

Romans 8:1-14

Introduction

There are different views about Paul's purpose in writing Romans 8. For example, according to Moo, it has more to do with "what the Spirit *does*" in the life of the believer when he says, "It is those blessings and privileges conferred on believers by the Spirit that are the theme of this chapter". Osborne, on the other hand, places more emphasis on a victorious life. He states, "The Spirit becomes the active force in believers' lives and enables them to defeat the flesh and live in victory". According to Sherwood, Paul wants to address the "life sentence" for those who he refers to as "I" in the previous section—unbelievers who are condemned due to "the power of sin". Sherwood goes on to state that believers are freed from this condemnation "because the Spirit has freed them" and enables them to live righteously before God. Osborne and Sherwood seem to emphasize the power of the Spirit in the life of the believer enabling them not to revert back into the fallen nature. Moo seems to place an emphasis on assurance that the believer's "relationship with God is secure and settled".

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" Romans 8:1

According to Schreiner, "therefore" as a subordinate conjunction may be an inference where the "supporting proposition precedes" it, which is supported by examples that follow. However, Paul may actually be transitioning to something new in this chapter and "not building on anything previously said by Paul" (Shellrude).

According to Dunn, after 7:25 there was probably a pause before the reader continues to read 8:1 thus strengthening what has gone before and providing a smooth “flow of thought”. Dunn also describes this transition as “the beginning of a fresh exposition of the reality of the salvation process in the present, this time in terms of the Spirit”.

Kruse is inclined to trace the “therefore” in the context of the “rescue of believers from their bondage to sin under the law (7:25a)”. He also believes that with “now” Paul is once again emphasizing what was he stated earlier in 5:9, “Since, therefore, we have *now* been justified by his blood”, and in 6:22, “But *now* that you have been set free from sin”.

Osborne also focuses on the *now*, meaning that it is a new age of salvation and the condemnation “of the old era” is no longer an issue for the believer. Osborne goes on to state that there is clear evidence for this because of Christ’s “overturning the results of Adam’s sin (5:12-21) and uniting those who are in Christ Jesus . . . in his death and resurrection”.

According to Cranfield, Paul is not relating 8:1 to the previous verse but is stressing what he said in 7:6, and in 6:14, which he states emphasizes that “those who are in Christ Jesus are freed from the divine condemnation pronounced by God’s law”. It is hard to keep the law.

Sherwood states that those whose actions are in “rebellion against God” are subject to the consequences of sin as defined by the Torah. This is in contrast with those who are *now* in Christ and who are no longer “trapped in their sin”. Consequently, we can state that we are *therefore* justified (Dikiasoni) as those who are in Christ and no longer condemned because of our sin.

Paul is emphasizing his main point that the believer *now* [in the present] lives in right standing before God in a different life orientation, meaning not oriented to the sinful way of life which was hindering their ability to live up to the Torah, and which was leading to death as the consequence for sin.

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

Romans 8:2

Paul provides a detailed follow-up for 8:1 throughout the next three verses. In 8:2 he is showing how two laws are in contrast. The first he describes as the “Law of the Spirit of life” and the second the “Law of sin and death”. In the previous chapter Paul described the law as holy (7:12), good (7:13) and spiritual (7:14).

Paul, in 7:21-25, introduced the law “metaphorically”, according to Hultgren, as “patterns of how the Spirit, sin and death operate”. The “law of sin” referred to in 7:23 has developed into “the law of sin and death” in 8:2. The law for those whose way of life emphasizes fallen humanity functions differently than for those whose way of life is oriented in Christ, in the Spirit.

According to Sherwood, it is the Spirit that releases us “from the authority and control of the power of sin” and people are therefore able to live the kind of life planned for us by Torah. Sin that exploits the law (Torah) leading to death cannot be overcome without the Spirit.

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,” Romans 8:3

Romans 8:3 begins with the conjunction “for”, which grounds the proposition that originated in verse 2 and continues through verse 4 (Schreiner). Sinful people who observe Torah could not *and did not* rid themselves of sin to achieve moral righteousness and right standing before God. Therefore, Torah is not the problem. We are the problem. Paul stressed that the law was weakened by the flesh. As Sherwood put it, “Torah diagnoses the sin in sinners but does not provide them sufficient resources for purging themselves”. To put it bluntly, what the law could not do, God did. Only God was able to “rid sinners of sin” by attacking sin in the flesh through Jesus who became the sin offering. Cranfield states that the “Son of God was not. . . changed into a man, but rather assumed human nature while still remaining himself”. Paul focuses on what Christ accomplished “in the likeness of sinful flesh” while never ceasing to be the eternal Son of God. Christ fully identified with sinful humanity, but he did not sin. According to Dunn, Christ’s death, in its identity with sinful flesh, breaks the power of sin by destroying its base 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.” Romans 8:4

Romans 8:4 begins as a clause in a subordinate relationship to the main proposition that came before. “In order that” is a conjunction supporting a distinct statement which further develops Paul’s point in v3b (Schreiner). Paul is emphasizing the purpose of the action, which

was that God “condemned sin in the flesh”. Because of this, believers are now justified and able to “satisfy Torah’s standard of righteousness” (Sherwood).

According to Osborne, God’s purpose in sending Jesus was to be the sin offering, thus breaking the power sin had over us, and fulfilling the “righteous requirements of the law”. Our participation is evidenced by our own experience of justification and living a life of obedience in the Holy Spirit”. Sherwood endorses this when he states that the lifestyle of empowered believers “will be one of actions that satisfy Torah’s standard of righteousness”.

Moo supports the view of “interchange”, meaning “Christ becomes what we are so that we might become what Christ is”. We are becoming morally righteous. Additionally, he is saying that “the law’s just demand is fulfilled in Christians not through their own acts of obedience but through their incorporation into Christ. He fulfilled the law; and, in him, believers also fulfill the law.”

“For 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.” Romans 8:5

Paul is describing what it is like to live according to the Spirit in 8:5-11. He sets up for us two types of people and their respective mindsets—believers and non-believers, or those who live by the flesh versus those who live by the Spirit. Krause identified these people who either have “a mind set on what the sinful nature desires” or “a mind set on the things of the Spirit give place to the fruit of the Spirit”. Paul seems to be emphasizing that both kinds of mind sets involve a specific orientation in their thinking or worldview. According to Osborne, Paul is focusing more on the nature rather than the behavior of the individual, which would involve the mind, will and

emotions. Osborne states that the “depraved” mindset of those who live “according to the flesh” are motivated by “self-centered desires”. Conversely, the mindset of those set on “the things of the Spirit” choose those things that emphasize obedience to God and in “accordance with the Spirit”.

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

Romans 8:6

Romans 8:6 begins with the conjunction “for” which provides ground for the statement that precedes it. Verse five focuses on the nature of the individual and verse six focuses on what results from that mindset. A mindset on the flesh is, according to Sherwood, a “sin-ruled sinful existence--correlates with a death-producing lifestyle”. Paul is not referring to eternal death but Osborne states it is a “state of death that rules over the unsaved throughout their lives. In contrast to a life set on the flesh, Osborne states a life that is centered on the Spirit will “experience life and peace”. The life he refers to is eternal, and the peace is a result of justification. Osborne goes on to say it is a “state of being reconciled to God, of being in right relationship with him”.

“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law;

indeed, it cannot.” Romans 8:7

Romans 8:7 begins with “because” in the translation provided. The conjunction introduces the clause that provides the reason and is an expansion of the previous verse. (Steiner). Paul’s focus in 8:7 is to emphasize the negative outcome—death, for the mind that is set on the flesh and hostile to God that makes, “self-satisfaction the highest priority” (Dunn). Cranfield chooses to

explain this as fallen humanity's "egotism". This helps us to understand why humanity is incapable of submitting to God's law.

"Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8

Romans 8:8 could easily have started with "and" because this verse flows out of and seems to restate Paul's emphasis that the flesh cannot follow Torah in any way. Additionally, it emphasizes, again, that the outcome ends in death. According to Osborne, the hostility is "fierce, active enmity toward all that God is and stands for".

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Romans 8:9

Previously Paul was focusing on the unbeliever and introduces a conditional statement in verse nine when he turns his attention to the Roman Christians. However, according to Osborne, this "does not mean Paul is uncertain about their condition". He recognizes that the Roman Christians know Christ. Paul has reverted to second person and is providing a contrast to the previous verse by focusing on a life lived "in the Spirit". Paul refers to the "Spirit of Christ" and the "Spirit of God" dwelling in the believer. They are associated with each other because according to Hultgren, "God is the giver or sender of the Spirit". Paul therefore sees that the Spirit is rooted in the OT. In 8:9 The references to the Holy Spirit are "metaphorical" (Shellrude). The indwelling Spirit is an indication that the believers have an intimate relationship and relationship with Christ that should be evident in the life of the believer.

“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8:10

Both Romans 8:10-11 begin with the conditional preposition “if”. According to Hultgren, in both instances there is no suggestion of doubt that it can be substituted with the preposition “since”. Paul seems to indicate here that the condition is not in question, because if you look at verse nine it is already established that the Roman Christians have “the Spirit of Christ”.

Paul now shifts from the Spirit *indwelling* the believer to Christ *in* the believer (Osborne). According to Sherwood, prior to being indwelled by the Spirit of Christ “a life dominated by sin and unrighteousness inevitably produces death” (Sherwood). Both the NIV and the translation provided state “the body dead because of sin” is referring to death of the (physical) body, which is a temporal reality.

According to Krause, the main point is the second clause in this verse, “The Spirit gives life because of righteousness”. Is Paul referring to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit? Kruse goes on to state that in order to make this determination you also need to look at whether the Spirit *is life*, or the spirit *gives life*, which is dependent on whether to use the verb to be alive or the noun life. It is recommended to stay with “the Spirit is life” in this context.

According to Dunn, most modern commentators concur that Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit. The context indicates there is a strong connection between Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ. In Romans 8:2 the Spirit referred to is “the Spirit of Life”. In Romans 8:6 the mind of the

Spirit results in “life and peace”. The following verse also indicates that Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit when he states “his Spirit who lives in you”.

According to Osborne, “while death still controls our mortal bodies, there dwells within us a new power, the Holy Spirit who represent the new life in God that is ours”.

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

Romans 8:11

Paul previously referred to Christ’s indwelling the believer (v 10). Paul now focuses on the Spirit’s indwelling of the believer, which Paul previously mentioned in v9b and he states it again, twice, in this verse. Paul wants us to see that there is a “continuity between the present indwelling Spirit and the future resurrection” to eternal life in the age to come (Dunn). He does this to demonstrate that there is a close connection existing between the “resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of Christians” (Cranfield). Dunn refers to it as the “double resurrection”.

According to Osborne, because the Spirit “who raised Jesus is living in you”, we know that this same indwelling Spirit “engenders resurrection life”. Paul demonstrates his main point that through the a “syllogism” which states 1) “The Spirit dwells in us” 2) “The Spirit is life” therefore 3) “Life dwells in us”. We conclude that the Spirit is present in believers and they experience benefits from the indwelling Spirit. In the future, death is overcome at the final bodily resurrection for those who live righteously in the Spirit (Sherwood).

“So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.” Romans 8:12

Beginning with “therefore”, Paul is making a distinct statement where the preposition is drawing a conclusion following “the supporting proposition that precedes” (Schreiner). So far in Paul’s letter he has emphasized to the Roman Christians that because the Spirit of God and Christ indwell the believer, “they are released from a pattern of life and thought that otherwise could end only in death” (Sherwood).

Paul is now addressing his audience using family imagery, “brothers and sisters”, which he did previously in 1:13. According to Dunn, this is “carefully chosen” and Paul intentionally includes himself using the “first person plural”. Paul is drawing attention to the family relationship that the Roman believers now have with God as their father.

Because sin no longer has a hold on the believer, Paul is saying that “in light of this” (Shellrude), [through use of antithesis] we are not obligated to “to the flesh” while also implying “but to the Spirit”, “to live according to the flesh” while implying “to live according to the Spirit”.

According to Cranfield, Paul initiated this negative position before he “broke off to insert the warning of v13a” . . . and “failed to complete the sentence begun in v 12”. Cranfield puts it that Paul is essentially saying that we are not under the flesh any longer and have “no duty to the flesh to allow our lives to be determined by it”.

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:13

Paul is making two distinct statements using two conditional prepositions. He is doing this to “summon the readers to consider whether they meet the condition” (Schreiner). In v13a, Paul is repeating the ending phrase in v12b, “according to the flesh”. There is also a link to 7:5 where Paul states, “For while we were living in the flesh”. According to Dunn, Paul’s “switch to second person increases the note of warning” and urgency, which he is directing to *believers* as well as to *unbelievers*. Paul repeats this warning in Galatians 6:8 where he states, “Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction” and in 8:6, “For to set the mind on the flesh is death”. In v13b, Paul makes the second conditional statement. There is also a link to 7:6, “having died to that which held us captive”. Paul seems to be writing to this group. According to Kruse, Paul seems to juxtapose the flesh and the body where he states initially “live according to the flesh” and then “put to death the deeds of the body”. Osborne points out when Christians heed the Spirit and die to these fleshly deeds, they will live, parallel to die in verse 13 and referring to eternal life”. Paul’s focus is that believers must be committed to resisting sin and the pursuit of righteousness.

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:14

Romans 8:14 uses “for” as the conjunction in a subordinate proposition to provide a ground for the main proposition (Schreiner). Kruse sees a juxtaposition of “led by the Spirit of God” in v14a with “if [led] by the Spirit” in v13b. He also draws our attention to what Paul says in Galatians 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”.

According to Osborne, “when Christians die to these fleshly deeds, they will live”, which is a reference to eternal life in v 13. The meaning for ‘life’ in v 13 is explained in v 14 as “the new relationship with God that the Spirit brings us”.

Cranfield argues that in v 14 Paul is expanding on 13b, because only those who are guaranteed eternal life are called the sons/daughters of God. According to Cranfield, the Christian commitment for the son/daughter of God is “The daily, hourly putting to death of the schemings and enterprises of the sinful flesh by means of the Spirit is a matter of being led, directed, impelled, controlled, by the Spirit”.

Sherwood, on the other hand, sees a link between v 14 to v 17. He reports that Paul develops what it means to be God’s children, which according to Sherwood, was Paul’s intention. He indicates that Paul was introducing the “principle” of sonship in the form of an “outline”, which is explained further in verses fifteen to seventeen.

In 8:1-14, Paul teaches us how we are now able to live in the Spirit as righteous people, free of condemnation due to sin and from trying to meet the righteous requirements of the law in the flesh.