

Romans 8:5-13—Freedom from Defeat: No Obligation To Sin

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Revision:

We have previously come to the beautifully freeing understanding that, because of Christ's death on the cross, *God's righteousness can be produced in us, but not by us*. The beautiful fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control, goodness, righteousness, and truth (see Galatians 5:23-24 and Ephesians 5:9)—cannot be produced by human effort.

We also learned about the difference between **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** and the **the law of sin and death**. Firstly, what is **the law of sin and death**? **The law of sin and death** is what causes the sinful nature to want to sin more when we try to sin less: simply put, *the more we try not to sin, the more we want to sin—the effect being that we are powerless to stop sinning* (see Romans 7:5). Again, **the law of sin and death** is the power or force or principle that causes us to only want to do more of the wrong thing when we try to do the right thing.

Now, what is **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**? **The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** is the opposite of law of sin and death that caused us to sin; **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** actually empowers us to *be* the person that God wants us to be, and to *do* the things that please God (the things that our new nature naturally wants to do). Notice that it involves **the Spirit of life**. We have already learned that “*the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [freedom]*” (2 Corinthians 3:17). The only way to overcome **the law of sin and death** is by learning to submit to the Holy Spirit and so live by a new law or principle **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**.

Outline:

1. The mind: the strategic battleground where the battle between the flesh and the Spirit is fought (vs 5-6)
2. The sinful nature is completely and absolutely hostile towards God (vs 7-8)
3. The glorious truth that the Holy Spirit lives in and produces life in believers (vs 9-11)
4. The believer puts to death the deeds of the body by forcing the sinful flesh (sinful nature) to submit to the Spirit (vs 12-13)

Introduction:

We could ask the question, “Since, as a believer, I am under no condemnation, and I am free from having to keep the law, then why can't I just keep on doing what I want, living according to my sinful nature (my carnal or fleshly tendencies)? Because if I do, it will lead to death. In Romans 8:5-13 there is a contrast, a decision that every believer must make—the choice between life and death. This is not talking about eternal separation

from God as other Scriptures do (e.g. Romans 6:23, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”).

Rather, it is choosing to experience one of two ways of living; being dominated by my sinful nature and experiencing its evil fruit and negative consequences that follow, or, being controlled by the Holy Spirit and enjoying the beautiful fruit of the Spirit and the blessed consequences that follow.

Romans 8:5-13 NKJV

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to 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, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² 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.

1. The mind: the strategic battleground where the battle between the flesh and the Spirit is fought

Romans 8:5-6 NKJV

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Romans 8:5-6 AMP

For those who are according to the flesh and are controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit.

⁶ Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever].

Romans 8:5-6 NLT

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

v 5 **Set their minds:** The mind is the strategic battleground where the battle between the flesh (sinful nature) and Spirit is fought. This battle is described in more detail in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16-17 (NLT)

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

What it all comes down to is submission: will I be seeking my will, or God's will—"my will be done", or, "God's will be done". There are only two choices that every believer has when it comes to submission—submit to the old nature, or submit to the new nature—there are no other choices.

Romans 6:16 NLT

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, **or** you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Again, every believer, every day, every minute, has to choose—to set their mind on seeking God's will, God's glory, and God's pleasure, or, seeking their own will, their own glory, and their own pleasure.

How do I know if I am walking in the Spirit (under the control of the Holy Spirit)?

v 5 **Set their minds on the things of the flesh... the things of the Spirit:** How does a person know if they have been walking in the flesh or the Spirit? This is not a simple question to answer. It cannot be answered simply by looking at appearances—even the devil transforms himself into an angel of light *"These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve"* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Here are some points to consider:

- Good intentions are not evidence of walking in the spirit

"We shouldn't think those who **set their minds on the things of the flesh** are only notorious sinners. They may be noble people who have good intentions. Peter meant well when he told Jesus to avoid the cross, but Jesus responded to Peter with these strong words: *you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men* (Matthew 16:23)." (David Guzik)

- Living by faith (by the Spirit) or living by sight (by the sinful nature)

It's easy to live by feelings or emotions, but harder to live by what is true and right. Often what feels right is not actually right. Why? Because to do what is right and true will often hurt us or cost us something, and that doesn't make us feel good. It's often very difficult to step back from a situation and take the time to study the Scriptures and see things from God's perspective: But if we don't, then we end up being man pleasers, just doing what feels best for us, and what will make others happy. This is called taking the easy way out. This is especially true when we are close to someone.

Ephesians 4:15 AMP

Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

- It's all about motivation and priorities—it's often not what we do, but why we do it

“Want to know how to experience the stench of death in your life? Live carnally [submitted to the sinful nature]. What does it mean to live carnally? Jesus associated it with Gentiles who were concerned with nothing more than what they would eat, what they would wear, and where they would go (Matthew 6:31, 32). A carnal person asks, “Where can we eat now? What new hobby can we enjoy? What vacation can we take?” You see, we think living in the flesh is synonymous with committing blatant sins. But in reality, *to live in the flesh simply means to give priority to the things of the material realm.*” (Jon Courson)

It's important to remember that we all have needs that must be met. There is nothing wrong with meeting or satisfying a need or desire, as long as we don't do it sinfully, and we don't let that need or desire begin to control, drive, or motivate us (e.g. earning money, seeking friends or companionship)

- Don't be fooled by religious zeal

Consider just how zealous and driven people are from other religions or cults, e.g. the J.W.'s or Mormons. They are not saved, they do not have a love for God, but share their faith because they have an ulterior motive—usually pride or legalism.

Concerning Christians, an elder from another church once said that me that someone who is overly zealous or spiritual and/or is always talking about what they are doing should raise a red flag in our minds—they probably have an ulterior motive—e.g. guilt or penance, legalism, or trying to impress, or trying to get something they want. Why should someone who looks like they are driven raise a red flag as to their motive? Because the Spirit doesn't drive us, He leads us.

Matthew 6:1-4 NLT—*The danger of trying to gain attention*

“Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ² When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³ But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Put another way, if the way I live is drawing attention to myself, then that's probably why I am living that way.

Matthew 23:25-28 NLT—*The danger of trying to look good*

²⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 9:8 AMP—*The good example of Jesus*

When the crowds saw it, they were struck with fear and awe; and they recognised God and praised and thanked Him, Who had given such power and authority to men.

It's amazing how, despite all the outward things that Jesus did, that people didn't praise Him, but the Father. *It was because everything Jesus did was done in humility, because He was walking in the Spirit. Because God by nature is humble, so will we be if we are walking in the Spirit.*

Philippians 1:15-19 NLT—*A good result doesn't prove there was a pure motive*

It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. ¹⁶ They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. ¹⁷ Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. ¹⁸ But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice.

Conclusion: It really doesn't matter about the spiritual state or motive of the person sharing the word, because the power doesn't come from the person, but rather the truth of the message that is shared—the power is in the word of God (see Hebrews 4:12).

- *It's all about the fruit of the Holy Spirit*

Someone can be very religious, but also be very proud, or legalistic, or trying to impress. What we have learned so far, is that the person who is really submitted to the Spirit is actually being the person that God created them to be. They are producing the fruit of the Spirit, as well as living a righteous life, free from habitual sin.

Ephesians 5:8-12 NKJV

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

The difference between life and death in the context of Romans 8:5-13

v 6 **For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace:** Depending on who we choose to submit to, we either bring death, or life and peace, into our lives: *“So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace (NLT).”*

What is life in this context? I experience life when I submit my will to God's will—I set my mind on listening to and obeying the Holy Spirit. God then produces in me the glorious fruit of the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT): *“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”*

What is death in this context? I experience death when I choose to set my mind on satisfying the desires of my sinful nature. I choose to allow my sinful nature to dominate or control me. It's “my will be done”, and not “God's will be done”. I will lose my joy, contentment, peace, no longer have the fruit of the Spirit produced in me. Instead I will be, at least inwardly, unhappy, discontent, and anxious, and my life will be marked by at least some of the following sinful practices or selfish attitudes as described in Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT): *“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.”*

Why is living to satisfy my sinful, carnal or fleshly nature called death?

“Because man was created in the image of God. Since God is a Trinity—Father, Son and Spirit—He created man as lesser trinity of spirit, soul, and body. The spirit is the deepest part of you, the “real” you. The soul is your mind and emotions. The body is the thing you live in temporarily. When God created man, there was a beautiful connection between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God as Adam and God walked together in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). But when Adam gave in to his flesh and ate the forbidden fruit, he allowed his body—the material aspect of his nature—to assume predominance over his spirit, thereby severing his direct communion with God’s Spirit.” (Jon Courson)

Thus every time we live according to the sinful nature, we are separating ourselves from God in a practical sense, we are out of fellowship with God.

1 John 1:6-7 AMP

[So] if we say we are partakers together and enjoy fellowship with Him when we live and move and are walking about in darkness, we are [both] speaking falsely and do not live and practice the Truth [which the Gospel presents].

⁷ But if we [really] are living and walking in the Light, as He [Himself] is in the Light, we have [true, unbroken] fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt [keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations].

2. The sinful nature is completely and absolutely hostile towards God

Romans 8:7-8 NKJV

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8 AMP

[That is] because the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God’s Law; indeed it cannot.

⁸ So then those who are living the life of the flesh [catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature] cannot please or satisfy God, or be acceptable to Him.

Romans 8:7-8 NLT

For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. ⁸ That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

v 7 **Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:** Again, it’s a matter of submission—the flesh or sinful nature absolutely refuses to submit to God—no peace treaty or agreement can be made—either it rules completely me or I kill it completely! Therefore, the only solution is to, by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, crucify or put to death my sinful nature, my fleshly or carnal mind. Just like James tells us to “Submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you”, so Romans and Galatians tells us that to walk in the Spirit, to be controlled by the Spirit, we must first crucify the flesh.

Galatians 5:24 NKJV

Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:24-25 AMP

And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) have crucified the flesh (the godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.]

Romans 8:13 AMP

For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever.

v 7 **Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God:** The sinful nature is the very essence of hatred towards and rebellion against God. Again, **the carnal mind *is* enmity against God.** “It is not black, but blackness; it is not *at* enmity, but *enmity* itself; it is not corrupt, but corruption; it is not rebellious, it is rebellion; it is not wicked, it is wickedness itself. The heart, though it be deceitful, is positively deceit; it is evil in the concrete, sin in the essence, it is the distillation, the quintessence of all things that are vile; it is not envious against God, it is envy; it is not at enmity, it is actual enmity.” (Spurgeon)

v 7 **It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be:** “We can try to do good in life without being **subject to the law of God.** We may hope to put God “in debt” to us by good works, thinking God owes us. But it doesn’t work. **In the flesh we cannot please God, even if the flesh does religious things that are admired by men.**” (David Guzik)

v 8 **So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God:** “With the soul—the mind—lodged between the spirit and the flesh, the question becomes one of what will control my mind. Will it be the spirit, as my spirit is linked to God’s Spirit? As the day unfolds, will I be a spiritual man? Or will I be carnal, wondering, *Where am I going to go? How am I going to be entertained? What am I going to eat?* Truly, if my body controls my thoughts, I am carnally minded and cannot please God.” (Jon Courson)

3. The glorious truth that the Holy Spirit lives in and produces life in believers

Romans 8:9-11 NKJV

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:9-11 AMP

But you are not living the life of the flesh, you are living the life of the Spirit, if the [Holy] Spirit of God [really] dwells within you [directs and controls you]. But if anyone does not possess the [Holy] Spirit of Christ, he is none of His [he does not belong to Christ, is not truly a child of God]. [Rom. 8:14.]

¹⁰ **But if Christ lives in you, [then although] your [natural] body is dead by reason of sin *and* guilt, the spirit is alive because of [the] righteousness [that He imputes to you].**

¹¹ **And if the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, [then] He Who raised up Christ *Jesus* from the dead will also restore to life your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.**

Romans 8:9-11 NLT

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) ¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer

v 9 **Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His:** Being born again is by definition receiving the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. The unbeliever does not have God the Holy Spirit living inside of them. In contrast, the believer does have the Holy Spirit living inside of them. This is the absolute difference between the believer and the non-believer.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NLT

It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, ²² and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first instalment that guarantees everything he has promised us.

Every believer is born with the power to live a life that pleases God (we are “born” with it, when we are born again)

v 9 **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you:** This means that every believer has inside of them the power of God by which they can crucify their old nature and live according to their new nature. The believer never *has* to sin, but rather they *choose* to sin. We will cover this in more detail shortly.

Ephesians 1:19-20 NLT

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 3:20 NLT

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

“However, many do miss out on living the Christian life in the constant fullness of the Spirit because they are not *constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit* as Paul commanded in Ephesians 5:18. They have no experience of what Jesus spoke about when He described *rivers of living water* flowing from the believer (John 7:37–39).

How does one know that they have the Spirit? Ask these questions:

- Has the Spirit led you to Jesus?
- Has the Spirit put in you the desire to honour Jesus?
- Is the Spirit leading you to be more like Jesus?
- Is the Spirit at work in your heart?” (David Guzik)

How the believer should live, considering that we have God living inside of us

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 NLT

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. ¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who **lives** in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honour God with your body.

"The word "dwell" [**lives**] means "to be at home." Is the Spirit of God at home in you? If you're a believer, He's in you—without question. But is He *at home* in your life? Can He just kick back in the easy chair of your heart and say, "I'm so glad to be in your life; I'm so glad you're Mine"? Or do you take Him to activities, listen to conversations, and involve yourself in that which makes Him uneasy?

In writing about a believer who joined himself to a harlot, Paul said he was joining Christ Himself to the harlot (1 Corinthians 6:15). So, too, I suggest to you that, in these immoral days in which we live, Christians all too often force the Lord into activities of which He wants no part. Would you think about this the next time you turn on TV, listen to gossip, or go to a movie? Praise the Lord, there's no condemnation (Romans 8:1)—but there must be a realisation of what's going on." (Jon Courson)

v 10 **And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness:** Our physical body is sin cursed and will eventually die. However, the believer's spirit and soul are alive forevermore, because we are in Christ.

v 11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you:** This is the promise of a new, glorified, resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 15:50, 53-55 NLT

What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

4. The believer puts to death the deeds of the body by forcing the sinful flesh (sinful nature) to submit to the Spirit

Romans 8:12-13 NKJV

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.

Romans 8:12-13 AMP

So then, brethren, we are debtors, but not to the flesh [we are not obligated to our carnal nature], to live [a life ruled by the standards set up by the dictates] of the flesh.

¹³ For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever.

Romans 8:12-13 NLT

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.

v 12 **We are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh:** Why is it that we owe nothing to our sinful human nature, that we are not obliged to submit to it, or give into it, or do what it wants? Firstly, the old nature only wanted to control us so it could destroy us. Secondly, the believer now belongs to God, and so owes a debt of love to their Saviour.

v 13 **For if you live according to the flesh you will die:** Here is the warning again. Living according to the desires of the sinful nature will produce death in my life—the prideful and destructive fruit of the sinful nature.

v 13 **By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body:** “When we **put to death the deeds of the body** (force the sinful flesh to submit to the Spirit), we must do it **by the Spirit**. Otherwise we will become like the Pharisees and spiritually proud.” (David Guzik)

“It is not enough for us to have the Spirit; the Spirit must have us! Only then can He share with us the abundant, victorious life that can be ours in Christ. We have no obligation to the flesh, because the flesh has only brought trouble into our lives. We do have an obligation to the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who convicted us, revealed Christ to us, and imparted eternal life to us when we trusted Christ. Because He is “the Spirit of Life,” He can empower us to obey Christ, and He can enable us to be more like Christ. But He is also the Spirit of death. He can enable us to “put to death” (mortify) the sinful deeds of the body. As we yield the members of our body to the Spirit (Rom. 6:12–17), He applies to us and in us the death and resurrection of Christ. He puts to death the things of the flesh, and He reproduces the things of the Spirit.” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

Conclusion—considering the example of king Solomon:

“Poor Solomon. Put yourself in his golden sandals. What frustration! All the power he could ever want, more money than he could even count, one thousand of the most beautiful women at his beck and call, endless parties, education, philosophy—he had it all. But here was his dilemma: Nothing satisfied. Whereas the average person thinks, *I’m almost happy. If I can just get a bigger house, or a newer car, I know I’ll be happy*, Solomon was stuck. He was at the top. There was no bigger car to buy, no other woman to go after, no higher investment to make. He was at the top and he said, “It’s empty.” And here little Paul comes along with his bowed legs, hooked nose, and bald head, saying, “It’s real simple. To be carnally minded is death—but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Brother Solomon finally did figure it out. After approximately twelve years of women, money, power, and philosophy, he said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man” (see Ecclesiastes 12:13). And from that time on, Solomon was known as “the preacher.”

I ask you this question: What has been ruling your soul? Has it been your flesh, or has it been God’s Spirit? If you’re going to pursue the material and live for your flesh, you’ll never be satisfied. But if you live for the Spirit, you’ll know life and peace eternally and presently.” (Jon Courson)