

## Romans 8:5-14 “Do you benefit from God’s Spirit?”

### Romans 8:5-14 NIRV

**“Don't live under the control of your sinful nature. If you do, you will think about what your sinful nature wants. Live under the control of the Holy Spirit. If you do, you will think about what the Spirit wants.**

**<sup>6</sup>“The way a sinful person thinks leads to death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit brings life and peace. <sup>7</sup>The sinful mind is at war with God. It does not obey God's law. It can't. <sup>8</sup>Those who are controlled by their sinful nature can't please God.**

**<sup>9</sup>“But your sinful nature does not control you. The Holy Spirit controls you. The Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup>Christ lives in you. So your body is dead because of sin. But your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God.**

**<sup>11</sup>“The Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. So the God who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your bodies, which are going to die. He will do this by the power of his Spirit, who lives in you.**

**<sup>12</sup>“Brothers and sisters, we have a duty. Our duty is not to live under the control of our sinful nature. <sup>13</sup>If you live under the control of your sinful nature, you will die. But by the power of the Holy Spirit you can put to death the sins your body commits. Then you will live.”**

### Life offers us many options, doesn't it?

#### It challenges us with endless choices.

When people bought vehicles in the 1930s and 40s, they selected from two or three models of different manufacturers. Once you chose a Chevy, Ford, or Plymouth, options were limited; whitewall tires, color, nicer upholstery, radio, and heater.

**Some of my early used automobile buys did not even have a radio or heater.**

**Now options of most products take multipage printouts.**

**Have you recently received numerous pages listing add-ons, attachments, and extras available for your prized purchase—in 14 different languages?**

### The Book of Romans relates to life's most crucial option.

But myths obscure this choice.

#### People say:

**“All roads lead to heaven.”**

**“All religions have their good in points.”**

**“Choose the path that suits you.”**

### These fables cause people to take a wait and see attitude.

They put off making their minds this crucial choice we must make.

“The one-room church building had a packed house the night the two mischievous boys decided to have some fun. One of the boys had gotten a devil suit for Halloween. It was of reddish hue with small horns, a pointed tail, and a pitchfork. One of the boys put on the costume and the other boosted him in the back window.

“You can imagine what happened when the people saw the hideous figure. They ran out the door and crawled out windows. Everyone except one old woman in a wheelchair. Some fellow had been nice enough to roll her in, but in his excitement to get away he had forgotten all about her.

“The boy in the devil suit carried out his part. He continued to creep up on the woman. About the time he seemed ready to pounce on her, she threw up her hands and said,

‘Wait a minute, Mister Devil I've been a member of this church thirty years. I've been president of the W.M.U. twenty odd years; I've taught a class in this church for ten years—but all the time I've been on your side!’”<sup>1</sup>

We might ridicule this frightened lady, but she seemed to understand what many do not grasp.

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<sup>1</sup> *THE FUTURE OF EVANGELISM*, GERALD E. MARTIN  
P. 62, 63

**Most think we have several eternity options, not just two as this lady did.**

**Have you decided whose side you are on?**

**We think our choices are optional—it is up to us to decide.**

We like the idea of picking and choosing as we do at supermarkets, restaurants, car dealers, and paint stores.

**"I prefer this church or teaching."**

**Jesus taught otherwise: "I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**<sup>2</sup>

**There are not 1001 optional ways to heaven.**

**Adam and Eve got us off the road and there is only one way back to it.**

There are not 1001 on-ramps; only a road called Jesus.

**Adam and Eve go off the road because they rejected the choice God gave them.**

**Do recall what God told them about choosing?**

**There's was a single option relationship with God; "Do not eat from this tree." When you eat of it you will surely die."**<sup>3</sup>

**Recall how Satan misquoted God: "You will not surely die"?**

**Adam and Eve liked the devil's revision, didn't they?**

**Folks intent on easing others' consciences distort the truth using assurances such as:**

**"I love you, baby."**

**"It won't hurt; nothing will happen"**

**"My God loves everybody regardless."**

**"God loves you just the way you are."**

In one way, the devil is dependable; you can always rely on him to distort the truth.

**When he escorted Jesus to the highest part of the Temple and tempted him to jump, the devil said: "Don't worry. God will take care of you. He won't let you get hurt."**

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 2:17

**Nearly word for word, Satan quoted from Psalm 91.**

The devil falsified the meaning, however. He left out verse nine that is prior to the ones he quoted:

**"If you make the Lord your refuge . . ."**

To enjoy God's protection, we have to stay close to Him.

**We cannot wander where we want and expect to remain in God's care.**

We have to stay faithful to God and His word.

**It is important to regularly read God's Word so others cannot deceive us.**

Departing from Scripture is more dangerous than playing football or baseball or riding a Harley without wearing a helmet.

**This truth is vital:**

**Your life has only two possible outcomes.**

**One is demise; the other life forever:**

**"The way a sinful person thinks leads to death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit brings life and peace."**

**There is no middle ground or neutral area.**

We serve God or we are serving Satan.

**God allows no fence-straddling.**

**How would you react to your child whose allegiance is split between you and a terrorist neighbor?**

**"Do what you want to do. Play in the street with this deadly person. Either way I love you."**

**The devil is the father, step-father, and foster father of evil, deceit, lying, and death.**

Only God brings life, love, and peace.

**"The way a sinful person thinks leads to death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit brings life and peace." <sup>7</sup> The sinful mind is at war with God. It does not obey God's law. It can't. <sup>8</sup> Those who are controlled by their sinful nature can't please God."**

**Who controls your mind?**

**Here's where we need to shred some myths.**

**When I was young, I heard religious leaders teach that two conflicting natures fight within us.**

**We have a spark of the divine in us called our spirit and it battles with our evil flesh.**

War ravages between our good spirit and our sinful flesh, they said.

**Matthew 26 tells of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

He asked the disciples to wait and watch while he went farther to pray.

**He prayed fervently and then returned to find the disciples asleep.**

**Seeing that they flunked their sentry duties, he chided them:**

**"Couldn't you fellows stay awake and watch even an hour?"**

Their lack of concern saddened him.

**That's when Jesus stated the oft-quoted:**

**"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."<sup>4</sup>**

I doubt Jesus was speaking theologically as much as he was saying:

**"Guys, I'm disappointed. I know you had good intentions but you could have hung with me a little longer?"**

**In Romans Paul expressed how frustrating it was for him to control his fleshly nature.**

He wrote both theologically and from every day experience.

**"For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."<sup>5</sup>**

**Does your inability to stay true to God's principles bother you? My failure to always do right vexes me.**

**The New Testament speaks often of Spirit versus flesh conflict in us.**

**It does not say that there are two natures within us; there's no duality.**

**Our spirit is not good or flawless.**

Paul wrote this to the church in Corinth:

**"Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."**

**If our spirit can be contaminated, it is not perfect.**

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote: **"May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>**

**If our bodies can become blameless, they are not totally evil.**

**Many Greeks thought we have a dual nature.**

**In contrast the Bible teaches that nothing good dwells in.**

Our total person conflicts with God's Spirit.

Our spirit, body, and soul rebel against God.

**Our stubborn pride keeps interfering, doesn't it?**

**Perhaps you heard about the minister, who was burdened by the magnitude of his work.**

He went into the church auditorium to pray. Falling to his knees, he lamented, **"O Lord, I am nothing! I am nothing."**

The minister of education passed by, and overhearing the minister praying, he was moved to join the senior minister, who was still on his knees. Shortly he, too, was crying aloud, **"O Lord, I, too am nothing. I am nothing."**

The youth minister came into the building, heard the sounds of praying, observed his seniors, and he also fell to his knees and began praying, **"O Lord, I also am nothing. I am nothing."**

The janitor of the church, awed by the sight of the three men praying, joined them crying, **"O Lord, I likewise am nothing. I am nothing."**

At this, the youth minister nudged both the other ministers and said,

**"Now look who thinks he's nothing."**

**We humans, regardless of race, language, age, or any other category, scuffle exceedingly with all types of pride and resistance to God's rule.**

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:41

<sup>5</sup> Romans 7:18 NIV

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:1b; 1 Thessalonians; 5:23b

### **The Lord gave Paul the privilege of experiencing extraordinary insights.**

But then the Lord sent Paul painful thorns in the flesh to keep him from being puffed up.<sup>7</sup>

As a young minister, I heard rumors of older preachers, who were attempting to master the sins of the flesh in their lives and indicated that they were making progress.

**I have always felt like I was going the other direction; I have yet to conquer anything**

**During my prayers at Hollywood services, I often asked God to free me from “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes (greed) and the pride of life” as the Apostle John described them.<sup>8</sup>**

I was, of course, confessing my own shortcomings and hoping other would, too.

One day one of our younger deacons asked me when I was going to overcome that “**pride problem I had been mentioning in my prayers for two or three years.**”

**The Bible clearly says that we do not have a good side in us.**

**My brother Don used to say that “beauty is skin deep, but ugliness is all the way through.”**

I am hardly expert on beauty matters.

**My experience with sin, however, tells me it permeates our being.**

**What I read in the Scriptures agrees with my own experience:**

**“I know that nothing good dwells within me.”**

**Recall the two men who went to the Temple to pray?**

Note for whom Jesus intended this parable:

**“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:**

**This is for us who get proud that we have chosen the right way and are that we are God’s select folks.**

**<sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**

**<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’**

**<sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’**

**One of them went home justified. Do you remember which one that was?**

**<sup>14</sup> “I tell you that this man (the tax-collector sinner), rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”<sup>9</sup>**

**In Luke 17, Jesus told a parable about the duties of a servant, concluding it by stating:**

**“So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”**

The word translated unworthy here is the word for “Necessity” with an alpha (Greek “a” in front of it.

**For example, a theist is a person who believes in God.**

**Place an “a” in front of “theist” and the word is atheist.<sup>10</sup>**

Place an alpha or an “a” in front of the word necessity and you can see what we are worth even when we have done our best.

**Regardless of how much we think we know or how right we think we are, we are still unworthy.**

**These things only we can bring to God:**

- Praise God for His greatness and power.
- Thank God for His mercy in Christ.

<sup>7</sup> See Acts 19 and 2 Corinthians 12.

<sup>8</sup> See 1 John 2:15, 16

<sup>9</sup> Luke 18: 9-14 NIV

<sup>10</sup> Grammarians refer to this as an “alpha privative”

- Love God and love one another as Jesus loved us

**Jesus' love is the most powerful force available to human beings.**

People say it's impractical.

**It can never work.**

**People will run all over us.**

**We'll be laughingstocks.**

**Let me tell you about a misfit army inductee:**

"He became the butt of all the jokes in the training platoon. The sergeant, a hardened war veteran, was disgusted with useless, excuse for a soldier. The sergeant made this worthless soldier's life hell. One day the men in the platoon decided to play a joke on him. They obtained a dummy hand grenade, but the sergeant told everyone in the platoon that it was a live grenade. He handed it to one of the soldiers to throw. The soldier pulled the pin and then fumbled with it and let it drop at the feet of the misfit."

"The misfit quickly fell on it pulling it to his stomach. As seconds ticked by he began to realize that it was a joke. He had again made a fool of himself. He looked up in humiliation expecting everyone to laugh at him as they always did. But no one was laughing. The sergeant gently lifted him to his feet and dusted the dirt from him. Never again did anyone laugh at the 'misfit.' He had been ready to die for those who had been ridiculing him."<sup>11</sup>

**Those who are led by Christ's Spirit are just like him.**

**<sup>9</sup> But your sinful nature does not control you. The Holy Spirit controls you. The Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not**

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<sup>11</sup> I read and retained this story 40 years ago, but I did not keep a record of its source.

**have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.** <sup>10</sup> Christ lives in you.

**The fruit of the Spirit in our lives is evidence that we are allowing God's Spirit to lead us.**

**How do you recognize the Spirit's fruit?**

**"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**

**<sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**<sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."<sup>12</sup>**

**Thank God for his love and mercy in Christ for us unworthy beings.**

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<sup>12</sup> Galatians 5:22-26