

Romans 8:12-18 (Part 2)

Who's The Lead Dog?

12So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

In verse 11 Paul said that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. Because of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives we are not obligated to the flesh. The power of sin is no longer overpowering to those who are in Christ.

13for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die;

Chapter 6 verse 11 says; "consider yourselves dead to sin." If we are not living as though we are dead to sin, then Paul says we must let the old life die. But how can we do that?

if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Only the power of the Holy Spirit is great enough to put sin to death in us. Putting sin to death is more about saying yes to Jesus than it is saying no to sin. When we say "yes" to Jesus we will have the spiritual power to avoid sin.

14For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God? The word "led" is very telling.

STORY - SNOW DOGS / LEAD DOG

Not too long ago our family watched a movie called "Snow Dogs". In that show they placed a lot of emphasis on the role of the lead dog. The role of the lead dog is to get all the other dogs headed in the right direction. Wherever the lead dog goes, the other dogs will follow. The following dogs will put all their effort into pulling the sled. They don't have to think about

where they are going. That is the job of the lead dog. If all the dogs had to decide where to go there would be great confusion.

So also, the job of the Holy Spirit is to decide when we stop and when we go, when we turn and when we pull harder. When we rest and when we awake. Our job is to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. If we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in our lives we will have no confusion in our heart. When we try to play the role of the lead dog in our lives it can get us to pull against the direction of the Holy Spirit and cause us confusion.

The Holy Spirit plays the role of the lead dog in our lives. He can discern the will of God for our life. If we are following his lead, then we know that our destination is to be running toward Christ.

There are several scriptures that speak about following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURES – FOLLOWING SPIRIT’S LEAD

Eph. 5:17-20

17So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Col. 3:14-16

14Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Galatians 5:24-25

24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

15For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

If we are living life apart from Christ, the result is fear. Many people won't admit it, but apart from Christ, life is greatly motivated by fear. Many people live in fear of getting laid off. Others live in fear of relationships that are not working. Others live in fear of getting sick. Life is uncertain and fear is the primary motivator for many people.

If we place our security in our own abilities fear will result. Why? We do not have the power to control everything in this life. As a result many people fear life and they also fear death. Speaking of the fear of death.

STORY – BRUCHKO – “HELP ME DIE WELL”

Bruchko was a missionary to a South American Jungle. He came upon a group of people who did not know the Lord. Bruchko had a very difficult time leading these people to Christ. But eventually everyone in the tribe came to Christ. How did that happen? This tribe was notorious for worshipping idols and demons. Each time a person from that tribe died they screamed in agony just as they were dying as demons plagued them with visions of hell fire.

One man got sick and was about to die. And he asked Bruchko to teach him to die well. Bruchko led this man to Christ. And when the man died, he had a big smile on his face. He was a total peace. Because death no longer brought fear to this man, the entire village came to Christ. They too wanted to know how to die well and have no fear of death. In Christ, there is no fear. Some people fear death while others fear life.

STORY – GRANDPA AND SOCIAL SECURITY

When I was a child I remember spending summers with my grandparents in Iron River. On many occasions my grandma and grandpa would lament and worry about many things. One of the things they were constantly afraid of was being poor when they retired. They carried on and on about social security and whether it would be there or be enough to live on.

Fear about money took up a lot of emotional energy for my grandparents. Life is filled with things that lead to fear. And in ourselves we do not have the power to control everything in life that might bring us harm or inconvenience.

When we are certain that God loves us, we are convinced that he will make sure everything turns out ok for us. If someone loves us then we know they will look out for us.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

When we spend time getting closer to God we begin to feel more and more of his love. And if God is for us, we know everything will be ok. Our Father will take care of us.

STORY – KIDS IN THE WOODS

A couple months ago I saw a fisher in the woods. Now my kids are a little scared of walking in the woods. But if I go with them, they do not have any fear. Why? Because they know that I have the ability to take care of a Fisher and they are convinced that I love them, therefore I will do whatever it takes to protect them. If they are afraid they can say; “daddy I’m scared” and I will either deal with the threat or reassure them that everything is ok.

The word abba is a very intimate word. It is roughly translated; “daddy”. God loves us so much that it is ok to call him daddy. Our Father is looking out for us. We can’t see what he sees but we can get close to him so that all the fear goes away. If God is for us, who can be against us?

16The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

Bill and I were talking about a time when we were not sure that we were Christians. Bill said he used to go to church meetings and he would pray something like this; “Lord, just in case I am not a Christian, would you save me from my sin.” When we are truly born again, The Holy Spirit exerts so much influence in our lives that we know for certain that we are God’s children and we no longer approach God in fear. We no longer approach life with fear because God is greater than all of our needs and fears. And our Father, our daddy will do what ever is best for us.

17and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,

This passage tells us that we are heirs with Christ. Think about what it means to be an heir. And heir is a person who inherits something from his family. What is it that Christ will inherit? According to scripture; Jesus Christ will inherit everything. And if we are his children, then he will share with us all that is his. If he is willing to share everything with his children, you can be certain that he loves you.

if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

This text assumes every Christian will suffer. The first century expectation is that if you become a Christian you might die for your faith. Many of us suffer for our faith. Some of us have been disowned or mocked for choosing to follow Christ. It is becoming more and more common to see Christians mocked and defamed.

Everything that happened to Christ will happen to Christians. Some Christians usually in other countries will die for their faith. Others will be mocked. Still others will be forced to give up wealth because sometimes there are strings attached to wealth.

Everything that happened to Jesus will happen to Christians. Paul is saying that not only was Jesus persecuted. Paul says; “don’t forget about the resurrection and the glory and the power and the victory and the inheritance of Jesus Christ. If you are going through a difficult time remember it will not last forever. What will last forever is our life and blessings with Jesus Christ in heaven.

18For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

STORY – EATING GROSS STUFF

When I was in food service management once in a while we did stupid pranks to pass the time. One of our activities was that all the employees would throw a few dollars into a jar and the person who ate the grossest thing would get all the money. One day we ended up with about 50 dollars in the jar and I was picked to cook up something gross for the challenger to eat.

How many of you know what a grease trap is? Large flat grills in a commercial kitchen have a little slot in the side or the front of the grill that all the junk gets scrapped into. Eggs shells, burnt food, grease, and miscellaneous liquids usually end up in the grease trap.

My choice for the gross food challenge was to make a shake out of the contents of the grease trap. It of course was topped off with about 6 ounces of cayenne pepper. Much to my surprise, this guy picked up glass and pounded down the entire thing. He drank it all. I couldn't believe it. I asked him how he could drink such a nasty concoction. And he said, all I had to do was keep thinking about the money.

This life can be nasty and difficult. But one of the best ways to keep our joy is to keep our eyes on the reward. Keep our eyes on the payday. Keep our eyes on the day that Jesus will come and lift us up to his side and tell us; "well done, you get a full share of the inheritance."

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are you the lead dog or is the Holy Spirit the lead dog?
2. Are you consumed with fear about things in this life or the next? If so, will you receive the truth in your heart that God the Father wants to take care of you like a daddy takes care of his children?
3. Do you have a lot of obstacles, temptations and challenges in your life right now? If so, did you know that it is easier to face these challenges when you focus on the reward?