



Walking

in the

Spirit

**An Exegetical Analysis
of Romans 8:1-8**

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Introduction

The passage that will be discussed, Romans 8:1-8 is one of the most comforting elocutions from the Apostle Paul in the Scripture. He opens the eighth chapter declaring that those who are “in Christ Jesus”, will have “no condemnation.” (Rom. 8:1) What a comforting thought for the believer, and a dreadful truth for the unbeliever. Over the seven ensuing verses, Paul develops a dynamic theology expounding on the contrast between the polar-opposites of one walking in the flesh and one walking in the Spirit. This paper is designed to examine both the historical and literary context of the passage, aiding in the production of an exegetical analysis that will provide an application of the text to the reader.

Context

It is important, according to Chadwick Thornhill (2016) that we examine the “contexts”² of passages in the Bible. This exegetical analysis of Romans 8:1-8 will be examining the historical-cultural and literary “kinds and layers of context”³ of the passage, in order to present an accurate exegesis of it.

Historical-Cultural Context

Craig Bloomberg said that “understanding the historical context of a passage removes the haze of obscure cultural traditions that often shrouds the text for modern interpreters of Scripture.”⁴ Understanding the historical-cultural context helps the exegete to both render the intended meaning of the original writing, and to develop a present-day application for the passage. First, the internal evidence of this epistle declares it to have been authored by the

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, King James Version.

² Chadwick Thornhill, *Greek for Everyone: Introductory Greek for Bible Study and Application*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 151.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Craig Bloomberg, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), Ch.3.

Apostle Paul (Rom. 1:1), by the hand of one of his writers, Tertius. (Rom.16:22) This understanding will also include asking the question: What was going on in Rome when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans? Once understood, we will look for ways to apply it to our contemporary scene.

In response to the question above, the eleventh-century French scholar, theologian, and philosopher, Peter Abelard, wrote that the Romans who were “converted from among the Jews and Gentiles, were placing themselves in front of each other with snobbish contention.”⁵ However, Phillip Schaff (1888-1893) wrote that Paul’s letter was written due to a large number of converts in Rome, and “in prophetic anticipation of its future importance, that Paul addressed to it from Corinth his most important doctrinal Epistle (a.d. 58), which was to prepare the way for his long-desired personal visit.”⁶ Schaff’s explanation seems to appeal more to the internal evidence of the first half of the first chapter of Romans, as well as the fact that at the time of the writing of this epistle, Paul “has never visited Rome” and felt it necessary to “establish his apostolic credentials.”⁷ Meanwhile, Abelard’s explanation points more toward the second half of that same chapter, and most of what follows it, including the passage in consideration. It is probable that they both are historically accurate, he was coming for a long-awaited visit, but also addressed them on their contentions, which Paul had been known to do on other occasions, like with the churches at Corinth and Galatia. Finally, they were a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles who likely spoke Greek with a mixture of Hebrew.

⁵ Peter Abelard, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. (ProQuest Ebook Central. Translated by Steven R Cartwright. Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 87.

⁶ Schaff, Phillip. E-Sword: *History of the Christian Church*. Vols. 1, Ch.5, Section 035-036. (Franklin, TN, 1888-1893).

⁷ Frank Matera, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 26.

Literary Context

When discussing the literary context of a book, the question should be asked, “What kind of writings [or what genre] are these [writings]?”⁸ According to the internal evidence, the genre of the book of Roman’s is that of an “Epistle” (Romans 16:22). Richard Longenecker (2016) said: “when analyzed in epistolary terms, it should be understood as a “letter essay” of instruction and appeal, comparable to various Greco-Roman letters of instruction.”⁹

It is also important to examine the passage being exegeted in the light of its context as well; what comes before it? And what comes after it? In Romans Chapter 7, Paul discourses on the tremendous struggle with the flesh against sin, and that it is only through Jesus Christ that man can be delivered “from the body of this death.” (Rom. 7:24) Thus, ensuring the security of struggling believers, opening Chapter 8 with a comforting declaration “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom 8:1) Following Romans 8:1-8, Paul continues to move the believer forward to their heirship with Christ, their future glory, and the everlasting love of God.

Analysis of Text

One author described the eighth chapter of Romans as “a rich and comprehensive portrayal of what it means to be a Christian.”¹⁰ Rather than attempting to analyze Romans 8:1-8 as one section, it will be broken down into three relative sections: verses 1-2, “no condemnation”; verses 3-4, “the weakness of the flesh” vs. “ the righteousness of the law”; verses 5-6 “carnally minded” vs. “spiritually minded”; and verses 6-8, “enmity against God”. In

⁸ Chadwick Thornhill., 162.

⁹ Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Accessed April 20, 2018. (ProQuest Ebook Central., ProQuest Ebook Central.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), 79.

¹⁰ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 270.

this step, the English text will be compared to various Greek texts which this author has selected for use in this analysis, *the Stephanus Textus Receptus*, *the Schrivener's Textus Receptus* and *the Byzantine text*.

Romans 8:1-2

The King James Bible reads: “[1] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

The Stephanus Textus Receptus, the Schrivener's Textus Receptus and the Byzantine text read alike in this passage, but various other Greek Texts leave out “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”, from the first verse. For this analysis, it will remain in the text and will be analyzed alongside the King James Version, which is a formal translation, and this author holds to be the only accurate one in the English language.

According to one Interlinear Bible¹¹, the first verse begins with the pronoun “οὐδεὶς”, which is the “nominative negative adjective”¹² of the neuter “οὐδὲν”, and is translated as “no”, which James Strong (1890) defined also as “not even one, never (man), no (man), none (+ of these things), not (any, at all, -thing), nought.”¹³ Friberg's, et.al, lexicon says it is “used for negating a referent; as an adjective to negate a noun *no, not even one*; as an accusative of respect *in no way, in nothing at all*.”¹⁴ There is a “peculiar emphasis given to ‘οὐδεὶς’ by its position at

¹¹ Scripture 4 All. *Scripture 4 All: Greek Interlinear Bible (NT)*. 2015.
http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Greek_Index.htm.

¹² Maurice Robinson, *Robinson's Morphological Analysis Codes*. (Digital: E-sword Bible Software, 2005-2010).

¹³ James Strong, *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*. (Public Domain: E-Sword Bible Software, 1890), οὐδεὶς.

¹⁴ Timothy Friberg, et.al. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. (Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 287

the head of the sentence and its separation from its noun.”¹⁵ ‘Οὐδεὶς’ is followed by the disjunctive particle “ἄρα” translated as “[There is] therefore” which is “denoting an inference more or less decisive (as follows): - haply, (what) manner (of man), no doubt, perhaps, so be, then, therefore, truly, wherefore.”¹⁶ These are followed by the adverb “νῦν”, which is “of present time; ‘now.’”¹⁷ The next word, “κατάκριμα”, which is a nominative singular neuter noun translated as “condemnation”, which could also be defined as an “adverse sentence (the verdict)”¹⁸, or a “damnatory sentence.”¹⁹ This Greek word was only used three times in this form in Scripture, and aside from this passage, each of those were in the book of Romans in the fifteenth chapter, and both also dealing with the verdict or judgment for sin. The chapter literally opens with the declaration of the apostle, that “[There is] therefore now (present time) no (not even one) condemnation (damnatory sentence for sin) to them which are in (a preposition) Christ Jesus (the object) “ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦς” (our prepositional phrase²⁰). This is a bold declaration when one considers the previous chapter and Paul’s struggle with the law and sin declaring that “Jesus Christ our Lord” is the only one who can deliver him “from the body of this death.” Douglas Moo points out that “In this first paragraph of Rom. 8, Paul reasserts the triumphant conclusion of 5:12–21: that for those who are “in Christ” eternal life replaces the condemnation and death that were the lot of everybody in Adam.”²¹

Some manuscripts end verse one there, but the Byzantine and both Textus Receptus’ texts

¹⁵ Justin Soderquist, "Christian History: Life in the Spirit: An Exegetical Analysis of Romans 8:1–8." (BYU Religious Education: Religious Studies Center. 2007. <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/selections-2007-religious-education-student-symposium/christian-history/life-spirit> (accessed May 4, 2018).

¹⁶ Strong.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek Definitions*. (Public Domain: E-Sword Bible Software, 1886,1889), κατάκριμα.

²⁰ Chadwick Thornhill., 19.

²¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 272.

finish the first verse with: “μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα,” which appears in the King James Version as well as its English predecessors and mirrors the dependent clause in verse four. In fact, Longnecker (2016) said:

The longer μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα (“who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”), which appears in uncials N² D² P [also Byz K L], and in uncials 33^{vid} 1173 (Category I), 1962 2464 (Category II), and 104 424* 436 [omits μὴ] 459 1241 1912 2200 (Category III); it is also reflected in versions it^{ar, o} syr^p .

This dependent clause begins with “μὴ” a word translated as “not”, which Strong (1890) says is “a primary particle of qualified negation.”²² Following it is the preposition “κατὰ” (after) and the noun “σάρκα” (the flesh) which Thayer (1886,1889) says “the flesh, denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God.”²³ This results in the prepositional phrase “after the flesh” which is one of two prepositional phrases in this clause, the other being “after the Spirit” (κατὰ πνεῦμα). These both share the “present active participle dative plural masculine verb”²⁴ “περιπατοῦσιν” which means “to tread all around, that is, walk at large,”²⁵ and “to walk: to live: to regulate one’s life; to conduct one’s life; to pass one’s life.”²⁶ They are both connected by the conjunction, “ἀλλὰ”, translated as “but” which means that the two prepositional phrases will contrast each other. A person either walks in the Spirit or they walk in the flesh, they cannot do both.

The inclusion of the dependent clause in verse one leads into verse two, “Ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν με ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ

²² Strong.

²³ Joseph Thayer.

²⁴ Maurice Robinson.

²⁵ Strong.

²⁶ Joseph Thayer.

θανάτου.” Translated: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom. 8:2) The conjunction, “γὰρ”, connects verse two to verse one with “supplemental information”²⁷, contrasting the two laws, “the law (νόμος) of the Spirit (πνεύματος) of life (ζωή) in Christ Jesus” (walking in the Spirit), and “the law (νόμου) of sin (ἁμαρτίας) and death (θανάτου)” (walking in the flesh). The word “ἤλευθέρωσέν” is an “aorist active indicative third person singular verb”²⁸ that means “to make free; set at liberty: from the dominion of sin.”²⁹

Therefore, in these verses, are a couple things that can be understood clearly. First, if you are “in Christ Jesus” (saved) you will not receive the damnatory sentence or “condemnation” as you have been set at liberty from the dominion of sin or made “free from the law of sin and death.” (v.2) This concept parallels the words of Jesus, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (Jn. 3:18) Second, those which are in Christ Jesus do not conduct their lives according to the desires of the flesh, but rather they conduct their lives according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:3-4) The “Τὸ γὰρ” definite article and conjunction at the beginning of the verse connecting it back to the previous verses, as to “give supplemental information”³⁰ to them. It has

²⁷ Chadwick Thornhill., 26.

²⁸ Maurice Robinson.

²⁹ Joseph Thayer.

³⁰ Chadwick Thornhill., 26.

been said that these verses “present ‘the incapability of the law’ as a significant part of the greater problem of sin that needed resolution.”³¹ The word used for “could not do” was “ἀδύνατον” which is defined as “without strength, impotent, powerless, weakly, disabled; unable to be done, impossible.”³² It was impossible for the law to make man free from the damnatory sentence, it is the law that condemns the sinful man. That is why it was “ἡσθενει” “weak; without strength, powerless”³³ Paul goes on to explain how the law was weak, by use of the prepositional phrase “δια της σαρκος” or “through the flesh.” The flesh has been mankind’s problem since the garden when Eve “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.” (Gen. 3:6) Even Jesus said, “the flesh profiteth nothing.” (Jn. 6:63) However, “[Paul] argues [in that same verse] that, through the mission of God’s Son, the problems of sin and the weakness of the flesh are resolved by the condemnation of sin in the flesh (of Christ).”³⁴ God (“ὁ θεός”) did what the law could not do, when He “εαυτου υιον πεμψας” (his own Son sending) the use of the reflexive pronoun “his own” to identify the noun “Son” clearly stating who He was “sending”; and how He was sending Him: “εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας” (in the likeness of sinful flesh) not “in sinful flesh” but in “a form; abstractly resemblance”³⁵ of sinful flesh; and why He was sending Him: he used the conjunction “καί” to indicate a connection of “ideas in continuity with one another.”³⁶ He was sent “for sin”, “for” being “περι” meaning “on account of, because of”³⁷, in which he “condemned sin in the flesh.” Condemned: “κατεκρινεν” defined by Strong (1890) as “to judge

³¹ Dirk Venter, "Romans 8:3-4 and God's resolution of the threefold problems of sin, the incapability of the law and the weakness of the flesh" *In Die Skriflig* 48, no. 1 (2014): 1-7.

³² Joseph Thayer.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dirk Venter.

³⁵ James Strong.

³⁶ Chadwick Thornhill., 26.

³⁷ Joseph Thayer.

against, that is, sentence: - condemn, damn.”³⁸ Yet, Thayer (1886,1889) included in his definition, “by one’s good example to render another’s wickedness the more evident and censurable”³⁹ Jesus actually did both in His earthly ministry. Augustine called it “Christ’s redeeming work, which liberated man from all sin.”⁴⁰

Verse four begins with the subordinating conjunction “ὅτι” which is translated as “That” and “indicates a purpose for or a result of an action”⁴¹, and that action being the “sending” in the previous verse. Because of Jesus being sent to condemn sin in the flesh, “the righteousness (“δικαίωμα”: “that which has been deemed right so as to have force of law”⁴²) of the law might be fulfilled (“πληρώω”: “to render full, i.e. to complete; to make complete in every particular, to render perfect”⁴³) in us. In other words, Jesus condemned sin in the flesh so that that which is deemed right would be rendered full in them which are in Christ Jesus, once again identified as those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:4)

Romans 8:5-6

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after 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) Again it begins with the same type of conjunction as the second and third verses do” “Οἱ γὰρ” once again, connecting it back to the previous verses and adding more information. It is followed by “they that are after the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα, the same prepositional phrase used in the first and fourth verses) followed by the present active indicative third person

³⁸ James Strong.

³⁹ Joseph Thayer.

⁴⁰ Partoens, Gert , and Anthony Dupont. "Sed de quo peccato? Augustine's exegesis of Rom. 8:3c in sermo 152, 9-11." *Vigiliae Christianae* 66, no. 2 (2012): 191.

⁴¹ Chadwick Thornhill., 26.

⁴² Joseph Thayer.

⁴³ Ibid.

plural verb “φρονουσιν”, which means, “to be of the same mind, i.e. agreed together, cherish the same views, be harmonious”⁴⁴ with “the things of the flesh.” One author put it simply, “they that are after the flesh think thoughts of the flesh.”⁴⁵ Likewise, they that are after the Spirit think thoughts of the Spirit. Your thoughts will always align with your pursuits.

Once again, the sixth verse begins with the definite article and conjunction “Τὸ γὰρ.” This time, it used for adding a precaution to the continuous thought sewn through the passage as a whole: to be “σάρξ φρόνημα θάνατος”. The word “σάρξ” translated as “carnally” in this passage, is the same word as “flesh” throughout the passage. Carnal is defined as “Pertaining to the flesh; fleshly; sensual; opposed to spiritual; as carnal pleasure.”⁴⁶ According to this verse, “to be carnally minded (φρόνημα: what one has in the mind, the thoughts and purposes) is death (θάνατος). This statement is then followed by the conjunction “δέ” or “but”, which “marks some development or new information.”⁴⁷ That new information is the contrasting statement “to be spiritually minded is life (ζωή) and peace (εἰρήνη).” (Rom. 8:6b) What Paul was saying is that those whose minds are focused on carnal, or fleshly things end up suffering death, but those who keep their minds stayed on the Spirit find not only life, but peace as well.

Romans 8:7-8

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom 8:7-8) The seventh verse begins with the subordinating conjunction “Because” or “διότι”, meaning “on the very account that, or inasmuch as: - because (that), for, therefore.”⁴⁸ It is a continuation of the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Justin Soderquist

⁴⁶ Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*. (F.A.C.E. Facsimile Copy: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1828, 1995).

⁴⁷ Chadwick Thornhill., 26.

⁴⁸ James Strong.

thought in the sixth verse, explaining why the carnal mind is death. It is because it is “enmity [“εχθρα”: “hostility; by implication, a reason for opposition: - enmity, hatred”] against God.” Abelard said, “Because the wisdom [of the flesh is hostile to God]. Therefore, the prudence of the flesh obtains death, because it is contrary to God and displeasing to him in every way.”⁴⁹ The apostle Paul explained, “for (again using the conjunction “γάρ”) it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom. 8:7) The phrase “is not subject” is a combination of the negative particle “οὐχ” (“the absolutely negative adverb; no or not”⁵⁰) and the present tense passive indicative third person verb “ὑποτάσσεται” (“to subordinate; reflexively to obey: - be under obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, (be, make) subject (to, unto), be (put) in subjection (to, under), submit self unto.”⁵¹) Thus, the fleshly, sensual, spiritually opposed mind, which is hostile toward God, is not subordinate, subject, submitted to the law of God. However, the verse does not just stop at its lack of submission (action), it furthers the statement by using a double conjunction: the negative conjunction “οὐδέ” (neither) “as a correlative to join negative sentences”⁵² and the explanatory “γάρ” (indeed) to “give supplemental information”⁵³ about its “δύναμαι” (“to be able or possible”⁵⁴). Thus, declaring that it is not even possible for the carnal mind to be subject to the law of God.

Finally, the eighth verse wraps up this dynamic theological exposition on the contrast between the polar-opposites of one walking in the carnality of the flesh and one walking in the Spirit. He begins the verse with the conjunction “δέ” (“So”) marking the new information that the carnal ones, the ones who are in the flesh, are not only hostile toward God, insubordinate to

⁴⁹ Peter Abelard.

⁵⁰ James Strong.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Friberg, and et.al., 287.

⁵³ Chadwick Thornhill., 28.

⁵⁴ James Strong.

God, and unable to submit to Him, but they also cannot “ἀρέσκω” (“to please; to strive to please; to accommodate one’s self to the opinions desires and interests of others”⁵⁵ or “be acceptable to”⁵⁶) Him. No matter how hard a person tries, if they are walking carnally, they are much like those who are “without faith” (Heb. 11:6), they cannot please God. Only those who are walking in the Spirit are acceptable to Him.

Application

The Apostle Paul developed in Romans 8:1-8, a vibrant theological dissertation that flowed from the bold opening statement, declaring that “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1a) He could have left it there and been theologically correct. However, throughout the next seven verses, he utilized a series of conjunctive clauses to develop and present a deeper theology on this subject to the church at Rome.

As believers, we should quickly embrace the simple truths of Scripture, but we should not stop there. Paul said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15) A good student delves in deeper. It is good to know that because we are in Christ Jesus we are not condemned, but it is equally as good, and perhaps more so, as we progress in our Christian walk, to know what being “in Christ Jesus” looks like. It is important to understand that those who are in Christ Jesus “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:1b) Walking after the Spirit, therefore, is an identifier of the genuine believer. It is what sets the believer apart from the unbeliever who walks carnally (after the flesh). This presents a compass of sorts for those who are in Christ Jesus to use as a

⁵⁵ Joseph Thayer.

⁵⁶ Friberg, and et.al.,73.

navigational instrument in our daily lives. If we desire to live and reap the benefits of a Spirit-filled life that pleases God, then there should be a recognizable difference in the way that we conduct our lives, when compared to the way that the unsaved, carnal person, conducts their lives. This is not a means of self-justification, but, rather, an evidence of a God-justified life, through Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, believers should never have the prideful and arrogant attitude that Paul Abelard discussed, feigning themselves superior to other believers. We have all sinned, we have all had weak flesh that could not deliver us, we all needed Jesus to come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh, and we should all be walking in the Spirit. Pride and arrogance are of the flesh, and there is no place for either in a believer who walks in the Spirit.

Conclusion

This exegesis of one of the most comforting articulations from the Apostle Paul in the Scripture, Romans 8:1-8, demonstrates Paul's teaching on the contrasts between believers who walk in the Spirit, and unbelievers who walk in the flesh, and why that difference exists. It was likely in response to the pride and arrogance Peter Abelard reported among the new believers in Rome. After an examination of both the historical and literary context of the passage, this author produced an exegetical analysis of this epistle (letter of Instruction) that delved deeper into Paul's intended meaning of the text to the Romans; and aided in the production of an application of the text to the modern reader.

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