

# THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

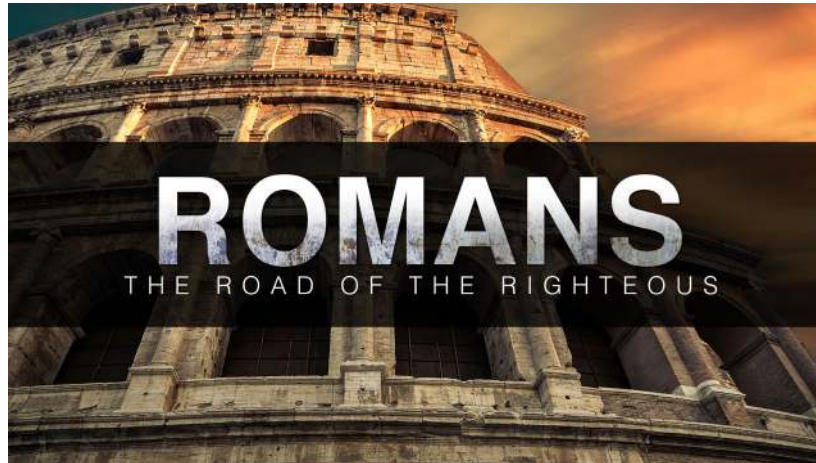
## Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 8:5-11

Written By

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Who is the greatest and most feared Greco-Roman wrestler of all time? Hands down it is the intimidating and dominating Alkesandr Aleksandrovich Karelin, or Александр Александрович Карелин for the Russian speakers among us. During his monumental career he won an impressive 887 times, while only losing twice. At one point, the mammoth, muscular, square-jawed, quick as a panther man went an impressive 13 years without ever losing a match, and prior to the end of his career in 2000 after the Olympics, he did not give up one point to an opponent for six straight years. That is no typo either . . . just a fact. No wonder the sports world slapped various colorful monikers on him like the *Russian Bear*, *Russian King Kong*, *Alexander the Great*, and *The Experiment*. With a muscular body cut like no other, forearms which resembled Popeye's, and legs the size of massive tree trunks, it is not surprising *The Experiment*, who stood at 6' 3" and topped out at 280 pounds, walked away with three consecutive gold medals at the world Olympics in 1988 (Seoul), 1992 (Barcelona), and 1996 (Atlanta). Concerning his brute strength, Mitch Hull, the National Teams Director for USA Wrestling once remarked, "That is not a human power."

When you think about the power of the flesh you battle as a believer, I think Alexander Karelin serves as an apt spiritual metaphor. Paul's description of his battle in Romans chapter seven certainly sounds like a play by play match with a spiritual opponent as ominous as Karelin. Can you relate? You know you are a saint because you've placed your faith in the redemptive work of Christ; however, when you are out on that 30 square foot circular mat of life it feels, at times, that your sinful flesh is all over you like Karelin, wearing you down and zapping your strength. Do you have to live a life of spiritual defeat as a believer because of the power of the flesh, or

indwelling sin as some might call it? For Paul, a spiritual super-heavyweight wrestler of worldwide fame, the answer is a resounding, “No.”

I don’t know how you wrestled as a believer in 2018, but if the defeats outweigh the victories, it’s time to listen to Paul your wrestling coach and get some victories under your belt in 2019.

## How Does The Believer Gain Victory Over The Flesh? (Rom. 8:1)

Join me as we review what our coach has said thus far.

### One: Realize The Principle Of Victorious Christian Living (Rom. 8:1)

The coach’s profound principle is detailed in the first verse of this uplifting and challenging chapter:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

You can, and should, live a victorious Christian life over the power of indwelling sin because in God’s courtroom He sees you as a guiltless, forgiven person. So, go on to live pragmatically in light of your new position. Are you? Will you?

Next, our coach counsels his spiritual wrestlers to focus on a second concept for successful spiritual matches:

### Two: Realize The Power Of Victorious Living (Rom. 8:2-4)

This unique power is showcased for all to see:

<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jesus did what no spiritual wrestler could ever do. He defeated the opponent of all opponents, sin. His powerful victory, therefore, becomes our victory each and every day. Do you, will you, realize that you are no longer all tied up by the power of sin, but a free now to live for God because Christ’s redemptive work has freed you? You are not a spiritual victim but a victor. So live like it to God’s glory. But there is so much in our coach’s wrestling manual which, if applied, will move us to winning more often than we lose.

### Three: Realize The Presence Of Victorious living (Rom. 8:5-11)

From verses five through eleven Paul reminds all his wrestlers of two truths: Never forget the old you, but don’t forget you are the new you.

*The Old You: Dominated by the Presence of the Flesh (Rom. 8:5-9).* I’m sure you can identify with Paul’s analysis here.

<sup>5</sup> For those who are 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. <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

The description here is between those who walk helplessly and willingly according to the indwelling power and dictates of the flesh, as opposed to those who know Christ as Savior and walk according to the power and dictates of the indwelling Spirit of God. While the believer is freed from his old ruthless and godless master, he can, as we see in Galatians 1 and 1 Corinthians 3, live, at times, like he used to live; however, this should not be the case for he is now empowered to live a holy life because of his new faith association with God. The unbeliever, or the non-Christian, on the other hand, is under the full control of the flesh.

What does this pivotal term, *flesh*, mean, exactly? A definition is certainly in order:

In the NT, especially in the Pauline epistles, the term “flesh” takes on a specialized theological meaning. Paul consistently uses the term “flesh” in reference to the fallen human nature that is incapable of conforming to God’s holy expectations (Rom. 7:5, 18; 8:3–9; Gal. 3:3). In this sense, “flesh” is unaided human effort—mere human strength without the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this “flesh” that offers sin a foothold in a believer’s life (Rom. 8:3–4, 9; Gal. 3:3; 5:16–17). Paul explains that the flesh and the Spirit are in conflict with each other within believers necessitating the believer’s denial of sinful desires and cooperation with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 2:19–21; Col. 3:5).

Unfortunately, many have misunderstood Paul’s specialized use of the term “flesh” and have taken the passages mentioned above to mean that our bodies are inherently evil. Nothing, however, could have been further from Paul’s mind. Paul taught that Christ Himself came in the flesh and yet lived a sinless life (Rom. 1:3; 1 Tim. 3:16). Furthermore, the body is God’s creation and therefore is good when it is devoted to God in holy service (1 Tim 4:4). In fact, Paul referred to the believer’s body as the temple of the Holy Spirit indicating its sacred nature and purpose (1 Cor. 6:19–20). The notion that the physical body is inherently evil and therefore an obstacle to spirituality came not from Paul but from Plato<sup>1</sup>

Man’s flesh is good per God’s creation, but indwelling sin takes advantage of the weaknesses and hungers of the flesh and exploits them for sinful gain.

Paul wisely and helpfully offers a description of these exploits in verses 5 through 8. We will methodically move through them, but first it is important to denote how Paul paints a stark contrast here between the “old you” and the “new you,” and between “the sinner” and “the saint.” I have couched the “old you” language in the past and present tense because not everyone who reads this analysis is a Christian. If that is you, then understand you are still a slave to sin (Rom.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Youngblood, “Flesh,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 582–583.

3, 6), and, by nature, you are ruled and driven by the insatiable and sinful desires of your flesh. A faith relationship with Jesus, however, as we have noted many times in this study, frees you from this bondage and gives you true life and freedom (Rom. 6). With these preparatory thoughts in mind, let us turn our attention to understanding, at least in part, the powerful and ruthless presence of the flesh in the life of one opposed to following Jesus, the Christ.

From my study of Paul's argument here, I see three traits emerge which describe the mindset of a person who rejects Jesus as *the* Savior for sinners . . . as He claimed repeatedly (John 3:16-18; 8:24; 14:1-6).

First, *you were/are consumed with fleshly pursuits* (Rom. 8:5-6). Paul's teaching here is clear:

<sup>5</sup> For those who are 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. <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death . . .

To this first description I could add one pivotal word: you/were *perpetually* consumed and driven by the desires of the natural man. I say this based on the present tense participle, *who are*, (ὄντες). Grammatically, this is what is called the progressive or durative use of the present tense, denoting action which is currently occurring without interruption. This participle, in turn, is directly related to the main verb, *set their minds on*, (φρονοῦσιν, plural; singular, φρονέω), which means to study something intently and then wholeheartedly give oneself to it, be it good or evil. The person who is predisposed to committing acts of sin does so like a person sold out to a carnal cause they will demonstrate and die for. <sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, this verb, too, is a present

<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1065-1066: φρονέω (s. φρήν) impf. ἐφρόνουν; fut. φρονήσω; 1 aor. ἐφρόνησα; pf. 1 pl. πεφρονήκαμεν (Ath. 10, 1) (Hom.+; ins, pap, LXX; TestJob 48:2; EpArist 236; Philo, Joseph., Ar., Just., Ath.).

① **to have an opinion with regard to someth., think, form/hold an opinion, judge** ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος *I thought like a child* **1 Cor 13:11** (schol. on Apollon. Rhod. 4, 868a νηπίου ὄντος καὶ νήπια φρονοῦντος). καθὼς φρονοῦσιν *as their opinion is* ISm 2. καλῶς καὶ ἀληθῶς φρονεῖς *your judgment is right and true* Hm 3:4 (εὖ φρ. Hippol., Ref. 10, 32, 4). ταῦτα φρονεῖν 9:12. ἃ φρονεῖς *the views that you hold* **Ac 28:22** (Just., D. 80, 2 ἔτερα λέγειν παρ' ἃ φρονῶ). πολλὰ φρονῶ ἐν θεῷ *many thoughts are mine when I take God's view of things* (so Kleist) ITr 4:1. φρονεῖν τι ὑπὲρ τινος *think or feel in a certain way about someone* **Phil 1:7**. ὑπὲρ τινος φρ. *think of someone* in the sense *be concerned about him* **4:10a**; cp. **10b**. φρ. περὶ τινος *think of or about someone* (Wsd 14:30; Just., D. 3, 7; Ath. 24, 1; περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ Theoph. Ant. 1, 1 [p. 58, 15]) 2:1a. φρ. τι περὶ τινος *think someth. concerning someone* (Isocr. 3, 60; Polyaeus 5, 2, 13; Lucian, Dial. Mort. 20, 5; Jos., Ant. 12, 125, C. Ap. 2, 168; Ar. 8, 1; Just., D. 48, 1) ISm 5:2. φρ. μικρὰ περὶ τινος *think little of someone* 2 Cl 1:2 (Philo, Spec. Leg. 2, 256 φρ. περὶ μοναρχίας τὰ ἄριστα); cp. 1:1b. Ὁν ἵνα ἀδελφὸς ἰδὼν ἀδελφὴν οὐδὲν φρονῆ περὶ αὐτῆς θηλυκόν 12:5a s. θηλυκός; cp. 12:5b. θεὸν δεσπότην φρ. *think of God as Master* Dg 3:2 (s. φρονίμως). οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρ. *think nothing different, not take a different view* **Gal 5:10** (Hdt. 7, 205, 3 ἄλλα φρ.; Jos., Bell. 5, 326 φρ. οὐδὲν ὑγιές). τοῦτο φρ. **Phil 3:15a**; τι ἑτέρως φρ. *think of or regard someth. differently* **15b**; τὸ αὐτὸ φρ. *think the same thing, i.e. be in agreement, live in harmony* (Hdt. 1, 60, 2; Dio Chrys. 17 [34], 20; Just., D. 65, 2 τὸ αὐτὸ φρ. . . ἐμοί; OGI 669, 36.—Opp.: ἀνόμοια φρ. Iren. 1, Pr. 2 [Harv. I 4, 5f]) **2 Cor 13:11**; **Phil 2:2a**; **3:16** v.l.; **4:2**; 2 Cl 17:3. τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις **Ro 15:5**; εἰς ἀλλήλους **12:16a**. Also τὰ αὐτὰ φρ. (Hdt. 5, 72, 2; Appian, Bell. Civ. 1, 65 §295 τὰ αὐτὰ ἐφρόνουν) Hs 9, 13, 7. τὸ ἐν φρ. **Phil 2:2b**.—*Cherish thoughts* μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν *not to think more of oneself than one ought to think* **Ro 12:3a**. Cp. **1 Cor 4:6** v.l. (cp. Diod S 27, 6, 2 τοὺς ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον φρονοῦντας). ὑψηλὰ φρονεῖν *be proud* **Ro 11:20**; **1 Ti 6:17** v.l.

② **to give careful consideration to someth., set one's mind on, be intent on**, foll. by the acc. (Brutus, Ep. 14 τὰ σὰ φρ.)

active verb, and it can be classified as progressive or durative in nature. The active nature of the verbal idea underscores how the subject, viz, the non-Christian, is responsible for their sinful activity. To put it in lay terms, *the non-Christian is locked on sin like a laser guided missile to the exhaust of a jet fighter's engine.*

Oddly enough, this verbal term *to set your mind on* (φρονέω) is what Jesus used to confront Peter at Caesarea Philippi when Peter rebuked Christ for stating He was going to die in Jerusalem and then rise the third day,

Matthew 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (Matt. 16:23 NAS)

Matthew 16:23 ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς εἶπεν τῷ Πέτρῳ· ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ· σκάνδαλον εἶ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (Matt. 16:23).

Worldly thinking is just that, worldly. It looks at life through a sinful, terrestrial lens, not a holy, celestial lens (Col. 3:1-4). It is consumed with self-gratification, self-love, the next fix (be what it may), the next drink, the next promotion . . . as if this will give life meaning and ultimate purpose, the next rush from the next big financial deal, disrespect masquerading as respect, hate masquerading as love, puritanical intolerance dressed up like tolerance, lawlessness being portrayed as lawfulness, scientism pawned off as science, free thought as opposed to true thought, false moral causes posing as true ones, living for the next party as if this is what life is all about, living beyond one's means, listening to educated misguided professors while rejecting the teaching of one's uneducated and unenlightened parents, acting as if illogical rhetoric . . . shouting and yelling one's viewpoint . . . is actually a reasoned argument, and so on and so forth. College students be advised: non-Christian professors and students will do everything within their power to deconstruct and demolish your Christian worldview. Commit this day to learn how to lovingly and forthrightly defend your faith. Many books can assist you to this end.<sup>3</sup>

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Ⓐ gener. ἀγαθὰ φρ. Hm 10, 3, 1. τὸ καλὸν φρ. Hs 5, 2, 7. τέλεια ISm 11:3. τὰ ὑψηλά **Ro 12:16b** (cp. 2 Macc 9:12). τὰ ἐπίγεια (Did., Gen. 50, 27; Theoph. Ant. 2, 17 [p. 142, 6]) **Phil 3:19**. τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς **Col 3:2** (opp. τὰ ἄνω; TestJob 48:2 τὰ τῆς γῆς φρ.).

Ⓑ φρ. τὰ τινοῦ *take someone's side, espouse someone's cause* (Diod S 13, 48, 4 and 7 ἐφρόνου τὰ Λακεδαιμονίων; 13, 72, 1; 14, 32, 4; 20, 35, 2 and oft.; Appian, Liby. 70 §316, Bell. Civ. 3, 85, §351; Polyaeus 8, 14, 3 τὰ Ῥωμαίων φρ., cp. Halmqvist, Plut. u. das NT '46, 56; Herodian 8, 6, 6; 1 Macc 10:20; Jos., Ant. 14, 450 οἱ τὰ Ἡρώδου φρονοῦντες). τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (opp. τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων) **Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33**. τὰ τῆς σαρκός (opp. τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) **Ro 8:5**.

Ⓒ of acknowledging the importance of someth. ὁ φρονῶν τὴν ἡμέραν κυρίῳ φρονεῖ *the one who is intent on the day* (i.e. a particular day rather than others) *in honor of the Lord* **Ro 14:6**. φρ. εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν **12:3b**.

Ⓓ **to develop an attitude based on careful thought, be minded/disposed** τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ *let the same kind of thinking dominate you as dominated Christ Jesus* **Phil 2:5** (Christ went so far as to devoid himself of his divine status for the benefit of humanity; the opp. of φρονεῖν μέγα, 'to think presumptuously', s. Reader, Polemo 216f on the theme of hybris). Or, *have the same thoughts among yourselves as you have in your communion with Christ Jesus* (so CDodd, The Apost. Preaching '37, 106f).—B. 1198. DELG s.v. φρήν II. M-M. EDNT. TW. Sv.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Apologetic books worth reading and studying are detailed on our church's web page under the Resources tab. Also, if you need additional books on various topics, please don't hesitate to contact me: marty@burkecommunity.com.

Is this a snapshot of your life? If so, you, my friend, are under the totalitarian rulership of the flesh. I know you are not happy because, as Paul says, this type of lifestyle ends in death, physical and spiritual. One day you will die and will have lost everything because you chose to live for this life and not the Lord of life. Today is the day to turn your mind toward Christ if you sense Him speaking to you. And if you are a believer today, your daily goal is to replace worldly thinking with godly thinking. More on that in a moment.

*Second, you were/are hostile to God* (Rom. 8:7-8). Paul says this much in the next two verses:

<sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Please note the cause/effect relationship between possessing worldly thinking and being openly hostile to God Himself. In Greek there is no main verb, *is*, in the first clause. Grammatically, this is called ellipsis and it serves to drive home an emphatic point.<sup>4</sup> That point here is how worldly thinking devolves into an internal and external hatred and hostility, *exthra* (ἔχθρα)<sup>5</sup> of all things related to God, especially His holy law and laws regarding proper moral and spiritual conduct. The godless, selfish mind-set of the flesh will not place itself under the authority of God's law, but will, conversely, look for every opportunity to twist, modify, and distort that law just like the Devil did in the Garden with Eve (Gen. 3). Submission to godly thinking to the godless is a fighting word, a word worth opposing at all costs. In addition to this internal hatred of God's law(s), Paul even goes so far as to say the non-Christian "is not even able to" submit because his depraved nature (Rom. 3) moves him to outright, blatant opposition when given the opportunity.

Concerning the biblical doctrine of total depravity, we would do well to remember the words of the late R.C. Sproul,

Total depravity does not mean that man is as sinful as he could be, it is not utter depravity. The point of the debate is this: Does man in his fallen nature have the moral ability to obey God? The answer that the Calvinist gives is that man, in his fallen mind, suffers under a moral inability to do the things of God. Man in his natural state cannot be subject to the law of God, and he is therefore at enmity with God.<sup>6</sup>

Does not all of this perfectly describe our day and age? Sadly, it does. I really do not even need to give you examples for they are endless. Whether it is a new congresswoman cussing out the President this week with vulgar words, a former National League Hockey player hitting a flight attendant this week because she denied him a drink on a flight to Moscow, or Freshman

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<sup>4</sup>E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Friberg's Greek Lexicon, ἔχθρα, ας, ἡ enmity, hostility, hatred, both as an inner disposition and objective opposition (RO 8.7); plural, of hostile feelings and acts *animosities, hostilities, discord, feuds* (GA 5.20)

<sup>6</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 133–134.

Orientation on university campuses really being Freshman Indoctrination in all things carnal,<sup>7</sup> one does not have to look far to see hostility to God and His law is spreading like a contagion.

Be honest. Does the word hostility describe your stance toward God and His law(s)? Does the Bible bother you? Do Christians upset you with their absolute thinking about morality? Do you rant and rave against law and order? Such is the life of the flesh and it is not a life that will ever please God, as Paul warns:

<sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Even if you were to wed yourself to a non-Christian religious group this would still not make you pleasing to God because that group devised laws God never approved of. Further, you could not please God because you have not come to God through the proper channel which is faith in His Son, the redeemer. This, of course, naturally dovetails with Paul's third point about worldly thinking.

*Third, you didn't/don't belong to God (Rom. 8:9).* Paul is most candid here:

<sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

How does God's Spirit come to dwell in you, the sinner? He comes at the moment of faith as Paul teaches in places like Ephesians 1, verses 13 through 14. If, however, you have not come to Christ in faith, you do not have the Spirit, nor do you belong to God's family, no matter what you think, say, or do. And if you are not a member of God's family, then you will certainly not act like one.

All of these verses aptly describe the old you, if you are a Christian. You used to be a child of flesh and you submitted to its powerful pull and presence. But now, as a believer, things are much different as Paul teaches in verses 5 through 11. In contradistinction to the old you we encounter . . .

*The New You: Dominated by The Presence of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-11).* Here Paul lists four concepts which describe a Christian who is no longer in bondage to sin.

*First, you focus on spiritual things (Rom. 8:5).*

<sup>5</sup> For those who are 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.

As a believer you are no longer consumed with worldly thinking. In fact, the more you think on God's things the less you think about what the world deems important. You read His inspired Word and it becomes milk, meat, honey, light, and a sword to your soul. You face life decisions differently because in prayer you desire to know God's mind on the matter. You seek His face regarding your damaged emotions and desire to have emotions which honor Him. You evaluate what you hear, see, and read in a given day against what God teaches and thinks. You learn how to respond, as Jesus did, when you are wronged unjustly. You can't wait to dive into a book about spiritual things because it answers questions you have, while also teaching you how to guide

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<sup>7</sup>Abby Nye, "College 101: Surviving as a Christian on a Secular Campus," *Crosswalk.com*, August 19, 2004, accessed January 5, 2019, <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/college-101-surviving-as-a-christian-on-a-secular-campus-1280154.html>.

people toward the light of Christ. You read through Proverbs and see where you need to stop living like a foolish person so you can become wise in God's eyes. And, to add one more thing, you live to trade carnal fruit for spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22ff). Yes, when your mind is laser-locked on the things of God, you don't live to please the presence of the flesh the but the Holy Spirit.

If you are believer today, I have two simple questions: Where in your life do you need to focus more on the things of God? Is your life absorbed with God or yourself and your world? Ask Him and He will most certainly show you how to answer these questions. Freedom from sinful ways comes as you make appreciable progress in this crucial life area. So don't wait.

*Second, you know life and peace* (Rom. 8:6). As Paul states, the life of the Christian is focused on two things: life and peace.

<sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, . . .

Show me a saint whose minds is absorbed with the Spirit and I'll show you a person who has real life about them. Sure, they are headed to heaven, but in the here and now they are the ones who truly know how to live and enjoy life as God intended. In life's storms they have an inner joy and hope. In life's triumphs they are humbly thankful and know to give God the glory. In life's friendships they know how to be friends who love at all times. In life's covenants, like marriage, they know how to love their mates as God would have them to. In life's times of pleasure, they know how to live so as not to stain the conscience. The result of all of this, of course, if they have peace, real lasting peace.

Want to break free from power of the flesh and indwelling sin? Discipline yourself to put God first in your thoughts and the natural result will be a life full of real life and inexorable peace. If life and peace elude you, then confession is in order to get you back on track.

*Third, you love God's law* (Rom. 8:7-8). The believer, by nature, love's God's law. It is first in his or her life, and if it is not in some areas, he strives to make it so. Paul says this much in verses 7 through 8.

<sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The implication here is a life full of the Spirit is open to God's law(s), not hostile to it. God's law, not a person's law is increasingly the believer's growing focus in life. Constantly, therefore, you will find yourself praying differently:

- God, is there any place in my thinking where I am either covertly or overtly hostile to your teachings?
- God, help me to see how your law applies in the complex situation I am facing.
- God, give me the courage to stand up for your timeless moral and spiritual law, and help me do it with compassion and love in my heart for others still in darkness.
- God, show me where I have replaced your law with my law, resulting in me making a mess of my life, marriage, etc.



Do these things and you will watch as God helps you break free from the carnal chains which formerly held you.

*Fourth, you possess God's Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11).* Yes, those who know Christ as Savior are not only justified by their faith in God's heavenly courtroom, they have His Spirit residing in them. Follow Paul's words here closely:

<sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. <sup>10</sup> If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But 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.

Did you catch the practical ramifications of these moving verses? If not, I'll explain. The same raw, unlimited, supernatural power which defeated necrosis in the body of Christ after three days, allowing Him to be resurrected from the grave, is the same power available to you as you face off against your own spiritual Alexander Karelin. You just might need to re-read that. This time let it sink deep into your psyche and soul. Yes, one day the Spirit of God will resurrect your dead body and fit it for the glories of heaven, but in the meantime, that same Spirit stands ready to empower you to put Karelin's shoulders on the mat.

What should you do in light of this reality which is based on Paul's descriptions of a life founded and grounded upon the Spirit? You have a duty to square off against that area of your flesh which so easily trips you up, and based on God's divine help to be a victor.

While you're thinking about that, let's go back to the Olympics in 2000. Rulon Gardner, a twenty-nine-year-old who grew up in Wyoming milking cows and baling hay, wound up on the U.S Olympic wrestling team. He faced, you guessed it, *The Russian Bear*, for the gold medal.

After the first round, neither man had scored a point, and no one had scored a point on Karelin in the last six years anyway. But in the second round Gardner broke free from the Bear's grasp, resulting in the referee awarding him one point. The rest of match went scoreless. The drained and desperate Bear attempted to pick up the massive farm boy with his infamous Karelin Lift, whereby he would use brute strength to pick up his opponents and then turn and slam their lifeless bodies into the mat. This, time, however, Karelin's power was overcome by another power stronger than his. To the shock of the world, *The Russian Bear* had been subdued.

Metaphorically, I think you know who you are in the match. You are Rulon and the Spirit is going to empower you like He did Samson to overcome the carnality which has way too many victories in your life.