

Romans Lesson 10 Articles

8:8 — So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Since “the flesh” naturally puts itself first and does everything it can to honor itself, nothing done “in the flesh” can honor or please God. We please God only when we depend on Him to do through us what we cannot.¹

The believer can have two “dispositions” (minds): he can lean toward the things of the flesh and be a carnal Christian (“carnal” means “of the flesh”) who is at enmity with God; or he can incline toward the things of the Spirit, be a spiritual Christian, and enjoy life and peace. The carnal mind cannot please God; only the Spirit working in and through us can please God.

The Christian has no obligation to the flesh: “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (v. 12). Our obligation is to the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who convicted us and showed us our need of the Savior. It was the Spirit who imparted saving faith, who implanted the new nature within us, and who daily witnesses within that we are God’s children. What a great debt we owe to the Spirit! Christ loved us so much, He died for us; the Spirit loves us so much, He lives in us. Daily He endures our carnality and selfishness; daily He is grieved by our sin; yet He loves us and remains in us as the seal of God and the “down payment” (“earnest,” 2 Cor. 1:22) of the blessings waiting for us in eternity. If a person does not have the Spirit dwelling within, that person is not a child of God.

The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of adoption” (v. 15). To live in the flesh or under law (and to put yourself under law is to move toward living in the flesh) leads to bondage; but the Spirit leads us into a glorious life of liberty in Christ. Liberty to the believer never means freedom to do as he or she pleases, for that is the worst kind of slavery! Rather, Christian liberty in the Spirit is freedom from law and the flesh so that we can please God and become what He wants us to become. “Adoption” in the NT does not mean what it typically means today, the taking of a child into a family to be a legal member of the family. The literal meaning of the Gk. word is “son-placing”—the taking of a minor (whether in the family or outside) and making him or her the rightful heir. Every believer is a child of God by birth and an heir of God through adoption. In fact, we are joint-heirs with Christ, so that He cannot receive His inheritance in glory until we are there to share it with Him. Thank God, the believer has no obligation to the flesh, to feed it, pamper it, obey it. Instead, we must “put to death” (mortify) the deeds of the flesh by the power of the Spirit (v. 13, see Col. 3:9ff) and allow the Spirit to direct our daily lives.²

The presence of the indwelling Christ is the believer’s guarantee of life. Although believers’ physical bodies are subject to death, their spirits are even now “enjoying life” (Williams). Death comes as a consequence of sin; life is the reward of justification. Death is the absence of God; life is a right standing before him. Whether or not a person is indwelt by the Spirit is truly a life-and-death matter.³

¹ Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Ro 8:8). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 388–389). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Williams C. B. Williams, *The New Testament*

³ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 179). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.