

### The Believer's Present and Future Conditions

#### Romans 8:12-18

Romans 8:12-18 - *"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. <sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

#### Background Notes

It has been said that if the Bible were likened to a ring, Romans could be likened to the gemstone of the ring. And if Romans is the gemstone of the ring, chapter 8 is like the sparkling highlight of that gemstone! In Romans 8, the cry of Romans 7:24 is fully answered, *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* That cry, which is really music to the Lord's ears, is fully answered in Romans 8. And the answer is not by trying to keep God's Law in our own strength, because we can't do it.

Once again, the answer to our dilemma is found in God's grace. In the Law, we do something for God; **in grace, God does something for us!** In His grace, God has not only provided eternal salvation for us, but He has also provided power for us to live the Christian life. We need power because, until we get to heaven, we still have the sinful human nature, or the flesh. We have already seen that in our studies of Romans 7 and 8. Although we have been born again and we have a new divine nature, we still have indwelling sin – even as Christians. So the new life that has been given to us needs power to overcome the sinful temptations and sinful tendencies of the sinful nature that we still have.

Well, the power is available if we follow the Lord and "walk after the Spirit." Don't be like the man who thought that he had to carry a suitcase to keep it in the air while he was on an airplane! **Power** is available to us so that we can overcome the sinful tendencies of the sinful nature. Power for Christian living is available -- even for such things as having the needed patience with your teenagers, and for control of your tongue and your anger when someone cuts you off in traffic! So Romans 8 not only tells us what a Christian should be like -- it tells us how to live it.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The present condition of the sons of God involves suffering and separation.

In Romans 6 we learned that our spiritual position is “in Christ” – in Christ, God sees us as righteous! We have died with Christ, we have risen with Christ, and we are **in Christ** --that is our spiritual position. But in these verses before us we have our present condition. We are not in heaven yet, and we don’t have glorified bodies yet. Yes, we are born again, and we’re in the family of God, and we do have new divine life -- but we are still on this earth, and we still possess sinful natures. Because we are still on this earth, we are involved in suffering. Because we are still in this body, we are involved in separation. Do you see the doctrinal point? The present condition of the sons of God involves suffering and separation.

In reference to suffering: the primary idea is not suffering from migraine headaches or the flu, but suffering for the sake of Christ. Once again, verses 17-18: *“if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”* <sup>18</sup> *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* These sufferings not only include physical persecution, but certainly include other forms of suffering as well -- suffering such as verbal abuse and the mocking that we endure as Christians in many areas of life, or suffering such as the loss of a job promotion because of being outspoken Christians.

Have you been ridiculed for maintaining moral standards in line with the Bible? Have you been scorned for speaking out against the sin of abortion? Have you been despised because you said that Jesus is the only way to heaven? Have you lost out in your career because you’ve made the Lord #1 in your life? These are all forms of suffering for the sake of Christ.

In reference to separation: in the power of the Spirit we must separate from sinful deeds – we must “put them to death” by the power of the Spirit. Notice verse 13 *“...but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”* Why are the sinful deeds of the body a problem for the Christian? Why does a Christian have to be involved in this process of separation? Answer: Because of indwelling sin, or the flesh which is still with us.

Which of the following hymn lines is more biblical? “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love” or “prone to worship, Lord I feel it, prone to serve the God I love.” Which is more biblical? Answer: Both are just as biblical! Why? Because on the one hand we have new life in Christ that is prone to worship and serve the Lord -- but on the other hand we still have the flesh that is prone to wander and leave the Lord. So we must be involved in separation.

How do we “*put to death the deeds of the body,*” and thus practice separation? We do it by feeding the new nature and starving the old nature. Remember that? We feed the new life that we have in Christ by reading and studying Scripture, by prayer, and by fellowship with other believers! By worship! By serving the Lord! Being involved in these things feeds

the new life we have in Christ. That's what it means to walk after the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit of God, and thus experience the power of the Spirit and the abundant life.

At the same time we starve the flesh. We owe the flesh nothing! Verse 12: *"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh."* We owe the flesh nothing, so we should separate ourselves from the sinful tendencies and deeds of the flesh – put them to death in our lives! We shouldn't read material and watch movies or TV programs that appeal to the flesh. We should avoid getting into situations where we know we're vulnerable to temptation. We can do it, because the power of the Spirit is there to enable the new life, that divine life we have in Christ. The unbeliever is characterized by living according to the flesh -- this is the way of death. Verses 13-14: *"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."*<sup>14</sup> *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."* The present condition of the sons of God involves suffering and separation.

## 2. The future condition of the sons of God involves inheritance and glory.

Verse 17 says that believers are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Did you ever wish that you born rich, or maybe the heir of some huge fortune? Listen, that's pocket change compared to what we're going to inherit! God owns the world, and it's all going to be subject to Christ when He returns as King. We are going to reign with Christ -- so it's all ours, folks! We're more than multi-billionaires. It's just a matter of time – just wait and see!

Not only that, the sons of God will be glorified together with Christ. Verse 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."* Amazing! Notice that the amount of glory seems to be linked to how willing we are to suffer for Christ now: *"If indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together."* So it will be quite obvious then how willing we were to suffer for the sake of Christ now. Is it worth it? Answer: *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (v18). Also, 2 Corinthians 4:17: *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."* So the equation is not something like "a pound of suffering = a pound of glory." It's more like "an **ounce** of suffering results in a **ton** of glory!" A **drop** of suffering equals an **ocean** of glory!

Young Christians, don't forget your investment opportunities along this line. I've seen older Christians cry when they realized that they had lost their opportunities to suffer for Christ in this life. Your chance, your privilege, your opportunity to suffer for Christ is **now**, in this life! It's well worth it, because the future condition of the sons of God involves inheritance and glory.

## **Practical Application**

### **Have you ever addressed God as “Dad”?**

Verse 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.’”*

“*Abba*” is the Aramaic and Hebrew word for “Daddy” or “Papa.” This is the term Israeli children use when they speak with their “Daddy.” It’s the name that children use to express their love and affection and trust for their father. Addressing God as Dad or Daddy may seem too familiar or too irreverent to you. If so, don’t use it. But the idea in these verses is that we’re not in the family of God as slaves, where we have to fear God – we’re in the family of God as His well-loved children and as His beloved adult sons and daughters.

What does the phrase “the Spirit of adoption” in verse 15 mean? In first century Roman culture, biological sons went through what was called an “adoption process” when they came of age, after which they attained all the rights and privileges of mature sons in the family.

So we are both children and sons in God’s family, we have all the rights and privileges of mature sons in His family, and the Holy Spirit convinces us of these truths. Therefore, we are close to our heavenly Father, and we can address Him as *Abba* or Father or Daddy in a reverent way. Have you ever addressed God as “Dad”?