

Why?
Romans 8:1-8

Why?

Why? This is a question often asked by young children. Sometimes they just want a parent to answer a question to get a response. Does my daddy know the answer? In other cases, the child is seeking answers to real questions.

There is a funny video on YouTube in which a young girl of maybe 5 is eating cereal with her dad at the breakfast table. I have paraphrased the dialogue.

She starts the question with something like “Why is it still dark outside?”

The father answers “Because the sun hasn’t come up yet.”

She asks, “Why?”

He says, “That will happen later.”

She says, “Why?”

He states that the earth rotates on its axis until the sun comes up.

She says, “Why?”

He admits, “I don’t know.”

She continues, “Why?”

He confesses, “I didn’t pay attention at school so I don’t know the reason.”

She demands, “Why?”

The conversation continues. The idea is that getting an answer to one question may elicit a string of “why” questions. And that is also true in the Bible.

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In Romans chapter 8 verse 1, Paul posed a conclusion based upon chapters 6 and 7. An obvious logical question could be “why?” For each answer Paul provides, you might ask “why?” Paul obliges with his answers.

Romans 8:1 (Revised Translation) Therefore there is now no punishment (divine discipline) for those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

After chapter 8 verse 1 Paul expects us to ask... “why?” Why is there no punishment for “those who are in Christ Jesus who walk according to the Spirit?” We still have a sin nature. We still have the potential for sin. Paul might have said, “I am glad you asked.”

He then uses Greek conjunctions to outline support for that proposition. To answer the question “why?” And then the following “why?”

Paul uses the Greek conjunction “γάρ” (gar). Repeatedly.

Conjunctions connect or link ideas in a paragraph. “γάρ” is a very versatile conjunction. It can indicate a subordinate clause. It can be a coordinating conjunction. It can explain the previous sentence or clause. There are many other uses. The point I am making is that this conjunction is very versatile. Here it is used to introduce an answer to the “why?” He has used it repeatedly, corresponding to our repeated implied questions, “why?” He says “for” or “because.”

If one takes the English translation and highlights the “for” which is the translation given in the NASB 1995 for “γάρ” then it becomes clear the point I am making.

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1 Therefore there is now no punishment for those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit (Revised)

[Why?]

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

[Why?]

3 **For** what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned (punished) sin in the flesh,

[Why?]

4 so that the (righteous) requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

[Why?]

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

[Why?]

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

[Why?]

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God,

for it is not even able *to do so*,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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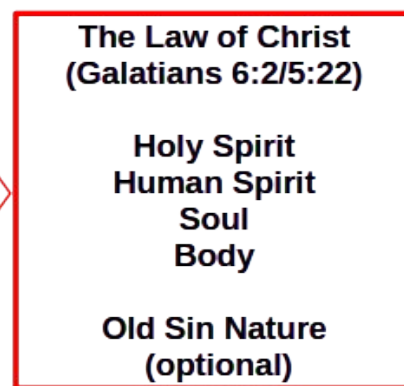
The point is to show where the “for” conjunctions are and how they provide an outline of these verses. You could precede each “for” with the question “why?” Or perhaps, “How is that possible?”

So, what is so important about verse 1? Why is it that God does not continue to punish a believer who is walking by the Spirit? As said previously, we still have a sin nature and have the potential for sinning. The key for Paul is that this is true, no punishment, to those who are walking by means of the Holy Spirit. But still, what is the basis of this? On the surface, this is obvious because we have the doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6) and know that we have the New Man no longer dominated by the sin nature. But Paul wants us to understand the nuances of our position. He wants to answer the question, “why?”

The Old Man



The New Man



Faith in
Christ

In Christ Jesus
all will be made alive.
(fruit is fruit of the Holy Spirit)

By using “who walk by the Spirit” here and again in verse 4, Paul is setting the context not just to believers, but to believers who are Spirit dependent.

So we go to verse 2

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Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Walking by the Spirit. We are under the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” By choice we decide to rely on the Holy Spirit rather than on the “flesh” or sin nature. This spiritual law of Christ, in the New Man, sets us free, has broken the complete domination over us by the sin nature. The unbeliever is completely dominated by the sin nature, in the “Old Man.” The believer is only dominated by the sin nature when it is chosen instead of the Holy Spirit. Choice.

In answering the “why?” questions, Paul is drawing on the foundation he laid in the previous chapters. Chapters 1-4 provide a rationale for salvation and the faith requirement. Chapters 5-7 draw upon that basis to lay the foundation for the Christian life. Chapter 8 is finally the explanation of the Christian life. But in so doing, he seeks to base his answers upon the foundation laid in chapters 5-7. He can do that by referring to specific words and concepts that were previously explained.



Verse 2 is full of potent words that we must touch on: Law: the two contrasting laws, freedom, sin and death.

Paul contrasts two opposing laws: The Mosaic Law & the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. That’s a mouthful.

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In Christ Jesus. This is a reference to position in Christ. This is a result of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was explained in chapter 6. It is mentioned in verse 1 and now repeated in verse 2 and again in verse 4. Position in Christ is important. It is where we live. Something to take note of: Paul uses “Christ” seven times in this chapter.

Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. I have assumed that this law is either the same as or another aspect of the Law of Christ. Neither is well-defined in Scripture. Gotquestions.org addressed that for “the Law of Christ.” But there is an obvious difference in application. The Law of the Spirit of Life is defined to a certain extent by what it does. It provides freedom from the other law: sin and death. That happens at the point of salvation but extends into our lives as Christians. Its results continue into the daily life. By choice we can continue to be separated from the domination of the sin nature which leads to operational death. Choice.

At the point of salvation the Holy Spirit does at least seven things. Here is a list of the ministries of God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation. It is merely a memory exercise without Bible passages nor explanations.

1. The Unbeliever Receives Efficacious Grace
2. The Unbeliever is Regenerated
3. The Believer is Sealed by the Holy Spirit
4. The Believer is Baptized by the Holy Spirit
5. The Believer is Indwelt by the Holy Spirit
6. The Believer Receives Spiritual Gifts from the Holy Spirit
7. The Believer is Filled by the Holy Spirit

One of those things is “regeneration.” God the Holy Spirit provides a human spirit which is the target for the imputation of eternal (spiritual) life. So here in Romans 8:2, at the point of salvation, apparently part of regeneration is the separation or freeing of the new believer from the domination of the sin nature. The Holy Spirit is characterized as the Spirit

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of Life. It is the Holy Spirit that provides that spiritual life in the human spirit as part of regeneration. The believers walks by the Spirit and He produces the spiritual life in us.

Too often “eternal life” is viewed as something we will experience after we die. But once we have been given a human spirit and the domination of the sin nature is broken we are new creatures, we possess the “new man.” We start living “eternal spiritual life” right here right now. While it is true that we will eventually have a resurrection body in the future, we have the option of living a spirit-filled life now. Eternal life is yours. Live it now. It is your choice to depend on God the Holy Spirit. Choice.

Set you Free. While translating this like an imperfect, the Greek is actually an aorist tense. In a point in time He freed you.

In the ancient world, this word had a different perspective than we have today. We do not appreciate it. Freedom is contrasted to “slave” or “slavery.” Indeed, Paul pointed us in that direction in Romans 6.

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.

In Romans chapter 6 Paul contrasted freedom and slavery. So in Romans chapter 8 he can reference this contrast with a single word in the Greek: “set you free.” The Holy Spirit broke the domination of the sin nature and set us free from it. The problem now is choice. Will we return to the sin nature or cling to reliance on the Holy Spirit?

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If we choose the sin nature, this leads us back to death. For the believer, this is death in the sense of loss of the ability to produce righteousness (righteous requirement of verse 4 which we will get to).

Having read and examined verse 2, we ask... “why?” or “how is that possible?”

Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned (punished) sin in the flesh,

The answer to our question is that God sent Jesus Christ (His Son) who was punished for all sin. The eternal punishment for sin was received by Jesus on the cross.

Law & flesh. Paul points to the perfect law that had no provision for its fulfillment. God had a standard, the Law. It was perfect. But no one could keep the Law except Jesus Christ. He did so through the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that we have.

God *did*. The word “did” is not in the Greek. The translation obscures the action of the two verbs present here: God, having sent (*aorist participle* – action precedes that of the main verb) then punished sin.

**Isaiah 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves
esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and
afflicted.**

**Isaiah 53:5 But He was pierced through for our
transgressions, He was crushed for our**

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**iniquities; The chastening for our well-being
fell upon Him,**

Punished. This is the same verb that the believer walking by the Holy Spirit does not have to endure in verse 1. That context is the believer living the Christian life. The context of this word here in verse 3 is sin being gathered up from all time and placed on Jesus. He is then punished during three hours on the cross. God didn't go throughout the world and find sin and judge it there. No! He had to have a container for all of the sins of the world. That container was Jesus Christ on the cross. A human container.

So the answer to the question that follows verse 2 is that God judged sin, He punished Jesus for it. Jesus was our substitute. So we have been freed from the eternal punishment for sin because God took care of it. Our response is just to trust Him.

Romans 8:3 (Revised) For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned (punished) sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:3 (Wuest) For that which is an impossibility for the law, because it was weak through the sinful nature God having sent His Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the sinful nature,

Romans 8:4 so that (purpose) the (righteous) requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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Verse 4 is a continuation of verse 3. Although there is no “for” or “because” there is an explanation of why God sent His Son.

So that. This expresses the purpose of God’s punishment of our sins on Jesus. He is our substitute. But why would He do that? God had a purpose. God is glorified by saving us SO THAT we could fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law. For righteousness. The ultimate purpose of history is the glorification of God. He is glorified when He can produce righteousness in us by means of the Holy Spirit. This has obvious implications in the Angelic Conflict. Not only can God save us from the fallen state caused by Satan, but believers can actually produce righteousness by means of the Holy Spirit. Believers can do something the fallen world cannot do. Produce God’s righteousness which results in blessing to the believer.

Romans 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Paul puts believers thinking into two and only two categories: flesh-oriented and Spirit-oriented. Remember, the context was set in verses 1 and 4: the believer walking by the flesh/sin nature or walking by the Spirit. It is talking about believers. There are only two choices. Choice.

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

The translation is not bad. It just doesn’t follow the Greek literally.

Romans 8:6 (More literal) For the mind of the flesh (or mind belonging to the flesh): death;

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but the mind of the Spirit (or the mind belonging to the Spirit): life and peace.

This is not talking about eternal life. This is the believer's abundant life in time. Peace means lack of hostility. This is specifically mentioned in the next verse. Peace versus hostility. Immediately you are asking why? Why or how can God be hostile against a believer. That goes back to verse 1. God punishes or disciplines the believer who is walking according to the flesh/sin nature. The believer walking by the Spirit is blessed. At the end of this lesson there is a list of benefits the believer has or receives when walking by the Spirit.

Romans 8:7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

Hostile. There it is. This is the opposite of peace. God is hostile to the believer out of fellowship. God disciplines the believer out of fellowship (i.e. walking by the flesh). But what Paul is saying is that the believer walking by the flesh starts out being hostile toward God. A believer chooses to walk by the flesh. At that point, that believer has declared hostility toward God.

Romans 8:8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

What does it mean to please God? Looking at the lexicons, it seems that almost universally they translate the Greek word as "pleased." There is another use of this word in Scripture that can help us follow logical thinking on this. Some problems arose in the new Christian community in Jerusalem. In solving this problem, the disciples "pleased" the people who

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had presented the problem with a workable solution. The word in Acts is translated as “found approval.” Let us read the Acts passage.

Acts 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.

Acts 6:2 So the twelve (Note: Judas is dead but Matthias was “numbered” among the disciples) summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

Acts 6:3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Acts 6:4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Acts 6:5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

Found approval. This is our word for “pleasing.” This gives a better insight into the meaning than other passages. There is a standard or set of criteria that has been met. So it is with our word in Romans 6:8. There is a

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standard which we can only meet while our thinking is dominated by the Holy Spirit. That standard is righteousness which the Holy Spirit produces in us (Romans 8:4).

In Romans 8:8 the negative is stated. It is not possible for a believer out of fellowship (not walking according to the Spirit) to please God. The implication is that those walking by the Spirit do please God since they fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law. In this case, not the Law of Moses but the superseding one, the Law of Christ.

A Summary of Positives:

Here are positives for the believer (in Christ) who are walking according to the Holy Spirit that I have extracted from Romans 8:1-8. In some cases these are implications from the stated negatives.

1. No discipline for those walking by the Holy Spirit.
2. Holy Spirit freed us from the law of sin and death.
3. God punished sin in His Son SO THAT (Purpose) while we walk by the Spirit, we will fulfill righteousness.
4. Thinking that is Spirit-based focuses our thinking on spiritual things.
5. This Spirit-based thinking leads to (abundant) life and (no hostility toward God) peace.
6. The bottom line: Spirit based thinking pleases God.