

(8:12) - “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” - The Bible is clear that God saves sinners and justifies the ungodly. There is absolutely nothing in or done by the objects of salvation by which they earn or deserve any of its blessings and benefits. Salvation is all of grace. Paul emphasizes this point here in this statement. We who are sinners saved by God’s grace owe nothing **“to the flesh,”** i.e. to our works done in the power of our flesh. We are not indebted to ourselves to live as if we have earned or deserved any of God’s blessings by our own power or goodness. Our salvation is all of grace based totally on the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness alone. It is HIS power and HIS goodness that saves us, keeps us, and will bring us to glory.

(8:13) - “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:” - The emphasis here in **“living after the flesh”** is sinners seeking salvation by their deeds (works) which always fall short of righteousness. They are living in unbelief and darkness controlled by sinful flesh (i.e. sinful desires, motives, and goals). We need to understand that living under the control of sinful flesh, no matter if one is in the dregs of immorality or the height of human morality and religion, always leads to death because it is living in sin and under the dominion of sin. **“But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”** - To **“mortify the deeds of the body”** means to put them to death. How do we do this? God’s true children do this **“through the Spirit,”** i.e. by the powerful and inward work of the Holy Spirit to expose our deeds aimed at the ground of salvation and trying to make us righteous enough to be accepted with God as being sinful (**John 3:19-20; 16:8-11**). He does this by showing us the glory and power of Christ’s work on the cross to put away our sins and to establish the only righteousness by which we can be justified before God, His righteousness imputed (**Php. 3:7-9**). He shows us how Christ died to destroy the whole **“body of sin”** that was against us (**Rom. 6:6**), even the sinfulness of our best deeds aimed at our salvation. Therefore, God the Holy Spirit brings us to look upon our best **“deeds of the body”** as being evil and sinful so as to bring us to REPENT OF ALL OUR SINS, INCLUDING THESE **“DEEDS OF THE BODY.”** They are **“dead works”** (**Heb. 6:1; 9:14**) and **“fruit unto death”** (**Rom. 7:5**). The Spirit brings us to know, believe in, and look to Christ as our only goodness and righteousness before God. In looking to Christ for all salvation and eternal life, we look upon our deeds aimed at salvation as being dead and crucified with Christ on the cross. This is mortifying the **“deeds of the body.”** Looking to Christ is living after the Spirit in the blessing of spiritual and eternal life.

(8:14) - “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” - All who are **“led by the Spirit of God”** to believe and rest in Christ for all salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory, and to repent of their dead works (**“mortify the deeds of the body”**), **“they are the sons of God.”** They are the chosen, justified, adopted, redeemed, regenerated and called (born again) spiritual children of God (**John 1:12-13**). They live and walk after the Spirit as evidenced by their faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. All others, even God’s chosen and adopted children, BEFORE being brought by the Spirit to faith in Christ and true repentance, live and walk after the flesh and give no evidence of being true children of God. Even God’s chosen and adopted children fell in Adam and are born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. By nature, before conversion, they live and walk in the darkness and deception of unbelief (**Eph. 2:1-3**). They must, and they will, be born again by the Spirit when He brings them under the preaching of the TRUE Gospel and imparts spiritual life and knowledge to them and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (**Rom. 6:17-18**). So, even though they are adopted children of God all along, before conversion they are LOST and REBELLIOUS children.

(8:15) - **“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”** - The **“spirit of bondage”** is a spirit of legalism that motivates sinners to obedience by guilt and fear of punishment and by mercenary promises of earned rewards. It is a mind-set in which a sinner imagines he or she can do enough to make himself, by deeds of law or by some decision or action performed, qualified for salvation, blessings, and acceptance with God. It is literal slavery to sin because the law of God demands perfect righteousness which sinners cannot attain by works (**Rom. 9:31-33; Eph. 2:8-9**). This is spiritual death and shows the absence of godly spiritual life. It is what is naturally in us due to our fall in Adam and our being born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. It is marked by ignorance and unbelief of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus (**Rom. 10:1-4**).

The **“Spirit of adoption”** is God the Holy Spirit Who convicts us of sin and drives us to Christ for salvation by God’s grace based on HIS righteousness alone. The Holy Spirit is sent from Christ to every one of God’s chosen, redeemed, and adopted children (**Gal. 4:4-6**). He is the Spirit of liberty and grace Who convinces us of our freedom from sin and the law because God cannot impute sin to us. He convinces us that God has imputed Christ’s righteousness to us so that we cannot be condemned for our sins. He liberates us from the deception and darkness of ignorance and unbelief by bringing us to believe in Christ and repent of our dead works and idolatry (**Rom. 6:17-18**). He shows us how God can be both a righteous Judge and a loving, merciful, and gracious Father to save us from our sins, so that we **“cry, Abba, Father”** (*cf. John 6:44-45*). **“Abba, Father”** is a way of calling upon the Lord God and approaching Him as a loving Father Who saved us by His grace in Christ. It indicates the special relationship of God to the children whom He loves and who love Him. No unbeliever has the right to address or approach God as **“Abba, Father.”** This is the gracious privilege of sinners saved by grace and who as mercy-beggars approach God looking for access to and acceptance with God based on the merits of Christ’s righteousness imputed alone.

(8:16) - **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”** - Through the Word of God implanted upon every believer’s heart, the Holy Spirit bears **“witness”** (testifies) **“with our spirit,”** i.e. He joins with our spirits, the spiritual life that is evidenced by our new hearts (minds, affections, and wills) wherein we love and bow to God’s Word (testimony). His testimony is **“that we ARE the children of God.”** He gives us the assurance of God’s grace in Christ Jesus by showing us that we are truly sinners saved by the grace of God and truly God’s children whom He loves and will bring to glory. This assurance is BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD HEARD, UNDERSTOOD, AND REVEALED. It is not the testimony of men, for even though we desire that other believers receive us into the fellowship of true faith, it is not their testimony that gives us the assurance of God’s grace. It is not the testimony of our own hearts, for when we become focused upon ourselves and our hearts condemn us, we know that God (and His Word) is greater than our hearts (**1 John 3:19-21; 5:12-13**). It takes the Word of God in Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit to assure our own hearts of His grace. Godly assurance of salvation is not based on feelings, circumstances, or human performance. It is based on the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God that shows us that we are truly looking to, resting in, and following Christ for all salvation. This is the goal of all Godly self-examination, not to look within ourselves for assurance, but to look to Christ Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith (**2 Cor. 13:5; Heb. 12:2**).