

Vocabulary of Spiritual Growth

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Word of God. The text of the Bible is titled as “the Word of God.” Bible doctrine is important.

Anyone who has listened to recordings of R. B. Thieme Jr. is familiar with this verse. He would recite it at the beginning of each lesson. It is important. It identifies the importance of the word of God (Bible doctrine).

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Here Paul calls the Biblical text “Scripture.” The Greek word means something written. In other words, God has given us documentation. In today’s business environment, legal contracts are supported by documentation. God gave the believer divine documentation. We live by this documentation. The Christian today is under the Law of Christ, the code of conduct we call love. We cannot live by it if we don’t know it. And we can only live it by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

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**Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.**

Even in the Old Testament, the “word” of God illuminates the believer’s path.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Some emphasize the importance of Bible doctrine. Others emphasize the importance of faith. As the Hebrews 4 passage indicates, it is the combination of Bible doctrine (promises) plus faith that is effective in the believers life. That was true in the Old Testament. It is currently true in the New Testament.

One of the purposes of combining the two is the growing and maturing of the believer. Increasing the knowledge of Bible doctrine increases the believer’s understanding of relationships and increases the use of the Law of Christ or code of conduct which we call love. Note however that knowledge is increased only in the sphere of faith dependence on the Holy Spirit. Academic knowledge is OK. But the knowledge that is effective in the Christian life is knowledge revealed by God the Holy Spirit to the believer who relies on Him and His teaching. Do you accept the Bible as God’s word. Do you believe it? Do you live it?

Paul laments the state of believers in the Corinthian church due to lack of mature believers.

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1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

1 Corinthians 3:3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

We know there is a maturing process that is illustrated by the Biblical vocabulary. We are not to walk like “mere” men. We are located “in Christ” above the angels. We are not “mere” men.

Peter says that some were like newborn babies.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1 Peter 2:2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

1 Peter 2:3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

So that by it. Purpose. It is the purpose of learning the word of God that we grow. We mature.

By it. By means of or in the sphere of the word (Bible doctrine).

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In Romans chapter 8 Paul introduces us to the word “son.” This son is a mature son. In the Roman custom during Paul’s time, a son by birth was “adopted” as a mature son around the age of 14 in a family ceremony. The son (υιου) became an adopted son through the υιοθησια. Listen to R. B. Thieme’s explanation:

“It refers not to the adoption of a baby, which is born to other parents, but to the Roman custom of adoption. In the Roman world when the child, the male heir became an adult, in the Republic this was 14, it varied after that, anywhere from 14-16 and in rare cases even 17, but at an age at least beginning at 14 the son of the family when through a ceremony called adoption, υιοθησια.”

“The son came in before the entire family as they were assembled and he wore the toga of childhood, and this was removed and he was given a new robe, this would be one of the most beautiful robes he would ever receive. If he came from an old patrician family, an old aristocratic family, the toga would be a very beautiful white robe with gold border, etc. If he was the son of a man who had distinguished himself in the military, it would be white with a crimson type of border. The Roman army’s uniform’s color was predominately crimson. And if he were in some other field it would be some other color, but this would be one of the most beautiful robes or togas that he would ever have and in this ceremony the toga was presented by the father and there would be a ceremony and he would say “I hereby adopt thee as my son and heir and grant thereto to thee rights of citizenship, the privileges of military service, marriage, business, politics”, whatever it was. And this is what actually happens, this is what is meant here when it says “but you have received the spirit of adoption.”¹”

John gets into the vocabulary with additional words.

1 R. B. Thieme Jr, Romans Tape 77 Message 1 (from typed printed notes)

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1 John 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

1 John 2:13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

The point is that the Bible recognizes that believers start out as newborn babies (βρεφος) as Peter uses the term. Paul identifies Corinthian believers by the term νηπιος or infants. They had many spiritual blessings and should have progressed to spiritual adulthood but hadn't.

Paul in Romans 8 identifies υιος as adult sons. John uses τεκνιον for "little children," νεανίσκος for young men and πατήρ as fathers.

Each of these indicates a milestone in a believer's life.

We are to grow in grace

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

One of the purposes of learning Bible doctrine is so that you will not be "carried away" by false teachers. Today there are many. We must stick to what the Bible says. Literal interpretation.

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2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Grow. It means to grow. It also means to increase. Grace orientation, humility, should be our attitude toward God. He provides. We just trust.

The emphasis has been on acquiring doctrine. This is the “promise” part of Hebrews 4:1-2. The faith dependence on the Holy Spirit is the emphasis of Romans chapter 8.

Let us review the background to the text of Romans 8:1.

Romans 8:1 (NASB 1995) Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

First, there is the textual issue. Most textual critics go with the “short” version. However, textually, there is also support for the long version that the King James Version has:

Romans 8:1 (KJV) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Which version you choose depends upon which ancient manuscripts you give the most weight to. It is possible to give the long version priority if you give weight to one set of ancient versions instead of another. The NASB does not recognize the issue in the Ryrie Study Bible. But the NIV Study Bible does identify the issue in the margin.

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Second, there is the theological issue. The short version as read contrasts the unbeliever with the believer. There is now no condemnation (i.e. punishment) to those who are in Christ Jesus (positional truth of the believer). The implication then is that there is punishment for the unbeliever and none for the believer. While that is true for eternal punishment, it is out of place contextually. But if you add the phrase included in the “long” version, the issue is that there is no condemnation (punishment/discipline) for the believer who is walking i.e. living/ordering one’s life by means of the Holy Spirit.

Third, and key, is the context which is related to the previous point. Starting with the transition chapter, chapter 5, Paul’s argument shifts from justification (salvation phase 1) to sanctification (salvation phase 2).

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:1 summarizes Paul’s discussion of salvation phase 1 which he calls justification. That is, at the point of faith the believer is imputed with Christ’s perfect righteousness and declared righteous—justified. The topic of Paul’s argument shifts to the believer’s life. He even uses his own life as an example of failure to live the Christian life by relying on the flesh (sin nature). At the end of chapter 7 expresses his frustration at the life lived in the flesh.

Romans 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Romans 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of

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God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

So what is the answer?

Romans 8:1 (KJV) There is therefore now no condemnation (punishment/discipline) to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk (order one's life) not after the flesh (i.e. the sin nature), but after the Spirit.

The flesh. In other words, the sin nature.

All through chapters 5-7 we are asking Paul, tell me what is the solution to overcoming sin and producing good in the Christian life.

The solution is summed up in the phrase that is left out of the short version: walk (live – order your life) according to the Spirit. The rest of chapter 8 will give us some details of this life.

Before progressing in Romans chapter 8, let me emphasize the context of Romans 5-7 leading up to chapter 8. Paul is talking about the life of a believer not a contrast between a believer and unbeliever. Paul is addressing believers in Rome. Remember his high praise of them in chapter 1?

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

We read chapter 5-7 last week. This week I want to extract verses with vocabulary that showcase the “life” of believers in various aspects. As a reminder, here is the chart from Robby Dean’s website showing the frequency of the word life in chapters 5-8:

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KEYWORD	KEYWORDS in Romans		
	SIN	JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH	SANCTIFICATION
	1:19–3:20	3:21–5:21	6:1–8:39
<i>krino</i> <i>krima/</i> <i>katakrima</i> condemnation	10 3/0 13	0 1/2 (these refer back to judgment)	0 1
<i>pisteuw</i> <i>pistis</i> faith	0 1	7 17 24	1 2
<i>zao</i> <i>zoe</i> life	2 1	0	12 12 24

There are words in addition to “life” that indicating living in time and eternity that Paul uses.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

We stand. It is a word that means not just to stand but can also mean abide. Additionally, it is a perfect tense which indicates a standing with abiding results. This is the life of the believer in time and eternity. We stand.

² <https://deanbibleministries.org/dbmfiles/slides/2010-Romans-082b.pdf>.

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Romans 5:17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Romans 5:21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reign in life. We know that believers will be ministers of the New Covenant in the Millennium and reign with Christ.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Continue. This indicates a continuity from now into time. Our life continues. The issue in the verse is that we not sin.

Romans 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Live. The issue of the verse is that we have the capability to not sin in life right here right now.

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

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Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Walk in newness of life. Walking is the ordering of our lives in time. “Might walk” is a subjunctive. Whether we order our lives in the newness of the Christian life or not is up to us. Choice.

Romans 6:5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Romans 6:7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

Free from sin. We have been freed from the domination of the sin nature. We still have the sin nature. Again, the issue is choice. What will you do every day. What will you choose. Every hour. Every minute.

Romans 6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

Live. Although this is a future, I believe the future starts now.

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Romans 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Life/lives. Chapter 6 is full of life words. Paul is writing about life after the point of salvation.

Romans 6:13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Present. Do not continue to sin but engage in righteousness. The logical question is “How?” As we progress through chapters 5-7 this should be our constant question. Paul starts the answer with the last verse of chapter 7. Interesting word, “present.” It is based upon the same word previously used for “stand.”

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

Romans 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

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Became slaves. This is a single word in Greek from the word for slave, *doulos*. It is in the aorist tense, a completed action.

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Sanctification. Paul uses “sanctification” for what we call salvation phase 2.

Romans 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Serve. This is from the word meaning servant or slave. As Paul previously said, we are to be slaves to righteousness. We only have two choices: slaves to the sin nature or slaves to righteousness. Choice.

Romans 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Romans 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

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Words we encountered:

We stand in grace

Will reign in life

Would reign through righteousness

Not continue in sin

Not live in it (sin)

Walk in newness of life

Freed from sin

We shall also live with Him

Alive to God in Christ Jesus

Present yourselves to God

You became slaves of righteousness

Present your members to righteousness resulting in sanctification

Serve in newness of the Spirit

Summary: Romans chapters 6-8 and part of chapter 5 is about life as a Christian. It emphasizes the need for the Christian to not sin; it emphasizes the mandate to not sin; it emphasizes that the Christian has the ability to not sin. There is a mandate on serving God in righteousness in newness of spiritual life. But now we explore how to not sin and how to serve God in righteousness. Next week.