

Start your study here

Read

Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Romans 8:12-25

- 12 So then, brothers,
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 all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
- 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery
to fall back into fear,
but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,
by whom we cry, “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 fellow heirs with Christ,
provided we suffer with him
in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time
are not worth comparing
with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- 19 For the creation waits
with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
- 20 For the creation was subjected to futility,
not willingly,
but because of him who subjected it,
in hope
- 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage
to corruption
and obtain the freedom of the glory
of the children of God.
- 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together
in the pains of childbirth until now.
- 23 And not only the creation,
but we ourselves,
who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,
groan inwardly
as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons,
the redemption of our bodies.
- 24 For in this hope we were saved.
Now hope that is seen is not hope.
For who hopes for what he sees?
- 25 But if we hope for what we do not see,
we wait for it with patience. (ESV)

Review:

Observations: 1) identify the two sections included below 2) all the contrasts 3) key terms
 Key Question: *What's the difference between being born into a family and being adopted? Does an adopted child live differently than a biological child? NO*

Song: Darlene Zschech "The Potter" 8:28 and "In Christ Alone" Romans 8:31-39

What do we have in common with Christ?
 "Co-"

What is Paul's purpose for including suffering?
 It doesn't change the reality of relationship with God

Effect—Cause

I can put to death the deed of body—
 because I am indwelt by the Spirit

Hinge between 8:1-11 "in Christ" and 8:14-17 "adoption as sons"

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6:1-14 no longer enslaved, under obligation

Flesh, not simply "body or physical" but the orientation to this world—he will use "flesh" and "body" but not fully interchangeably

Infinitive clause here is explanatory not purpose

How are both of these true of believers in light of 8:1?
 "death" –discipline not condemnation? Warning not reality? Warning and reality. Balance security/responsibility

"put to death"—so hard, he used drastic terms

"led" passive tense—Spirit is primary agent in causing obedience

sonship—full legal rights ∴ NO FEAR

Don't take it for granted! Celebrate your relationship

Testimony of the Spirit—"to" dative of direct object not of association—assurance

συγκληρονόμοι (synkleronomoi)	co-inheritors	heirs with
συμπάσχομεν (sympasxomen)	co-sufferers	suffering with
συνδοξασθῶμεν (syndoxasthomen)	co-glorified	glorified with

That's grace

These are truths worth celebrating

present

future

Purposelessness, transitoriness, frustration

"him" – God, Gen 3:17 used
 Does God do "purposeless" activity? No 8:28

?relationship?

past

Oxymoron: wait eagerly

Bodies will be redeemed
 God created as complete units
 (material and immaterial)

Even in the midst of suffering



Effect

clarification

Cause

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Those indwelt by the Spirit are God’s children (no longer slaves)
therefore they can put to death the deed of the body and live
But they are not just associated with God, they are adopted to full right and inheritance
—heirs to be glorified with Him.

But before glory in the present, there will be suffering due to the curse of sin on all creation
which anticipates the glorification of those who are sons of God
to free it from the futility of sin
so though believers are adopted and promised heirs, the inheritance is still in the future
—a cause for hope.

Main idea:

Indwelt by the Spirit—Heirs with the King
Living in a sin cursed world—Hope that provides patient endurance

Teaching idea:

Encourage your class over the next four weeks to read and meditate on the wonders of this chapter.
Free from condemnation
Indwelt by the Spirit
Adopted by God
Destined for glory

Help, Hope, Heading

Paul will seek to help us find the balance between working out our own sanctification and passively waiting for the Spirit to transform us.

This fine balance between faith and surrender on the one side and self-effort and rules on the other side is not too easy to maintain.

One prime truth will come through: that while God is gracious and gives the Spirit to empower our sanctification, He does expect us to be actively involved. Too often in the church, we have feared this tension and have overemphasized rules. Paul’s solution is to show us the depth of relationship we have with God (sons, children, heirs) so that any rules are a response, not a condition, for the relationship.

“Rules without Relationship lead to Rebellion.”¹
Rules within Relationship lead to Responsibility.

Interaction

(Teacher, you may want to plan a time for people to interact using these questions)

Name tag game—Hello My Name Is _____

What is your name?
What does it mean?
What is the nationality or history of your last name?

Women who are married—Is your identity tied to your maiden name or married name?

Was anyone adopted? Did you take your adopted family’s name? Why?

What questions do we tend ask people when we meet them for the first time?
What do you do?
Where are you from?

¹ Andy Stanley from a Sermon on the 10 Commandments.

Interactive Question

What’s the difference between being born into a family and being adopted?
Does an adopted child live differently than a biological child? NO

OR

How do we avoid legalism?
How do we avoid lowering the expectations of right behavior?

Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.
Rules within relationship lead to responsibility.



Introduction

The struggle explained in Romans 7 may leave many of us wondering—are things hopeless?

Romans 8 opens with great encouragement that there is “no condemnation” to those who are “in Christ.” But not only are we encouraged with our position, we are encouraged with the power of the Holy Spirit (resurrection power) that is available but also challenged that He will not transform us without our participation.

That is where Paul picks up—what is our role? However, he will not get too far before returning to what God has done for us.

Review

A believer indwelt by the Spirit has the enablement to overcome sinful patterns. The starting point (as in chapter 6) is the realization of our present position—indwelt by the Spirit. The next “step” is not really a “step” but a crucial aspect. In order to allow the indwelling Spirit to work transformation through us, we must be in the process of forming our minds through the Word.

Overview / Preview

Notice the book ends of the chapter

- 8:1 No Condemnation (Standing)
- Middle section: No Defeat (State)
- 8:39 No Separation (Standing)

There are a number of ways to outline this chapter:

Thematic Outline: The fruits of God’s work of sanctification in the believer

1. Victory Today 8:1-17
Overcoming sin by the power of the Spirit
2. Glory to Come 8:18-30
In spite of suffering
3. Fellowship with God Forever 8:31-39

- 8:1-27 The ministry of the Holy Spirit
- 8:28-30 The ministry of the Sovereign God
- 8:31-39 The spontaneous praise of the secure saint

Now comes the good news: those who are organically connected with Christ are not only not condemned (8:1), but also are set free from the law which could only produce sin and death (8:2). How is this accomplished? By the Spirit of God who enables believers to gain progressive victory over sin (8:1-8), death (8:9-11), and slavery (8:12-17). The Spirit is not an external, objective, cold standard, but a warm, internal witness to our hearts that God is our Father (8:14-17)—proving that we are organically connected to God the Father, not just judiciously excused by God the Judge.²

² Paul here seems to be subtly indicating that the new covenant is now operative in believers, for we each know God through his Spirit. Thus the kingdom has been inaugurated in the present age. Further, in 8:16 *summaturevw* is used to describe the

Finally, Paul concludes this section by discussing the goal of sanctification (8:18-39), which is our future glory—based, as it is, both on forensic justification and organic union with Christ (8:28-30). This glory needs to be kept in mind especially during the present sufferings we face simply because the world is not a perfect place (8:18-27). But lest anyone give up, thinking that his participation in glory is in jeopardy, Paul concludes with a hymn of assurance (8:31-39).³

To overcome sin believers need the help of the Holy Spirit (8:1-17). He not only helps believers obey God but also gives special aid to those who suffer for Christ (8:18-30). However, since suffering may cause believers to doubt God's favor, Paul ends the chapter by affirming those who suffer for Christ that God will never abandon them (8:31-39).⁴

Living by the Spirit 8:1-17	
8:1-4	The Holy Spirit, God's Provision for (1) escape from condemnation, and (2) enablement to fulfill the Law
8:5-11	The necessity of walking in the Spirit, rather than walking in the flesh
8:5-8	Why walking in the flesh cannot please God
8:9-11	Why walking in the Spirit will please God
8:12-17	Paul's words of application
8:14-17	Transition—The sons of God will suffer
8:18-27	Truths which sustain the suffering sons of God
8:18	The benefits of sonship outweigh its sufferings
8:19-22	Suffering is the experience of all creation
8:23-25	Suffering is a prerequisite to sonship
8:26-27	The Holy Spirit ministers to us in our suffering

Summary

Chapter 8 has 19 references to the Spirit—it is the Spirit that enables the believer to walk in a manner that pleases God.

Romans 8:12-25 will emphasize the need for the Spirit to be the governing authority. It also reminds believers that the presence of the Spirit provides assurance of one's relationship to God as Father. It provides encouragement that because of what God began in us, through the indwelling presence of the Spirit which will result in glorification, even though for now there may be frustration and suffering.

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

Abba
Co-heirs with Christ
Hope

Outline

I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God's Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 *What a Mess!*

*The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness
The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions*

Spirit bearing witness to our spirit that we are God's children. Although sun- prefixed verbs often carry the connotation of association, this particular verb is merely a strengthened form of *marturevw* (so BAGD), indicating that we, not God, are the recipients of his testimony (for further help, see my essay on Romans 8:16 and the Witness of the Spirit).

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

⁴ René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005). 158.

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

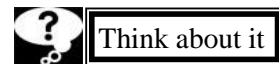
The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ’s Image

	6:1 Principle	7:7 Practice	8:1 Power
Key Subject	Surrender	Self	Spirit

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
 - a. Believer’s Freedom from Sin’s Domination 6:1-14
 - b. Believer’s Enslavement to God’s Righteousness 6:15-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
 - a. Believer’s Freedom from the Law 7:1-6
 - b. The Law’s Relationship to Sin and Death 7:7-25
 - (1) Relationship between Sin and the Law 7:7-12
The Law being holy reveals the sinfulness of sin
 - (2) The Great Conflict: Struggle for Victory 7:12-25
The Law being good is not the cause of death but sin is
3. **Believer and the Holy Spirit 8:1-39**
*The believer’s relationship to the Holy Spirit gives assurance of victory in Christian life.*⁵
To have victory over sin—you must live in the Spirit.

Or
Believer’s freedom in Christ 8:1-11
Believer’s responsibility in Christ 8:12-30

- a. Victory Today: Living by the Spirit 8:1-17
The Spirit’s Enablement for Sanctification
 - (1) Believer’s Freedom in Christ through the Spirit 8:1-11
 - (a) Life in the Spirit freed believers from condemnation 8:1-4
 - (b) Life in the Spirit contrasted to life in the flesh 8:5-11
 - (2) The Believer’s new relationship to God—living by the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh 8:12-17
 - (a) Exhortation: do not live according to the flesh 8:12-13
 - (b) Reason: characteristics of the believer 8:14-17
 - i) Spirit leading (governing authority) indicates sonship
 - ii) Sonship provide intimacy (Abba)
 - iii) Sonship indicates heirship (future hope)
- b. Hope Today: 8:18-30
 - (1) The Believer’s present suffering and future hope 8:18-25
 - (a) Perspective on suffering 8:18-21
 - (b) Perspective on patience 8:22-25



Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be Aware Of

8:12-17

Note that this section is not an exhortation, there are no commands. This section has more to do with what God has done than what we are to do but exhortation may be implicit by the reality of what has been done for us.

8:12-13 (Hinge)

⁵ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner’s outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

The logical relationship between verses 5–11 and verse 12 is as follows: believers are in the Spirit and not in the flesh, therefore they are not debtors to live according to the flesh.⁶

Paul explains in what sense they are not debtors to the flesh: they are no longer subject to its tyranny and mastery in terms of their everyday life. The qualification is perhaps necessary because verse 10 has already indicated that believers must still die physically. Nonetheless, since they are in the Spirit, the flesh does not exercise dominion over them. The thought is remarkably similar to 6:1–11, which states that believers have died to sin. I have already noted that identifying verse 12 as an exhortation misreads the text. Paul refers to a fact that is true of believers, not a quality of life to which they are exhorted to attain.⁷

8:13

Paul switches from “flesh” to “body” but doesn’t make the terms quite interchangeable. The influence of “the flesh” is enacted by “the body.” We sin through the use of “our members.” But one day our bodies will be redeemed (see 8:11, 23).

We will ultimately inherit the new eternal life God has promised us only if we actively use the Spirit to “put to death the misdeeds of the body.” Continuing to live “according to the flesh” means that we will suffer spiritual death. The tension between the “indicative” of what God gives us and the “imperative” of what we must do comes to a head here. We will say more about this tension in the Contemporary Significance section.

Three points can be made briefly here. (1) Paul is serious about the need for us to put into effect the new life God gives us. Our response is not optional; it is necessary. (2) However, this response is itself empowered by the Spirit. We cannot stop committing sins in our own power; it can only be done “by the Spirit.” (3) Paul never suggests that the inheritance of future life requires that we stop sinning altogether. What he demands in this verse is clear, long-term, progress in becoming less like the world (i.e., “the flesh”) and more like Christ.⁸

Interactive Questions

God’s gift and our obligation. The juxtaposition of [verses 1](#) and [13](#) is jarring. In the former, Paul boldly proclaims that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” But in the latter he warns, “If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” How can both be true? If there truly is “no condemnation” for believers, then how can we warn believers that they may die if they live the wrong way? Has God secured our eternal life once for all? Or is it still up to us to earn that eternal life?⁹

Security without responsibility breeds passivity, but responsibility without security leads to anxiety.¹⁰

The truth question cannot be evaded. We need to preserve security and responsibility in balance. But how do we combine them in a way that is both coherent and true to Scripture? When push comes to shove, I myself think the strength of the assurances Paul gives to justified believers in this part of Romans (see esp. [5:9 – 10, 21](#); [8:1 – 4, 10 – 11, 28 – 30, 31 – 39](#)) favors the Calvinist interpretation. No true believer can ever suffer condemnation. The verdict of innocence has already been proclaimed in the divine court, and it cannot be changed. But precisely because I take this view, I bend over backwards to do justice to the responsibility side of biblical teaching. As John Murray, a Calvinist himself, says, “The believer’s once-for-all death to the law of sin does not free him from the necessity of mortifying sin in his members; it makes it *necessary* and *possible* for him to do so.”

The Spirit’s presence in our lives inevitably produces fruit pleasing to God. Thus, we are secure. But the Spirit does not do his work apart from our response. I like the careful balance Paul achieves in [verse 13](#): “By the *Spirit* you put to death the misdeeds of the body” (italics added). Paul puts the

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 419.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 419.

⁸ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 252.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 257.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 258.

responsibility squarely on our shoulders: *You need to put sin to death. But at the same time, he makes it clear that we can only do it through the Spirit.*¹¹

The liberation present in the indicative does not preclude warnings against succumbing to the flesh. In the tension that exists between the already and the not yet, believers are warned of the danger of submitting to the flesh. Murray (1959: 294) observes rightly, “The believer’s once-for-all death to the law and to sin does not free him from the necessity of mortifying sin in his members; it makes it necessary and possible for him to do so.” Or as Deidun (1981: 80) insightfully observes, the relationship between the indicative and imperative should not be construed as realizing an ideal or actualizing a possibility, nor even subjectively appropriating an objective reality. Rather, it is an ongoing yes to God’s work in us, a call to affirm God’s action on our behalf.¹²

Human beings must summon and harness their wills in order to overcome sin, which bubbles up within us and desires to manifest itself in bodily actions. The squelching of sinful impulses is not finally attributed, however, to the agency of human willpower. The paradox of Paul’s thought must be noted in verse 13. Those who “live” according to the flesh will “die.” But those who “put to death” the deeds of the body “will live.”⁵ Victory is by means of the Spirit (πνεύματι), which means that believers conquer sinful passions by relying on and trusting in the Spirit to provide the strength to resist the passions that wage war within us. Paul probably has in mind the trust in God’s promises that enables believers to wage war against the “delights” offered through following the dictates of the “deeds of the body.”¹³

Summary

The warning of verse 13 is real, but real believers will submit to the Spirit and not the flesh (v. 14).

8:14-17

As we move into this section, it is important to remember that “Rules without Relationship leads to Rebellion.”¹⁴

What do we have in common with Christ?

Spirit—Son—Heirs

Those who have the Spirit as their governing authority put to death the deeds of the flesh.

Those who have received the Spirit are sons, with an intimate relationship with the Father—Abba

Those who are adopted sons are heirs.

Heirs of God—the Creator King

co-heirs with Christ—the Heir to the Throne

presently co-suffering with Christ

in the future will be co-glorified with Christ.

This section should lead to:

Celebration

—our position, potential and future

—amazement at the depth and breath of salvation—not just forgiveness of sin, not just declaration of righteousness, not just adoption by God, but full heirs with Christ destined for glorification!

8:14-15

All those who have the Spirit manifest that fact by their submission to the Spirit, and conversely those who do not possess the Spirit are not led by the Spirit. The “leading” (ἄγονται, *agontai*) of the Spirit

¹¹ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 259.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 420.

⁵ This paradox was pointed out to me by A. Caneday.

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 421.

¹⁴ Andy Stanley from a Sermon on the 10 Commandments.

does not refer to guidance for everyday decisions in determining the will of God. It refers to being “controlled by” or “determined by” or “governed by” the Spirit.¹⁵

The leading of the Spirit then is not about “where” we are going (direction) but “how” we are going about life (obedience). When the Spirit is the governing authority and we submit to His will, we will be obedient to God.

The link with the preceding verses, then, could hardly be stronger. The Spirit that has been given to believers is a Spirit that liberates from the power of sin, and thus a new obedience is generated in the heart of believers. In both verses 14 and 15, that believers are children of God is inseparable from the obedience of believers. In verse 14 it is those who are controlled by the Spirit who are children of God, and in verse 15 those who are adopted are those who are not slaves to the power of sin. Similarly, in Gal. 3:21–4:7 those who are still under the pedagogue and under guardians and administrators as minors are still enslaved to sin, whereas those who are children of God are liberated from slavery to sin (see esp. Gal. 4:7, “you are no longer a slave [i.e., to sin] but a son”).¹⁶

The great puritan John Owens, whose treatise on the *Mortification of the Sin* is still a classic, states it this way:¹⁷

The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.

The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.

8:16 Witness of the Spirit

A comprehensive examination of the usage of *summarturevw* in Greek literature, as well as other exegetical evidence, leads to the conclusion that this verb means “bear witness to” in Rom 8:16. The passage thus is affirming that the Holy Spirit has an ongoing witness to our inner being. One implication of this is that we have assurance of salvation not just because of the word of God but also because of the testimony of the Spirit to our hearts.¹⁸

Romans 8:16 reads simply *aujtoV toV pneu'ma summarturei' tw' / pneuvmati hJmw'n o{ti ejsmeVn tevkna qeou'*. There are two possible translations at the crucial juncture. Either “The Spirit himself bears witness *with* our spirit that we are God’s children,” or “The Spirit himself bears witness *to* our spirit that we are God’s children.”

Grammatically, the issue is simply this: Is *tw' / pneuvmati* (*to pneumat*) a dative of association (“*with* our spirit”) or a dative indirect object (“*to* our spirit”)”? Exegetically and theologically, the issue may be far deeper: If a dative of association is in view, then our spirit joins God’s Spirit in bearing witness that we are God’s children, that we are saved. But *to whom* is this witness made? Many argue that such a witness is made to ourselves (thus, “the Spirit bears witness along with our spirit *to us* that we are God’s children”). On the other hand, some argue that such a witness is made to God. In this construct, there is no witness of God’s Spirit *to us*. Rather, both “spirits” testify *Godward*; both are advocates of our status before the great Judge.

If, on the other hand, a dative indirect object is in view, then God’s Spirit is testifying *to our spirits*, that is, *to us*. In this case, believers are the *recipients* of the testimony of the Spirit.

The first view (what we will call the *associative* view) may imply that the Spirit has nothing to do with the believer’s assurance of salvation.¹ This is especially the case if the witness is *Godward*. The second view (what we will call the *indirect* view or *indirect object* view) certainly implies that the Spirit’s testimony to the believer is an important aspect of assurance. The first view allows one to

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 422.

¹⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 424.

Cf. also John 8:32–36, where sonship involves liberation from sin and slavery is subjection to sin. The parallels between Rom. 8:14–17 and Gal. 4:1–7 suggest to some scholars that traditional material is being used here, but Fee (1994: 560) remarks rightly that the more plausible hypothesis is that Paul wrote both texts.

¹⁷ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/mort.html>

¹⁸ Daniel Wallace, “The Witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:16: Interpretation and Implications” in *Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit? An Investigation into the Ministry of the Spirit of God Today*, editors M. James Sawyer and Daniel B. Wallace (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005) p. 37.

claim assurance based directly on the objective data, the word. The second view opens the doors to a soft mysticism, suggesting that though the word is essential to assurance, God's Spirit is also essential to offer such comfort.¹⁹

Positively, we can argue from two vantage points: context and correlation. The *context* of Rom 8 involves especially two themes—assurance of salvation and the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's sanctification. These two are not unrelated. The assurance offered seems to come from two sources: inner testimony and external fruit. The one, in fact, seems to be the prerequisite for the other. Notice the following verses:

- Verse 4—"so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."
- Verse 9—"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you."
- Verse 14—"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God."
- Verse 23—"we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies."
- Verses 25–27—"But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will." *Paul is stressing in these verses, it seems, that though we might waver, the Spirit does not. The Spirit helps us in our weakness and our doubts.*
- Paul concludes with vv. 31–39 in which he evidently is arguing against doubts that are caused by our own inner turmoil as well as by external forces. Verses 31–34 ask the repeated question, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31). Verses 35–39 ask the question, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" The accusation of condemnation is something *felt* on the inside. The defense is also internal: because we are in Christ *and* because he is in us, we stand secure before God.
- In this great chapter it seems that the Spirit produces the assurance we so desperately need. Because we have the Spirit, we have hope. Yet even in our hope, he helps our weakness and intercedes for us. Because we have the Spirit, we bear fruit for God. The order is significant: The Spirit dwells in us, thus enabling us to live for God. We can have assurance of our salvation the moment we are converted, and as much as our own hearts try to condemn us, the Spirit intercedes.²⁰

Obviously, the main implication has to do with *assurance of salvation*: We know that we are saved because of the testimony of scripture *and* because of the inner witness of the Spirit. I know I am a child of God not just because the Bible tells me so, but because the Spirit *convinces* me so. The present tenses in relation to the Spirit in Rom 8 are used predominantly to suggest an ongoing state from regeneration to glorification (thus, customary presents). Because of the Spirit's witness I have assurance at the front end *and* throughout my life. But the Spirit sustains in me not just belief, but fruit. Because he dwells in me, he can prompt me to good works. The cause-effect relationship here must be carefully noted: **I am assured of my salvation, first, because the Spirit indwells me. Thus, I can have such assurance before I do any good works for God. But as I continue, because of the Spirit's presence and power, I will persevere. My saved status thus receives confirmation by my works.**²¹

The Spirit not only assures our hearts that we are saved; he also *sustains* that belief. True believers continue to believe because the Spirit energizes that faith. And he does more: he also energizes the fruit that results from that faith. Thus, the position that we can be eternally secure *without* persevering seems to embrace both a weak view of sin (in that we have the ability to sustain belief without the Spirit's aid) and, consequently, a defective pneumatology.²²

¹⁹ Daniel Wallace, "The Witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:16" p. 39-40.

²⁰ Daniel Wallace, "The Witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:16" p. 39-40.

²¹ Daniel Wallace, "The Witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:16" p. 46-47.

²² Daniel Wallace, "The Witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:16" p. 50.

8:17

We are co-heirs with Christ. “All that Christ claims as his will belong to all of us as well!” (Phillips). How rich in significance is the fact that we are full members of an eternal family in which God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our elder brother (cf. Heb 2:11–12). What appears to be a condition on this promised inheritance (“if indeed”) is actually a simple statement of fact. Sharing the sufferings of Christ leads to sharing his glory. Obviously we do not share the redemptive suffering of Christ, but we do share the consequences in terms of opposition from the world he came to save (cf. Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:13). As members of the same family we share in the trials of life as well as the benefits.^{164 23}

The fact that we are “co-heirs” with Christ is the connection between 8:12-17 and 8:18ff where our eschatological hope is addressed.

Application

When considering adoption from a human standpoint—it is interesting that it is often the one being adopted (the child) who struggles more than the parent. Children who are adopted often struggle with issue of attachment, trust and fear of abandonment.

When contemplating that in connection with the believer’s adoption by God—I have to wonder if our struggle with sin is not in part due to our struggle with attachment.

Does the reality of our unloveliness cause us to distrust our adopted Father—to question His motives? Do we end up with attachment issues—therefore not fully accepting our position, and the provision that accompany it (the Spirit)?

The reality of our adoption into God’s family, as co-heirs with Christ is awesome. We must fully accept:

the reality of the relationship—He loved us that much
that we are received thoroughly into God’s family—we are not second class children
responsibility of the relationship—we should live in a manor that honors our Father

8:18-25

In the light of eternity we should view the cost of suffering with Jesus Christ now as insignificant in view of the glory that lies ahead for us (2 Cor. 4:17). Paul personified all creation as leaning forward, eagerly anticipating the great day when God will fully redeem it too (Rom. 8:19). Because of the Fall God subjected the whole creation to “frustration” so at present it never reaches the perfection that He originally intended it to achieve (8:20, NIV). The creation acts as though it is going through birth pains in that it is straining to produce its fruit, to achieve its potential. The saints share the sense of groaning and anticipation that Paul said the creation feels, but happily the saints possess the firstfruits of our redemption (the Spirit) now. God’s gift of the Spirit at the commencement of the believer’s Christian life is His pledge that He will complete the process of salvation. In the meantime we should look forward with hope to what God has promised and patiently endure present sufferings.²⁴

8:18-21

Perspective on suffering

How do you compare temporal suffering with eternal glory?

Why is there suffering? 8:19-21

Phillips J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*

¹⁶⁴ Hunter writes, “For Christ the path of suffering was the path to glory. For his JOINT-HEIRS it must be the same” (Hunter, *Romans*, 81).

²³Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995). 183.

²⁴Mark Bailey, Tom Constable, Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, *Nelson's New Testament Survey: Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the New Testament* (Nashville: Word, 1999). 275.

The sin of Adam resulted in all of creation being subjected to the effects of sin. Not only death (physical and spiritual) but futility—purposelessness (chaos) and decay (corruption).

Notice how Paul personifies creation as longing to be rescued from the subjection to sin. God created an orderly, perfect universe which is bound to the sin of man.

but because of him who subjected it

Literally the phrase is “because of the one” and I take it, from the context, and from Genesis 3:17 that it is God who has subjected creation to futility as a result of sin and the curse. You can also see this in the book of Ecclesiastes particularly chapter 3.

What is interesting is that even though God has subjected creation to futility or meaninglessness, it is with purpose—the end of the verse stated “in hope...” A Paul goes on to indicate the time (when believers are glorified) that the creation will rejoice.

8:22-25

Perspective on patience

Not only does creation long to be freed from the grip of sin, Paul states that those who have been adopted by God long for the fulfillment of their redemption.

This hope of future, ultimate, salvation is what enables patience for the present time.

So Paul comes full circle in this section:

Perspective on suffering

Patience from hope

8:23

“Firstfruits” is used repeatedly in the Old Testament to describe the initial part of the harvest offered to the Lord and to his priests. It is hard to know whether this background plays a significant role in the New Testament use of the term, where it refers to the first stage of a series—the first converts in an area (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15), the first steps in God’s redemptive plan, and Christ himself, the first to be raised from the dead. In each case, however, the idea of “firstfruits” implies the certainty of more to come.

“Groan” is a keyword in these verses. Creation groans (8:22), Christians groan (8:23), and the Holy Spirit groans (8:26). Paul may use the word in this context where hope is so prominent because righteous sufferers in the Old Testament frequently describe themselves as “groaning” in their present sufferings as they call out to God for deliverance (see Ex. 2:24; 6:5). The word, therefore, nicely captures the combination of frustrated longing for final deliverance that characterizes this passage.²⁵

Key Point

We are children of God, with the presence of the indwelling Spirit to enable us to overcome sin—but the motivation is relationship, not rules. We have an intimate relationship with our adopted Father (Abba) which should motivate us to maintain that relationship even when suffering in light of the wonders yet to come of our ultimate salvation and glorification.

Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.

Rules within relationship lead to responsibility.



What do we learn
About God

Father—Daddy



Act on it

²⁵ Moo, Douglas. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 3, Romans to Philemon*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan.) 50-51.

Are you living like an orphan or an adopted heir?

Celebration

The grace of being an adopted heir

Motivation

The future certain hope of glorification

Romans 8:12-25

- 12 So then, brothers,
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 all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
- 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery
to fall back into fear,
but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,
by whom we cry, “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 fellow heirs with Christ,
provided we suffer with him
in order that we may also be glorified with him.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time
are not worth comparing
with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

19 For the creation waits
with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility,
not willingly,
but because of him who subjected it,
in hope

21 that the creation itself
will be set free from its bondage
to corruption
and obtain the freedom of the glory
of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together
in the pains of childbirth until now.

23 And not only the creation,
but we ourselves,
who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,
groan inwardly
as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons,
the redemption of our bodies.

24 For in this hope we were saved.
Now hope that is seen is not hope.
For who hopes for what he sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see,
we wait for it with patience. (ESV)