

Romans
The Spirit of Christ In Us (Part 3)
Romans 8:5-13
April 08, 2018

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

I love certain places on this planet. Of course, above all of them, I love home, as I know many of you do. But then I love some places that it's been my joy to travel. I love Italy; it's a wonderful country; just got back from there in January, and I love being there. But I also love England, and that should not be a surprise to you because obviously it's a nation rich in history and architecture, both of which I love, but also it shouldn't be a surprise to you because of the name 'Pennington.' That's a very British name, and of course if you look at my profile, I look like everybody on the BBC until I open my mouth and then it's lost. But I am of British descent. In fact, those in my family who care about such things, some of my relatives have investigated this, and apparently, we came from a line of Penningtons that came over after the Short Parliament was dismissed by Cromwell. At least that's the good story; we hope we're not in that other line.

But I love England, and I love having had the opportunity to visit there; and on one of my first visits to London, I had the joy and privilege to visit Bunhill Fields. Now some of you have been to England; that's probably not on the top list of places that you've gone, but it should be if you ever do go to London. Bunhill Fields is the cemetery where most of the nonconformist pastors are buried; that is those men who remained faithful to the Lord through the darkest days of British history. And the highlight of my visit to Bunhill Fields was to visit the grave of the greatest English Puritan, a man named John Owen.

Now, before I mention anymore, I need to clarify what a Puritan is because that name has been abused and has been misused. What exactly is a Puritan? J.I. Packer, in his book *Quest for Godliness*, defines Puritanism this way, he says:

It was essentially a movement for church reform, pastoral renewal and evangelism and spiritual revival. [And he says,] The Puritan goal was to complete what England's Reformation began. For about 100 years after the Reformation was the time of the Puritans, and it was their desire to complete the Reformation in England. They were not a joyless somber lot. They, in fact, were people that were filled with grace and love for Christ, serious about their faith; that is our

heritage because it's the Puritans who landed on the shores of this land in New England.

John Owen was a Puritan. He was born to Puritan parents in Oxfordshire Village, England, in the year 1616. It was the same year that William Shakespeare died, and it was four years before the pilgrims sailed for New England. Owen's parents sent him to a grammar school in Oxford at the age of ten to prepare for the university. At the age of twelve, Owen entered Queens College Oxford. He received his BA at sixteen, his MA at nineteen, and he went on to do additional doctoral work there at Oxford. After graduating, he served as a pastor for nearly forty years. In the year in 1651, Owen was appointed Dean of Christ Church, Oxford; and the following year in 1652, Vice Chancellor of the University. He was a man in his time of immense political influence as well as spiritual and pastoral influence. But he was also a man who endured tremendous trials.

In fact, he had eleven children. Ten of those children died in childhood. Only one survived. And the daughter that survived lived only to young adulthood; and after her marriage ended, she died as a young adult. Then after thirty-one years of marriage, his first wife died. He lived through two plagues. One of those plagues killed one in five people in the City of London. Almost 100,000 people of the 500,000 people who populated London at the time died, and two of those who died were his sons. He suffered himself physically, relentlessly from asthma and from gallstones. But he labored faithfully for the Lord, and he died at 67 years old in the year 1683, and he was buried in Bunhill Fields where you can see his grave to this day.

The most famous thing about John Owen though and what is known for today is the fact that he published twenty-two works during his lifetime. By far the most famous of those works has a title that in today's world would never make it to the bestseller list; the title is *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*; mortification simply means "to put to death, to kill", *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. That book is based on a series of sermons that he preached to both the students and the academic community at Oxford. It is an exposition and an application of the verse that we come to in our study this morning, Romans 8:13. That is the foundation for John Owen's most famous work, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*.

And by the way, I would suggest at some point during your Christian life, you read this book by John Owen on sin and temptation. I would suggest however that you read an updated version of it with updated language because he wrote in a Latin style which is very difficult reading for most of us, and so I would suggest you get the updated version edited by Kelly Capik and Justin

Taylor entitled, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*. We have carried it in the bookstore. It may be there today.

Now in the preface to Owen's book about the verse we come to this morning, this is what he wrote, and it really summarizes both the purpose of his book as well as the text of Romans 8:13. Here's Owen:

My heart's desire unto God and the chief design of my life, [That ought to get your attention.] the chief design of my life are that mortification [the killing of sin] and universal holiness may be promoted in my own and in the hearts and ways of others to the glory of God so that the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be adorned in all things.

That was the goal of his life. It is also the grand goal of the passage that we come to in our study of Romans this morning.

Now let me just remind you of where we are in this great letter of Paul. The theme of the eighth chapter of Romans is the absolute security of the Christian. Paul argues, based on several reasons, that the salvation of a genuine Christian, if you're truly in Christ, if you've truly repented and believed in Him, your salvation is secure for several great reasons. We've looked at one of those reasons in its entirety, found in the first four verses of chapter 8, It's this, we can be secure because God has delivered us from condemnation. Verse 1 says there is "Therefore ... now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment, no penalty] for those who are in Christ Jesus." So, we are secure because that has been done; we have been justified, and there can never be any condemnation that can come to us from the throne of God because of what Christ did.

We are considering a second reason for our security, the security of our salvation. It's found in verses 5 - 13 and it's this: God has changed and empowered us by His Spirit. Let's read this paragraph together, and as I read it, pay attention to what Paul says here. He's making this basic point that God has changed and empowered us by His Spirit, and that becomes a source of our confidence in Christ. Let me read it beginning in verse 5; Romans 8:5:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the

mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Now, Paul's basic point in that paragraph is this: we can be certain as believers that we are secure because we can see that God has, in fact, changed us and empowered us by His Spirit. If you're a Christian, you see that in your life. If you're not a Christian you're clueless about that. But if you're a Christian, you can look at your own life and see this remarkable change that God has produced.

Now, Paul begins in this paragraph by making the point that believers are, in fact, radically different from unbelievers. We looked at this in verses 5 - 8. Paul details those differences between what we were before Christ and what we are now, between believers and unbelievers. We have different natures. We were in the flesh, and now we're in the Spirit. We have different mindsets. Our mind is set on totally different things. We have different patterns of conduct, different lifestyles. We have different spiritual conditions. We even have different eternal destinies; and all of that is because, Paul explains here, we have different relationships to God.

Unbelievers, whether they think they are or not, if you're here this morning, and you're not in Christ, you've never repented of your sins and believed in Jesus, then you are hostile toward God, and He is hostile toward you, unwilling to submit to God's commands, unable to submit to God's commands, and unable to please God. So, believers are radically different from unbelievers in all those ways.

But why, how did that difference come about? Why is there that radical difference? And that brings us to a second point that Paul makes in this paragraph in verses 9 - 11; it's because

believers were fundamentally changed by the Spirit. The reason there is such a remarkable difference is because of something the Holy Spirit has done in the life of every genuine Christian. And he begins in verse 9 by describing our past change. He says listen, Christians have experienced this fundamental change in their nature. It was accomplished by the Holy Spirit, and it's called theologically, regeneration." Jesus described it as being "born again". Paul describes it as like a resurrection from spiritual death. Before that happened, all of us were what Paul calls "in the flesh". That is, we were completely given over to our sinfulness and our fallenness. But in a moment, the Spirit changed all that through regeneration, through that new birth, through that resurrection from spiritual death. He made us alive, and we, instead of being in the flesh, became in the Spirit in the sense that the Spirit now controls our lives as the flesh did before. That's the past change.

But then he goes on in verse 10 to detail our present condition in light of that. He says at the beginning of verse 10, "If Christ is in you, [if you're truly a Christian, your] body is dead because of sin." All Paul is saying is that, at salvation, your physical body didn't change; it is still spiritually and morally dead to God, and the seeds of physical decay and death are still in your body. But, at the same time, verse 10 goes on to say, "If Christ is in you, [your] body is dead [spiritually and morally] yet [your] spirit is alive, [alive to God] because of righteousness."

If you're a Christian, your soul is now spiritually alive and relates to God. The point of verse 10 is that in our present condition as Christians, our salvation is not yet complete. Our spirit is alive to God, but at the same time our bodies are dead spiritually and morally and they are decaying and dying physically. If you doubt that, look in the mirror; for some of us it's more obvious than others, but it's true for all of us.

So, we need something else and that brings us to verse 11, and that is future glorification. God's Holy Spirit dwells within every true Christian, and Paul argues in verse 11 that because the Spirit is within you, your future resurrection physically and your future glorification are absolutely guaranteed. Someday, Christian, if the Lord doesn't come back, you will die. That doesn't mean your soul will die. Your soul is eternal. It will survive that. Your body will die, and they will place it in the ground. Your soul, Christian, will go immediately into the presence of the Lord.

I had the privilege of sharing that with a family in our church as they wept over a sudden heart attack of one they loved, even on Friday. The spirit goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. Someday, Paul says, if the Spirit was in you during this life, the Spirit will bring that body

back to life in a new and glorified form; a body like Jesus's own body. I don't mean you'll look like Jesus; you'll look like you. It will be your body completely remade like His glorified body; it will be like His body in nature, not in appearance. And it's absolutely guaranteed, verse 11 says if you have the Spirit, if you've really been changed.

Now, that brings us today to Paul's final point in this paragraph. We've seen that believers are different because they have been fundamentally changed by the Spirit. Well, the third point that he makes in this paragraph, in verses 12 and 13, is that believers are practically empowered by the Spirit, by the Spirit who dwells within them. You're practically, daily empowered, if you're truly in Christ, to live in a way that honors Christ.

Now, let's take these two verses apart. First of all, Paul begins by making this basic point; we are obligated as Christians to the Spirit unto obedience; that's really an overarching point that he is making in verses 12 and 13; we're obligated.

Notice how verse 12 begins, "So then," so then. The Greek words are two words Paul uses often, but he doesn't often use them together: literally, "so therefore". They're two words of logical inference. Paul intentionally combines them here to show that what he's about to say is the logical consequence of what he has just said. So, let's put it together then. What has he just said? In light of the fact that you are radically different from the unbeliever you once were and other unbelievers, in light of your past change in regeneration, in light of your present condition: that although your "body is dead because of sin," your "spirit is alive", and in light of your future glorification, in light of all of that change, Paul says, "Here's how you must live if that's happened to you." You see, there are huge consequences of this fundamental change that the Spirit has produced in every true Christian; consequences that will radically affect your daily life if you're truly a Christian. If you're not, don't expect that. But if you're a Christian, this change, the Spirit has accomplished, will change your daily life; that's Paul's point.

Now, there's another important point I want to make here. Let me just step back for a moment from the text itself and make a larger overarching point. It's really important for you to understand this because I think there are a lot of true Christians who are tempted to want Paul to skip all of this heavy doctrine. Have you ever been tempted to think that? It's like, "Wow, Paul, I mean, come on, when are we going to get to the good stuff? I mean, can't we just get to the punch line? Can't you just skip the doctrine and tell us how we're supposed to live? Let's go to Romans 12. Really?"

Now let me just say that if you're tempted to think that way, (and I think at times in our lives we've all been tempted to think that way) if you're tempted to think that way, you need to come to grips with this very simple but profound truth. Listen carefully. Nothing else I will say today will be more important than this, ultimately, in your spiritual life. The starting point for real spiritual growth is not doing, but doctrine. Let me say it again, the starting point for your real spiritual growth is not your doing, but your understanding of doctrine. That's what Paul is saying here.

Let me give you an example from everyday life. We've all enjoyed the winter Olympics, at least my family did. I assume many of you enjoyed the Olympics, and of course, the Summer Olympics are coming. In the Summer Olympics and all the track and field events, one of those events is that of the long jump. Now, if an Olympic long jumper wants to make progress in the length of his jump, where does he start focusing? He doesn't start by focusing on the jump itself. No, if he wants to increase the length he jumps, he has to focus instead on the point at which he gains the energy to make the jump, and what is that? It's the run; it's the run down the track before his foot leaves the pavement and he leaps into the air; it's the run itself. And the same is true for us as believers. Our success in sanctification, in becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, our success is tied to what gives us the energy to pursue it.

Let me put it another way; before you can or will work on sanctification, before you make any real progress in the length of your jump toward Christ-likeness, you must first come to grips with what provides the energy and the motivation for that jump. And what is that energy? What is the motivation? What is the track down which you run in order to jump farther toward Christ-likeness? It's understanding who you are in Jesus Christ. It's understanding the new person that you have become, understanding your new identity in Christ. This is always what the New Testament teaches.

Let me illustrate it for you. This is always Paul's method. It's true when it comes to the structures of his books. Take the book of Ephesians, for example. I love Ephesians. We spent several years walking through the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters, there are six chapters in Ephesians; first three chapters--all doctrine, only one command in the first three chapters, and it's "remember" in chapter 2, I think verse 11. Remember, that's it. So, three chapters of doctrine before Paul ever gets to doing, but look how he ties it, keep your finger here and go over to Ephesians 4; Ephesians 4:1, here's the hinge verse. Three chapters of doctrine, who we are in Christ, what God has done for us, the salvation we enjoy, God's sweeping eternal

plan, all doctrine. And then he says, 4:1, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...”

You see how he ties them together? He spent the first three chapters explaining how God called us to Himself, how He saved us, what He’s done for us, and then he says, “In light of all of that, now, let me tell you how you ought to live. You ought to walk worthy of what God has done, and let me explain how to walk worthy.”

Paul does the same thing here in the book of Romans. There are certainly more imperatives in the first eleven chapters of Romans than there are in the first half of Ephesians. However, the bulk of the first eleven chapters of Romans, doctrine. He doesn’t get to the imperative after imperative after imperative and all the doing until Chapter 12. So, think about this, Paul spends 11 chapters focusing on doctrine, and then chapters 12 - 16 on doing. This is always his pattern because the one is built on the other. This is true not only in how he structures his books; it’s how he structures his arguments.

Do you remember back in Romans 6, he starts in the first eleven verses by telling us about our new position in Christ? He says, “Listen, if you’re a Christian, the old person you used to be died; that person doesn’t exist anymore. You’re a new person in Jesus Christ, and he goes into this heavy doctrine; and then beginning in verse 12, he gets to the application and says, “Okay, here’s the doing.” That’s what he’s doing here in Romans 8; so don’t skip, don’t miss the significance of those little words “so then,” or “so therefore,” because everything he has said so far is crucial to the doing.

Now Paul adds in 8:12, “So then, ... [brothers.]” Here Paul reminds us who he’s addressing in these two verses. It’s all of us, if you’re a Christian, if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ. It’s his Christian brothers and sisters. Now notice how these brothers are described in this eighth chapter. Back in verse 1 they’re described as those for whom “there is now no condemnation [because they] are in Christ Jesus.” In verse 2 they are described as those who have been “set ... free from [God’s] law;” that is, free from its penalty and free from the pressure of trying to keep it as a way to earn God’s favor and earn your way into acceptance with God. In verse 3 they’re described as those whose sin God condemned in Jesus’s body when Jesus died. In verse 4 they’re described as those who walk “according to the Spirit,” that is who live lives that reflect the Spirit and not their flesh. In verse 9 they’re described as those who were “not in the flesh but in the Spirit” because the “Spirit” actually “dwells” within them. In verse 10 they are, those whose bodies are, dead morally and spiritually, “dead because of sin,” but whose spirits have

been made alive. And in verse 11 they are those whose “mortal bodies” God will eventually raise and make like Christ’s body. Those are the ones Paul is referring to in verses 12 and 13.

Now, why do I belabor that? Because I want you to understand that what Paul is teaching in these two verses is not just for some special elite class of Christians. No! This is for all true believers; these crucial truths about pursuing holiness in your life, they’re for you if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ.

Verse 12, “So then,” brothers, and notice how he begins, “we are under obligation.” The Greek word that’s translated “obligation” here is the same word that’s used for debtors. A debt, it makes sense to think about it, a debt is a financial obligation. Here Paul says, “We have a moral obligation or debt.” Really, it’s one we don’t have. Notice what he says, as Christians, we are not debtors to the flesh. Verse 12, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.” Now again, what is the flesh? Paul’s used this word a number of times; we’ve defined it; for those of you who may be new with us, let me just remind you of this word. Paul means, “by the flesh,” that part of the Christian that remains unredeemed, that part of us that is our fallenness that’s still with us.

John MacArthur defines the flesh in this way; he says “The flesh is the ugly complex of human sinful desires that includes the ungodly motives, affections, principles, purposes, words, actions that sin generates through our bodies.” In other words, it is the entire complex of everything sinful in us. That’s the flesh, everything that remains unredeemed.

Now what does Paul say here? “You are not under obligation to your flesh, to that part of you that remains unredeemed.” He’s saying, “You owe your flesh nothing. You don’t owe that part of you that remains unredeemed anything.” There was a day when you paid it everything it wanted, and you gave it all that is asked, and you satisfied its desires, and you lived for your flesh. Paul says, “If you have been changed, you owe your flesh nothing.” Specifically, he says, notice what he says in verse 12, you are not obligated “to live according to the flesh.” In other words, you have no obligation to obey the demands of your flesh like you once did. I mean, after all, folks, just think of what your flesh did for you.

You track back through the early part of chapter 8, in verse 3; you’re flesh kept you from living in obedience to God’s Law. In verse 6, it produced your physical and spiritual death; and apart from Christ, it would’ve caused your eternal death. Verse 7, your flesh produced hostility between you and God, and it refused to obey God. Verse 8, when you were “in the flesh,” that is

when you were entirely characterized by your fallenness, before you were saved, it made it impossible for you to ever please God; that's your flesh! You don't owe it anything. That's what Paul is saying, certainly not your obedience.

At the same time, there is, in this verse, a reminder that our flesh has not been completely eradicated. If you're a Christian, your soul is alive; your spirit is alive, has been regenerated. But there's a part of you that remains unredeemed; and if we're not careful, we can find ourselves listening to our old master again as we used to.

It's like the illustration I gave you from Lloyd-Jones back in chapter 6 where he says, "You know, when you're saved, you're transferred from one field across the road to another field, and you can still hear your old master shouting from the old field; and if you're not careful, you can think that old master still has some right over you, and you start obeying it like it still does. Paul says, "You are not under obligation to the flesh."

Now notice that verse 12 ends with an em dash in the new American Standard, a dash, an elongated dash. Why? There are no marks like this in the original Greek manuscripts; this is instead, our translators recognizing a reality and that is, Paul interrupted himself and didn't finish his thought. That's why that long dash is there. But Paul didn't have to finish his thought because it's understood.

In fact, let me give you a little quiz, okay? You're all very acquainted now with Romans 8, so in light of what we have learned in verses 5 - 11, let me have you finish Paul's thought. Look at verse 12, "So then, [brothers, you are debtors] not to the flesh, [but you are debtors to the] Spirit." That's what he has been interacting with throughout this paragraph . You are debtors to the Spirit. As Christians, we're not debtors to the flesh, but we are debtors to the Holy Spirit. Why? Why are we obligated to the Spirit?

Well again, look at the first part of this chapter and remember what the Spirit has done. In verse 1 the Spirit applied the work of Christ to you accomplishing your justification so that for you "there is now no condemnation." In verses 2 and 3 the Spirit produced life in you; He regenerated you by applying the work of Christ on the cross to you. Verse 4, He enables you now to meet the full requirement of God's Law to fulfill the requirement of God's Law. In verse 6 the Spirit provided you with eternal life and peace, peace with God, and the peace of God in your heart. Verse 9, the Spirit now indwells you. Christian, do you realize that? If you're truly in Christ, the Spirit lives in you. Verse 11, He guarantees your ultimate resurrection; and in

verse 13, as we will see, He empowers your sanctification. You owe the Spirit everything; you are obligated to the Spirit; you are a debtor to the Spirit, but in what sense? To live according to the Spirit just like you are not a debtor to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; you are a debtor to the Spirit to live according to the Spirit. What does that mean?

It's not some mystical thing; it's to live in obedience to the Spirit just like you used to live in obedience to the flesh. You say, "Well, how do I know how to live in obedience to the Spirit? How about the Word He inspired? Now, why is it important, why is it important that we live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh? Because, listen carefully, living in obedience to your fallenness and living in obedience to the Spirit lead to two totally different outcomes.

Notice in verse 13, the outcome of living in obedience to the flesh is eternal death. Verse 13 says, "for [because, here's why you shouldn't be obeying your flesh] if you are living according to the flesh, you must die...." Now, what does Paul mean, "you must die"? If as a consistent pattern of life, you are living in obedience to your fallenness, to your sinfulness, literally, the Greek text says this, "You are about to die." He's not talking about physical death here in context; he's talking about eternal death as a penalty for sin, and he says, "you are about to die." That underscores its certainty, its inevitability.

Now don't misunderstand Paul. Paul is not saying here that a true Christian can lose his salvation. In fact, Paul is making, I think, two separate points at the beginning of verse 13. First of all, he's giving us a warning. It is a warning to all who claim to be Christians. So, let me just say, if you're here this morning, you claim to be a Christian; here's Paul's warning to you. If you continue as a pattern of your life to obey your sinfulness, to obey your fallenness, to obey your flesh, you will be eternally damned. That's what he says, "You are about to die." He's talking about eternal death. In other words, if you live your life obeying your flesh and not the Spirit's commands in the Word of God, it proves that you never really became a Christian at all. That's the point he's making.

Charles Hodge puts it this way, "The necessity of holiness is absolute. No matter what professions we may make, or what hopes we may indulge, justification is never separated from sanctification." In other words, being declared right with God is never unplugged from being like Jesus Christ; the two go together. You can't get a sort of "get out of hell free" card and live your life however you want. It doesn't work like that. Justification and sanctification come as a package deal. Here is as bluntly as I can put it; if you are living like an unbeliever, obeying your

sin as opposed to the Holy Spirit, you will be damned like an unbeliever because you are an unbeliever. It doesn't matter what profession you may have made, what prayer you may have prayed, when you were six your mother led you.... It doesn't matter, this is what Paul is saying. If you're living like an unbeliever, you are an unbeliever, and you will die. You will suffer eternal death.

Turn over to Hebrews 12; Hebrews 12. The writer of Hebrews puts this bluntly here. He's talking about God's disciplining of His children, and he says in verse 6; Hebrews 12:6, "THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." In other words, if you're a true son of God, and you get locked into a pattern of disobedience in your life, an unbroken, unrepentant pattern of sin in your life, then like any good dad, God is going to discipline you. He's not going to let that continue. He's not going to let you sully the family name; and for your own good, He's going to discipline you. In fact, that's what he goes on to say.

He says in verse 10 our earthly fathers "disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but ... [God] disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet (for) those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Verse 12, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak the knees that are feeble." In other words, "make straight paths for your feet." In other words, "get back in line; don't invite God's discipline into your life." Verse 14, "Pursue," and notice, first of all, he says, "Pursue peace with all men."

But then he says this, "Pursue," and the Greek word here has the idea of continually pursuing, be continually pursuing, notice verse 14, "the sanctification," now notice what he says, "without which no one will see the Lord." Underscore the words "no one." Listen, you're not going to be the exception to that; God's not to say, "Well, okay, you prayed a prayer when you were eight, and you claimed to be a Christian, it's okay." No, "no one will see the Lord" who isn't pursuing sanctification because being right with God and pursuing likeness to Jesus Christ come together as a package.

So there's a warning here; there's a warning if you don't take your sin seriously; if you say, "I'm a Christian, yep, I walked an aisle, held up my hand, signed the card, prayed a prayer, my mom told me, my dad told me I was a Christian;" but you live like an unbeliever, and your sin doesn't really matter to you; you don't really care; you're good with that; you're not going to see the Lord. You will die, not only physically, but eternally. That's Paul's point. It's a warning.

But go back to Romans 8 because I think the beginning of verse 13 is also an encouragement. It's an encouragement to all true Christians because, if you're not living a life of obedience to your flesh, and you don't want to do that, but at the same time, you see how weak you are, and how prone you are to sin, how easily tempted, and if you worry about what you are capable of, and what might happen in your life, listen, you can be encouraged, because what Paul is also saying here is that the truly regenerate person who does often sin but who has the Spirit within, that person, the Spirit will never allow us to live in an ongoing unbroken lifestyle of sin. He will bring discipline as we saw in Hebrews 12 or in 1 Corinthians 11. He'll even bring death at times to believers who refuse to walk in obedience.

But what the Spirit is never ever going to allow a true Christian to do is to be damned by a lifestyle of obedience to the flesh. The Spirit simply won't do it. Why? Because He's the Spirit of holiness, and He indwells every true believer! So be encouraged. If you're truly in Christ, He's not going to let you be damned because you walk according to the flesh. He will discipline you to bring you back onto the path of righteousness; or if necessary, to take your life, but He will not allow you to be lost.

Now the outcome of living in obedience to the flesh is eternal death; but back in Romans 8:13, the outcome of living in obedience to the Spirit is eternal life. Notice what he says, "but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Just as he was talking about eternal death before, now he's talking about eternal life. Live in that sense. Now, don't misunderstand Paul again. Paul is not arguing that we earn eternal life by our works. He's not saying, "Yah! If you work hard at sanctification, then you're going to earn eternal life." That is contrary to everything he's said so far in this letter. And I could take you to a lot of verses. Let me just give you one, 6:23, "the ... gift of God is eternal life." Okay? So, he's not talking about earning eternal life here.

What is he saying? Paul is saying that if you are living according to the Spirit, in other words, if, as a pattern of life, you are obeying the Spirit, how? By obeying His Word! That proves you have been changed by the Spirit. It proves the Spirit dwells within you, and it means you have eternal life. "If by the Spirit you're putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." You can be assured of eternal life because only the Spirit's work does that. So, we are obligated to the Spirit unto obedience.

But that's not all. Paul goes on to explain, and really the main focus of the second half of verse 13 is this, we are empowered by the Spirit for obedience. Specifically, we are empowered by the

Spirit to live according to the Spirit; in other words, to pursue holiness, to pursue sanctification. If you're a true Christian, the Spirit is within you, and He is the Spirit of holiness, and He empowers you to grow in holiness, to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. But notice how Paul puts it here in verse 13, "but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Here is what it means to live according to the Spirit.

Let's take this apart. First of all, notice Paul points out the duty; the duty here in the second half of verse 13. The duty is this, "if ... you are putting to death the deeds of the body." Now, notice he says, "if you," that's the plural pronoun, and it means all true believers, "if you," Christian, "are putting to death." In other words, in sanctification, there's something you and I must do. You must put the sins of the body to death. You know, in salvation we contribute nothing; God does everything in salvation. You say, "Well what about repenting and believing?" Well guess what, God gives you repentance and faith as a gift, so you contribute nothing to your salvation.

But it's not true with sanctification. Paul says you must be "putting to death the deeds of the body." We have a responsibility. Notice how he puts it though, he puts it in a present tense form; the verb is in the present tense, "if ... you are putting." That points out that this is not a one-time effort; this is an ongoing, constant daily battle, "If ... you are putting to death."

You see, Paul didn't teach perfectionism. He didn't teach that in this life we could arrive at complete sanctification. But also, the fact that this is in the present tense makes it contrary to what is often taught in Wesleyan circles. Some of you grew up in a Wesleyan setting, Methodist or other Wesleyan setting, and you were told that sanctification comes by some sort of a crisis experience. In a moment, you're catapulted to some new and high level of sanctification, whether it's surrender, or whatever it is. In Baptist circles that's what it was. You know, you're a Christian, now you need to surrender your life as if that's going to somehow change radically your level of sanctification. That's not what's being taught here. "If ... you are putting," if you are daily, constantly battling and fighting the sin in your life.

Now, specifically notice our duty is put this way, "putting to death the deeds of the body." That's violent language. It means to kill. This idea of killing our sin occurs in only two places in the New Testament. It occurs here, and then flip over with me to Colossians 3; Colossians 3, notice verse 5, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead." Now let me just say, I love the *New American Standard* translation, but that's a bad translation. If you doubt me, look at the marginal note in your *New American Standard Bible*. You'll notice there's a marginal note, a number, and it says, literally, in other words here's what the Greek text actually

says, “put to death the members which are upon the earth.” It’s the same thing as we see in Romans 8, be “putting sin to death.” And he goes on to describe specifically here in verse 5 what he means: sexual sin of all kinds, “immorality,” that’s every forbidden sexual act.

And then he talks about a variety of words here that have to do with what goes on in the heart related to sexual sin: “impurity, passion, evil desire,” even that word “greed;” it’s not talking about lusting after stuff; the word covetousness is used of sexual lust and here in the context, that’s what he is talking about, which amounts to idolatry. He says, listen, kill the sexual sin in your life whether it’s sin of the mind or whether it’s sin of the body; kill it; put it to death.” And he says this is serious, verse 6, “For it is because of these things [these sexual sins both internally and acted out] that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.” Listen, God doesn’t take sexual sin lightly. Our culture is immersed in it, but Paul says, “God’s wrath is coming because of sexual sin, internal and acted out.”

But that’s not all. He says, verse 8, there are other sins you need to put to death; you need to kill, “anger”, that Greek word for “anger” is the kind of anger that internalizes; it’s bitterness; it’s the boiling of the heart; it’s clamming up in anger. And then the word “wrath”. That’s a different Greek word; it’s the idea of blowing up; it’s outbursts of anger, blowing up all over the people around you. “Malice,” this is what you do when you’re angry. It has the idea of doing hateful things to get at people, to hurt them. That’s malice. “Slander,” the actual Greek word is “blasphemy”, but it’s not here blasphemy against God; it’s blaspheming other people; this is name-calling. This is when you start breaking out all that foul language to call somebody something because you want to hurt them. And anger “*and* abusive speech from your mouth.” He says, you have got to kill all that stuff. If you’re a Christian, it’s not okay.

And then he says, lying too, dishonesty, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed [according] to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” You got to kill these things.

Now, go back to chapter 8 of Romans. That’s what Paul means when he says we are to kill the deeds of the body; he’s talking about every use of our body and brain that serves our fallenness rather than our souls, our new person in Christ; every use of our body and brain that includes sinful habits of thinking, of speaking and acting. It’s those things we just saw, those things in Colossians 3 are representative, they’re not exhaustive; everything in our thinking, in our attitudes, in our speech and in our actions that are contrary to what the Spirit wants as revealed in

the Word of God. Paul says you and I are to kill these things, to cause the total cessation of them in our lives. Now this isn't a new idea. Paul told us this back in Romans 6. Go back there to verse 11; 6:11,

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, [Don't obey it; you don't owe the flesh anything; don't obey its lusts;] and ... [don't] ... go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you...."

That's not a command; that's a statement of fact. If you're a Christian, sin is no longer your master, and it's not going to dominate you the way it once did; kill it.

You know, Lloyd-Jones says we have to take the sin in our lives, we have to pull it out, we have to look at it, we have to understand it, we have to denounce it, we have to hate it for what it is; and in the end, we have to kill it. John Owen, in his book that I mentioned earlier, said, "Be killing sin, or it will be killing you." Those are the only two alternatives. You be killing your sin, or it will be killing you.

You say, "How in the world can we do this?" That's the duty, well notice verse 13 and the power, the power that's available to us. He says, "You," verse 13, you "by the Spirit ... are putting to death the deeds of the body." By the Spirit; although God assigns us the responsibility for putting our sins to death, we can only accomplish this through His Spirit. Now, this is a really important point; holiness, your holiness is not solely the work of the Spirit apart from your participation; that's what Keswick theology teaches. Keswick theology says, "Stop trying; just let go and let God do this." That's not what Paul is teaching here. But holiness is also not solely our work either; holiness doesn't happen because of our hard work; that's what moralism and legalism teach. Instead, it has to happen by the Spirit.

Listen, if you think you can change yourself, if you think you can undo the sin in your life and change yourself at a basic level, you need to understand that's like false religion. In fact, John Owen puts it this way, he says, "Mortification [That is putting to death sin in our lives.] from self-strength carried on by ways of self-invention [You come up with the ways to do it.] unto the

end of a self-righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.” That’s not what Paul is talking about. He says, although we are responsible to pursue sanctification, we don’t have the power to change ourselves; only the Spirit can change us. And in order for that to happen, we have to work hard at obeying the Spirit, but we have to depend on the Spirit to do what we could never do, and that is change ourselves at the most foundational and basic level.

Paul finishes with the promise, look at the end of verse 13, “you will live.” Genuinely pursuing sanctification breeds and increases our assurance that we are truly Christians. You see, if you are not living in obedience to your flesh, if you’re not obeying your sinfulness and your fallenness, but you are trying, through obedience to the Spirit in His Word, to kill the sins in your life, then be encouraged; you will live. That proves the very effort that you’re extending, the very pattern that is in your life, shows that the Spirit is in your life and that you will in fact enjoy eternal life.

In fact, look at verse 14. Notice the connector word “For [because] all who are being led by the Spirit of God,” that’s not talking about some mystical guidance into what house to buy or what job to take, no, in context he’s talking about being led by the Spirit to put to death the sins in your life, being led by the Spirit to deal with your sin and to pursue holiness. When that happens, he says, “These are the sons of God.” So, we must put sin to death.

But what does that really mean, and practically how does that happen day to day? How do we deal with the sins in our lives? Well, the second half of verse 13 answers those questions of what does it mean and how do we do it? In fact, condensed into just these few words, we discover several incredibly helpful and profound insights into what it means and how to do it. And Lord willing, we will look at them together next week.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for the practical nature of Your Word to us. Thank you for the confidence and assurance that it gives us who are in Christ. Lord, I pray for every person here this morning who claims to know Jesus Christ and who seeks not to obey the flesh, but to obey the Spirit in the Word, and is seeking to kill the sins in his or her life that dishonor Christ, and wants desperately to be more like Jesus Christ. Lord, encourage that person. Give them a greater sense of their security and assurance that they are truly in the Spirit because only the Spirit creates that desire. Only He empowers such change. Lord, thank you for that assurance.

But I pray for the others who are here this morning, who perhaps claim to know Christ, made some childhood profession, still make some profession, but they're living like unbelievers, obeying their fallenness day in and day out as a pattern. Father, remove the blinders from their eyes. Help them to see that they are absolutely lost, without Christ, and that they are about to die eternally. And, Father, may this be the day when they cry out truly to Jesus Christ as their only hope, repent of their sins, and put their faith in Him and are radically changed by the Holy Spirit. Lord, may this be the day, the salvation of many.

We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.