονται). The verb is from the same root as δικαίωμα.

¹² Concerning the textual variant, the shorter reading “is strongly supported by early representative of both the Alexandrian and the Western types of text (ⲛ* B C D G 1739 it^{d*,g} cop^{sa,bo} arm^{mss} al).” Bruce M. Metzger, *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 455-456. Regarding internal evidence, the longer readings might very probably reflect intentional changes, as scribes seek to harmonise the identification of v.1 (τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) with that of v.4 (τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα).

¹³ The prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is found in 6:11 and 6:23. However, the concept of participation is prevalent throughout. So, those who were baptised *into* Christ Jesus were baptized *into* his death (v.3 - ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν); we were *co*-buried *with him* (v.4 - συνετάφημεν... αὐτῷ); our old man was *co*-crucified with him (v.6 - συνεσταυρώθη); we died *with Christ*...we will also *co*-live *with him* (v.8 - ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ,... συζήσομεν αὐτῷ).

V.2, introduced by the causal conjunction γὰρ, explains the grounds for the declaration of v.1, namely “God’s act of liberation.”¹⁴ ἐλεύθερω, as its use in 6:18 and 6:22 shows, indicates freedom from slavery.¹⁵ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ functions adverbially, and, as in v.1, recalls the participatory language of 6:1-23. Thus, we see “liberation effected in and through Christ Jesus.”¹⁶

That from which “you”¹⁷ are liberated is that which previously bound, τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. Slavery to the reign of sin and death, and captivity to Torah characterises life “in the flesh” (7:5),¹⁸ life “under” (ὑπὸ) these “powers”.¹⁹ Whether τοῦ νόμου here designates Torah, or a more metaphorical “exercised power, authority, control,”²⁰ is disputed, and turns principally on the interpretation of νόμος in 7:21-25, and especially the phrase τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας in 7:23. Up until 7:20, Paul has certainly indicated an intertwined relationship between Torah, sin, and death (5:12-14, 20; 7:5, 9-11, 13),²¹ and so we might expect τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας to refer to Torah. Puzzling, however, is the apparent reference in 7:22-23 to two “laws”, “the law of God” (v.22), and “another law” (v.23). This has led some to posit that whilst τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (v.22) is Torah, ἕτερον νόμον (designated also in v.23 as τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας) must be a more abstract ““authority” or “demand”.”²² The debate involves a number of exegetical and theological issues.²³ However, considering Paul’s argument in

¹⁴ Wright, “Romans,” 576.

¹⁵ This is clear in, for example, 6:17-18, where Paul speaks of our past slavery to sin - ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας - and then our having been liberated from that, using the verb in question - ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ.

¹⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 418.

¹⁷ Regarding the textual variant, we follow Metzger in preferring σε. Supported by a good number of Alexandrian and Western witnesses, it is also a harder reading than με, which itself would fit more easily with the 1st person singular in 7:7-25. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 456.

¹⁸ Language of slavery, dominion, reign, captivity is strongly associated, in chapters 5-7, with the “powers” of sin (5:21; 6:6, 16, 17, 20), death (5:14, 17; 6:9), and Torah (7:6).

¹⁹ Paul talks of being “under” law (6:14, 15), “under” sin (7:14).

²⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 376. He is commenting here on the use of the phrase in 7:23, but equates this use with the same phrase in 8:2.

²¹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 419; Wright, “Romans,” 570.

²² Moo, *Romans*, 464. See also Cranfield, *Romans I-VIII*, 364.

²³ See, e.g. Moo, *Romans*, 460-465.

7:7-25 as a whole (of which vv.21-25 form a summary), it is unsurprising to see “two Torahs” here, for this has been Paul’s point. Torah is holy, righteous, good, spiritual, for life, and yet *simultaneously* sin-arousing, captivating, for death. As Wright comments: “nothing is gained by lessening the force of Paul’s paradox, by avoiding the thought that Torah might be its own shadowy *doppelgänger*.”²⁴ Assuming that νόμος in 7:21-25 is referring to Torah,²⁵ Paul is most likely referring in 8:2 to “the law [that is, Torah] caught up in the nexus of sin and death.”²⁶

Thus, we would presume that ὁ νόμος in the phrase ὁ... νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς, the subject of the verb ἐλεύθερω, also refers to Torah. Certainly, Torah is associated with both πνεῦμα and ζωη in 7:7-25.²⁷ However, this would ostensibly make Torah that which liberates the believer, a suggestion which militates not only against Paul’s negative view of Torah in previous references (4:15; 5:20; 7:5), but also against v.3, where Torah’s inability to give life, thereby necessitating God’s action, is highlighted. Dunn takes νόμος here to be Torah, but downplays its significance as subject of the verb, opining that “the sentence is probably rhetorical... the emphasis lies on the Spirit.”²⁸ Wright and Peterson make similar suggestions.²⁹ This might be a solution. However, it would also not be out of place rhetorically to take νόμος as a metaphorical “authority” and τοῦ πνεύματος as an exegetical genitive, thus rendering the phrase “the law – that is, the Spirit of life,”³⁰ even if we were to take τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου as speaking of Torah.³¹

²⁴ Wright, “Romans,” 570, author’s italics.

²⁵ See Wright, “Romans,” 569-572; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 392-399; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 376-377; Bruce Morrison and John Woodhouse, “The Coherence of Romans 7:1-8:8,” *RTR* 47 (Jan-Apr 1988): 10-12.

²⁶ Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 110.

²⁷ See 7:14; 10.

²⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 417.

²⁹ Wright comments, “when God acts in Christ and by the Spirit the Torah is somehow involved as well, somehow present and active.” Wright, “Romans,” 577. Peterson suggests that the phrase could mean “the law as fulfilled in Christ through the Spirit,” the emphasis thus falling on Christ rather than on Torah. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 110, author’s italics.

³⁰ See Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 375-376; Käsemann, *Romans*, 215-216.

³¹ Morrison and Woodhouse support this suggestion, that “the law of sin and death” refers to Torah, whereas “in the phrase “the law of the Spirit” in 8:2a the word *nomos* is used in a new way making a play

So, the grounds for “no condemnation” appears to be *liberation from* the flesh-located reigning triumvirate of sin, death and Torah, *liberation by* “the law of the Spirit of life.”³² Some commentators say this plainly.³³ Many, however, balk at the suggestion that escape from condemnation might be grounded somehow on the Spirit’s liberating work in the believer,³⁴ even though this is the apparent meaning of vv.1-2. I will seek to further establish my interpretation by expounding the flow of Paul’s argument in vv.3-13, below.

How is it that a) we are liberated from the enslaving realm of Torah/ sin/ death, and b) our liberation ensures no condemnation? V.3ff explains, as the causal conjunction γὰρ again indicates.

The syntax of v.3 is not obvious. With Moo,³⁵ we suggest supplying ἐποίησεν as a missing main verb, such that τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς... reads “for the impossible thing of the law, in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did...” What was “the impossible thing of the law”, that which it could not do? Bring life. Torah is in view here, as 7:5-25 is recalled. Although Torah promised life (7:10), whilst we were in the flesh (7:5) sin employed Torah to bring death (7:5, 7-11) and not life. So, *God* brings life, “no condemnation.” He does this

on the word and in so doing indicating that in some sense the Spirit takes on the function of the Mosaic law as it sets us free from that law.” Morrison and Woodhouse, “The Coherence of Romans 7:1-8:8,” 13.

³² We note here that the language and concepts of 8:2 are clearly reminiscent of 6:21-23 and especially 7:5-6. The lexical connections with these verses are shown here, with emphasis added:

6:21-23 - τίνα οὖν καρπὸν εἶχετε τότε; ἐφ’ οἷς νῦν ἐπαισχύνεσθε, τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἐκείνων θάνατος. νυνὶ δὲ ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον. τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

7:5-6 - ὅτε γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ. νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γραμματος.

³³ Wright, “Romans,” 576; Chuck Lowe, “There is no condemnation” (Romans 8:1): but why not?” *JETS* 42/2. June 1999: 232.

³⁴ Lowe provides a useful summary of approaches to vv.1-2. Lowe, “There is no condemnation” (Romans 8:1): but why not?” 231-232.

³⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 477n37.

through “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.”³⁶ Jesus is sent *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. This could simply mean “concerning sin.”³⁷ However, the technical sacrificial meaning of “sin offering” is more likely, referring to Christ’s death. This reflects the phrase’s usage in the LXX,³⁸ and is consonant with the present context.

By sending Jesus as a sin-offering, God “condemned sin in the flesh” (*κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί*). The phrase is unusual, for elsewhere the object of *κατακρίνω* is invariably personal. As Paul describes Jesus’s cross-work here, that which is condemned is “sin”, the flesh-located (hence *ἐν τῇ σαρκί*; cf. 7:5, 14, 17-18), personalised, reigning and enslaving power of the old age (cf. 6:14, 6:20, and especially 7:8-11, where sin comes alive, seizes, deceives and kills), which brings death (5:21, 7:5). By sin’s condemnation is meant, “such a combination of sentence and execution as constitutes a final and altogether decisive dealing with its object – so God’s effective breaking of sin’s power.”³⁹ The breaking of sin’s power, as well as the bearing of sin’s penalty, is Paul’s concern here.⁴⁰

Paul has not yet completed his explanation of how “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (v.1). Our liberation from the realm of Torah/ sin/ death (v.2) through Christ’s sin-bearing, sin-condemning death (v.3) implies that “with [sin’s] power broken, God could then give the life sin would otherwise prevent,”⁴¹ but is this right, and how does this happen?

V.4 starts to provide an answer. The purpose of God’s condemning of sin is: *ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα*. This verse’s meaning is disputed but is critical for Paul’s argument, not least for a right understanding of vv.5-13, for in v.4b we are confronted with the *σὰρξ/ πνεῦμα* contrast, which is developed in the argument of vv.5-13.

³⁶ Gk. - τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας

³⁷ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 382.

³⁸ See Wright, “Romans,” 579; Moo, *Romans*, 480; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 439.

³⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 382-383.

⁴⁰ See Wright, “Romans,” 578; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 439; Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 382-383. *Pace* Moo, *Romans*, 481.

⁴¹ Wright, “Romans,” 578.

τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου is commonly taken as indicating the behaviour which Torah demands, the singular form of δικαίωμα perhaps highlighting its unity,⁴² or its “essential requirement,”⁴³ namely, faith seen in obedience,⁴⁴ or love (cf. 13:8-10). However, when this phrase is employed in 2:26, referring to behaviour, δικαίωμα is plural in form.⁴⁵ Perhaps a closer parallel is in 1:32, where τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ refers not to the *behaviour demanded* by Torah but the *verdict pronounced* by it, that is, death to sinners. δικαίωμα (singular) as verdict finds support in 5:16, where the noun contrasts with κατὰκριμα (as here). However, in 5:18 it contrasts with παράπτωμα, a behavioural term. In Romans, then, δικαίωμα is a flexible “many-coloured word,”⁴⁶ as outside the New Testament, where it can mean “a legal claim, a written right..., a statute or ordinance, or a judicial sentence, especially of punishment.”⁴⁷ Whilst a reference to *behaviour* here is possible, the singular form and suggestive parallel with 1:32 point to the meaning of *verdict*. 1:32 indicates the negative verdict of death pronounced by Torah.⁴⁸ Could not here the positive verdict of Torah be in view, namely, “the ‘life’ that the law offered on condition of obedience”?⁴⁹ This *life-giving* intention of Torah is certainly highlighted in 7:10,⁵⁰ and is precisely τὸ... ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου which God must do (v.3). It is the God-given life, moreover, which is the fundamental subject of 8:1-13.⁵¹

⁴² Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 384; tt, John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (BST; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 221; Schrenk, “δικαίωμα,” *TDNT*, 2:221.

⁴³ Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 111.

⁴⁴ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 384.

⁴⁵ 2:26 - ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομήν λογισθήσεται; (emphasis added).

⁴⁶ G. Schrenk, “δικαίωμα,” *TDNT*, 2:223.

⁴⁷ Schrenk, “δικαίωμα,” *TDNT*, 2:219.

⁴⁸ Paul writes, in 1:32: οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν... Cf. 6:23.

⁴⁹ Mark A. Seifried, *Christ, our righteousness: Paul's theology of justification* (NSBT 9; Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 119.

⁵⁰ 7:10 - ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον καὶ εὐρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολή ἢ εἰς ζωὴν, αὕτη εἰς θάνατον. (emphasis added).

⁵¹ See Seifried, *Christ our righteousness*, 119; Wright, *Romans*, 577. Reference here to Torah's *verdict*, rather than to its *demands*, is thus not out of place in Paul's argument. *Pace* Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 165n44.

Broadly, πληρωθῆ ἐν ἡμῖν is interpreted in one of two ways. Either τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου is “fulfilled in us” by the imputation of Christ’s perfect law-keeping to those who are in him, such that they are pronounced “righteous.”⁵² Or, it is “fulfilled” in some way through the believer’s new Spirit-enabled obedience.⁵³ In favour of the former interpretation, Moo cites the verb’s passive mood, which “points not to something that we are to do but to something that is done in and for us”, and the “ongoing imperfect obedience of the law by Christians.”⁵⁴ However, the passive mood “does not rule out human activity, even when God’s work is envisioned.”⁵⁵ In fact, it is entirely consonant with the Spirit’s instrumental and active role in the believer’s life in the following verses.⁵⁶ Secondly, if τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου refers to Torah’s verdict of life pronounced rather than behaviour demanded, it does not necessarily follow that “fulfillment” comes through the believer’s perfect obedience to Torah’s commands.

In our view, “...that the righteous verdict of the law (namely, ‘life’) might be fulfilled in us”⁵⁷ refers most fittingly, but not yet explicitly, to the Spirit’s present and future work in us. It is he in us who brings about the fulfillment of the pronouncement of ‘life’. In support of this, we note:

- a. ἐν ἡμῖν, whilst possibly indicating instrumentality, more likely has a locative sense.⁵⁸ This reflects Paul’s language in the following verses:
 - “You...are...in the Spirit” (v.9 - ἐν πνεύματι); “the Spirit of God dwells in you” (v.9 - πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν; cf. v.11); “Christ is in you” (v.10 - ἐν

⁵² Moo, *Romans*, 484; Andrew J. Grey, “The fulfillment of the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου in Romans 8:4 – contextual, lexical, and theological considerations” (M.Th. short diss., Oak Hill College, 2006), 22.

⁵³ See, e.g. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 111; Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 384; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 423-424; Wright, “Romans,” 580; Stott, *Romans*, 221.

⁵⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 483.

⁵⁵ Schreiner, *Romans*, 405.

⁵⁶ See 8:13-14, where mortification is “by the Spirit”, and we are “led by the Spirit”. As Fee rightly comments, “the emphasis is still and always on the divine activity.” Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 535.

⁵⁷ This is an amplified translation.

⁵⁸ See, e.g. Käsemann, *Romans*, 219; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 536n191.

ὑμῖν).⁵⁹ The designation τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (v.1) is also recalled. ἐν ἡμῖν is the sphere of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

- b. In 8:1-13, life and Spirit are inextricably linked. The Spirit is “the Spirit of life” (v.2),⁶⁰ and “the Spirit is life” (v.10). Most significantly, God “will also give life... through his Spirit *who dwells in you*” (v.11).⁶¹
- c. The participial phrase τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα modifies, and describes and defines, ἡμῖν. The present participle περιπατοῦσιν, as other uses indicate,⁶² “shows that the concrete obedience of believers is in mind,”⁶³ as is the case with the κατὰ σάρκα/ κατὰ πνεῦμα contrast, developed in vv.5-13.⁶⁴ Holding that Christ’s perfect substitutionary law-keeping is in view in v.4a, Moo argues that this obvious reference to Christian behaviour merely “shows that Paul does not separate the “fulfillment” of the law [that is, by Christ, imputed to the Christian] from the lifestyle of the Christian.”⁶⁵ A tighter connection between the two clauses is more likely. Those in whom life is brought about by the Spirit are precisely “those who walk according to the Spirit,” as vv.5-13 will explain. As to whether walking κατὰ πνεῦμα is evidential of or instrumental in τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου being fulfilled in us, v.4b does not say. Again, vv.5-13 will clarify.

Moreover, an inference to the Spirit’s vivifying work in us in v.4 fits well with the flow of the argument in vv.1-4. The pronouncement of “no condemnation” (v.1) comes about because of our liberation by “the law of the Spirit of life” from “the law of sin and death” (v.2), effected through Christ’s sin-bearing and sin-condemning death (v.3). V.4 shows us the *purpose* of that which precedes. With τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου, at the start

⁵⁹ Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ We note that Cranfield suggests translating τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς (v.2) as “the life-giving Spirit.” Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 376.

⁶¹ Emphasis added. Gk. - διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν.

⁶² See Rom 13:13; 14:15; and, significantly, 6:4 - ...οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.

⁶³ Schreiner, *Romans*, 406.

⁶⁴ See especially 8:13.

⁶⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 485. See also Grey, “The fulfillment of the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου,” 21.

of v.4, signifying the verdict of ‘life’ (i.e. “no condemnation”) which v.1 itself pronounces, we expect v.4 to outline something of how liberation from sin’s power (vv.2-3) leads to “no condemnation.” We know already that “the Spirit of life” is central to our liberation (v.2). V.4 teaches that the verdict of ‘life’ is fulfilled “in us,” that is, in those who walk *κατὰ πνεῦμα*. This suggests that it is by the work of the indwelling Spirit, which of course depends on Christ’s cross-work (v.3), that “no condemnation” comes.

The following amplified translation of vv.1-4 summarises our exegesis of Paul’s argument thus far.

“There is therefore now no eschatological condemnation, that is, no death, but rather life, for those who are in union with Christ Jesus. This is why: because the “Torah” of the Spirit of life has liberated you in Christ Jesus from the Torah of sin and death. For, that which was impossible for Torah, in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did - sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin-offering, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous verdict of Torah, that is, ‘life’ (no condemnation), might be brought about in you, those who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit.”

So, the verdict of “no condemnation” is pronounced for those in union with Christ on the basis of the Spirit’s liberating (v.2) and inwardly vivifying (v.4) work, which itself depends on Christ’s prior sin-bearing, sin-condemning cross-work.

3. 8:5-11

The theme in v.4 of the Spirit’s “no condemnation”-bringing work in us is expanded upon in vv.5-11, as Paul expounds the crucial distinction, introduced in the final clause of v.4, between those who are *κατὰ σάρκα* and those who are *κατὰ πνεῦμα*. His purpose here is to outline why and how it is that *τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου* can be fulfilled uniquely in those who walk *κατὰ πνεῦμα* (v.4).

As “the persistent use of the third person plural (“those who”)⁶⁶ indicates, Paul is describing here not the internal struggle of the believer but two distinct groups of people.⁶⁷ He does so, moreover, using redemptive-historical terminology.⁶⁸ An ontological *and* epochal contrast is being made.

In expounding the σὰρξ/ πνεῦμα distinction, Paul argues that not merely a difference of behaviour (v.4b) is in view. Rather, “each term [σὰρξ, πνεῦμα] describes a concatenation of lifestyle, nature and orientation,”⁶⁹ which lead inexorably to contrasting eschatological verdicts.

So, in v.5, those who *are* (ὄντες) κατὰ σάρκα have a mindset oriented towards the things of the flesh, contrary to the κατὰ πνεῦμα people, whose mindset is towards the things of the Spirit. In v.6, the flesh-mindset *is* “death”, whereas the Spirit-mindset *is* “life and peace.” These descriptions, recalling the epochal θάνατος/ ζωὴ contrast of 8:2, suggest radically contrasting eschatological outcomes. In vv.5-6, then, Paul claims that through the fundamentally different mindsets of these two distinct epochal people-groups opposing inevitable verdicts ensue.

Introduced by the causal conjunction διότι,⁷⁰ vv.7-8 explain why, for those ἐν σαρκὶ (v.8), their mindset necessarily leads to death. *Contra* the mindset that is “peace” (v.7), that of the flesh is “enmity towards God,”⁷¹ for to God’s Torah it does not submit, nor is it able to do so. V.8 reiterates and emphasises this point: “those who are in the flesh are unable to please God.”⁷² Language of inability (οὐ δύναμαι) recalls τὸ... ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου (v.3). Torah was *unable* to give ‘life’ because it was weakened

⁶⁶ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 540.

⁶⁷ See, e.g. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 111-112; Moo, *Romans*, 486; Schreiner, *Romans*, 410.

⁶⁸ Moo, *Romans*, 486.

⁶⁹ Lowe, “There is no condemnation” (Romans 8:1): but why not?” 241.

⁷⁰ This conjunction can function both inferentially and causally. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996, 673-674. Here, the relationship between v.6 and vv.7-8 readily suggests a causal meaning. See, e.g. Moo, *Romans*, 488n87; Wright, “Romans,” 582.

⁷¹ Gk. - ἐχθρα εἰς θεόν. Cf. 1:18-32.

⁷² Gk. - οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύνανται. Here, ἐν σαρκὶ is used interchangeably with κατὰ σάρκα, as the parallel identification in v.5 (οἱ... κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες) shows.

through the flesh (v.3), for those in the flesh are *unable* to please God (v.8). This inability to please God by submitting to Torah leads inescapably to death.⁷³

Undeniably, then, those who are κατὰ σάρκα, bound up in the slavery of the old epoch,⁷⁴ are death-bound. τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ νόμου will not and cannot be brought about in them. Implicitly (cf. 6:22; 7:5), we assume that those who are κατὰ πνεῦμα *are* now able to please God (and so be τοῖς...περιπατοῦσιν...κατὰ πνεῦμα (v.4)). To these people Paul now turns.

In vv.9-11, Paul defends the proposed unbreakable link between οἱ...κατὰ πνεῦμα and ‘life’ of vv.5-6. His readers are firstly assured: ὑμεῖς⁷⁵ δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι... The following protasis, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, serves not to induce doubt.⁷⁶ Rather, εἴπερ (v.9), “if it contains a shadow of a doubt... does so within a basic affirmation.”⁷⁷ The evidence for “you” being “in the Spirit” is that He indwells (οἰκεῖ⁷⁸) you. Actually, if someone doesn’t have the Spirit, he is not of Christ (v.9c). Vv.10-11 then describe the implications of having the Spirit within, again using first class conditional statements.⁷⁹ In v.10, parallel clauses declare: “the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” In view of its use in v.11, σῶμα signifies not the person but the physical body, mortal, “dead”, as a result of sin.⁸⁰ For the believer, physical death will come. However, the Holy Spirit⁸¹ “is the lifegiving power”⁸² for us. This is so διὰ δικαιοσύνην, because of the saving righteousness of God.

⁷³ Cf. 6:21; 7:5; 7:7ff.

⁷⁴ See again 7:5 and 6:20-21.

⁷⁵ This is an emphatic usage.

⁷⁶ V.9, syntactically, is a first class conditional statement.

⁷⁷ Wright, “Romans,” 584. Cf. a similar usage in 3:30.

⁷⁸ Cf. 7:17, 18, 20, where Paul speaks of sin that indwells.

⁷⁹ Whilst the argument of vv.10-11 is rightly assumed to be true for Paul’s readers, Wallace helpfully points out, concerning first class conditional statements, that “to translate εἰ as *since* is to turn an invitation to dialogue into a lecture. Often the idea seems to be an encouragement to respond, in which the author attempts to get his audience to come to the conclusion of the apodosis (since they already agree with him on the protasis). It thus functions as a tool of persuasion.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 692.

⁸⁰ See 5:12; 6:12; 7:24; 8:11.

⁸¹ See, e.g. Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 390; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 431. Pace Stott, who prefers an anthropological meaning for τὸ πνεῦμα. Stott, *Romans*, 226.

⁸² Wright, “Romans,” 584.

V.11 is the climax of vv.9-11, and indeed of vv.5-11 and vv.1-11. Paul explains how τὸ δικάσιμα τοῦ νόμου is ultimately fulfilled in those who are κατὰ πνεῦμα, that is, how “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (v.1). Crucial to the argument is the indwelling Spirit’s identity. The Spirit “of God” (v.9) is described as “the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead.”⁸³ Historically, God has shown himself to be a dead-raising life-giver by raising Jesus, the Christ, “the head of a people.”⁸⁴ It is His Spirit who indwells us. Therefore, given we have *this* Spirit within, and are “in Christ” (v.1) the risen one, surely this God “will make alive [ζωοποιήσει] also your mortal bodies.” *Pace* Calvin,⁸⁵ our final bodily resurrection is in view.⁸⁶ The agent⁸⁷ of resurrection is “His indwelling Spirit in you.” Dunn comments, “when sin plays death as its last card God’s Spirit will trump it.”⁸⁸

In vv.5-11, Paul has explained how and why it is that ‘life’ is brought about in, and only in, those who walk κατὰ πνεῦμα (v.4). There is an “unbreakable link”⁸⁹ between Spirit and life, and between flesh and death. Nature, mindset, lifestyle and end are bound together. For those “of the flesh”, death is inevitable. However, to be “of the Spirit” is to be subject to his vivifying work. A new mindset, a new ability to please God, and the certainty of future bodily resurrection are all in view. Thus it is that, by the Spirit, τὸ δικάσιμα τοῦ νόμου, the promise of ‘life’ and “no condemnation” (v.1) is “fulfilled in us.”

⁸³ Cf. 4:24.

⁸⁴ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 391.

⁸⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (trans. John Owen; 1849; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2005), 293.

⁸⁶ See, e.g. Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 391. Cf. 6:5.

⁸⁷ Concerning the textual variant, we following Metzger in preferring τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος to τὸ ἐνοικουν αὐτοῦ πνεῦμα. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 456. Therefore, διὰ functions as a preposition not of cause (διὰ + acc.) but most likely of agency (διὰ + gen.).

⁸⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 445.

⁸⁹ Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 111.

The concrete moral behaviour of the Christian, indicated by περιπατοῦσιν in v.4b, has been referred to only implicitly in vv.5-11. It is to this that Paul now turns, in a continuation of the argument of vv.1-11.

4. 8:12-13

Ἄρα οὖν⁹⁰ (an “emphatic inferential”⁹¹), coupled with the vocative ἀδελφοί (which heightens the intimacy between Paul and his addressees), suggest the “applicational nature”⁹² of what follows.⁹³ Vv.1-11 lack both imperatival form and force. Here, although imperatival forms are absent, exhortation to action in the light of vv.1-11 is clearly implied. Paul infers: ὀφειλέται ἐσμέν οὐ τῇ σαρκὶ τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν. The placing of οὐ after the verb, giving the translation “we are debtors, not to...”, suggests a “not to...but to...” construction,⁹⁴ with Paul planning to then state positively that we are debtors to the Spirit,⁹⁵ an intention which he abandons in v.13. The running σὰρξ/ πνεῦμα antithesis in vv.1-13 supports this. Whilst we must deal with what Paul specifically wrote, the sentence construction and surrounding context are certainly suggestive of our indebtedness to the Spirit.⁹⁶ “Obligation” is unusual Pauline

⁹⁰ Cf. 7:25.

⁹¹ Moo, *Romans*, 493. Dunn describes these conjunctions as indicating “a compelling conclusion drawn from what has just been said.” Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 447.

⁹² Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 556.

⁹³ Cf. 12:1. Cranfield comments: “In 12.1 and in 16.17 (cf. also 8.12) [Paul] is probably particularly conscious of the relationship between himself and those he is addressing, as he takes up the pastoral task of exhortation.” Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 82.

⁹⁴ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 555n243.

⁹⁵ He would continue v.12 with ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ κατὰ πνεῦμα ζῆν. Moo, *Romans*, 494n117; Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 394.

⁹⁶ Pace Schreiner, who suggests that “Paul does not want to speak of believers being “debtors” to the Spirit and thus he intentionally does not follow through with the parallel.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 420. Fee, rightly conceding that “one must be duly cautious about trying to “read the mind” of an ancient author as to what he did not do”, contends nonetheless that our indebtedness to the Spirit is to be inferred. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 555n243.

language.⁹⁷ Understanding σὰρξ (to which we are not debtors) not as “the sinful nature within”⁹⁸ but, as in 7:5, as shorthand for our past sphere of living in which we were enslaved to Torah, sin and death,⁹⁹ places the language of obligation in the realm of necessary obedience to a slave-master (as in 6:15-23).¹⁰⁰ We are not obliged to the fleshly realm, that is,¹⁰¹ obliged “to live according to the flesh.”¹⁰² The exhortatory implication is obvious: “don’t live that way!” By inference, then, “live according to the Spirit!”

Once we grasp the exhortatory function of v.12, the connection with v.13 becomes clear. V.13 does not have a merely “roughly explanatory” link with v.12.¹⁰³ Rather, Paul spells out *why* we must not live κατὰ σάρκα (v.12b) but rather κατὰ πνεῦμα.

Syntactically, v.13 consists of two first class conditional statements. Now in direct address, the reader has set before him two contrasting paths. One leads to death, the other to life. Paul states: εἰ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆτε, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν. The protasis repeats the final phrase of v.12. Paralleling the verb περιπατέω in v.4, ζάω here is a verb of conduct, manner of life, lifestyle. In view is living κατὰ σάρκα, conducting oneself in a manner consistent with the fleshly realm, the old epoch where Torah, sin and death reign and enslave. What would this look like? Letting sin “reign in your mortal bodies” (6:12) by “present[ing] your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness” (6:13), “present[ing] your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness” (6:19). This is living κατὰ σάρκα. If we live this way, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν,

⁹⁷ In Romans, the noun occurs only in 1:14, 8:12, 15:27. Galatians 5:3 is the only other usage in the Pauline corpus.

⁹⁸ See, e.g. Stott, *Romans*, 227.

⁹⁹ 7:5 which describes life “when we were in the flesh” (ὅτε...ἤμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί).

¹⁰⁰ Fee comments: “People who live κατὰ σάρκα are in servitude to the flesh, thus under obligation to it.” Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 557.

¹⁰¹ With many commentators, we take the genitive articular infinitive clause τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν in an exegetical sense. See, e.g. Schreiner, *Romans*, 419.

¹⁰² Cf. 8:4. To “live” (ζῆν) according to the flesh (v.12) is parallel with to “walk” (περιπατεῖν) according to the flesh (v.4).

¹⁰³ Schreiner, *Romans*, 420.

“you will certainly die.”¹⁰⁴ Pace Wallace, it is not that a flesh-living Christian’s life will be shortened.¹⁰⁵ Nor is merely physical death in view, for *all* will die physically!¹⁰⁶ Paul means “death in its fullest theological sense: eternal separation from God as the penalty for sin,”¹⁰⁷ the condemnation¹⁰⁸ which is the necessary outcome of the fleshly life.¹⁰⁹

There is another path: εἰ δὲ πνεύματι τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε, ζήσεσθε. “The deeds of the body” (τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος), in isolation, has no pejorative force. However, in 7:5 the sphere in which our sinful passions work to bear fruit for death is specifically “in our bodily members” (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν; cf. 6:13, 6:19). It is as we “present [our] members” (6:13) as slaves to sin that we bear fruit for death. Thus, σῶμα is closely associated with death (6:12, 7:24; 8:10). So, τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος does carry a pejorative force, referring to the impure and lawless actions of our members (6:19).

We come now to consider “mortification.” θανατοῦτε functions in “linguistic antithesis”¹¹⁰ with ζῆτε. The verb itself appears 11 times in the New Testament,¹¹¹ but only here in a present active form. It normally means to “cause cessation of life;... kill someone, hand someone over to be killed, esp. of the death sentence and its execution.”¹¹² So, the believer is to actively and continually (the present tense of the

¹⁰⁴ BAGD (628) notes that μέλλω followed by present infinitive is used “to denote an action that necessarily follows a divine decree”, and therefore it should be translated as “is destined, must, will certainly.”

¹⁰⁵ Wallace suggests that Paul “is referring to physical death, i.e., that a Christian who conducts his or her life according to the flesh has no guarantee that he or she will live out the lifespan God originally intended (desired will, *not* decreed will) that believer to have.” His argument is this: “if one sees *spiritual* life in the first part...then to be consistent he/she should see *spiritual* life in the latter part of the verse.” This implies, for Wallace, that *spiritual* life is gained by works, and he finds this totally unacceptable. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 393. In our view, we see here an example of an over-zealous desire to downplay “works” leading to a strained exegesis of the text. This theme will be explored more below.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. 8:10.

¹⁰⁷ Moo, *Romans*, 494.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 8:1.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 6:21-23; 7:7ff.

¹¹⁰ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 558.

¹¹¹ Matt. 10:21; 26:59; 27:1; Mark 13:12; 14:55; Luke 21:16; Rom. 7:4; 8:13; 8:36; 2 Cor. 6:9; 1 Pet. 3:18.

¹¹² BAGD, 443.

verb suggests “a sustained effort”¹¹³) kill, “cause total cessation of,”¹¹⁴ the deeds of the body. Implicitly, this presupposes that whilst we are no longer “in the flesh”, our “sinful passions” (7:5) are still continually present and active and powerful, hence the need to actively kill off their deathly fruit.¹¹⁵ As the verb’s object, τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος, implies, Paul is not advocating merely a certain mental attitude towards sin. Nor is “a masochistic self-abuse”¹¹⁶ in view. Rather, we are to extirpate the impure and lawless actions of our members.¹¹⁷ The imperatives of 6:11ff illumine this mortifying. In the present tense, with a continuous force, Paul commands: “reckon yourselves dead to sin” (v.11); “do not let sin reign” (v.12); “do not present your members to sin” (v.13).¹¹⁸ We must reckon ourselves to be, by virtue of our union with Christ (6:1-10), “dead to sin and alive to God” (6:11),¹¹⁹ and thus resist sin’s reign by ceasing impurity and lawlessness (6:19). A reckoned, radical, ruthless, rigorous refusal of sinful practices is called for.¹²⁰ Importantly, this mortification is to take place πνεύματι. Given the main verb is active in voice, Wallace argues that πνεύματι must be a dative of means, not of agency.¹²¹ Whilst this makes sense grammatically, the Spirit as agent must be understood, given his agency in the following explanatory clause: “for those who are led

¹¹³ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 449. See also Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 395; Stott, *Romans*, 229.

¹¹⁴ BAGD, 443.

¹¹⁵ Schreiner comments, helpfully: “The verb θανατοῦτε demonstrates that the desires to carry out the deeds of the body are incredibly strong, so strong that the overwhelming of them is best described as putting to death that which is longing to burst forth into life.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 421.

¹¹⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 458.

¹¹⁷ Cf. 6:19.

¹¹⁸ We note the present tense of the verbs, emphasised here: ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς... (v.11); Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία... (v.12); μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτία (v.13).

¹¹⁹ Wright comments, on 6:11, “The key word here is “reckon,”... Do the sum, he says; add it up and see what it comes to. The Messiah has died, once for all, and been raised; you are, by baptism, in the Messiah; therefore, you too, have died, once for all, and been raised. The “reckoning” in question is to take place in the believing thought-processes of the Christian.” Wright, “Romans,” 541.

¹²⁰ Cf. Matt 5:29-30.

¹²¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 164-166.

by the Spirit...”¹²² The point is, mortification is not self-powered, meritorious effort. Just as the “Spirit of life” liberates us from life in the flesh (v.2), just as through the indwelling Spirit God will give us future resurrection life (v.11), so it is that by the Spirit’s vivifying power we can attend to mortification in the present. As Stott comments, “only he can give us the desire, determination and discipline to reject evil.”¹²³ His vivifying power works in us past, future, *and* present.

Turning to the apodosis, Paul states: “you will live” (ζήσεσθε). Stott considers that “having called eternal life a free and undeserved gift (6:23), he is not now making it a reward for self-denial,” and thus the life referred to here is the “rich, abundant, satisfying life” which we can enjoy *now* as God’s children.¹²⁴ This will not do. Stott’s interpretation of ‘life’ owes more to John’s gospel¹²⁵ than to Paul’s argument here. If ἀποθνῆσκειν (v.13a) refers to the eschatological condemnation of the last day, it follows that ζήσεσθε promises the contrasting eschatological outcome.¹²⁶ Moreover, 6:23 actually supports mortification as a means to the end of eschatological life. In 6:22-23 we observe the following order: a) freedom from sin leads to b) fruit-bearing for sanctification, which leads to c) eternal life (v.22), which is a free gift (v.23). This is paralleled in chapter 8: a) having been liberated (v.2), b) we now by the Spirit engage in mortification of sin, which is c) the condition for ‘life’ (v.13).

So, v.13 presents itself as a solemn eschatological life-or-death choice to be made. That which determines future death or life is our present behaviour. Mortification of sin, by the Spirit, is necessary for life.

We note here a parallel with Deut. 30:15ff.¹²⁷ Disobedience leads to death, whereas obedience leads to life, a life described in both passages in terms of inheritance

¹²² Gk. - ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται. Cranfield comments: “...the [instrumental] dative is not to be taken to imply that the Holy Spirit is to be a tool in the hands of Christians, wielded and managed by them. A safeguard against such a misunderstanding is afforded by πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται in the next verse.” Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 394.

¹²³ Stott, *Romans*, 228.

¹²⁴ Stott, *Romans*, 229.

¹²⁵ See, e.g. John 10:10.

¹²⁶ Cf. vv.10 and 11.

¹²⁷ Cranfield, *Romans I, I-VIII*, 394; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 558; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 449; Stott, *Romans*, 227.

(Deut 30:16 cf. Rom 8:17).¹²⁸ The greatest difference is that “the moral effort is now πνεύματι,”¹²⁹ as a result of the Spirit’s promised eschatological outpouring. We are thus now able to please God (cf. v.8).

5. 8:14-17

Vv.14-17 continue to expound why those who are κατὰ πνεῦμα can have eschatological life.¹³⁰ “As many as are led by the Spirit”¹³¹ is a phrase reflecting the various descriptions of those ἐν πνεύματι in vv.1-13.¹³² The verb’s passive form strengthens the impression “that the Spirit is the primary agent in Christian obedience.”¹³³ The new idea in vv.14-17 is adoption – οὗτοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν (v.14). Receiving “the Spirit of adoption” (v.15) means we are heirs, co-heirs with Christ (v.17) of the future glorious eternal life.

6. Conclusions

It should now be apparent that vv.1-17 (and particularly vv.1-13) function as a coherent, continuous argument, and that v.13 itself is crucial to Paul’s explanation as to why and how there is now “no condemnation” (v.1). The basis for the eschatological verdict of v.1 is the liberating, life-giving work of the “Spirit of life” in the believer (v.2), a work that can only take place “because in Christ and his cross God has already “condemned” sin”¹³⁴ (v.3). Our liberation from the enslaving powers of the old epoch happens in order that the verdict of ‘life’ (spoken of by Torah (7:10)), “no condemnation”, might be fulfilled *in* those who walk κατὰ πνεῦμα. Why those κατὰ

¹²⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 449.

¹²⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 449.

¹³⁰ Moo, *Romans*, 496-497.

¹³¹ Gk. - ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται.

¹³² See, e.g. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 450.

¹³³ Schreiner, *Romans*, 422.

¹³⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 477.

πνεῦμα, and how is ‘life’ fulfilled *in us*? For, those who are κατὰ σάρκα are inexorably death-bound, being unable to please God (vv.5-8), whereas we who are κατὰ πνεῦμα have a new mindset and ability to please God (vv.5-8), and, being indwelt by the Spirit of the “dead-raising life-giver” will certainly through the Spirit be given future resurrection ‘life’ (vv.9-11). Therefore, we must not live κατὰ σάρκα, for that way ends in death (i.e. condemnation). So, empowered by the “Spirit of life”, we must continually kill off the sinful deeds of the body, and thus we “shall live” (v.13). Life comes through the vivifying work of the Spirit of God. For (vv.14-17), led by the Spirit of adoption, we are God’s children, co-heirs with Christ of future glory.

Thus, we see that ongoing mortification of sin is necessary for final salvation.

II. OBJECTION, CONCERNING “WORKS” AND SALVATION

There is a significant objection to the above interpretation. The comments of Stott and Wallace on 8:13¹³⁵ betray a fear, that to make the Spirit’s vivifying work in believers (and particularly, the moral transformation produced in them) grounds for the eschatological verdict of “no condemnation” implies some sort of meritorious “salvation by works.” To this we reply firstly that this interpretation of 8:1-13 fits with, and builds on, both 6:21-23 and 7:5-6. In these passages, the fruit borne in a person’s life is that which leads to the end (τέλος, 6:21, 22), the verdict, of ‘death’ or ‘life.’ This reflects Paul’s teaching in 2:6-11, that God “will render to each one according to his works” (2:6). Our interpretation is consonant with the surrounding co-text. This said, there is no merit theology here. Paul is at pains to stress that “works are not the meritorious cause, but they are a necessary prerequisite for escaping the final judgement.”¹³⁶ 6:23 is clear: “the *free gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹³⁷ Life is a free gift (χάρισμα), in contrast with death as “the wages of sin.” And yet, that life comes as the result of the fruit of obedience (6:22). How can this be? The explanation, surely, is that it is *God* who acts to give us life. Through Christ’s cross-work, God condemns sin (8:3). It is his Spirit who liberates us (8:2) then leads us (8:14), transforming our mindset (8:5-6), enabling and empowering mortification (8:13). It is God who will “give life to your mortal bodies” (8:11). From first to last, salvation is *all* the work of our life-giving God.¹³⁸ There is no merit theology here.

¹³⁵ See above.

¹³⁶ Lowe, ““There is no condemnation” (Romans 8:1): but why not?” 249.

¹³⁷ My italics.

¹³⁸ See Lowe, ““There is no condemnation” (Romans 8:1): but why not?” 247-248.

III. IMPLICATION, CONCERNING ASSURANCE

Paul, in Romans 8, does indeed assure of salvation whilst affirming mortification as necessary for gaining eternal life. Certainly, moreover, the mortifying of sinful deeds can and should rightly serve to assure the believer of salvation.¹³⁹ However, for many Christians, actively seeking to mortify sinful behaviour but continuing to sin, 8:13 can induce a lack of personal assurance of salvation. In this case, the following brief remarks (based on 8:1-17) might be apposite:

- a. The Christian, in seeking to mortify the deeds of the body, is to expect an ongoing struggle. The present tense of *θανατοῦτε* implies a “sustained effort,”¹⁴⁰ and the verb itself does not picture a tranquil relationship with sinfulness! Given that the theatre of battle is *ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν* (7:5), and that deliverance from “this body of death” (7:24 cf. 8:11, 23) comes only at the final resurrection, a life-long struggle is in view. Total victory over sin now is not anticipated. Also, it is undoubtedly true that “our good works are always spattered with much uncleanness.”¹⁴¹ Assurance of salvation does not depend on present sinlessness, but on ongoing mortification.

¹³⁹ Calvin comments: “...we do not forbid [the Christian] from undergirding and strengthening [his] faith by signs of the divine benevolence towards him. For if, when all the gifts God has bestowed upon us are called to mind, they are like rays of the divine countenance by which we are illumined to contemplate that supreme light of goodness; much more is this true of the grace of good works, which show that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us [cf. Rom. 8:15].” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. J.T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 1559; 2 vols.; LCC XX-XXI; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), III.xiv.18 (1:785). We note here Calvin’s emphasis on our good works as “signs of the divine benevolence towards us.”

¹⁴⁰ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 449.

¹⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xv.4 (1:792). He states elsewhere: “Let a holy servant of God, I say, choose from the whole course of his life what of an especially noteworthy character he thinks he has done. Let him well turn over in his mind its several parts. Undoubtedly he will somewhere perceive that it savors of the rottenness of the flesh, since our eagerness for well-doing is never what it ought to be but our great weakness slows down our running of the race.” Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xiv.9 (1:776-777).

- b. 8:13 is enveloped and driven by indicatives concerning God’s work for and in us, and is to be understood in this context. The Christian, in struggling with sin, must not consider 8:13 in isolation, and introspectively focus exclusively on his own unrighteous works. 8:1-17 demonstrates that “the efficient cause of our obtaining eternal life is the mercy of the Heavenly Father and his freely given love toward us,”¹⁴² not our good works. Salvation is for “those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1), that is, those who are baptised into him (6:3)/ have faith in him (3:22). God is the active agent in our salvation, *himself* condemning sin (8:3), and working in us liberation (8:2), mortification (8:13) and resurrection (8:11).¹⁴³ All this he does freely (6:23). Thus, “believers should be convinced that their only hope for the inheritance of a Heavenly Kingdom lies in the fact that, being engrafted in the body of Christ, they are freely accounted righteous.”¹⁴⁴ The Christian’s assurance is based solely on God’s work for and in him (including his mortification). Therefore, personal assurance of salvation will come through focusing not on self but on Christ and trusting not in self but in Christ, knowing that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).
- c. The Christian life is one of activity, not passivity. Therefore, realistic about the ongoing struggle, assured of God’s free and certain life-giving work, the Christian must then continue reckoning himself dead to sin and alive to God (6:11), and mortifying impure and lawless deeds (8:13, 6:19). In this ongoing mortification, he may be sure of future life (8:13).

¹⁴² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xiv.17 (1:783-784).

¹⁴³ See ch.2 – Objection, concerning “works” and salvation.

¹⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xiii.5 (1:768).

IV. CONCLUSION

Through considering 8:13 within the argument of 8:1-17, we have established that mortification of sin is a necessary and integral means to the end of eternal life, whilst not being a meritorious cause of it. Moreover, within and through the ongoing struggle with sin, the Christian can be rightly assured of God's free and certain life-giving work for and in him.

Concerning this subject, consideration of the connection between 7:7-25 and 8:1-17 would provide beneficial further study. The identification of ἐγὼ in 7:7-25 is a much disputed question. However, it is important to consider whether the believer's experience with respect to indwelling sin is in some way simultaneously one of mortifying (8:13) *and* being enslaved (7:14) (i.e. ἐγὼ represents the present life of the believer), or whether 8:1ff is the eschatological solution to the problem of ἐγὼ. My exegesis of 8:1-17 would suggest the latter.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> .
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.
BST	Bible Speaks Today.
ICC	International Critical Commentary.
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.
LCC	Library of Christian Classics.
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament.
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology.
RTR	Reformed Theological Review.
TDNT	Kittel, G., ed. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> .
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary.