

NBS | THE MIND SET ON THE SPIRIT

PART I

David Baker, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 4 October 2021
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Good morning. It is great to be with you, enjoying the fellowship in the word across a number of centres this weekend. We have been enjoying His word, and are blessed, as we digest this content together.

I will focus on Section 3 of our booklet: 'The mind set on the Spirit'.

Setting our mind on the flesh or setting our mind on the Spirit

As part of the cultural application of the weekend, the main point that I am making is that there are two very distinct and different mindsets, or ways, that we can 'set our mind'. These two mindsets reveal two *modes of life*.

And they have two very distinct outcomes. The end for those who set their mind on the flesh is 'death'; damnation.

And the end for those who set their mind on the Spirit is 'life and peace'.

Reading our key verses: 'For those who live according to the flesh [a principle of life; a mode of life] set their minds on the things of the flesh.' Rom 8:5.

We could say that in reverse. If we set our mind on the things of the flesh, it reveals that we are living according to the flesh.

'Those who live according to the flesh set their mind on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Rom 8:5-6

Identifying our carnal response as a Christian

By way of introduction, I will endeavour to summarise the key proposition.

Paul, using his own experience, described the carnal problem for a Christian. Rom 7. This problem is common to us all, so we easily identify with this.

The problem is that, even though we may delight in the word of God, agree with it, want to obey it, delight in it, receive it as it is proclaimed, we have

another law in our heart that keeps us in bondage to the law of sin.

We need to recognise this problem – and this is quite a journey sometimes. Paul helpfully illustrated the journey for us.

He said, in effect, 'I am observing my life, and what I am concluding is that I don't understand what I'm doing because, what I want to do, I don't end up doing. And what I don't want to do – that's what I end up doing. I don't understand what's happening.'

But then he said, 'I *find* then a law.' Rom 7:21.

There are two different ways of finding this, because it is not as simple as saying, 'Oh, well, I come along to BCF. Everyone is talking about "the other law". I find then that this is my problem. I have another law in my heart.

'So now I am absolutely consumed and preoccupied with the other law in my heart. The other law is causing me to do this, and the other law' is causing me to do that – everything is now explained. I understand that it is all the other law.'

Deliverance from this carnal response; our choice

Now, the other law is a big problem. However, there are two different ways of approaching our deliverance from this issue.

When we recognise this problem, which is common to us all, we need to *choose* which 'prayer meeting' we are going to join in our search for a remedy. And we do need a remedy.

The apostle Paul described two distinct prayer meetings. He described 'the carnal prayer meeting' in Romans Chapter 7; and then 'the spiritual prayer meeting' in Romans Chapter 8.

The 'carnal' prayer meeting

We haven't described Romans Chapter 7 from this perspective before. But it is helpful to say that this is actually the description of a carnal prayer meeting, which describes a whole 'mode of life'.

The central feature of the carnal prayer meeting is a perpetual cry to God for 'deliverance from the body of death'. If we continually seek the Lord for deliverance in this way, we will look to others for deliverance, as well. Paul said, 'Who will deliver me from this body of death?' That is the carnal prayer meeting.

He expanded on that prayer meeting when he said, in effect, 'Who will ascend into heaven to bring Christ down for me, or who will descend into the abyss, to bring Christ up from the dead?' Rom 10:7.

This is the expansion, if you like, of 'Who will deliver me?'

When we seek deliverance in this way, we will often look to others: for example, our spouse, other family members, friends, health practitioners, and religious leaders.

There are, of course, many examples of the way in which we do this; particularly in relation to religious leaders. We may look for someone to 'script' for us. We may look for all kinds of lengthy pastoral discussions to identify our problem, and then to put a framework in place for our deliverance.

This is often the nature of pastoral counsel. How do I find deliverance from my problem? The Lord wants to deliver us from looking for deliverance in this way. He wants to deliver us from continually and perpetually looking for deliverance.

And some of us may need to 'repent from repenting' all the time from this self-motivated, self-righteous perspective, in our search for deliverance.

Repentance – turning to set our mind on the Spirit

Now, we do need to repent. But we repent according to what Jesus Christ is saying to us, and what the Holy Spirit is convicting us of, in our heart.

And the nature of our repentance, which the Lord is looking for, is *turning from walking after the flesh*. And it means 'setting our mind on the things of the flesh'. We turn from the flesh to 'set our mind on the things of the Spirit'.

This is the critical point. Rather than continually crying out for deliverance, we need to recognise

that if we have been born of the Spirit, we can and must set our mind on the things of the Spirit by *joining a completely different prayer meeting*.

The apostle Paul highlighted this major point. 'So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.' Rom 8:8.

It doesn't matter how much repentance, how much pastoral counsel, how much religious service we carry out, if we are walking after the flesh, we *cannot* please God.

And, more than that, we are *under the judgement of God*.

Born of the Spirit – free to choose to set our mind on the Spirit

'But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.' Rom 8: 9.

So, if we are born of the Spirit, and we have Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Father, *dwelling* in our heart; and then He gives us the Holy Spirit so that we are *born of the Spirit* - if the Spirit of God dwells in us, and we are born as a son of God - then we are not obliged to live in the flesh.

We are *free to choose* to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. We received this freedom as soon as we were born of the Spirit.

If we are born of the Spirit, we need to recognise the key to our deliverance, which is already in our hands. And we appreciate that freedom, the glorious liberty.

Also then, we appreciate the *accountability* that we all have as sons of God, to make this choice. And we are culpable for the choice that we make.

Remaining in the flesh

So, if we continue to participate in the carnal prayer meeting, it is because we have *chosen* to do so. There is no obligation to do this. We have chosen to do so; and it leads only to damnation.

As sons of God, we will be delivered from the body of death. However, our deliverance is not the outcome of the carnal prayer meeting, our self-motivated repentance or of lengthy pastoral discussion.

The spiritual prayer meeting

Our deliverance is the outcome of *our ongoing participation in the spiritual prayer meeting*.

What is the nature of 'the spiritual prayer meeting'?

In the flesh, we have *no capacity* to join this prayer meeting. However, as we choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit helps our weakness. He makes intercession for us with groanings too deep for words.

Now, *our* groaning is real; but the Holy Spirit converts the groaning into prayer 'in the Spirit'.

Jesus Christ then responds to the intercession of the Holy Spirit by searching our hearts with 'eyes like a flame of fire'.

This is not a mysterious or mystical experience. We do not pray, waiting on our knees, for some kind of 'lightning bolt' of illumination to pierce our heart.

Jesus Christ *hears* the prayer of the Holy Spirit. And He *responds* by proclaiming His word to us, through the messengers who are in His right hand. They are 'the seven stars in His right hand'.

That word pierces our heart. It is *the word of the cross*. As we turn in *response* to that word, we meet Christ Himself, eye to eye and heart to heart. And He illuminates to us, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the issue that He is addressing in our heart, and what the nature of our repentance needs to be.

This is not our own self-analysis. It is the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

As we turn in response to that word and that conviction, we know, we are assured, that Jesus Christ Himself is making intercession for us to God the Father. He is ministering to us our participation in the fellowship of His offering so that, in that offering, 'God is working all things together for our good'.

This is not automatic. This is not fatalistic. God does not automatically work all things together for our good. But we know that, as we continue to respond to the word of the cross as it pierces our heart, and we turn to meet Christ, eye to eye, heart to heart, and embrace our participation in His offering, He is making intercession for us.

God is working all things together for our good.

The other law is being circumcised from our heart, and His love is being poured into our heart.

We are learning what it means to be an obedient son of God.

The renewing of our mind

Further, as we continue to walk by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, our *mind is also being renewed*.

It is only when we choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit by joining the new prayer meeting, that our mind can be renewed in the fellowship of that prayer meeting.

This is a significant point. We can all identify the need for our mind to be renewed. We can all identify the difficulties that we have with our mind - the way our anxious thoughts can multiply; the way we are prone to 'mind chatter'; all of these things.

And, of course, in the world, mental illness continues to flourish. It doesn't matter how many help lines and how many mental health days the world puts in place, it continues to flourish.

Of course, we are all familiar with this as well, because these issues are also easy to identify in the church. We know when we are becoming anxious. As I said, we are familiar with the problem of mind chatter.

However, it is not that our mind is renewed and we are waiting for some kind of watershed or deliverance so that we are *then* able to set our mind on the things of the Spirit.

It is the other way around. We recognise that we are a son of God, and that we are free and accountable to choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit by joining a new prayer meeting. Then, in the fellowship of that prayer meeting, our mind is being renewed.

The fruit of a renewed mind

And the *fruit* that our mind is being renewed is actually very simple. We stop thinking about ourselves, and we begin to think about others. This is the 'fruit' of a renewed mind.

Paul noted that it is very easy to identify. The fruit that shows that our mind is being renewed is that we are no longer preoccupied with our own issues, our own problems, our own circumstances - even if that is the other law in our heart. We are letting go of all of those preoccupations; and, also, our preoccupation with finding our own name and revealing our own sonship.

Paul exhorted us, 'Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' Php 2:3.

This is the nature of the mind that belongs to Christ. We recognise that if we have been born as sons of God and we have been baptised into Christ, we have 'died with Him' and our sonship, our *zoe* life, is hidden, with Christ, in God.

We know that Jesus Christ has completed the works of our sonship. He has learned our obedience. He has 'finished the race'. Our hope is already in heaven as a son of God; already finished, already done, already complete.

So we can relax, as long as we are setting our mind on the things of the Spirit.

We know that when Christ who is our life appears, then we will also appear with Him in glory.

Now, this is all contingent on our *continuing to walk after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering*.

Being led by the Holy Spirit

As our mind is being renewed in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are learning to *relinquish the control of our life* to the Holy Spirit.

And we are learning to be *obedient to the doctrine of our baptism*, to which we have been delivered. We are learning to be obedient from the heart, as the love of God is being poured into our heart.

We are learning to relinquish control of our life to the Holy Spirit. He has been given to us to be the expression of our name, both as a son of God and as a member of the body of Christ.

When we talk about being 'led by the Holy Spirit', we know that we are talking about the pathway of Christ's offering. 'Walking after the Spirit' means being led by the Spirit on that offering journey.

When we are led by the Holy Spirit, our preoccupation is not to reveal our own sonship. Rather, our preoccupation is to *reveal Jesus Christ* by revealing the members of His body.

So we become content with the simplicity of laying down our lives to reveal one another. This is the 'fruit' of a renewed mind.

The mind that is set on the Spirit is life

Coming back to our key verse, we read, 'For to be carnally minded is death'. Rom 8:6. This means eternal judgement, damnation.

'But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' It is 'life' because, when we are joined, by the Spirit, to the fellowship of Christ's offering, the Holy Spirit takes the life that belongs to Christ, and it is becoming our life in the fellowship of that offering.

As we die with Christ, embracing the fellowship of His death, being co-cursed, or co-crucified, with Christ, and we are being taken out in judgement with Him, we are also receiving *resurrection life*.

So there is another principle of life, and it is called 'the law of the Spirit of life' that is in Christ Jesus; and it is bringing us back with Him from the death of sin.

The mind that is set on the Spirit is life, because we are receiving resurrection life. And, because we are receiving resurrection life, our spirit is now alive, even though the body is dead because of sin. But we are joined to His death, His dying, and we are receiving His life.

'Even though our outer man is perishing, our inner man is being *renewed* day by day'. This includes the renewing of our mind.

The mind that is set on the Spirit is peace

Further to this, Paul declared, 'The mind that is set on the Spirit is *peace*', because it is our participation in the spiritual prayer meeting that enables us to enter 'the rest of Christ'.

We know that Christ has already perfected our sonship.

Rather than striving to fulfil the works of our sonship, we turn our attention, our mind, our focus, our preoccupation to the *simplicity* of revealing our brethren in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Our freedom and accountability as sons of God

I want to highlight the freedom and the accountability that we have been given as sons of

God; and the culpability that we have as sons of God.

If we choose to set our mind on the things of the flesh, we will die. And that is damnation.

But we can choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit.

And, as our mind is being renewed, we are finding the simplicity of not being preoccupied with ourselves or our own sonship, and are turning our attention to revealing others. That is our proposition. That is the summary.

A process of deliverance

We will now highlight a couple of key points from the book of Romans. There are many 'layers', as I am sure you are appreciating, throughout Romans Chapter 7.

Paul prefaced this by saying that there is no problem with the Law. There is no problem with the word. The Law is not sin. The Law is not deficient. The problem is elsewhere.

'But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment.' Rom 7:8. When Paul uses the term 'the commandment' or he refers to 'the Law', that is not limited to the Ten Commandments. This is equally relevant here for us today.

As the word of faith is being preached to us under the New Covenant, there are two ways of living; there are two ways of responding; there are two ways of interfacing with the word that is being proclaimed to us, to bring life.

'Sin taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.' Another translation says, 'coveting of every kind'. 'For apart from the Law, sin was dead.'

'I was alive once without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.' Rom 7:9. This refers to a person who has been born as a son of God, baptised into Christ.

'I was alive once without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.'

We have *died to the Law* through the crucified body of Christ.

And, having died with Christ, we are being delivered from *the condemnation of the Law*.

There is a *process* of deliverance here, and it is working only in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Deceived into using the word of the Lord, and others, as a resource for life

From the perspective of his own life and testimony, Paul helpfully explained that, even though we have died to the Law with Christ, if we set our mind on the things of the flesh when the word of God is proclaimed to us, it will bring us back into captivity to the law of sin and death. The life that we have received will die. And we are damned.

So 'the stakes are high' in relation to this choice. Paul described the operation of the carnal mind that leads to death by saying that, when the word of God is proclaimed, it gives the law of sin the opportunity to *deceive* us into laying hold of the word, in the flesh.

This means that it provokes us to *covet* the word as a resource that will facilitate our own religious aspirations, our idealism, our projections.

Remember, the law of sin is motivating us, in a world with limited resource, to find life and to escape death.

And what is the greatest resource of all? It is the word of God, because it is instinct with life, in contrast to everything else that is in the world.

The word comes; it is proclaimed; it is instinct with life; it is instinct with faith.

The other great resource that we are prone to use and abuse is *the members of the body of Christ*. This is all carnal; this is in the flesh.

The word of God is proclaimed, and the law of sin has an opportunity to motivate us, if we are setting our mind on the things of the flesh, to say, 'This is my resource that I can use to not only to escape hell, but also to realise all of my religious aspirations.'

This is a great deception because, as soon as we lay hold of the word of God as a resource, we immediately come under its *judgement*. Laying hold of the word in this manner is not an action of faith. It actually condemns us to 'the lake of fire'.

Our motive may govern our heart – self-centeredness

We need to recognise that 'motive governs mind'. This is an important point to digest.

We all know the power of the mind, and the nature of 'mind over matter'. It is also important, then, to recognise that our motive governs our mind.

If we are continually beset with anxiety, it is not external factors that explain that for us. If we are beset with anxiety, it reveals that we are *self-centred*. It reveals *the nature of my heart*.

So a work has to be done in our heart for our mind to be renewed.

Recognising that motive governs mind, a person may simply be motivated by the law of sin to delight in the Law of God, if they perceive it to be 'beneficial' for them to do so.

We may genuinely delight in the word of God because we are receiving, and have received, spiritual illumination.

However, Paul testified that, regardless of his 'agreement' with the word and even his will to obey it, and his delight in it, *he did not have*, in his flesh, *the capacity for obedience*.

Obedience to God's word is found only in the fellowship of Christ's offering

Obedience is very important, because we do need to be obedient to the word. But we find this obedience only in the fellowship of the offering of Christ, who has learned our obedience for us.

If we are disobedient to the word, that is our judgement. That is what invokes judgement upon us.

So we agree with it; we want to obey it; we are rejoicing in it - but we have no capacity to obey it.

Finding the other law of control in us; no capacity to be obedient

We could see this as being the first note in Paul's 'diary'; in his 'devotional journal': 'What I'm doing, I do not understand.' Rom 7:15.

Paul may have looked back over the day and thought, 'What I have done today, I do not understand, because it was not what I set out to do at the beginning of the day. In fact, what I set out to do, I didn't do. And everything I set out not to do and avoid, I ended up doing. I don't understand what is going on. Then I find out, because someone tells me about this other law. Ah ha! Now I understand what is going wrong all the time. I have another law in my heart.'

'I find then a law.' Rom 7:21.

But if this finding, or discovering, is not the outcome of Jesus Christ searching our heart with eyes like a flame of fire and revealing to us the nature of our heart, while at the same time revealing to us the nature of His offering to see what He is revealing to us removed and circumcised from us - if this is not the outcome of that relational interaction - this is giving us no help at all.

We are simply finding another explanation for why we do the things we do; and another thing to talk about and to become preoccupied with, and to *try* to be delivered from.

'I find then *another law*, that evil is present with me the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man, but I see *another law*.' Rom 7:23.

So, I'm seeing this everywhere now; I see it everywhere in my life. This now explains it all for me.

'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.'

Now, Paul did come to understand this. And we do need to understand this.

This is the issue with the other law. And the reason why it is always warring against the law of our mind is because, whenever we decide that we want to be obedient, *the other law*, which is the deepest desire in our heart to be the source of our own identity, name, works, *refuses to relinquish control*.

So whenever we get right to the 'precipice', no matter how much we want to do it; no matter how much we are convinced that this is going to be the best thing, the most helpful thing to do, when it gets to the point, *we cannot let go of control*.

We have no capacity to be obedient in our flesh.

Paul recognised that this unyielding desire for control in his heart led him *back into bondage* to the law of sin, and under the judgement of God. He said, 'O wretched man that I am!' Rom 7:24. And this is true. This is true for each and every one of us. 'O wretched man that I am!'

In 'seeing' our heart, what is our response?

But, recognising this to be true, which prayer meeting will we join?

Paul then articulated the carnal prayer meeting: 'Who will deliver me from this body of death?'

We have tended to interpret this from the positive perspective of a person who is 'bankrupt in spirit'. Now, we *do* need to be bankrupt in spirit. And we *do* need to recognise that we cannot perform 'the heart operation' on ourselves. We cannot 'deliver' ourselves.

But we are seeing this, because we are meeting Christ eye to eye and heart to heart. We are seeing what is in our heart.

And we are also being connected to the broken heart of Christ, so that we are very quickly seeing – very quickly seeing – not only the nature of our own heart, but also the grief that that has caused to God the Father because of our rebellion and rejection of His fatherhood.

We are also seeing the pain, the suffering, the wounds, that we have inflicted upon Jesus Christ, because our reproach upon the Father has been 'laid upon Him'. And that reproach broke His heart.

So, when we are in that relational interaction, we are very quickly 'getting our eyes off ourselves' – even though this is the first time that we actually understand ourselves.

And we are recognising the impact of the nature of our heart upon God, upon Christ, and upon others – so we are beginning to *mourn*.

This is a very different response from being self-centred, self-focused, self-preoccupied, seeing 'my problem', but wanting someone to deliver me from my problem.

The body of death

We will consider 'the body of death' for a moment. Paul used this term, 'the body of death'. It refers to the whole 'first man', who has become the 'old man'. So this is all 'going out with Christ'.

It is an holistic statement. It includes our physical body, but it is not limited to our physical body. We know that our whole person is spirit, soul and body.

This discussion is not like some kind of Greek philosophy where the inner man is still 'good',

and the outer man is the problem. Nor is it some other kind of doctrine where the spirit is 'good' and the soul is 'bad'.

This refers to the whole nature of our fallen humanity; the 'old man' that is completely in bondage to death and to the principle of death.

And we can identify this in relation to our *spirit* – our identity. We can identify it in relation to all of the faculties of our *soul*. And we can also identify it in relation to our *physical body* – the body of death.

The other law

The first element of the body of death is 'the other law' that was fathered in the hearts of Adam and Eve, by the lie of Satan. It resides in the heart of every fallen human being.

The other law is our desire to be 'like God'. That is, to be in 'control' of our life or to be the source – in control of our life as the source of our own name and works.

This, of course, is completely *self-centred*. And we very quickly find that we are not *able* to be the source of anything.

The only thing that happens is that we now have a big, gaping void or vacuum that is bottomless; that has no capacity to be the source of anything. It is merely an insatiable desire for identity verification.

This is the principle that is at work in the spirit of man – the other law. It is *other* than the Law of love, so that every thought, every attitude, every behaviour brings us under the judgement of God; under the curse of the Lord. We are alienated and cut off from His life.

One of the most obvious symptoms of this, which every person will identify, is that we have 'an evil conscience'. Now, it is not simply that we have a conscience, because our conscience is part of who we are as a person, and it is our ability to 'know ourselves with ourselves'. And it *should* be bearing witness by the Holy Spirit.

But the fact that our conscience is now *bearing witness* – it is an evil conscience – to our own knowledge of good and evil, as though we are the source of our life, is the symptom of the other law that is in our heart.

The law of sin

The second element of the body of death is 'the law of sin' that is at work in all of our faculties. This includes our mind, our will, our emotions.

It is at work in us because we are 'sons of disobedience'. And we give it advantage whenever we listen to or heed the word of Satan. The law of sin is 'the spirit of Satan' that deceives us and distorts all of our faculties and senses.

It causes us to *covet*. It is the principle of 'covetousness' which Paul identified in Romans Chapter 7. It causes us to covet what does not belong to us, in the mistaken belief that this will help us to find life and to escape death.

You can see, then, that as we covet in this way, we will violate the ground of fellowship everywhere.

The law of sin describes the way of living that belongs to fallen mankind, who compete with each other for the limited resource of life. The Scripture describes this in a number of different ways. This is comparison; it is envy; it is competition; it is strife. These are all symptoms of 'the fear of death' that is at work in us.

And, of course, the most obvious of all symptoms of the fear of death, and the reason why we are in bondage to the fear of death, is our *anxiety*.

We note that the fear of death in all of its various manifestations is the primary symptom of the law of sin at work in us.

Our mortal body that is dying

The third element of the body of death is *our mortal body that is dying because of sin*. Of course, the major symptom of the mortal body that is dying because of sin is all of our aches and pains, and the degeneration that is part of the aging process. That is very easy to identify, isn't it? This is the body of death!

Now, Paul rejoiced that there is *deliverance* from the body of death. He said, 'I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!' Rom 7:25.

This is not the response of the carnal prayer meeting!

'I thank God' – the Father – 'through Jesus Christ our Lord!' We recognise that we are a son of God. The Spirit of God dwells in us. We have a choice. We have the freedom and the accountability to set our mind on the things of the Spirit.

As we do so, we embrace our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. And, through that participation, we are finding deliverance from the body of death.

Paul appreciated that his deliverance from the other law in his heart was a life-long process. This is not the outcome of one, profound, pastoral discussion or one altar call or one watershed or one amazing illumination that we receive.

We recognise that this is a life-long process as we continue to walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering. And, as the other law is being circumcised from our heart, we are ceasing from sin.

Paul also understood that he would not be delivered from the pain and suffering that was associated with his mortality, until the very end of his earthly pilgrimage. He embraced the reality of his mortality as a participation in Christ's sufferings.

However, he was also looking forward to the day of his *deliverance*. He looked forward to the day when his mortality would be wholly swallowed up by the resurrection life of God, as his final deliverance from the body of death.

Our new reality

So we do not need to run around looking for deliverance from all the various elements of our mortality, now. But we do look forward to the day of our deliverance. We have a new reality now.

Paul said, 'I thank God.' He recognised that he was a son of God. 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord!' There was an offering here that he joined.

We can serve the Law of God

And our deliverance is through that offering. Our new reality is that 'with the mind I myself serve the Law of God'.

This is not the same as 'delighting in the Law of God'. We are now able to 'serve' it. Remember, the person who sets their mind on the things of the flesh may delight in the Law of God. They may delight in the word, but they find no capacity to be obedient. They are not serving.

Serving in the newness of the Spirit

Now, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are finding the capacity to be obedient to the word that we delight in, because the love of God is

being poured into our heart. We are now serving, and it is in 'the newness of the Spirit'.

We know that this can't be the carnal mind who is delighting because Paul explained that the carnal mind is 'enmity with God'. Rom 8. It cannot subject itself to the Law of God. It cannot serve. It cannot be done.

So this is *the spiritual mind*. But, at the same time, and this appears to be a contradiction - and it is - Paul said, 'With my mind I serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.'

Sin is condemned in our flesh

So, even though I am finding capacity for obedience, I know that I still have the other law in my heart.

I am still prone to the occasional reaction when someone 'pushes my buttons' the right way or hard enough. I can see that.

And I also know that I am living in a mortal body, which is dying, with all of its various aches and pains. Now, this is a contradiction. With my mind I serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

However, it is not a contradiction *in Christ*. This is explained by the two goats. Well, it is a contradiction, but the explanation is in recognising that we are joined to Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God; and the Lamb of God embodies two goats.

One goat is cursed and going out to destruction. And the other goat, 'the Lord's goat', is returning, by resurrection life, as a pure offering to the Father.

And *as I am joined to the offering of Jesus Christ*, I am joined to His offering in both of these dimensions. So, sin is being condemned in my flesh, as I recognise that I am co-cursed and crucified with Christ, and I am going out with Him to destruction. And that is an absolute.

We live by resurrection life

At the same time as I embrace my *fellowship in His death*, in His offering, I also know that I am *coming back with Him by the resurrection life* of God in His blood.

I am finding the capacity for obedience while, at the same time, sin is being destroyed in my flesh. This is our reality.

And I rejoice in this new reality, which is only possible in the offering of Christ.

There is now no condemnation

'So then, with my mind I serve the Law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.' Then he continued, 'There is therefore now *no condemnation*.'

The distinction here, or the break, in the chapters, isn't necessarily helpful. Although it is helpful in the sense that Romans 7 describes a carnal prayer meeting, and Romans 8 describes a spiritual prayer meeting. We simply need to *choose* to join the spiritual prayer meeting.

Paul's description continued, 'I thank God - through Jesus Christ my Lord!' 'This is my new reality.'

'There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.' Rom 8:1. Now, there *is* condemnation, and we are under condemnation.

However, if we are under condemnation in the offering of Christ but we are co-crucified, co-cursed with Him, that condemnation is now focused on destroying sin in our life, and we are coming back with Christ by the power of His resurrection life.

'There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit'.

Paul kept emphasising, or labouring, the point that we are being led by the Spirit. We are walking on a pathway, led by the Spirit. However, this is only effective for us as we choose to *set our mind on the things of the Spirit*.

Paul's use of the term 'condemnation' did not refer to the emotion that we feel, which is regret or shame, or any of our other emotions when we are aware that we have done something wrong.

Rather, it refers to 'the sentence of death'. This is a person who has been 'charged'. The sentence has been passed, so they are condemned, and they are waiting for that sentence to be executed when they will lose their life.

We do not live under condemnation, because 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death'. Rom 8:2. There is another principle of life that we are joined to in the offering of Christ.

'For what the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.' Rom 8:3.

So, in the offering of Christ, as He became the body of sin, and suffered - under the curse of the Law - the condemnation, the judgement, of God, because He was dying obediently and by the grace of God, it became for Him a circumcising event which removed the body of sin from Him. The condemnation, if you like, was focused on *the destruction of sin*.

And we have to choose to join this process; otherwise, we will still live under this condemnation.

'For what the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.' Rom 8:3.

This is where the process of condemnation is working. It is in the flesh of the body of Christ; His crucified body.

'He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us [we are learning to be obedient]. Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.' Rom 8:4.

The Spirit is life because of righteousness

'But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you [if Christ dwells in you; His life is being formed in you], the body is dead because of sin.' Rom 8:9.

Our physical body is dying; but we are now joined to the physical body of Jesus Christ and to His offering death, so that 'the Spirit is life because of righteousness'.

We are receiving the resurrection life of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, in the fellowship of that offering. And, as we receive that resurrection life, our spirit, our identity, is being made alive. We are coming back from the death of sin with Him. Our inner man is being renewed.

When Paul said, 'because of righteousness', he was referring to 'the righteous offering of Christ'.

It is important to recognise that the book of Romans is an integrated 'package'. As Paul wrote,

he built propositions, and he referred to things that he said earlier. He also projected forward to points that he would make later.

So, when he said, 'because of righteousness', he was referring to the 'one Man's righteous act'. We read earlier in the book of Romans that 'through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all, resulting in justification of life'.

'Justification of life' means the resurrection life of Christ that gives every son of God the capacity to live a justified life.

The love of God is our new motivation

Our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the remedy to our carnal dilemma that is described in Romans Chapter 7.

In the fellowship of the wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, the other law is being circumcised from our heart; and the love of God is being poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

The love of God is our new motivation, which is replacing the emotions of sin.

It is also *the capacity for our obedience to the word of God* that has been proclaimed to us.

Debtors to live by the Spirit in resurrection life

'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies.' Rom 8:11.

Exanastasis life is now coming to our physical body, as well. We are finding the capacity, or the grace, to fulfil the will of God, each day.

'Therefore, brethren we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. But we are debtors to walk after the Spirit.' Rom 8:12.

We are 'debtors' to Jesus Christ, because He has purchased us; He has redeemed us. And this is our only choice. We have freedom of choice. And we have accountability for our choice. But we are completely obliged by the Spirit to choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. We are 'debtors to live by the Spirit'.