

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 8:1-17 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1 to 5 Paul explained *the state of justification* and made it clear that the law cannot secure justification.

In Romans 6 and 7 he explained *the state of holiness* and the process of sanctification and made it clear that the law can also not produce sanctification.

In Romans 8 Paul explains *the everlasting assurance of salvation and security of Christians*. Believers in Jesus Christ will never be doomed to perish. The salvation that was purposed by God the Father, merited by God the Son, proclaimed in the gospel (1:16) and applied by God the Holy Spirit is absolutely sure (certain)!

The salvation of Christians has from all eternity been purposed (planned, decided) by God the Father. Salvation is on the basis of God's eternal purpose in election, that is, on the ground of his unmerited and unchanging love that chooses people. God loved believers first¹, when they were still sinners, godless and enemies, that is, completely lost (5:6,8,10).

The salvation of Christians has been merited and consequently been made possible by Christ's sacrifice of atonement.

The salvation of Christians is being realised by Christ's sovereign lordship (kingship) and ceaseless High Priestly ministry through his Spirit (the Holy Spirit).

OUTLINE

Theme. Living in dependence of the Holy Spirit and in security of salvation.

Believers in Jesus Christ may have absolute assurance that they are saved and may live in absolute security of salvation.

The truths in Romans 8 are so interwoven with each other that the division in seven parts are intended only for clarity. The first three parts are found in Romans 8:1-17 and the final four parts in Romans 8:18-39.

- (I) 8:1-4. The salvation of Christians is secure, because they have been delivered from the dominating and controlling power of their sinful nature (the law of sin and death)
- a. The Christian has been delivered from the doom of sin (8:1).
 - b. The Holy Spirit delivered the Christian from his sinful nature (8:2).
 - c. Jesus Christ doomed sin in the sinful nature of man (8:3).
 - d. Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law (8:4).
- (II) 8:5-13. The salvation of Christians is secure, because their salvation has actually begun in the regeneration and sanctification of their hearts and lives by the Holy Spirit
- a. By his transformed mind the regenerated man does and can live the new life (8:5-6).
 - b. By his free will the natural man does not and cannot live the new life (8:7-8).
 - c. The Holy Spirit gives new life (8:9-11).
 - d. The Christian is responsible to destroy the practices of the sinful nature (8:12-13).
- (III) 8:14-17. The salvation of Christians is secure, because they are God's adopted sons (children) and heirs of the future glory
- a. The Christian assurance of being a child of God (8:14-16).
 - b. The Christian assurance of being an heir of God (8:17).

EXPLANATION

(I) 8:1-4. The salvation of Christians is secure, because they have been delivered from the dominating and controlling power of their sinful nature (the law of sin and death)

a. The Christian has been delivered from the doom of sin (8:1).

8:1. So therefore, (there is) now no doom² (the punishment that follows sentencing, the execution of judgement, the consignment to eternal destruction) for those (who are) in Christ Jesus.

The context of Romans 8:1-4. The first word 'therefore' refers to the previous context. But which previous context?

Some Christians believe it refers to the whole of Romans 3:21 to 7:25 and in particular Romans 3:21 to 5:21, and that Paul is thinking only of the deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the condemnation which guilt brings. This context deals with *justification* only.

The best interpretation, however, is that it refers to the immediate context, Romans 6:1 to 7:25 and particularly to Romans 7:14-25. Paul is thinking of the deliverance from the enslaving *power of sin* on the one hand and *the guilt of sin*

¹ 1 John 4:19

² G: katakrima

on the other hand. This context deals particularly with *sanctification* and also with the more remote context that deals with *justification*. Paul concludes that *justification and sanctification* cannot be separated!

Doom means the execution of the sentence that has been pronounced (8:1). Doom means “consigning the power of sin to misfortune, ruin and destruction”. The sin in the sinful nature has been doomed (consigned to destruction). In other places in the Bible the same term has the sense of doom or punishment of the sinful world and the ungodly³. This doom has already been pronounced and its execution has already begun! The execution of the destruction of the sinful world and the ungodly people will be finally completed at the second coming of Christ. This renders the ultimate victory of the Christian over the sinful world and the ungodly people certain!

Christ’s death once-for-all dealt with *the absolute power of this evil world and of Satan!* His once-for-all death is *the judgement* of the evil world and its evil prince⁴!

- The first consequence is that the evil world has been crucified at Christ’s first coming. The perfect tense stresses the fact that the evil world remains crucified to the Christian and the Christian remains crucified to the evil world⁵.
- The second consequence is that the present heaven and earth together with its ungodly people are continually reserved for destruction (present tense) at Christ’s second coming⁶.
- And the third consequence is that throughout the period between the first and second coming of Christ Satan and his powers of darkness are being driven out of their position of absolute power over non-Christians in the whole world and that many non-Christians in the world will certainly be drawn to Christ (future tense expressing certainty)⁷.

Christ’s death once-for-all dealt with *the absolute power of the sinful nature (indwelling sin) in the believer!* His once-for-all death is *the doom* of the sinful nature in the believer. The word ‘doom’ does not mean *condemnation in the sense of pronouncing judgement* on the guilt of sin, but rather *executing judgement* on the power of sin by overthrowing the power of sin! The believer in Christ is not doomed - he will not be consigned to eternal destruction! However, the power of his sinful or depraved nature has once for all been doomed – its destruction *has already begun!* The execution of destruction will be finally completed at the second coming of Christ, when also his physical body will be resurrected. This renders the Christian’s present state of holiness (his devotion and ability to live the new and holy life) certain! The genuine Christian wants to live the new life, can live the new life and shall live the new life!

Conclusion. Thus, the Christian may enjoy a life free from doom. The Christian is sure and secure in his salvation because he will never be doomed. While John 5:24 promises that the Christian will not be *condemned* in the final judgement day, Romans 8:1 promises that the Christian will not be *doomed* (punished with eternal destruction)⁸! This is because God has already *doomed* the sinful nature of the Christian together with its overwhelming guilt and its dominating power in Christ’s body.

b. The Holy Spirit delivered the Christian from his sinful nature (8:2).

8:2. for in (through) Christ Jesus the law (in the sense of the dominating principle) of the Spirit of life has *once for all* set me free (via) from the law (in the sense of the dominating principle) of sin and death (the powerful sinful nature).

The law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death do not refer to the gospel versus the law. Some Christians believe that on the basis of 2 Corinthians 3:7-9, these two terms refer to *the gospel* and *the law*. However, 2 Corinthians 3:7-9 compares *the New Testament ministry of the gospel* with *the Old Testament ministry of the law* and does not speak of *the deliverance* (setting free) from this law.

Moreover, these Christians confuse the law as God’s *absolute requirement or condition for salvation* (to which the Christian died and from which he has been released) (7:4,6) with the law as God’s *moral commandments for living* as a Christian (from which the Christian has not been released) (7:7-16,22,25)! And finally, the setting free refers to being set free from the absolute dominating power of (indwelling) sin (8:2) and refers thus to *the state of holiness* (a once-for-all accomplished act as in Romans 6:2,6-7) and not to *the process of sanctification* (an ongoing activity as in Romans 6:13,19).

The law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death refer to the Holy Spirit versus the sinful nature. On the basis of Romans 7:21,23,25, the best interpretation is that the word ‘law’ means *the absolute governing principle or dominating power*.

The sinful nature of the non-Christian. In the non-Christian there is only one absolute governing principle: one dominating and controlling force, namely his own sinful nature (the flesh). His sinful nature produces every kind of fruit for death⁹. The non-Christian cannot but obey its demands. He is a slave of sin (6:16)¹⁰.

³ Romans 5:18, 1 Corinthians 11:32, 2 Peter 2:6

⁴ John 12:31

⁵ Galatians 6:14

⁶ 2 Peter 3:7

⁷ John 12:31

⁸ Matthew 25:46; John 11:25-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:9

⁹ Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁰ John 8:34

The sinful nature in the Christian. In the Christian there are two opposing forces: the law of sin and death (his sinful nature) and the law of the Spirit of life (the Holy Spirit who is active in the regenerated nature of the Christian). Both laws operate in the Christian's body.

The sinful nature of the Christian is still a powerful principle or force in the old nature of the Christian. The sinful nature is called *the law of sin and death*, because it refers to the dominating force behind every kind of sin in the sinful nature derived from Adam and Eve (7:21,23,25) and to the reason for everything that leads to death in the fullest sense of the word (spiritual, physical and eternal)(6:22-23). The sinful nature of the Christian is still *a ravaging power* (7:14-25) and *a terrible opposing power* (Galatians 5:17). But in principle his sinful nature is already *a defeated power* and *a temporary power*, which will plague the Christian only until his physical death¹¹.

Thus the sinful nature of the Christian functions as a law, that is, as a compelling and controlling power in the Christian's life. It challenges (defies) again and again the believer's will and changes his good intentions into evil. It can bring havoc in his body. Paul does not say that the Christian is always doing sin, but that the sin dwelling in the human nature of the Christian is such a strong power that he cannot deliver himself from it! The sinful nature of the Christian will continue to work in his body until he is finally set free from his body of sin and death (6:6; 7:24)¹²!

The regenerated nature of the Christian. The Holy Spirit is *now the absolute governing (dominating and controlling) principle or force* in the Christian. He is called *the law of the Spirit of life*, because he has liberated the Christian from the absolute dominating and controlling power of his sinful nature (his indwelling depravity)(cf. 7:21,23ac,26b) and is the Author, Sustainer and Director of the Christian's new and regenerated life. He functions as the Life-giving and Controlling Power in all aspects of the Christian's life¹³.

c. **Jesus Christ doomed sin in the sinful nature of man (8:3).**

8:3. For what the law could not do (literally: the inability of the law)(in the sense of God's absolute requirement for justification and sanctification expressed in the moral law), in which (i.e. because) it was weak (viaa) by the (human) flesh (i.e. the human sinful nature), God, by once for all sending (vpaa) his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the purpose of (taking away or atoning) sin¹⁴, once for all doomed¹⁵ (viaa) sin in the flesh (i.e. in the body of Christ).

What was impossible for this law to do (namely, to justify or save man), because it was weakened by the sinful nature in man, God did in Jesus Christ! God once for all doomed (consigned to destruction) sin and its dominating power in the human body, not in the body of the Christian, but in the body of Jesus Christ on the cross¹⁶. Between his birth and his death, Jesus Christ had the same kind of body people have, except for sin¹⁷. God doomed sin (residing in the sinful nature of the Christian) in Christ's weakened human nature. It was not sin *in* Christ's flesh (body) that was doomed, but sin in the Christian's sinful nature that was doomed *through* Christ's flesh (body). God consigned the power of sin (residing in the Christian's sinful nature) to destruction through the death of Christ (in his weakened human nature)¹⁸.

d. **Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law (8:4).**

8:4. in order that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled (vsap) in us, who do not keep on walking (vppa) according to the flesh (the sinful nature), but according to the Spirit.

The righteous requirement of the law. The 'law' in Romans 8:3,4 and 7 is God's righteous requirement (absolute demand and condition) for justification (salvation) and condemnation (judgement) as it is expressed in God's moral laws (the Ten Commandments and other moral laws in the Bible). Thus, God's law expresses both God's condition (requirement) for justification (salvation) and God's goal for sanctification (holy living). God's condition for justification and God's goal for sanctification is nothing less than *absolute perfection*! Because God is perfectly holy and righteous, this law demands perfect obedience to God and his will, perfect punishment of all sins (disobedience) and as a consequence perfect holiness and righteousness in all human lives.

However, no one in history qualifies, except Jesus Christ (who is sinless). Also this law cannot justify or save anyone, because the depraved human nature of man makes this impossible!

The Christian is saved because God's righteous requirement has been met in the place of the Christian. God doomed the power of sin in the sinful nature of the Christian with the purpose that the righteous requirement of the law may once for all be fulfilled in the life of the Christian.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

¹² 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

¹³ Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁴ G: 'peri hamartias'

¹⁵ G: katakrinó

¹⁶ 1 Peter 2:24

¹⁷ Hebrews 4:15

¹⁸ Hebrews 2:14-18

Jesus Christ fulfilled this condition for justification (salvation) and this goal for sanctification for every person that believes in him! From the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ onwards, God proclaims, regards and treats that Christian as perfectly justified and perfectly holy¹⁹! That is why *the only boasting the Christian may do is to boast in the completed work of justification and sanctification of Christ on behalf of him*²⁰! Because God's holy and righteous demand was satisfied, he removed the guilt, punishment, shame and absolute dominating power of sin from Christians.

Because Jesus Christ has already merited *the state* of perfect spiritual and moral holiness of the Christian, *the process* of sanctification in the life of the Christian is thereby guaranteed as not only possible, but also certain! The sanctification of the Christian consists of living his life according to God's moral laws. By the indwelling and control of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can, want to and will live according to God's moral laws. The sanctification of the Christian is now possible, real and it will be perfected in the future!

The righteous requirement of God's law is thus perfectly fulfilled by only Jesus Christ: first on the ground of his life, death and resurrection and second on the ground that he is living his perfect life in and through the Christian by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

By God's grace there is no conflict between God's moral law demanding a holy life and God's Spirit enabling and energising that holy life! *What God demands²¹ he also grants (5:5)*! In the context of justification, the Christian is released from keeping the law (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(3:28). But in the context of sanctification, the Christian is not released from keeping the moral law (13:8-10)²². The moral law is spiritual (7:14) precisely because it is derived from the Holy Spirit and is taught by the Holy Spirit²³.

The non-Christian is not saved because God's righteous requirement has not been met in his case. The requirement of God's law is not met in the non-Christian (8:4a). His sins have not been atoned for by the death of Jesus Christ²⁴. And the non-Christian does not live according to the Holy Spirit, but only according to his sinful nature (8:4b)²⁵.

The Christian should, wants to, can, and will live the new and holy life. Romans 8:3-4 refers to the legal basis of holy living (cf. 6:7). The power of the sinful nature has once for all been doomed to be destroyed by Christ's completed work of salvation. The execution of this destruction has already begun by the work of the Holy Spirit living in the Christian.

If the regenerated Christian could and would completely and perfectly obey the Holy Spirit, he also could and would be completely and perfectly free from the power of sin and the pollution of sin! However, because every Christian continues to have a sinful nature within his physical body until his physical death, no Christian on earth can or will be completely and perfectly free from the power of sin or the pollution of sin. *Only after his physical death will a Christian be absolutely free from the power, pollution and even presence of sin!*

Nevertheless, because Christ's death once for all delivered (aorist tense) the Christian from this *absolute* power of sin (6:2,7) and because the Holy Spirit is applying this reality to his life (8:2), the Christian *should, wants to, can and will* walk after the Spirit and no more after the sinful nature (flesh)(8:4)! A Christian may not be victorious over sin all the time, but he will certainly not be defeated by sin all the time! The Christian *can, should and will* again and again put to death the misdeeds of the body (8:13) and he *should, wants to, can and will* again and again set his mind on what the Holy Spirit desires (8:5).

The Christian proves that he is genuinely a new man by no longer living out of his sinful nature, but by living in dependence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of life functions as the new power in his life.

(II) 8:5-13. The salvation of Christians is secure, because their salvation has actually begun in the regeneration and sanctification of their hearts and lives by the Holy Spirit

a. By his transformed mind the regenerated man does and can live the new life (8:5-6).

8:5. For those who are (living)(vppa) according to the sinful nature continually set their minds (vipa) on the things of the flesh; but those (who are living) according to the Spirit (continually set their minds) on the things of the Spirit.

8:6. The mind of the flesh (sinful nature) (is) death, but the mind of the Spirit (is) life and peace.

This paragraph contrasts the natural man (the non-Christian) with the spiritual man (the Christian).

The *mind* represents the reason (the way of thinking, aims, aspirations and strivings), the emotions (feelings) and the will (decisions and choices) of man.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:30

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:31

²¹ Mark 12:30-31

²² cf. 1 Corinthians 9:21

²³ 1 Corinthians 2:13

²⁴ Mark 10:45; John 10:11; Romans 5:19

²⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3

The life of the non-Christian. The non-Christian does not believe in Jesus Christ and consequently does not have the Holy Spirit. His mind is controlled by his sinful nature. He again and again sets his way of thinking, his aims, aspirations and strivings, his heart and his decisions and choices on what his own sinful nature desires. He continually lives under the dominating rule of his sinful nature and finds his interests and goals in corrupt worldly affairs.

The attitude and condition of the non-Christian result in death. 'Death' primarily refers to spiritual death²⁶. Such a person is 'ungodly' (5:6), alienated from the God who has revealed himself in the prophets of the Bible and Jesus Christ. He lives his life on earth apart from the God of the Bible and does things that are in contradiction to God's character and will. He persists in his 'hostility' against God (5:10). He is 'powerless' against the unholiness and unrighteousness in his life (5:6). Spiritual death finally results in physical death²⁷ and eternal death in hell, where there is only eternal misery²⁸.

The life of the Christian. The Christian believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord and consequently has the Holy Spirit living in him. His mind is controlled by the Holy Spirit. He again and again sets his mind on what Jesus Christ desires. He has the thoughts and attitudes of the Spirit, the same view of things as the Spirit, the same goals, aspirations and strivings that the Spirit has! He continually lives under the loving and wise government of the Holy Spirit and directs his interests and goals again and again to things which the Spirit proposes and approves and which glorifies God.

The attitude and condition of the Christian result in life and peace. 'Life' means that he has an intimate personal knowledge of God and fellowship with God²⁹. 'Peace' means that he has an inner assurance that all his past sins are forgiven (5:1), that all his present difficulties are overruled for good (8:28), and that all the future events and people he encounters will not be able to separate him from God's love for him (8:31-39)!

Because the Christian is delivered from the absolute dominating and controlling power of his indwelling sinful nature, he lives his life no longer in accordance with his sinful nature, but in accordance with the indwelling Holy Spirit³⁰. The Christian enjoys living the holy life. His obedience to Jesus Christ and consequent sanctification begins at his regeneration³¹ and is perfected only at the time when he sees Christ face to face³². The Spirit will continue to sanctify the Christian until he is finally set free from his present body in which the sinful nature and death causes so much ravage³³.

b. By his free will the natural man does not and cannot live the new life (8:7-8).

8:7. Therefore³⁴, the mind of the flesh (is) hostile to God, because to the law of God it *never* submits (vipp), and *never* can (vipn)(submit to the law of God).

8:8. And those who are (vppa) in the flesh (i.e. controlled by the sinful nature) can *never* (vipn) please (vnaa) God.

Does the natural man have a completely free will? Is he able to choose and accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord by his own will and effort? Is he able to do good in his own power?

It is spiritually, morally and psychologically impossible for the non-Christian to submit himself at any time to the God of the Bible and obey his will.

Natural man does not and cannot submit to God. The mind of the non-Christian is hostile to the God of the Bible and against his revealed will in the Bible. The non-Christian *does not at any time submit* (present tense) to God and God's will! He *cannot at any time submit* (present tense) to God and God's will! The non-Christian is dominated and controlled by his sinful nature. He cannot do anything that could please God. He does not have the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot be a (born-again) Christian (8:9)!

Natural man does not want to submit himself to God. He cannot submit himself to God. He will not submit himself to God, unless he is born again. The natural man with his so-called free will and personal effort is not able to choose the God who revealed himself in Christ or choose to do his will. He has no ability to change or transform himself!

At his birth he *involuntarily* inherited the sinful nature from Adam and Eve³⁵. And throughout his life he *voluntarily* became a slave of his sinful nature (6:16). Thereafter he cannot free himself from this slavery to sin! No man can free himself from himself! The thoughts and emotions, as well as the decisions and choices of the natural man can only obey his sinful nature. He cannot remove these by any act of his human will (cf. 9:16). Romans 8:5-8 proves the moral and

²⁶ Ephesians 2:1-3

²⁷ Hebrews 9:27

²⁸ Mark 9:42-49; Revelation 21:8

²⁹ John 17:3

³⁰ Galatians 5:16-26

³¹ cf. Acts 5:32; 1 Peter 1:2

³² cf. 1 John 3:1-3

³³ cf. 7:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

³⁴ G: dioti

³⁵ Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalm 51:5

psychological impossibility for any natural man (the non-Christian) to obey God or to please God or to do anything to be accepted by God by his own power or effort.

Natural man needs a Saviour outside himself! In order to be set free from this slavery to his sinful nature, the natural man (the non-Christian) needs a Saviour outside himself. He can only be set free by God's gracious gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, by regeneration (8:2)³⁶.

The natural man has the freedom for example to choose what clothes he will wear and what food he will eat. But that freedom is limited by whether the sovereign God provides him with clothes or food. He does not have the freedom to choose Jesus Christ as his Saviour, because it is God who chooses him³⁷. The natural man has a very limited free will (8:7-8; 9:16-18).

c. The Holy Spirit gives new life (8:9-11).

8:9. You (the believers in Rome), however, are *not* (vipa) in the flesh (i.e. controlled by the sinful nature), but in the Spirit (i.e. controlled by the Holy Spirit), if indeed the Spirit of God dwells (vipa) in you. And if anyone does not have (vipa) the Spirit of Christ, he *never* is (vipa) of him (Christ)(i.e. he never belonged to Christ).

8:10. But if Christ (is) in you, though³⁸ the (your) body (is) dead (it must die) due to (your) sin, yet³⁹ the (Holy) Spirit (not: your human spirit)⁴⁰ (is) life due to (the objective) righteousness (of Christ that was imputed) or due to (your subjective) righteousness (that was imparted and made you sure that the Author of life, the Holy Spirit, is dwelling in you!).

8:11. And if the Spirit of him who raised (vpaa) Jesus from the dead dwells (vipa) in you, he who raised (vpaa) Christ from the dead will *certainly* also give life (vifa) to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who dwells (vppa) in you.

The genuine Christian is controlled by the Holy Spirit (8:9). The indwelling Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. The Christian has the Holy Spirit living in his heart and in his body⁴¹. He is governed and controlled by the Holy Spirit⁴². *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ or Christ in (the heart and life of) the Christian.*

The disintegrating and destructive power of the indwelling sinful nature in Romans 7 is put in sharp contrast to the life-giving power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in Romans 8. Both are presently at work in the body and life of the Christian. Because the sinful nature is still active in the physical body and life of the Christian, his body is doomed to die physically. But because the Holy Spirit is also present and active in him, he *has not only been regenerated⁴³ and justified by faith⁴⁴, but also has the promised guarantee⁴⁵* that his mortal body will be resurrected from physical death (6:5; 8:11)⁴⁶!

The body of the Christian is presently dead due to sin (8:10). Romans 8:10 contrasts the lowliness of the present physical body with the glorious work of the Holy Spirit when he will resurrect that body in the future. Therefore this verse does not contrast the human body with the human spirit, but contrasts the lowly physical body with the glorious Holy Spirit already dwelling in that body!

Because of the sinful nature dwelling in the body of the Christian, his physical body is subjected to decay and to all kinds of weakness which finally leads to physical death. The Christian remains subject to the pains, the sorrows, the trials of life, and the necessity of dying, even though he already shares the Spirit's regenerated life.

However, physical death is no longer the punishment for the sins of the Christian as after the fall⁴⁷, because all his sins have been atoned for and he has been redeemed (3:24-25). Physical death is nevertheless still a reality for the Christian, but must be regarded as the completion of his sanctification and the beginning of his perfect life in eternity!

The Holy Spirit in the Christian is presently life due to righteousness (8:10).

The Spirit of God, not the spirit of man. The word 'spirit' cannot refer to the human spirit, because the whole context speaks about the Holy Spirit and because life is contrasted with death. 'Death' is not simply a matter of the physical body, but is *a separation* of the human spirit from the human body⁴⁸. Thus death affects both the body and the spirit of man.

³⁶ cf. John 3:3-8

³⁷ John 6:44,37; Romans 8:29-30; cf. 10:14-17

³⁸ G: to men

³⁹ G: to de

⁴⁰ The word Spirit (pneuma) in *the context before and after verse 11* all refer to the Holy Spirit and not to the human spirit!

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

⁴² Galatians 5:16,18,26

⁴³ John 3:3-8

⁴⁴ Titus 3:4-8

⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:22

⁴⁶ Philippians 3:21

⁴⁷ Genesis 2:15-17

⁴⁸ Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 8:53-55

‘The Holy Spirit’ as life is much more antithetical of the human body than death, because the Holy Spirit will annul this death and redeem the body from death at the resurrection - something the human spirit cannot do.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is God’s power that makes regeneration (at the beginning) and holiness (throughout life) possible and guarantees the future resurrection of the body from the dead (at the end)!

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the Christian generates salvation from its beginning to its end:

- *the initial stage* of his salvation (regeneration, conversion, faith and justification)(8:9-10a),
- *the continuing stage* of his salvation (sanctification: growing in holiness and doing righteousness)(8:13) and
- *the final stage* of his salvation (the transformation of the spirit and the resurrection of the body)(8:11).

The sovereign government of the Holy Spirit in the Christian makes his salvation from its beginning to its completion absolutely secure!

The Holy Spirit is life because of righteousness. Two possible explanations and both are correct:

- *The objective righteousness of Christ.* The life-giving work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is based, not on the subjective righteousness of the Christian⁴⁹, but on the objective righteousness of Christ⁵⁰ that is reckoned (imputed) to the Christian⁵¹. The work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated, because the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (8:9-10)! *What Jesus Christ merited by his death and resurrection two thousand years ago, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) applies to the life of Christians throughout history until today. Christ’s perfect righteousness and holiness not only makes the present regeneration and sanctification possible and necessary, but also makes the future completion of that sanctification absolutely certain!*
- *The subjective righteousness of the Christian.* Because of sin your physical body is bound to die. But because you have been justified, you can be sure of the fact that the Holy Spirit (who is Life and the Author of life) is dwelling in you.

The Holy Spirit will resurrect the body of the Christian (8:11). *The life, which the Holy Spirit imparts in regeneration, is developed in ongoing sanctification until it is perfectly completed in glorification at the resurrection of the body⁵². “The last enemy to be destroyed is death”⁵³! Thus, when the benefits of Christ’s complete salvation are not yet received in their fullness at the moment the Christian believes, there is no inconsistency between the Christian’s still imperfect state and life on the one hand and Christ’s perfect work of salvation on the other hand. Christian salvation is not a point, but a line stretching from regeneration (its beginning) to resurrection (its completion). The transformation of the Christian is not yet completed!*

At the resurrection from the dead the same present mortal body of the Christian will be transformed and clothed with immortality. The person who died will continue to have the same identity⁵⁴ and this identity and continuity will in no way interfere with the newness of quality which his same body will receive at the resurrection⁵⁵.

d. [The Christian is responsible to destroy the practices of the sinful nature \(8:12-13\).](#)

8:12. Therefore then, brothers, we have a *continual (vipa) moral debt (obligation), not to the flesh (the sinful nature) to live (vnpa) according to the flesh (i.e. to live according to its standard).*

8:13. For if you *continue to live (vipa) according to flesh (the sinful nature), you are doomed⁵⁶ (vipa+) to die (+vnpa). But if by the Spirit you keep on putting to death (vipa) the (disgraceful) practices of the body, you will *certainly live (vifm).**

This is not a threat that the Christian can lose his eternal security. It is an exhortation to destroy the misdeeds of sin in his life.

God cannot and will not save the sinful nature of man. Paul states very emphatically that God cannot violate his own holiness and righteousness. God does not save people *in the flesh*, but *from the flesh*. *God does not save them by tolerating their sinful nature and gradually transforming their sinful nature, but saves them by destroying their sinful nature!* Therefore, the only way to avoid death in its fullest sense (eternal death in hell) is to be finally delivered from the sinful nature!

⁴⁹ Ephesians 2:8-9

⁵⁰ 1 Peter 3:18a

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁵² 1 John 3:1-3; Philippians 3:21

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 15:26; cf. Hebrews 11:13

⁵⁴ cf. Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:22

⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:35-54; Philippians 3:21

⁵⁶ G: melló + present infinitive denotes action that must necessarily follow, a must by divine decree

However, if a person thinks that he is a Christian, but nevertheless lives according to his sinful nature, he will certainly die⁵⁷.

The Christian must destroy the disgraceful practices of his sinful nature. The fact that the Christian has once for all time died to sin (6:2) does not release him from the responsibility to continually put to death the sinful thoughts, motives, plans, attitudes, feelings, evil inclinations, words and deeds in his body! The completed work of salvation of Christ not only makes justification and sanctification necessary, but actually possible! The Christian *should* again and again put the misdeeds of his body to death by the power of the indwelling Spirit. He *desires* to do this, *can* do this and *shall* do this!

The Christian is thus a person under obligation! He has a very important responsibility and that is not to live according to his indwelling sinful nature (the flesh), but to live according to the indwelling Holy Spirit. He must not *tolerate* his sinful nature! *He must not try to change his sinful nature!* Instead, he must *again and again put to death* the disgraceful practices of his sinful nature that are expressed in his physical body (8:13)! And he must *again and again* put himself and the members of his body at the disposal of God, as instruments of righteousness that leads to holiness (6:13,19; cf. 12:1-2).

The Christian can do this and will do this when he lives according to the Holy Spirit. Or to put it in another way: When the Christian allows Christ through his Spirit to live in and through him, he will root these sins out of his life. By these statements, Paul does not neutralise the security of the Christian. *He emphasises that the only way the Christian can be subjectively sure of his eternal salvation, is when he lives according to the Holy Spirit! A person who lives according to his sinful nature cannot and will not have any assurance of salvation!*

The Holy Spirit continually destroys the already doomed sinful nature. The Christian is “continually led by the Holy Spirit”⁵⁸. He is constantly and really influenced by the Spirit, so that his thoughts, feelings and conduct are directed by the Spirit. The leading of the Spirit emphasises *the activity of the Spirit*, while putting to death the disgraceful practices of the body emphasises *the activity of Christian*. The work of the Spirit does not happen only now and then, for example in moments of need or danger, but happens constantly and continuously. The work of the Spirit is not primarily protective, but corrective, helping the Christian to put to death the disgraceful practices of the body. His work is not merely giving direction (guiding), but actually being the reigning and controlling influence in the life of the Christian. His work is not stifling and repressive, but helping, supporting and encouraging the Christian in his responsibility. This work of the Spirit is transforming and is expressed in sanctification: enabling the Christian to more and more crush the power of sin in his life and walk in God’s ways.

(III) 8:14-17. The salvation of Christians is secure, because they are God’s adopted sons (children) and heirs of the future glory.

a. The Christian assurance of being a child of God (8:14-16).

8:14. because those who are continually led (vipp) by the Spirit of God, they are always (vipa) sons of God.

8:15. For you did not receive (viaa) a spirit of slavery, again to⁵⁹ fear, but you once for all received (viaa) the Spirit of sonship. And by him we again and again cry (vipa). “Abba, Father”.

8:16. The Spirit himself continually testifies (vipa) with our spirit that we always are (vipa) children of God.

The term ‘sons of God’ (8:14). The indwelling Holy Spirit creates in Christians the love and trust of sons. He gives them a deep assurance that they are indeed children of God, sons (and daughters) in God’s family.

The *state* of Christians as sons of God guarantees their eternal security! The term expresses *being the chosen objects of God’s love* (9:26)⁶⁰, *having a similar inclination and character as God*⁶¹ and *having right of ownership* to some special dignity or advantage⁶². Christians have all three: They are the special objects of God’s love (8:39). They know that by regeneration they share in the characteristics of the divine nature⁶³. They have the same inclination as the Spirit, which means that their own feelings and the testimony of the Spirit are the same (8:15-16). And they are heirs of God’s Kingdom in its final phase and of Christ’s eternal glory (8:17).

The feelings of love of Christians towards God prove that they are children of God (8:15). The reality of the adoption of Christians as God’s sons is proved by their childlike feelings. Before a person becomes a Christian, his indwelling sin (the law of sin and death) only produces fear, anxiety and distrust. The non-Christian has *a spirit of slavery*, that is, the spirit that slaves have⁶⁴. He fears his master, punishment and rejection.

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9-10; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:15-17; Revelation 20:8; 21:27

⁵⁸ Galatians 5:18

⁵⁹ G: eis

⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 1:4-5

⁶¹ Matthew 5:9,45

⁶² Galatians 3:7; John 1:12; 1 John 3:2

⁶³ John 1:12-13; 2 Peter 1:3-4

⁶⁴ Galatians 3:23 to 4:7

However, after he has become a Christian, he possesses the Spirit of adoption, that is, the Spirit that changes him from a slave into a son of the household! Instead of fear and distrust, the Holy Spirit creates love and trust in his heart for God. The Spirit continually creates the characteristics of a child or son of God in him⁶⁵. *The Christian is confident that the God of the Bible has accepted him completely.* And he has a personal and intimate relationship with God as his heavenly 'Father'. It is only through the indwelling Holy Spirit that a person can call God 'Father' (8:15) and that he can say, "Jesus is Lord"⁶⁶! People who do not call God 'Father' or Jesus Christ 'Lord' are definitely not Christians!

When Paul uses the term 'adoption' he borrowed *the term* and the legal standing from Roman law and practice, but *the essence* from the divine revelation in the Old Testament⁶⁷. God adopts people as his sons⁶⁸ and daughters⁶⁹.

The sons and daughters of God may call God 'Abba', which means 'Father'. It expresses the love, trust and tenderness of children towards their father.

The fatherhood of God has no relationship to fatherhood on earth, where fathers beget physical children. *The fatherhood of God is a complete spiritual concept! God regenerates people spiritually⁷⁰ and relates to them spiritually!*

The witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Christians proves that they are children of God (8:16). The reality of the adoption of the Christian as God's son (in his family) is also proved by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his human spirit. The Holy Spirit continually gives the Christian the subjective assurance of his salvation in his heart (8:16; cf. 5:5) and the objective assurance of his salvation in the written Bible. Every Christian may have this assurance in his heart and in his mind⁷¹.

The Holy Spirit himself testifies again and again with the human spirit of the Christian that he is in fact a child of God. He continually confirms and assures the Christian in his inner self or regenerated conscience, heart and mind that he belongs to God's family. The Holy Spirit constantly reminds the Christian of God's truth⁷² and God's promises in the Bible⁷³ and generates in him a deep assurance that God himself loves him as his child (cf. 8:39).

b. The Christian assurance of being a heir of God (8:17).

8:17. If (we are) children, then also heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Since⁷⁴ we share in (his) sufferings⁷⁵ (vipa) means that we shall share (hereafter) in (his) glory (vsap).

Christians are heirs of God. To be an heir means to have the right, the certainty and the security of possession. *Possession by inheritance is much surer than possession by purchase or any other method⁷⁶, because an inheritance cannot be taken away and it cannot be transferred.*

Earthly testators have limited inheritances and they die. When their inheritance has been used up, it is all gone and no new goods can be added. In contrast, our heavenly Testator is God. And his possessions are not limited and can never diminish⁷⁷.

Christians are heirs of the inheritance which God himself has laid up for them. His inheritance is inexpressibly great⁷⁸ and he lives forever. Their inheritance consists of blessings for their soul and body, a renewed universe, living in the presence of God and living for God. Their inheritance can never perish, spoil or fade. It will never diminish or peter out⁷⁹!

But in a very special sense Christians are heirs of God himself. God himself is their inheritance! "Whom have I in heaven than you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you"⁸⁰. "The LORD is my portion"⁸¹!

Christians are co-heirs with Christ in his sufferings. Christians share in the present sufferings of Jesus Christ. In God's eternal plan, Christians must first suffer with Christ before they inherit with Christ⁸². Christians will not share in Christ's glory unless they first share in his sufferings! "To suffer with Christ" means to again and again suffer the same

⁶⁵ cf. 2 Timothy 1:7

⁶⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:3

⁶⁷ Exodus 2:10; Esther 2:7

⁶⁸ 2 Samuel 7:8,14; Psalm 27:10; Hosea 1:10

⁶⁹ Isaiah 43:6; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

⁷⁰ John 1:13

⁷¹ 1 John 5:11-13

⁷² John 16:8-10; 1 John 2:20

⁷³ 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

⁷⁴ G: eiper

⁷⁵ G: sumpaschó

⁷⁶ 1 Kings 21:3-4; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; Ephesians 1:14; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 9:15

⁷⁷ Psalm 50:10-12

⁷⁸ 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Haggai 2:8

⁷⁹ 1 Peter 1:4

⁸⁰ Psalm 73:25-26

⁸¹ Lamentations 3:24

⁸² Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:11

things he suffered, to suffer as he did, and to suffer for his sake. The present sufferings of the Christian in this world is unavoidable, but nevertheless the way towards this future glory!

Christians suffer *the ordinary sufferings or afflictions and sorrows of life* as the man of sorrows suffered⁸³. They share in the general weakness, sickness, disability, disasters and wars, results of crime and sins of others, difficulties of circumstances, broken relationships, disappointment, unemployment, poverty, frustration, etc. In short, they share in the sufferings of a fallen and broken world into which also Christ was born⁸⁴.

Christians also share in *the particular sufferings or persecutions against Christ and the Christian faith*⁸⁵. Christians suffer for the name of Christ and for the cause of Christ (i.e. for being involved in Christ's ministry)⁸⁶. Christians should respond to their sufferings in the same way as Christ did: without retaliating and without threatening⁸⁷. These sufferings take many forms and will continue in this present age until the second coming of Christ.

The purpose of God with the suffering of Christians is not to satisfy the demands of his justice, but *to prepare Christians to share in his glory!* The present suffering is the process of refining through which Christians must pass⁸⁸. Suffering is the necessary condition for finally sharing in Christ's glory.

The sufferings of Christians are the sufferings of Christ in the sense that they are regarded as *filling up the total quota of sufferings required in God's eternal plan before the final salvation and glorification of the whole Body of Christ*⁸⁹.

But the sufferings of Christians never contribute to the accomplishment of the atonement on the cross and their consequent redemption from sin. The sufferings of Christians are nowhere represented as having redemptive virtue. God laid the sins of his people on Christ alone⁹⁰ and only in Christ does God reconcile the world to himself⁹¹!

Christians are co-heirs with Christ also in his glory. Christians do not receive any permanent inheritance or possession now in this present world. But in the future, they will share in Christ's glorious inheritance, which consists of nothing less than the new heaven and the new earth. Christ as the Head of his Body (the Church) and Christians as his Body itself are *joined heirs!* Christ earned this inheritance and shares it with his people.

*Christ in his sufferings, death and resurrection two thousand years ago cannot be contemplated apart from Christians today on whose behalf he suffered, died, and rose again. Likewise Christ in the glory bestowed on him as the reward for his completed work of salvation cannot be contemplated apart from Christians. And Christians in the state of glory cannot be contemplated apart from Christ in his glory (8:17)*⁹²!

⁸³ Isaiah 53:3

⁸⁴ John 1:14

⁸⁵ Matthew 10:25; John 15:18-21; Acts 9:4-5; 2 Corinthians 1:5,10; Galatians 6:17; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:13

⁸⁶ Mark 8:34-38; 2 Timothy 2:11-12; 3:11-12

⁸⁷ 1 Peter 2:18-23

⁸⁸ 1 Peter 1:6-7

⁸⁹ Colossians 1:24; cf. Mark 10:38-39; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 2:11; 1 Peter 4:13

⁹⁰ 1 Peter 2:24

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

⁹² Matthew 25:21; Luke 22:30; John 17:4; Revelation 3:21