

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 8, Verses 1-11 (Revisited)**  
**Notes from Tuesday November 16, 2010**  
**Last Revised on November 29, 2010**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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Last week we began **Chapter 8**, covering the first 11 verses, and I found them difficult.

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So tonight before we read on, I want to review and discuss what we studied last week.

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Before that I will review the first 7 Chapters, but much more quickly than usual.

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Please open your text now to Chapter 1 and follow along with me as I review.

**Review**

Remember the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is ... the **gospel**. The gospel is in some ways very simple and admits to brief summary statements, such as we find here and there in Romans and throughout the Bible. But the gospel is also the central truth of the universe and impossible even for the angels to grasp fully. So there are parts of the Bible which are hard to understand and parts of Romans are quite difficult as we have seen.

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The first part of Chapter 1 contains important **introductory** material and then, beginning in **Verse 18** and continuing to the end of Chapter 1, examines the **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men. We really cannot grasp the gospel of Jesus Christ or Paul's letter to the Romans without first coming to terms with what the Reformers called the "total depravity" of man. Apart from God there is **nothing** good in us.

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In **Chapter 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3**, Paul argues that such ungodliness and unrighteousness has **always** pervaded **all** of humanity, including **even** the most **law-abiding Jews**. They know **who** God is. They know his **law**. But their knowledge can not save them.

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The point, as Paul explains in **the remainder of Chapter 3**, is that nobody can be saved from sin and death, **except** as a **free** gift of God, which we receive through **faith**.

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This has always and everywhere been true, as Paul aptly illustrates in **Chapter 4**, which is all about **Abraham** one of the great heroes of faith of the Old Testament. Abraham **believed** God and that belief, in itself, was **credited** to him **as righteousness**. Abraham's Obedience was the inevitable expression of the faith found in him, and in **all** of God's children.

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In **the first 11 verses of Chapter 5**, Paul speaks of the peace, and joy, and hope, and love that we experience, even in our **suffering**, even **because** of our suffering, as we contemplate and come to understand the fact that God in Christ came down to suffer **with** us and **for** us while we were **still** his enemies. That is how much God loves us and how much he hates our sin.

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In the remainder of **Chapter 5 (Verses 12-21)** Paul illuminates the marvelous power and efficacy of the gospel, through which God in Christ eternally overcomes the Fall of Man:

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**In Chapter 6, and in the first six verses of Chapter 7**, Paul makes it plain that the gospel is not an invitation for Christians to continue sinning, but just the opposite. In Christ we die to **sin** and are **reborn** into newness of life, slaves to God, and therefore **free** from the dominion of sin and death.

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It would of course be a **mistake** to suppose, based on what Paul had written that the law itself is a **bad** thing. **The remainder of Chapter 7 (Verses 7-25)** is intended to avoid just such a mistake. It is our **sin** that kills us **not** the law. The law **helps** us to understand our problem.

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Now we come to **Chapter 8**.

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Verse 1 reads:

**(Verse 1)**

**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

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This is essentially a brief statement of the **gospel**. (Isn't it?)

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The "**therefore**" gathers up much of what Paul has previously written in this letter and probably is not intended to refer only or even mainly to what Paul has just been saying at the end of Chapter 7.

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I think Paul is **collecting** himself here and preparing to add an important new **dimension** to the exposition of the gospel which he has shared with us to this point.

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He is getting ready to speak of the **Holy Spirit**, which is not an easy topic to address or one which Paul could possibly ignore, because we cannot fully understand the gospel without understanding the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Verse 2 continues

**(Verse 2)**

**For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**

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The word “for” suggests that Verse 2 gives further explanation of what is said in Verse 1,

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further explanation of the gospel, of the fact that “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

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In Christ Jesus we are not condemned, because we are not subject to the law of sin and death anymore.

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And we are not subject to the law of sin and death because we are subject to the “law of the Spirit of life.”

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The Spirit of life, is God, the Holy Spirit.

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We whom Christ has redeemed, and only we, are somehow subject to the law of the Holy Spirit.

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We live and we live a life abundant and everlasting, according to His rules!

*(n.b. The converse must also be true, it seems to me, viz. all who are not subject to the law of the Holy Spirit are subject to the law of sin and death, they are not in Christ, and God’s wrath remains on them. No wonder that Paul here calls Him the Spirit of life. Without the Holy Spirit we are dead)*

As I mentioned last week, the Greek word *pneuma*, translated “*spirit*,” appears only only 5 times in the first 7 Chapters of Romans, and only 8 times in Chapters 9-16, but this word appears 21 times in here Chapter 8, which is many more times than than this word appears in any other single chapter in the New Testament.

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Whenever this word appears, it falls to the translator and the expositor to determine whether the word refers to the human spirit or to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity --- i.e. the Holy Spirit.

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What the translator thinks is indicated in the text by the capitalization of the letter “S” in Spirit.

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All but two of the 21 occurrences in Chapter 8 are capitalized.

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It would not be wrong then, I think, if we were to remember Romans Chapter 8 as being (more than anything else) “**about**” the Holy Spirit.

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The **first** mention of the Holy Spirit in **Chapter 8** is, as we have just seen, in **Verse 2**.

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Notice that the “S” **is** capitalized.

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Paul has here referred to the Holy Spirit as “*the Spirit of life*” because that is what he brings us. Two of the many offices of the Holy Spirit are to **regenerate** non-believers and to **sanctify** believers.

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By bringing us to **faith** in Christ the Holy Spirit literally brings us to **life** from death.

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He then dwells within us, sanctifying us and **leading** us on to blessed **eternal** life.

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The meaning of the term “*Spirit of life*” is equivalent to “*life-giving Spirit*”

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Comforter, Councillor, Spirit of life, Spirit of truth, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of God, Spirit of holiness, and so on. The Holy Spirit is referred in the Bible to by a variety of different names, depending on the aspect of his person and **work** that the author (who is the Holy Spirit) wishes to emphasize.

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We are not given so much information in the Bible about His “**personality**” as we are about the “**personality**” of God the **Father** or of God the **Son**. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would **not** speak of himself but would teach us about Jesus and remind us of Jesus words!

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Nevertheless we understand from the Bible enough to say that the Holy Spirit is a **person** not a thing, a **He** not an It and we understand that the Holy Spirit is **God**, no less so than God the Father and God the Son.

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And we understand that these three persons: God the **Father**, God the **Son**, and God the **Holy Spirit**, are **One and the same God**.

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Therefore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are always acting **in concert**.

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Wherever **one** is at work, the other two are **also** active and close at hand,

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as we can see here, in Verse 3, which reads:

**(Verse 3)**

**For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,**

The “*for*” again suggests that Verse 3 is offering additional explanation of what went before.

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Q. **How**, you might ask, has condemnation been removed from those who are in Christ Jesus. **How** has the law of sin and death been replaced by the law of the Spirit of life?

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A. God the **Father**, sent his own **Son**, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and condemned sin in the flesh, punishing it once and for all **on the cross**.

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Notice that God in Christ did not **redeem** sinful flesh, or repair or remake it. He condemned it and put it to death.

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There is no everlasting **life** in the flesh

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God **did** this, we read in Verse 4

**(Verse 4)**

**in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Paul includes himself among those “*who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*” He unquestionably means to include **all** who are “*in Christ Jesus.*” (cf. vv 1-2)

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And here and everywhere Paul clearly means to say that those who are “*in Christ Jesus*” and who thus “*walk...according to the Spirit*” must not and no longer do **walk** “*according to the flesh.*”

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The **flesh** has been **condemned** --- like a building that will soon be **demolished** and **burned**.

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Yet we clearly see that all men, including **all** born-again believers, including **even** the Apostle Paul, do **continue** to sin for so long as we live. in the flesh --- i.e. for so long as these present fleshy bodies of ours continue to exist.

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Q. So the question arises: how is the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled **in us**?

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A. By **God**, the Father, first of all --- effectively and in accordance with the judgement of the only one whose opinion matters --- i.e. the judge himself!

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A. **In Christ** also and no less so. **His** righteousness is imputed to us. Our sins are forgiven for **his** sake. **His** Spirit lives in us, sanctifying us, and leading us on to blessed eternal life.

We are in **Him**, part of **his** body which is the Church. He is our **Head** and He rules **over** us. If the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, it is fulfilled in us only because of Him, because of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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A. Finally but not last or least, the righteous requirement of the law is also fulfilled in us through the **Holy Spirit**. Because of what **God** accomplished in **Christ**, and is accomplishing in us by His Spirit, our minds are no longer set on the things of the flesh but on the things of the Spirit. We are in some sense acquiring the mind of Christ and becoming more like him. We have now become **subject** to the law of the Spirit of life.

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That is the sense of Verse 5 which reads:

**(Verse 5)**

**For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.**

For so long as we remain physically in the flesh, even those of us who believe on Christ and are led by His Spirit will surely continue to sin, but there will be noticeable improvement, particularly in the “set” of our **minds**.

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We will **increasingly** have trouble focusing on the things of the flesh...things that will pass away forever with the death of this body.

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Instead we will be increasingly preoccupied with things of the **Spirit**... things that will survive the death of this body and continue forever.

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This realization is important and can be both a warning and a consolation.

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But here (I think) it is mostly consolation.

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Verse 6 reads

**(Verse 6)**

**For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.**

This is **not** simply a matter of choice, I think.

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Those who **are** in Christ and, therefore, ruled by the Spirit of life, will not and can not continue to have their minds set on the flesh; just as those who remain unregenerate cannot **possibly** begin to have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.

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This will be true regardless of the particular sins we may **continue** to see in the life of a believer and regardless of the particular **virtues** we may see in the life of an unbeliever.

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Those whose minds are set on the Spirit **will** increasingly bear fruits of the Spirit and, despite the troubles of this world, which they will not be spared, they will certainly continue on to life and peace eternal and, even in **this** life amidst their troubles, they will know that certain peace which passes all understanding.

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Those whose minds remain set on the **flesh** will not come to a good end and may eventually suffer the **horror** of facing the end without the assurance of salvation and eternal life.

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That which belongs to God, lives forever and that which is merely flesh and therefore condemned by God, dies.

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Verses 7 and 8 read

**(Verses 7 and 8)**

**For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

The flesh is that which is fallen and sinful and which God condemned and punished once and for all in the death of his Son on the cross, and which condemnation He prefigured in the flood in the time of Noah, and in the law in the time of Moses, and at other times in other ways. The flesh has always been temporary, always destined for death and resurrection.

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It is **eternally** dead.

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To prefer the things of the **flesh** to the things of **God** it to prefer **death** (or worse) to life eternal.

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To truly prefer the things of the **Spirit**, is to be **already** saved, and already living on the edge of eternity.

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Such are the **Christians** to whom Paul is writing.

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Such are you and I **hopefully**. And if we are, we must always feel compassion and never envy for those around us, who love the world and prefer the things of the flesh to the things of God. Theirs is a sad and well worn path leading to a bad place.

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And it is only by the **grace** of God that we are otherwise.

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Verse 9 reads

(Verse 9)

**You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.**

Notice here several important **theological** points.

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Christians, if they truly are such, **are** in the Spirit and **not** in the flesh.

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To be truly Christian, “not in the flesh but in the Spirit” means in some sense that the Spirit of God, God the Holy Spirit, **dwells** in you.

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It is hard to say what this means **exactly**, but somehow God has associated **Himself** with you, even made Himself a **part** of you, permanently.

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He goes where **you** go, you are **never** alone, -- which is why sin in the life of a believer is particularly disgusting. We are taking God along for the ride.

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The **Spirit of God** and the **Spirit of Christ** are two different names for the same **Holy Spirit**, who as we have already noticed, is referred to by several different names throughout the Bible.

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It seems to me that “**having** the the Spirit,” or having the Spirit **dwelling** in us” or being **in** the Spirit, or **walking** in the Spirit, or being **led** by the Spirit, and other similar expressions all mean practically the same thing and pertain **equally** to all who are truly believers in Christ.

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Q. But what exactly do such expressions **describe**? It is very difficult to say!

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A. When he uses such expressions, Paul does **not** mean to describe some abstract theological concept or imperceptible spiritual state or phenomenon.

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A. Clearly Paul uses such expressions to describe something **real**, the **actual** presence and activity of God, the Holy Spirit, in the life of those who truly believe on Christ.

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A. However we can **not** actually **see** the Holy Spirit or otherwise detect His physical presence. He does not, after all, **have** a physical presence. That’s why they call him the Holy **Spirit!**

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Q. So do we only know of the Holy Spirit from from Biblical **testimony**, or is there some way that we ourselves can directly perceive his, inherently non-physical, **existence**, **presence**, and **activity**?

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A. Only I think in terms of how the Holy Spirit **affects** us.

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Q. How **does** he affect us?

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A. He primarily affects our **mind**: what we think, what we believe, what we value...

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Q. How do we perceive **these**, essentially hidden, changes in ourselves and other people?

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A. Mostly through changes in behavior....the “fruit” of the Spirit.

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God actually changes **us**, and the Christians around us, in ways that we **can** finally perceive.

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These perceived changes are the **outward** manifestations of the hidden work of the Holy Spirit within us.

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Please note that it is **God**, the Holy Spirit, who moves **us**, changes **us**, leads **us**, controls **us**, possesses **us**, regenerates **us**, sanctifies **us**, and so forth, and not **ever** the other way around.

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We **cannot** summon the Holy Spirit, conjure him, direct, dispense, impart, or otherwise control him.

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He is **never** the **object** of our activity.

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Anyone who supposes that they **can** do such things, is dealing with a different spirit!

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The Holy Spirit is **God**, the sovereign Lord of all creation. He controls us.

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He is **not** some elemental force at our command.

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This is very **important** to understand.

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Verse 10 Continues

**(Verse 10)**

**But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**

Everyone dies.

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Even Jesus died.

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But Jesus rose from the dead.

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Q. Why?

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A. **Not** because he was an exceptional human specimen. He **was** not. He was **exactly** a man, exactly as we are. He was not **even** exceptional in the sense of Adam before the fall. Jesus came in the likeness **sinful** flesh. Many of his peers thought he was **profoundly** sinful. Only **God** knew for certain that Jesus was without sin!

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Jesus was exceptional **not** in his human flesh, but because he also **was** God and therefore without sin.

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However when Jesus died and breathed his last, he had **emptied** Himself of his divine power (else how could he have died?) and taken on all of the sins of all men for all time. He had become accursed and a curse! I there were ever anyone whose death was buried under a weight of **sin**, it was Jesus. Truly in Him sinful flesh was utterly condemned.

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Nevertheless the Holy Spirit raised even **Jesus** from the dead, and this is the same Holy Spirit that lives in you and me and in everyone who believes in Christ.

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Verse 11 continues

**(Verse 11)**

**If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.**

This is our **hope**.

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Our hope is **not** in this world.

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Our hope is **not** in the things of the flesh.

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Our hope is not **anywhere** on this side of death.

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Our hope (as has been the case for all of God's people of all time) lies **beyond** death,

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in the **resurrection**, when we will be **with** the risen Lord Jesus, and when we shall be **like** him!

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when our spiritual body shall be **perfect**, and **holy**, and **imperishable**.

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*(n.b. This is where we ran out of time)*

**Closing Prayer**