

Romans Ch 8:12-17

“Under Obligation”

To kinda catch us back up to the context we’ve been speaking about the Spirit, the life *of* the Spirit, what it means to walk *in* the Spirit, how we lead lives that are sanctified, that is set apart to the Lord *by* the Spirit. A significant chunk of Ch 7 is all about self, and the *futility* therein, as you enter Ch 8 a transition is made and a significant chunk is focused *on* and all *about* the Spirit and the *fruitfulness* thereof. The flesh equals death, the Spirit equals life, the bible is clear, notice Vs 6 of Ch 8 (read) - jump down to Vs 9

Vs9

If you’ve received Jesus Christ into your heart and into your life, that is you’ve believed on Him for the forgiveness of your sin and the salvation of your soul than Jesus Christ has come into you and He’s done that by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is in you, you are in the Spirit, the Spirit is in you.

Vs10-12

Now we read all of that preceding Vs 12 because it’s really all leading up *to*, and pointing *towards* this practical application that’s established here. The word “Therefore” speaking of “because of what we’ve just read,” Paul’s just established the principle of what the Spirit of God *has done* and *will do* for you, specifically in regard to resurrection life that’s begun in you now, but will be made fully manifest when Christ returns and your mortal body puts on immortality, and this corruption puts on incorruptibility.

Now to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, we understand that, the bible doesn’t in anyway teach soul sleep, yet the bible is clear that the day will come when God will raise our mortal bodies, in Vs 23 of this Ch Paul speaks of the redemption that awaits our body. Now the bible doesn’t have much to say of the nature of our resurrection other than the fact that we’ll be like Christ. Our new nature will be like His, Paul spoke to the Corinthians regarding the resurrection and he likened it to sowing seed and how the seed is sown, planted in the ground, but when it buds forth it’s really nothing like the seed. and He said so to with the resurrection, you can look at a tulip bulb all day, but it doesn’t appear anything like the flower, so to with your body in the resurrection. He said, “*The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*” 1 Cor 15:42-49

Paul is developing this premise here in Ch 8 of the book of Romans, (the fact that the Spirit of God has convicted you, revealed Christ to you, and has imparted eternal life to you), because he has a practical point to make to us. What is that? Did you see it there in Vs 12? Underline it, draw attention to it, 3 words, “We are debtors” we’re under obligation, oh not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. All the flesh ever got you was trouble, inner pain, turmoil and separation from God, you owe the flesh nothing, and are under no obligation to pamper or feed the flesh. To the contrary we’re under express command to *crucify* the flesh, how do I do that?

We’ll speak on that in a minute, but what I want you to realize here is that *you* have an obligation, *I* have an obligation to the Spirit, to lead our lives *after* the Spirit. Our debt is to the Lord, He’s the One who paid the debt that He didn’t owe, because we owed a debt we couldn’t pay. Again Paul told the Corinthians, “...*do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*” 1 Cor 6:19-20 You belong to Him, you’re to live your life *subservient* to Him.

I find that often times we have the audacity to think that it’s the other way around, we think that if we *do* a certain thing, or perhaps *abstain* from another thing that God owes us. He’s *our* debtor, “God I had the opportunity to get drunk and I didn’t do it, so You owe me one!” “God I was a little nervous and didn’t want to say anything to that person, but I shared the gospel, so now You owe me a blessing.” and Though we’d never verbally articulate that, somewhere down deep in there we sorta feel that way, but that’s faulty logic, God owes you nothing, He owes me nothing. Except perhaps an eternity in hell if you want to get right down to it, that’s what we rightfully *deserve*. But instead He’s given us the forgiveness of sin, He so *loved* us that He gave His only begotten *So for* us to die in the place *of* us, He’s blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, granted us resurrection life (and on and on we could go) He’s not the One in *our* debt, we’re the ones in *His* debt.

The bible is clear that God will be a debtor to *no* man, but we owe Him everything, our all, our lives and beyond, we’re eternally indebted to the Lord. and When we do what we’re *supposed* to do, (avoiding sin, serving the body, sharing the gospel) why do we think that then God owes us something? Remember we’re not our own, we’ve been bought at a price, and part of the responsibility that’s been given to us as His servants is to glorify God in our spirit *and* our body which are His. Jesus said, “...*which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'*” Luke 17:7-10

Or another way to understand that, when you've done all that the Word desires/requires of you, when you've led your whole life on fire, sold out, uncompromisingly for Christ, just serving Him with every ounce of energy you have throughout your entire life. You've done well as a good and faithful servant, but have in no way shape or form gone above and beyond the call of duty. I owe Christ my life, I was a slave to sin, He set me free, and in so doing He's ransomed me, I belong to Him. Try to remember those things the next time you get to feeling like God owes you because of what you've done, or perhaps haven't done. You might think of it like this, God is *never* in our debt, but we are always, eternally, in His, therefore live your life according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.

Vs13

Now in Vs 6 we read where to be carnally minded is death, and now already in Vs 13 Paul is re-emphasizing that fact. "If you live according to the flesh you will die," what are we talking about when we use this phrase, "the flesh"? We're speaking of the entire complex of human sinful desires, be it ungodly motives, affections, principles, words, actions, or whatever it may be that sin generates through our bodies. The full orb of sin that is able to manifest itself in and through us we attribute to or consider it, the flesh. and The bible is clear that the wages of sin is death and that sin separates us from God.

You may recall from our last study a couple weeks ago that in the context here the *interpretation* lends itself to the believer vs. the non-believer, the saved and the unsaved, those who walk according to the Spirit, or those given over to the flesh. and The end of the non believer is death, that is, eternal separation from God, the lake of fire, weeping/wailing/gnashing of teeth, gnawing the tongue and all the things the bible speaks of in regards to the eternal habitation of the unregenerate, (those who've rejected Jesus Christ).

But certainly there's an *application* in here for the believer as well, because sin separates us from God, meaning that even in our walk we can distance ourselves from that intimate place of relationship with God through unrepentant sin in our lives. Isaiah writes, "*Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity.*" Isa 59:1-3 How've things been lately with respect to your intimacy with God? If you find that you've been more distant, than intimate, allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart, see if there be any wicked way, any unchecked unrepentant sin that He needs to deal with. I have a suspicion that if you're in that place, and there's sin in your life, you already know it, it's a simple matter of giving it to Him rather than choosing to hang on to it.

I don't know why it is that human nature tends to play around with sin, rather than the putting to death the deeds of the body, that's what we're called to do, to crucify the flesh. I was speaking to a friend a couple days ago about this very thing, we were talking about how it is, or why it is that seemingly so many "Christians" toy around with sin in their lives. Wanting to find that ambiguous edge of how much they can sin and still have salvation, and I don't get it, why not just live for Jesus? Why toy around with sin, it's no wonder that Paul reemphasizes the deceptive nature of sin and the flesh here because we're all the time thinking that living after the flesh is what life's really all about, but the end of the life lived after the flesh is death, don't be deceived. That's why Jesus said, *"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."* Matt 5:29-30

Of course He wasn't speaking literally but the point is well taken, do what you need to do in order to avoid sin. and We realize that sin is a matter of the heart but we're speaking here of making provision for the flesh. If having the internet causes you to hang out on pornography sites, get rid of it, better to safeguard your relationship with Jesus, than to throw it all in the trash for a few minutes of temporal pleasure. So the idea being to maintain the eternal perspective, again if every time you stop by a certain gas station you come walking out with a 12 pack or whatever, avoid it at all costs, I don't care how convenient it is on the way home. That's what Jesus was talking about, taking practical measures to maintain and safeguard your relationship with Him.

That's in essence what Paul is talking about when he says here that we're to (by the Spirit) put to death the deeds of the body. A little bit ago we mentioned the need to crucify the flesh and I said we'd speak about how we're to do that in a minute, well here we are. We're to put to death the deeds of the body *by* or *through the means of* the Spirit, speaking of the Holy Spirit, you see He not only *imparts* to you life, but He also *enables* you to lead the life that He gives you. You can't do it on your own, if by your own will you start doing this, or stop doing the other that lends itself to pride, we become Pharisaic in our mentality. But when the Spirit is doing the work it lends itself to humility, a more Christ-like character is the resolve.

So our obligation to manifest the life of the Spirit is both passive, yet positive. I realize that sounds a bit confusing but this is what I mean. We have a positive obligation, meaning we're indebted to the Lord to lead a life after the Spirit, yet when it comes to crucifying the flesh, well our positive action finds itself in a passive position of submission. Which is kind of a confusing way to say that it's not we who put to death the deeds of the body, but it's the Spirit in us Who'll do the work, but we have to *submit* to His work in our lives, if you want to do your thing He'll let you. But if you'll submit to His leading in your life, He'll crucify, put to death the deeds of your body. Meaning He'll give you victory over the flesh.

You say, “Well how do I do that”? Do you remember when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and took it in before Dagon their ½ fish ½ man god? and The next morning the temple priests came in and found Dagon fallen over before the Ark? They set their god back up, next day same thing except he was like beheaded and both his hands were broke off, you’d have thought they’d have suspected something fishy but they just didn’t get it. Ultimately they sent the Ark back because it was wreaking so much havoc in their country. and As you know the Ark represented the power and presence of God. The Law was in it, Aaron’s rod that budded speaking of resurrection life, the jar of manna speaking of the bread from Heaven pointing also to Christ, of course the Mercy Seat covered the Ark from which God said He would meet with the people from above the Mercy Seat. But here’s my point, whatever your “Dagon” might be, whatever vice or area of the flesh that has a grip on your life, the only effective way to deal with it with any sense of permanence is to bring in the Ark. Don’t fight the flesh, submit to the Spirit, when you wake up in the morning before your feet hit the floor invite Jesus into your day. When you’re deciding which radio station to dial in, let the Spirit be apart of that decision. and What you’re going to find is that the more you invite the Lord into an equation, or the occasions of your life, the less interested in the things of the flesh you’re going to become. Not because you’re so *strong* willed, but because you *submitted* your will to the Spirit. To the Galatians Paul put it like this, “*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” Gal 5:16

Walk into a dark room and try to use all your strong will power make the darkness go away, scream at it, karate chop it, rebuke it, do whatever you like, but it’ll still be dark. That’s the picture of too many believers trying to fight the corrupt tendencies of the flesh, the answer is so simple, want that darkness to vanish, just turn on the light. Want that habit of the flesh to topple over and die, allow the Spirit to have His way, turn on the light, invite Him in to the equation to that occasion, spend quality time in the Word of God, and your desire for the flesh life will just begin to die off, be led of the Spirit.

Vs 14

Few things to point out here, #1 It’s not saying that once you learn to be led of the Spirit of God, then you’ll be a son of God. It’s saying that once you become a child of God, the Spirit of God will begin to lead your life. #2 I want you to notice that it doesn’t say, “As many as go to church, these are the sons of God,” or “As many as are baptized, these are the sons of God” or “As many as read their bibles,” or “Partake of communion,” those things aren’t the test of sonship. The earmark of being a true *child* of God is found in being led by the *Spirit* of God. Now you should understand that this phrase “Being led” doesn’t speak of never ending uninterrupted leading or else all of the exhortations unto holiness, and avoiding the flesh would be pointless, your free will is still in tact. But the overall gist of the believer’s life will be characterized by the Spirit’s leading. What does it look like to be led of the Spirit? Well, the Spirit will obviously lead you in a life that’s repentant, that’s convicted over sin in your life.

He'll lead you into truth that accords with God's Word, He'll lead you in holiness, in love, in humility, He'll lead you to minimize yourself and magnify Christ, He'll lead you to spend time in the Word of God, in prayer and communion with God. These (and like characteristics) are the earmarks of a Spirit led life. Sure you'll go to church, you'll partake of communion, and all those things, but those things don't mean your Spirit led, but if your Spirit led you'll partake in those things, make sense? You can do them *religiously* and not be Spirit led, but if you do them *relationally*, in obedient response to knowing Jesus, that's the leading of the Spirit.

Which brings me to the 3rd thing I'd have you see in this Vs, the Spirit *leads* you, He doesn't drive you, I think sometimes the people of God wait for the Spirit of God to drive them on out into whatever arena He desires like cattle, that's not His style. Satan will drive you, the Spirit will *draw* you, He'll lead you, which again implies free will because in order to be led of the Spirit you have to be willing to what? Follow, David said, "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.*" Ps 23:1-3 There are all kinds of scriptures that refer to the *leading* of the Lord, Jesus was all the time beckoning those around Him to *follow* Him, which implies what? His leading, the Spirit doesn't drive us, He draws us, He leads us, we're to choose willfully to follow Him.

Vs15-17

I'd have you notice the emphasis in Vs 15 on the word, "Receive" or "Received" God the Spirit isn't a wage that's earned, He's a gift that we can only *receive*. But I want you to notice the emphasis in this passage upon intimate relationship; we're seeing here that we didn't receive a spirit of fear, nothing of legalism, or skepticism fearing for our salvation, or relationship to God. Paul told Timothy, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" 2 Tim 1:7 God doesn't want you to be fearful; or all the time 2nd guessing your salvation. Bound up in legalism and all the rest, therefore He's given you the Spirit of adoption, that is the Holy Spirit by whom through Christ, makes us part of the family of God. You've heard it before, the word "Abba" here is an Aramaic word, it's an intimate expression, like "Daddy" my kids don't wonder if their part of my family, they know it. They employ the intimate expression of "Dad" or the younger one's "Daddy" all the time.

Adoption in the Roman world was a major ordeal, it released you of all former debt and identity with your old life, and gave you full and total privileges/inheritance and the whole shabang of the family into which you were adopted. and It wasn't altogether uncommon that one adopted would usurp the privileges of the natural born son. You might be 20 yrs old when you were adopted or whatever, and you'd step into the family in the highest status. So when Paul speaks of the Spirit of adoption, his Roman readers would readily identify with what he's getting at here. You were brought into God's family not under bondage, not with a spirit of fear, but by the Spirit of adoption, you've entered into the family with full rights and all the inheritance of the Son Himself.

Vs16

Again this isn't some mystical little voice that's simply reassuring you all the time, though God can reaffirm Himself to us emotionally. But if you rest on that you'll be in trouble, because our emotions can deceive us. We're talking here of that witness much like we spoke earlier of a life led by the Spirit. How does the Spirit bear witness in your life? By manifesting the fruit of the Spirit through your life. Gal 5 tells us, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*" Gal 5:22-23 Else where the bible tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

If the agape love of God is in you, if your life is generally characterized by joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control, if you're seeking to live your life in truth that accords with the Word of God. and Again these things won't be with out flaw because you still live in this sin tainted tent, but these things along with a desire to fellowship with other believers, a hunger for the Word of God. These things aren't a reality apart from the Spirit of God in your life, so let the Spirit (through those things) bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God.

Vs17

Persecution, tribulation, suffering, is just apart of the Christian experience, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Perhaps verbal assault on one extreme to the price of martyrdom on the other, every believer will at some point face some sort of rejection, persecution, or suffering for Christ's sake. But take heart, to suffer with Him is to be assured of being glorified together with Him, as a child of God you become a joint heir with Christ. and Apart from all the peripheral aspects of the inheritance, notice what your primary portion will be, God Himself, "...heirs of God, which in itself speaks of limitless riches God Himself being eternal and with out end. All eternity won't be enough time to understand the manifold riches of who God is as He unveils Himself more and more deeply throughout eternity. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

Prayer Points: Lord having tasted of the firstfruits of our inheritance in the gift of Your Holy Spirit we eagerly await the fullness. and I pray for anyone here who may be struggling with the assurance of salvation, perhaps they're caught up in some sort of sin they've been entertaining, perhaps there's nothing of that sort but that the enemy is simply ripping them off. Help us Lord to just receive the witness of Your Spirit in our lives, bearing witness with our spirit, and may we be truly led of the Spirit, and by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body. Lord help us to hunger for just living for You, that we wouldn't be deceived by the lusts of the flesh, but that we'd simply obey the leading of Your Spirit to draw near to You.

If you're here and have never given your heart to Christ, but you're sensing the Spirit drawing you now, leading you, beckoning you to follow Christ, than why not submit to Him and surrender your life to Him now. God wants to forgive your sin. Maybe you've thought you were a Christian because you go to church, but you've never really had a desire for God's Word, or God's love isn't really an active part of your life, you're realizing that these earmarks of being led by the Spirit of God, testifying that you're a child of God have been void from your life. All that can change today. Jesus said, "Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will be *for you*, rest, rest for your soul." Tired of fighting, than give up, come to Jesus, rest in Him, receive *through* Him forgiveness.