

Rom 8 – Give Life to Mortal Bodies

Romans Series (Part 14)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Feb 23, 2014

Opening Remarks:

- A. Thanks for joining us for another study of the book of Romans from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we looked at the two occurrences of the word "body" in Romans 7. We noted that when the word "members" (Gk MELOS) is used in reference to the sum of all its body parts, it is referring to the "body" also, even though the word "body" may not be used with it. There are three occurrences of the word "members" in Romans 7 (verses 5 and 23), as well as four more references to "members" back in chapter 6 (verses 13 and 19). That means that chapters 6 and 7 were pretty heavily loaded with references to the body, eleven in all, when we include the four "body" references and the seven "members" references. In past sessions we showed that all eleven of these references are talking about individual bodies, not some kind of collective body.
- C. This time we are going to look at the four uses of the word "body" (Gk SOMA) here in Romans 8 (verses 10, 11, 13 and 23). There are no more references to "members" (Gk MELOS) here in chapter 8, nor in the rest of Romans until we get to chapter 12, where there are thirteen of them. As we would expect, with so many occurrences of the word "body" here in Romans 8, this chapter is extremely crucial for understanding what kind of Resurrection Paul is teaching, not only here in Romans, but throughout his other epistles as well. So, don't be surprised if we spend at least two sessions on Romans 8. You will want to have your Bible open at Romans 8 as we study it together.
- D. Before we get started on our study of Romans 8, let's pray:

God of all ages, both before the foundation of the world, and throughout all generations of the ages to come – We bless Your Holy Name. To You alone belongs all glory and honor and power and dominion. We are eternally grateful that You are for us, and that You delivered Your Son over to death on our behalf, so that we could be adopted as Your children and be fellow-heirs with Christ. Satan can no longer bring a charge against us to condemn us and separate us from Your forgiveness, fellowship and blessing. As Paul says here in Romans 8, "We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Be with us now in this study and help us understand what Paul was saying to those first century saints in Rome, and how it applies not only to them, but to us as well. This we pray in the Worthy Name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Historical Context of Romans 8

Paul wrote this to the Christians in Rome in the Spring of 58 AD, near the end of his third missionary journey, just before he went to Jerusalem carrying the Gentile contributions. This whole chapter is a collage of soteriology, eschatology, and cosmology. That is why it is so challenging for interpreters.

Paul is obviously talking about a soteriological-eschatological event that was coming soon. There are imminency statements all through this chapter (8:13 "you are about to die", 8:18 "glory that is about to be revealed", 8:23 "waiting eagerly", 8:25 "wait eagerly for it", 8:38 "things about to come"). They were only six years away from experiencing the great tribulation, which was the Neronic persecution in AD 64. They were only eight years away from the Parousia (AD 66). The Age was rapidly drawing to a close. Paul is urging the Christians in Rome to get their act together, sober up, and brace themselves for a very brutal outburst of persecution against them, which was soon to crash in upon them.

The Roman Christians were subject to the full spectrum of fleshly temptations and materialistic-humanistic influences that the city of Rome was famous for, and which modern 21st Century America is famous for as well. Paul is reminding them of what happened to their "inner man" (Rom. 7:22) when they became Christians. They put the old man (the "outer man") to death, and were quickened in the inner man with new life from the Spirit. Therefore, (Rom. 8:5) they were to set their minds on the things of the Spirit, and live according to the influence and teaching of the Spirit, and no longer live as they once did in a lifestyle that was controlled and influenced by the fleshly desires and impulses.

In verses 12-17, Paul is advising them both of the benefits of Spirit-controlled living, as well as the danger of fleshly-oriented living. If they went back to their former fleshly-oriented lifestyle, they would die in their sins and be lost forever. But if they continued living a Spirit-controlled life by constantly mortifying (putting to death) the evil deeds that come from their sinful nature, they would live eternally. Their bodies were mortal (subject to death) because of sin. But their spirits had been quickened by their new birth. *That new life inside them would have a dramatic effect on them at the Parousia if they remained alive on earth at that time.*

Verses 11-23 (Rom 8) are talking about what would happen to those Christians who remained alive at the Parousia. Their "mortal bodies" which were indeed subject to death because of their sin, would be "changed" into immortal bodies at the Parousia. If they lapsed back into their old fleshly lifestyle, however, then they would not have their bodies changed. Paul wants them to continue living in the Spirit, so that at the Parousia when Christ raised the dead out of Hades, He would also "change" the bodies of the living saints into immortal bodies and snatch them away to live with Him forever afterwards. That is what the "redemption of the body" (Rom 8:23) is talking about. It was a bodily change for those living saints who remained alive at the time of the Parousia.

That very idea of "bodily change" for the living seems to be clearly in view in verses 17-23 especially. Paul talks about the glory that was about to be revealed in them. What was this "glory that was about to be revealed in them" and how would they see it and experience it when it was revealed in them? Paul also mentions the revealing of the true sons of God, and their bodies being set free from slavery to corruption and into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. They were groaning (like 2 Cor. 5:1-4 talks about) as they suffered in the persecution waiting for this bodily change. They did not want to be "unclothed" in death, but rather "clothed upon" by their new immortal bodies without having to experience the death of their old bodies. That was indeed a very literal "redemption of their bodies." It was a glorious event which was about to be unveiled to them.

Paul wanted them to remain faithful to the very end, which was indeed drawing near when he wrote. Many of those very Christians in Rome, to whom he was writing (see Rom. 16:1-15 for a list of them, some of whom were his kinsmen, and close friends with whom he had worked in the past, like Aquila and Priscilla), would suffer martyrdom in the Neronic persecution that was only six years away. Some of them would escape it and remain alive until the bodily "change" and rapture at the Parousia. Paul would be there in Rome with them three years after he wrote this letter, at which time he would encourage them all the more to "walk according to the Spirit" and keep putting to death the deeds of the flesh, so that their wedding garments would be pure and white when the Son of Man appeared to take them into His glorious heavenly kingdom.

Paul was released from his house-arrest in Rome in the Spring of 63, only to be arrested again six months later, and sent back to Rome for execution (late 63 or early 64). So, Paul was there in Rome for over two years of time before the Neronic persecution broke out. That was not coincidence. The Holy Spirit was preparing those Roman Christians for their own time of horrifying persecution and martyrdom that came within months after Paul was executed. Paul provided a tremendously powerful example of how to face that kind of persecution and be an overcomer ("overwhelmingly conquer" Rom 8:37). So it was an amazing work of the Holy Spirit that was being done through the Apostle Paul as he wrote this extremely important book to them, which began the process of bracing them for the soon-coming great tribulation (Neronic persecution).

The Literary Context of Romans 8

So, what do we see here in this chapter (Romans 8)? The discussion in the two previous chapters about the role of "the flesh" in our lives as Christians continues in greater detail here. Paul dwells on this contrast between a life lived *according to the flesh*, versus one lived *according to the Spirit*. The first 13 verses of Romans 8 are especially focused on this contrast, as well as explaining the blessings or curses that come from each of those lifestyles. The rest of the chapter (verses 14-39) mainly lists all the benefits that those first century saints were about to receive if they continued living according to the Spirit.

These verses must have been a tremendous encouragement to those Roman saints just six years later when most of them were tortured to death under Nero. This chapter contains some of the most "precious and magnificent promises" that are found anywhere in the Bible (2 Pet 1:4). Paul shared his own attitude about suffering and persecution, not knowing that he was bracing those Roman saints for the horrendous ordeal that was coming soon. Paul himself would die there in Rome less than a year before the Neronic persecution struck. His example of faithfulness in martyrdom was undoubtedly a source of great courage for those Roman Christians not long afterwards.

According to Revelation 7:9-17, there was a "great multitude which no one could count" who went directly to the throne room in heaven after being killed in the Neronic persecution (the great tribulation). Paul's words here in Romans 8 must have prepared them well to face the fiery trial in that very dark hour. They "fixed their hope completely on the grace that was about to be brought to them" (1 Pet 1:13). They must have remembered Paul's promise that "the sufferings of this present time (no matter how horrifying they may be) are not worthy to be compared with the glory that was about to be revealed in them" (Rom 8:18).

Most of those Roman saints died in the Neronic persecution, while a few of them, the elect, lived and remained to the Parousia. However, ALL of them received the glorious benefits that Paul and all the other NT writers promised they would get at the Parousia. Here are some of the benefits that the living and dead saints were promised to receive at the Parousia, which are mentioned here in Romans 8 –

- 8:11 – the Spirit will give life to your mortal bodies (bodily change of living)
- 8:13 – you will live (future tense)
- 8:14 – status as "sons of God" would be revealed
- 8:15 – adoption
- 8:16 – status as "children of God" would be revealed
- 8:17 – joint heirs with Christ and glorified with Him (if they suffer with Him)
- 8:18 – the glory which was about to be revealed **in them**
- 8:19 – the revealing of the sons of God
- 8:21 – delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (dead raised and living changed)
- 8:23 – the adoption and the redemption of our body (bodily change of living)

Notice how those benefits were described. Paul says they were groaning for it, eagerly waiting for it, and hoping for those things to happen to them at the Parousia. We need to ask ourselves these questions:

- Did they know that they received those benefits?
- Did they experience those benefits in any cognitive way?
- Were there any saints still alive on earth after the Parousia who knew that they had received all these benefits that they were groaning for, hoping for, and eagerly waiting for?

- Why didn't at least one of them speak up and set the record straight when Papias, Polycarp, Ignatius and others started saying that the Parousia was still future?

You see, there is a historical problem here which cannot be resolved by waving our magic hyper-spiritualizing wand over it, and declaring this fulfilled in some kind of spiritualized way. The Collective Body view really has no answers to these questions about the expectations of the pre-70 saints, and how those expectations were fulfilled. Those saints were expecting real, tangible, cognitive, and experiential benefits to be received at the Parousia. They were NOT expecting to be totally in the dark about what had happened and what they received afterwards.

Comments on Rom 8:10

Rom. 8:10 If Christ is in you, though **the body is dead because of sin**, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Paul points out that our bodies are subject to physical death (the first death) "because of sin." That is because of the law of sin and death. If we sin, we have to die (doomed to die, subject to death, mortal). And that physical death puts us under the dominion of eternal death unless a redeemer intervenes. By dying with Christ and receiving His Spirit to indwell us, our spirits are quickened or made alive, so that physical death no longer puts us under the control of eternal death. So, even though our physical bodies still have to die (because of our sin), our spirits do not suffer the second death (eternal death). Our spirits have been made alive so that we can escape eternal death and live forever with God.

In Rom. 8:10, notice that these "bodies" which these living Christians had at that time, were "dead because of sin." This is obviously not talking about their physical bodies being physically dead at that time, but rather being doomed to die, or subject to death, or mortal. That is what "mortal" really means, **subject to death because of sin**. Yet by being covenantally associated with Christ in **His death**, they were also covenantally associated with Him in **His life**, which would be fully received by those saints at the Parousia, both by the dead ones who would be *raised out of Hades to receive their new bodies* that were like Christ's glorious body, as well as by those who "lived and remained" until His return. The "living and remaining" saints would have their *bodies changed* (or "redeemed") without having to experience physical death (i.e., "taste death"). Paul talks about that in the following verses here in the context (Rom 8:11-23). Let's look at verse 11 now.

Comments on Rom 8:11

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in **you [plural]**, He who raised Christ Jesus from out of **the dead ones [plural]** will also **give life to your [plural] mortal bodies [plural]** through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Rom. 8:11 is related to the rapture, since it is talking about a **bodily change** for the living saints that would occur just before the rapture, when Christ would **"give life to their mortal bodies"** through His Spirit who indwelt them. The mortal "bodies" (notice the plural "bodies" here, not a singular collective body) of the living saints would have LIFE given to them at the Parousia. This is the same idea as 2 Cor. 5:4 ("what is mortal will be swallowed up by life"). When their *mortal bodies were changed into immortal bodies*, that was the **"redemption of their bodies"** (Rom. 8:23 and Luke 21:28). The redemption (change) of their bodies was followed closely by their gathering into the presence of Christ (i.e., the rapture). Redeemed from slavery to corruption, and gathered into the presence of Christ in the unseen realm.

Both Rom. 8:11 and 8:23 are easy to understand from an "individual body" perspective. However, Rom. 8:11 does not make any sense from a "collective body" perspective, since it mentions a plural number of "bodies." And since the "bodies" mentioned in Rom. 8:11 are obviously speaking of individuals, it forces the conclusion that Rom. 8:23 must also be speaking of individual Christians who lived and remained until the Parousia having *their bodies redeemed from physical death by having "life" given to their mortal bodies* at the Parousia/Resurrection event – the very same thing verse 11 is talking about. There is an inseparable connection between verse 11 and verse 23. The redemption mentioned in verse 23 "changed" their mortal bodies into immortal bodies. Only the "individual bodies" approach can make sense out of this text, and only if it sees a real bodily "change" or "redemption of the individual body" at the Parousia. My book, *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*, has a much fuller explanation of this bodily "change" at the Parousia. It is available from our website (www.preterist.org) secure order page.

In Rom. 8:11 notice that the word "bodies" is plural. This is talking about a plural number of living individuals, not a "collective body" (singular). Since Rom. 8:23 is speaking of the same body (or "bodies") as Rom. 8:11, it means that the plural number of individual "bodies" that are under consideration in Rom. 8:11 must be the same "body" or "bodies" that are under consideration in Rom. 8:23. That helps us determine what the "redemption" of those "bodies" means in Rom. 8:23, especially when we compare it with what it says about those bodies back in verse 11.

In Rom. 8:11 Paul reminds them of the same hope that Jesus had given His twelve disciples, that if they continued to live in union with Christ (abiding in Him) and faithfully carried out the great commission that He gave them, "some of them standing there" (Matt 16:27-28) would "not ever die to the age" (John 11:25-26). This means that some of those disciples standing there would not ever taste death, but would "live and remain until the Parousia" (1 Thess 4:13-17) at which time they would "see" (1 Jn 3:2) the Lord and be "changed" (1 Cor 15:51-52) to be "like Him" (1 Jn 3:2), and would receive new glorious bodies "like His glorious body" (Phil 3:21), and would be "caught up to be with Him" (1 Thess 4:13-17) where He is (Jn 14:3) -- without experiencing physical death ("not ever die").

There is nothing hard to understand about Rom. 8:11 when we see that Paul is referring to their "living hope" (their hope of living and remaining until the Parousia and being changed without having to experience or "taste" physical death). At the Parousia, Jesus fulfilled their bodily hopes by rescuing their whole "spirits, souls, and bodies" (1 Thess. 5:23) out of the tribulation and "changing" them into their glorious bodies like Christ's glorious body, and snatching them away from this physical realm into the spiritual realm where He was at the Parousia.

This is the same thing Paul is teaching, not just in 1 Thess. 4, but also in **Rom. 8** (redemption of the body, so that the "mortal body" becomes an "immortal body"), **1 Cor. 15** (bodies were "changed" to "put on immortality"), **2 Cor. 5:2-4** (be "clothed upon" with their new heavenly dwellings without taking off their old physical bodies first), **Phil. 3:21** (their lowly physical bodies were transformed to be like His glorious body), **1 Thess. 5:23** (whole spirit, soul and body preserved complete until the Parousia, at which time those bodies were changed and caught up to be with Christ). John taught the same thing in **John 11:25-26** ("not ever die to the age"), in **John 14:3** ("received to Himself that where He was, they might be also), as well as in **1 John 3:2** (when they see Him "appear" they would be changed to "be like Him" when they "saw Him as He is" at the Parousia). So, there are numerous texts which talk about this same bodily change that we are looking at here in Romans 8, and we will look more at this in our next session when we deal more specifically with the "redemption of our body" in Romans 8:23.

This "bodily" change is exactly what the apostles and saints were EXPECTING to receive at the Parousia. Jesus had told his disciples that they could not go to heaven with Him at the ascension (John 13:33-36), but that they would "follow later" after He had prepared dwelling places for them (John 14:1-3). When Jesus "came again" He would "receive to Himself" all those who "lived and remained" until His coming. They sat on the twelve thrones that Jesus had prepared for them (Matt. 19:28). The "living and remaining" saints were rescued out of the tribulation (2 Thess. 1:7) and given their new heavenly dwelling places with Christ (2 Cor. 5:2-4).

Again, all this is explained in much detail in my book, *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*. If you do not have that book, you need to get it! :-)

Comments on Rom 8:13

Rom. 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you are about to [MELLO] die; but if by the Spirit you are **putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.

As we noted in the previous text (8:11), there is a direct and inseparable connection between verse 11 and verse 13. Paul is here (8:13) talking to the same group of individual saints that he addressed two verses earlier (8:11), each of whom had their own individual "mortal bodies" (8:11), and who were now being exhorted by Apostle Paul to "put to death the [sinful] deeds of [their individual bodies]". In net effect, he was exhorting them to "put to death" or "mortify" a sinful lifestyle that is lived "according to the flesh," and instead live according to the Spirit who was indwelling

them. They "put to death [or "mortified"] the deeds of their individual bodies" by repenting of that evil way of life and following the way of righteousness into which the Spirit was leading them.

This verse (8:13) directly relates to 8:11 (two verses earlier) where Paul was talking about a whole bunch of individual mortal bodies being given life at the Parousia. How would that apply to a collective body (collective sinful deeds of a collective body)? What would that do to the motivation for individuals to mortify the deeds of their own individual bodies, if the mortification is only referring to a collective body?

This is clearly talking about **individual mortification** of the fleshly lifestyle, NOT "the collective mortification of the collective sinful deeds of a collective body" (the church). We also need to note that this idea of "putting to death the deeds of the body" is referred to repeatedly throughout the preceding context by such phrases as: "died to sin" (6:2), "reckon yourselves indeed to be dead to sin" (6:11), "do not let sin reign in your mortal body" (6:12), "do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin" (6:13), and "do not walk according to the flesh" (8:4-9). So, it does not take a lot of guesswork to figure out what Paul means here in Rom 8:13 when he urges those Roman saints to "put to death" (mortify) the kind of deeds that were associated with their former fleshly-oriented lifestyle outside of Christ.

Hopefully, this study is helping all of us see how Paul was using the word "body" here in Romans 8. In verse 10 he told those first century Roman Christians that even though their bodies were mortal and subject to death because of sin, they were alive spiritually through Christ who was in them. And the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead was in them, and He would give life to their mortal bodies at the Parousia by changing them from mortal to immortal. Verse 13 simply reiterates what he had already said in verses 10-12. If they were following the leading of the Spirit within them, and putting to death their sinful deeds, they would live (and not die). Ten verses later (v. 23) he will mention this same idea again, when he talks about the redemption of their bodies at the Parousia.

Well, that will do it for this time. In our next session we will continue looking at the fourth of these "body" texts here in chapter 8 (Rom 8:23), as well as discuss the meaning of the word "creation" as it is used here in Rom 8:19-22.

That will wrap it up for this time. Thank you so much for listening.

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