

## Romans Part 25 – Chapter 8:12-17

Sunday, September 18, 2022

With input from John Owen, <https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/8>, and David Jeremiah

**Romans 8:12-17:** *So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Notice the continuously active verb “putting” and structure of this sentence: “*you are putting to death the deeds of the body*”

Excerpts from John Owen:

Mortification of Sin – what is it? A metaphorical expression, taken from the putting of any living thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigor, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own; so it is in this case. Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called “the old man,” with his faculties, and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified, — that is, have its power, life, vigor, and strength, to produce its effects, taken away by the Spirit.

**Galatians 2:20:** *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

The old man, (old nature or old self) is, indeed, meritoriously, and by way of example, utterly mortified and slain by the cross of Christ; and the “old man” is thence said to be “crucified with Christ,”

**Our “old self” is dead with Him:**

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

**We live a new, or regenerate, life with Him**

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

**Ongoing mortification is necessary because the battle continues:**

**Galatians 5:17:** *For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.*

Free people in Christ have the opportunity to lead meaningful lives of service instead of meaningless lives of religious rule-following or endless pleasure seeking (**Galatians 5:13–15:** *For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.*

But how can we live this way if it does not come naturally to us? Paul urged us to walk in the power of God's Spirit. His Holy Spirit lives in the heart of every Christian (**Galatians 4:6** *Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba! Father!"*) When we walk by His power, we won't indulge our own desires at the cost of others.

The intent of the apostle is this prescription of the duty - that the mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh and is the constant duty of believers.

### **1. Mortification is the duty of the best believers**

**Colossians 3:5:** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

**1 Corinthians 9:27:** *No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

### **2. Indwelling sin always abides; there is no perfection in this life**

**Philippians 3:12:** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

**1 Corinthians 13:12** *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

**2 Peter 3:18:** *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

### **3. The activity of abiding sin is in believers**

**Romans 7:23:** *but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.*

**James 4:5:** *Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us Or that the spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely; or that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us longs jealously?*

**Hebrews 12:1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us*

### **4. Sin's fruitfulness and tendency — Every lust aims at the height in its kind — The Spirit and our new nature are given to contend against indwelling sin:**

**Galatians 5:17:** *For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.*

**2 Peter 1:3-8:** *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

*5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## **5. There is the fearful issue of the neglect of mortification**

**Revelation 3:3** (to the church in Sardis) *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us*

**Hebrews 3:13:** *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

Back to our text:

**Romans 8:12-17:** *So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, **you will live.***

David Jeremiah on the spirit-filled life of Paul:

The word "content" means self-sufficient, but Paul goes beyond that. Paul tells us that our sufficiency is not of ourselves. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God," 2 Corinthians 3:5. The Christian views contentment both as something that's independent and something that's dependent. The things of the world that we are told are necessary for contentment don't matter to the Christians, they don't. If you see somebody who's really walking in the center of the will of God, money is just a tool to get them what they need so they can serve God better. On the other hand, all of the things the world says are unimportant are of vital importance: the family, time alone, building your own life, your faith in God.

So, here is Paul at the end of this letter giving us this little tutorial on how we can develop the spirit of contentment. Let me remind you again this is not something you're born with. I have never seen a contented baby. Have you? Contentment is not something that's in your genes. It's something you learn. You learn to be content. Now, that's possible, I'm sure, that some people are just more normally contented than others, but for those of you who have a spirit of discontent, let me give you this encouragement. Here's what the Bible says: you don't have to stay that way. You can learn to be content. If the Apostle Paul can do it, you can do it, I can do it.

May I remind you that Paul was not writing this from any kind of a place where you would normally think such a writing would come. He was writing it in between being chained to Roman soldiers. And I just want to stop and say that it's such a sad thing, and it's so easy for this to happen, that so many people go through life thinking that if they could just relocate they'd be content. If they could just go to another church, they would be content. We have a name that we call people who do that, they're called church-hoppers. They go from church to church to church to church trying to find something, and here's the key phrase, "I didn't get my needs met," whatever that means. That's not in the Bible by the way. And if we would stop trying to get our needs met and start trying to help other people who have

needs we would never say anything like that, we'd be so busy helping others and in the process we'd be discovering everything we wanted was always there.

The Bible says if you want hope, you'll find it in the resurrection. If you're looking for peace, it's in the shed blood of Christ. If you want joy, it's in the joy of the Holy Spirit. If you want power, you will one day rule with him forever. If you're hungry, he's the bread of life. If you're thirsty, he's the living water. If you're naked, he covers you with his righteousness. If you're looking for health, he's the Great Physician. If you want knowledge, he holds it in his hand. If you're looking for rest, he's the one who said, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

**Romans 8:14** *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God.*

Christians have God's Spirit, and those who have God's Spirit are Christians. Period. That's the point Paul is emphasizing in this verse, but he adds a new layer that he will begin to build on in the following verses. In the previous verse, he wrote that the ones who will live are those who put to death the sinful deeds of the body by the Spirit's power. He was not saying that we are saved by our works or our ability to stop sinning. That would contradict the entire message of Romans up to this point.

This verse clarifies that statement. The Spirit leads Christians—every Christian—in a specific direction away from their sinful choices. We are saved by God's grace alone through our faith alone. Then, the Spirit, also by God's grace, begins to set a new direction for our lives and to give us the power to go that way.

Why does God do this? Paul answers here: We are God's children. All who become God's children through faith in Christ are led by God's Spirit. All who are led by God's Spirit are His children. Put negatively, we are not in God's family if His Spirit does not lead us.

What is the implication of this? Looking forward, Christians should expect to be directed and empowered by their loving Father away from their sin and toward Him. Looking back, we should trust that He has been leading and empowering us on the path that we have walked as His children.

**Romans 8:15** *For you have not received a spirit of slavery [a]leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*

Earlier in this letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that through faith in Christ we are freed from slavery to sin and that we become "slaves to righteousness" (Romans 6:18) or "slaves to God" (Romans 6:22). Paul is not backing away from that in this verse. The word used for slaves—*doulos*—describes what was once known as indentured service: when a person swore their allegiance to remain in the service of a specific master.

Here, though, Paul assures us that God does not view us as His slaves or even just good servants. He did not free us from slavery to sin simply to add us to His team. He rescued us from sin to make us His children. That involves the Holy Spirit.

God did not give us the spirit of slavery, by giving us the Holy Spirit. Abused slaves often live in fear of their masters, and that is not the relationship God wants from us. No, Paul insists, God gave us the Spirit of adoption as his children. In other words, God legally changed the status of those who come to Him by faith in Christ to sons and daughters.

This is not a distant or strained parent/child relationship, either. This Spirit of adoption, another name for the Holy Spirit, allows us to cry out to God as little children call out to a loving daddy. The word Abba is a Greek and English adaptation of the Aramaic word for father. It was often the word used by young children for "papa" or "daddy." That's the relationship God wants with us, and He has made it possible through the Spirit.

*16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*  
When we quench the Spirit repeatedly and consistently, we don't hear the Spirit testify that we are His and doubts come.

Paul is revealing exactly what the Holy Spirit does in and through those who are in Christ. In Romans 8, he emphasizes that communication between us and God is one of the key works of God's Spirit in us. That communication goes in both directions. By the Spirit, we can communicate with God at the most basic level. We cry to Him and He hears from us "Abba! Father!" Romans 8:26–27 goes even further, showing that the Spirit is the one who takes our prayers, even when we don't know what to pray, to the heart of our Father.

In this verse, the communication goes the other way. God communicates from His Spirit to our spirit that we are His children. His Spirit "bears witness," keeps communicating to us over and over that we belong in God's family now that we are in Christ. He confirms to us what is true on some deep and unspoken level.

The confidence we carry that we belong to God, not because of our goodness or effort but because of His love for us, comes directly from God's Spirit with us.

*17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

The action of making us heirs is absolutely unnecessary on God's part, and it is absolutely evidence of God's enormous love for us. God has every right to treat us as mere creatures. He is the Creator. Instead, in Christ and through the power of His Spirit, He has welcomed us as fully adopted children with full access to His kingdom. There is no greater gift.