

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Exegetical Paper: Romans 8:1-8

Submitted to Dr. Sorin Sabou,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

NGRK505 – B04_202130

Greek Language Tools

by

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June 25, 2021

Abstract

Romans chapter 8, verses 1-8, is a continuation of the argument of the Apostle Paul from Romans chapters 5-7, where he explains that though one still possesses a body subject to human limitations, God's Spirit lives in one whose mind is set on spiritual matters and one's faithfulness to Christ. The way in which the Spirit guides the believer is personal, though the conflict between spiritual conventions and human limitations continues for believers following Jesus Christ in mortal bodies (in the present age) with an assured victory. Paul's articulation of this process begins with the thesis of Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'" (1:16-17). Thus, God's faithfulness is demonstrated in Christ's faithfulness, which enables the believer's security through one's rescue by the Savior. It is through salvation and one's faith in Christ that one is preserved from the oppressive forces of this present evil age.

"The Bible was not revealed via "the tongues of angels." Though inspired of God, it was written in human language and within human cultures."¹ By using the exegetical method, one will endeavor to outline, exegete, understand the original author's meaning of the text, and apply the theology of the first eight verses of Romans chapter 8. "Moreover, preachers or teachers must proclaim the Word of God rather than their own subjective religious opinions. Only a carefully defined hermeneutic can keep one wedded to the text."²

Keywords: exegetical methodology, faithfulness to Christ

¹ Grant W. Osborne, *The Hermeneutic Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: 2008), 23.

² Ibid.

Historical Information

Dating Romans is generally agreed, amongst most scholars, as being written by Paul in A.D. 57. F. F. Bruce describes the book's dating as "the year in which Paul wrote Romans."³ Longenecker and Still indicate that Romans was written from Corinth, citing this location in the book's later chapters (15:17-16:23). "Romans is likely to be dated to the autumn of 57 or so, just prior to his final journey back to Jerusalem."⁴ Other scholars such as Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles register an estimate-only approach by indicating "mid to late fifties,"⁵ a range for various researchers venturing to date the epistle.

Given Paul's itinerary, three localities figure in his travel plans in which he mentions in 15:22-29: Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain, though his immediate destination is Jerusalem in the transport of an offering gathered from Gentile-Christian churches he has established. His only concern is how the offering will be received, uncertain of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians in this locale.

Literary Structure

In light of its literary context, a view of Romans supposes that Paul's epistle sent to the Roman Christians was the composition of the entire sixteen chapters presented in the New Testament. Given this supposition, its examination requires a thorough investigation, for a significant number of scholars challenge this proposal, citing inconsistencies in the canonical Romans. Key to this theory is the location of the doxology at the end of the letter, appearing in modern texts. Though, in some manuscripts, it is omitted altogether. According to Carson

³ F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 18.

⁴ Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking Through Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 163.

⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 516.

and Moo, “several manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate omit 15:1-16:23 entirely, while another codex of the Vulgate (Amiatinus) while containing 15:1-16:24, omits the section summaries from this section.”⁶ Another view suggests that Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Cyprian abandon references to chapters 15 and 16. In recent decades, some scholars believe that Romans did not include chapter 16. However, according to Carson and Moo, “this thesis rests on shaky ground. We have good grounds for concluding that Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians contained all sixteen chapters.”⁷ Longenecker and Still’s words weigh heavy in light of this point: Its sixteen chapters are, after all, an expression of “the gospel of God,” the very “power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).⁸

In relationship to Romans’ thesis statement (1:16-17), 8:1-4 finds this power for salvation as the *indwelling Spirit*. The whole of the Christian life is lived in one’s trust and dependence on the God who justifies the sinner (1:17), Thus this theme, “justification by faith” carries Romans chapters 1-5. As illustrated by Mounce, chapters 6-8, the believer’s substance in one’s relationship with the Savior, is indicated by the illustration of chapters 6, 7, and 8:

IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN WHICH WE ARE TO GROW (6:1–8:39)

1. No Longer Slaves to Sin (6:1–23)
 1. Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ (6:1–14)
 2. Slaves to Righteousness (6:15–23)
2. No Longer Condemned by Law (7:1–25)
3. Living in the Spirit (8:1–39)⁹

⁶ D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2005), 399.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 400-401.

⁸ Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking Through Paul*, 165.

⁹ Robert Mounce, *New American Commentary, Romans* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1995), 264.

In Romans 6, the believer's identity is the old man's death, whereas in Romans 7, the believer's identity is in Christ and death to the Law. Romans 8 is the pinnacle expression of the Holy Spirit's provision for the believer's new birth. Just as faith in Jesus Christ alone is essential for the believer's justification, faith resting in the Spirit's power is the assurance for the believer's sanctification. Thus, there is the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8:1-10. Below is a chart of the Trinitarian work of the passage.

Father	Son	Spirit
Sent his Son – 8:3		
Condemned sin – 8:3	In believers – 8:10	Indwells believers – 8:9

Contextual Analysis

Romans 8:1-4

1. **Therefore,** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit given to believers can be realized in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For Paul's *no condemnation* in Romans 8 is but another view of the believer's assurance of salvation through the cross-work of the Savior. "There is no condemnation, οὐδὲν κατάκριμα, does not mean nihil damnatione dignum (nothing worthy of condemnation,) as Erasmus and many others render it, but there is no condemnation. Those who are in Christ are not exposed to condemnation. And this again is not to be understood as descriptive of their present state merely, but of their permanent position. They are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. They shall never be condemned."¹⁰ This renders the believer "not ashamed of the gospel; it is

¹⁰ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York, NY: Armstrong and Sons Publishers, 1893), 391.

the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:16). Here, the demonstration of God’s faithfulness is Christ’s faithfulness, which rescues everyone— the faith of the believer is now no condemnation. The rendering of condemnation is κατάκριμα (katakrima), Strong’s Number G2631, has a limited semantic range occurring only 3 times in 3 verses in the mgmt. Greek (Romans 5:16, 18; 8:1).¹¹ “Those to whom there is and never can be any condemnation, are described, first as to their relation to Christ, and secondly as to their character. The first assigns the reason of their security, the second enables us to determine to whom that security belongs.”¹² Here, Paul reminds the believer that God’s Spirit is transporting one from the ineffectiveness and defeat of life in the flesh— a reference to chapter 7.

“The one who is righteous will live by faith” (1:17). Here, the theme is “in Christ” (in his Spirit) where the antithesis is one whose focus is on the pressures of human limitations rather than the enablement of God’s Spirit. One having God’s Spirit is free from the constraints of the flesh, though one is in a mortal body. Salvation does not give one the right to choose to live sinfully, but to make righteous choices, perhaps a Johannine reference to the relationship of κύριος (kýrios) to δούλος (doúlos), where one’s submission to Jesus as Lord results in the fruit of righteousness (“you did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit...” (John 15:16)), “what the law could not do” (Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:21). With this same idea in reference to *no condemnation*, Calvin reminds the believer of one’s contest with one’s own flesh where Paul turns one’s attention to the consolation that is needful— though one is beset by sin, one is exempt from the power of death, whereas “for he (Christ) joins together these three things, — the imperfection under

¹¹ “Lexicon: Strong’s G2631 - katakrima,” Blue Letter Bible, accessed June 24, 2021, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G2631&t=KJV>

¹² Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 391.

which the faithful always labor, — the mercy of God in pardoning and forgiving it, —and the regeneration of the Spirit...”¹³

2. For the law of the Spirit of life has
set you free in Christ Jesus
from the law of sin
and death

One’s analysis of 8:2 in observation of the believer's justification in light of sin and guilt confirms that the blood purifies the former sentence of the Savior who, in our stead, sacrificed his life. In this course, one is not under the curse of the law (which is condemnation), but that the work of the Spirit of Christ abolishes the law of sin in the believer by the destruction of one's prevailing desire to live in the flesh, which one has received deliverance. The meaning then is, that the law of God condemns men, and that this happens, because as long as they remain under the bond of the law, they are oppressed with the bondage of sin, and are thus exposed to death; but that the Spirit of Christ, while it abolishes the law of sin in us by destroying the prevailing desires of the flesh, does at the same time deliver us from the peril of death.”¹⁴ The law in this case is the functioning power of sin inciting further wrongdoings so to generate death.

3. God,
done what the law
weakened by the flesh, could not do.

Humanity’s slavery to sin weakened the law. Paul’s criticism is not the law itself, but because of humanity’s sinfulness, the law cannot bring salvation— this is the prohibiting action for all humanity. This is Paul’s dilemma in 6:19 as he notes that because of one’s slavery to sin, he cannot fully reveal the Christian life. In this frame, the punishment for sin is

¹³ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Bible*, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/cal/romans-8.html>

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 276.

death and condemnation. “The object for which God sent his Son, clothed in this feeble, suffering nature of ours, is expressed by *καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας* (*and for sin*). This may mean either *on account of sin* whether for its expiation or its removal, being undetermined; or it may be understood in a sacrificial sense.”¹⁵

4. By **sending** his own Son
 likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,
 condemned sin in the flesh,
 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be **fulfilled** in us,
 who **walk** not according to
 the flesh but according to the Spirit.

A continuation of the contrast of (8:3) the old pattern of life and the new— between life in the flesh, one’s sinful nature and inheritance from Adam, to life in the Spirit. Here, Paul speaks of divine capability in opposition to human limitations (“what the Law could not do”). The Spirit’s residency within Jesus-followers results in patterns of lifestyle that are themselves the fulfillment of ‘the righteous requirement of the law’¹⁶

Romans 8:5-8

5. Those who **live** according to the flesh,
 set their minds on the things
 of the flesh
 but those who **live** according to the Spirit
 set their minds on the things
 of the Spirit.
6. For to **set** your mind on the flesh
 is death
 but to **set** your mind on the Spirit
 is life
 and peace.

¹⁵ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 396.

¹⁶ Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking Through Paul*, 185.

Though the contrast of 8:3-4 continues, Paul's attention moves to the contrasting character of living after the flesh and living after the Spirit. Several points concerning these aspects bear weight on victory versus death. The one who lives in the Spirit has the mind of Christ in contrast to those who do not. The flesh-driven life opposes the things of God, whereas the Spirit-driven life is devoted to the things of God. “The new creation in Christ Jesus means the end of the old creation. Christ’s death and resurrection constitute the decisive victory over sin and death.”¹⁷

7. For the mind is **set** on the flesh
is hostile to God,
for it does not **submit** to God’s law;
indeed, it cannot

8. Those who are in the flesh
Cannot please God.

Paul’s point of the hostility of the unregenerated mind is one’s futile attempt to live life void of Godly council. The human mind is set at odds to the instruction of God because “anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (8:9). Paul declares that this φρόνημα σαρκός itself is not subject, and cannot be, to the law of God— the true mindset of everyone not yet renewed by the Spirit (3:9-18).

Application

Flowing out from Paul's continued argument of Romans before chapters 5-7, the emergence of Romans 8 contends for the believer's emancipation of a Spirit-enabled life, although one is still subject to the limitations one has while still in a human body. Paul's encouraging words amidst this angst are that God’s Spirit prevails in those who set their

¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 555.

minds on the things of the Spirit in faithfulness to Jesus Christ, though the conflict between spiritual conventions and human limitation will continue, for Christ's followers are still in their earthly houses in this present age. This news is good news for those who are tired of the era of waiting for victory. When the waiting time comes, all creation will come.

The anticipation of the liberation that Paul elaborates upon in Romans 8:1-8 is first imagined in 7:25, where he writes, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the confidence that one has in the ability of the finished works of the Savior. This confidence is “nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39). This declaration is first communicated through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ— the power unto salvation through faith alone in the Son. Highlighting Christ’s divine love toward man beginning in Romans 5-8, his death takes center stage as the means whereby one is liberated from the law of sin and death. Here sin is shattered along with one’s propensity toward sinfulness. “As powerful as they are, even the powers of sin and death cannot undo the salvific effect of bringing God’s love to a creation in bondage.”¹⁸ Given nineteen references to the Spirit, Romans 8 is “an essay on the role of the Spirit.”¹⁹ Paul expresses in 8:9 and that “the Spirit of God lives in you.”

Conclusion

As one closes this examination of Romans 8:1-8, sound exegesis of Scripture is the basis for understanding the originating author’s intent. In a culture where hostile hermeneutics are commonplace in the church, the pursuit of the things of God is more critical in this hour than perhaps any other time in history. “But tragic is the situation when the preacher or teacher is perpetually unaware of the blatant nonsense he utters, and of the consequent

¹⁸ Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking Through Paul*, 185.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, this is the count in Greek, excluding the reference to “our spirit” in 8:16.

damage he inflicts on the church or God.”²⁰ Sensitive to the responsibility of sound exegesis and the critical method of interpretation, one has attempted to draw the critical ideas that would outline, exegete, understand the original author’s meaning of the text, and apply the theology of Romans 8:1-8.

²⁰ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 16.

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