



## CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING INTRODUCTION

It is critically important that a theological position accurately conforms to Scripture. With one's final destiny at stake, there is confusion regarding the four major viewpoints on salvation that are taught in the church: Roman Catholic, Reformed, Arminian and Free Grace (see article *Theological Positions on Salvation*). The same is true in our understanding of the way the Christian life is lived following salvation. This article addresses two distinct options or approaches to living the Christian life. Should believers expect to be *empowered* or *influenced* by the Spirit in their Christian walk? The following material provides clarity for understanding how each approach supports their position from the Scriptures.

Understanding the basis for Christian living sheds insight into the Christian's responsibility. We will first address the underlying *basis* for these two major positions and then the *behavior* associated with each. Then we will look at the *interpretation* of particular texts relating to both perspectives.

One options holds that believers are empowered to live the Christian life based on the existence of two opposing sources of power: the *power of the Spirit* producing obedience and the *power of sin* causing disobedience. The opposing viewpoint understands believers either allow their *propensity to sin* to utilize the world's system *to influence* unrighteous behavior or allow *the Spirit* to utilize God's Word *to influence* righteous behavior. The following key texts make evident which is supported scripturally.

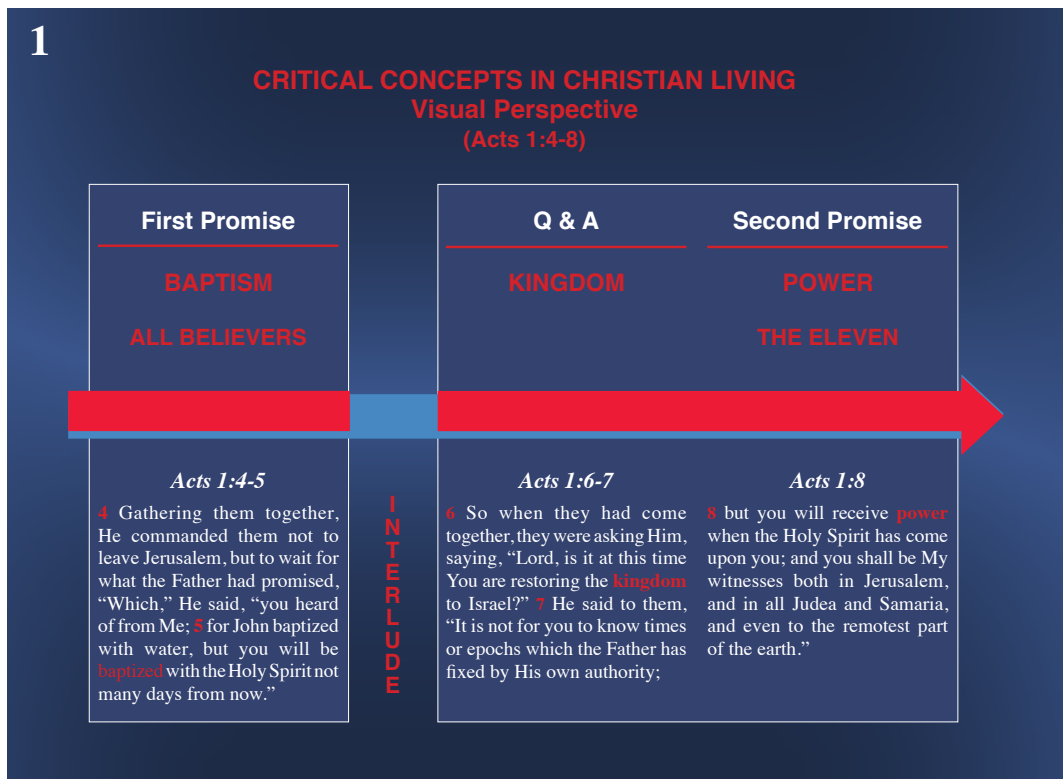
Much is assumed and written concerning the promise of power for living the Christian life. At the heart of this issue is Acts 1:8: "You *will receive power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you *shall be My witnesses* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (italics added). Nevertheless when we turn to Acts 1:4-8, the progressive development of these five verses shows a different perspective (see slide 1).

The two promises in this passage are first "you shall be baptized by the Spirit" (v 5) and then the second "you will receive power" (v 8). They are separated by time, whether by two different occasions when the disciples met with Jesus or by two separate discussions on the same occasion. The phrase "gathering them together" (v 4) is a different Greek word from that used in "when they had come together" (v 6). Either Luke was careless in his communication or he was purposeful, indicating a change in the topic of discussion, if not timing as well. In fact the intervening question about the kingdom's restoration (vv 6-7) separates the promise of the Holy Spirit (v 5) from the promise of power (v 8) even if they occurred during the same extended event.

While the *first promise*, baptism of the Spirit (v 5), was for all believers in Christ, notice that the *second promise*, the promise of power (v 8), was directed toward a particular group, the Eleven, and for a particular task, to be Witnesses of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The issue of power in Acts 1:8 *does not concern power to live the Christian life but only power for service or ministry*. The promise of power was given to the Eleven as "eye witnesses" (Luke 24:48) of Christ (Paul was also an "eye witness," Acts 9:3-5) to accomplish their mission of taking the message of Christ

### BASIS UNDERLYING EACH POSITION

#### Evidence from Acts 1:4-8



to the world. Luke consistently used the term *witnesses* throughout Acts in reference to the Apostles as Christ's "eye witnesses."<sup>2</sup> The Spirit's power was evidenced in "signs," "wonders," and "miracles," which authenticated the Apostles and their message (2 Cor 12:12).<sup>3</sup> These signs and miracles were manifestations of God's enablement for their particular ministry.

Notice, while empowerment for service was not exclusively to the Eleven in the New Testament, empowerment is *never* for living the Christian life. Consequently, the biblical evidence points to the Spirit's power being manifested through the gifts of believers only for ministry and service, not for Christian living. [Also see chapter 9 of *Escape* and articles *Insight to Acts 1:4-8* and *Insight to Ephesians 3:14-21*.]

Not only does Acts 1:8 not support the idea of empowerment for Christian living, but also there is no support found in major *how-to-live* texts in New Testament. Nowhere in the "how-to-live" section of Romans 5:12–8:39 does the term *power* occur except for one instance in Romans 8:38, which references demonic beings who are at work in the world to thwart God's purposes. The same is true of the "how-to-live" section of Ephesians 4:1–6:20. There is no mention of the term *power* except for the one instance in Ephesians 6:12, which again references demonic beings. And in Galatians, there is no mention of *power* at all in its "how-to-live" section (5:1–6:10). Notice the complete silence on the subject. The omission of power in these texts is not only an argument *from* silence, but is in fact an argument *about* silence. The absence of the term *power* was intentional in the "how-to-live" sections of Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians. Therefore, one must conclude Paul did not think power was the key to living the Christian life!

If the "power of the Spirit" for Christian living is unsupported from Scripture, then the "power of sin" has no adversary and is free to wreak havoc and devastation in the life of the Christian. Is there then no antidote to sin's power? No, none! But there is good news. Just as the "power of the Spirit" for Christian living is only a theological assertion, the same is true for the "power of sin." Remember, the absence of the term *power* was intentional in the "how-to-live" sections of Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians. Paul did not consider power to be an ingredient in living the Christian life, whether referring either to the "power of sin" or the "power of the Spirit." Both are merely theological assumptions.

However, there is one and *only one* place where "power" and "sin" are linked together in the New Testament (see slide 2) and it is found in 1 Corinthians 15:56 (italics added):

**Evidence from  
1 Corinthians 15:56**

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CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
SIN CAUSES BEHAVIOR or INCITES DESIRES  
(1 Corinthians 15:56)

*The Law gives sin its power* (NLT)

First Option

Power  
to cause  
sinful behavior

Second Option

Capability  
to incite  
sinful desires

The sting of death is sin, and *the power of sin is the law* (NASB)

For sin is the sting that results in death, and *the law gives sin its power* (NLT)

It was sin that made death so frightening and *law-code guilt that give sin its leverage, its destructive power* (MSG)

These translations seem to confirm that sin does have power. So it is important to consider the context of 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 to gain clarity. Paul talks about the transformation of believers when Christ returns to establish the kingdom of God. The resurrection of believers to life will demonstrate God's defeat of death, death being the result of sin entering into the world (see Rom 5:12). In 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul addressed the relationship of law to sin writing *the law gives sin its power*. The term *dunamis* (power) indicates a potential *capability to function* in conjunction with sin.<sup>4</sup> The verse can be paraphrased, "the law provides sin with the capability to function within the believer, resulting in sinfulness." Rather than *power* for ministry as was the case for the Apostles (Acts 1:8), here Paul taught that the demands in the law awaken and stimulate sinful desires in the Christian (see Rom 7:7-11). Consequently, the believer's inner tendency to sin has the *ability* to find opportunities through the Law that arouse sinful desires (vv 8, 11).<sup>5</sup> This verse does not imply that a supposed power of sin causes sinful behavior. Rather it teaches the law has the capability to incite sinful desires. This predisposition raises it head every time you observe a stay-off-the-grass sign. What effect does that particular sign have on you?

**Evidence from  
Romans 5:15-21**

Since Acts 1:8 does not address an alleged "power of the Spirit" for Christian living and 1 Corinthians 15:56 does not address a supposed "power of sin," many turn to Paul's instruction on "reigning" found in Romans 5 to support both a "power of the Spirit" and a "power of sin." The term *reign* occurs twenty-one times in the New Testament. In the fifteen times outside of the book of Romans, the context is *always* associated with a ruler reigning over a physical, earthly kingdom. But for the six references in Romans (5:14, 17 (twice), 21 (twice); 6:12), Paul transfers the idea of reigning from the physical to the spiritual realm. In Romans 5:12-21, Paul sets up a dichotomy between two different types of rulers who reign over the behavior of their subjects.

The typical way in which this section of Romans is translated aligns with the predominate understanding of Romans 5. Romans 5:16b-18, 21 (NASB) is shown on slide 3, (notice words indicated in **red**)

## 3

**CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
PREDOMINATE TRANSLATION  
(Romans 5:16b-18, 21)**

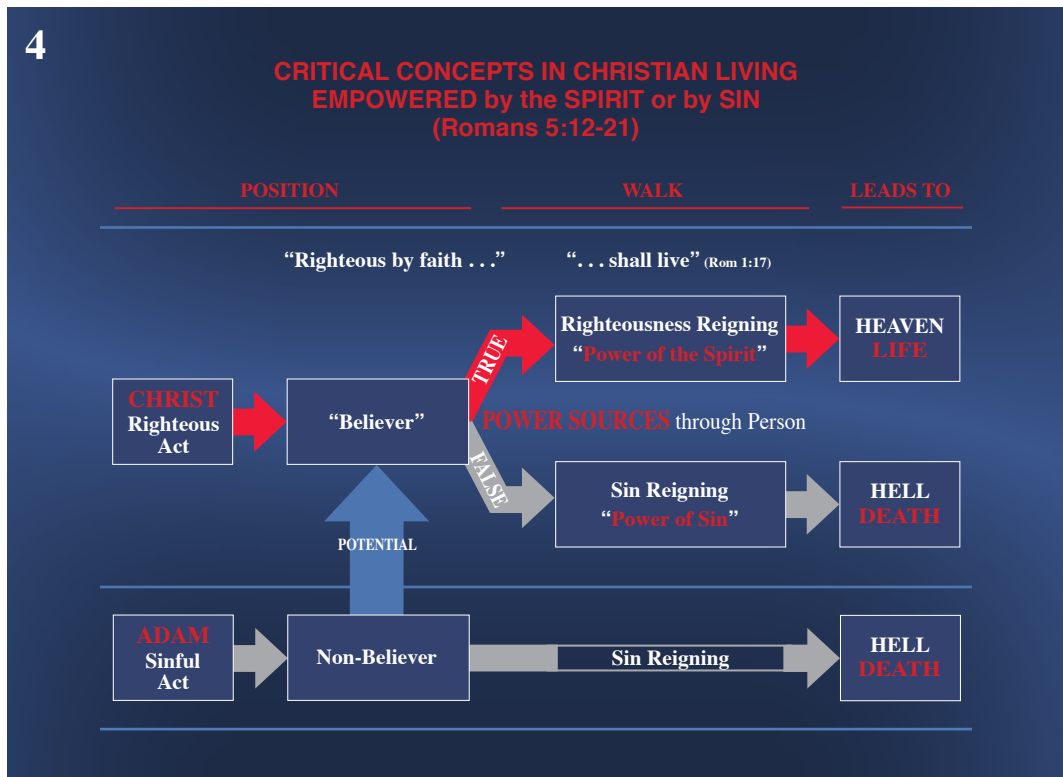
16b On the one hand [from Adam's offense] the **judgment** (*krima*) arose from one *transgression* resulting in **condemnation** (*katakrima*), but on the other hand [from Christ's sacrifice] the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in **justification** (*dikaioma*). 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one [Adam], much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of **righteousness** (*dikaioisune*) will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. 18 So then as through one transgression there resulted **condemnation** (*katakrima*) to all men, even so through one **act of righteousness** (*dikaioma*) there resulted **justification** (*dikaiosis*) of life to all men.... 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through **righteousness** (*dikaioisune*) to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NASB

As shown on the bottom portion of slide 4, because of Adam's sin (Rom 5:15, 17) everyone is born in sin (Eph 2:3), being non-believers under sin's reign. Each person remains in that state until they come to faith in Christ. Through faith in Christ, whose sacrifice provides life (Rom 5:15; Eph 2:8), the believer is declared righteous in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22, see top portion of slide 4). You would then naturally assume "the gracious gift of righteousness" (v 17) would reign in the believer's life. Notice on slide 4, however, that *believer* is in quotation marks to emphasize the two ways in which the empowerment position makes a distinction between believers. They differentiate *true believers* from *false believers* based on their definition of faith, which requires works as an evidence of salvation (see "Myth 3, Faith Is a Tricky Word" in *Hold Fast* and "Myth 5, Good Works Are Proof of Salvation" in *Free to Choose*). This identification is necessary from the empowerment perspective since the *alleged* "power of the Spirit" works only through "true believers" to produce obedience. Therefore if a person claims to be a believer and yet his/her behavior seems to originate from the *supposed* "power of sin," that alone gives evidence that the person is in fact a non-believer, a "false believer." This conclusion would certainly be validated if inappropriate conduct was "habitual" in nature.

The empowerment position understands that Paul continued the "how to become righteous" section (3:21–5:21) in Romans through verse 21.<sup>6</sup> This assumption aligns with the use of the terms *condemnation* and *justification* in the NASB translation (see vv 16 and 18).<sup>7</sup> The contrast between *condemnation* (declared guilty) and *justification* (declared righteous) is presumed to refer to a person's future destiny—heaven or hell. Consequently, non-believers, including "false believers," are under the reign of sin, being empowered by sin to yield the deeds of the sinful flesh. Their destination is an eternal separation from God—hell. On the other hand, "true believers" experience the gift of righteousness reigning by means of the "power of the Spirit," producing spiritual fruit. Their ultimate destination is to be in the presence of God—heaven.

From the *viewpoint of those holding the Empowerment Position*, these two sovereign rulers are seen to have absolute authority over those who are in subjection to them in their particular



kingdom. When sin reigns, the “power of sin” works through the person to produce death. On the other hand, when the “power of the Spirit” is at work through the Christian, righteousness reigns and life is experienced.

*Influenced Perspective*

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul indeed points to a dichotomy between two different rulers who hold sway over their subjects. However, the disparity between the empowered and influenced positions is in the manner in which each ruler reigns (see chapter 4 of *Escape* and article *No “Power of Sin;” only “Servitude to Sin”*).

Following the outline of this Book’s theme verse: “the righteous by faith shall live” (1:17), Paul moves from the “how to become righteous” section (3:21–5:11) to the “how to live” (5:12–8:39). Rather than being found at the conclusion of the how-to-become-righteous section, Romans 5:12-21 actually introduces the how-to-live section and sets up the development of chapters 6–8. This approach is supported by a better translation of Romans 5:16b-18, 21, which differs from the one addressed above. An alternative and preferred translation by Zane Hodges, which captures the intent of the text, is shown on slide 5 (notice words indicated in **red**).<sup>8</sup>

A comparison of how *key words* are translated in this section of Romans 5 provides clarity in our discussion (see slide 6, with variances indicated in **red**). Both translations recognize a *judgment* by God (v 16) in the form of a judicial pronouncement on Adam and thus mankind, with spiritual death (along with physical death) being the consequence. The *first* difference in the two viewpoints occurs in verses 16 and 18 and refers to the result of that judgment—*condemnation* versus *servitude to sin*. The empowered position opts for “condemnation,” referring to eternal damnation—because of Adam’s sin all will go to hell. Notice, however, that the Greek words “judgment” and “condemnation” are from the same root word *krima*. The former refers to a “judicial verdict”<sup>9</sup> and the latter “does not denote merely a pronouncement of guilt, but the adjudication of punishment.”<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Hodges suggests the translation “the *judgment* arose from one transgression resulting in *condemnation*” (v 16) would “seem like a useless comment” because “Paul’s statement would mean that *the judgment (to kirma) is to judgment (eis katakrima)*.”<sup>11</sup> Rather Hodges agreed with the Greek resource Moulton and Milligan in reference to *katakrima* which states, “the word must be understood technically to denote ‘a burden ensuing from a judicial pronouncement—a servitude.’”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, “the *judgment* of

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CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATION  
(Romans 5:16b-18, 21)

16b For the **judgment** (*krima*) came for one offense to produce **servitude** (*katakrima*) *to sin*. But the free gift brings release from many offenses to produce **righteous action** (*dikaioma*). 17 For if by means of the offense of the one *man*, death has reigned through the one *man* [Adam], much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of **righteousness** (*dikaioisune*) [the gracious gift of righteousness] shall reign in life through the one *Man*, Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as through one offense *judgment* came to all men to produce **servitude** (*katakrima*) *to sin*, so also through one **righteous action** (*dikaioma*) grace came for all men to produce **[righteous living** (*dikaiosis*)] *sourced in* [Christ's] life.... 21 in order that just as sin had reigned in *the sphere of death*, so also grace might reign through **righteousness** (*dikaioisune*) unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

death on Adam produced for him and his race *servitude to sin*—“the *penalty*.”<sup>13</sup> Based on that analysis, *servitude to sin* is the preferred translation in both verses (vv 16 and 18).

The *second* area of disagreement also occurs within verses 16 and 18, having to do with *justification* (declared righteous) versus *righteous action/living*. “Justification,” the result of God’s

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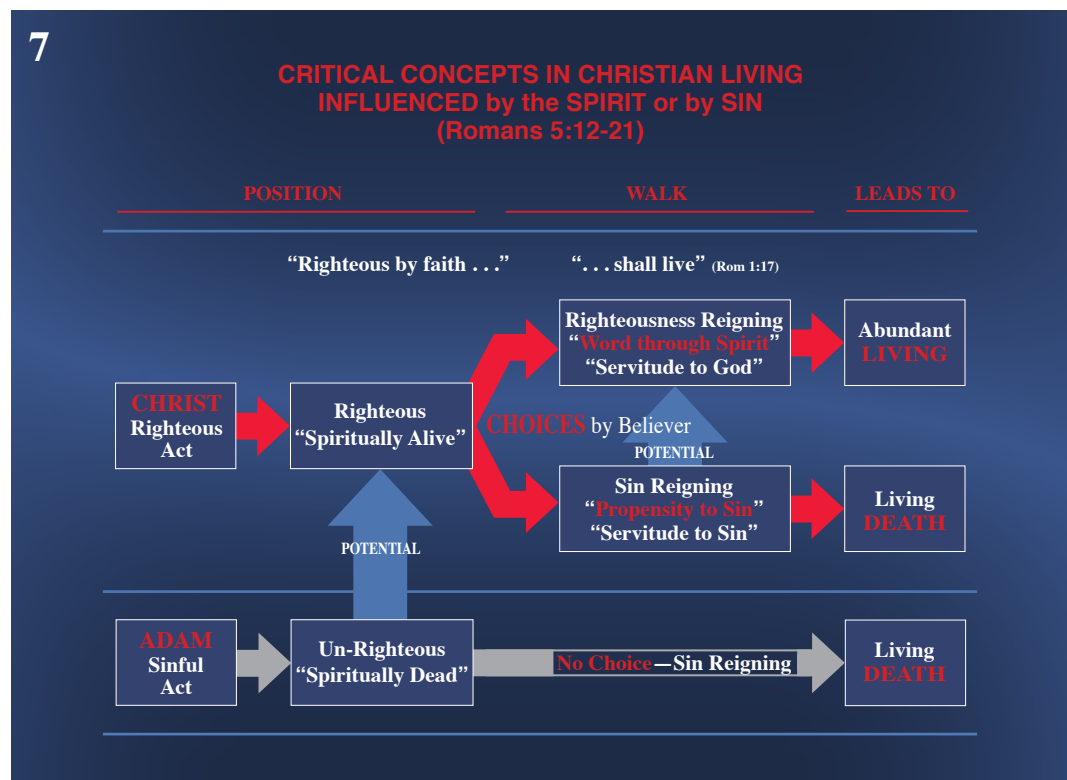
CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
KEY WORD COMPARISON  
(Romans 5:16b-18, 21)

Verse	Greek Word	Predominate Translation	Alternative Translation
16	<i>krima</i>	judgment	judgment
	<i>katakrima</i>	condemnation	<i>servitude to sin</i>
	<i>dikaioma</i>	justification	righteous action
17	<i>dikaioisune</i>	righteousness	righteousness
18	<i>katakrima</i>	condemnation	<i>servitude to sin</i>
	<i>dikaioma</i>	act of righteousness	righteous action
	<i>dikaiosis</i>	justification	righteous living
21	<i>dikaioisune</i>	righteousness	righteousness



gift because of Christ’s sacrifice, aligns with the empowered position. As indicated previously, the contrast between *condemnation* (declared guilty) and *justification* (declared righteous) is presumed to refer to a person’s future destiny—heaven or hell. We have just addressed the misunderstood and the misused idea of *condemnation*. Now notice the predominate translation’s misunderstanding and misuse of *dikaioma* (v 16) for justification, which in fact actually means *righteous action*—an expression of righteousness.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the NASB translated the same word (*dikaioma*) correctly in verse 18—“act of righteousness.” Unfortunately, however it was misinterpreted in verse 16. The second use of justification (*dikaiosis*, v 18) again misses the mark. Rather than justification, the context in both times this particular word is used in the New Testament (Rom 4:25 and 5:18) refers to *righteous living*, not one’s status but rather one’s conduct.<sup>15</sup>

With a proper understanding of this passage, *condemnation* and *justification* are not the issues because heaven and hell are not the concern in this particular text. Rather when introducing the how-to-live section (5:12–8:39), the topic under discussion concerns the choices believers make in order to experience a righteous lifestyle (see slide 7). As before, by Adam’s sinful act (5:15) all are born in sin (Eph 2:3), being unrighteous and under sin’s reign (see bottom portion of slide 7). Being spiritually dead, everyone remains in that condition unless they come to faith. [Note: the argument being made by Paul does not address how the “unrighteous” live or the outcome of that lifestyle. Rather Paul is addressing the choices made by those who are “righteous”—*who will they allow to rule over them.*] Through faith in Christ, a person is declared righteous in Jesus Christ, being made spiritually alive (see top of slide 7). Notice that there is



not a distinction between “true” and “false” believers because that idea cannot be supported from Scripture (again see “Myth 3, Faith Is a Tricky Word” in *Hold Fast* and “Myth 5, Good Works Are Proof of Salvation” in *Free to Choose*). But there remain two contrasting rulers. That is Paul’s concern in this portion of Romans 5:12–8:39—*how will believers decide to live* since they are now spiritually alive, being able to choice to serve God and not serve sin (see 6:16-23). They are free to choose!

Due to the “gracious gift of righteousness”<sup>16</sup> provided by Christ, believers should choose to experience “righteousness reigning” that leads to abundant living. This happens as the Christian

obediently walks in “servitude to God,” being influenced with the Word from the Spirit. But believers also have another option. Because each person (believer or non-believer) continues to have a propensity to sin, they can choose to live in “servitude to sin.” When that choice is made, sin reigns in life as they allow the world’s enticements to influence their decisions. Whether, Christian or not that experience is a living death because they are not aligned with the will of God (see article, *Why You Do the Things You Do!*).

With that perspective in mind, let me suggest a different way of looking at the concept of *reigning*.<sup>17</sup> Coaches with different motivational styles bring us into the twenty-first century. In competitive sports, when you step on the field, on the court, or dive into the pool, you know who is in charge. The coach is the king in his kingdom. What the coach says goes if the athlete wants to participate in the sport. A ruler like a coach can only influence or persuade while his subjects can choose to either conform or resist. A tyrannical ruler can coerce and incentivize obedience. Even threatening a person’s life, it is the person’s choice of life or death.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, a benevolent ruler wanting the best for those under his authority would influence behavior by entirely different means. Kings and coaches can be cruel taskmasters or compassionate leaders. They can be callous or caring. Nevertheless, each individual must decide if a particular ruler is allowed to influence his/her conduct.

This different way of understanding “reigning” *in reference to influence rather than power* is presented on slide 7. Notice the primary changes from slide 4 are “Word through Spirit” in place of “Power of the Spirit” and “Propensity to Sin” for “Power of Sin.” Further, “Choices by Believer” replace “Power Sources through Believer.” These changes align with the context and thus the intent of Romans 5:12-21.

The life and death experiences addressed in Romans 5 are *not* the result of sin or righteousness reigning as *sources of power*. Rather those experiences are the result of how the believer *chooses* to respond either to the influence of his/her inclination to sin or to the influence of God’s Word provided by the Spirit. Whichever the believer *chooses* will determine the result. Make no mistake attractions from the world’s system, working in cooperation with the inclination to sin, influences our decision-making process and can *feel like power*. This is exactly the reason a “power of sin” is *assumed* by many to play a part in the life of the Christian.

See if an illustration about chocolate helps our understanding. If you love to eat chocolate as I do, to look at a three-layered cake with thick chocolate icing stimulates my sense of taste. Reminiscent of Joseph running from Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39:12), I tell the waiter to take away the platter of dessert samples. I have to separate myself from the temptation or I will find myself eating the whole cake. Obviously, you can insert anything in the place of chocolate: lying on a business deal, desiring that luxury car to impress others, porn, etc. You get the point. Whatever stimulates any inducement is influenced by your propensity to sin. Temptations that lead to sin and thus a “living death” (see Jam 1:14-16) concern choices we make, not power sources. This is exactly why in Paul’s last use of “reigning” he exhorted, “Therefore do not let *sin reign* in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts” (Rom 6:12, italics added). Believers are not to allow their inclination to sin to influence their behavior with worldly stimulus. On the contrary, Christians are to let the Word of God through the Spirit to influence their behavior.

## No Power Sources

The New Testament is void of evidence to support either a power to produce disobedient or obedient conduct. There are no power sources in living the Christian life. There is no “power of sin” to generate disobedience and no “power of the Spirit” to create obedience. Nevertheless, those whose viewpoint is centered on sources of power are compelled to follow that position to its conclusion.

The responsibility of believers from an “empowered” viewpoint of Christian living is in contrast to the “influenced” perspective (see chapter 8 of *Escape*).

Is it the Spirit’s ministry to provide power to live the Christian life? It would certainly seem so since this teaching is mainstream teaching in the Church. The position is that a Christian cannot live obediently without empowerment from the Spirit. The Spirit then is the *cause* of good works, with the believer merely the *conduit* of the Spirit’s energizing power. Since the empowerment stance holds to a power struggle between sin and the Spirit, they must also assume sin is the *cause* of evil works, with the believer merely the *conduit*.

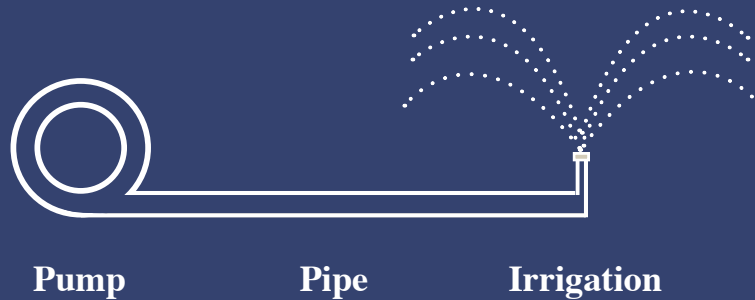
This power-causes-behavior view is illustrated by an irrigation system (see slide 8). Pipes are used as conduits for the flow of water in order to irrigate a field. The pump activates and

**BEHAVIOR  
ASSOCIATED with  
EACH POSITION  
Empowered  
Behavior — “by  
Power through  
Believer”**



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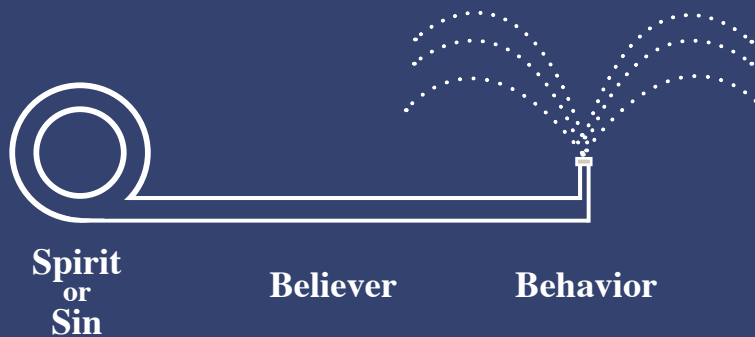
CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Pump-Causes-Irrigation Example



energizes the flow of water through the pipes. The pump is *working through the pipe*. “Because the pump works the pipes work”<sup>19</sup> and the field is watered. Replacing words, the Spirit/sin power-causes-behavior position shows that the believer is *not* actually responsible for his or her actions (see slide 9). “Because the pump (Spirit or sin) works the pipes (believers) work.”

9

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Power-Causes-Behavior Position

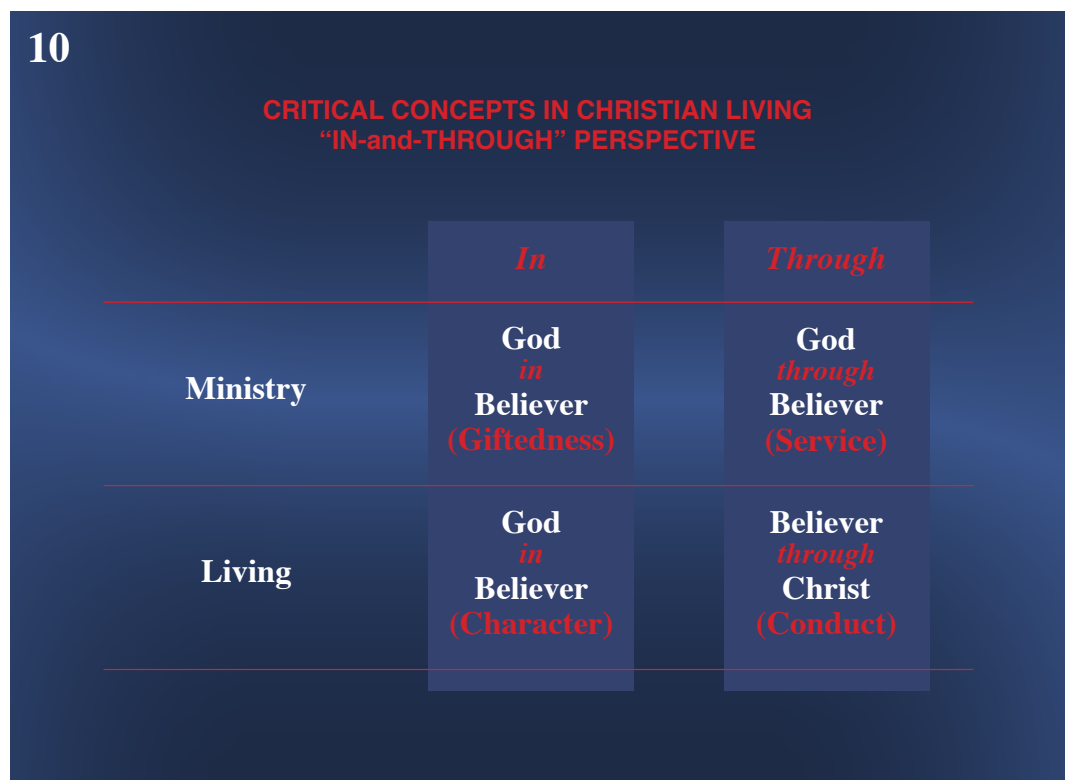


with either godly or sinful behavior as the result. Being merely the conduit for the energizing work of either the Spirit or sin, does the believer participate at all? Is the believer responsible for good works? For evil deeds? See the problem? *The believer is merely a conduit through which the Spirit or sin produces results.*

However, choosing to live according to God’s Word and then actually doing so is the biblical pattern for Christian living. There are hundreds of commands in the New Testament directed to the believer. Remember the “put off” and “put on” commands presented in Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:22-24; and Colossians 3:8-14. The believer is solely responsible and accountable for his walk with God. The Judgment Seat of Christ is the event occurring at the return of Christ at which time the works of each believer will be evaluated, whether good or bad (2 Cor 5:10). Notice it is the believer’s works, not the Spirit’s works and not sin’s works, which are judged. If good works, rewards are forthcoming; if not, rewards for forfeited.

As shown on slide 10, God works *in* the Christian both for ministry (e.g., 1 Cor 12:6; Gal 2:8; Col 1:29) and for living (e.g., Phil 2:13; Heb 13:21). In each case, He provides what is necessary for the believer: gifts for ministry and character development for living. God also works *through* believers for ministry in order that the diligent Christian can serve affectively (e.g., Acts 2:43; 19:11; 21:19). The biblical evidence substantiates each (see chapter 8 of *Escape*.) The tension arises in relation to the view that the Spirit causes and produces good works through the believer. The biblical evidence does *not* validate that assertion. Rather, the *believer living through Christ* refers to choosing to allow the Word of God from the Spirit to influence his/her behavior. The focus is the believer’s conduct.

**Influenced Behavior—“by Believer through Christ”**



Our concern in this article is on the bottom right of slide 10: the *believer living through Christ*. Notice that we are making an important distinction. This distinction is clarified in the following texts (Rom 5:17, 21; Phil 4:13; Heb 13:21; and 1 John 4:9) that speak to Christian behavior *without* any indication of the Spirit producing conduct through the believer (see slide 11, italics added):

These texts illustrate Christian living through Christ or Christ’s Spirit.<sup>20</sup> From this perspective *Christian living is through Christ, not Christ or the Spirit living through the Christian* in reference

# 11

## CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING “BELIEVER-THROUGH-CHRIST” PERSPECTIVE

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 5:17).

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

*I can do all things through Him* who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).<sup>21</sup>

Equip you in every good thing [work] *to do His will*, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, *through Jesus Christ*, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb 13:21).

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we *might live through Him* (1 John 4:9).

to conduct. Living *through* Christ is cooperative living, involving both the Word from the Spirit and the believer’s choice to obey. The Spirit causing obedience through the Christian is *not* found in these texts or any other text. Likewise there are no texts that address the believer’s propensity-to-sin working through the believer to cause or produce sinful behavior. However these texts teach us the *believer is solely responsible to live the Christian life through Christ’s provision of the Spirit’s influencing ministry with the Word of God*.

Those who see empowerment for living the Christian life in Acts 1:8 believe the Spirit energizes believers, causing them to walk obediently. The assumption is that the believer receives power in a mystical way, being infused with spiritual energy and resulting in obedience. The same would then also be true for sin’s empowerment causing disobedience. In fact, the *empowerment view* involves getting what is *not yet* possessed, since believers need additional empowering. On the other hand, the *influence view* centers on accessing and experiencing what is *already* possessed. Believers are expected to know and apply the Word in their life, for God has already provided the needed resource through the Spirit.

Each particular theological position will determine how one interprets associated texts. If there is leaning to the *empowerment view*, with behavior being produced “through the Christian” either by sin or the Spirit, then the interpretation of individual texts reinforce that view. Being predisposition to the *influence view*, with believers solely responsible for their own behavior, requires a different interpretation for the self-same texts. As a consequence, these two approaches can never be reconciled.

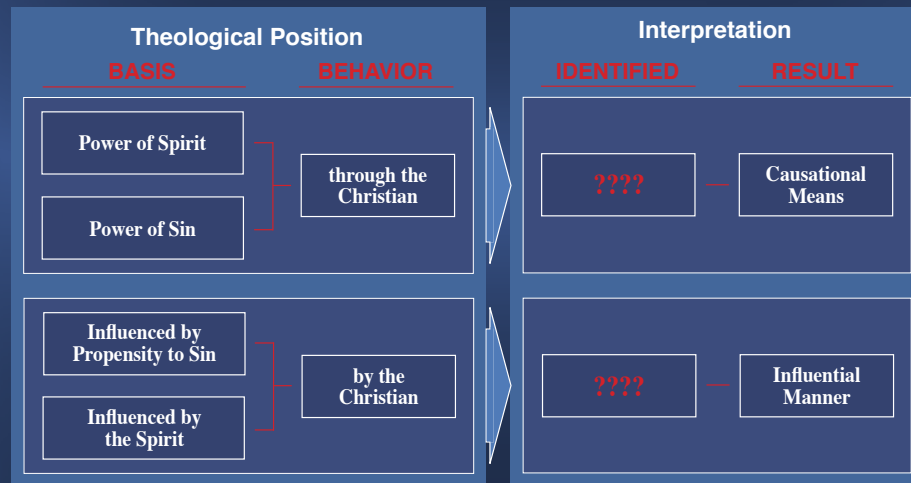
Slide 12 shows the relationship between the two theological positions previously discussed, along with interpretation of texts. Significant “words” and “phrases” must be carefully *identified* to ensure they are properly understood so that the original intent of the author is clear. The *empowerment position* identifies each text to indicate the *means* by which behavior is achieved—through the Christian by means of power. On the other hand the *influenced position*, using those same texts, identifies the *manner* in which behavior occurs—by Christians’ choices as influenced either by their propensity to sin or by the Spirit. As a result, a *causational means* is the understanding of the former approach, while in the latter approach an *influential manner* captures the interpretative understanding of the same texts.

Influenced,  
Not Empowered

INTERPRETATIONS  
ALIGNED with  
EACH POSITION

12

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Theological Approach Determines Interpretations



The divergent interpretations by these two diametrically opposed approaches sheds light on the contradictory conclusions reached. The following verses give clarity in regard to critical texts concerning Christian living found in Romans 8, Galatians 5, and Ephesians 5. Before we begin, it should be understood that the student of the Word who uses a good translation of the Bible (e.g., the NASB being a word-for-word translation from Greek to English) has no problem in grasping the intended meaning of the Scripture. Here, we are going to offer further insight from the Greek to confirm what should already be obvious to the careful student. It will be something like observing a movie on a new LED UHD television when compared to an old picture-tube television—a clearer picture of the same images.

**“by the Spirit”  
Interpretations**  
(Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18;  
Eph 5:18)

The way in which the phrase *by the Spirit* in Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:18, and Ephesians 5:18 is interpreted gives away one’s theological position (see slide 13, italics added). Slide 14 indicates how each position identifies and understands the phrase *by the Spirit* in these verses.

In Romans 8 and Galatians 5, the prepositional phrase *by the Spirit* is a translation of one word *Spirit (pneuma)* in the Greek, while in Ephesians 5 Paul included a preposition (*en*) before the same Greek word. In all three cases, the noun form (dative case) allows the translation into a prepositional phrase. However, how that single word or word with the preposition is translated is determined by the translator. From the empowerment perspective, *Spirit (pneuma)* is identified as a “dative of means”—“The noun in the dative denotes the means by which something is done”<sup>22</sup> and is translated by a “by” or “by means of” phrase. Even when connected with the preceding preposition (*en*), together they are also identified as a “dative of means.”<sup>23</sup>

Coming from a different perspective, the influence position identifies *Spirit (pneuma)* as a “dative of agency”—“The noun in the dative denotes the agency by whom something is done”<sup>24</sup> and is translated with a “by” phrase. Likewise, the preposition (*en*) plus *Spirit* is again understood as a “dative of agency.”<sup>25</sup> Having identified the Spirit as the agent of “leading” or “filling,” it should be understood that “agency” does *not clarify the manner* in which either “leading” or “filling occurs. The key to understanding the “manner” in which something is accomplished is found in the context of the passage under consideration and is inserted mentally or physically into the translation, being indicated by a “with” phrase.<sup>26</sup>

13

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
“by the Spirit” Texts  
(Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; Eph 5:18)

All who are being led *by the Spirit* of God, these are sons of God  
(Rom 8:14).

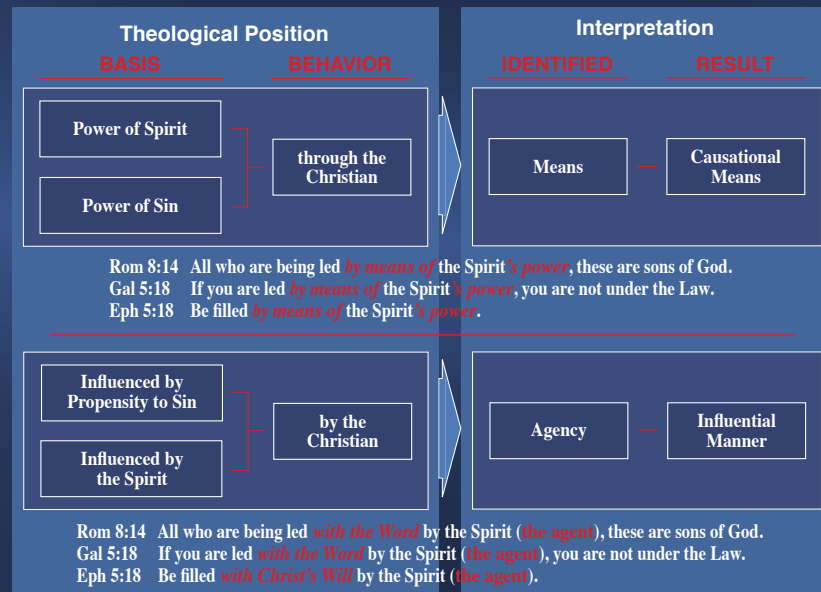
If you are led *by the Spirit*, you are not under the Law  
(Gal 5:18).

Be filled *by the Spirit*  
(Eph 5:18).

*Remember:* the translator’s choice in identification is determined by the understanding of the context in light of his/hers theological position.

14

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Theological Approach Determines Interpretations  
“by the Spirit”  
(Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; Eph 5:18)





With these distinctions, the three verses can be understood in the following ways (words in **red** indicate insertions to reveal the position):

*Empowerment Position:*

All who are being led **by means of** the Spirit's **power** (Rom 8:14).

If you are led **by means of** the Spirit's **power** (Gal 5:18).

Be filled **by means of** the Spirit's **power** (Eph 5:18).

*Influence Position:*

All who are being led **with the Word** by the Spirit (**the agent**) (Rom 8:14).

If you are led **with the Word** by the Spirit (**the agent**) (Gal 5:18).

Be filled **with Christ's Will** by the Spirit (**the agent**) (Eph 5:18).

*In Summary*, the empowered position requires the Spirit's power to be the means of leading and filling the believer. On the other hand, the Spirit is the agent by which the believer is led or filled in the influenced viewpoint. The manner in which that leading and filling occurs is "with the Word" or "with Christ's Will."

The way in which the phrase *according to the Spirit/flesh* in Romans 8:4, 12, 13 is interpreted reveals one's theological position (see slide 15, italics added). The underlined phrase *by the Spirit* in Romans 8:13 will be addressed on slides 17 and 18. However, we bring it to your attention since it parallels the earlier "according to the Spirit" phrases (see Rom 8:4), which is contrasted with "according to the flesh" phrases in both Romans 8:4 and 8:13.

**"in relation to the Spirit/Flesh" Interpretations**  
(Rom 8:4, 5, 12, 13)

## 15

### CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING "in relation to the Spirit" Texts (Rom 8:4, 12, 13)

Who do not walk *according to the flesh* but *according to the Spirit*  
(Rom 8:4).

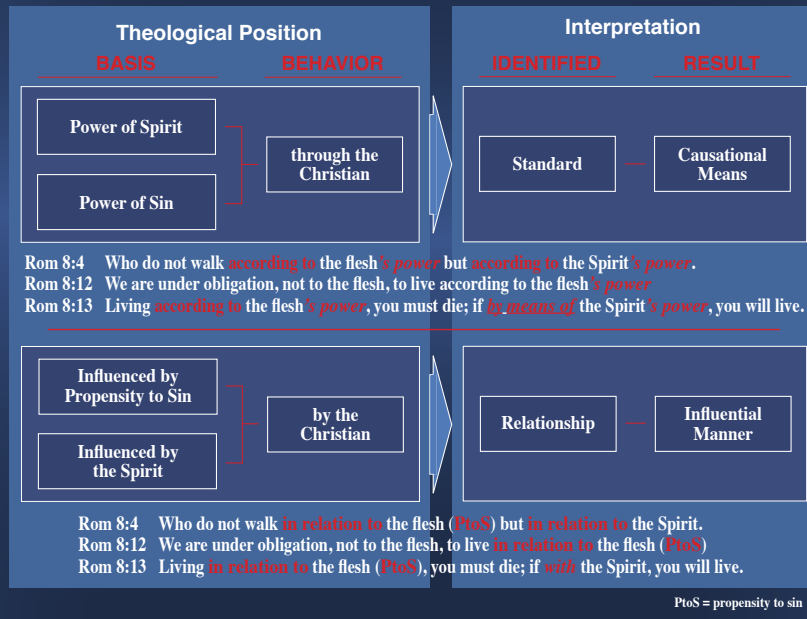
We are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live *according to the flesh*  
(Rom 8:12).

Living *according to the flesh*, you must die; but if by the Spirit,  
you will live (Rom 8:13).

Slide 16 indicates how the two different theological positions identify and understand the phrase *according to the Spirit* in these verses (italics added). In all three verses, the prepositional phrase *according to the Spirit* is a translation from the combination of the preposition (*kata*) and either *flesh* (*sarx*)<sup>27</sup> or *Spirit* (*pneuma*), with both noun forms being in the "accusative case."

16

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Theological Approach Determines Interpretations  
"in relation to the Spirit"  
(Rom 8:4, 12, 13)



From the empowerment perspective, the preposition (*kata*) used with the accusative case of either *flesh* or the *Spirit* is identified to indicate a "standard" by which a person is governed.<sup>28</sup> So understood the preposition introduces an "according to" or "in accordance with" phrase, which associates the Christian with the flesh's power or the Spirit's power. On the other hand from the influence perspective, the same preposition (*kata*) used with the accusative case of either *flesh* or *Spirit* is identified to denote a person's "relationship" with the *flesh* or the *Spirit*.<sup>29</sup> The preposition introduces a "with respect to" or "in relation to" phrase in those instances.

Remember: the translator's choice in identification is determined by the understanding of the context in light of his/hers theological position.

With these distinctions, the three verses can be understood in the following ways (words in **red** indicate insertions to reveal the position; PtoS = propensity to sin):

*Empowerment Position:*

Who do not walk **according to** the flesh's **power** but **according to** the Spirit's **power** (Rom 8:4).

We are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live **according to** the flesh's **power** (Rom 8:12).

Living **according to** the flesh's **power**, you must die; but if **by the Spirit's power** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:13).

*Influence Position:*

Who do not walk **in relation to** the flesh (PtoS) but **in relation to** the Spirit (Rom 8:4).

We are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live **in relation to** the flesh (PtoS) (Rom 8:12).

Living **in relation to** the flesh (PtoS), you must die; but if **with** the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:13).

*In Summary*, the empowered position requires the Spirit's power to be the standard, the norm, for obedient Christian living, while the power of sinful flesh is the standard for disobedience. Seen from the influenced viewpoint, the believer's close relationship with the Spirit, through the Word, leads to obedience. On the other hand, the believer's relationship with his/her propensity to sin, as a result of yielding to the attractions of the world, results in disobedience.

Lastly, the way in which the phrase *by the Spirit* in Romans 8:13, Galatians 5:18, and Galatians 5:25 is interpreted discloses one's theological position (see slide 17, italics added). Notice again in Romans 8:13 the underlined phrase *according to the flesh* along with the phrase *by the Spirit* in italics, which we brought to your attention on slides 15 and 16.

17

### CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

#### "with the Spirit" Texts

(Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16, 25)

Living according to the flesh, you must die; but if *by the Spirit*,  
you will live (Rom 8:13).

Walk *by the Spirit*, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh  
(Gal 5:16).

If we live *by the Spirit*, let us also walk (together) *by the Spirit*  
(Gal 5:25).

How the two different theological positions identify and understand the phrase *by the Spirit* in these verses is indicated in slide 18. In all three verses, the prepositional phrase *by the Spirit* is a translation of one word *Spirit (pneuma)* and is in the dative case. As in slides 13 and 14, the empowerment perspective identifies the *Spirit* as a "dative of means"—"The noun in the dative denotes the means by which something is done"<sup>30</sup> and is translated with a "by" or "by means of" phrase. Nevertheless, the influence view understands the *Spirit* to be identified as a "dative of manner"—"The noun in the dative denotes the manner in which something is done"<sup>31</sup> and is translated by a "with" phrase.

The significance of the underlined phrase *according to the flesh* along with the phrase *by the Spirit* in Romans 8:13 becomes apparent in that the expression "by the Spirit" (see 8:13) is interchangeable with "according to the Spirit" in 8:4 (see slides 15 and 16). Being analogous in usage, it should be understood for the empowerment position that to "walk *according to the Spirit's power*" is equivalent to "walk *by means of the Spirit's power*" and for the influence position that to "walk *in respect to the Spirit*" is equivalent to "walk *with the Spirit*." The same would be true when "Spirit" is replaced by "flesh." This equivalence obviously links the parallel contexts regarding the believer's walk found in Romans 8 and Galatians 5.

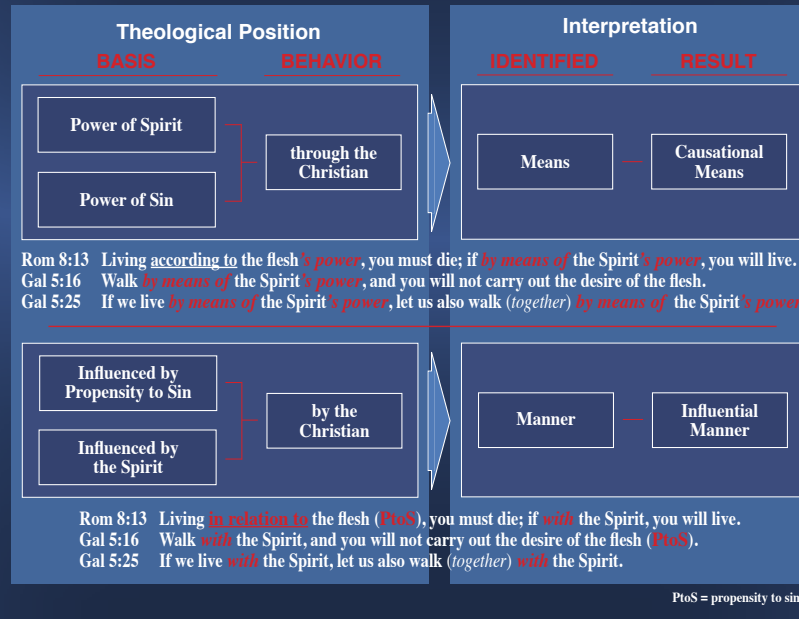
*Remember:* the translator's choice in identification is determined by the understanding of the context in light of his/hers theological position.

### "with the Spirit" Interpretations

(Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16,25)

18

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING  
Theological Approach Determines Interpretations  
"with the Spirit"  
(Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16, 25)



With these distinctions, the three verses can be understood in the following ways (words in red indicate insertions to reveal the position; PtoS = propensity to sin):

*Empowerment Position:*

Living according to the flesh's power, you must die; but if by means of the Spirit's power you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:13).

Walk by means of the Spirit's power, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

If we live by means of the Spirit's power, let us also walk (together) by means of the Spirit's power (Gal 5:25).

*Influence Position:*

Living in relation to the flesh (PtoS), you must die; but if with the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:13).

Walk with the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh (PtoS) (Gal 5:16).

If we live with the Spirit, let us also walk (together) with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

In Summary, the empowered position requires the Spirit's power to be the means by which the believer walks in obedience, while the power of sinful flesh results in disobedience. On the other hand from the influence perspective, walking with the Spirit through the Word leads to obedience. The converse is likewise true. Walking in sync with one's inclination to sin ends in disobedience.

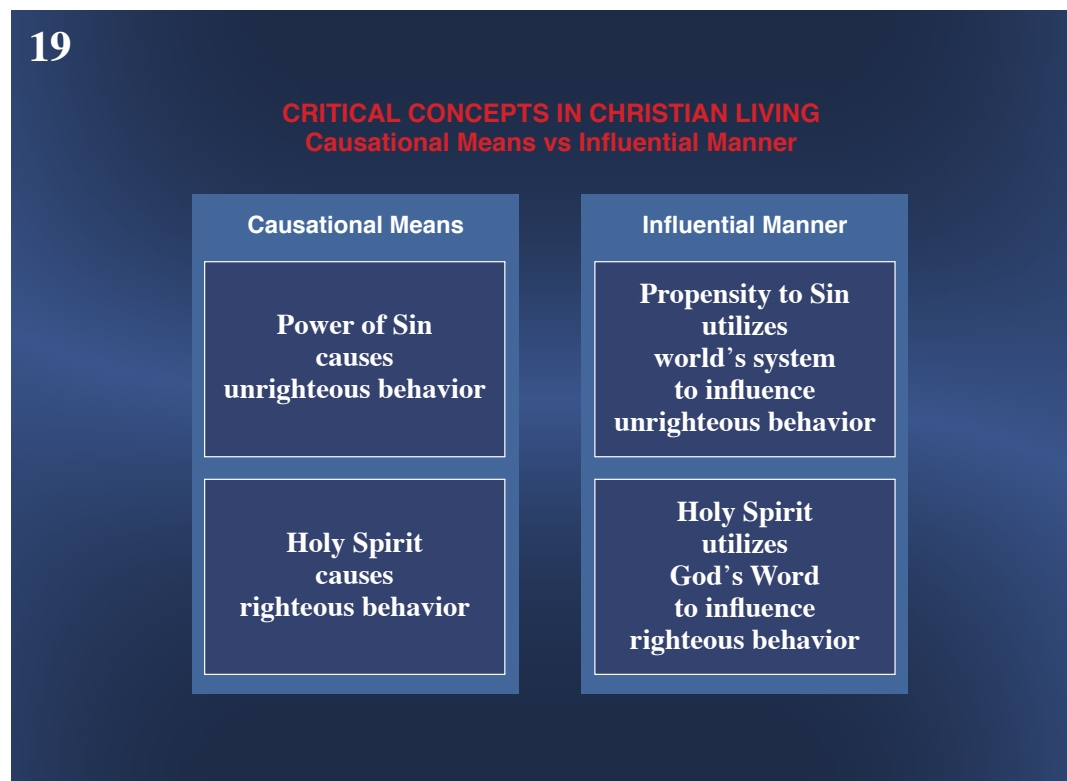
The purpose of providing the different interpretations for both theological positions in this Introduction to Critical Concepts in Christian Living is to make you aware that theological viewpoints always determine how individual texts are actually interpreted.

Interpretation  
Summary

**KNOW WHAT  
YOU BELIEVE**

There are two diametrically opposed views on understanding how the Christian life is lived. Being under the impression that life is *lived by power sources through the Christian* is entirely different from a life *lived by the Christian through Christ*. Whichever position you choose does in fact affect you life! It shapes the way you make life decisions, which in turn will affect the way those decisions and actions will be evaluated when Christ returns at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). The Bible does not teach that you choose to allow the Spirit to cause or produce obedience through you, but rather that you choose to allow the Word provided through Christ's Spirit to influence your decisions so that your actions align with the Word of God.

Slide 19 presents these conflicting approaches. One says life is viewed from a *causational means*, either the power of sin causes unrighteous behavior or the Spirit causes righteous behavior through the Christian. The other believes life is understood from an *influential manner*, the believer can allow either his/her propensity to sin to utilize the world's system in order to influence unrighteous behavior or the Spirit to utilize God's Word in order to influence righteous behavior.



*Further Information:* There are four related articles in a *Critical Concepts in Christian Living* series (see slide 20) addressing important texts associated with Christian living (Rom 8:1-14, Gal 5:16-25, Eph 5:1-21, and 1 John 1:3-2:2). We have just considered interpretative issues concerning specific verses in these texts. The *Four Critical Concepts* delve into their expanded contexts, explaining what we have just touched on in this *Introduction*.



20

**CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN CHRISTIAN LIVING**

Critical  
Concept  
#1

**Walking in relation to the Spirit**  
**Being Led by the Spirit**  
Insight to Romans 8:1-14

Critical  
Concept  
#2

**Walking with the Spirit**  
**Being Led by the Spirit**  
Insight to Galatians 5:16-25

Critical  
Concept  
#3

**Walking Wisely**  
**Being Filled by the Spirit**  
Insight to Ephesians 5:1-21

Critical  
Concept  
#4

**Walking in the Light**  
Insight to 1 John 1:3-2:2



## Endnotes

1. Ken Neff, *Rethinking Empowerment* (St. Augustine, FL: LeaderQuest, 2011), 89-93.
2. Zane C. Hodges, *Notes on Acts* (Class notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1973), 4.  
Hodges states that only the apostles “are μαρτυρες [witnesses] (vs. 8) in the technical sense (cf. 1:22) of this term. (In a secondary sense, of course, so are we, but in reference to the Christian *martyria* the technical use is the only one found in Acts.) The power (δυναμιν) which the official witnesses are to receive apparently refers basically to the miraculous manifestations which in this book are mainly, though not exclusively, apostolic. (Stephen who also works miracles is called a *martus* at 22:20, but Philip is not. Stephen, of course, saw Christ in heaven—cf. 7:55). For the connection of δυναμιν with miracles, cf. 3:12 and 4:17, and note 4:33 which in context is formally parallel with 2:43.”
3. As with the Apostles, “signs,” “wonders,” and “miracles” performed through Christ by God authenticated Christ and His message (Acts 2:22).
4. [BDAG—Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 262.  
See definition category 1, a—“a potential for functioning in some way, *power, might, strength, force, capability*.”
5. Context determines the intended meaning of “sin” and “flesh”:  
**Sin:** 1. sin = action/behavior (Rom 7:7); 2. sin = propensity to sin [capacity to sin] dwelling in an individual (Rom 7:17, 20); 3. sin = propensity to sin leads to sinful actions (Rom 7:8); 4. “sin reigns” = exercising authority in physical bodies [flesh] (Rom 6:12).  
**Flesh:** 1. flesh = physical body; 2. flesh = sinful flesh [propensity to sin in physical body] (Rom 8:3); 3. flesh = body of sin [propensity to sin in physical body] (Rom 6:6); 4. flesh serves through the propensity to sin (Rom 7:25); 5. flesh [propensity to sin in physical body] leads to evil deeds (Gal 5:19); 6. “in the flesh” = non-believers (Rom 7:5; 8:8).
6. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 179-80.
7. *Ibid.*, 195.  
In the Romans 5 context, Murray understands *condemnation* to be “the judicial sentence which pronounces us to be unrighteous.”
8. Zane C. Hodges, *Romans* (Grace Evangelical Society: Corinth, TX, 2013), 132.
9. BDAG, 567.
10. *Ibid.*, 518.
11. Hodges, 152.
12. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 327).  
This observation is important since *katakrima* is only used three times (Rom 5:16, 18; 8:1) in the New Testament in the identical context.
13. Hodges, 152-53.  
“Adam was now spiritually dead, and physically dying, and in this condition he fell under *bondage to sin* (*to sin* is added for clarity and is supported by Paul’s following discussion [vv 17-21]).”
14. BDAG, 249.
15. Hodges, 156.  
In a comment on Hodges’ translation, Bob Wilkin suggests *dikaiosis*, only used in Romans 4:25 and 5:18, might refer to *righteous living* rather than *justification* (see footnote #14). “Then Romans 4:25 would mean that the Lord Jesus was raised ‘for our righteous living.’” This author agrees, seeing that *righteous living* aligns with the context.
16. *Ibid.*, 154-55.  
Hodges suggests the intended meaning of “the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness” should be rendered “the abundantly gracious gift of righteousness.”
17. BDAG, 170.
18. Even though a tyrannical ruler can threaten a person’s life if his behavior does not conform to the ruler’s desires, it is the person’s choice of life or death. It is the person’s choice to conform and therefore the person’s choice to live or die. God may intervene as in Daniel’s case in the Old Testament (Dan 6), but not necessarily. Both John the Baptist (Matt 14) and Stephen (Acts 6) died for their decisions.
19. John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 148-49.  
Supporting the Spirit-causes-obedience position of Reformed Theology, Murray wrote,  
God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work (*italics his*).

- The author adapted Murray’s “because God works we work” into “because the pump works the pipes work” for the irrigation-system illustration to show the fallacy of that position.
20. A text *alleged to* indicate the Spirit produces conduct through the believer is Ephesians 3:16: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, *to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*” (italics added). In *Ephesians 3:14-19*, as well as in Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-14, Paul prayed for believers to grow in maturity. In Ephesians 3:16, Paul presented his request for the believers *to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*. Thereafter, verses 17-19 contain a progressive series of expected results derived from being “strengthened...in the inner man.” Notice the acquisition of strength concerns the inner man, “an inner strength as opposed to a physical strength” [Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 478] or conduct. Differing from an instantaneous approach, this strengthening is accomplished *through* the Spirit’s ministry over time as the believer allows the Spirit to influence his thoughts and actions. This particular text is addressed in detail in the chapter 9 of *Escape*, pp 326-42.
  21. In Philippians 4:10-13, there is an exchange of weakness for strength. The context of each relates to gaining a godly perspective of one’s situation or circumstance. Rather than accomplishing a task by means of an acquired power, living out life deals with grasping the reality of God’s Word by the Spirit’s leading, filling, and teaching through Christ.
  22. Philip R. Williams, *Grammar Notes* (Tacoma, WA: Northwest Baptist Seminary Greek class notes, 1988), 15.
  23. BDAG, 328.  
See marker 5.
  24. Williams, *Grammar Notes*, 16.
  25. BDAG, 329.  
See marker 6.
  26. In this article, we pointed out that the “Spirit” in Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:18, and Ephesians 5:18 should be understood as a *dative of agency*. Others, however, disagree and indicate that the “Spirit” is a *dative of means*. That distinction is critical since the verbs *be led* and *be filled* are in the passive voice, indicating that believers cannot lead or fill themselves. So, it is very important to understand biblically in what way believers are to be led or filled. In this presentation, we indicated that the acquisition of biblical truth through the Word by the Spirit results in “the leading” or “the filling” (the Agency Approach). On the other hand, others believe the power of the Spirit produces “the leading” or “the filling” (the Means Approach). The former is the *manner* in which something is *obtained*, with believers allowing the Word from the Spirit (agent) to inform and influence them. On the other hand, the latter is the *means* by which something is *produced*, with believers allowing the Spirit to energize them.

Which approach should be chosen—Agency or Means? Unfortunately many select the Means Approach, being swayed by the typical understanding that the “power of the Spirit” for “Christian living” causes and produces obedience through the Christian. That in fact is not true! It cannot be biblically support! Of course, the Spirit empowers believers for ministry, but that is not the case for “Christian living.” Yet, that is the bases for selecting the Means Approach in reference to the “Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18.

Below we reveal the way the Agency Approach differs from the Means Approach. Even though there are similarities in grammatical layout, the critical distinction is the *error of empowerment by the Spirit for Christian living in the Means Approach*.

#### AGENCY APPROACH

A noun in the dative form, denoting the agency (personal) by which something is accomplished, is a *dative of agency* and typically indicated with “by” (see endnote #24) Using Ephesians 5:18 (“Believers be filled by the Spirit”) as an illustration, we will show the way the verse is addressed via the “dative of agency” as understood by Philip Williams. [Philip R. Williams, *Grammar Notes* (Tacoma, WA: Northwest Baptist Seminary Greek class notes, 1988), 16.]

The grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of agency* is understood as follows:

Believers	be filled	by the Spirit
Subject	Verb	Agent
(2nd pers, pl)	(pres, pass, indic)	(dative)

Within a sentence with a dative of agency, the subject receives the action of a passive voice verb. However, the manner in which that action is accomplished must be determined from the context. In this case, the “manner” is *with Christ’s will* (see v 17). The *Agency Approach* for Ephesians 5:18 follows:

Believers	be filled [with Christ’s will]	by the Spirit
(Subject)	(Manner)	(Agent)

MEANS APPROACH

Others understand the “Spirit” in Galatians 5:18 to be a *dative of means*. In comparison and again using Ephesians 5:18 (“Believers be filled by the Spirit”) as an illustration, we will show the way the verse is addressed when the “Spirit” is understood as a “dative of means.”

First Example by Daniel Wallace

[Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 158, 162, 375.]

Wallace understands the “Spirit” in Galatians 5:18 “to indicate the means or instrument by which the verbal action is accomplished” (162). Consequently, the grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of means* is understood as follows:

Believers	be filled	by mean of the Spirit
Subject	Verb	Means
(2nd pers, pl)	(pres, pass, indic)	(dative)

Rejecting the dative of agency approach, Wallace’s translation of Ephesians 5:18 is “Believers are to be filled...*by means of the Spirit with the content of the fullness of God*” (375, italics his). As such, the *Means Approach* for Ephesians 5:18 follows:

Believers be filled [with the fullness of God]	<i>by means of the Spirit</i>
(Subject)	(Content) (Means)

Notice:

*First*, when compared to the agency approach, the “content” in the “means approach” and the “manner” in the “agency approach” refer to a similar concept.

*Second*, while not stating the means of filling is by the “power of the Spirit,” that is in fact his position as illustrated in his discussion on “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). He wrote, “the *empowering of the Spirit*...enables one to resist the flesh” (158, italics his).

Second Example by Harold Hoehner

[Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 699, 704.]

Citing Daniel Wallace (see footnote #2, 704) for support, the grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of means* is again understood as follows:

Believers	be filled	by mean of the Spirit
Subject	Verb	Means
(2nd pers, pl)	(pres, pass, indic)	(dative)

Coming essentially to the same conclusion as Wallace, Hoehner’s translation of Ephesians 5:18 is “the Holy Spirit is the means by which believers are filled with Christ and his will” (704). Consequently, the verse rendered by the *Means Approach* follows:

Believers be filled [with Christ and his will]	<i>by means of the Spirit</i>
(Subject)	(Content) (Means)

Notice:

*First*, when again compared to the agency approach, the “content” in the “means approach” and the “manner” in the “agency approach” refer to a similar concept.

*Second*, while also not addressing the means of filling is by the “power of the Spirit,” that is in fact his position: “The will of the Lord...is carried out by the *power of God’s Spirit*” (699, italics added).

27. Context determines the intended meaning of “flesh”:

1. flesh = physical body; 2. flesh = sinful flesh [propensity to sin in physical body] (Rom 8:3); 3. flesh = body of sin [propensity to sin in physical body] (Rom 6:6); 4. flesh serves through the propensity to sin (Rom 7:25); 5. flesh [propensity to sin in physical body] leads to evil deeds (Gal 5:19); 6. “in the flesh” = non-believers (Rom 7:5; 8:8).

28. BDAG, 512.

See marker 5, a, α, γ.

29. Ibid., 513.

See marker 6.

30. See endnote #22.

31. Williams, *Grammar Notes*, 15.