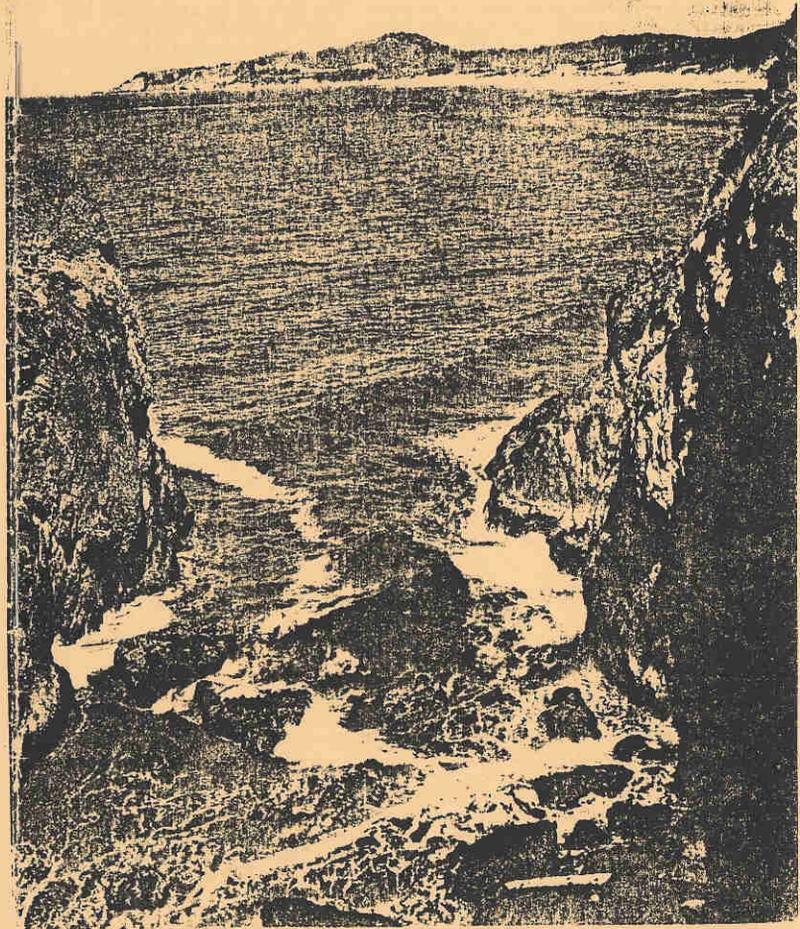


The MAN
of
Romans 7



The MAN of Romans 7

R. D. Brinsmead

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:14-24

In trying to solve the problem of whether Paul is referring to his pre-conversion or post-conversion state, we are liable to miss the essential message of this important passage. The apostle uses the first personal pronoun not necessarily in the vein of autobiography, but as illustrating the *impotency of the flesh*. After describing the futile attempt of the flesh to keep the spiritual law of God, he is ready to introduce the great theme of Romans 8.

"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." Romans 8:3,4

It is important that we understand what the apostle means by *flesh* in Romans 7 and 8.

". . . when we were in the flesh, . . ." Romans 7:5

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: . . ." Romans 7:18

". . . weak through the flesh . . . sinful flesh . . . after the flesh . . . carnal mind [literally, mind of the flesh] . . . that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:3,5,7,8

It is apparent that by *flesh* the apostle does not here mean the mortal body only, as he does in other places (for example, Galatians 2:20: ". . . and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, . . ."). While those who "live in the flesh cannot please God," there is nothing evil about living in mortal flesh, for

Christ Himself lived in our mortal flesh. Obviously *flesh* in Romans 7 and 8 does not mean the mortal body. It refers to the whole man in his natural state--his will, reason, mind, and all his faculties--not only without the Spirit of God, but controlled by "the spirit . . . of disobedience." Ephesians 2:2 *Flesh* is that "old man" who is enmity against God. He is called *flesh* because he is by carnal generation.

A predominant characteristic of the natural man is that his lower, corrupt nature has dominion over his higher powers. "The words 'flesh' or 'fleshly' or 'carnal lusts' embrace the lower, corrupt nature; . . ." *Adventist Home*, p. 127 But we must not conclude that *flesh* is just the lower nature of the natural man. It embraces the lower nature, yet it is more than that. It is the whole man without the Spirit of God, and the list of his works in Galatians 5:19-21 shows that more than his lower nature is included. *Flesh* is merely another figure for the "old man" (Romans 6:6), "self--the old, disobedient nature."

"They That Are in the Flesh Cannot Please God"

Man in his natural state is conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. (Psalm 51:5) Because of the powers that God has given to man, he may be able to do many wonderful things such as build a ship, make a jet aircraft, build a computer, and get a little out into space. Furthermore, God has not cut him off from every manifestation of grace, as the following statement so clearly shows:

"Christ is the 'Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' (John 1:9) As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he can not resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need." *Education*, p. 29

Thus, even the natural man, because of that measure of grace exercised upon him, can confess that the law of God is holy, can will to obey it, and can even "delight in the law of God after the inward man." As the above quotation says, a desire for goodness, a perception of right, exists in every heart, and in his *inmost soul* (inner man) the natural man can long to be in harmony with the law of God.

"It is not enough to perceive the loving-kindness of God, to see the benevolence, the fatherly tenderness, of His character. It is not enough to discern the wisdom and justice of His law, to see that it is founded upon the eternal principle of love. Paul the apostle saw all this when he exclaimed, 'I consent unto the law that it is good.' 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' But

he added, in the bitterness of his soul-anguish and despair, 'I am carnal, sold under sin.' Romans 7:16,12,14 He longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and cried out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Romans 7:24, margin. Such is the cry that has gone up from burdened hearts in all lands and in all ages. To all, there is but one answer, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John 1:29." *Steps to Christ*, p. 19

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14 The "old man" is stark blind to spiritual truth. Flesh and blood cannot see the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 15:50, John 3:3) He may spend years studying the Bible, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Timothy 3:7 He can do nothing but wrest and pervert the Scriptures. That is why Paul says that heresy is one of the works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19,20) Man in his natural state may "consent unto the law that it is good," and recognize many Christian obligations, but he cannot find the door of grace. He has no spiritual eyes. He cannot hear the gospel, for he has no spiritual ears. He cannot understand the simplest spiritual truth, for he has no spiritual mind. He cannot even seek after God. (Romans 3:11) He is as impotent as a corpse, for without the indwelling Holy Spirit he is dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1) He may become very religious, avoiding all known acts of sin, and by the exercise of great will power become as outwardly "blameless" as Paul said he was before his conversion. (Philippians 3:6) He may toil hard in "Christian" service, making great sacrifices for the cause, and uttering some wonderful sayings about God and godliness. He may even deceive himself as well as others with his great manifestation of piety. But being a work of the flesh, all is nothing more than glittering sin. In God's sight, the best deeds that flesh can do are sinful as are the deeds of publicans and harlots. In fact, as Jesus pointed out, the latter class may the more readily confess their sinfulness, accept the gospel, and "go into the kingdom of heaven" rather than the former class.

"They that are in the flesh [that is, in their natural state] cannot please God." Romans 8:8 They may seem to come near the kingdom of God, yet they are never so far away.

The Slavery of the Flesh

At the commencement of Romans 7, the apostle refers to a woman married to two different husbands to illustrate our union with the flesh and our union with Christ. A woman must be freed from the first husband by his death before she can be married to the second husband. Even so, the would-be Christian must be freed from his natural state--the old man, or the flesh--before being united to Christ. This first "husband" is a tyrant, and one united to the flesh is a slave to do the will of the flesh even though in his inmost soul he longs to do that which is right. Romans 7:14-24 is a description of the tyranny of the flesh. It reminds us of the children of Israel down in Egypt groaning under the oppression of Pharaoh.

It is interesting how Paul likens himself in Romans 7:14-24 to two persons. First, there is the "I," the "inward man," "my mind" that longs to do that which is right, and cries to be delivered from the bondage of sin. This is the true, God-created self, for we must remember that the gospel aims at the restoration of man's true self. The gospel does not intend to destroy personality. Man's self-respect, self-control, and self-government is to be restored, not destroyed. "Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,--to the true glory and dignity of man." *Desire of Ages*, p. 466

Then Paul speaks of "me," "my flesh," "the body of this death," in which no good thing dwells. Here the law of sin and death operates and brings the "I," the "inward man," the "mind" into wretched captivity. This second self is the sinful self, sinful because of the principle of self-love. This bent to evil is so strong a force in human nature, that it takes possession of the whole man, and captures the better self that longs for freedom from its dominion. Hence, one who is in the flesh is "married" to this evil nature, and is "one flesh" with it. He may make good resolutions, but he is powerless to keep them. He will do evil in spite of himself. Hence, the comment, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

". . . They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8 This is like saying that the children of Israel could not keep the commandments of God down in Egypt. When the Lord drowned the enemy in the Red Sea, Israel sang the song of freedom. Even so the old man-husband must be put to death before there can be Christian freedom.

Freedom in the Spirit

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Freedom comes "through the body of Christ." Romans 7:4 "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!" Romans 8:3 Christ "took upon Him our sinful nature" (*Review and Herald*, December 15, 1896) and ". . . abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [that is, all of the old man's efforts and resolutions to make himself righteous by the law]; . . ." Ephesians 2:15

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in His sight:" Colossians 1:21,22

The purpose of Christ's atonement was not to reform the natural state of man, but to crucify and abolish it. This He accomplished "in His flesh." Christ put man's sinful nature into the grave. The first husband is dead through the body of Christ. We are free to unite our lives unto "Him who is raised from the dead." Romans 7:4 We are therefore not to spend time trying to reform the old life, endeavoring to bring it into harmony with God's law. We are to put it off, to reckon it dead, and by faith take hold of the "law of the Spirit

of life in Christ" which makes us "free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2

We should not fail to notice the great contrast between Romans 7 and 8. The man in Romans 7 is most certainly a captive. "I am carnal, sold under sin. . . into captivity to the law of sin. . . ." Jesus said: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [slave] of sin." John 8:34 Peter said: ". . . Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Peter 2:19 The man of Romans 8 is freed from this bondage. He rejoices: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2 He is not free through the efforts of the flesh, for such futile efforts are depicted in Romans 7; but he is free because Christ took his old sinful nature and crucified it. Through faith in this, he receives the Spirit which makes this victory operative in his own life. He is freed by the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and interceded for by the Spirit. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: . . ." 1 John 3:9 "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18 "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Romans 6:14 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13 These great and positive facts of victory over sin in Christ can hardly be applied to the wretched slave of Romans 7.

Not only do some affirm that Romans 7:14-24 is the perpetual, abiding experience of those who are truly converted, but there are Adventist theologians who insist that this experience of continual falling into sin will abide until the body is changed at the second advent. They say the cry for deliverance from "the body of this death" is parallel to Romans 8:23: "And not only they [the whole creation], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is difficult to understand how one can believe in the final atonement, the latter rain, the sealing, and especially the close of human probation when the saints must live without a Mediator in the sanctuary, and teach that the saints will still be sinning after Jesus leaves the sanctuary. We might rightfully ask, How shall we hold to the great fundamental truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary when the official organ of the church calls the doctrine of sinlessness in this life the Satanic heresy of "holy flesh?" (See editorial, *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1965) These views which are coming in among God's people are inconsistent with the great fundamental Adventist truths which clearly mark out a sealed and sinless people alive upon the earth in the last generation.

"The body of this death" of Romans 7:24 is not "our body" of Romans 8:23. The first is crucified and destroyed by being buried with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:4); the second is changed at the advent of our Lord. The first is the *flesh*, the whole man in his natural state, the old man, the first husband. It must be put to death before we can be united to Christ. The second is the mortal body, "our vile body," "this corruptible" that must put on incorruption at the last trump. Only those who have put off the old man and

put on the new man will be ready to put off the old body and put on the new body at the return of Jesus. What a fatal error to confuse the two experiences!

The Essence of Righteousness

Yet it may be pointed out that the Spirit of Prophecy uses Paul's confession, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" as being applicable to those who are truly God's children (see *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561). This is because, as pointed out earlier, the main point of Romans 7:14-24 is not whether or not Paul is referring to his pre-conversion days, but that he is showing how impotent is *all* flesh.

Unless we realize that the message of Romans 7 is not only applicable to those who have never experienced the power of the new life in Christ, but also to those who have begun well in the Christian way, the great message of Romans 7 will elude us. Paul is writing to a community of Christian believers who have obeyed the gospel, and whose faith was known everywhere (see chapter 1:8). In the earlier chapters of Romans he has laid down the steps to the mighty experience of justification by faith. Those to whom he was writing had entered this experience initially. But there is a real danger that those who have begun aright will not continue to walk in the Spirit. The lesson of total dependence upon Christ is a hard one to learn thoroughly. It takes more than one lesson. The book of Galatians throws much light on the message of Romans 7. The Galatian believers had believed the gospel, turned from their idols, and rejoiced in the saving experience of justification by faith. But having begun in the Spirit, they were deceived in trying to be made perfect by the flesh. (See Galatians 3:1-3) Mark this point with care: first God has to teach a sinner that he is completely sinful by nature, that he must hope wholly in the merits of Christ. This Paul sets out in Romans 3. But when a Christian has stepped into that experience of justification by faith, he is so prone to think that because of the change in his life, there must be something in him that he can now trust. But he must learn the painfully hard lesson that a sanctified saint has no good thing in the flesh. Romans 7 stands as a great warning to Christians against being led to trust in the flesh. There is no such thing as a so-called "holy flesh" experience.

Abraham, whom Paul cites as an example in righteousness by faith, went through a Romans 7 experience *after* his conversion. In Genesis 15 the record states that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Then the next chapter tells of his failure to continue believing in the Lord. He took Hagar, and brought forth a son of the flesh.

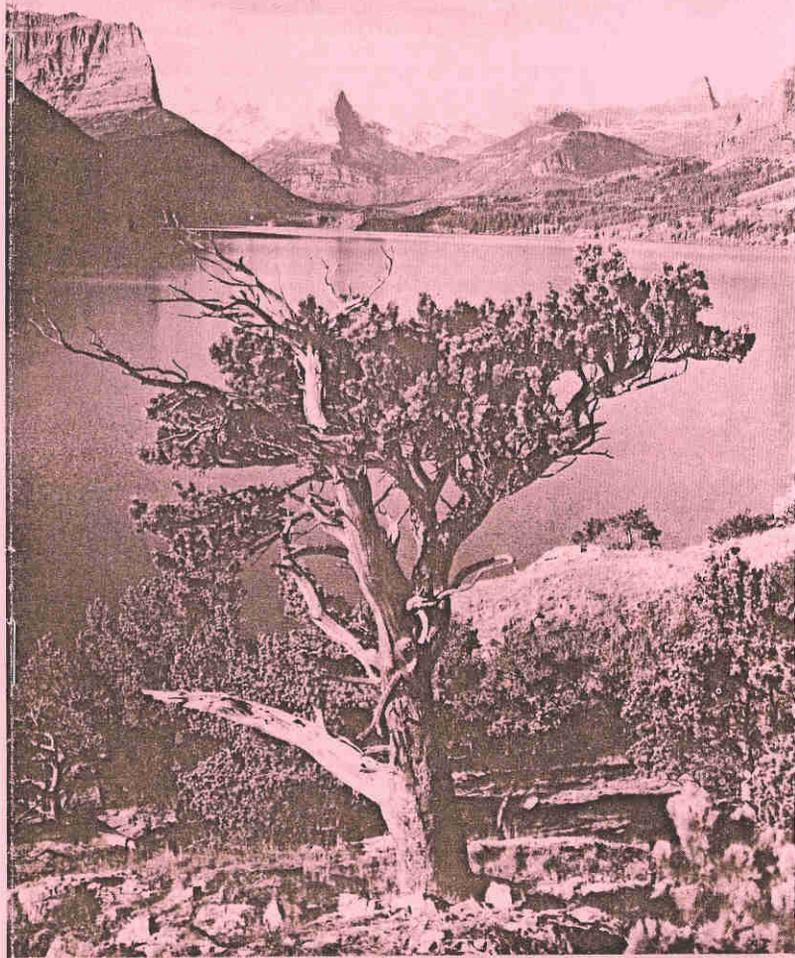
Let no man boast that to him Romans 7 is a thing of the past, for its lesson must be ever present to the child of God. A converted man must still confess that in him, by nature, there is nothing good. Without the unction of the Holy Spirit, one who has known the sanctifying power of divine grace for years is just as sinful and weak as one who has never experienced renewing grace. Righteousness is not an experience of having some holiness intrinsically in the flesh, but it consists in a certain relationship with God.

To illustrate, let us go back to man's first sin. Adam in his sinless state did not have righteousness intrinsically in himself. When he separated himself from God, he had no righteousness. Love is righteousness. God is the source of love. Adam could not love without the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit no longer controlled his being, he was sinful. The work of his flesh was sinful, not because of the state of his organism (which was perfect), but because the unction of the work did not come from the Holy Spirit. Now if the work of a perfect organism was sinful because the Holy Spirit was not the source of the work, what will the work of degenerate man be? It matters not whether the man has been converted or not. If the work originates from the creature, it is sinful. Anything of carnal generation is sinful.

Since God alone is intrinsically righteous, and since He is the only source of righteousness, man is invited to submit himself unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:3) Jesus illustrated for us how man may be righteous before God. In His humanity, He did nothing of Himself. He yielded Himself to do God's will, to live by His every word. The Father that dwelt in Christ did every work of righteousness. (John 14:10) The Spirit of God had complete control of Christ's faculties, to use them only according to the word of God. Thus every work of Christ was righteous because God was the source of the work. If Christ had done some work of Himself, He would have failed as our Pattern. But living by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God, Christ was *righteous by faith*. His humanity was righteous solely because of its relationship with God.

When we cease to go our own way, and when we rest from our own works, allowing the Spirit of God to take possession of our lives and to guide us by the Word, then we experience righteousness by faith. This is the theme of Romans 8. The creature can never have righteousness innately, but only through fellowship with the Spirit. When we have a perfect relationship with God, then our lives will be sinless because of His perfect control of our being. That last generation of saints who live without a Mediator in the sanctuary are those who, through daily dying to self and daily confession of their own sinfulness, gain an experience of total dependence upon Christ. Under the former rain they gain such a victory, while under the latter rain they have such victory perfected and sealed in them for eternity. These have the faith of Jesus, and by this faith they are righteous and sinless, not in themselves innately, but because of their complete at-one-ment with God.

The MAN of ★
★ ★ Romans ★ 8



The MAN of Romans 8

By Robert D. Brinsmead

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 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. 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. 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. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:1-9, 14.

We should not fail to notice the great contrast between the man of Romans 7 and the man of Romans 8. Romans 7 is the presentation of a man *in the flesh*; Romans 8 is the presentation of a man *in the Spirit*, or in Christ Jesus. Romans 7 is a description of man's best effort to keep the law by all the resources available to the flesh; Romans 8 is a description of the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Romans 7 shows the impotency of the flesh; Romans 8 shows the potency of the Spirit. Romans 7 is the "righteousness" of the flesh; Romans 8 is the righteousness of the Spirit.

The man of Romans 8 has put off the flesh, he does not walk after it, live in it, nor is he led by it. He walks after the Spirit, lives by the Spirit, and is led by the Spirit. He has put off the mind of the flesh, and has put on the mind of the Spirit.

Meaning of "Flesh" and "Spirit"

If we are to grasp the great truths of righteousness by faith that the Holy Spirit has for us in the 8th chapter of Romans, we must give very careful attention to the meaning of the words *flesh* and *spirit*. Either we are in one state or the other, and we cannot afford to mistake the way of deliverance, righteousness and peace.

In one place, the servant of the Lord says, "The words *flesh*, *fleshly lusts*, or *carnal lusts* embrace the lower, corrupt nature. . ."-- *Adventist Home*, p. 127. Now the lower nature refers to those appetites and propensities of our bodies that relate us to the animal kingdom. There is nothing sinful about bodily desires in themselves,

but it is a common characteristic for unregenerate men to live a life on the level of the lower nature. Man's animal propensities have strengthened through centuries of indulgence, and many are enslaved by these lusts of the flesh. The apostolic writers often had in mind such sins as gluttony, drunkenness, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, sensuality, etc., when they warned professed Christians against the sins of the flesh. (See 1 Peter 3:21; 4:2,3; 1 John 2:16) But we must not conclude, however, that *flesh* and the *sins of the flesh* only embrace the indulgence of the lower nature. Nor should we misuse the definition above by concluding that because the servant of the Lord says that *flesh* embraces the lower, corrupt nature, it embraces nothing else. For such a conclusion will not stand the investigation of the words of Paul in Romans 8, Galatians, and other passages.

There is a definite danger that those who take a limited view of what the sins of the flesh are will deceive themselves that they are not living *in the flesh*. For it often happens that religious or cultured people would not think of being gluttons, adulterers, drunkards, or men given to appetite. They look down upon such poor sinners who derive pleasure merely from the gratification of the physical senses. Therefore, they conclude that they are not living *in the flesh*, but imagine that they have a sort of spiritual existence. But according to Paul, the works of the flesh are not only the sins of gratifying the cravings of the lower nature; they are also sins of perverted reason.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21.

Perhaps the words of Jesus are the clearest and most emphatic of all. We ask the Master this important question, What is *flesh*? Jesus answers, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. . ." John 3:6. This means that anything which springs from the natural powers of man is embraced in the expression *flesh*. Anything which is the product of human devising, all "righteousness" which comes from humanity, all reasoning and religion and doctrine that comes from the human mind is *flesh*. *Flesh* is everything that man is and is capable of doing apart from the unction of God's Spirit. Therefore a religious man, who is zealous and devoted in the cause, who shuns all the sins of the lower nature, yet fails to know the nothingness and sinfulness of all that can come from him without the Holy Spirit, is *in the flesh*. He is carnally minded, and his works are works of the flesh. If he does not awake to his terrible deception, he will find himself classed with the adulterers, murderers, drunkards, and all those who did evil. His works are of the flesh, and therefore they are sins from the same evil tree. In fact, such works of the flesh as spiritual pride, religious egotism, and self-righteousness, are more difficult to cure, for they are more difficult to identify to the carnal mind. The religious, "righteous" self, who takes delight in his humility, acts of obedience, sacrifices for Christ, and zeal in the cause is a far worse devil than the sinful, unreligious self who makes no pretense of working in the Lord's vineyard.

Some remarks in Luther's *Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians* are most illuminating. In the preface, it says:

"As for the contrast between the *spirit* and *flesh*, it is clear to Luther that the Enthusiasts [fanatics] have quite failed to understand the Biblical meaning of these terms. They equate *flesh* with *body*, with what is external, visible and tangible, and *spirit* with what is (psychologically) inward and imperceptible by the physical senses. But according to Biblical usage, Luther maintains, 'everything is called spirit and spiritual that proceeds from the Holy Spirit, no matter how corporeal, external and visible it may be. And everything is flesh and carnal that proceeds without Spirit from the natural powers of the flesh, no matter how inward and invisible it may be. Thus St. Paul in Romans 8 calls the carnal mind *flesh* and in Galatians 5 he reckons among the works of the flesh heresy, hatred, envy etc., which are entirely inward and invisible.'" --Page 8.

It is clear to the great Reformer that the *flesh* is the *old man* (see page 24 *Ibid.*) Says he, "Now *flesh*, in Paul, doth not signify (as the schoolmen dream) manifest and gross sins; for those he useth to call by their proper names, as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and such like (Gal. 5:19ff): but by *flesh*, Paul meaneth here, as Christ doth in the third chapter of John: 'That which is born of the flesh, is flesh' (John 3:6). *Flesh* therefore signifieth the whole nature of man, with reason, and all other powers whatsoever do belong to man. . . *Flesh*, therefore, according to Paul, signifieth all the righteousness, wisdom, devotion, religion, understanding and will, that is possible to be in a natural man."--*Ibid.*, 143-144.

An English reformer just after Luther defined *flesh* and *spirit* as follows: ". . . by *flesh* is meant the *nature of man*, as it is corrupted by the fall of Adam, and propagated from him to us, in that corrupt state, by natural generation; and to be *in the flesh*, is to be in a natural state; and to be *in the Spirit*, is to be in a new state, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us (Romans 8:9). The corrupt nature is called *flesh*, because it is received by carnal generation; and the new nature is called *spirit*, because it is received by spiritual regeneration. 'That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit (John 3:6).'"--Walter Marshall, *The Gospel--Mystery of Sanctification*, pp. 56-57.

". . . our old natural state is that which we derived from the first Adam, by natural generation: and it is called, in the Scripture, *the old man*; and, while we be in it, we are said to be *in the flesh*. And our *new state* is that which we receive from the second Adam, Jesus Christ, by being new born in union and fellowship with Him through faith; and it is called, in Scripture, *the new man*; and, when we are in it, we are said to be *in the Spirit*."--*Ibid.*, p. 159.

The thoughts presented by these two reformers are representative of the view held by the reformers in general. And we must concur with them that *flesh* in this theological sense is not to be equated

with the physical body. For ". . . they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8. This does not mean that they that are in the physical body cannot please God. The apostle tells us to crucify, put to death, and destroy the *flesh* (Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:6; 1 Corinthians 5:5; etc.) But we are to treat the body with care and respect.

Being *in the flesh* is not a physical problem. Even when being *in the flesh* takes the form of enslavement to the appetites of the lower nature, the real problem is still not in the body. Being *in the flesh* is a sinful condition of the mind. It is to be carnally minded. ". . . the carnal mind [literally, the mind of the flesh] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7. Here the apostle shows us that the carnal mind is *flesh*, not because it is composed of meat, but because it is of carnal generation. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The carnal mind is born of the flesh: it is not born of the Spirit: therefore, it is flesh in the proper theological sense of the word. In the original Greek, the expression *carnal mind* reads literally *the mind of the flesh*. And since it is of the flesh, we must apply the words of Jesus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Two men were discussing the nature of Christ. One was insisting that Christ's flesh was the same as our flesh, while His mind was different from our mind. The other could not grasp this distinction between flesh and mind, and so he replied, "Are not our minds flesh?" Well, if our minds are carnal they are *flesh*. Thus Paul says that false philosophy, vain deceit, and false religion are the product of the "fleshly mind." (Colossians 2:8,18) But if our minds have been renewed and transformed by the Spirit, then they are not *flesh* but *spirit*; for Jesus also said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The old man is *flesh* because he is born of flesh. The new man is not *flesh* but *spirit* because he is born of the Spirit.

The Likeness of Sinful Flesh

"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." Romans 8:3.

To receive the thought that the Holy Spirit has for us in these words, we must continue to follow closely the meaning of the word *flesh*. Ellen G. White, citing this text in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 373, calls *flesh* the *sinful nature*. As we have observed, it takes in the whole man in his sinful state.

The law could not justify sinful humanity because sinful humanity could not keep the spiritual law. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am flesh." Romans 7:14. The carnal mind is *flesh*, enmity against God, not subject to the law and impossible to make subject to the law. *Flesh* may wrestle, struggle, strive, agonize and endeavor to keep the law of God with all that lies within, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." That which comes from flesh can only be works of the flesh. This was just as true for Adam who had a perfect body as for us who have a corrupt and degen-

erate body. All works which originate from the flesh are sinful by very nature. Romans 7 vividly depicts the futile struggle of a man who tries to order his life according to the great principles of righteousness. So in the 8th chapter, Paul now proceeds to show that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has done by sending His own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh."

Many of us who believe in fundamental Adventism, and want to stand with the fundamentalist writers and preachers of the past, are very prone to follow their example by eliminating the word "likeness", and affirming that Christ possessed "sinful flesh". But is it a coincidence that the prophet of the Advent movement never once followed their example? In every case where Romans 8:3 is cited or referred to in the Spirit of Prophecy, it always says that Christ was "in the likeness of sinful flesh."

I am in sympathy with the general view of the fundamental Adventists on the incarnation. If I could sit down with Wilcox, Jones, Prescott, Haynes and others, and ask them, "What do you mean by *sinful flesh*?" then I believe I would agree with them that Christ had *sinful flesh*. But many of us have not properly considered the Pauline meaning of *flesh*--that it is the carnal mind, the old man, the wicked nature of man in his natural state. Therefore I must follow the example of Paul and Sister White who say that Christ was "in the likeness of sinful flesh." For this is to say that Jesus came in the likeness of sinful humanity. He was not sinful humanity as any Christian would freely admit. His was not a carnal mind. He was like us in every respect except that no sin could be found in Him. He was not made in the likeness of Adam before Adam fell, but he was made in the likeness of sinners. "As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' was to be their Redeemer."--*Desire of Ages*, pp. 174,175. Please take careful note of the parallelism in this citation.

Now *flesh* as used in Romans 8 does not mean the same as "flesh and blood" in Hebrews 2:14. In Hebrews the apostle is showing us the body which God prepared for Christ (Hebrews 10:5). He took the whole human organism in its deteriorated condition--weakened physical, mental, and moral powers (see *Desire of Ages*, p. 117). These do not constitute character however, (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 606) but *flesh* as used by Paul in Romans 8 has definite reference to the sinful state of man.

Being in the likeness of sinful flesh, Christ condemned sin in the flesh. By living a life without sin in human nature effected by the fall, He passed judgment upon sin in the flesh. Christ's righteousness was not the result of His taking, as some suppose, the sinless nature of Adam before the fall. For we might rightfully ask, How could He take a sinless human nature from Mary when Mary did not have such a nature to give? Christ united the sinful nature that He received from Mary with His own divine nature. The presence of the Holy Spirit slew the inherited enmity, and brought forth a New Creation in the *likeness of sinful flesh*. Jesus'

righteousness was not a righteousness which sprang from His humanity. It was a righteousness which came from God through the Spirit. He was born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and led by the Spirit. He did nothing of Himself. He made no plans for Himself. He "emptied Himself." (Philippians 2:7, RSV) The Father alone appeared in His life. All His works were wrought by the power of the Spirit (John 14:9,10). His righteousness was woven in the loom of heaven. There was not one thread of human devising in it. If Jesus had done one thing, even one "good" thing apart from His Father, it would have been a work of human nature, a work of the flesh, and that garment of righteousness would have been spoiled with one thread of human devising.

The rebuke that there is for us in Christ's life is not only that He did no gross sinful act, but that He kept His righteous self hidden. For human nature thinks that crucifixion of self means putting away those evil, nasty traits of character that spoil a "radiant Christian personality." But it means far more than that. Consider that Jesus did not relate one story concerning incidents in His own life. He did not use His experiences with people as sermon illustrations to draw attention to Himself. Jesus humbled Himself and emptied Himself, even of His righteous self, that we may receive by faith His mind that we may be emptied of our sinful selves.

That the Righteousness of the Law Might Be Fulfilled in us

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.

The object of the gospel is not to provide a clever substitute for obeying the law of God; but it is a means whereby its righteousness may be fulfilled in our lives. But the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled in them that make resolutions and determine by all that lies in them that they will keep the way of the Lord. First we must not walk *after the flesh*, nor *live in the flesh*. We must despair of attaining holiness by any natural, human endeavor. The *flesh* is that old man--husband of Romans 7, that must be put to death that a better union may be made--even the union with the new man, even Christ. The flesh must be put off and crucified. ". . .they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. . ." Galatians 5:24. We must die with Christ "that the *body of sin* [meaning *flesh of sin* as in the Greek of Romans 8:3] might be destroyed." (See also 1 Corinthians 5:5) The strongest language is employed to tell us that the *flesh* must be destroyed, abolished, killed, and cast off.

Now this may seem strange language to those who confuse *flesh* with *body* (physical), for they must conclude that crucifying the flesh means doing something to the body. So they enter into some program of flagellating the body. They may observe that sin is somehow associated with their bodily desires and impulses, and conclude that this is the *body of sin* that must be destroyed. Alas, the malady is not in the body, but it is in the mind. And so, the servant of the Lord says, "We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ."--*Adventist Home*, p. 128.

The crucifixion of the flesh takes place in the thoughts. It means that the ways of the natural man and all that is of the sinful nature is cast out of the heart. We must not live in the flesh, neither must the flesh live in us--in our hearts. Having cast off the flesh--cast it out of our hearts--we must walk after the Spirit. For as many as are born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God, heirs of the Almighty, joint-partners with Christ in the heirship of the universe.

Man's original sin consisted in his trying to be independent of God. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, man is brought back to submit himself to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). He yields himself as a habitation of God through the Spirit. The only righteousness which is fulfilled in humanity is that which comes from the Spirit. When God's people have crucified the flesh, and have submitted themselves to be possessed by the Spirit of God as Jesus was, then they will truly acknowledge, "Thou also hast wrought *all* our works in us." Isaiah 26:12. A Christian who has this experience does not live *in the flesh*. He lives *in the Spirit*. He is a new creature. This new man is not holy flesh, for the new man is not flesh, but spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And all that he does, even plain eating and drinking, is not a carnal experience, but in the Biblical sense of the word, it is a spiritual exercise to the glory of God.

The last generation of saints, whom God is now waiting to develop as a testimony of what the gospel can do for humanity, will be those believers in Jesus who will have thoroughly learned that there can be no righteousness of the flesh nor perfection for those *in the flesh*. Therefore, their hearts will have been searched and fully cleansed of the *flesh*, and the new man which is not *flesh* but *spirit* will have been fully formed in them. They will have "come unto a perfect man, unto the full measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) Though still possessing infirmities and degeneracy of the human organism, though still needing to subdue all animal propensities and keep their bodies under by severe discipline, they will have the seal of God in their foreheads. This means that in all their thoughts they will be righteous and holy through the Spirit of Him who dwells in them: as it is written, "The thoughts of the righteous are right." Not even by a thought will they be brought to yield to the power of temptation (*The Great Controversy*, p. 623). Thus their characters will be perfected.

If we intend being numbered among that company to the glory of God, then it is now that we must walk after the Spirit. He will not come to those of us who want to perpetuate that original sin by managing ourselves. He will not fill those of us who are self-sufficient and independent of God. Neither will He come to be used of any man. And let us realize that if the Spirit has not "wrought all our works in us," then those works are wood, hay, and stubble that must perish by fire. Only that which is accomplished by God's Spirit in us, and then sanctified by the merit of Christ, will be found to be gold and precious stone to abide the Day of God.