

## Getting It All Together

Up to now we have been majoring on the techniques of analyzing the details of the biblical text, with little attention to its structure. Now let's consider how to discern this structure and outline a passage or book.

The procedure is simple enough. We just:

- 1) Follow the logical progress of thought
- 2) Try to observe the breaks in thought
- 3) Put a caption or headline on each division which reflects its content.

To start out, let's try this approach on Psalm 32, just eleven verses long, so it shouldn't be too hard. It starts with the happy picture of a man who is forgiven:

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit (Ps. 32:1,2).

The next two verses talk about the misery inherent in unconfessed sin:

3. When I declared not my sin,  
my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer (Ps. 32:3,4).

There is obvious contrast here, so we choose two contrasting captions:

*Happiness is --FORGIVENESS, and*

*Misery is --THE BIG COVER -UP*

Then we add some subheadings to reflect the content of each pair of verses, like this:

A. Happiness is-- FORGIVENESS vss. 1- 2

1. Transgression forgiven. 1
2. Sin covered

3. Iniquity not charged v. 2

4. A free spirit

*B. Misery is --the BIG COVER -UP vss. 3 - 4*

1. A body wasted away

2. Continual groaning

3. A heavy spirit v. 4

4. No strength

At this point we read the word *Selah*, a very interesting Hebrew word found frequently in Psalms. Though the meaning is a bit obscure, it is thought to be a pause in the music (since the Psalms were sung). It apparently comes from a root word meaning *to weigh*, thus someone has said it should be translated "pause for thought," or, "just think of that!" If we consider the content of these first four verses of this Psalm, especially verse 4, we can see how it demands that we stop and think about the truth here declared.

Reading on, we note that there is *Selah* at the end of verse 5 and also after verse 7. This gives us a clue for our next breaks in thought.

5. I acknowledged my sin to thee,

and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";

then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

6. Therefore let every one who is godly offer prayer to thee;

at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

7. Thou art a hiding place for me, thou preserves" me from trouble;

thou cost encompass me with deliverance. *Selah* (Ps. 32:5-7). *Selah*

Verse 5 spells out the way to recover, so we title it, "The Way Back," while verses 6 and 7 declare the value of this new-found freedom. Thus we entitle it "Restored Fellowship." So now we have, with added subpoints:

*C. The Way Back*

1. Admit it!v. 5

2. God forgives!

Think of that! (*Selah*)

*D. Restored Fellowship vss. 6-7*

1. Under pressure--pray. v. 6

2. The Lord delivers us out of our trouble--is our hiding place. v. 7

How about that? (*Selah*)

Looking ahead at the remaining four verses we see a natural break at the end of verse 10.

8. I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

9. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not keep with you.

10. Many are the pangs of the wicked;

but steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord.

11.. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,

and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (Ps. 32:8-11).

Verses 8 through 10 tell us "How God Works" and verse 11 suggests "The Result." So we analyze the subpoints and come out like this:

#### E. How God Works vss. 8-10

1. By personal direction and counsel v. 8

a. So--don't fight it v 9

b. Or you'll be without it.

2. Crime doesn't pay--it pains v 10

3. Trust brings encircling love

#### F. The Result v. 11

##### A Rejoicing Heart!

As a last step we give a title to the whole Psalm, "A Song of Forgiveness." When we put it all together it looks like this:

#### A SONG OF FORGIVENESS: Psalm 32

##### A. Happiness is--FORGIVENESS v.1 - 2

1. Transgression forgiven. v. 1

2. Sin covered.

3. Iniquity not charged. v 2

4. A free spirit.

##### B. Misery is--the BIG COVER-UP v. 3-4

1. A body wasted away. v. 3

2. Continual groaning.

3. A heavy spirit. v 4

4. No strength.

(Pause for thought.)

#### C. The Way Back v. 5

1. Admit it!

2. God forgives!

(Think of that!)

#### D. Restored Fellowship v. 6-7

1. Under pressure--pray v. 6

2. The Lord delivers--keeps us out of trouble--is our hiding place! v. 7

(How about that?)

#### E. How God Works v. 8-10

1. By personal direction and counsel. v. 8

a) So--don't fight it! 1 v 9

b) Or you'll be without it!

2. Crime doesn't pay--it pains. v 10

3. Trust--brings encircling love.

#### F. The Result

#### A REJOICING HEART! v. 11

Compare  
1 John 1:3-10  
Psalm 51  
Proverbs 28: 13

#### **Let's Do It Again**

As a final exercise let's put to work all we have been learning on a familiar but interpretively difficult passage from the New Testament--part of Romans 7 and all of Romans 8. Once again we ignore the chapter divisions, for it is not hard to see that a new chapter should *not* begin with Romans 8:1.

My first step in approaching this passage was to make my own paraphrase, simply because it is such familiar ground that I need a fresh look at it. Besides, the discipline of looking carefully at each word is exactly what I

need to get me immersed in the text. Here's what I came up with, written without verse breaks to keep the flow of the thought.

7:15 Really, the way things work out in my life I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I honestly want to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. If, then, I do what I desire not to do, I am agreeing with the law of God--that it is good. But now it is no longer I who make it work out this way, but the sin dwelling in me; for I am beginning to see that no good dwells in me, that is in my flesh, for to will is simple enough for me, but to accomplish what is good is not, for what I keep on doing is not the good things I really want to do but the evil I don't want. But if I do what I don't really desire, it is no longer I who produce this result but the sin dwelling in me.

21. I discover, then, another law: that even though I want to do good, evil is near at hand for me, for though I delight in the law of God in the inner man, yet I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind and taking me captive by the principle of sin being in my members.

24. Oh, me! Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body of this death? Thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ! So, this is what I am forced to conclude: I myself with my mind am in willing slavery to the law of God, and with the flesh I am enslaved to the law of sin.

8:1 But then I remember--there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the new law of the Spirit, of life in Christ Jesus, has freed us from the law of sin and death. For what was impossible for the law of God to do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *God did* by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful man and as an offering for sin. In doing this he judged sin-in-the-flesh, cutting off its control over us, in order that the just requirement of his law might be fulfilled in us, the ones now ordering our lives not after the dictates of the flesh but in response to the spirit.

5. For there are two kinds of people, the ones whose mind is set on the flesh, and those who set their mind on the spirit. Now the mind-set which is occupied with the flesh is death, but the mind-set focused on the spirit means life and peace (because the whole mentality of the flesh is hostile to God, for it is not subject to God's law; actually it *cannot* be--and those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God). But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ he is not Christ's.

10. But if Christ is in you, two things follow: the body is dead through sin, and the Spirit is life for you because you are now right with God. And since the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also impart life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you. So then, brothers, we come to this momentous conclusion: *we are* in no way obliged to live according to the dictates of the flesh! Certainly if you live according to the flesh you are already in death's grip, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body you will live!

14. Now, as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God are the *sons* of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to live again in fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship by which we call God "our dear Father." This is because the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that *we are* the children of God, and since children, also heirs. We are heirs two ways: heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him in order that we may also share the splendor of his character.

18. Actually I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the future glory to be unveiled to us. Indeed, the earnest expectation of the whole created world is eagerly anticipating the unveiling of the sons of God. In fact God's creation was subjected to futility not by its own choice, but through the one subjecting it in hope, hope that even the

creation itself will be freed from its present slavery to corruption and decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

22. For we know that all the created world groans together and travails together until now, and not only the creation but also we ourselves, though enjoying a preview of the future through our life in the Spirit, even we groan inwardly, longing for the full experience of our sonship in the redemption of our body. Certainly in hope we were saved, but hope always looks forward to what is promised for future delivery. For what a person has in his possession why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we do not yet possess we wait quietly for it, patiently enduring the problems of life that surround us.

26. In the same way in which the Spirit assures us of this future glory he also supports us in our present weakness. Honestly, we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf with inexpressible yearnings, and the one who searches the hearts (that is, God himself) knows what is the mind of the Spirit: without saying a word he intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's good purposes--and because of this intercession we know that God works everything together for good to those who love him, those he has called according to his purpose, because those whom he foreknew he also predetermined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be the first in time and the first in rank among many brothers. And those whom he predestined thus he also called out; and those whom he called he also justified; and these he also gave the splendor of his own character.

31. What, then, can we possibly say to these things? If God is for us (and he is) who in the world can stand against us? Indeed, he who spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also, having given us him, freely give us all things?

Who can lay a single charge against God's chosen ones?

God is the one who has declared us blameless!

34. Who can condemn?

Christ Jesus, the one who died for us, but more than that is raised to be our living Lord, is at God's right hand in the place of honor and authority--and he is interceding for us.

Who can possibly separate us from the love of Christ?

Can trouble, or crisis, or persecution, or hunger, or lack of clothing, or danger, or threat of violence? As it stands on record, "For your sake we are being put to death every day; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we more than conquer through him who loved us.

38. For me it is a settled fact: I am thoroughly convinced that neither death nor life; neither mighty angels nor mighty men; neither present circumstances nor future possibilities; not any of the powers that be; not the towering heights of God's majesty nor the depths of human degradation; no, nor any other thing in all creation can possibly separate us from the love of God given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You will note that I started new paragraphs where I sensed a break in thought, but when it came to the questions at the end of chapter 8, I could not resist setting it forth in short bursts of expression simply to highlight the content in our minds. The paragraph breaks are at 7:21, 7:25, 8:5, 8:10, 8:14, 8:18, 8:26, and 8:31.

My next step was to try to put a title on each section--and an overall heading. Here's what I chose:

## FROM FRUSTRATION TO FULFILLMENT

Romans 7:15 to 8:39

### I. We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us! 7: 15-8 :4

- A. Our Problem, 7: 15-20
- B. Our Conclusions, 7:21-25
- C. Formula for Freedom, 8: 1-4

### II. The Joy of Growing Up 8: 5-17

- A. Two Ways to Go, 8:5-9
- B. The Way to Maturity, 8:10-17

### III. *Hereafter* Here 8:18-30

- A. Present Suffering and Future Glory, 18:26a
- B. Adequate Resources and Ultimate Aim, 8:26b-30

### IV. Love Unfailing 8:31-39

- A. Love Takes a Test, 31-35
- B. Love Comes Through, 8 :36-39

I wrestled through some interpretive problems like: what is the flesh'? What is meant by "the sin that dwells in me"<sup>9</sup> What does the body of this death" mean in 7:24? What is "he judged sin in the flesh" in 8:4 all about? What is "sonship" in 8:14 by contrast with being "children"? How come we have received the "Spirit of sonship" in 8: 15 yet still await the full expression of sonship in 8:23? What are all the different laws?

You can see that I'm just full of questions--but this time I m not going to give you any answers. This is a study book remember? Besides, I would never think of robbing you of the Joy of discovery." This is such a crucial and rewarding scripture, I hope you are excited about pursuing its study to the satisfaction of your own heart.

I will give you my final summary outline, though. I hope it will help you think through this vital passage.  
*What words these are to live by!*

### **From Frustration to Fulfillment**

#### I. We Have Me' the Enemy and He is Us! Romans 7: 15-8:4 7:15-20

##### A. Our Problem

1. I know what is right, but I don't *do* it. How come trying to do it right isn't enough? 15-16
2. The flesh is still around--and is incorrigibly bad.It *won't* behave! The principle of indwelling sin is what beats me! 17-20

##### B. *Our Conclusions* 7:21-25

1. I find the *Law of Temptation*. I can always do it wrong--even when I am trying to to it

right and agree with the the law of God. 21-23

2. Is there no way out? Yes--through Jesus Christ our LORD. 25a

3. But trying to make the flesh behave through my own effort is a vain attempt.. 25b

*C. Formula for Freedom* 8:1-4

1. *Really* --there's *no condemnation* 1

2. The New Law--the law of the Spirit, of Life in Christ Jesus makes all the difference. 2

3. It *frees* me from the old vicious circle of *sin and death*. 2, 3

4. It's not my trying harder but trusting in what God *did* in Christ that sets me free. 3

5. *His Purpose* --the fulfilling of the very law that used to condemn me as I walk now in obedience to the indwelling *Spirit* --- trusting-- not *trying!*

## II. *The Joy of Growing Up* Romans 8:5-17

*A. Two Ways to Go* 8:5-9

1. Two options--the way of the *flesh* or the way of the *Spirit*. 5

2. Two different results--*death* or *life* . 6

3. The *flesh* is incurably hostile to God. It *cannot* behave.

4. Two types--those in the flesh and those in the Spirit.

*B. The Way to Maturity* 8:10-17

1. The Law of the Spirit 10-13

a. Christ in you makes a difference--you have resurrection life in mortal bodies. 10-11

b. So--we don't cater to the even flesh, we put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. I can always do it wrong--when I'm trying to do it right - and agree with the law of God. 12-13

2. The Appointment to Sonship 1-17

a. The Spirit leads to mature, responsible sonship. 14

b. We're not *slaves*, but *sons* , joint heirs with Christ! 15-17

## III. *Hereafter --and Here* , Romans 8:18-30

*A. Present Suffering and Future Glory* , 18-26a

1. No comparison 18

2. Real contrast, 19-26a



<i>N o w</i>	<i>T h e n</i>
Suffering Waiting Eager longing Futility Hope Bondage to decay Groaning in travail Down payment (the Spirit) Patient waiting Weakness	Glory Revealing Creation set free Glorious liberty Our full inheritance-- (son-placing)--Redeemed bodies

*B. Adequate Resources and Ultimate*

*Aim* Romans 8:26b-30

1. The Spirit's intercession--knowing what I need 26-27
2. The resulting experience--all for my good
3. The final goal--conformed to His image
4. The operating process--from guilt to glory!

IV. Love Unfailing

A. Love Takes a Test

Final Exam--Six Questions 8:31-35

1. What do you say to all this? 31
2. If God is for us, who can prevail against us? 31
3. Having given us his Son can he fail to give us the rest? 32
4. Who can make any charge stick against God's own? 33
5. Who will condemn us--Christ? 34
6. Who or what will separate us from the love of Christ? 35

B. Love Comes Through 36-39

1. Killed--but conquering, through him who loves us.
2. One sure thing! Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord! 38-39

Death? Brings me into his presence! Life? Nothing's too big for him!

Angels? Satan's surely tried--and failed!

Time? Space? Anything else? Don't even come close!

*What Can We Say?*

How about, "*Thanks, Lord!*" --from a full heart.

## **The Last Word**

There are some who become so preoccupied with textual criticism that they never seem to get to the text of scripture. And though most of us are not likely to get caught in that trap, there is a similar danger we must be alert to avoid. It is this: we can become so involved in the detail of Bible study and interpretation that we may miss the point of it all. The point is that we may know, in living reality, the One upon whom it focuses, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we miss him, in all the unsurpassed value of his work for us and in us, we are only engaging in pointless exegetical exercise.

In some ways, the current tempest revolving around the question of biblical inerrancy can assume the same significance, and I wonder if we are not trying to catch a straw in the wind. It is possible for us to make the Bible the battleground of our orthodoxy and be unspiritual in the process. All of us know people who "believe the Bible from cover to cover," but whose lives show little evidence of a living relationship with the Lord it seeks to present.

And lest I be misunderstood, I personally have no doubt about the Bible's inerrancy. But that doctrinal assertion does not make me Christlike. For no matter with what passionate conviction we hold to the utter trustworthiness of the Bible and contend for its inerrancy, we need to recognize that it is only an instrument in the hands of God (although an immensely valuable one) to bring us to the fullness of life in Christ. It is the incorruptible seed through which we experience new birth; it is the mirror which shows us what we are really like; it is the sword of the Spirit by which the enemy of our souls may be defeated; it is the lamp which lights our pathway through life--and much more. But all of this only because it relates us in love, and in power, to the One who has made us his inheritance.

No wonder, then, the apostle prays:

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know

- 1) what is the hope to which he has called you,
- 2) what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and
- 3) what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him...far above all rule and authority and dominion... and put all things under his feet, and has made him head over all things for the church, which is his body... (Eph. 1 :17-22).

How thankful we should be for the objective revelation, the Word of God, and the subjective illuminating ministry of the Spirit of God--both dedicated to the same end, to make the Lord Jesus a living reality in our lives!

That's why God has given us his words to *live* by.

[Back to Discovery Publishing Page](#)  
[Back to Peninsula Bible Church Home Page](#)

---

First published in book form in 1978 by Word Books, Waco, Texas. [Copyright \(C\) 1997 Discovery Publishing](#), a ministry of [Peninsula Bible Church](#). This data file is the sole property of Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain the above copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.

---