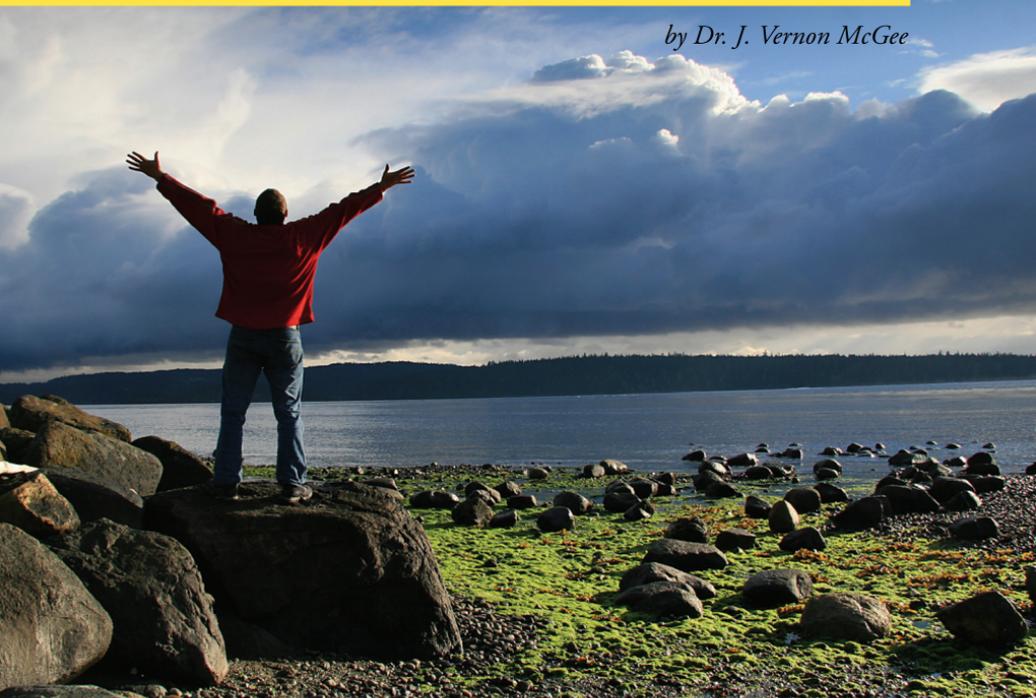


Living the Christian Life God's Way

by Dr. J. Vernon McGee

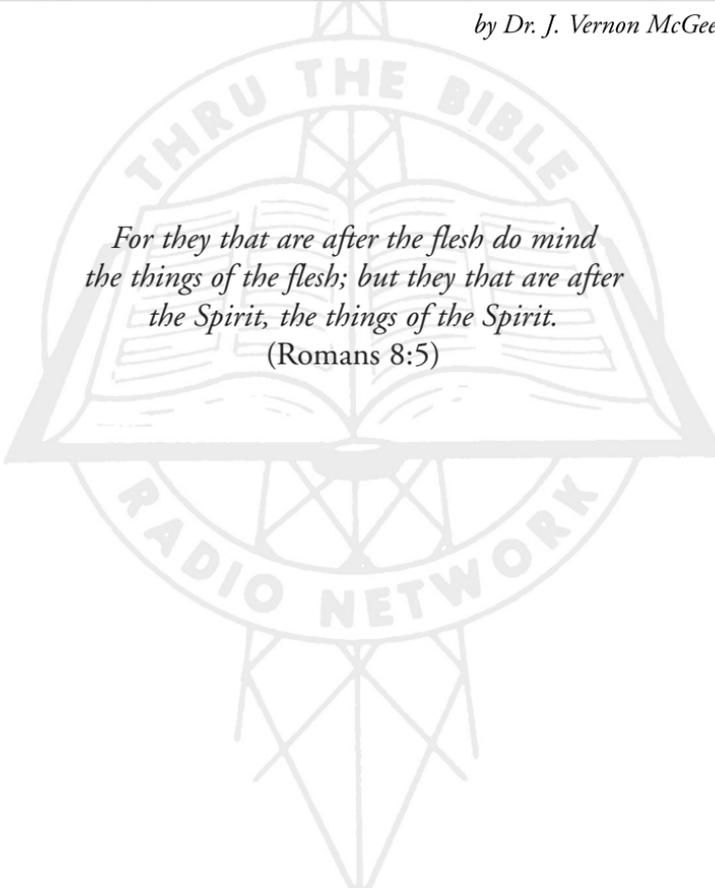


Thru the Bible
Radio Network

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Living the Christian Life God's Way

by Dr. J. Vernon McGee



*For they that are after the flesh do mind
the things of the flesh; but they that are after
the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
(Romans 8:5)*

Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the
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Living the Christian Life God's Way

Before me is a letter, typical of many I have received recently, that tells the story of failure in the Christian life. The man writes, "It seems that I know you because I have listened to you for so long. Several of your recent sermons have seemed especially for my encouragement, and, brother, do I need it! I am surely in the seventh of Romans and cannot find the way out. I have the way, but cannot get in the eighth chapter. I am fighting a losing battle, seemingly singlehanded."

The writer continues in this same frame of mind to the end of the letter, which consumes several pages. It reveals a great distress and struggle going on within the heart of a man who apparently is a born-again Christian.

As we come to the eighth of Romans, we come to a chapter that is given to set before us the great deliverance that is ours. I have worked out a detailed division of it but will bypass that and just attempt to lift out its message as we go along. I trust there is something here that might help a discouraged Christian. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to lift the shackles from the human family so that all might come into the place of salvation, and also to give power to those who want to live for God, as does the writer of this letter from which I have quoted.

Chapter eight of Romans is one of the great chapters of the Bible. You could not select ten of the great chapters of the Bible and exclude the eighth of Romans. It is possible that you could leave out John 14, you might omit Romans 12, you might leave out Hebrews 11, but you could never leave out Romans 8. One of the great saints of the past wrote, "If Holy Scripture were a ring and the Epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter eight would be the sparkling point of the jewel." Another has called it the Mount Whitney of Scripture.

The eighth chapter of Romans is a lofty, wonderful chapter. It opens with “no condemnation,” it closes with “no separation,” and in between “all things work together for good to those who love God.” Now, friend, you cannot have it any better than that. A preacher friend, Dr. Coy Maret, put it like this: “No condemnation, no frustration, and no separation.” So just about all that we need is in the eighth chapter of Romans.

Now it opens like this:

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

The clause “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” is not in our better manuscripts. The King James Version was made from the best manuscripts that were then extant. But since that time other manuscripts have been discovered which are superior to the ones used way back in 1611. The remarkable thing is that there have been so few differences – but this happens to be one. You may ask, “How did these additional words get into the manuscript?” Well, you must understand that before printing was invented by Gutenberg in 1453, the Bible was a difficult book to get. You could not buy a printed Bible like the one I have before me. All Bibles were written by hand. One scribe would sit down and read aloud while a dozen others sat around him writing down what he read. Now, evidently, the scribe got to the eighth of Romans, and he may have been a little sleepy or he may have been watching the page so long that he dropped down a few lines to what is verse 4 in our Bibles where he read, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” And, as he read that off, the scribes wrote it that way. Others have thought that because the first phrase in the chapter is such a glorious statement, some scribes read it over and said, “Say, that couldn’t be true,” and so they added this phrase from

verse 4. But, friend, it doesn't belong in verse 1. This is just a declaration of the great truth that Paul has given us up to this point that "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

This, by the way, is the sum total of what Martin Luther discovered in the Word of God. It was this Epistle to the Romans which he was reading and studying that brought him to the place where he saw that no religious ceremony, no church, no *thing* he could do could bring him to God. The story has been found now to be accurate that Martin Luther went all the way to Rome and went up the Sancta Scala, trying to *do* something to make himself acceptable to God. And at that time the tremendous words came to him: "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17) and that it's not by the good works which we have done, but it's by "his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

The declaration, therefore, that introduces Romans 8 is:

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

Now *that* is what salvation is. Salvation means to be in *Christ*. It does not mean to join a church or to *do* something. It means to be in Christ. Theologians have been looking for 2000 years to find a word that would describe our salvation. They have come up with the words propitiation, repentance, substitution, atonement, redemption, and justification, but the interesting thing is that the Bible also has a very simple word: the little preposition *in*. What does it mean to be saved? It means to be *in* Christ. And that is what justification is.

Let's look now at the expression "justification by faith." What does it mean?

Well, first of all there is the negative aspect. It means that you and I were hell-doomed sinners. You say, “Now look here, preacher, don’t you talk to me like that!” Oh, no, friend, *I’m* not talking to you like that – *God* is talking to you like that. He says,

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

(Romans 3:23)

You say, “Now don’t you try to tell me that I’m as bad as some of those bums down on skid row – thieves, winos, and murderers.” No, you are not. They are sinners. We will all agree to that when it’s the other fellow, won’t we? But you also have come short of the glory of God – maybe not as much as those fellows, but you have come short of the glory of God nonetheless.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose today you would come to me and say, “Let’s play a game. Let’s see which one of us can jump from downtown Los Angeles to the San Fernando Valley.” Since I like jumping games, I agree to play. You say, “Well, McGee, I don’t think you would be able to jump very far. Let’s get others in the game.” So a lot of people get in the game. It’s a good game to play, by the way. Now I’d run and jump. I’ll be honest with you, I don’t think I would jump as far as I’d like to, and you might say, “Look, I jumped farther than you did.” That probably would be true. All of us would jump, but we would all come short of the San Fernando Valley. No one can jump that far.

Now, you may be better than somebody else, but regardless of who you are, you have come short of the glory of God. You have nothing that is acceptable to God. You stand before God as a sinner. Every person stands before Him as a lost sinner. Therefore, when you and I come to God, we don’t come offering Him anything. It is not by works of righteousness. We come to Him empty-handed, as lost sinners, and we trust Christ as our Savior.

There is also the positive aspect of justification. God not only subtracts our sin, He not only paid the penalty for our sin, but He does something else – He puts us *in Christ*, and God looks at us in Christ. My friend, you are completely saved in Christ or completely lost out of Christ. You are in Him 100 percent or out of Him 100 percent. If you are in Christ, God sees you in Him, and you are as much accepted by God as Christ. In fact, you have as much right in heaven as Christ – or you have no right there at all, because you and I have none in and of ourselves. But *in Christ* we are accepted. As Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Now, friend, you can’t get any more saved than that. The poor lost sinner, the moment he trusts Christ, is as much saved as he will be a million years from today.

Earlier chapters in the Epistle of Romans have covered this tremendous truth; now the eighth chapter just reaches back and encompasses what has been said before. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.”

You see, there is no judgment for sin to those who are in Christ. If you are in Him, God sees you in Christ, and He accepts you because of Christ. Christ’s righteousness is your righteousness. Certainly you and I have none of our own.

This is the great truth that gripped Martin Luther – the tremendous truth of justification by faith. And it shook the shackles off a darkened Europe. The Dark Ages rolled back like a flood, and the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ broke over Europe. How to be righteous in God’s sight has worried many men down through the ages, including Paul. But when Paul came to Christ he made this discovery which he passed on to the Philippian:

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Philippians 3:9)

This is the righteousness of God which comes to us by faith only. And, friend, this is the righteousness that is available to you and me now. If today you have Christ and are in Christ, there is no condemnation.

Paul is talking from experience because he is a man who fell on his face as a Christian. In Romans 7, he tells of this experience. He made such a blunder of everything and failed miserably. Now he goes on to talk about that:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)

Here he mentions the Spirit for the first time. We know that back in Romans 5 he mentions eight wonderful results of our justification by faith, one of which is that we *have* the Holy Spirit, but he doesn't mention the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer until he gets to the eighth of Romans. And the reason he mentions it here is that this is the way of Christian living. You see, there is something that Paul discovered in the seventh of Romans, and it is this: Even after he was converted, he could not live the Christian life in his own strength.

A great many of us find this out the hard way. I remember that was my feeling. I thought when I got converted that I'd be walking on top of the world, but that is when I fell flat on my face. Never did I fall so flat as I did after conversion. Nobody had told me that I could not live the Christian life. In fact, they patted me on the back and told me I could. But I could not, and I found that out.

The Christian life is the Holy Spirit working through the believer, producing the life of Christ and what *He* wants. And anything that the Holy Spirit does not produce is of the flesh. It is no good at all, and it is not Christian living. Christian living is the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is no good in the old nature. Paul found that out. He said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing . . .” (Romans 7:18).

Also he found that there was no power in the new nature. In verse 24, he cried out in despair, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” In other words, “I find that I can’t do the things that I want to do. I’m a newborn Christian, and I want to live for God, but I can’t do it!” Well, that is exactly what God said. He said you couldn’t. Paul found it to be true, and I think everybody else has found it to be true. Just recognize it and realize it instead of trying to set your own goal. The man from whose letter I quoted at the beginning of this message has set a goal for himself, something he wants to do. He wants to be a businessman and dedicate everything he has to God. He asks, “God blessed Mr. LeTourneau, why doesn’t He bless me?” I judge from what he writes that he wants to be another R. G. LeTourneau, a businessman who gave 90% of his income to the Lord and experienced great material blessings from the Lord. Well, maybe God doesn’t want him to be another LeTourneau. Maybe He wants him to do something else. I do know this: It is not what you want and what I want that is all-important; it is what the Spirit wants and what Jesus Christ wants in our lives. That is the Christian life – not some goal that you and I might set for ourselves.

Now the apostle Paul explains:

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:3, 4)

Here the Spirit is mentioned again. In the first seven chapters of Romans the Holy Spirit has been mentioned only one time, but

in the eighth chapter the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times. Obviously Paul is putting great emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Notice that he says, “What the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh.” I want you to see a wonderful truth in this. Let me illustrate it with a story Dr. William L. Pettingill used to tell. It meant so much to me, and I hope it will be helpful to you. He told the story of a good housewife who got a roast ready one day and put it in the oven to bake. Then she got busy doing other things. Later the phone rang; it was one of her neighbors who had just heard the latest gossip, so she sat down to listen. It developed into a long conversation, and all of a sudden she smelled something burning. She said, “I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to hang up. I smell my roast burning. I’ll call you back later.” So she hung up the telephone, rushed into the kitchen, opened the oven, and there was the roast – overdone and burning. She rushed to get a fork, reached down with it and attempted to lift up the roast to get it out of the oven, but it would not come – the fork went right through the meat, it just wouldn’t hold. As I said, she was a good housewife, so she went and got the spatula, put the spatula down under it and a spoon on top. Then she lifted up the roast. What the fork could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, the spatula was able to do. There was nothing wrong with the fork – that was a peach of a fork she had, brand-new, I guess. There was nothing wrong with it, but there was something wrong with the flesh – overcooked. It wouldn’t hold. So she had to use another method.

Now look, just as there was nothing wrong with the fork, there is nothing wrong with the Mosaic Law. When we say that we are not under the Law, we do not mean that the Law isn’t good. It *is* good. It is God’s Law. But, you see, it cannot save you. It’s like the fork. It reached down in me and it came right through. I don’t know about you, but it could not lift *me* up. Has it lifted you up? Well,

may I say to you, what the fork (the Law) could not do, God has sent His Holy Spirit to do. And the Holy Spirit in you can lift you up and enable you to live for God. That is the thing God is saying in this verse. The Law could not do it because of the weakness of the flesh; now there is a new method, a new process, and that is by the Holy Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5)

That word *mind* means “to obey,” and that is the way it is used in my Southland. I remember holding meetings in middle Tennessee and being invited to a chicken dinner up in a country house one day. Oh, it was good chicken! The wife and mother fixed it and went out on the back porch to call her boy, Willie. I tell you, that woman would have made a good hog-caller. Maybe she did call them, I don’t know, but that day she was calling Willie. He never did answer her, and if he was a mile away he could have heard her. Finally she came in and said, “That young’un won’t mind me anymore.” Well, I knew what she meant, as did everybody else who was there. Paul uses this same word, “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh [that is, they obey the things of the flesh]; but they that are after the Spirit, [mind, obey] the things of the Spirit.”

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, neither, indeed, can be. (Romans 8:6, 7)

The carnal mind is enmity against God. That is, man in his natural state is an *enemy* toward God. That old nature that we were born with is in rebellion against God. I wonder if you have ever felt this. Possibly at this moment you are enjoying the comfort

of home, but God wanted you to perform some service for Him. That is the weakness of the flesh, is it not? You could have gone if you had wanted to. The flesh, you see, did not want to go. Now, I have that kind of nature, you have that kind of nature – every child of God has that old nature. But if you live by that nature, everything you produce is just dead works. It won't amount to anything as far as God is concerned. You cannot live for God if your motivation comes from the old nature. The carnal mind that you and I have is enmity against God.

Have you discovered this? Years ago a song was written with these words, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." Is this your experience? Have you ever felt that? Well, somebody came along and said, "I don't think that is the experience of a child of God. I want to change it." And the words were changed to "Prone to *worship*, Lord, I feel it, prone to *serve* the God I love." Is that your experience? Well, which is correct? The fact of the matter is, friend, both of them are correct. Every child of God, I think, if he is honest, would say, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it." Then there also are the times (thank God for those times) when we are living by the Spirit of God and can say, "Prone to worship, Lord, I feel it, prone to serve the God I love." You see, you have two natures. To be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded – that's life and it's peace.

The interesting thing is that the carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, nor can it be. Not only is our old nature an enemy against God, but it always will be that; it cannot be subject to the Law of God, and it never will be. God never has had an arrangement to save the old nature. He does not intend to save the old nature at all.

Now do not misunderstand me about this old nature that we have. All of us have it, we were born with it, and you would be

surprised how limited that old nature is. I do not know about you, but when I was born into this world, I was born ignorant. I didn't even know *A* from *B*, nor did I know anything about manners at all. You talk about being in the darkness, we certainly are when we first arrive. I read recently a quotation from one of the latest scientific books in which it was pointed out that humans are the only creatures born into this world helpless and that we don't know how to do anything except one thing – weep. That is all we can do without being taught! We have to be taught everything else. That's the old nature.

We come into this world very handicapped, don't we? We have to do something with that old nature as far as education is concerned. And I believe in education; I think we ought to get all of it that we possibly can. That old nature should be educated. Also it should be taught manners. I know they are going out of style, but they are something that we ought to have today. You need to teach little Willie to take off his cap when he comes into the house. You need to teach him to say, "Thank you," and "No, I don't care for the second piece of cake" – even then, chances are, he will ask for it. But children need to be taught to be gracious, to be considerate of others, and to be respectful. All of those things have to be taught to us. I remember as a boy how my mother used to try to instill manners into me. Oh, I thought I never would learn to be polite. It is something we've got to learn; we are not born that way.

This old nature that we were born with is against God. It will blaspheme, turn its back on God, deny Him in a minute. I've got a nature right now that, if it were not for His marvelous grace, would deny Him within the next five minutes. But, don't worry, I've found God's grace sufficient. Yet I have that old nature, and you have an old nature. We'd better reckon on it. We had better realize that we have it.

Now God has no arrangement to salvage the old nature. God says it will finally die, but we won't lose it until we die physically. God has no program to restore old natures.

This is the reason He has given us a new nature, one that can become obedient unto God. One characteristic of the new nature is that it can be obedient unto God – but it needs empowering – it needs the Holy Spirit. So Paul says here:

So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
(Romans 8:8)

I do not know how much good you do – that is, what your neighbors call good – but regardless of what it is, if it is not of the Spirit it cannot be pleasing to God. You may be called upon tomorrow by the Chamber of Commerce of your town and be given a silver loving cup. They may say you are the outstanding citizen of your community, that you are philanthropic, that you are a good neighbor and you exemplify everything your community stands for. They may even go so far as to say that since you are a church member you are their idea of what a Christian should be like. But, my friend, if what you are producing in your life is just the works of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit, none of that is pleasing to God. You see, it has to be of the Spirit of God working in your life. Therefore, you and I cannot boast of anything that we do because if there is any good, it is of the Spirit of God, it is not of us. If we do it, brother, it is not lovely at all.

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

It may be that a Christian might say, “I don't think I have the Holy Spirit.” My friend, if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, you *have* the Holy Spirit. “But,” you may say, “I don't *feel* like it.” Well,

you don't know that you have Him by the way you feel. You have Him because God's Word says you do. In the fifth chapter of Romans it says that when you are justified by faith, the Holy Spirit is given to you and you are indwelt by the Spirit of God. That is the mark of a child of God.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10)

Notice that it says the body is *dead* because of sin. Somebody will ask, "When did it die?" Well, that was about 2000 years ago when *Christ* died for sin.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:11)

The moment you trust Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit is given to you. The Spirit of God, the third Person of the Godhead, comes to dwell in your heart and life.

Someone will say, "I'm not worthy of that." No, we certainly are not. God used three chapters in the Epistle to the Romans to tell all of us that we are not worthy of it. He doesn't give the Holy Spirit because we are worthy; He does it because of His grace. He doesn't go into a community and say, "I'm looking for the outstanding people here that I might indwell them." Not at all. It seems to me as if He does the opposite, that He looks for the worst lost sinner who knows he is a sinner and will trust Christ. When one does that, the Spirit of God dwells in that person's heart and life.

Then we are told in verses 12 and 13:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die

The natural man says he owes it to his flesh to satisfy it. He may rationalize his dishonesty by saying, “A man has to eat.” A woman once said, “I live for sex, and I have to have my needs met.” We hear this today on every hand. Satisfying the old nature has plunged our nation into the grossest immorality! But God says that we as believers are not debtors to the flesh. My friend, the flesh – and we all have it – is a low-down, dirty rascal. And we don’t owe it anything.

. . . But if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13)

You shall live as *a child of God*.

Paul is not talking here about salvation; he is talking about Christian living. We will live as children of God if we are walking in the Spirit, you see, and if we are putting to death the doings of the body. I get so tired of these people who are always talking about having crucified the flesh. I ask you, can you crucify it? Every time I do, it gets up and lives again. I have tried to beat it to death, but that doesn’t do any good. My friend, that is not the way it is to be done at all. It is the deeds or doings of the body that we are to put to death. That is, we are to condemn and deal with those things in our hearts and lives that are wrong.

Now notice this wonderful statement:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Romans 8:14)

If you are led by the Spirit of God, you are a child of God. The Lord Jesus gave the same picture when He said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). You see, He leads His own. The picture is of a first-century shepherd and his flock of sheep. Perhaps a half dozen shepherds leave their flocks for the night in one fold. In the morning their sheep are all mixed up. One shepherd goes up over the hill there and calls

his sheep. All of the sheep that know him come out of the fold and follow him. And this verse, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” speaks of the same thing. May I say to you, friend, that is the real test. Are you led by the Spirit of God? I appreciate the letter which I mentioned at the beginning of this message because I know it comes from a real born again fellow. Although he is a sheep that has wandered away, he knows his Shepherd – that is, he is not following the wrong shepherd. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)

That word *Abba* was carried over from the Aramaic rather than being translated, and I’m glad the translators handled it that way. I have heard preachers say that the scholars did not know how to translate it. Of course they knew how to translate it. If you look it up, you will find it is an Aramaic word, and those who are acquainted with Aramaic will tell you what it means. However, it was such an intimate word, such a personal word, they felt that they would be irreverent, almost blasphemous, if they translated it literally. You see, the Holy Spirit within us cries up to the Father, and the word He uses is *Abba*, simply meaning “my daddy.” It is an intimate word.

My friend, may I say to you that the Spirit of God cries out from the heart of a believer to God the Father, especially in times of trouble. When you are going through a struggle, when it looks dark for you, when you’ve been misunderstood, or when your friends have turned on you, it is at those times that the Spirit of God will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, and the Spirit just cries out, “Abba, Father.”

Thinking of John Knox – my, how that fellow stood up against the hierarchy of his day! He is the man who said, “One with God

is a majority.” How could he stand against so many? Well, the Spirit was bearing witness with his spirit that he was a son of God. In that dark hour John Knox, Martin Luther and others tell us that they just cried out to God.

Have you had that experience? A very fine Christian, an outstanding man, was telling me the other day about a struggle that he went through. I said to him, “I don’t see how you were able to go through it.” And he said, “You know, McGee, when it looked like everything had fallen in upon me, when it seemed that everything had turned out wrong, my spirit just seemed to cry out to God in that dark hour. God has never seemed so close to me as He was at that moment.” That is the mark of a real child of God. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” How wonderful it is!

Perhaps you haven’t had a trying experience, but sometimes God lets us have these trials so that we will turn from placing our confidence in man. We’ll just look up to our Father and cry out to Him, “Oh, my Father, my intimate, personal Father.” And He is interested – He sees you, knows you, and understands.

Then we are told:

And if children, then heirs – heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ – if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:17)

Somebody is apt to get some wrong ideas at this juncture. They may say, “My, if we are children of God like this, indwelt by the Spirit of God, we can do anything we want to do.” No you can’t, friend. You are still in a frail human body. Many of us have bodies that are limited and handicapped. Many of God’s children are set aside for physical reasons, and it is not God’s will for them to be healed.

Listen to this passage:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)

One of these days you and I are going to get over yonder and look back on this scene down here – on the struggle that seemed so difficult, on the suffering that you went through and I went through. I know there are a lot of folk who have suffered in a way that I know nothing about. Perhaps you have gone through the very fire. But when you look back on it, friend, I think you will say with me, “Oh, that’s nothing compared to what He had reserved for me. I just wish I had suffered a little more, and I wish I hadn’t complained like I did.” And we do complain down here, don’t we?

For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Romans 8:19)

Why is it that we are suffering down here? Well, we are waiting, friend. God is working out a plan and program. He hasn’t finished it yet, and that is the reason it is going as it is.

Not only did the curse of sin come upon man in Adam’s disobedience, but the physical world came under the curse also.

For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (Romans 8:20-22)

The creation is not delivered yet. All of it is travailing in pain until now. I call your attention to the fact that nature sings in a minor key. The wind blowing through the pine trees on a mountainside

or the breaking of the surf on some lonely shore, both emit the same sob. The frightened cry of some wounded animal pierces the night air. All about us is death and decay, in both the animal and plant worlds.

Somebody said to me, “McGee, we’ve got healing in the atonement.” I said, “Yes, I guess we do. We have a new body in the atonement also, and there is going to be a new creation – but we don’t have it yet, brother.” We are waiting today, you see, waiting for that time.

And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23)

It has not come yet, but we are waiting for it.

When Christ comes, we are going to get rid of these feeble, infirm bodies that actually are a handicap to us. We are going to get new bodies. In the meantime we groan in these old bodies, waiting for the day when our redemption will be complete. Between now and that glorious day, God has made every arrangement to *keep* those who are His own. Thank God, we have been indwelt by the Spirit of God, and we have been given a new nature. Now God wants us to live for Him.

When you and I go out on our own, asserting our own wills, trying in our own strength to live the Christian life – what happens? Why, we just fall right on our faces! We make a failure of it all. Even if you and I do produce something in the flesh which men may applaud, it is no good to God. It is the flesh. Only that which the Holy Spirit produces in our lives can He accept. And that ought to be our prayer and our concern. Whatever we produce ought not to be the works of the flesh – not this backscratching, backslapping,

parading kind of Christianity – but a deep, abiding faith in Jesus Christ which brings us to the place where we are dependent upon Him, where we look to Him and rest upon Him.

