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Romans

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. Romans 8:12

"Therefore" is given as a summary of verses 9-11. Because of these things, "Therefore..."

After stating this he speaks to his audience, which includes us, as "brethren." In this, he is showing the bond of family which is formed by the union with the Spirit who dwells in each person who has called on Christ. We are now in a familial relationship, one which continues in the language of believers around the world today - "Hello Brother Steve."

Therefore, brethren, because of those things I just relayed to you, "we are debtors." He then explains this in what may seem a rather unusual way. He says, "not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." He uses a negative term to describe our debt.

This would be like explaining all of the good things somebody named Alex did for you by getting you off of drugs, and then turning around and saying, "You are a debtor (because of all these good things) not to Mark - to live and work for Mark." Mark was your drug supplier and if you had stuck with him, then you would have eventually died, having given him what you own and in the end, thrown your life away as well.

This is what Paul is saying here. Therefore, we are debtors (as described to us in the preceding verses) - not to the one we once served. We are in fact debtors to God for the work of God in Christ. Through Christ in us, our body is dead because of sin, but our Spirit is alive because of righteousness. We are now truly alive in Christ. So why would we pay a debt to a dead body? It would make no sense. If we pay our debt to someone who is dead, then only death is the result. If we pay our debts to the One who lives in us, then the payment is accounted to that life.

This concept will be built on in the verses ahead and will culminate in some of the most glorious verses of the magnificence of life in Christ.

Life application: Believers in Christ are in a fallen body, but bear the sealing of the Holy Spirit; we are made alive in Christ. If existence implies a debt is owed, and it does, then who are we debtors to? Think it through - if our physical bodies are animated and yet dead, but our spirit is made alive in Christ, then to which should the debt be paid? We are debtors not to the flesh - to live according to the flesh, but to the Spirit - to live according to the Spirit. Let us think on this with every action we take.

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. Romans 8:13

One commentary concerning Romans 8:13 states: "This verse is perhaps the clearest, most concise statement of the way a person once in grace can lose his salvation." (New Testament Study Bible).

One must come to the table already believing that the loss of salvation is possible in order to come to this conclusion. If the concept of eternal salvation is taught both explicitly and implicitly throughout the New Testament, then any verse which appears to contradict this must be taken out of context. This is the problem

with coming to the Bible with presuppositions. It is also a problem concerning the nature and workings of God.

God doesn't think as we do. His thoughts are immediate and intuitive, not discursive or syllogistic - within the framework of time (which He created). For a person to be sealed with the Spirit, the act must, by the very nature of God, be eternal in consequence. God cannot err and therefore it is impossible for Him to act against His nature or work against Himself. Further, if loss of salvation were possible because of sin after salvation, then no one would remain saved. God would be saving and then unsaving every person continuously as they re-received Christ and then sinned against Him. One's ultimate state could never truly be determined. It is folly and it is unclear in thinking.

"For" refers to the conclusion of the previous verse - "We (meaning believers) are debtors, but not to the flesh." We have been brought out of the body of death and are debtors to the One who brought us out. Therefore, the "for" is speaking of the state prior to this occurring. "For if you live according to the flesh (the life we were previously brought out of) you will die. But (in contrast to this) if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body (which actually occurred in you and which has now made you a debtor to the One who brought you out), you will live.

Though speaking in the present and future tenses in this verse, it is based on the past actions which were noted leading up to the "therefore" of verse 12. In other words, and as Albert Barnes so eloquently states, "No man can be saved in his sins. This closes the argument of the apostle for the superiority of the gospel to the Law in promoting the purity of man. By this train of reasoning, he has shown that the gospel has accomplished what the Law could not do - the sanctification of the soul, the destruction of the corrupt passions of our nature, and the recovery of man to God."

This verse has nothing to do with a loss of salvation. Rather it has everything to do with what occurred in our salvation. "In Christ, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This doesn't give us license to sin, but it does cover the sins which we commit.

Life application: Time and time again we come to verses which appear to contradict each other. Jesus is said to be the Author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9) and yet difficult verses cause us to be unsure of this. There are no contradictions in God's word, just misunderstandings because of our own failure to fully research or understand a matter. Let us come to the Bible without presuppositions and when we come to a passage which is difficult, we need to evaluate it, not as a stand alone thought, but as part of a continuous stream of knowledge which is to be taken in proper context.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:14

Note - If you've ever been curious about the Nephilim and the "sons of God" from Genesis 6, here is a previous sermon which explains the meaning of those often abused verses. As it ties in with today's verse, I'm including it for those who are curious - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9Cp30fPM5g>

The "sons of God" as applicable to the post-resurrection New Testament are those who have been adopted by God through faith in Christ. We are "born again" thus moving from Adam to Christ. This concept is alluded to on numerous occasions, but here are two from Galatians -

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:26, 27

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Galatians 4:4-6

The "sons of God" referred to in Romans 8:14 are no different. Being led by the Spirit refers to those who have received the Spirit. This is the "baptized into

Christ" spoken of in Galatians 3:27. Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the sign of this son-ship. Being "led by the Spirit" is speaking of responding to the call of the Spirit - a call which is made to all who hear the message. Some follow the leading and some don't. Those who do and accept Jesus as Lord are those who become sons of God. This will be evident in the next verses. It is He who leads to the call, and it is He who seals us when the call is made.

Life application: Have you accepted Jesus as Lord? If so, you are a child of God through adoption. Now it is incumbent on you to not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). As you allowed the Spirit to lead you to life in Christ, now allow the Spirit to lead you in your Christian walk.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

This is now the third "for" which follows the "therefore" of verse 12. As he does frequently, even earlier in this chapter, Paul is building up a solid wall of doctrine, one point leading to the next in order to buttress his argument. Follow the progression -

- 1) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh;
- 2) 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;
- 3) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- 4) For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

This "for" is an explanation of the previous conclusion about being a son of God. It is a "for" which is divided into two thoughts. The first contrasts being led by "the Spirit of God" to having left "the spirit of bondage" to fear. And this is certain because you are "brethren." Because you are, then you are led by the Spirit of

God. This means you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear. And what is this bondage? It is explained in Hebrews 2:14, 15 -

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The bondage is the power of death and the fear which results from it. We've already seen in Romans that the law produces death in our mortal bodies. And so Jesus shared in our humanity, fulfilled the law, died in fulfillment of the law, and carried away the death associated with the law. When the death was carried away, so was the fear which was connected to it.

If you truly believe the gospel and accept Christ, then you are truly free. Death has no power over you. This is as certain as the ground under your feet. The truth found in this message is absolute. As Jesus Himself proclaimed, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The second portion of the explanation resulting from "for" is that because we are in Christ "brethren" "you received the Spirit of adoption." If we are adopted as sons of God, and we are, then we are His children. This leads to an obvious conclusion that should be considered before going on. If we were adopted and are now sons of God, then before we were adopted we weren't sons of God. In other words, until you are in Christ, who fulfilled the law, died in fulfillment of the law, and carried away the penalty of the law, you are not a son of God.

Stated plainly, if you are not a true believer in Jesus Christ, then you have no family relationship to God. You are, as described elsewhere, a "child of wrath." This point shouldn't be missed because even in Christian churches, the "Fathership" of God is tossed about as if it were universal to humanity. The Bible doesn't teach this. It is either "in Christ" and a son of God, or not "in Christ" and an enemy of God.

With that clear, we can see the resulting benefit of the Spirit of adoption. Where once we were at complete odds with God, we can now cry out to Him as our "Abba, Father." Paul uses both the Aramaic and the Greek as Jesus did in Mark 14:36. Abba is an endearing and personal term closely associated with "daddy." It is the call of the child to the one who protects and feeds him. "Father" is the Greek pater which is the one who begets life. In this then, there is a respect and an adoration. Citing both languages then demonstrates our closeness to God and our gratitude and dependence on Him.

The Spirit of adoption is key to understanding our new position. Jesus is the Son of God. When we receive Him, we are now linked to God directly because of Him. God will no more reject us than He would His own beloved Jesus. The surety of being in Christ is complete, it is eternal, it is the hope of glory which will never fade.

Life application: If you are in Christ, death is defeated. Yes, these bodies will wear out and die, but that isn't the end of the story. As surely as Jesus came out of the grave, because it was impossible for death to hold Him, so is the surety of the same for you.