
Christ in You

The Hope of Glory



by Paul Noble

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Colossians 1:27 "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"

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Forward

God the Father is drawing people to Himself every day awakening in them a hunger to be restored to right relationship with Him. You, dear Reader, are clearly one of those dear people as you hold this book in your hand. You are looking for deeper revelation of God and you've come to the right place.

Guided by the Holy Spirit in compiling this excellent short book, Paul Noble unpacks scripture with clarity and ease that will lift the veil of mystery surrounding what it really means to have Christ on the inside of you. Prepare to be challenged and enlightened! He ably illustrates the impact new life in Christ has on our spirit, our mind, will and emotions and points to the freedom believers should and can experience in their everyday lives. This book will comfort, clarify and edify and will be a treasure to share with your fellow believers and loved ones.

In my work as a missionary based in Italy, I need clear, impactful materials for new believers and others seeking the freedom the true gospel offers. Soon 'Christ in you' will be available in Italian, too, and no doubt other languages will follow.

I congratulate Paul, the Lord's 'good and faithful servant', on 'Christ in you' and pray more inspiration for additional titles to equip the Body of Christ.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Colossians 1:27 (KJV))

Sally Davis MBE
Missionary in Italy

Chapter 1

How did this book begin?

In August 2013 I reached the ripe old age of 50. Reaching this momentous point - please don't laugh if you haven't yet arrived - it caused me to reflect on over 43 years as a seasoned born-again Christian. I asked myself the question: how much progress have I actually made? Well, for the most part, like many believers I was doing OK, trundling along, doing church, reading my Bible, preaching, leading worship, praying, witnessing and even seeing the sick healed occasionally. So, using a modern-day analogy, my Christian life was a bit like the Star Trek Enterprise on its impulse engines - I was getting there slowly on 0.5 warp!

Of course, there have been times when my spiritual experience has definitely been on steroids and I have felt the turbo kicking in! When I was 25, for instance, and a member of the strict Christian sect the Exclusive Brethren, God arranged for my ordered and controlled world to be rudely overturned!

Firstly, I bumped into a fervent Pentecostal believer (I had never met these strange creatures before, in fact I had hardly met any Christian outside my narrow religious confines!) Boldly, he told me to my face that I was a theoretical Christian and that I needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit! He told me that I didn't even have a warp drive and that I was using rocket fuel! What a cheek!

What he said, though, was like someone plunging a dagger into my heart and, after much soul-searching, I came to the realisation that he was right! So, ditching my pride, I simply knelt down one night and asked Jesus to fill me with His Holy Spirit. Immediately I started speaking in tongues in a language I didn't understand - totally freaking me out and overturning my neat theology!

Of course, as I awoke to the truth I continued asking questions. This eventually led to both my wife and I being ejected from the Exclusive Brethren and joining a local lively charismatic church.

In this church, we soon experienced our first taste of prophets and the prophetic and in 1992 my wife Fran and I were given several prophecies by well-known prophets. Part of one of those prophecies spoken 25 years ago I reproduce here, as I believe this my first book is part of its fulfilment:

“It’s just marvellous how he’s going to write, not only songs, but he’s going to write music that, even if it doesn’t sound musical, just the sweetness of heaven will come through. Stories, articles that are written against injustice. Father, he’s a good researcher. When he does his homework he does it very thoroughly. I see him astounding teachers when they tried on him. Good grief! He sounds like [he’s at]college when he’s only at high school. So, Father, I thank you there is going to be something that he’s going to be released [into] with his ready writing pen or word-processor, that’s going to burst chains asunder, where people have been illegally treated by legal systems, where oppression has continued in a spirit of hypocrisy. He’s going to be a clear voice that cuts through the crap of this world: the light of Jesus.”

Several years later, as I approached my fifties, I again began to hunger spiritually and as an elder of a Pentecostal church I increasingly began to preach grace and what some today disparagingly label ‘hyper-grace’. Eventually this message resulted in my being asked to step down from eldership. That was a painful time but looking back I can see how God used it to totally revolutionise and reformulate my thinking. The fruit of that process is this book “Christ in You” which I pray will bless and equip you to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13:43 “Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.”

Anyway, to answer my original question! On my 50th birthday I started writing articles for my blog www.godsgraceworks.com and a year later this book is the fruit of my labour!

Chapter 2

Where does God live?

Colossians 1:27 “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”

Where does God live, where does He reside?

Acts 7:48 “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?”

This scripture clearly indicates that God doesn't live in a temple - He would never fit! No, He's far bigger than that! In fact, He's omnipresent!

God in a box

Nevertheless, under the Old Covenant God graciously dwelt or tabernacled with man. In fact, for a while He came to live in a box or 'ark' hidden in a desert tent or 'tabernacle'. Unfortunately, to go in and meet God you had to be an Israelite, a Levite and also the high-priest that year. The chances of even meeting God in those times were pretty slim and of surviving the experience also pretty slim! Moses, who saw God's back, was a very privileged individual!

Under the Old Covenant God's presence was external. It was, as Graham Cooke calls it, a 'visitation mentality'. In other words, God came and He went. King David could therefore legitimately say in Psalm 51:11:

“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”

In those days the Holy Spirit came upon people, indeed He filled them but He didn't indwell them. In other words, He didn't reside there, He just came to stay for a while and one day He was gone. His presence was always temporary. (By the way, the prayer above is not appropriate for believers today because His presence in the believer is permanent - but we will get to that later!)

God lived in Jesus

God's ultimate plan and desire, though, was always 'habitation'. He desired to live with man permanently. The prophetic title of the Messiah 'Emanuel' meaning 'God with us' expresses this perfectly. Through the event of incarnation around 2,000 years ago God came to dwell amongst us in the person of Jesus Christ.

John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Access was limited

But, the problem was that even though God was manifest in the flesh, access was still limited. You actually had to be living in Israel, push through huge crowds and, technically, salvation was available only to the Jewish people - gentiles were excluded. So, even though Jesus was the temple of God access to Him was not universal and was limited to the brief time that He was actually alive and walking the earth - a mere 33 years before He was brutally murdered!

The Holy Spirit's coming!

Jesus himself hinted privately to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion that a mystery was going to be unveiled. He revealed that He would soon be leaving and that His replacement would soon be coming - the Holy Spirit. This meant that the presence of God was coming and He would be personal and permanent to His followers, not just a visitation but also a habitation. Indeed, they would literally carry the presence of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit everywhere they went and worship would no longer be in a physical temple but by the Spirit.

John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

The disciples get born again

However, Jesus had first to be resurrected from the dead before the disciples could be born again and in-dwelt with the Holy Spirit. This event is recorded in John 20:22 when the living Christ Jesus breathed into them His own Spirit (the Spirit of Christ); this mirrors Genesis 2:7 when God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul.

John 20:22 *“and when he had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them Receive the Holy Spirit”*

Why Jesus had to leave

In order for the Holy Spirit to be sent from heaven, however, Jesus had first to ascend back into heaven to His Father - that is why Jesus tells Mary not to touch Him in John 20:17 because He no longer wanted her to relate to Him in the flesh but according to the Spirit.

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

Jesus therefore had to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come.

John 16:7 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came it was to indwell the church, the body of Christ and tongues of fire settled on each of the hundred and twenty believers gathered there in that upper room.

Similarly, many years previously, when King Solomon had dedicated the temple (2 Chronicles 5:13), a hundred and twenty priests had sounded trumpets and had been unable to stand to minister because of the glory cloud of the Lord.

When Pentecost came, believers individually and collectively became the temple of the Holy Spirit - and permanently so. God came to live in the Church, the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

So, each believer (a member of the body of Christ) is a little Christ, an anointed one or Christian - a nightmare for the devil because everywhere we go, the presence of God goes - a moving temple!

Ephesians 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The revelation of the Apostle Paul

The full extent of the revelation of this magnificent truth, though, awaited the conversion of the devil's right-hand man - the Apostle Paul. Paul, unlike the other Apostles, had never met Jesus in the flesh (as far as we know), only meeting Him dramatically in a 'heavenly vision' at midday on the Damascus road.

What the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul was that, even though you might have known Jesus in the flesh and even touched and talked with Him, now by the Holy Spirit every believer had far greater access to God the Father.

2 Corinthians 5:16 "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

Questions for discussion

- 1) What is the difference between a 'habitation' and a 'visitation' mentality?
- 2) Under the Old Covenant where did God live?
- 3) When were the disciples born again? - John 20:22
- 4) Why did Jesus have to go back to heaven? - John 16:7

Chapter 3

You must be born again!

In the dead of night around two thousand years ago, a healer and radical teacher, Jesus of Nazareth met a Jewish religious leader by the name of Nicodemus. What Jesus privately revealed to Nicodemus was a new and mysterious teaching. This teaching explained the necessity of what Jesus termed 'new birth'. This meeting is recorded for us in John Chapter 3.

A shocking theology

Basically, Jesus says to this religious and scholarly man that unless you start again from scratch, like being born as a baby, you can't even see the kingdom of God because you are spiritually blind. Not only that, but without new birth you can't enter it either – you remain on the outside. He told Nicodemus that you need not only to be physically born (born of water) but to be spiritually born (born of wind or spirit) as well.

These statements of Jesus must have been totally shocking to a religious man like Nicodemus who had spent his whole life in religious performance and self-righteousness. Yes, he was not a bad man - he went to church (synagogue) and in many ways was a pillar of society and respected by many.

However, Jesus showed in stark clarity that all this knowledge and good works counted for nothing in terms of a relationship with God. What he needed was to be born again. Of course, if this was true of Nicodemus, then it is true of every human being on the planet. You must be born again!

Why are we spiritually dead?

So then, *why* are we spiritually dead and what exactly does it *mean* to be spiritually dead? How did we get there, how did this happen? Firstly, we must understand that God did not create the first human beings like this. In fact, Adam was created a living soul. He was created perfect without sin.

Genesis 1:24 “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*”

Spirit, soul and body

Man, therefore, was created as a tri-part being (reflecting the image of God as trinity): spirit, soul and body.

1Thessalonians 5:23 “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The body: is visible and gives us world-consciousness. It is our interface to the physical world. We perceive this world through our five senses.

The soul: is invisible and gives us self-consciousness. It is made up of mind, will and emotions and includes our memories and personality.

The spirit: is invisible and gives us God-consciousness. It is our interface to the invisible spiritual dimension. We perceive this world through our spiritual senses.

Therefore, what makes us radically different from the animal creation is that, like God, the devil and the angels (who are spirits), we, too, have a spirit.

What is the flesh?

Unfortunately Adam didn't remain a living soul because sin and death entered the world through his act of disobedience. The moment he disobeyed the commandment spiritual death occurred. Immediately he became self-conscious: he knew he was naked, and he was afraid.

The soul and body now ruled. In the Bible this is called the 'flesh'. The spirit was now dead (called the 'old man') and Adam was now carnal and driven by his five senses, his thoughts and his feelings. Eventually he physically died and every human being born afterwards took on his fallen and sinful nature. This is described in Ephesians 2:1:

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

How do we get born again?

Now that we understand *why* we need to be born again, the next important question is *how* do we get born again?

Firstly, as in the natural, we have nothing to do with the process. We are not the initiators. We can't be because we are dead. For example, in the natural a baby is conceived by the coming together of two people in love and intimacy. The baby doesn't decide it is going to be born. In fact, it has no choice in the matter. Similarly, the work of new birth or regeneration is the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5 *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”*

Therefore, we are born again not by our actions but by the action of the Holy Spirit and by the seed or sperm of the Word. This seed of the Word is incorruptible and eternal. It, or rather He, is Jesus.

1 Peter 1:23 *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

This is spiritual reproduction. This is how God reproduces Christ in us. This is how we become born-again and a Christian (a little Christ or anointed one). So, if you are born-again you have a brand new spirit that is alive to God. It's just like Jesus. Christ is alive in you!

John 3:6 *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”*

Questions for discussion

- 1) What does it mean to be 'spiritually dead'?
- 2) How would you define 'spirit, soul and body'?
- 3) What does the Bible mean by the 'flesh'?
- 4) How are we born again?

Chapter 4

Christ in us - the fruit!

If you are born-again then Christ is in you. A Christian is no longer in the flesh with a dead human spirit but your born-again spirit is the Spirit of Christ.

*Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but **in the Spirit**, if it 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. "*

Christ now dwells in your heart through faith - you have the Spirit of Christ. God now lives in you.

"[.]so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 3:17)

Really close to God!

How close do you want to be to God? The fact is that as believers we are now so close to Jesus that there is not a hair's breadth between the Lord and us! No longer do you have to go to Jerusalem to a physical temple to pray. You can talk to the Lord just where you are. There is no distance between your spirit and God's. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:17: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit!"

Our spirit is alive and righteous

Consequently, because it is Christ's Spirit that lives in us, even though our bodies and souls are still affected and damaged by sin and death, our spirit is alive, righteous and holy just like Jesus!

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

*Ephesians 4:28 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in **righteousness and true holiness.**"*

*Hebrews 12:23 “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the **spirits of just men made perfect**”*

A new nature

In fact, new birth means your nature has been completely changed. Previously it had been natural to sin because you were of Adam’s fallen spirit: the Old Man. Now you have the New Man Christ Jesus inside and you have a new nature, a divine nature just like Jesus’. What is God’s nature? It is love.

*2 Peter 1:4 “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

Laws written on the heart

This new nature wants to do what’s right. Through new birth God has written or programmed His laws (not the ‘Ten Commandments’ but rather the commandments of God), and His desires on our hearts. This is the law of Christ, the royal law, the law of liberty.

This means that new birth also affects our will, mind and emotions - our whole person.

*Hebrews 8:10 “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put **my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts**; and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people;”*

It affects everything

So then, this new creation miracle is not restricted to just the spirit. This new life, eternal life and resurrection power works from the inside out, affecting and transforming both our emotions, mind, heart and also our physical body:

Romans 8:11 “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 quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

The new nature does not sin

What's more, this born-again Christ-like and righteous nature cannot sin!

*1 John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God **doth not commit sin**; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God."*

Of course, as a believer this doesn't mean you don't sin but that Christ in you cannot sin! There has been an identity change and 'you', the real 'you', is who you are in Christ:

*Romans 7:7 "Now then it is no more **I** that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."*

Therefore, you have a new identity, a new name. Saul became Paul. You are no longer called a 'sinner' you are called a 'holy one' or a 'saint'.

A new identity

That is your new identity and like Paul you can identify yourself fully with Jesus in His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. After all, that's what baptism is all about!

*Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless **I live**; yet not I (the old identity) but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh (the physical existence) I live by faith in the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Lastly, the real proof of whether you are a Christian and in the faith at all, is that Christ is in you. If Christ is indeed in you, then outwardly you may not look like Jesus but your spirit is identical. You are like Christ!

2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Questions for discussion

- 1) How do we know we are born-again and have the Spirit of Christ? - Romans 8:9
- 2) What sort of nature do we now have? - 2 Peter 1:4
- 3) What has God written on our hearts? - Hebrews 8:10
- 4) How can the physical body be affected by new birth? - Romans 8:11
- 5) Can the new nature sin? - 1 John 3:9
- 6) How do we know we are in the faith? - 2 Corinthians 13:5

Chapter 5

Why do I still sin?

In the previous chapter I made a radical statement: I said that Christ in you cannot sin. What do I mean by that? Does it mean that a born-again believer never sins again? The Apostle John in his first epistle indeed seems to say exactly that:

The believer cannot sin?

*1 John 3:9 “Whosoever is born of God **doth not commit sin**; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God.”*

*1 John 5:18 “We know that **whosoever is born of God sinneth not**; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”*

In point of fact he also says that if you commit sin you are of the devil! You can't get much more black and white than that!

*1 John 3:8 “He that **committeth sin is of the devil**; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”*

However, we do sin

Sadly, we all know from our own experience that even after we become born-again and are filled with the Holy Spirit, even though we desire to live a holy and completely sinless life is not a reality and is probably not even possible. Indeed, the writer John, a few verses later, seems to contradict himself and confirms this by the following verses:

*1 John 1:8 “If we say that we have **no sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*

*1 John 2:1 “My little children, these things write I unto you, **that ye sin not**. And if any **man sin**, (aorist tense, one off) we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”*

So, what is John saying? Does he really mean a believer cannot commit sin?

A believer does not *practice* sin

Firstly, a better translation of 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:8 and 1 John 3:8 and the phrase ‘commit sin’ would be ‘*practice* sin’, as translated in the ASV. This is because the tense of the verb ‘sin’ is not ‘Aorist’ (sinning in a moment of time, even once – see verse above 1 John 2:1). It is in fact, ‘present active’ or *sinning continually*.

Therefore, John is saying that a true believer may sin in a moment of time but doesn’t sin continually - or *practice* sin. In fact, if they do sin continually, then there are grave doubts that they ever knew Christ in the first place!

1 John 3:6 “No one who sins (present active) has seen him or known him!”

A believer practices righteousness

However, I don’t believe that the above explanation, although technically correct, is the complete answer because John not only talks about practicing *sin*; he also talks about practicing *righteousness*. See the following scriptures:

1 John 2:29 “If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of him”

1 John 3:7 “Little children, let no one deceive you, the one who practices righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous”

1 John 3:10 “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious, anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God”

Now, this is problematic because John uses the same present active tense to describe righteousness! In other words, a believer practices righteousness – he or she doesn’t just do occasional acts of righteousness, like an unbeliever might. No, they constantly and continually do righteousness every day, at all times.

Now, we can easily cope with the idea that we occasionally sin but can we honestly say that we practice righteousness day in, day out? Well, John says if you don't, then you're not born again! There must be a more complete answer – and there is!

I believe, in context, the Apostle John is describing who we are in the spirit. In other words our *spirit man* (Christ in us) indeed practices righteousness and cannot sin.

Why do we still want to sin?

So then, if we have Christ in us and a brand new nature, why do we still want to sin as well as want to do what's right? Do we possess two natures now: a sinful nature and a Christ-like nature that are locked in some sort of mortal combat or tug of war? Or, are we perhaps schizophrenic with some kind of weird personality disorder? For many of us that's certainly what it sometimes feels like.

No, I don't believe that is the case; you don't have two natures. You have one new nature that is Christ-like. However, the scripture does indeed suggest that there are two opposing forces: the flesh and the Spirit at war inside you!

Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

The conflict of desire

Paul describes this conflict of desire in Romans 7:

Romans 7:15 "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do but I am doing the thing I hate."

Romans 7:16 "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do I agree with the Law confessing that it is good."

In effect, what he is saying is that even though he doesn't want to do bad things, he has no power to actually stop doing bad things - even if he wants to. So, becoming monk, hiding away from the world and from all temptation to sin, will not change the fact - that even in a monastery sin is with you. The war carries on regardless.

Romans 7:23 “I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members”

Regrettably, even though you are born-again, you still carry around the body of death, your mortal and sinful flesh: mind, memories, emotions, will, sexual drive and so on.

Romans 7:24 “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

As Paul says in an earlier verse in Romans 7:14 that we are sold in bondage to sin:

“For we know that the Law is spiritual but I am of the flesh sold in bondage to sin”

It's not me, it's this darn flesh!

However, in verses 17 and 20 of Romans 7 Paul comes to three important realisations:

Firstly, there is no good in his sinful flesh (note he is careful to say in his *flesh* because he knows that his *spirit* man is good and desires good.)

*Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (**that is, in my flesh,**) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”*

Secondly, he has no power to do the good that he (his spirit man) wishes.

Thirdly, he realises that if he doesn't *want* to do it, then it's not really him doing it. In other words, it is sin in the flesh. His true identity therefore, is not in the sinful behaviour but in the new man.

*Romans 7:17 “Now then it is **no more I that do it**, but sin that dwelleth in me.”*

*Romans 7:20 “But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, **I am no longer the one doing it**, but sin which dwells in me”*

Example - driving your screaming kids to school!

Imagine you are driving your kids to school and they are behaving very badly in the back seat, fighting, screaming and even trying to distract other drivers. You can't do much about it because you're trying to keep your eyes on the road. Do you just ignore the behaviour and pretend it's not happening? No, of course not - if you don't deal with it soon, you're likely to have an accident!

Sin in the flesh could similarly be likened to a big, bad dog straining at the leash. We need someone to help us and fast! Who is going to deliver us from this body of death? Who do we turn to?

Most people, of course, turn to Mr Law. Yes, he's Mr Perfect, he knows the rules absolutely. But he's no teacher or coach! All he does is point out that your children are misbehaving and he even finds time to comment on the inadequacies of your driving! Thankfully we are no longer married to Mr Law! The Law, religious rules, church attendance, will power, determination, self-help, education, self-discipline, self-reliance, striving, and even prayer may all help and even manage the sinful flesh for a while but they can never ultimately control it.

A positive note

The writer of Romans chapter 7, though, ends on a positive note: he maybe stuck, in need of help, under the Law, frustrated and unhappy in this struggle against sin but he has now seen the light at the end of the tunnel. He has grasped two important positives:

Firstly, he now knows there is only one person, Jesus, or Mr Grace who can help him get free from the law of sin and death. The writer has now given up on himself and also on Mr Law!

Romans 7:25 "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Secondly, he now has a clear revelation of who he is in Christ (see I MYSELF in the verse below). He understands now beyond a doubt that his sinful flesh is not his identity even though it is his responsibility.

Romans 7:25 “So, then, on the one hand I *MYSELF* with the mind am serving the law of **God**, but on the other, *WITH MY FLESH*, the law of *sin* (my capital letters and bold letters added)

To conclude therefore, how do we answer our original question: “why do we still sin?” **We still sin, not because we have a sinful nature but because still we have the sinful flesh!**

Questions for discussion

- 1) How do we understand the contradiction in John’s First Epistle where he apparently says someone who is born-again cannot sin?
- 2) How do we explain that John says that a born-again believer continually does righteousness?
- 3) Why, even though we are born-again. do we still want to sin?
- 4) What are the conclusions that Paul comes to in Romans 7?

Chapter 6

Freedom from sin!

If you could take a pill to be totally free of all sin, would you do it right now? If you're born-again then your answer would be most likely a resounding yes! The desperate man at the end of Romans 7, as discussed in the previous chapter, would certainly grab at the chance! I mean, as believers, don't we all long for that day when we will be in heaven where we will never ever sin again? A glorious thought!

However, the Gospel (God's-pill) is not just a promise of freedom from sin in the future, but rather it is freedom from law of sin and death NOW!

As a result, if you turn to Romans chapter 6, it is clear that the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are together the means by which God has not only forgiven all your sins but has also dealt with sin in the flesh. Therefore, your freedom is a done deal - it happened 2,000 years ago!

*Romans 6:18 "and **having been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness"*

*Romans 6:22 "but now **having been freed from sin** and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome eternal life."*

When Jesus was crucified you were crucified with him

Romans 6:6 "knowing that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"

When Jesus died you died with him

Romans 6:7 "for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ..."

When he was buried you were buried with him

Romans 6:4 "therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death"

When he was raised you were raised with him

Romans 6:4 “in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life”

Consequently, the resurrection of Jesus is the key. Life is more powerful than death; light always overcomes darkness. Resurrection and eternal life always defeat and trump death completely.

1 Corinthians 15:54 “Death is swallowed up in victory”.

One of my favourite scriptures and the one of the best bits in the Bible (in my opinion) is Romans 8:1. It's like a victorious fanfare of trumpets announcing the termination of the wrestling match described in Romans chapter 7.

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for law of the spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

Wow! What this amazing verse tells us, and what we have been saying already, is that resurrection life, Christ in you and the law of the spirit of life, breaks the hold, the chains, the patterns and the habits of sin in our lives! As Jesus came to life and walked out of that tomb, so God is able to raise you from the dead! Similarly, like Jesus calling forth Lazarus from the tomb - so He calls your name!

No condemnation

As a result, because we have been set free there can be NOW (this moment and at any moment), NO (zero) condemnation or future judgment and penalty for sin. Nothing we do, no sin we can commit (even right now or in the future), is going to suffer a penalty because when Jesus died, we died!

In the next verse, Romans 8:2, the writer gives a bit more detail on how this is possible. He explains how what the law was powerless to do (free us from the law of sin and death), God did at the cross by judging sin in the flesh. Therefore, not only were individual sins dealt with but also the whole of our sinful flesh was judged - exhausting all possibility of future penalty.

*Romans 8:2. “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**: ”*

This is the ‘too good to be true’ news that is the Gospel of Grace - and the legalists hate it! Without conditions, caveats and multiple hoops to jump through, lawkeepers just can’t cope. Indeed, the original translators of the King James Version even added extra text (without any authority, I may add): “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Why? Because they couldn’t believe verse 1 could be that good!

Indeed, how can it be that good? Surely, the first thought that goes through the mind of the believer is: “*Yippee, let’s go out on the town and sin as much as I can get away with!*” Of course, that takes no account of the fact that if you are born-again you actually do *want* to live holy because you have a new nature. The truth is that now you are a willing slave to righteousness and to God (Romans 6:18 and 6:22). It’s a bit like thinking that if you said to your children that they could now do whatever they liked, that they would somehow smash your house up, drink all your beer and drive your car into a wall! No, if they really are your children and truly love you they probably wouldn’t – well, I hope not! This, however, is the risk of grace and of love that God undertakes. The good news is that God now treats us as sons who are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14); the law is for immature kids who need rules.

Accordingly, when Jesus said the following he wasn’t kidding: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Let us, therefore, learn to stand and enjoy this freedom that Christ has purchased:

Galatians 5:1 “It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject to a yoke of slavery”

Questions for discussion

- 1) How have we been freed from sin? - Romans 6:7
- 2) What has set us free from the law of sin and death? - Romans 8:1
- 3) How much judgment is left for the believer? - Romans 8:1

- 4) If you died and had sinned only 5 minutes beforehand, would you still be saved?
- Romans 8:1

Chapter 7

Fix your mind!

In the previous chapter we saw that the man of Romans 7 came to an important conclusion: he might be unable to conquer sin in the flesh but there was one area where he did have control – his mind or, as the famous detective Poirot would say, “those little grey cells”!

Romans 7:25 “*So, then, on the one hand I MYSELF with the mind (nous) am serving the law of God, but on the other, WITH MY FLESH, the law of sin.*”

This is an important step because as the well-known proverb says: “*As a man thinks in his heart so is he.*” Proverbs 23:7.

The French philosopher Descartes said something similar when he made the famous statement: “*I think, therefore I am*”.

What is the mind?

The mind, therefore, is very much at the centre of who we are but is much more than just the grey matter of the brain. No, the mind enables us to make sense of the world around us, giving us perception and experience of the physical world through the five senses. In addition, somehow it enables self-consciousness. We are not therefore, just computers and thinking machines.

For example, the mind does the following:

- 1) It enables us to conceptualise, anticipate, create, remember and imagine.
- 2) It gives us the ability to experience emotion and pain.
- 3) It creates a conscience.
- 4) It gives us the ability to compute and think through problems logically.
- 5) It enables us to be self-aware.

Therefore, the mind is the inner man, the heart and soul of our being where all the information from the external world is processed. In other words, as the physical senses of the body are a window to the physical world, enabling the mind/soul to experience that world, the spiritual senses of the human spirit are a window into the spirit, enabling the mind/soul to experience that reality.

How did sin affect the mind?

Now that we have some idea what the mind is, how then did the sin and the fall affect the mind? Of course, one of the major effects of sin is that a sinner becomes blinded to spiritual realities. This is what is termed being ‘carnally-minded’.

Consequently, the unregenerate man’s spirit is dead; there is no information coming from that realm. That is why to the lost man the Holy Scriptures are a closed book until the Holy Spirit sovereignly enlightens them because, as Jesus said, His words are Spirit and life.

2 Corinthians 3:14 “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.”

Psalms 119:120 “the entrance of your words give light, it gives understanding to the simple”

Likewise, spiritual truths to the carnally-minded, even if highly educated, appear foolishness because they are spiritually discerned:

1 Cor 2:14 “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Education then, though very important and beneficial, does not change human nature. At the end of the day it just creates a clever sinner. A man therefore, may be totally brilliant and yet totally evil – an inventor of evil things (Romans 1:30). Indeed, even in the thousand years or so before the flood when God wiped out the human race, the mind of man produced nothing but evil.

*Genesis 6:5 “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every **imagination of the thoughts of his heart** was only evil continually.”*

How does new Birth affect the mind?

However, new birth or new creation changes not only the spirit of man but also affects the mind. God writes His laws (how He thinks) on our hearts and minds:

Hebrews 10:16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;”

In point of fact, He not only writes his laws on our hearts but gives us the mind of Christ:

1 Corinthians 2:16:”For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

How is the mind transformed?

This transformation of the mind, though, although it starts at new birth, is an ongoing process unlike the born-again spirit. There is now work to do. We have to learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to actually let the mind of Christ operate in our lives. We have to work out (exercise) our salvation.

Philippians 2:5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

Example - Computer

Imagine a computer that has a brand new operating system installed. Unfortunately, there may be still old applications, picture files and even viruses on the hard drive. Maybe a few careful deletions of inappropriate material and programs need to take place! Possibly, some of the applications need to be upgraded and modified to run under the new operating software.

Example - A new business

A few years back my wife and I bought a 'ladies only' gym. The existing staff and membership came with the business. Of course, this meant all the existing problems and attitudes came along, too! So, even though we had fresh vision and ideas for the business, we first had to change the mindset of both the staff and the members many of whom clearly preferred that things remain exactly the way they were. This meant we had to overcome their resistance to change and this ultimately meant a few staff and even members leaving.

This is very much like what happens when we get born again. Mindsets and habits don't change overnight but the Holy Spirit (our amazing mentor) helps us turn the business around! So, don't give in to the desire of the flesh. You're in charge now. Don't let those unruly staff boss you around!

Romans 6:13 "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Repentance and renewal

A renewal, a change of thinking and re-education in our lives, therefore, is firmly on God's agenda. This is what the Bible calls 'repentance'.

Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Before we were saved, for example, we might have had a very arrogant attitude. Well, now we need to change that attitude and learn humility.

Ephesians 4:28 "And be renewed in the spirit (attitude) of your mind;"

We sin because we think sin

A key to understanding the importance of renewing the mind is to understand that **we sin because we think or imagine sin**. A man cannot sin if he cannot think it first.

Cain murdered Abel in his imagination long before he flew into a jealous rage and actually spilled his blood.

That is what Jesus meant when he said:

Mark 7:21-22 “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.”

In other words, the sinful behaviour comes from a sinful heart and sinful thinking.

A few examples of fleshly attitudes and mindsets:

Andrew Wommack ‘helpfully’ calls this type of fleshly thinking: “stinking thinking”!

If you are depressed - ask yourself the question, what am I thinking about? Depressed emotions generally come from negative thinking.

If you are full of sexual lust- what are you thinking about? What are you looking at? If you often look at pornography then this is going to reinforce lustful images in your mind and objectify others.

If you are constantly worried and fearful about the future - what are you listening to? What is your mind fixed on? Maybe you need to switch off the news channel now!

So then, you can’t necessarily change your fleshly appetites overnight but you can change what you think about. You can choose what TV programmes you watch.

What are we filling our minds with?

Accordingly, what we put into our minds is what is going to come out. In other words, we are the product of our education, the books we read; the films we watch and the music we listen to. So, if someone looks at pornography every day then is it any wonder that they have a big problem with lust?!

One of the major things that is lacking in many people's lives is peace. God's supernatural peace is a gift that guards our hearts and minds. However, it's also a product of what we think about:

*Philippians 4:7-8 "And **the peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things.**"*

Therefore, even though to the believer all things are permissible, clearly not all things are beneficial. (1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 10:23). This should give us wisdom that maybe that it would be better not to watch that horror movie! Is it pure? Is it lovely?

Consequently, the fruit of peace is a result of what we put into our hearts and a major way we can have peace is by reading God's Word. The Holy Spirit can't make us read it, we have to do that but He is pleased to give us understanding of it.

Luke 24:45 "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,"

What is your mind fixed on?

Hence, one way to have peace is to fix our attention on the Prince of Peace:

Isaiah 26: 3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Most of the time, the mind can only really concentrate effectively on one thing at a time – yes, ladies, even you! Maybe you can drive a car at the same time as eating a sandwich and listening to music but try working through a maths problem at the same time as writing an email to your bank!

What we set or fix our minds on can be likened to the rudder of a ship – it sets the direction of our lives. We can choose. We can either focus on the flesh and its desires or we can set our minds on the Spirit and have the fruit that results: life and peace.

This is what is meant by the expression 'walking in the Spirit'.

Galatians 5:16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"

It's in the mind and heart that belief or unbelief takes place. A double-minded or uncertain man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). The believer, however, is urged to be unwavering and single-minded. We are to set or fix our minds:

Romans 8:5 "For those who according to the flesh **set their minds** on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the spirit the things of the spirit"

Romans 8:6 "For the **mind set on the flesh is death**, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Colossians 3:2 "**Set your mind** on the things above not on the things on the earth"

Spiritual warfare

Of course, that is easier said than done because we have an enemy, the devil, who does his damndest to distract, divert or deceive you. In fact, that's really the principal power he has over you. Consequently, spiritual warfare is mostly between the ears! Just don't give in to the devil's mind games!

2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (thoughts, mind games)"

So, the devil can't make us think in a certain way but we are *susceptible* to suggestion and temptation. Think of TV advertising. Your kids would never have had the desire for that latest gadget, if they had not first seen the advert on the TV!

Hence, the devil is not just interested in getting you to sin but he wants you to believe lies. This is the way whole people groups have been deceived and put under the bondage of philosophies such as communism. Some Christians, too, have shipwrecked their faith because they have not tested what they were reading, hearing or experiencing against the Word of God. This means, we must test the spirits to see if they are of God. (1 John 4:1)

*Colossians 2:18 “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his **fleshly mind**”*

2 Corinthians 11:3 “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

How does God want us to fight the enemy? It is not with carnal weapons but with spiritual weapons: the word of God, prayer, speaking in tongues, prophecy and so on.

2 Corinthians 10:5 “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

How are you reckoning?

Lastly, there is another important way we renew our minds: it is to reckon ourselves according to what the Bible says about us rather than how we feel.

*Romans 6:11 “Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

In other words, when the Bible says we are dead to sin, even though our experience may contradict the Word, we continue to reckon according to the Word rather than experience.

Likewise, by faith we put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that an act? Are we being a hypocrite? No, because this is who we truly are and we are renewing our minds as to that fact.

Romans 13:14 “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

Questions for discussion

- 1) What is the mind?

- 2) How did sin affect the mind? - 2 Corinthians 3:14
- 3) How does new birth affect the mind? - Hebrews 10:16
- 4) Explain how the mind is transformed.
- 5) How is Romans 12:2 repentance?
- 6) Explain how thinking sinful thoughts is the precursor to sinful actions.
- 7) Why is it important what we fill our minds with?
- 8) Why is the mind the battleground in spiritual warfare?
- 9) Explain how we renew our minds by the principal of reckoning.

Chapter 8

Before you go

We have nearly reached the end of this short book. I hope you have enjoyed it. If you would like to leave me some feedback, have further questions, disagree or just want to find out more about our ministry - contact me at my blog:
www.godsgraceworks.com

You can also email me at paul.noble@godsgraceworks.com

Before you go though, I must ask one important question. Are you born-again? Is Christ in you? If you are not certain, then why not make certain?! Remember, going to church or any other religious activity in itself does not make you a Christian any more than spending time in a garage makes you a car!

So, if you want to get born-again pray a simple prayer something like the following. Note: it doesn't have to be a perfect prayer. If you truly want to be born-again then the Holy Spirit is only too willing to oblige and help!

“Lord Jesus. I choose to believe that you are the Son of God and you came into the world to die on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for all the wrong things I have done and said. Please come and live in me and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Amen.”