

## **Romans 8:12-13**

### **Romans 8:1-13**

**1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

**2** *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

**3** *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

**4** *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

**5** *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

**6** *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

**7** *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

**8** *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

**9** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

**10** *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

**11** *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

**12** *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

**13** *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

The first thing I want us to notice here is that literally every verse so far in this chapter has been an expansion upon the previous: *Therefore, For, That, Because*.

This is not something necessarily unique to this chapter—we have in fact seen that the entire epistle of Romans has been a logical flow of thought, beginning with some of the more basic premises found in scripture, and then deducing from them further truths. Of course, the flow of information we've received has also incorporated direct revelation—information that had been directly communicated to Paul by Jesus Christ, that we could not have known otherwise.

But I simply want us to see here that what we've been discussing, really since chapter 6, is all one connected flow of thought. It is the same subject matter, explained and expounded upon. And that subject matter has been our sanctified standing in Christ— it has been the new identity we have in our inner man through Christ, and the unprofitableness of the flesh, and how all of our victory over sin resides, not in ourselves, but in identity, in the simple truth that when we trusted the gospel, *we died with Christ*, and since our old, *in-Adam* nature has been crucified with Him, we too then must have been buried and raised to new life with Him as well. It is therefore by that same power that the Lord Himself has over death and life that He accomplished something for us spiritually, and has severed our inner man from the dominion of our flesh, and we can now walk in freedom because of that work that He performed.

And so, this brings us to verse 12:

### **Romans 8:12**

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

*Therefore*—that is, *considering everything we have learned up to this point*, and coming to the invariable and *most reasonable* conclusion in light of these facts, we see our apostle tell us plainly that we are *debtors, not to the flesh*.

What does it mean to be a *debtor*? To be a *debtor* means you're in debt to *someone* or *something*; you owe something back, whether to an individual or an institution.

The point Paul is making here is that we are in fact *not debtors to the flesh*. We owe *nothing* to the flesh, because the flesh profits nothing. There is no power in it to produce the righteousness that God requires.

Paul tells us here near the end of our doctrine on sanctification that we are not debtors to the flesh, and so he tells us what we are *not* debtors to, but he does not tell us what we *are* debtors to.

And so, are we debtors to anything? If so, what is it that we owe? And if we do owe something—*who* do we owe? Remember that word we learned back in our doctrine on justification, *propitiation*? That word carries within it the idea that someone, somehow, appeased the legal requirements of a higher authority *by payment*. And in terms of our justification, it was *life for life*.

Look what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:

### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

**19** *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

**20** *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

And so, who are we indebted to? We are indebted to the one who loved us and died for us. But what do we know about our justification? We know that it's a free gift of God, and one that He cannot legally revoke, because of the work that Christ performed and the offer that has been made to us dispensationally on the basis of that work.

And so, as we consider this verse and begin to think of ourselves as *debtors*, we know *we're not* indebted to God *for eternal life*. That is something we all obtain by virtue of faith alone in what Christ has accomplished, and is something we *eternally* possess—God is not going to require us to *repay* something *that we could never pay to begin with*. That is why salvation is offered as a *free gift*—because no one is able to earn it. And if we could never earn it, and God therefore gives it freely by faith, then we are not indebted to God in respect to this. We do not owe Him anything in regards to us maintaining our standing in eternal life, because that standing is secured and preserved by Christ's finished work.

*However...*

However, we *are* indebted to God, not in any legal sense, but in a practical sense we are indebted to God because of what He did for us. We are not indebted in the sense that we have something to pay back or else face legal ramifications, but we are indebted in the sense that He paid it all, and purchased us, and now He wants to allow His grace to work in us to produce something. Who are we to stand in His way?

I'd like us to go back and look at the opening of Romans chapter 5:

### **Romans 5:1-6**

*1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

*2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*

*4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

*5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

*6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Because of the things Christ did, in dying for us when we were *ungodly* and *without strength*, we are to have developed a *love of God*—that is, a love *from* God and *for* God, which becomes the very basis for our experience in life—it is to become the basis for how we understand and view God, how we understand and view ourselves, and how we understand and view and interact with others—it is to be the principle thing within us that anchors us and allows us to not just *endure* tribulation in this life, but *glory* in tribulation. It is the selfless love that Christ demonstrated that is meant to impact our hearts so that that same selfless love is generated *within us*, so that, just as He laid His life down for us, we too would be willing to do the same for Him.

Paul is a clear demonstration of this in his life. Look what he says to the elders of the Ephesian church in Acts chapter 20:

### **Acts 20:17-24**

*17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*

*18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,*

*19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

*20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,*

*21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**22** *And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:*

**23** *Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.*

**24** *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Neither *persecutions*, nor *bonds*, nor *afflictions* moved Paul—neither did he count his life dear unto himself, but he rather took joy in laying his life down for the sake of Jesus and Jesus’s ministry. This was not something he had to conjure up or *try* to do, it was something that came from *within*. The truth of the gospel had worked in Paul’s heart to produce this.

And we understand the principle given in Luke 7:47, that whosoever is *forgiven* little, *loveth* little. That he who is forgiven much therefore loves much. But the truth is, we have all been forgiven so much more than we can imagine before the eyes of God. And when we truly understand this and allow that truth to work in our hearts, it changes our outlook and dispensation in life.

This work should have already begun to take place in us when we were in the earlier chapters of Romans, but it bears repeating here, because this is something we may need to remind ourselves of daily. It is very easy to understand this intellectually—it is quite another thing to remind yourself of this in situations that arise in daily life. But truthfully, that is what we should be doing.

It is on the basis of these truths that we see we are indebted to the one who purchased us and set us free.

### **Ephesians 5:1-2**

**1** *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

**2** *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

It was *Jesus’s life* given for *our sake*, and so the reasonable expectation then is that it is to now be *our life* given for His. *He* doesn’t need salvation, *He* doesn’t need a sinless sacrifice, *He* doesn’t need us at all, in and of Himself, but *He* desires us, as partakers of Him, to be willing to lay ourselves down, so that, as His character is formed in us, His will is accomplished, both in the inner man of the believer, and in the earth.

In the direct context of our passage however, this *indebtedness* is *not to the flesh*—to live after the flesh. He is not telling us of our indebtedness to Christ, but he is telling us rather what we are *not* indebted to. We are *not* indebted to *try harder*, to follow after *carnal commandments*, or to *perform*.

Neither do we owe anything to the carnal passions that arise from the flesh—as Paul asked us back in chapter 6, *What fruit had we then in those things whereof we are now ashamed?* The fruit we had in those things—in sin—was death, it was corruption. And so we owe *nothing* to the flesh, *regardless of the intent*, whether to lust after evil things or to impose some strict set of religiosity—in any case, the flesh profits nothing. The road to hell, as they say, is paved with good intentions, and that cliché is fitting here, because as Christians, we understand we owe nothing to our flesh in regards to sin, but it is a little harder for us to understand that we in fact owe nothing to this flesh at all, and that all of the righteousness we can conjure up in our own strength in these tainted vessels is damnable before God because it has fallen short of the glory of His perfect and absolute standard of righteousness. It is not able to meet that standard of righteousness.

If we are indebted to *anything*, we are indebted to *Christ*, to *trusting* Christ, who is performing a ministry in the inner man, who is performing a work within us, *providing for us* what we could not provide for ourselves, who is mediating and ministering His righteousness and life to us. For, as we have seen, our usefulness and functionality to God and His purposes is put to a grinding halt when we recruit our flesh, when we attempt to serve Him in our own strength, when we rely on ourselves rather than upon Him and His provision.

Thus, as verse 13 here says, if we seek to live after the flesh, we shall die:

### **Romans 8:12-13**

**12** *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

**13** *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

Certainly we have all read these verses in Romans chapter 8 and thought, *of course, sin is the cause of death*. And we think, *well, if we live after the flesh we shall die, of course, because living after the flesh is sinful and bad and can cause all sorts of problems, even health related problems...* and that is the way we've understood this passage. And of course that is all true. Sin is the ultimate cause of death, and a sinful lifestyle of course *can* result in health problems and premature death. But, is that what Paul is talking about here?

Let me ask you this: can you walk after the flesh and engage in a healthy lifestyle? Yes you can. Can a person live after their flesh their entire life and never give God a second thought and yet live to be 90 years old? They can. Can a person who loves God, and trusts the gospel, and even serves God continually get sick and die at a young age? Yes they can. Those are all *possibilities*. Not only are these things *possible*, but *they actually happen*. And yet what is being communicated here in Romans 8:13 is not a *possibility*—it is a *certainty*. If ye live after the flesh, ye *shall* die. There is nothing in this passage to indicate this is a mere possibility. Paul is saying this *will* happen.

*But Paul, we're all going to physically die, whether we live after the flesh or not.*

Let's say, hypothetically, you get saved at a young age and actually walk after the Spirit perfectly every day for the remainder of your life—are you still going to die? Yes. What about the man who smokes cigars and drank whiskey every day and lived to be 98 years old? He still died, and yet probably outlived many Christians who were actually walking after the Spirit.

Paul is not saying here that if you live a sinful life you'll physically die, though of course a sinful lifestyle is not *conducive* to a long life. Not only this, but Paul does not say, *if ye commit sin ye shall die*; no, he says, *if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*. And what have we learned about dead religion? *It's of the flesh*. Anything we do outside of the spiritual identity and provision God has made for us in Christ is actually of the flesh. So are we to believe that anyone who's engaged in false religion and dead works and self effort is going to somehow suffer *physical death*?

So you see, this passage actually becomes somewhat ridiculous if you interpret it as speaking of physical death in the sense we typically understand it. What's in view here is what's been in view this entire section of scripture, beginning in Romans 6, and that is *functional death*.

It does not say that we *might* die, or *could* die, it says we *shall* die. This is a *certainty*, just as certain as the flesh has no life within itself, but is on borrowed time, and all goes the way of the grave, so too has the flesh no life in itself to produce the righteousness of God. When we try to serve God by our own resources we will ultimately be found lacking. We are not debtors to the flesh because *it is bankrupt*. We owe it nothing because it has given nothing to us except sin and rebellion. It has no ability to provide the quickening life necessary to function in this body in service to God. This death is, of course, not speaking of physical, bodily death, but the death of our spiritual walk. The flesh cannot produce that walk; the flesh will only hinder it.

This death is, just as it has been in this entire context, *functional death*. It is a body that is *practically dead* to God, *functionally dead* to God, that cannot please Him or serve Him. Just as Abraham and Sarah were still physically alive, and yet in regards to having children they were *functionally* dead, they were not able to produce life—so too is the situation with our flesh. Though our inner man may be justified unto eternal life—though the inner man may be seen through the lens of Jesus's imputed righteousness, the outer man can still be found a useless

shell bound to the sin that resides within it, if we neglect the provision God has made for us spiritually.

If we want to serve God, we *cannot* walk after the flesh. Our ability to actually serve God *dies* the moment we try to perform by our own strength and resources. The only viable option is to walk after the Spirit, which is done by *minding* the things of the Spirit, as the mind itself *is* Spiritual, and is something distinct from the flesh itself.

What is the entire point of our sanctification after all? What is the end goal? It's for the sake of us being able to function as agents of godliness—it's so we can actually be profitable servants, both now and in the ages to come, in God's eternal kingdom. It's so we can walk in freedom and be the people God designed us to be.

What we need to remember is that God *is* life, and that separation from Him therefore *is* death. We think of death only in carnal terms, physical terms, but death truly is defined as separation from God because God Himself *is* life. And so when Paul says that if we are to live after the flesh we shall *die*, he is making a reference to us living our lives out of a resource that is *separated* from God, and that is actually *hostile to* and *at enmity with* God.

Revelation 21 shows us that those that have already died *physically*, and who have rejected God and Jesus Christ, who go to the lake of fire, actually die *again*:

**Revelation 21:8**

*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

How can they suffer a *second death* if they are already dead, unless death is something that can be more generally understood than as simply referring to the soul's separation from the body?

Now, if we live after the flesh, we shall die, but if we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. Again we have the same language that denotes a *law*, that denotes *certainty*, that denotes *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ*, as Romans 8:2 calls it. It is the function the Spirit of God is performing in us today, it is the manner in which He is working, and it does not change. He is always willing and able to perform that function, because God has a very specific ministry He is trying to accomplish today which takes place in the soul and spirit of man.

We spoke before about that word *mortal*. That word *mortal*, remember, though it denotes *life*, it implies *death*. A mortal is someone who is living but who is destined to die. It is the natural course of physical life here in these unredeemed bodies. And so, in verse 11 we saw that if we allow the Spirit of God to *dwell* in us, then that Spirit will actually bring *functional life* to these present, *mortal* bodies that are otherwise functionally dead to God, that cannot appropriately serve God.

### **Romans 8:11-13**

**11** *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

**12** *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

**13** *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

And so, there is a *quicken* of our mortal bodies in verse 11, and a *mortifying* in verse 13. What does it mean to mortify? The suffix *-ify* actually means *to make something to become, or to cause to be*. It takes nouns or adjectives and turns them into action words. If I take this definition of the suffix *-ify* and give you a real word example, then I am taking my explanation, a *noun*, and *simplifying* it. I am causing it to be more simple to understand. We could take a piece of ice and leave it in the sun, and cause it to *liquefy*—*to become* liquid.

And so what does this word *mortify* then mean? The root itself *mort* comes from Latin and means death. From it we get words such as *mortal*, *immortal*, *mortuary*, even *mortgage*—all have within them the concept of death. *Mortal*—*you are subject to die*. *Immortal*—*you cannot die*. *Mortuary*—*a place where the dead are kept*. *Mortgage*—*a death pledge*.

And so if *mort* itself means *death*, to *mortify* means to cause something to die, to cause something to be put to death. If we live after the flesh—we die in a practical, functional sense in our walk and service to God. But if we, through the Spiritual provision God has made, put to death the deeds of this present body, we shall *live unto God*. We shall be *functionally alive* unto God, useful to God and His purposes. And how is this accomplished? It is by minding the spiritual truths that have been revealed to us about what God did in our inner man when we trusted the gospel, and allowing those truths to renew our minds and then for us to reckon them to be so in our hearts, and yielding ourselves to them. As we are concluding this section in Romans 8, which discusses the mechanics of how we are made alive unto God, I want us to briefly review the doctrine that is given in Romans 6 for this to actually take place within us:

- We were baptized into Christ's death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, we also should walk in newness of life (v3-4). If we are unified and identified with Christ, then this means we also died with Him, and if we died with Him, we also are partakers of the resurrection life He eternally possesses.
- Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin (v6-7). If our old man, with its "in Adam" nature and status, was truly crucified with Christ, then we have been freed from the nature that held us in bondage to sin.
- That, knowing Christ having been raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him; for in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God (v9-10). If He died to sin once, and our old man was crucified with Him, then this means our old man also died unto sin only once. This means the work has already been accomplished. Since we have died unto sin, we are now able to liveth unto God.
- Having fully known these truths, we must then reckon them to be so. "Reckoning" is not something one can force. Just as knowing is something that takes time and diligence, reckoning these truths to be so is something that requires first a thorough knowledge of the facts, implicit child-like faith in them, and an ongoing meditation upon them so that they go beyond mere knowledge.

As I've said before, it's often very easy for us to believe that Jesus died for our sins—but many people often have a harder time truly believing that actually our old nature was also put to death with Him when we believed.

While we may still presently live in sin-cursed bodies, the Spirit is actually able to raise us up to new life here and now. We do not have to live in that sin, and have in fact been set free from the bondage of our flesh. And that is part of God's manifold wisdom, that He is perfecting something spiritual in us, that He is perfecting *holiness* in us, in the face of the sin which is in our natural flesh.

This being *made alive unto God*, if you will recall, is actually the second aspect of our sanctification. We are now getting ready to begin looking at the third component of our sanctification—our identity as *sons of God*. I feel we have sufficiently dealt with all of the doctrine up to this point, and are ready, at least intellectually, to move on to this third component. And so, to conclude this lesson and this section, we're going to briefly review the basic components of our foundational doctrine here in Romans:

What we often term “salvation” is actually composed of three parts:

- Justification (salvation from the penalty of sin)
- Sanctification (salvation from the power of sin)
- Glorification (salvation from the presence of sin)

Justification is likewise composed of three parts:

- Propitiation (Romans 3:24-26) / Payment
- Imputation (Romans 3:22, 4:6) / Credited God’s righteousness
- Atonement (Romans 5:1-2, 5:10-11) / Made “at one” with God

The 3 components of our Sanctification:

- Dead to sin (Rom. 6:2-7)
- Alive unto God (Rom. 6:4-5, 8-11)
- Sons/daughters of God (Rom. 8:14-17a)

It is this third component of our sanctification that we’ll begin looking at in the next lesson.