

ROMANS 5:12-8:39 | GIVING TESTIMONY TO THE VALIDITY OF THE
MYSTERY

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 5, 28

ROMANS 8:1-39 | THE STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL OF GOD'S ELECT

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 28

ROMANS 8:12-14 | DEBTORS TO THE SPIRIT

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 36

VERSE 12 – BLACK

Having given a practical message to Roman Jews concerning the flesh and the spirit, Paul now says that **we** (either the apostles or the entire family of the **sect of the Nazarenes** -Acts 24:5) **are debtors**, but they should realize to whom or what the debt is due. Verse 12 uses *we* while verses 11 and 13 use *ye*, and thus the entire group is likely in mind.

This is not a debt **to the flesh**. The issue at hand was the resurrection of the mortal body (v. 11) at the time of the resurrection. This was a matter of the Spirit of God, as Paul has mentioned. Therefore their debt is **not to the flesh** even if their works in the flesh were good. Even under the Kingdom Gospel, good works did not raise the body, but were only the criteria of judgment for Kingdom entrance.

If good works could give bring about a resurrection, then “work till the sun goes down!” In such a case they would have been debtors **to live after the flesh**.

Most commentators interpret this verse as “don’t be a slave to sin.” But Paul has talked about that in Romans 6:16. I think here he simply says “don’t be a slave to the flesh, whether it be in sin or in producing good works.” For example, John MacArthur says:

“Verse 12 is a continuation of Paul’s exhortation that we should live not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (v. 4). By doing so, we will put to death the deeds of the body and live (v. 13).”¹

One wonders how the words “we will put to death the deeds of the body and live” are not works salvation.

John Piper said,

“Paul is saying, ‘Don’t let sin boss you around. You don’t owe anything to the flesh. You’re done with it.’”²

Perhaps the reason virtually every commentary puts this to a “don’t sin” category rather than the broader “don’t trust in flesh” category is that the commentators have dismissed any idea of works for righteousness under the Kingdom Gospel. I think Paul took the broader approach and was saying that “works are necessary for our judgment as Jews, but even works won’t raise us from the dead.”

VERSE 13 – BLACK

This verse confirms that Paul is instructing the Roman Jews to remove all dependence on **the deeds of the body**. While it is often interpreted as a message to “quit sinning,” I believe it is actually a message to “quit depending on the flesh.”

Ironically, two verses that warn against a dependence on the flesh are often presented in a way that encourages dependence on the flesh. Isn’t a “quit sinning” message a dependence on the flesh?

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1677.)

² John Piper, Sermon: “The Debt You Can’t Pay and the Way You Can,” accessed April 27, 2023, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-debt-you-cant-pay-and-the-way-you-can>.

The way to **live** (a reference to physical life) is to **mortify the deeds of the body** by being dependent upon the **Spirit**. That is, to reject the flesh in favor of the Spirit.

VERSE 14 - BLUE

I have put this in blue because Paul uses the **as many as** reference, seemingly making this universal rather than localized.

When Paul speaks of the **sons of God** he uses the Greek word "tekna" (τέκνα). This word is the more intimate of the other "children" words Paul could have used, and even used in other places. For example:

1. "Huios" (υἱός) - This Greek word is often translated as "sons" in the New Testament, and is used in some other passages to refer to believers as sons of God (e.g. John 1:12, Galatians 4:6-7). However, it carries a stronger connotation of adult sonship and legal inheritance rights, rather than the more familial and relational connotations of "tekna."
2. "Paidia" (παῖδια) - This Greek word is often translated as "children" in the New Testament, and can refer to either sons or daughters. It also emphasizes the idea of childhood and immaturity, rather than adult sonship and inheritance rights.
3. "Therapon" (θεράπων) - This Greek word means "servant" or "attendant," and is sometimes used in the New Testament to refer to believers as servants of God (e.g. Luke 1:38, Acts 4:29). However, it does not carry the same familial and relational connotations as "tekna."

Ultimately, Paul chose to use the word "tekna" (τέκνα) to emphasize the close and familial relationship that believers have with God as their Father, highlighting the intimacy that comes with being part of God's family.

ROMANS 8:15-17 | A WORD TO ISRAEL

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 36

VERSE 15 – BLACK

Paul speaks of a **spirit of bondage**, not bondage itself. In the same way, he speaks of having a **Spirit of adoption**, not a literal adoption. While the KJV uses the capitalized **spirit** we should note that the grammar for **the spirit of bondage** is exactly the same as **the Spirit of adoption**. While it may be that this inherently involves the Holy Spirit, we should entertain the idea that Paul simply says, "you have a spiritual adoption, not a spiritual slavery."

Some translations go so far in making the **Spirit of adoption** to be the Holy Ghost that there is simply no way for the student to make their own interpretation. This has gone beyond Scripture to the point of interpretation, and such "translations" should be rejected. For example, the NIV says, "'The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.'" The New Living Translation (NLT) says, "'So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.'" And if you want to really go "out there," The Message says, "'This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike 'What's next, Papa?'"

We should note that the term **Abba, Father** is likely not new to Paul's audience. A document found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and presumably written in the second century BC called the *Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Hymns) includes the line, "For You are my Abba, my father, and I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid."³ This is in reference to God. If we assume a simple "spiritual adoption" then the use of "Abba, my father" 200 years earlier is no problem. If we assume an *adoption from the Holy Spirit* then it is a problem.

VERSE 16 – BLACK

In Romans 8:16, Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God. The use of the phrase "the spirit of adoption" leaves little doubt that Paul is referring to

³ Dead Sea Scrolls. "Hodayot (Thanksgiving Hymns)." Translated by Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Brill, 2011, pp. 525-526.

the Holy Spirit, as there is no other spirit that would fulfill this role. To suggest that this witness is merely a feeling in one's heart would be uncharacteristic of Paul's writing and not a wise interpretation. Additionally, in Romans 8:26, Paul uses the phrase **Spirit itself** in a similar manner to clarify the distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit.

How does the **Spirit itself** bear this **witness**? Since we are talking about the Messianic believers of Israel, they had received the Holy Spirit as a testimony and manifestation that they were **the children of God**. 1 Corinthians 12:7 speaks of this witness. For those saints, each and every one of them received a **witness** from the Spirit that they were one of God's children.

I have taken a kingdom-era approach to this passage, not applying it to the Body of Christ. This is a rare interpretation, even in "right division" circles. However, my interpretation is consistent with the pronouns and consistent with our own experience. If the **Spirit itself bearers witness** to me and you **that we are the children of God**, then what exactly is this witness? It could be nothing more than a feeling, and I am not prone to trust feelings.

Many interpret this verse to mean that "the Holy Spirit confirms to our inner being that we belong to God and are adopted into His family." However, this interpretation reduces the witness of the Spirit to a mere feeling, except for some charismatic Christians who take it more literally. For instance, Wayne Grudem states that "The Holy Spirit bears witness to our own spirits, giving us a deep, inner conviction that we are indeed children of God, so that we cry out to God as our Father."⁴ This "deep, inner conviction" can be seen as ...a feeling. This "deep, inner conviction" could also be described as "a feeling."

In short, I am convinced that Paul says to the Roman Jews (as he did to the Corinthian Jews), "God's Spirit bears a visible testimony to confirm with our spirit that we are children of God."

You and I, living in the Body of Christ and not under Kingdom theology, have the Word of God to assure us that our faith in Jesus Christ has made us complete in Him.

VERSE 17 - BLACK

The two **if** references can be taken as a certainty (as in 2 Thes. 1:6). Paul has clearly already stated that they are **children**, and thus the rest falls into place as a certainty. The suffering is, in my view, the persecution of Messianic Jews in the first century. As if Paul says, "Hey friends, we suffer today, but we will be glorified in the Kingdom."

⁴ Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. p. 761.