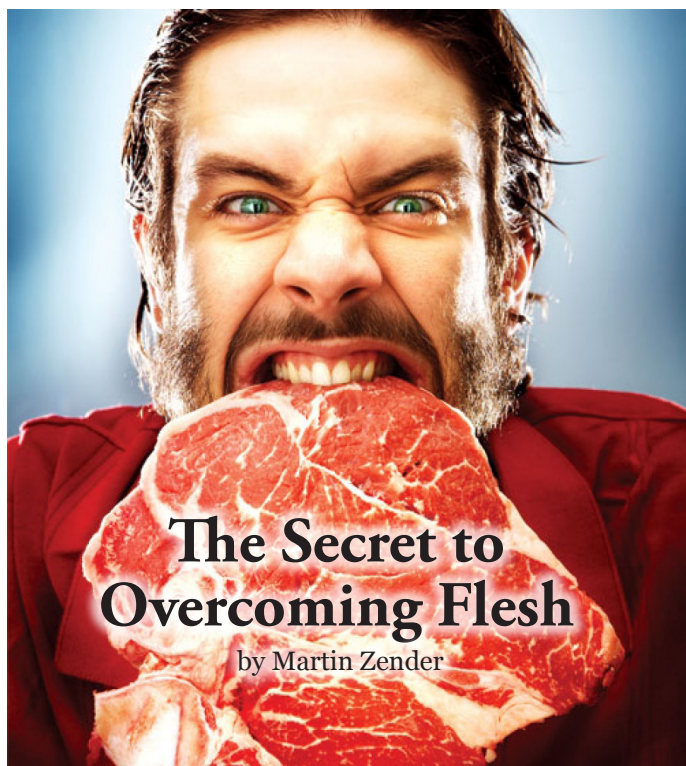


# ROMANS Part 66

Chapter 8:11-17



**N**ow if the spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies because of His spirit making its home in you. 12 Consequently, then, brethren, debtors are we, not to the flesh, to be living in accord with flesh, 13 for if you are living in accord with flesh, you are about to be dying. Yet if, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living. 14 For whoever are being led by God's spirit, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, "Abba, Father!" 16 The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God.

17 Yet if children, enjoyers also of an allotment, enjoyers, indeed, of an allotment from God, yet joint enjoyers of Christ's allotment, if so be that we are suffering together, that we should be glorified together also.

Let's carry on with verses 12 and 13:

**Consequently, then, brethren, debtors are we, not to the flesh, to be living in accord with flesh, 13 for if you are living in accord with flesh, you are about to be dying. Yet if, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living.**

The word "consequently" hearkens back to what Paul has just explained. If we forget what precedes, we will miss what follows. Paul has just taught on how the spirit of God makes its home in us and that the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will one day do the same for us. It is only a matter of time until we share in the immortality pioneered by our Forerunner. The most insistent thought of our difficult lives ought to be the recognition that the spirit of God makes its home in us. Only when this thought takes root can we grasp Paul's subsequent exhortation: "Consequently, then, brethren, debtors are we, not to the flesh, to be living in accord with flesh."

## GET OUT OF DEBT FREE

A debtor is someone who owes someone something. In this context, the "someone" is flesh. We do not owe the flesh anything; no honor, no glory, no worry, no fret, no mind. It is what it is. It's flesh. It's going to clamor for attention, and it doesn't care what brand of attention

it gets. Flesh says: “You owe me.” Really? For what? For getting fat and falling apart? Starve it or indulge it—it’s all the same to flesh. For flesh, there is no such thing as bad publicity.

Satan lives to derail your appreciation of even what little of God’s spirit lives inside you. Satan wants you obsessing over the container rather than the contents. Since flesh is, comparatively speaking, the overwhelming component of our lives, it is easy to think of it as the ruling factor as well. In man-power and volume, flesh does prevail. But man-power and volume are no match for even a thimbleful of spirit. This is why Paul considers it so important to say that you are not a debtor to the flesh. Flesh will insist otherwise, but don’t listen to it. Flesh makes so many claims on you that if you heeded them all, you would go crazy. Maybe this is why some of you *are* going crazy. Leave the flesh be. Don’t stir it up one way or the other. It’s only something that your spirit is riding in until your Rescuer arrives. It houses you spirit, responds to the soul, and lets you partake in the same sufferings of Christ.

Other than this, it can be a royal pain.

## DARING THOUGHTS

There must be a reason why flesh *thinks* we owe it something. Let’s personify it for a moment. I imagine flesh saying to itself, “I’ve controlled this person her whole life.” Or, “There is much more of me than there is the spirit making its home in this guy, because this guy has hardly any spirit.” Then comes the following flesh-thought: “I’ve been around a lot longer than the spirit of God that makes its home in this person.” Flesh acts hospitably to your face, but then insults you when you’re not looking.

All of these things may be convincing arguments in a normal world, but our world is not normal. We are justified and declared righteous at the same time that we struggle within mortal vessels. This situation is unique in the universe. It is so strange that Paul wants no indulgence in *any* claims made by flesh. There is too much of it, and the bait is too juicy. To Paul, one ounce of spirit outweighs three tons of flesh. We have to take Paul’s word on it; after all, Paul took God’s word. Paul is just the messenger. So you simply trust the one ounce of spirit. You place all your bets on that one lonely little ounce of “fairy dust.” You adjust your thinking until all your money—all of it—is placed on that thing that *seems* like the least part of you, but is actually the greatest: the



“You place all your bets on that one little ounce of ‘fairy dust.’”

spirit of God. In spite of what you see and feel, you make the presence of the spirit of God inside you your identity.

You will receive no arguments from me that this is one of the most daring thoughts that a human being could possibly entertain.

## TRIAL OF DENIAL

As I have taught throughout this series, people are trained to think that “living in accord with flesh” means feeding the flesh whatever it wants. Another way to put it is, “sinning like crazy.” That is not the point. Sin may be lurking at the perimeter of fleshly enterprise, but the primary consideration here is attention to flesh *at all*. I keep saying and will continue to say that it doesn’t matter to flesh what kind of attention it gets. The basic desire of flesh is to be noticed, considered, weighed in the balance. The more I say this, the more the practicality of it amazes me. If you decide to purposely eat rich desserts, you eat rich desserts. If you prohibit yourself from eating rich desserts *because you think that eating rich desserts makes you a bad person*, then you still eat rich desserts. Why? At the root of the “bad habits make me a bad person” lie is the dynamic

religious duo of prohibition and guilt. The prohibition has as much power—or more—as the simple allowance. Your question now might be, “Then how do I avoid eating rich desserts?” The answer to this question sneaks through an unexpected door: 1 Corinthians 6:12-13—

All is allowed me, but not all is expedient. All is allowed me, but I will not be put under its authority by anything. Foods for the bowels and the bowels for foods, yet God will be discarding these as well as those.

### “A SPECTER TO BEGIN WITH”

“All is allowed me” is critical truth because it eliminates the erroneous teaching that God now expects us to obey laws in order to please Him. He doesn’t. The law never said and couldn’t say, “All is allowed me.” Only grace can say this. If this one verse doesn’t convince you that law no longer lords it over Paul’s people, nothing will. Nothing can ever touch our position before God, in Christ. What if we sin? Grace overwhelms it (Romans 5:20). Jesus Christ took away the sin of the world at the cross (John 1:29). This truth still eludes billions of people. Billions of people still magnify sin above the cross. This crime occurs in churches. “Not all is expedient” needs grasped. “Expedient” means “proper under the circumstances.”

Eating rich desserts is allowed you, but it may not be proper under the circumstances. What circumstances?



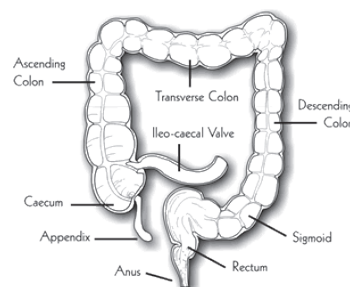
Diabetes, for instance. If a diabetic keeps eating cherry cheesecake, he can lose limbs or go blind. It’s all very practical. If a diabetic *still* eats cherry cheesecake even as his limbs wither and his eyes darken, he has been put under the authority of the dessert, whose original commanding

officer—I am guessing—is not the physical disease but the spiritual one of religious prohibition against fleshly indulgence.

Limbs and eyes may go the way of dust, but the spiritual truths of justification and unconditional love live on. This is what Paul means when he writes, “foods for the bowels and the bowels for foods.”

This cherry cheesecake business has to do with the body and the bowels, nothing more. The spirit cares nothing about sugar or the lack of it. Certain foods will either massage the bowels or poison them. (Nothing like this moves the spirit.) This speaks to expedience. In any case, God will soon discard both food and bowels. There is no need in the resurrection for either Taco Bells or toilets. All of this food/bowel ballyhoo goes the way of summer snow; it’s temporary. What is *not* temporary is our justification before

Christ; not even cherry cheesecake imperils that. This information alone may keep the diabetic from committing passive cheesecake suicide. Religion guilts many into thinking that excessive



eating or excessive anything lowers them as *people*. Paul says no. It all about the bowels—and the liver and the lungs and the kidneys, and so forth. How could the state of mucous-coated organs affect us as people—as human beings created by a loving God? They can’t. As soon as we eliminate the possibility of spiritual harm from things such as sugar and flour, we will be less prone to panic and less apt to surrender our joy to demon-inspired prohibitions. When we ignore it, the false authority goes away; it was a specter to begin with.

### DONUTS ARE JUST NOT THAT POWERFUL

**“For if you are living in accord with flesh, you are about to be dying” (Romans 8:13).**

Preoccupation with flesh promises nothing but death. It will lead either to literal death or to that dead feeling inside. This truthless world makes you think that happiness depends on continually striving against a humanly-unconquerable enemy: the flesh. But how can life be enjoyed by people banging their heads against commandments? It isn’t God telling us that eating cheesecake or smoking cigarettes demeans us as people.

Still, if you are a diabetic I don't want you living in accord with the cheesecake, or you about to be dying—literally. This truth concerns your limbs and your eyes, not the love of God. Your spirit will be saved in the day of Christ Jesus, but maybe not your old foot. First and foremost, avoid moralists insisting that eating too much sugar makes God roll His eyes and wonder why He called you into His fold. Succumb to *that* and you'll suffer small emotional “deaths” every day: condemnation; guilt; dishonor; shame. There's a better way:

**“Yet if, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living” (Romans 8:13).**

This statement is so potentially misleading that Paul carefully adds “in spirit” to the phrase, “putting the practices of the body to death.” What is the first thing you think of when someone says, “Put the practices of the body to death”? As ex-religionists, most of us think this means we're supposed to stop doing whatever bad thing we're doing. Are you eating too many potato chips? Then stop it. Smoking too many cigarettes? Stop it. Lusting after the opposite sex? Stop it. But doesn't Paul say to put these practices of the body to death?

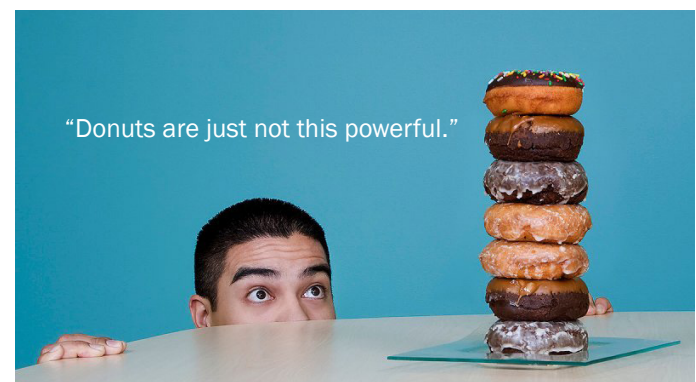
Let me ask you something: Paul has just mentioned how food is for the bowels and the bowels for food. In other words, what belongs to flesh is flesh. Conversely, what belongs to spirit is spirit. So how are you supposed to use the spirit to stop *doing* what the world considers to be bad things? Does the spirit of God help you quit smoking? Does the spirit of God help you quit eating donuts? I've never seen a verse of Scripture or a modern self-help book detailing the mechanics behind how an invisible power such as spirit physically re-directs a donut, a cigarette, or a porn site.



Forget these fleshly things. Ours is a *purely* spiritual warfare. Your happiness or misery has nothing to do with either the donut, the cigarette, or the porn site. These things are but handy tools Satan uses to manipulate you and others like you into guilt-laden uselessness. Satan and his Religion Department commandeer these incidental things of flesh to derail people *spiritually*. The donut or the porn site cannot condemn you. How could they? Is a jelly-roll stronger than the cross? Be

sensible. This is the lie. How can a collection of flour and sugar, or a sprinkling of tobacco rolled inside of a tiny piece of paper, or the pixelated image of a woman, wreck what Christ wrought for you at Calvary? It is literally impossible; the mere thought of it is insane.

What these things can do, however—in *conjunction with Satanic suggestion*—is devitalize your life. Satan uses the jelly-roll and the porn site as convenient fulcrums to level lies against the dual truths of justification and the unconditional love of God. The false condemnation then cripples any victim naive enough to entertain these lies. Rather than reveling in the weakness that highlights the power of God (2 Corinthians 12:10), the victim now wrings his or her hands over a supposed unworthiness. Such people become so preoccupied with the church-touted necessity of giving up fleshly “roadblocks to spirituality” that the ensuing guilt digs literal or metaphoric



graves—and in they go. If this happens to you, then Satan has won. Don't let it happen. Donuts are just not this powerful. Only a powerful being like Satan can *make* donuts this powerful. It's the way Satan *uses* the donut that's powerful. The Christian religion aids and abets this lie.

### PERSONIFY THE PRACTICE

So what does Paul mean when he says, “If, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living”? He means just what he says: you put the *practices* of the body to death. How can you put something to death that doesn't exist? Paul is not describing how not to do bad things. He is telling us what to do with bad things once they happen. We are not dealing with either potentialities or concepts here, but with manifested practices. If you are thinking about eating one-too-many donuts, is that a practice? No, it's a thought. Paul is not telling us how to put thoughts to death, but practices. For

Paul's exhortation to make sense, someone has to have *eaten* the damn donut and probably still have cream on his or her face. *Now* what does this person do? Here, finally, is the right question at the right time. What this person does now is: *put that practice to death*.

To understand this, you must personify the practice. The practice—the thing that was just *done*—will rise up with the voice of Satan (Satan imitates Christ) and try to condemn you for *doing* what you did. Satan will say, “This practice is ruining you,” or, “This practice is wrecking your justification, your peace, and the love of God for you.” All of these things are lies. The practice can't do that because justification, peace, and the love of God are spiritual truths, and spiritual truths are not for the bowels to decide. The bowels decide about food. Food and the bowels cannot touch spiritual truths.

Now is when you put the personified practice to death. You tell the practice, “I'm not falling for this. Even if I eat ten more donuts, my justification and the love of God not only survive, but thrive.” (Remind the practice of Romans 5:20; this will drive it crazy; remember, you want to drive the *practice* crazy, not yourself.) The result of this spiritual and mental insistence is that the personified practice will wither and die. Like the Wicked Witch of the West, it will lose its power and melt into the floor. The first power lost will be the power to condemn. The next one will be the practice's ability to make you eat another donut. This desire to abstain is a result of the spiritual realization that eating can't condemn. *No* indulgence of flesh can condemn. This is still strictly spiritual warfare, but the collateral benefit *will* be physical. Please keep in mind that you are not *fighting* in the physical realm, but when you fight in the spiritual realm, physical benefits ensue. Horses must be put before carts, or the horses become upset. God must be put before donuts; truth before lies.

### THE KEY TO LIFE

**“Yet if, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living” (Romans 8:13).**

I have said that the death of this context can be either literal or metaphorical. Likewise, the life of the context can be either now or then. When we stop letting practices condemn us, life takes on a new livability. Liberation never tasted so good. For freedom, Christ frees us (Galatians 5:1). By the time you finish reading this sentence, Satan will have talked another poor human being out of happiness. The lies of Satan are strangely preferred because



of how much these lies ignite the human compulsion to “do things” and “sacrifice” for God. Paul hopes we forsake this mind-set and assume God's opinion of us instead, which is happiness and light.

The contemplation of such freedom makes even mortality seem less bitter. Now think of your future life. Paul wants us to live anticipating this. He wants us to put down stakes into the earnest of our inheritance. The earnest might be minuscule, but no flesh can stand against it—unless it lies. Thinking this way takes faith. When faith gives way to sight, such exhortations as these become superfluous. I look forward to that day. In the meantime, “as a man thinks, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

Christ has liberated you from sin and death through the power of the Cross. *Think on these things.* —MZ

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**SEE NEXT PAGE  
FOR LETTERS!**





## FROM THE MAIL

Thank you, Martin Zender, for doing what you do without fear or compromise. Thanks for this website and for archiving all these riches. I am so new to this teaching but it has, in a few short months, done more to heal and transform my mind than the past two and a half *decades* in church.

I just listened to two Crack O' Dawn reports: "The 'Especially' Salvation of Believers" and "Christianity the Evil Empire." I am speechless with the shocking truth of what you say. Here are two totally different approaches used to get across this message of the salvation of all and the false doctrine of eternal torment. Truth is just ringing out to me, can't quite find the words to describe it. It's like relief and happiness and amazement all rolled together.

Part of me so wishes I could have known this sooner and saved my family decades of religious, straightjacket, uptight claptrap. But I know now that God has it mapped out ultimately for the good of us all.

God got me out of church three years ago and I felt like a huge spiritual failure. The good outcome is that I could finally find the space to be honest with myself and with God about everything that had profoundly bothered me. The main trouble was the confused and conflicting presentation by the church concerning my so called heavenly Father. No wonder I couldn't love Him the way I thought I was supposed to. No wonder my kids didn't want to know.

Sorry, I am just freewheeling but this is decades of pent-up guilt and pain here. Well, the fog has lifted, and I can really see the truth now. I know I have a measure of faith and a dollop of spirit and my flesh doesn't count any more. I know God is truly good and that I, along with the universe and my loved ones, are in safe hands. God is bigger and more wonderful and more true and more great and more almighty than my previous "knowledge" could ever have seen. So thanks again, Martin, and when you feel like giving up—*please, please don't!*

\* \* \*

Martin, the small ecclesia here in Poland loves you dearly, my friend. Hope you carry on the well-message given to Paul till the end. Never forget that we owe you our lives, bro. Couldn't do it without you. We would so like to be with the Lord and with you, snatched away from this hell on earth, but if we live it means fruit from work, just like in the case of Paul. I'm so happy to be in the body of Christ and to be alive together at the same time as you! We are blessed beyond measure. Martin, I am giving thanks for everything.



"The main problem was the conflicting presentation by the church."