

—The Key to Overcoming— THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

by Ed Marks

Romans 8 is one of the most crucial chapters in the Scriptures because what is presented here is the key to being an overcomer. God's desire is to gain the overcomers. In the Lord's seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, there is a repeated call for the overcomers. These overcomers are not a special breed of Christians. Rather, the overcomers are normal Christians who live a normal Christian life. The problem today is that an abnormal Christian life is seen as normal and acceptable and that a normal Christian life is seen as abnormal and unattainable. But the Scriptures reveal that the Lord wants all of His believers to be overcomers, whose normal Christian life is a life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, gaining Christ, being found in Christ, knowing Christ, and pursuing Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ (Phil. 1:19-21; 3:8-14). But how can we live such a life? What is the key? Without this key, nothing revealed in the Scriptures concerning the life which a Christian should live will work.

It is a great revelation to see this key and an exceedingly precious thing to build up a habit of cooperating with God to use this key so that we may live a God-honoring life of expressing Christ to please Him in all things (Col. 1:10). This key, seen in Romans 8:2, is the law of the Spirit of life, which may be considered the subject of this chapter. Romans 8 is a chapter for desperate seekers who are looking for the key to living the Christian life, the key to living and magnifying Christ, the key to being overcomers who cooperate with God to fulfill His eternal purpose in conforming them to the image of His Son (v. 29). At the end of Romans 7, Paul concludes and cries out in a desperate way, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Have we passed through enough failure to come to this conclusion about our fallen natural being? When we truly see that we are wretched men with no human way of

deliverance, then God has a way to bring us into the reality of the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8. No self-help program can deliver us from our flesh, the receptacle of sin and death. We need a daily and divine deliverance. We need to contact, experience, and enjoy God Himself as the law of the Spirit of life.

A "Scientific" Law

Paul made a great discovery in the spiritual universe. He discovered a "scientific" law that operates in the unseen, divine, and mystical realm of the Spirit of life. A law, such as the law of gravity, is a spontaneous, automatic principle that operates under certain conditions and according to specific principles. There are also laws of life in the biological realm. As the life of a peach tree grows, for example, it will produce peaches. With such a life there is a life-principle that operates spontaneously and automatically according to its growth to bear fruit conformed to the image of a peach with the essence of a peach. The peach tree does not need to be lectured in peach producing. Its life-law must be allowed to operate, and then it will be a "successful" peach tree. In the animal realm, the dog life operates spontaneously and automatically as the dog grows to cause the dog to unconsciously do things that dogs do without the need to be taught how to bark, chase cats, wag its tail, or bury its bones. The law of life, even in the biological and animal realms, is truly a wonder. How much more of a wonder is the law of the Spirit of life!

Every life has a law and even is a law. God's life is the highest life, and the law of this life is the highest law. The law of the Spirit of the divine life is the spontaneous power of the divine life; it is the natural characteristic and the innate, automatic function of the divine life. We need to see that the very God who dwells

in us is a life-law. The Christ who dwells in us is the inner-operating God, who is the law of the Spirit of life (Phil. 2:13). If we are to know Christ, to know God, we must know Him as an automatic and spontaneous law within us, and we need to know that this law operates through a believer who cooperates. Romans 8 reveals the divine operation of this law and the believers' cooperation with this law so that they may be the sons of God in reality who are conformed to the image of Christ (vv. 4, 14, 29).

The words of Agur in the book of Proverbs express the wonder and mystery of the law of created life, when he says that "the way of an eagle in the sky" is something too wonderful and mysterious for him (30:18-19). The eagle flies automatically, spontaneously, and even unconsciously according to the innate capacity, function, and ability of the eagle life. In the Bible our God, who is the uncreated and divine life, is likened to an eagle. He told the children of Israel to recall how He bore them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself (Exo. 19:4). Deuteronomy 32:11-12 says, "As the eagle rouses his nest, / Hovers over his young, / Spreads his wings, takes them, / And bears them up upon his pinions; / So Jehovah alone led him." If we enjoy God as the divine eagle who indwells us, we will experience the law of His eagle life, the divine life, which is the law of the Spirit of life. This life is something the believers in Christ receive in addition to their human life (John 1:12-13; 10:10). This life, the divine life of the Spirit, is able to soar above all the intermixed and complicated situations of human life on this earth. This life does not faint or become weary as our human life does. As Isaiah 40:28-31 says,

Do you not know,
Or have you not heard,
That the eternal God, Jehovah,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Does not faint and does not become weary?
There is no searching out of His understanding.
He gives power to the faint,
And to those who have no vigor He multiplies strength.
Although youths will faint and become weary,
And young men will collapse exhausted;
Yet those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles;
They will run and will not faint;
They will walk and will not become weary.

In order to experience God as our indwelling eagle with the law of His life, the Spirit of life, we need to be those who wait on Jehovah. To wait on Jehovah means to expect Him, look for Him, hope in Him, trust in Him, and depend on Him in a spirit of prayer. In the New Testament sense, it is to look away unto Jesus (Heb. 12:2).

As we gaze on the Lord in our prayer to Him in a conversational way, we become those who are infused and imbued with the renewing strength of God. We mount up with wings like eagles. The margin of the New American Standard Bible says that we "sprout wings" like eagles. This shows that as we behold Him and are infused with Him, we become His duplication. He is the great "Father eagle," and we become His many eagles in reality, the sons of the living God who are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14). As the law of the Spirit of life indwelling us, He is able to soar in us, through us, and out of us to overcome the law of sin and death, another spontaneous automatic power, albeit evil and satanic.

The Three Lives and Four Laws in Romans 7 and 8

In order to experience our God, our Christ, as the law of the Spirit of life, we need to see the three lives and four laws in Romans 7 and 8. Romans 7 and 8 are a marvelous and amazing scientific study of our inner being, God's demand, who God is, how God operates in us, and how we can live the Christian life for His glory and the building up of Christ's Body. There are three lives at work within a born-again Christian—God's life, the created human life, and the satanic life. These three lives are also accompanied by three laws—the law of the Spirit of life, the law of good, and the law of sin and death. These lives with their laws correspond to the three parts of our being—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The divine life with the law of the Spirit of life is in our spirit, the human life with the law of good is in our soul, and the satanic life with the law of sin and death is in our flesh. Note 1 on Romans 7:23 in the Recovery Version of the New Testament is very helpful on this point:

There are three different laws in the three different parts of the believer's being. As revealed in chs. 7 and 8, these three laws derive from the three parties in the universe. The law of sin and death in the believer's members (v. 23), that is, in his body, derives from Satan, who as sin dwells in the believer's flesh. The law of good in the believer's mind (v. 23), that is, in his soul, derives from the natural human life, that is, from man himself. The law of the Spirit of life in the believer's spirit derives from God, who as the Spirit dwells in his spirit (8:2, 16). These three parties with the three laws are now present in the believer in much the same way that they (God, man, and Satan) were present in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3). In addition to the three laws within the believer, there is the law of God outside of him (vv. 22, 25).

When God created man and placed him in Eden, the only law at work in his being was the law of his created life, the law that automatically wants to do good to please God. God created man in His image so that man could contain Him and be filled with Him to express

Him. Just as a glove is created in the image of a hand to contain a hand for the expression of a hand, so man was created in the image of God to contain God for the expression of God. God created man with a human spirit for contacting God, who is Spirit (John 4:24; Rom. 8:16). He also created man with a soul (mind, emotion, and will) for magnifying and expressing Him (Luke 1:46-47). Man's mind is for containing the thoughts of God (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5), man's emotion is for being infused with the feelings of God (2 Cor. 5:14; Rev. 2:6), and man's will is for choosing the life of God and the will of God (Phil. 2:13). Man's body was created for the working out of God's good pleasure in serving and glorifying God (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:20).

God's desire in His creation of man was for man's spirit and soul and body to be wholly sanctified by being filled with His life and nature for the glory, the expression, of God (1 Thes. 5:23). For this reason God placed man before the tree of life, with the desire that man would choose to partake of Him. The tree of life signifies God in Christ as the Spirit—the Triune God, who is the eternal, divine, immortal, uncreated, and indestructible life. God's desire is for man to have another life, His life, in addition to man's created human life. This is stated in the incarnated God's expressed commission—"I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). "I am...the life" (14:6). Man has the physical life (Gk. *bios*) and the psychological life (Gk. *psuche*), but what man needs added to him is the divine life (Gk. *zoe*).

We know, however, that man did not choose life, the tree of life. Instead, man tragically chose death (cf. Deut. 30:19) by partaking of the "tree of death," the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man disobeyed God's desire and warning: "And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). Whereas the tree of life signifies God as the source of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies Satan as the source of sin and death. Man with his created life had the choice of two trees, two persons with two lives. Instead of choosing to partake of God to become the children of God with God's life and nature, man chose to partake of the devil to become children of the devil with the devil's life and nature. The apostle John very clearly delineates mankind into these two camps—"the children of God

and the children of the devil" (1 John 3:10). There is not another camp after the fall of man. Satan is the father of the flesh of fallen men to make men the children of the devil; God is the Father of men's spirits to make men the children of God (John 8:44; 3:6; Heb. 12:9). The Lord Jesus speaks of these two camps as "the sons of the kingdom" and "the sons of the evil one" (Matt. 13:38).

With this in view, the Lord Jesus said boldly and even shockingly to the unregenerated scribes and Pharisees: "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). The devil is the ancient serpent, and fallen men are poisonous serpents, a brood of vipers (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; Matt. 23:33; 3:7), with the poison of asps under their lips (Rom. 3:13). Man before the fall was in a neutral situation between God and the devil. But once man chose to eat, receive, and take in the devil's life and nature, he became a child of the devil. Thus, man's whole being was poisoned with the life and nature of Satan, whose life is actually death and whose nature is sin, which is lawlessness, rebellion against God (1 John 3:4). This satanic poison which man imbibed caused him to become "dead

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in...offenses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Man's spirit was killed, losing its function to contact God and sense God; man's soul was poisoned to become the self, full of evil thoughts, desires, and intentions; and man's body was corrupted with sin and death to become the flesh, full of evil lusts and filthiness. Fallen man now has two lives—his created human life and the evil satanic life, with which his human life has tragically been united. When man receives Christ as the life of God, he becomes a redeemed and regenerated man with the divine and eternal life of God. A believer in Christ thus becomes a very complicated person with three lives. The life of God is in his spirit, the created human life is in his soul, and the devilish life of sin and death is in his flesh.

Romans 7 reveals the human life and the satanic life in their operation as "scientific" laws within fallen man as he seeks to do good to please God in futility and despair. Both of these laws are activated by man's well-intentioned response to the written law of God outside of man. The written law of letters shows us who God is, what God desires, and what God demands. God is love,

light, righteousness, and holiness. Just as His law is, God is spiritual, holy, righteous, and good. His desire is for us to become the same as He is in His divine attributes for His expression. His demand is for our living and conduct to match Him and even to become Him in every detail. But when we exercise our human will power to work out what God wants, our experience is that we end up where we do not want to be—"in the flesh." We may say that the title for Romans 7 is "In the Flesh," and the title for Romans 8 is "In the Spirit." Paul's declaration in Romans 8:9 alludes to this when he says, "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."

At this juncture, we must point out something that is very important. Some say that Romans 7 was the experience of Paul before his salvation in Christ. This is certainly true, but it is also true that it is the experience of a believer in Christ who does not live in the divine Spirit who indwells his human spirit (8:16) and yet tries to fulfill God's law. The divine Spirit dwells in our human spirit, and these two are mingled together as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Paul speaks of living according to this mingled spirit in Romans 8. We have a choice of being either in the flesh or in the spirit. There is no middle ground. If a believer lives according to the flesh, his experience will be that which is described by Romans 7—a wretched and defeated experience under the demand of the written law. If a believer lives according to the spirit, his experience will be that which is described by Romans 8—a blessed and overcoming experience in the supply of abounding grace. This is why Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh." To walk is to live, move, and have our being. To walk is something that is step by step and moment by moment.

For one step a believer may be in the spirit, but for the next step he may be in the flesh. One moment a believer may be enjoying the Lord, but the next moment he may find himself losing his temper in the flesh. One day a believer may live in the indwelling presence of the Lord in the divine light, but the next day he may live in the flesh of sin and death in satanic darkness. What a terrible vacillation this is! But regrettably this has been or is the experience of many of us in our journey in our Christian life. We desperately need to enter into and remain in the experience of Christ described in Romans 8. We must see and use the key to being an overcomer in this chapter. We need to maintain our personal and intimate fellowship with the Lord in a constant way so that we may enjoy Him as the spontaneous and automatic law within us. Paul charged us believers to remain experientially in Romans 8 and stay out of Romans 7 in the following way: "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (8:6).

Romans 7 shows that there is something innate, ribred, and automatic in the created human life that wants to do what is right and good. This is what Paul refers to as "the law of my mind" (v. 23), which is the law of the created human life, the law of good. There is another law, however, within fallen man, a more powerful law than the law of good within him. This is the law of sin and death in his flesh. The power of man's created will cannot defeat the power of the law of sin and death within him. Notice the terrible quandary that Paul describes in Romans 7:15 and 17-19:

For what I work out, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do....Now then it is no longer I that work it out, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not. For I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice.

Whereas in Romans 7:17 it is "no longer I...but sin," in Galatians 2:20 it is "no longer I...but...Christ." "No longer I...but sin" is described in Romans 7; "no longer I...but...Christ" is described in Romans 8.

A believing Christian who desires to live a life of "no longer...I but...Christ" must be enlightened by the Lord to see that nothing good dwells in his flesh and that the flesh never improves. The flesh never improves, no matter how long we have been a believer. Our fallen body, the flesh, is the body of sin (Rom. 6:6) and the body of death (7:24). We may be transformed in our soul (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2), but our mortal body, the flesh, will not be swallowed up by the divine life until the day of the Lord's appearing (2 Cor. 5:4). Until that day, our flesh is the "meeting hall" of Satan, sin, and death, and this meeting is never dismissed. Also, the law of sin and death overpowers our willing to work out the good.

Years ago, in some schools, the punishment to be undergone by a disobedient boy was for him to stand in the back of the class with outstretched arms and hold a number of books in each hand. This became a contest of his will and strength against the law of gravity. No matter how powerful the young man's will and physical strength were, sooner or later the law of gravity would defeat him, causing him much pain as he endeavored to fight against it. This is a picture of our endeavoring to overcome the law of sin and death in our flesh by our natural will power and strength. We may "succeed" for awhile, but this law sooner or later will defeat and overcome us, causing us much inward pain.

Through Paul's painful experience of trying to keep the law, he made the following discovery: "But if what I do

not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me” (Rom. 7:20). Paul discovered that there was something else within him forcing him to do what he did not want to do. This “something” was sin, which is actually a “someone.” Sin is personified in the book of Romans. It is like a person who can reign (5:21), lord it over people (6:14), deceive and kill people (7:11), dwell in people, and cause people to do things against their will (vv. 17, 20). Sin is Satan’s life and nature as an active, personified poison which has entered into man through Adam’s disobedience—“through one man sin entered into the world” and “through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners” (5:12, 19). This evil, poisonous life is a law, the law of sin and death. Only another more powerful law can overcome this evil law. Just as the law of gravity can be overcome by the law of aerodynamics, the law of sin and death can be overcome by the law of the Spirit of life. The law of good in our created life cannot overcome the law of sin and death in the satanic life. Only the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can overcome the automatic principle of sin and death in our flesh. Paul concludes his experience of being overcome by the law of sin and death in the following way:

I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man. But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will be deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. (7:21-25)

When Paul willed to do good, he found that “the evil” was present with him. Notice that there are both good and evil here, showing that good and evil are of the same tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Note 2 on Romans 7:21 in the Recovery Version tells us what “the evil” is:

The Greek word means *that which is evil in character*. This must be the evil life, nature, and character of Satan himself, who is the indwelling sin in us. When sin is dormant within us, it is merely sin, but when it is aroused by our willing to do the good, it becomes “the evil.”

When we will to do good we have “switched on” the wrong law. We must beware not to turn on this switch in

the form of resolutions to please God. By exercising our self-will in such a way, we are trying to overcome the law of sin and death by ourselves, without utter dependence on God. Instead, we need to exercise our will to choose to contact God in our spirit, which is to “switch on” the law of the Spirit of life. Once the law of the Spirit of life is switched on, it operates automatically and spontaneously to give us the victory over the law of sin and death. Such a victory is both effortless and one of which we are unconscious and unaware. Just as the eagle is unconscious and unaware that he is overcoming the law of gravity, so our victory over the law of sin and death is spontaneous and automatic. We must switch on this overcoming law in our spirit so that we may effortlessly fly and soar together in oneness with the indwelling Christ, who is the Spirit in our spirit (8:16).

“Switching On” the Law of the Spirit of Life

In order for the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit to operate, this law must be “switched on” by us. The law of the Spirit of life may be likened to electricity. When a

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building is properly wired and installed with electricity, all that is required is for us to switch the electricity on. When we turn on the switch, the electricity flows into the building with its apparatuses and automatically and spontaneously carries out many functions. Our Triune God has gone through a process so that He may be installed in us. He came out of eternity into time and with His divinity into humanity. “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14). As the incarnated God, He passed through the process of human living to set up a pattern and prototype of what the Christian life is and should be (1 Pet. 2:21).

Then He passed through the process of crucifixion as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world for our redemption (John 1:29). He died as the brass serpent to destroy the devil, the old serpent, and to deal with our serpentine nature (3:14). He also died as the grain of wheat to release the divine life that was in Him (12:24; 1:4). In resurrection He “became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17) to install Himself as the law of the Spirit of life into our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22;

Rom. 8:16). This “installed” God is an automatic law in our spirit, making our spirit life (v. 10). When this law, this person, is switched on, He spreads from our spirit into our mind to make our mind life (v. 6). This law as the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead even operates to give life to our mortal bodies as He makes His home within us (v. 11).

Romans 7 and 8 show that we can be one of two kinds of persons. One kind is a person who inadvertently switches on the law of sin and death by his willing to do good (7:21). Another kind is a person who actively cooperates with God to switch on the law of the Spirit of life. Romans tells us how we can switch on this law. It reveals the requirements, or ways, for us to cooperate with God so that He may automatically and spontaneously operate within us. Some of these ways are: (1) walking according to the spirit (8:4); (2) minding the things of the Spirit—setting the mind on the spirit (vv. 5-6); (3) putting to death by the Spirit the practices of the body (v. 13); (4) being led by the Spirit as the sons of God (v. 14); (5) crying to the Father in the spirit of sonship (v. 15); (6) groaning for the full sonship, the redemption of our body (v. 23); (7) loving God and being constrained by the love of Christ (vv. 28, 35-39); and (8) being in the Body life to enjoy the Body’s supply (12:4-5).

Walking according to the Spirit

Romans 8:4 says, “That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.” John Nelson Darby points out in his New Translation that it is hard to determine whether the spirit referred to in Romans 8 should be capitalized to refer to the divine Spirit or lowercased to refer to the human spirit. M. R. Vincent refers to such references to the spirit as being the blending of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit (Recovery Version, 2 Cor. 4:13, note 2). In addition to the word *blending*, we also like to use the word *mingling* because it is a scriptural word. Leviticus 2:4-5 speaks of the meal offering as a type of Christ—a mingling of fine flour (signifying Christ’s humanity) with oil (signifying His divinity). Mingling, of course, does not mean that a third nature is produced but that the human and divine natures remain distinguishable in their inseparable combination.

When Christ as the life-giving Spirit was imparted into our spirit, these two spirits (the divine and human) were mingled together as one spirit—“he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). The spirit spoken of in Romans 8 mostly (not always and depending on the context) refers to this mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with our human spirit to be one spirit. This is “the Spirit Himself...with our spirit” (v. 16). To walk according to the spirit is to live, move, and have our entire

being according to the mingled spirit. To walk according to the spirit is to be dominated, led, governed, controlled, restricted, and moved by the spirit.

First Corinthians tells us that there is the possibility of our being three kinds of men—spiritual, soulish, or fleshly. We can be fleshly men, who are governed by the flesh and whose flesh is the prominent characteristic of our life and work (3:3). We can also be soulish men, who are dominated by the soul, mainly by the mind (2:14). Many Christians mistakenly confuse the mere acquisition of more objective biblical knowledge as growth in the Lord, but real growth is the growth of God in us, the increase of the life and nature of God in our inner being (Col. 2:19). Our Christian life should not be characterized by intellectualism in objectively knowing about God by the independent use of the mind but by the use of our spirit in subjectively knowing God through the renewing of the mind (Eph. 4:23).

Soulish men do not understand the things of the Spirit of God because such things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). Jude 19 says that such ones are divisive, “having no spirit.” This does not mean that they cease to possess a human spirit as a part of their tripartite being, but that they do not care for their spirit or use their spirit to contact, substantiate, and know God, who is Spirit (John 4:24). Instead of being those who are soulish, having no spirit, we need to be spiritual men who exercise our spirit daily by “praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). Just as we exercise our legs by walking, we exercise our spirit by praying. In order to walk according to the spirit, we must be persons of prayer. We need to follow the Lord’s example in His human life (Mark 1:35; Matt. 14:23) to have a personal time with God in a daily way to be saturated with His beauty and radiate His virtues.

The following marvelous hymn reveals that we should have one motive in prayer—“to fellowship with Jesus.” This would be a good hymn for us to pray back to the Lord in our personal time with Him:

- 1 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
In the spirit seek His face;
Ask and listen in His presence,
Waiting in the secret place.

Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
In the spirit seek His face;
Ask and listen in His presence,
Waiting in the secret place.
- 2 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Fully opened from within,
With thy face unveiled, beholding,
Single, pure, and genuine.

- 3 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Seeking Him in confidence;
Learn to touch Him as the Spirit,
Looking up in reverence.
- 4 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Speaking nothing in pretense;
Ask according to the spirit,
Praying by the inner sense.
- 5 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
List'ning earnestly to Him;
Be impressed with His intentions,
Yielding to Him from within.
- 6 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Bathing in His countenance;
Saturated with His beauty,
Radiate His excellence. (*Hymns, #784*)

As we pray to fellowship with Jesus, according to the holy aspirations and life principles spoken of in this hymn, we are switching on the Spirit as the divine electricity within us. Spontaneously, automatically, and effortlessly, as we bathe in the Lord's countenance, we radiate His excellence and shine as luminaries in the world (Phil. 2:15).

In addition to having a personal time of prayer with the Lord on a daily basis, we also need to pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17). Throughout the day, as we are doing our daily duties, we should have continuous fellowship with the Lord to keep the law of the Spirit of life within us activated. Just as we breathe unceasingly to live the human life, we need to pray unceasingly to live the divine life. John 20:22 says that in resurrection the Lord breathed into the disciples, telling them to receive the Holy *Pneuma* (Gk.). According to its context, *pneuma* here can be translated as "Spirit," "breath," or "air." The Holy Spirit is actually the Holy Breath, or the Holy Air. Just as we breathe the physical air for our physical existence, we need to moment by moment breathe the Spirit as the divine air for our spiritual existence. We can breathe Him by calling upon His name and conversing with Him constantly throughout the day. "No one can say, Lord Jesus, except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3—lit.). Stanza 2 of a hymn by M. E. Barber says, "Blessed Jesus! Mighty Savior! / In Thy Name is all I need; / Just to breathe the Name of Jesus, / Is to drink of Life indeed" (*Hymns, #73*).

This corresponds to the experience of the prophet Jeremiah in the book of Lamentations, where he says, "I

called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit. / You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry" (3:55-56). According to Jeremiah's realization, calling upon the name of the Lord was his spiritual breathing. Just as breathing both activates and is an issue of the law of our human life, so breathing in the Lord by calling on His name both activates and is an issue of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit.

Some particular stanzas and the chorus from a classic hymn by A. B. Simpson speak of our enjoying the Spirit as the divine Breath of God through conversing with God.

- 1 O Lord, breathe Thy Spirit on me,
Teach me how to breathe Thee in;
Help me pour into Thy bosom
All my life of self and sin.

I am breathing out my sorrow,
Breathing out my sin;
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,
All Thy fulness in.

***Throughout the day,
as we are doing our daily
duties, we should have
continuous fellowship
with the Lord to keep the law
of the Spirit of life
within us activated.***

- 4 I am breathing out my sorrow,
On Thy kind and gentle breast;
Breathing in Thy joy and comfort,
Breathing in Thy peace and rest.
- 6 I am breathing out my longings
In Thy listening, loving ear;
I am breathing in Thy answers,
Stilling every doubt and fear.
- 7 I am breathing every moment,
Drawing all my life from Thee;
Breath by breath I live upon Thee,
Lord, Thy Spirit breathe in me. (*Hymns, #255*)

In our conversations with the Lord, we can breathe out all the negative things of sin and self, and we can breathe in the pure air of the Holy *Pneuma* of God so that He may have the free way to operate as the law of the Spirit of life in our entire being. To breathe in the Lord in such a way is to be an open vessel for the Lord's dispensing and filling so that we may contain God, be constituted

with God, overflow with God, and express God. As we keep ourselves open to the Lord throughout the day, the law of the Spirit of life is switched on within us, and the Spirit of life is dispensed into our inward parts.

When we keep ourselves open to the Lord throughout the day in an atmosphere of prayer, we are walking in God as the divine light (1 John 1:5, 7). As we live, move, and have our being in the light of God's indwelling presence, we are exposed to see all of our trespasses, failures, and shortcomings. This brings us to confess our sins to the Lord, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, continuously and constantly cleanses us from every sin. The shining of the divine light and the cleansing of the blood of Jesus keep us in the divine fellowship with our God, and the law of the Spirit of life spontaneously operates within us to dispense the life of God into our inward being. Actually, this may be considered a spiritual cycle in the following way from chapter one of 1 John: We enjoy the divine life, and this life brings us into the divine fellowship, which is the inner flow of the divine life for our inner joy in the Lord (vv. 1-4). When the life within us is flowing as a divine current, the light of God is switched on within us to show us where we really are (vv. 5-7). As we employ the blood of Jesus for the cleansing of our sins (vv. 8-9), this brings us into more enjoyment of the divine life, the divine fellowship, and the cleansing of the blood. The life, the fellowship, the light, and the blood are a cycle in our daily life, a cycle that is the spontaneous issue of the activated law of the Spirit of life in our spirit. To remain in this divine and mystical cycle is to walk according to the spirit.

Romans 8:4 reveals that when we are walking according to the spirit in such a way, the righteous requirement of the law is spontaneously fulfilled in us. Once the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit is switched on by our walking according to the spirit, keeping the demands of God's law becomes spontaneous, effortless, and even something of which we are unaware. God Himself as the living law of the Spirit of life is written upon our hearts, and He causes us to walk in His statutes—"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and My ordinances you shall keep and do" (Ezek. 36:27). Thank the Lord that living the Christian life is not something of human effort but of God Himself as the indwelling Spirit causing us to walk in His statutes, supplying us with Himself, and living in us and through us to meet all of His demands.

Minding the Things of the Spirit— Setting the Mind on the Spirit

Romans 8:5-6 presents another way to switch on the law of the Spirit of life in us: "For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the

mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." We need to mind the things of the Spirit and set our mind on the spirit. To set our mind on the spirit is for us to pay attention to the spirit, to take heed to our spirit (Mal. 2:15-16). When Christ as life came into our spirit at our regeneration, our spirit became life (Rom. 8:10). It is a remarkable thing that when we set our mind on the spirit, our mind becomes life, the divine life! Also, our mind becomes peace, the divine peace! This is for our mind of life to become a part of the New Jerusalem, which is the city of life with the tree of life, the river of water of life, and the light of life. This is also for our mind of peace to become a part of the New Jerusalem as the city of peace (*jeru* means "foundation" and *salem* means "peace").

By setting our mind on the spirit, our mind can be a mind of life and peace, or by setting our mind on the flesh, it can be a mind of death. In order to set our mind on the spirit, we need continually to pay attention to the sense of life and peace and the sense of death within us. These inner senses tell us whether we are in the spirit or in the flesh. When we are in the spirit, minding the things of the Spirit, we have the inner sense of life. This sense of life is the sense of enlightening, flowing, watering, satisfaction, joy, and refreshment within us. The sense of peace is the sense of harmony, comfort, and rest within us. These inner senses of life and peace confirm that we are in the spirit. In contrast, when we are in the flesh, setting our mind on the flesh, we have the inner sense of death. The sense of death is the sense of inner darkness, dryness, dissatisfaction, depression, confusion, anxiety, and unrest. When we have the sense of death within us, we need to repent, to turn from all things other than God to God Himself in our spirit. Such a sense, when heeded, can force us to turn back to the Spirit in our spirit and keep us living in the law of the Spirit of life for the overcoming of sin and death.

One of the best ways to set our mind on the spirit is to set our mind on God's words, which are spirit and life (John 6:63). God's speaking to us activates the law of the Spirit of life in us. This can be seen most clearly with a wonderful picture presented by God in Isaiah 55:8-11:

For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
And your ways are not My ways, declares Jehovah.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So My ways are higher than your ways,
And My thoughts higher than your thoughts.
For just as the rain comes down
And the snow from heaven,
And does not return there,
Until it waters the earth
And makes it bear and sprout forth,
That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;

It will not return to Me vainly,
But it will accomplish what I delight in,
And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it.

This passage reveals how God dispenses His thoughts and ways into our being through His word. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so His thoughts and ways are not our earthly thoughts and ways. But when God speaks to us, His word comes down from heaven as the divine rain and the mystical snow to water our being. The watering by the word of Christ as the rain and snow imparts the water of life into our inward being, saturating our mind with the heavenly thoughts and ways of God. Once the word of Christ “waters the earth” of our inner person, the divine life within us is activated according to its life-law. The water of the word causes us inwardly to gain Christ as the seed of life for sowing into others and as the bread of life for our spiritual food and for those under our care. God’s word as rain waters, refreshes, and supplies our inner being, and in the form of snow it also kills all the germs in our inner being. His word activates the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit for our growth in the divine life and for our ministering of the divine life into His chosen ones for the increase and building up of Christ’s Body.

To mind the things of the Spirit for the activation of the law of the Spirit of life involves both “the things of man” and “the things of God.” Only the spirit of man knows the things of man, and only the Spirit of God knows the things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11). The things of man include man’s position, situation, condition, need, source, and destiny. We need to set our mind on the spirit to dwell on these things. The things of God are the things of Christ, the unsearchable riches of Christ, as the deep things of God. As we set our mind on our spirit, exercising our spirit with our trained mind to pay attention to the things of man and Christ as the deep things of God, the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit searches and explores all the things of Christ, the exalted God-man, in His divinity and humanity. The Spirit actively researches the things of God concerning Christ and reveals them to us in our spirit for our participation and enjoyment. The divine riches of Christ are appropriated by us and automatically dispensed into our being when we love Him.

‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man’s heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the

Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (vv. 9-10)

When we turn our heart to the Lord and exercise our spirit to say, “Lord Jesus, I love You,” the law of the Spirit of life is activated within us to dispense Christ in all His untraceable riches into our being for the building up of His Body.

To set our mind on the spirit, to mind the things of the Spirit, is also to be one with the Lord to care for the church with all the saints. The things of the Spirit in Romans 8:5 are the things of Christ Jesus in Philippians 2:21. Paul said that Timothy was the only one he had who genuinely cared for what concerned the saints in Philippi. Timothy was one who did not seek his own things, but “the things of Christ Jesus.” According to the context, the things of Christ Jesus are the things concerning the church with all the saints. Christ gave Himself up for the church (Eph. 5:25), and now He is the church-loving Christ in our spirit. When we exercise our spirit to be one with Him, the activated law of the



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Spirit of life within us causes us to love the church, to love the brothers, and to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers (1 John 3:16).

Putting to Death by the Spirit the Practices of the Body

Another way to switch on the law of the Spirit of life is seen in Romans 8:13: “For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” Note 3 on this verse in the Recovery Version says that the practices of the body “include not only sinful things but also all things practiced by our body apart from the Spirit.” In order to put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit and remain in our spirit, we must allow the Spirit to inhabit and reside in our inward being—“But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (v. 9). *To dwell* here means “to reside or inhabit.” If we allow the Spirit to inhabit and indwell us, He will give life to our mortal body that it may be enlivened to carry out God’s will.

The body of this sin is strong in sinning against God [6:6], but the body of death is weak in acting to please God [7:24]. Sin energizes the fallen body to sin, whereas death utterly weakens and disables the corrupted body, so that it cannot keep God's commandments. (Recovery Version, Rom. 7:24, note 2)

When the Spirit of the resurrecting Triune God gives life to our mortal bodies, the divine life energizes our body to be a living sacrifice to God and strengthens and enables our body to carry out God's commands. When we switch on the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit, the Spirit of the One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies as He makes His home in our hearts. This switched-on law will enable us to put to death the practices of the body.

The choice in Romans 8:13 is to die or to live. If we live according to the flesh, we must die—spiritually. If by the Spirit we put to death the practices of the fallen body, we will live—spiritually. This is the same choice that was before Adam in the Garden of Eden. God said that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. But to eat of the tree of life was to live (Gen. 2:9, 16-17). This same choice is before us in a daily way. Our inner being may be considered a miniature Garden of Eden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is in our flesh, and the tree of life is in our spirit. Our soul, our personality, is in between these two trees. We must set our mind, the leading part of our soul, on our spirit, where the Spirit of life as the real tree of life dwells. Then by the Spirit we can put to death the practices of the body.

By the Spirit is a critical phrase. For the recovery and building of the temple, a type of the recovery and building of the church, God's word to Zechariah was, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (4:6). The Lord's word through the apostle Paul is, "Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Everything in the Christian life is by the Spirit. The indwelling Spirit must be our ability, strength, power, and means to be and do all things. It is by the Spirit that we can kill the practices of our fallen body and by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.

We must put to death the practices of the body, but we must do it by the Spirit. On one hand, we must take the initiative to put to death the practices of the body; the Spirit does not do it for us. On the other hand, we should not attempt to deal with our body by relying on our own effort without the power of the Holy Spirit.

The putting to death here is actually our coordinating with the Spirit who indwells us. Inwardly, we must allow Him to make His home in us that He may give life to our

mortal body (v. 11). Outwardly, we must put to death the practices of our body that we may live. When we take the initiative to put to death the practices of our body, the Spirit comes in to apply the effectiveness of Christ's death to those practices, thus killing them. (Recovery Version, Romans 8:13, note 2)

To cooperate with the Spirit to put to death the practices of our body is to be led by the Spirit of God (v. 14). By cooperating with the indwelling Spirit in such a way, the law of the Spirit of life operates within us to kill the outworking of our fallen flesh so that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit to express Christ (Gal. 5:19-25). As the life of the Spirit grows within us, this fruit is gradually and spontaneously produced as the expression of the law of the Spirit of life. Instead of exhibiting the works of the flesh through the law of sin and death, we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit borne by the law of the Spirit of life. The divine attributes are expressed in our human virtues as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

Being Led by the Spirit as the Sons of God

Another way to switch on the law of the Spirit of life in us is to follow the Spirit's inner leading. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). To be led by the Spirit of God is to take care of the inner anointing, which is the moving and working of the indwelling compound Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27). As we follow the Spirit of God in our spirit, we are the sons of God in reality. One of the most touching examples of following the Spirit's leading in our spirit is seen in the apostle Paul's experience recorded in 2 Corinthians 2. In verse 12 Paul said that when he came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, a door was open to him in the Lord. According to our logical and even spiritual viewpoint as Christians, we would surely and perhaps even automatically go through such an open door for the preaching of the gospel. This door was opened in and by the Lord. But in verse 13 Paul went on to say, "But I had no rest in my spirit."

The last two words of this phrase are of tremendous import in our living and serving in God's New Testament economy: *my spirit*. What do we care for as believers? Do we look to our outward environment, an environment even arranged by the Lord, for His leading, or do we look to the inward Lord as the Spirit in our spirit? Yes, the door may be opened by the Lord, but whether we go through it or not may be a matter of the Lord's timing and of whom He wants to go through this door. He opened the door, but we must still consult with Him as to whether He would lead us to go through the door or not. We must still and always honor His headship in a practical way by inquiring of Him, seeking His counsel, and following Him inwardly by *paying attention to our*

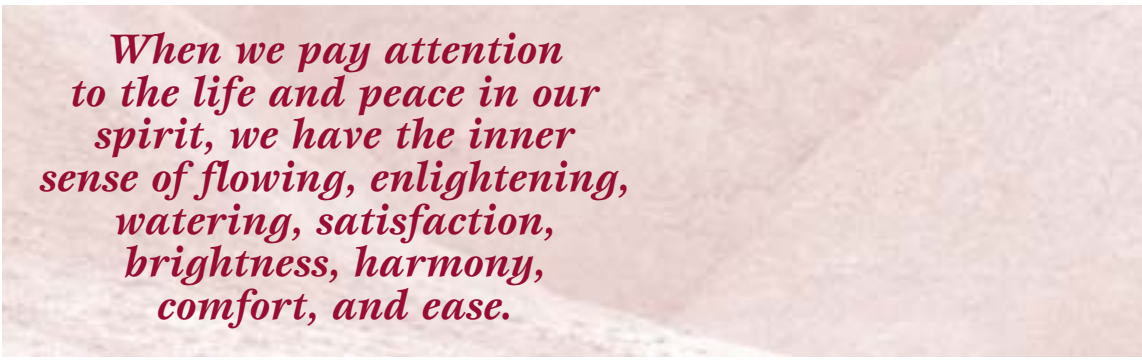
spirit. We must mind the spirit in all things. Do we have the life and peace of the Spirit in our spirit? This is the deciding factor in our following the Lord. How we follow the Lord is not a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, yes or no, good environment or bad environment, but a matter of the Lord as the life and peace within our spirit. When we pay attention to the life and peace in our spirit and follow the Lord inwardly in this way, we have the inner sense of flowing, enlightening, watering, satisfaction, brightness, harmony, comfort, and ease. We have rest in our spirit. To care for the rest in our spirit in order to be led by the Spirit is to switch on the law of the Spirit of life so that He may flow in us and out of our innermost being to dispense Himself into others for the carrying out of the gospel of God's economy, the stewardship of the grace of God (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:2).

Paul gives us the reason he had no rest in his spirit to go to Troas for the gospel: "I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia" (2 Cor. 2:13). Paul was concerned about how the Corinthians received his first Epistle to them, since it was filled with serious admonitions in love from him as their spiritual father. He wanted to find Titus to receive this news. In his concern for the church, he followed the Lord in his spirit to leave Troas and go forth into Macedonia to obtain this information. Paul continues in verse 14 by saying, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place."

The picture here is of a Roman conqueror leading his captives in a procession back to Rome in a train of his triumph. Christ, the real General, conquered and captured Paul and his co-workers and led them about in His triumphal procession for the carrying out of His heavenly ministry through them. In practicality Paul was Christ's captive and was always led about by Christ because he paid attention to his spirit. He was dominated, governed, led, and directed by his spirit, that is, by the Lord as the Spirit mingled with his spirit to be one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). He was truly a spiritual man led by the Spirit of God to be a captive of Christ and a real son of the living God. It is good for us to pray, "Lord, make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time." To be defeated by Christ, to be His continual captive, to allow Him to be our General, Lord, and Head, is to take care of the rest in our spirit.

The narrative of Paul's burden to go to Macedonia

resumes in 2 Corinthians 7 and adds further enlightenment as to how we should follow the inner leading of the Spirit of God. Remember that when Paul came to Troas, he had no rest in his spirit, but when he came into Macedonia, he said, "Our flesh had no rest" (v. 5). Notice the contrast here. Near Troas, Paul said, "I had no rest in my spirit." In Macedonia, where he was led by the Spirit of God, he said, "Our flesh had no rest." This begs the question: "What do we care for as believers following the Lord—do we care for the rest in our spirit or the rest in our flesh?" If we truly follow the inner leading of the Spirit of God, we will have the real rest in our spirit, but we may not have any rest in our flesh. Conversely, we may have the rest in our flesh in a comfortable environment but no rest in our spirit. Paul went on to say, "We were afflicted in everything; without were fightings, within were fears. But He who comforts those who are downcast, that is, God, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (vv. 5-6). Fightings are without in our hostile environment, afflictions are related to our physical body, and fears are within in our soul. But Paul did not pay attention to or give first place to his environment, his bodily



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sufferings, or his fearful soul. Paul paid attention to his spirit and gave first place to the Lord in his spirit. In his being downcast because of his oppressive circumstances, he enjoyed the God of comfort in his spirit through the coming of Titus, a member of Christ's Body. This all shows that to follow the leading of the Spirit of God is to care for our spirit in which the Spirit of God dwells. To care for the indwelling Spirit of God is to care for the Body of Christ. Such care switches on the law of the Spirit of life within us for the Body's building up.

Crying to the Father in the Spirit of Sonship

To switch on the law of the Spirit of life is also to cry aloud to and call upon our Father God. "For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba Father!" (Rom. 8:15). When we cry, "Abba, Father!" "the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God" (v. 16). The divine sonship is in our spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Our God is the Father of our regenerated spirit, where we

were born of Him to receive His life in addition to our human life (Heb. 12:9; John 1:13). Our spirit is now “a spirit of sonship,” and in this spirit “it is very normal and sweet for us to call Him ‘Father’” (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:15, note 2). To cry “Abba, Father” is a form of endearment that shows our complete dependence on God. We must be like little children to participate in the reality of the kingdom (Matt. 18:3). A little child is unoccupied with old concepts and is able to receive the new thoughts of God. We must have a childlike wonder, awe, reverence, and love for our Father God. When we exercise our spirit to call Him “Abba, Father,” the law of the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God’s Son, is switched on within us (cf. Gal. 4:6). There is an inner witness that we are the children of God and that we should behave as children of God in the limitation and restriction of God’s life within us. There is also an inner question and checking: “Would a child of God behave in this way? Remember that you are a child of God. Do not dishonor your Father or misrepresent Him to others.” This witnessing always reminds us that we are God’s children and that as God’s children we cannot act in certain ways, go to certain places, or say certain things. To be a child of God is to be a child of divine royalty, a child of the King. We are divine progeny with the King’s “genes.” These genes of the King in our spirit with their life law cause us to live a life fully dignified with the divine attributes being expressed in our human virtues. Thank the Lord for this inner witnessing, restricting, and limiting of the Father’s life within us for His radiant expression. Let us continually keep our hearts turned to Him and call Him “Abba, Father,” to enjoy His life as a spontaneous and automatic law in us.

Groaning for the Full Sonship, the Redemption of Our Body

Another way to switch on the law of the Spirit of life is to groan in the interceding Spirit for our full sonship, which will be the redemption, the transfiguration, of our body at the Lord’s second advent. “We ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). This inner groaning is something of the divine Intercessor in our spirit.

Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God. (vv. 26-27)

This should be a marvelous encouragement to us, since this passage of Scripture says that “we do not know for what we should pray.” Many Christians are bothered about this

in their prayer life, but Paul says that this is a normal fact. What are we then to do? Thank the Lord that the Spirit joins in to help us in our weakness, and He is “in like manner” with us, interceding for us with unutterable groanings. On the one hand, we groan; on the other hand, He groans in our groaning in like manner. The Scriptures, especially the Psalms (Israel’s prayer and praise book), are full of groanings to God, full of “O God” and “O Lord.” When we call on our God and cry out to Him with such groanings in our spirit, He intercedes for the saints according to God. “The interceding Spirit prays for us not according to something of God but according to God Himself, that we may be conformed to the image of God’s Son” (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:27, note 2). While we are daily contacting Him and enjoying Him as the indwelling and interceding Spirit, He arranges our circumstances and causes all things to work together for good (v. 28).

According to the context, the good here is not related to physical persons, matters, or things. It refers to our gaining more of Christ, to our having Him wrought into our being, that we may be transformed metabolically and may eventually be conformed to His image, the image of the Son of God (v. 29), that is, that we may be brought into the full sonship. (Recovery Version, v. 28, note 3)

Loving God and Being Constrained, Restricted, Motivated, Compelled, Impelled, and Propelled by the Love of Christ to More Than Conquer in All Things

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). In order to switch on the law of the Spirit of life within us for our daily transformation and conformation to Christ’s image, we need to love God in all things. Furthermore, we need to be constrained, restricted, motivated, compelled, impelled, and propelled by the love of Christ to more than conquer in all things.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter.” But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us. (vv. 35-37)

The all-conquering love of Christ is the love with which we love Him supremely above all things.

In these final days of degradation before the Lord’s imminent return, we need to consider: “What kind of lovers are we?” Paul tells us that we can be lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure. It is sad today that even in some so-called Christian circles, the love of self, pleasure, and money is encouraged. But Paul wants us to be another kind of lover—a lover of God (2 Tim. 3:2-4). A lover of

God denies himself and takes God as his person, life, and all. A lover of God rejects earthly pleasure and takes God as his entertainment, joy, amusement, and pleasure. A lover of God does not seek material wealth, but takes Christ as his unsearchable riches. A lover of God, though poor, makes many men rich with the riches of Christ (2 Cor. 6:10). When we love God by giving Him the pre-eminence in all things, the law of the Spirit of life operates within us to transform us to Christ's image in the midst of suffering and perplexing circumstances.

We need to pray in a simple and daily way, "Lord, constrain me with Your love so that I would no longer live to myself or for myself. I want to be constrained by Your love to live to You and for You for the sake of Your Body." Wuest's translation of 2 Corinthians 5:14 says,

For the love which Christ has [for me] presses on me from all sides, holding me to one end and prohibiting me from considering any other, wrapping itself around me in tenderness, giving me an impelling motive, having brought me to this conclusion, namely, that One died on behalf of all, therefore all died, and that He also died on behalf of all in order that those who are living no longer are living for themselves but for the One who died on their behalf and instead of them, and was raised.

To be constrained by the mighty love of Christ and to love God with Christ as our love is to switch on the indwelling law of the Spirit of life. Spontaneously and automatically, we desire to live for Christ and to live for His Body, to die for Christ and to die for His Body.

Madame Guyon wrote a short and poignant hymn to express her love for the Lord by the love of Christ:

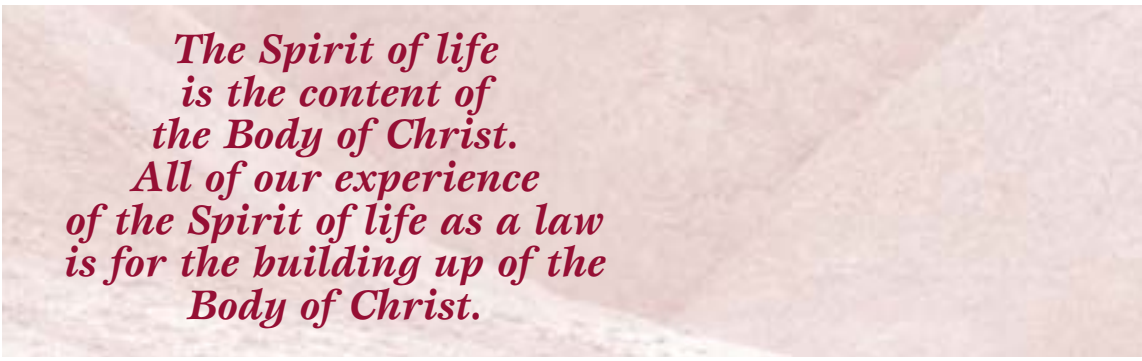
I love my Lord, but with no love of mine,
For I have none to give;
I love Thee, Lord, but all the love is Thine,
For by Thy love I live.
I am as nothing, and rejoice to be
Emptied, and lost, and swallowed up in Thee.

Thou, Lord, alone, art all Thy children need,
And there is none beside;
From Thee the streams of blessedness proceed,
In Thee the bless'd abide.
Fountain of life, and all-abounding grace,
Our source, our center, and our dwelling-place.
(*Hymns*, #546)

Such divine love makes us more than conquerors in all of our circumstances. Such love switches on the law of the Spirit life to cause us spontaneously to reign in the life of Christ and to be saved in His life to live Him for His magnification (Rom. 5:10, 17).

*Being in the Body Life in Romans 12
to Enjoy the Body's Supply, the Bountiful Supply
of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*

It is crucial to realize that our enjoyment of the indwelling Spirit as the automatic law of the divine life is in the Body of Christ and for the Body of Christ. Our enjoyment of the inner operating God as an automatic and spontaneous principle and capacity cannot be experienced in fullness if we are individualistic, independent, or isolated from the other members of Christ's Body. The enjoyment of Christ as the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8 ushers us into the reality of the Body of Christ in Romans 12. The Spirit of life is the content of the Body of Christ. All of our experience of the Spirit of life as a law is for the building up of the Body of Christ.



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The innate capacity and automatic operation of this divine and mystical law is switched on when we enjoy the supply of the Body through the fellowship of its members.

We have an excellent illustration of this. Paul told us in Philippians 1:19 that the circumstances of his imprisonment would turn out to his salvation. Salvation here to Paul was not salvation from the eternal perdition of the lake of fire; this salvation was for him to be sustained and strengthened to daily live and magnify Christ (vv. 20-21). In order for Paul to live and magnify Christ, he needed the saints' petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit: "I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (v. 19). Even though Paul was in prison, he was not isolated from the Body in his consciousness. He depended on the specific prayers of the saints to be a channel to convey the immeasurable Spirit to him for his moment by moment supply. This supply, the supply of the Body of Christ, activated the inner law of the Spirit of life within him, causing him to

spontaneously, effortlessly, and joyously magnify Christ in his mortal body with rejoicing (v. 20; 4:4). Like Paul, we need to live in the Body, depend on the Body, and be Body-centered and Body-conscious in order to keep the law of the Spirit of life switched on within us. The law of the Spirit of life is the organic law of the Body of Christ.

The Operating Power and Mighty Energy of the Spirit of Life

The Spirit of life is a spontaneous and automatic power within us that can operate within us in a number of ways (see *The Knowledge of Life*, pp. 130-134). First, the power of this living law can incline our heart toward God. Proverbs 21:1 says, “The king’s heart is like streams of water in the hand of Jehovah; / He turns it wherever He wishes.” The Lord’s life is the King’s life in us, making us kings, who should reign in His life. As the divine life flows in our heart as streams of living water, the Lord turns our heart in the direction He desires to fulfill His economy. Second, the power of the law of the Spirit of life can make us submissive toward God. When this law is switched on in our spirit, God operates in us the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

Third, the law of the Spirit of life can cause us to do the good work that God has ordained for us. “For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). These good works are the doing of God’s will for the carrying out of His heart’s desire by dispensing Himself into His chosen ones to make them the church, the masterpiece of the Triune God. Fourth, the law of the Spirit of life can make us labor with all of our heart and strength. Paul said that his burden was to present every man full-grown in Christ, and he said that for this he labored, “struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power” (Col. 1:28-29). The Wuest translation says,

That we may present every man spiritually mature in Christ Jesus, to which end also I am constantly laboring to the point of exhaustion, engaging in a contest in which I am controlled by His energy which operates in me in power. (vv. 28-29)

What a wonder that we can be controlled by Christ as our divine energy and have this divine energy operate in us in power for the carrying out of God’s commission. The Living Bible says, “This is my work, and I can do it only because Christ’s mighty energy is at work within me” (v. 29). His mighty energy working within us, causing us to do His work, is the issue of the law of the Spirit of life. He is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us (Eph.

3:20). Finally, the inner operation of the law of the Spirit of life can cause our service to the Lord to be living and fresh. We are not serving according to the oldness of the dead letter but according to the newness of the Spirit, who gives life to us and to all whom we contact (2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 6:4; 7:6).

The Goal of the Law of the Spirit of Life

According to God’s goal, the law of the Spirit of life functions to transform us and to shape us, conform us, to the image of the firstborn Son of God, making us the same as God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead (8:28-29; 12:2; 1 John 3:2). The law of the Spirit of life does not primarily function in the negative sense of telling us what not to do; rather, while the divine life grows in us, the law of the Spirit of life functions in the positive sense of shaping us, conforming us, to the image of Christ. The law of the Spirit of life functions to disperse the all-inclusive Spirit into our being so that we grow in life to bear the fruit of the Spirit for God’s expression (Gal. 5:22-23).

The law of the Spirit of life also causes us to function as members of the Body of Christ with the manifestation of the Spirit to build up the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7). The law, the divine capacity, of the Spirit of life constitutes us to be the functioning members of the Body of Christ—the joints of the rich supply and every part of the Body that functions in its measure (Eph. 4:11, 16). Through the functioning of the law of the Spirit of life, we will become the mature sons of God, the Body of Christ will be built up, the kingdom of God will be ushered in, we will become Christ’s overcoming bride for His satisfaction, and God will have His universal, corporate expression as the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. May the Lord grant us to be those who use the key of the law of the Spirit of life to be His overcomers for His heart’s desire. **AFC**

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