

Romans, chapter eight. We're looking at verses 12 through 17 this morning.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it is not an obligation to the flesh to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if the Spirit you put. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, abba. Father, the Spirit himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory.

Let's pray. God, thank you for your word, for the power of it, for the truth that it speaks. And, Lord, thank you for your servant Beth, who has spent hours studying this text, wrestling with it, finding the joy and the beauty in it, and submitting and surrendering to your Holy Spirit to say, how do you want me to teach this to your people and God? I believe that you have given her words. You have definitely anointed her and given her the gift of teaching and preaching.

Lord, it is evident. And so, God, I pray that in this moment she will just surrender to you and allow you to use her to speak the words you have given her to us. And may our hearts be open to it. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you. Go get it, Beth. All right, let's go.

Okay, before we zoom in on these verses today, I would love to, if you would allow me to zoom out just a little bit. So Paul wrote this book we know as Romans. It's a letter to the Christians in. Come on, Rome. Thank you.

Let's go. Rome was the power center of the known world at the time, the most influential city. And Paul had not yet been to Rome, but he was planning a visit there. And so, in anticipation of his visit, he wrote this letter, and he sent it ahead of himself. Now, he would have sent it with a letter carrier.

His. And a letter carrier would have been more than just a mailman who put it in the mailbox. It would have been someone who was very familiar with Paul and intimate with the contents of this letter, because this person was gonna read the letter to small gathered groups of people and then explain the letter and answer any questions that they may have. Now, if you're the kind of person who flips to the end

of a book to see how it ends in Romans, that may have served you well. Because in 16, the final chapter, Paul begins his, like, final greetings and shout outs.

And he starts in verse one by saying, I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Centria. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. Based. Excuse me. Based on this verse, most people believe that Phoebe was the letter carrier of Romans.

She personally hand delivered this letter we know as Romans to the believers in Rome. And they received this letter not in a large congregational setting like this, but in small gathered groups, house churches dotted across the city. And so it is very likely that Phoebe was the very first person to communicate and explain Paul's longest and richest letter. And it is my honor today to be your letter carrier and get to read and explain God's word to you. Thank you.

All right, before we dive in, I just want to say that the book of Romans is overwhelming, right? I mean, it's just like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Like, all these truths, and then. And then we're focusing in on eight, which is like powerbomb, Powerbomb, Powerbomb. I mean, it's one hit after another.

So many things to understand and explain, right? And it reminds me. It's just overwhelming. It reminds me of when Andy and I, we were engaged and we got registered. We were gonna register for all of our gifts, and we went to Bed, Bath and Beyond RIP and we.

We were. The sales consultant was taking us on a tour of the store past the shower curtains and the trash cans and the mixers. And I could just see Andy's eyes getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and he's just overwhelmed, right? I said, you know what, babe? Like, we don't have to do everything all at once.

We can just take it little bit by little bit. Why don't we just start with one room today? And he was like, okay, yeah, yeah, we could do that. How about the kitchen? And I was like, probably not the kitchen.

Like, if we're starting small, let's start small. So we did a bathroom. And, like, 2007, Andy and Beth, we're going to take that same approach today, and we're just going to do a little bit by a little bit. Let's get started. Verses 12 and 13.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit, you put to death the misdeeds of your body, you will live. At the beginning of the series, Sean reminded us that in biblical study, we always need to ask, what's

the therefore, Therefore? So let me just do a quick summation of this long and deep book.

Thus far, Paul has been giving his richest explanation of the Gospel. The highlight reel is often called the romans Road. In 3:23, we learn that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that high standard of God. In 6:23, we learn the wages of sin. The consequences of our sin is death.

And then in 5, 8, we hear that God showed his own love for us in this, while we are still sinners. Christ died for us. Then in Romans 8, Paul focuses his attention on the Holy Spirit. The last few weeks in Sean's sermon, we heard how through Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from condemnation. And then last week, Matt talked with us about how we are no longer slaves to sin by the power of the Spirit in us.

And so today, we're continuing with that thought, this declaration. We are not obligated to live in our old ways. And with the Holy Spirit in us, we can put to death the misdeeds of the body and live. Now, I think we can all agree that we never use the phrase misdeeds of the body in our everyday life. We don't hear living by the flesh every day.

You never say, like, ooh, I would not watch that movie. It's got a lot of misty of the body in it. Okay, we're not like, bye, kids, have a great day at school. Hey, be careful of living by the flesh. We just don't use these words in our everyday life.

And as I prepared for this sermon, I was really struck by how often Romans uses these phrases that we only hear in church. And it makes sense, right? This is God's holy word. It's set apart. And as the kids would say, it's built different.

Okay, It's. It's gonna be different. But it also means that when we hear these phrases. Phrases, we can start to kind of tune them out or just assume they maybe don't apply to us today because they're using words we know, but we don't really understand them in that context. Like, we know the word deeds, we know the word flesh, but we don't know them like that.

So at first reading, it can kind of feel like listening to teenagers talk. Today we have two teenagers in our house and the crazy, they just. Their lingo is constantly changing. We cannot keep up. The hardest part is that they are using words we know, but like, entirely differently.

Yeah, I see the parents being like, oh, my word. Yes. Okay. So they'll say, hey, mom, don't post that picture. I look chopped.

And it has nothing to do with being cut in half. Right. And they'll say, hey, oh, she was glazing him. And it has nothing to do with the sweet exterior of a honey baked ham. Okay, we know the words, but we don't understand the meaning.

So if you're feeling a little lost in the text today, here's a reminder. Living by the flesh means living to satisfy our own desires or your base instincts. What we call our human nature, corrupted by sin, misdeeds of the body, then, are those thoughts and behaviors that come from living by our human nature. Paul is always reminding us that living by the flesh leads to death. And we need this reminder over and over again because we are constantly deceived, led to thinking that the way I want to live is going to bring about my best life.

We choose to live by our human nature, and we call it being true to ourselves. We explain away that harsh comment by saying, oh, that's just my personality. I'm the kind of person who really tells it like it is. We choose the easy way out, preferring comfort and happiness over all else. And we often choose the easy way instead of telling the complete truth.

The message of the world is that you come first and you need to do what feels right, and you should live your truth. But God's truth tells us in Galatians 6, 8, whoever sows to please their flesh, that's their human nature. From the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life. And in Colossians 3, Paul tells us to put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

That human nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil, desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying. And I'm sorry to tell you, I don't believe that is an exhaustive list. When we say that we are no longer condemned and we have the Holy Spirit living in us, it doesn't free us from the work of putting to death sin. It makes it possible for us to do so. It's important to pay attention to both aspects of this verse, our part and Holy Spirit's part.

If you live by The Spirit, you will put to death the misdeeds of your body, and you will live. In Galatians 3, 3 we read, are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? We know that we can only be saved through Christ alone. But a lot of times we kind of feel like, all right, that was God's part, and now here I go.

This is my part. The rest is up to me. Right? But as the message reminds us, if you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? We must be active in putting to death the misdeeds of our body.

But that activity is never apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit. All right, verse 14.

Will you guys read this? Because I'm going to take a drink of water. All right, ready, Andy? Really loud. I need you to read this so everybody can follow you.

Okay? Ready? God.

Oh, that was good. Thank you. All right. In this verse, Paul is continuing to build his case that salvation is for everyone. In the beginning of this letter, he said, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Paul is constantly defining to the Romans who is a child of God. It is anyone who is led by the Spirit of God. His salvation and his Spirit are for everyone. Okay, so let's think back to Phoebe reading this letter to her house churches, and let's think about how they would have heard this verse. So the earliest house churches would have been primarily made up of Jewish people, Jewish leadership, for sure.

They would have had Jewish customs and they would have followed the Jewish ways. Okay, but around AD 49, the Roman Emperor Claudius kicked all of the Jews out of Rome for five years. They had a five year exile. And in their absence, the Gentile Christians would have taken up that mantle of leadership in those house churches. Right?

They would have stepped up and they would become the new leaders, making decisions and guiding their flock. All the people who would have joined the church during this time would have also been Gentile Christians. And so this letter was likely written around A.D. 57. That's eight years later. So the exile ended, and then there were three years of the Jewish Christians kind of moving back into Rome and back into those house churches they once occupied.

So imagine with me the recipients of this letter and how they might be feeling. Jewish Christians were used to being in charge, but then were forced to leave for five years. And in their absence, these gentile Christians would have learned to survive without their Jewish leaders, right? They would have naturally led differently. But then these Jewish Christians come home to this very different looking church.

Can you feel some of that tension there? Paul is reminding them that they're led by the Spirit. They are all children of God, Jews and Gentiles alike. Everyone belongs to verse 15. The spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again.

Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, abba Father. Now I perked up when I saw

the word adoption because I have always loved that picture of all of us being adopted into God's family. And I immediately started thinking about what it means to become a part of a family via adoption. If you know our family, our son Drew was adopted.

And so we are very familiar with that process. And first there are the legal steps in adoption. I have stacks and stacks of paperwork filed away at our house for that legal process of making Drew a long. But then there's that second part of becoming part of a family, just being woven into the fabric of a family. And it's been so fun to see over the years how Drew has fully embraced being along.

He and his dad have a proclivity for sports stats that you would not believe. They're the only ones who know exactly what's happening in the NAIA at all times, right? He wears his sister hand me down Jackson Creek sweatshirt so often you would think that he was actually a student there. And as for my boys, if you saw them play football together in our backyard, you would have no question that they are brothers. Becoming a part of family is a process, right?

But you get to the point where, like I heard my Grandma Johnson say one time, pointing to her children and their spouses, these are my kids. I gave birth to some of them, but I can't remember which ones. But this isn't quite what Paul had in mind when he talked about adoption. Tim Thompson is the pastor of our Bedford location and he, he kind of nerded out on Roman adoption. He wanted to know more about that.

He did a bunch of research this week and I think you guys are going to be blessed by what he found out. Adoption in Rome at this time was less about providing a child with a family like relationally and emotionally. And it was more about someone finding someone to give their inheritance to and continue their family line. So a wealthy, high ranking man with no children would look among his friends and associates and he would find a young man and adopt him. So be A man, not a child.

And when this man was adopted, his life and his standing changed completely. He lost all rights in his old family, and he gained all the rights of his new family. His old life was completely wiped out, including any debts he had. And he would be in line for the inheritance of his new family, and he would continue their family line. So peek again in on our Roman audience hearing Phoebe read this verse.

The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. That would give them a beautiful picture of salvation and redemption. They would know God chose you. He paid your outstanding debts with nothing from your past counting against you. They would know he changes your name and the trajectory of your life.

And now you are appointed heir of a great inheritance. What a picture. Very cool.

Leads us right into 16. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now here's where I think Paul does kind of get a little bit into the warm and fuzzy side of adoption, because he's reminding us that the Holy Spirit confirms our place in God's family. One of my favorite ways to study the Bible is to take a passage and just read it in a bunch of different versions. Gives me a different idea of how the original text was translated.

And so I just. I need you to hear how this was translated. In these two different versions. The message says, God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are, father and children.

And this is how the Passion says it. For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, you are God's beloved child.

That's good. All right, 17. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs. Heirs of God and co heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Because he has adopted us into his family, we are now qualified to share in his inheritance.

Paul calls us co heirs with Christ, like co heirs with Jesus Christ. Are you seeing that? Yes. Thank you. Right.

What belonged to Jesus by right because he was God's son. We get to God graciously shares it with us by adoption. So growing up, my grandma Noelle had this funny habit of divvying up her possessions in front of us. Like, if she caught me looking at this piece of decor, she would grab it and get the Sharpie out and write my name on the bottom of it so that everybody knew that when she died it was going to be and it wasn't. She wanted Everybody to know that gold tree.

It was this gold tree. I still have it in my house in the basement, if you'd like to see it. I kept it because, of course, she wanted everybody to know that gold tree was mine. Not now, but when she passed away, it would be my inheritance. And that's how heaven is for us.

It's that inheritance of heaven. We don't have it yet, but we know about it. We will have it. But God's inheritance is better than that. It is too far, because we will have heaven later.

But we have the Holy Spirit now. We get the Holy spirit now. Ephesians 1, 13, 14 says, you were also included in Christ when you heard the

message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession. To the praise of his glory, the Holy Spirit is given to us like a down payment as the first installment for what is coming. If we share in his sufferings, we may share in his glory.

Being part of a family means being part of all of the highs and the lows. We're going to talk more about that. The verses after this cover that idea of suffering, and we'll be talking more about that as we go through this passage. But I'm thinking again to our Roman House church audience. Okay, if Phoebe took a pause right here, and I don't know how she did it, like, did she get up and just read the whole thing?

Did she take some pauses? I kind of think she took some pauses and did a little crowd interaction. What questions would the Roman audience have had? What questions do I have? At this point in the text, I think my biggest questions would be, so what does all of this mean?

And what does it mean to live by the spirit? Here at Sherwood Oaks, I get to run our moms group that meets here at Friday mornings. It's called mom to Mom. And each week we take a different topic. And it's important to us to have some key takeaways for the moms, you know, some simple steps, some things they can do to improve their mental health or their grocery budget or to find friends.

That's really important, and that's kind of my temptation today. I just want to leave you all with eight simple steps for following the Spirit, having a spirit led life. And if I made that list, you would not be surprised by what was on it, right? I would say, hey, you need to read God's word. You have got to pray.

You should live in community. You need to tithe, you've got to fast, you should really be practicing Sabbath, you need to serve and you should be sharing your faith. And these are all good and beautiful things that I hope you are investing in. But the problem with our desire for eight easy steps is that we reduce our Christian life to a checklist of items rather than a spirit led life, a relationship with God. And we start to believe that those eight steps are what save us, that our relationship with God is contingent on doing those things.

If we do them, we're good with God and if we don't, he's mad at us, right? But what if we looked at each of these things, these eight easy steps, and we kind of flipped it and we viewed them as an invitation, an invitation to a spirit led life. What if we approach the Bible with curiosity and a desire to engage with God's story? What if praying without ceasing, as the Bible tells us, became a lifeline of Holy Spirit guidance and led us on adventures that we would have never had on our own? What if we experienced the joy of living in encouragement and accountability with fellow believers?



What if we got a little giddy about partnering with God through our money to bring his kingdom here on earth? What if through fasting, as John Mark Comer says, you practice suffering and through it you increased your capacity for joy in all circumstances? What if observing a Sabbath rest allowed us to feel God's presence and hear him more deeply? What if in serving others we found that we were the ones who were changed?

What if we were open to sharing how God is moving in our lives and because of that we got to see another life changed. Are you catching the exciting adventure that comes from a spirit led life? Listen, sometimes I feel like in the church we do not give enough hype to the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit every day with us. If you are a believer, you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit.

Growing up I heard 1st Corinthians 6:19. Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit? And I, I don't know, maybe every time, but I feel like every time then the next part was like, so don't get a tattoo right? Or so you should really like clean up your eating a little bit and exercise because your body's a temple of the Holy Spirit. But when I heard that, I missed the whole point.

And that is that our bodies are a sacred dwelling place for God's presence, presence, the Holy Spirit. And if you read God's word. God. We see all the ways that the Holy Spirit leads us. Okay.

The Holy Spirit leads us to truth. The Holy Spirit leads us to repentance. The Holy Spirit leads us to remember what we've learned. The Holy Spirit leads us to sanctification. That's that process of becoming more and more like him.

The Holy Spirit leads us with power to bear witness to what he's done, to tell other people about what he's done. In your. The Holy Spirit leads us to walk away from the desires of the flesh. How do we leave those misdeeds of the body behind? Through the Holy Spirit in you.

The Holy Spirit leads us to abound in hope. That's a word we need today. Abound in hope. The Holy Spirit leads us to wisdom. And the Holy Spirit leads us to become more like him.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. I loved the way Matt said it last week. This is not a to do list. It is a promise. This is what happens when you have a spirit led life.

You become the kind of person who has love. You become the kind of person who is joyful. The kind of person who is peaceful and has patience. Patience. The kind of person who is kind and good and faithful and gentle.

You become the kind of person who has self control. The fruit of the spirit isn't the goal. We like to print this out and put it on our wall and be like, this is what I'm trying to do. That's not it. That's not the goal.

The goal is a spirit led life. This is the result of the spirit led life right here.

Not only that, when we don't know what to say and all we can do is sit in silence or cry out, Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

That's Romans 8:26. Spoiler alert. That's coming up later in the series. But isn't that cool? Just a couple weeks ago, my 9 year old son, during the prayer time at the end of the service, he came up to me and, and he said, mom, sometimes I just don't know what to pray.

And I was like, oh, bud, me too. I have times I just don't know what to say. And I told him two things, Bud. One, God knows your heart. He knows the desires of your heart.

So when you don't have the right words, that's okay. But secondly, Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He prays for us with groans that words cannot express. What a comfort to know we serve a God like that. I truly believe that we can practice the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We can learn to follow where he is leading, and we can learn to recognize his voice and his promptings in our life. My dad said, he told me once the Holy Spirit would regularly tell him, shut up, Jeff. And people would say, well, God doesn't talk to me like that. And he said, well, no, because God knows me and he knows that. That I need to hear.

Shut up, Jeff. Right. And the apple may not fall too far from the tree because not too long ago, I was in my car by myself and I was in the middle of a frustrating situation and I was just rehearsing an argument I was not intending to actually have. Now, I am guessing that you are all more spiritually mature than I am and you never do this, but I was just getting these points in there and I had some counterpoints and some really good comebacks and I was just really doing this and I just felt the Holy Spirit tap me on the shoulder and say, what are you doing? Why are you rehearsing a conversation you don't even want to have when you could be having an actual conversation with me right now?

Holy Spirit leads us to repentance. Okay? The Holy Spirit will be at work in your life as you invite him. This isn't about forcing ourselves to just be better through sheer determination every day. It's about the Holy Spirit's leadership in our lives.

This is a muscle. It's a skill that we can learn. We can learn by removing the noise. This is a noisy world. And listen, I am preaching to the choir here because I really love audiobooks.

And if you have seen me at Target, I probably have my headphones in in the middle of a really good audiobook, okay? And I don't think there's anything wrong with that, but lately I have been feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit because he's saying to me, hey, if you've always got noise coming in, how can you hear me?

That's a good question. When you see that we can also learn to build up this muscle of hearing the Holy Spirit by when you hear. When you. Sorry. When you see the work of the Holy Spirit in you, in your friend, in your co worker and your kids, your spouse, call it out.

Acknowledge where you see Holy Spirit at work, in their life. Hey, man, I saw your response to him. Holy Spirit gave you so much self control in that situation. Wow, that is awesome, man. Hey, I was just thinking about this friend and then I ran into them at the coffee shop.

Like man, God made that appointment happen. Holy Spirit made that appointment happen. The more we look for it, the more we see it. And then this muscle can be built just by inviting his leadership in our day to day life. Before you go have that conversation, Holy Spirit, what do you want me to say to this friend?

Maybe throughout your day, tomorrow you ask, throughout the day, over and over again, Holy Spirit, who can I share your joy with today?

And then when you hear, when you feel that inclination, respond to that. Because that spe part of the muscle building, right? You ask, you listen, you respond, you act on it. That is how we build that muscle. Practice the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Listen, this letter was written 2000 years ago and it still applies to us today. The Holy Spirit wants to lead you to life. Will you follow? Let's pray.

God, not only have you given us salvation, but you have given us the Holy Spirit so that we can live in your truth. Every day, God, I pray, as we leave from this place and we move about our days, would we acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit with us? Would we listen to him more and more and follow him more and more? What a gift to serve a God who chooses to be with us every day. God, we're so grateful for that.

And I pray that you give us the strength and encouragement to follow you more and more. Amen.