

Spiritual Victory Over Death-Deeds (8:12,13)

No Obligation to Death (8:12-13a)

8:12 *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – 8:13a for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die...*

- Paul is speaking to Christians, for he calls them “brethren.” This is important, because we must not read what follows as advice to unbelievers lost in sin. They will not be able to save themselves by trying to put “to death the deeds of the flesh” in their own self-discipline and self-effort. Hell will be filled with countless self-disciplined moral people whose sins were not atoned for by the only acceptable sacrifice to God – His own Son.
- Paul has already said, “the wages of sin is death” (6:23). The apostle told us the origin of this reality in human experience: “...through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (5:12).

Spiritual Battling for Life (8:13b)

...8:13b *but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

- When Paul says “the deeds of the body,” he means those things we do which are contrary to a Christ-imitative, Spirit-empowered, obedient-to-the-Father life. Does the Bible say it’s wrong? Then it’s one of “the deeds of the body.” Remember what Paul just said about the Holy Spirit and our bodies: “...if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you” (8:11). The same Spirit Who will raise you from the dead is now, in all

Christians, making you more and more truly and eternally alive in this life.

- This is called “mortification.”¹ READ more about it Matthew 10:38,39; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23; Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:24. Colossians 3:5 is perhaps the most practically-understood, because Paul immediately tells us how to “mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (K.J.V.). In Colossians 3:8-4:6 the apostle lays out a “mortification life” very positively and clearly.²
- We do not put “to death the deeds of the body” to achieve a right standing before God (justification), for “**a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified**” (Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20 says it, too, but Paul says it three times in Galatians 2:16!!).
- We put “to death the deeds of the body” which are sinful not in our own strength, but “by the Spirit,” Who is given to those who believe in Jesus (John 7:39), and show this belief by repenting of their sins and being baptized (Acts 2:38).

¹ Mortification is another way of describing sanctification, the process by which the Holy Spirit makes Christians holy throughout their lives. “Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration [being born again], by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person’s life” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, IV.C)

² Colossians 3 is one of those chapters I frequently tell you a Christian should read every week, along with Galatians 3, Philippians 3, and Hebrews 12.

- “You will live” is a promise to eternal life, but Paul is not saying that we save ourselves by mortification! Those truly justified by faith in Jesus Christ, adopted by the Father, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit will live (truly live!) eternally: “...I am confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). It is God Who saves us – the Father purposes it from eternity, the Son accomplishes it on the cross in history, and the Holy Spirit applies it throughout our lives here on earth until we get to heaven. It’s all God.
- Those who deny Christ either by words or actions show they are not God’s, and will not inherit eternal life.³

The Spirit of Adoption (8:14-16)

To Be Led Is to Be Family (8:14)

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

- Proof of your adoption into the family of God is how you live your daily life – are you “being led by the Spirit of God”?

³ There are some who make a verbal confession of Christ, but it is a false confession; their lives show they are “devoid of the Spirit” (Jude 19) and do not really belong to Him. READ Matthew 7:21-23. They have impressive spiritual resumes, call Jesus “Lord,” and yet are rejected by Him because of their “lawlessness.” The apostle Paul says, “they profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed” (Titus 1:16). These belong to a category of people described by Jesus Himself, Who said they have an initial positive response to the Word, but it ultimately does not change their lives and they go back out into the world (Matthew 13:5-7,20-22//Mark 4:5-7,16-19// Luke 8:6-7,13-14).

Not a Spirit of Slavery (8:15a)

8:15aFor you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again...

- READ also 2 Timothy 1:7 to see the opposite of “fear.”
- Before we come to Christ, the Spirit binds us in slavery to drive us in desperation to God in Christ; after we are in Christ, He binds us to God as Father.

How You Are Able to Call God “Father” (8:15b-16)

...8:15bbut you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” 8:16The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...

The Cry of “Abba! Father!”

- The first time we hear this cry in the Bible is significant for the context of this chapter of Romans: “They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here until I have prayed.’ And He...began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.’ And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, ‘Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will’” (Mark 14:32-36). Romans 8 describes the sufferings of believers in this life (8:18,23,35,36). When we are united to Christ by faith, we cry out to the Father as the Son cried out to Him in the garden of Gethsemane.
- Paul’s letter to the Galatians is sometimes called a smaller version of his letter to the Romans. Compare what he says there with our text for today: “...when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem

those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God” (Galatians 4:4-7).⁴

God the Father

- Last week I urged us to know God as He reveals Himself in the Bible – as Trinity. Often we pay a lot of attention to the Person of the Son and the Person of the Holy Spirit. While we often call God “Father” in our prayer and song, I personally don’t spend enough time meditating on the Scriptural witness to Him as “Father.” Let’s adore our Father through the truth of the Word:
 - God, before we were born and had done anything good or evil, chose to adopt us in Christ: *“In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved”* (Ephesians 1:4-6).
 - We are children of the Father because of His sovereign act of love, and not because of anything lovely or worthy in us. It is a fully gracious love.⁵ *“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of*

God...God is love. 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. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”

- (1 John 3:1; 4:8-10).
- The Father’s eternal purpose is realized in our lives when we trust His Son alone for our salvation: *“...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26).
- When Jesus teaches us to pray, *“our Father Who is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:9// Luke 11:2), He is speaking exclusively to *“His disciples”* (Matthew 5:1// Luke 11:1).
- The apostle Peter tells us that having God as Father through the redemption in Christ ought to have an effect on how we live in this world: *“If you address as Father the One Who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were...redeemed...with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ”* (1 Peter 1:17-19).
- Similarly, God says, *“‘Come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these*

⁴ Galatians 4:4-7 is a Christmas passage – 70 days until Christmas!

⁵ This is good. If your sense of being adopted and loved by the Father is based on your good deeds or worthiness, you will lose this assurance on days when you are not so good in your deeds. If God’s love is entirely based on His gracious choice and merciful character, you can be assured that He is your Father even on your worst days.

*promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1).
READ also Philippians 2:12-16.*

The One Who Is Calling Upon the Father

- Paul tells us here that when a Christian calls God “Father,” it is the Holy Spirit in that Christian Who is the Source of that cry. It is proof of the Holy Spirit’s presence in a believer’s life.⁶

Inheritance and Qualification (8:17)

Heirs (8:17a)

...8:17a *and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...*

- God Himself is the greatest inheritance, for He is the infinitely rich Source of all goodness, love, peace, joy, and beauty. READ Psalm 73:25,26; Lamentations 3:22-26.
- Psalm 16, a Psalm of Christ (prophetically given through David, Acts 2:24-31), describes God as Inheritance of an eternally joyful and pleasurable life in His Presence. Read this Psalm, hearing Christ sing it in your soul, and know that you are “fellow heirs with Christ.” This is your inheritance, too.⁷

Cross Unto Crown (8:17b)

...8:17b *if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

⁶ Similarly READ, 1 Corinthians 12:3.

⁷ “...all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (1 Corinthians 3:22,23). I can scarcely comprehend what this means, and look forward to the day when I can see it and understand it, but it is huge, whatever it is. This is what it means to be “fellow heirs with Christ”!

- United to Christ by faith, the New Testament teaches that Christian suffering in this world is a normal experience: READ John 15:19-21; 16:11; Acts 14:22; Philippians 3:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-19.⁸
- There are two biblical sacraments, or ordinances, of the Church: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.⁹ They are pictures of our being united with Christ’s suffering, and are how we experience the leaning toward glory every Lord’s Day.

⁸ We are just beginning to see Christians treated as they’ve normally been treated in Church history. Only now are they starting to have economic trouble for being believers (Revelation 2:9; 13:16,17). Still, we are not been made “prisoners,” and have not experienced “the seizure of your property” (Hebrews 10:33,34) as the first generation of the Church did. They “accepted [such treatment] joyfully” because they knew that had “a better possession and a lasting one.” How great is your faith and love and longing for heaven? Enough to get through genuine persecution? **READ Matthew 26:41.**

⁹ “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; **observing the two ordinances of Christ...Christian baptism** is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper. **The Lord’s Supper** is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, VI-VII).