

## Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:12-13

October 31, 2010

This is lesson number **64** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

**The Theme of the Letter**

**Romans 1:16-17**

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

**We Are Debtors**

In Chapter Eight, verses 1-11, the Apostle writes pure doctrine of the most **sublime** { noble, exalted, highest, awe inspiring } nature.

For the believer in Christ Jesus there is nothing more assuring, nothing higher in this life, than to know that he is ‘in Christ’ and that:

**‘There is therefore now no condemnation.’**

And not only that, as if it is not enough to know you are saved forever and to have peace in your soul, believers in Christ also know that they will be raised from the dead because Jesus was raised from the dead. The grave is not the end of your existence.

Or, for that matter, is the grave the end for unbelievers.

A Puritan wrote, “You will live as long as God lives and you will live somewhere; either with Christ or apart from Christ.”

So believers in Christ may have the absolute assurance that they cannot sin away their salvation because their security is entirely in what Jesus Christ has already done.

Genuine Christians are not ruled by fear of losing their salvation.

And Christians also know that no matter what this life brings in the way of hardship and illness that they will be raised from the dead in a new body.

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While Paul is still in the 'doctrine mode' he guards these great truths against **presumption** and **antinomianism**.

He does that by defining exactly who is a Christian, both negatively and positively.

**Negatively**, a Christian **does not** live according to the sinful nature.

**Positively**, a Christian **does** live under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

He closes the case for who is a Christian by telling us in verse 9:

**"... Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."**

Then in verses 12-14 he makes the **application** of the doctrine.

Paul is consistent in his writing in that he always gives the application along with the teaching or doctrine. E. g., in Ephesians, the first three chapters are doctrine and the last three chapters are application.

Some time ago I met a preacher who had served a church in upstate New York and he told about how he began preaching through Ephesians. The message was well received as he expounded the first three chapters on election and predestination and salvation by grace through faith. But when he began to make the application of the doctrine in the last three chapters on unity and submission the church fired him.

Doctrine believed, no matter how orthodox or correct, is useless, even damning, unless it is personally applied.

The antinomian fails to practice what he claims to believe.

So here at verse 12 ff begins the application of verses 1-11:

### **Romans 8:12-14**

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

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**“Therefore, brethren ....”** Because everything in verses 1-11 is true - **therefore**, we are debtors, but we do not owe anything to the flesh. In fact, if we continue to live according to the flesh or sinful nature, it will show that we have not life in Christ.

And the end of a life lived according to the flesh is to be in hell forever.

Paul is consistent with the other writers of the New Testament when he gives this clear warning against giving an intellectual ascent to the doctrine and then failing to personally apply the doctrine.

### James 1:21-27

**Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

**26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**

### James 2:19

**19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!**

The great danger is for someone to claim to believe the Gospel and to think that accepting the truth is all that matters.

Verses 1-11 are a description of the Christian and his **position** in Christ. Now we are told exactly how the Christian is to be **sanctified** or set apart.

There are **two errors** that are very common in the visible church in our time. These two common errors are **‘easy believism’** and **‘antinomianism.’**

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We have dealt with antinomianism before and will only say that this is an intellectual believer only. An antinomian may be orthodox, or correct in doctrine, but he is just as lost as Nicodemus was before Jesus saved him.

The other of these two errors is **'easy believism,'** or **'decisionism.'**

**'Easy believism'** is the idea that a person needs only to say that they believe. That all a person has to do to be a Christian is to give verbal acceptance to the proposition that Jesus died for him; to make a **'decision'** to allow God to save him, and then he may continue to live as though nothing in his life needs to change.

Where is repentance unto life?

In 2002, Cora and I attended the Southern Baptist Founders Conference at Asbury College in Wilmore, KY. At one of the sessions Dr. Tom Ascol quoted some statistics that he characterized as a "sham" and "an affront to God." Let's see if you agree?

The Southern Baptist Convention churches boast of almost 16 million members, making it the largest Protestant denomination in the world. Of the 15.9 million members, only 5.5 million can be found in attendance on any given Sunday morning. The typical SBC has 233 members but only averages 70 in attendance. Less than one out of ten of those members who attend take part in church activities beyond those on Sunday morning. Worst of all, less than one out of ten people who make **'decisions'** for Christ each year are active in church one year later. So the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist church members give little or no sign of spiritual life.

The Lord Jesus warned about **'easy believism'** and **'antinomianism.'**

**Matthew 7:13-14**

**"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**

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Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says that verses 12-13, may be the most important verses in the Bible as to the doctrine of sanctification.

Simple: no qualifications, no caveats, just two unequivocal statements.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We are debtors; we owe something.

What do we owe to the flesh? Nothing!  
What do we owe to God? Everything!

If you think true biblical sanctification is **hard** let me tell you it is not hard, it is **impossible**. It is impossible for us in our own strength but it is **certain** in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some people try to make the 'ifs' in verse 13 to mean a contingency.

E.g., 'if' we put to death the deeds of the body, then we will live. They try to make verse 13 a matter of **cause and effect**.

But that notion is contrary to the entire message of grace in the Gospel.

Verse 13 is not 'cause and effect,' but 'means to an end.'

Cause and effect says:

'If you do this, or because you do this, then that will happen.'

Means to an end says:

'Because of who you are, this is the means to that end.'

Paul is really going back to 6:20-23:

**20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

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And vs. 23 should keep anyone from concluding that this is cause and effect.

**23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Christian, you once served the flesh and what is the end of that fruit of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death.

**But now Christian, you are slaves of God and you will bear the fruit to holiness and the end of that is everlasting life.**

David Brown said, "If you do not kill sin, it will kill you."

**A man will only be as holy as he wants to be.**

**Philippians 2:12-13**

**12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

Verse 13 tells the Christian to put to death or mortify the deeds of the body.

Now, there are two errors that are taught about how to put to death the deeds of the body.

There is first the error of **monasticism** and **asceticism**.

**Monasticism** is where people resign from the everyday world and go to live in monasteries and convents. That is what the great Martin Luther tried to do with no success.

Jesus said His people who are in the world are not of the world.

**Asceticism** is the idea that if you deprive your body of all or most comforts that it will make you more holy. The hair shirt is an example. Sleeping on a stone floor in winter with no cover and flogging yourself with thongs until you bleed are other examples of the kind of things people do to be 'holy.'

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**Monasticism** and **asceticism** will make you lonely and ill but it will not make you holy.

The other error associated with putting to death the deeds of the body is **legalism**. Legalism is a joyless religion. Legalism is a tyranny of rules and fear of doing something or not doing something that will cause a person who thinks they are saved to lose their salvation.

A prisoner wrote in answer to the question about legalism: “It is a work that is never finished.”

A Christian will want to be where the church gathers to encourage others and to be encouraged. But a Christian will come to church because he loves Christ and because he wants to worship Christ but not because he fears that he will lose his salvation if he stays home.

One of the churches a half mile from this building teaches that if you quit meeting with the church you will lose your salvation. In my opinion the person who can stop meeting with the church was never saved to start with.

Another way legalism is seen in these churches is they serve the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. Now that is not a problem for me although the reason behind their practice is legalism. In one such church that I visited and what I have a huge problem with is they had a table in the back of the room and those who missed the Lord’s Supper that morning could just walk by and take the elements individually, apart from the entire church. Such is the bondage of legalism!

Those are negatives; how not to ‘put to death the deeds of the body.’

**Then how do we put to death the deeds of the body?  
Through the Spirit!**

And Christian you don’t need to do anything to receive the Spirit and this power. All Christians by definition have the Spirit of God.

Matthew Henry said, “But we cannot do it without the Holy Spirit working in us and the Spirit will not do it without us.”

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As believers we really have no excuse for sin.

**1 Corinthians 10:12-13**

**12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

So my exhortation to the church, as Lloyd-Jones said: “Be who you are.”

When a Christian sins he feels guilty and is miserable. While that is true what is worse is that we **grieve the Holy Spirit.**

I don't pretend to understand all that it means to grieve the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit put it in the Bible for a reason. For the purpose of ‘putting to death the deeds of the body,’ I will read:

**Ephesians 4:25-32**

**Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

That is a pretty good start on ‘putting to death the deeds of the body.’ Those are debts to the flesh.

Christian, tell me why you can't forgive someone.  
If you have been forgiven, you must be willing to forgive.

Tell me why you can't stop using foul language.

Tell me why you have to lie.

Why can't you be kind and tenderhearted?



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You can see why that church in New York fired the preacher.

But this is serious and I do not mean to trivialize what God's Word tells us.

**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ...**

Children and young people who respect their parents will avoid doing things that their parents have taught them not to do. They will think, "I can't do this, it will hurt my parents and they love me."

A child of God should think that way:

**"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."**

The liberal crowd ridiculed Nancy Reagan when she said that the way teens could avoid getting on drugs was to "Just say No!"

Well, tell me something that will work any better than that.

So, Christian when sin tempts you **"Just say No!"**

**James 1:12-15**

**Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.<sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

So I will say again, sisters and brothers;

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

To this preacher, and to all who name the name of Christ:

**"Be who you are."**

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A couple of weeks ago I received an email from a friend in Australia that included an excerpt from a book by Graeme Goldsworthy.

It caused me to consider that while we have been stressing the necessity for a Christian to “mind the things of the Spirit,” that we must always make sure our emphasis is on the Gospel.

PREACHING the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture – Graeme Goldsworthy, p237

*Preaching from Acts and the Epistles*

“The principal feature of the biblical theology that is expressed in the New Testament epistles, and that will affect the way we preach from these documents, is the relationship of Christian existence to the historic gospel event both in the past and in the future eschatological hope. In chapter 7 I discussed this in terms of the coming of the end for us, in us, and with us. It is the relationship of Christian living, or sanctification, to the gospel event. At the risk of being repetitious I say that the most serious problem that easily afflicts us all as preachers is the tendency to confuse this relationship. This happens when we expound Christian living on any other basis than the gospel. Sanctification is, as has been wisely said, our justification in action. James Buchanan expressed an important truth when he said, “Nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit in us, for the vicarious work of Christ for us, as the grounds of our pardon and acceptance with God.”<sup>5</sup>

One is unlikely to assert that we are justified by sanctification, but whether done intentionally or not, that is what happens when we allow the teaching of Christian living, ethical imperatives, and exhortations to holiness to be separated from and to take the place of the clear statement of the gospel. We can preach our hearts out on texts about what we ought to be, what makes a mature church, or what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives, but if we do not constantly, in every sermon, show the link between the Spirit's work in us to Christ's work for us, we will distort the message and send people away with a natural theology of salvation by works. Preaching from the epistles demands of the preacher that the message of the document be taken as a whole even if only a selection of texts, or just one verse, is to be expounded. Every sermon should be understandable on its own as a proclamation of Christ. It is no good to say that we dealt with the justification element three weeks ago and now we are following Paul into the imperatives and injunctions for Christian living. Paul wasn't anticipating a three-week gap between his exposition of the gospel and his defining of the implications of the gospel in our lives. Nor was he anticipating that some people would not be present for the reading of the whole epistle and would hear part of its message out of context.”

5. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. p. 401.