

## Romans 8:12-17

Romans 8:12-17 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. (15) 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." (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

### Questions On The Text

#### In what way are we debtors?

Verse 12: We are certainly not debtors to the flesh to live according to its dictates. Having had the flesh already executed on the cross (see Galatians 5:24), we are no longer obligated or enslaved to its passions and desires. Instead, we have a new obligation that stems from God's grace. Our new obligation is to be partakers of the abundant life available to us through the Holy Spirit.

#### What happens to the person who lives according to the flesh?

Verse 13: The person whose life is dominated by the flesh will ultimately die. This is not referring to the death of the body since, except for those alive at Christ's return, this will happen to believers and unbelievers alike. Instead, it refers to eternal separation from God.

However, the person whose lifestyle is to put to death the deeds of the body, will be the recipient of eternal life. The body is not the physical body, but the sinful human flesh, the old man, that was crucified with Christ. Putting to death these deeds is only possible by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Compare this verse with the choice God gave to Israel of life or death, blessing or curse, in Deuteronomy 30:15,19; 11:26.

#### If a person is led by the Holy Spirit, what does that prove?

Verse 14: Every person who is led by the Holy Spirit is a son of God. The Greek word "led" also means "controlled", so this is a person controlled and dominated by the Holy Spirit and His desires and interests. The word "son" is generic and not gender-specific. It refers to a mature son as opposed to a child. See Galatians 4:5-7 which refers to our adoption. In Paul's time, an adopted son had all the legal rights of a natural-born son and was in no way considered inferior. Being adopted was not a point of shame, but an honour.

#### What kind of Spirit have we received from God?

Verse 15: God has given us the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of adoption. It is the Holy Spirit Himself who seals our adoption as sons of God why cry out "Abba, Father." Abba is an Aramaic term used also by Jesus (see Mark 14:36) when addressing His Father God. It is not the formal term used to address a father, but an expression of familiarity and intimacy, used first as small children, but continued throughout life as part of the language of the home. (See also the parallel passage in Galatians 4:4-7.) Unfortunately, we do not have a true equivalent of Abba in English, as "Daddy" is not normally used by adults. Adoption entitles us to all the inheriting rights of true sons.

#### How can we be sure that we are children of God?

Verse 16: The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. What does it mean to bear witness with our spirit? Is it some kind of feeling? Is it a mysterious spiritual sense? Neither of these. This verse is an explanation of the previous verse. Paul is saying, "The evidence that I am a child of God is that I

am prompted by the Holy Spirit to call God “Abba, Father.” This prompting to relate to God on such intimate terms is the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are children of God.

### **How do we benefit from being children of God?**

Verse 17: Being God’s children means that we are also His heirs. Unlike the human pattern of inheritance, we do not need to wait for God to die before we can inherit, as it is impossible for Him to die anyway. And since we are sons as Christ is a Son, we are joint heirs with Him and stand to inherit everything that He inherits.

“If we suffer” is a mistranslation which should say, “seeing that we suffer.” This is important since suffering is not a condition for sonship, but the inevitable consequence of it. In other words, true sons and daughters of God are continually being called upon to make choices in self-denial that produce varying degrees of suffering that are only experienced because they are children of God. (see Philippians 3:8-11) Suffering does not make us sons, but being sons involves suffering. And in turn, suffering with Christ means that we will also be glorified with Him.

### **Further Questions For Discussion:**

How can we make sure that we don’t walk according to the dictates of the flesh?

What do you think it means to choose life rather than death?

If we have been adopted into God’s family as His sons, what rights and obligations to you think accompany that privilege?

What does it mean to have full inheritance rights?

In what way have you been called upon to suffer because you are a child of God?