

Romans 8:12-14 NIV
"Being true kids of God"

(Romans 8:12-14 NIV)

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

"(13) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, (14) because those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God."

Our text refers to living and dying, the topic gripping so many folks now.

In all Covid19 news reports, death lurks.

This text tells a sobering fact about death that seemingly escapes most preachers.

Some think *Romans, Ephesians* and other epistles by Paul teach predestination.



In their view, God pre-decided who'll go to heaven and those destined for hell.

Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine, 354-430 AD) and John Calvin (1509-1564) taught this foreordination by God.

Today's text tells us otherwise.

God doesn't choose favorites.

Our Creator judges us on the way we perform in life's tests.

Whether we go to heaven or to hell depends on decisions we make.

"Bob," you say "have you forgotten that we're saved by God's grace in Christ?"

Not at all.

If Christ had not come, we'd all be destined for hell.

By God's grace, Jesus came to resist Satan's temptation.

By God's grace, Jesus showed us how to live by God's standards.

By God's grace, Jesus broke death's power and came back from the grave. If we renounce the devil's way, believe in God's grace through Christ, and unite with Christ in baptism, God cleanses us so His Spirit can live in us.

If we follow God's Word in Christ, and His Spirit's lead, **by God's grace**, we live better here and in eternity.

You may be thinking:

"Bob, back up the truck. You sneaked baptism into this. This text doesn't mention baptism. Isn't baptism a work? What happened to God's grace?"



So let's reverse to some baptism facts.

In *Romans 6*, Paul wrote of the experience all Christians shared then:

³ **"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"**

⁴ **We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** ⁵ **For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his."**

In baptism, we join Christ in his death.

We are buried and raised with him.

Many preachers neglect to remind you that in the NT, three vitals always precede baptism.

First is belief in Christ.

Second, persons repented or renounced sin.

Third, they publicly confessed their belief in Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul reminded Christians in Colossae of their common experience:

"Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

NT facts illustrate why you won't find one Bible example of an infant being baptized.

We are not born in sin.

Sin results from improper acts and thoughts.

No baby commits errors.

Innocent babies don't, but we adults sure do.

This Colossians passage also shows the connection between baptism and faith.

"Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

Babies can't express faith in God.

Getting wet apart from faith and commitment to Christ is a pointless act.

Romans 6 clarifies another truth intimated in Colossians.

Sin puts us on hell's highway.

Our sin and pride complicate life.

Thus baptism isn't a work.

Baptism displays and validates our intention to quit our sinful life and to take on Jesus' purity and love.

As long as we stubbornly refuse to accept God's word concerning baptism, our proud old person remains alive and kicking.

Jesus himself said that we must be born again of water and Spirit.

This is not my opinion.

In John 3:5, Jesus said: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he/she cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Romans 6:11 agrees:

"Count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Jesus Christ."

As our text reads: "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die . . ."



Sin makes us and others miserable now and puts us on the freeway to hell.

Colossians 3 specifically says:

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. . . You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived . . . you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

Folks out in the streets angrily destroying things are not following Jesus' example.

But neither are those who sit bitterly at home and despise others.

God's people grieve and pray for peace.

If we're looking for joy and harmony, we follow God's word and Spirit.

Consider another misconception.

The Bible never talks about church membership as we do now.¹



The Bible speaks about being members of Christ's body, which is the church.

The body exalts and obeys the head.

You likely have an old school annual buried in a closet somewhere.

Trying to recall old classmates, you look at pictures of faces in that old book.

Unless your old annual has comedy pages, it likely doesn't have a section featuring elbow, knee, or stomach pictures.

¹ See Romans 12:1-8 & 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, noting especially verses 14: "For we were all baptized by one spirit into one body." NIV

Christ heads the church and all parts of the body should glorify him.

We honor him as the Son of God, who died for us and was raised from death.

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, he said this to his disciples

"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."²

Preachers talk of God's love and grace. Few bother to mention *repent*, the first word in Jesus' preaching.

Most Christians can quote John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Would someone would like to research how often Jesus mentioned God's love for us in the Gospels?

You could record the times using your fingers on one hand.

Jesus used the word *love* on many occasions. **But most times have to do with us loving God, our neighbors, and our enemies.**

By contrast in the gospels, Jesus used the words **repent** and repentance 18 times and another 11 times in the *Book of Revelation*.

If you watch TV evangelists, compare the number of times they mention the word *repent* in the next six weeks with how often they speak of God's love and grace.

We impatiently remind our loved ones, "How many times have I told and you still didn't pay attention?"

If Jesus warned us 29 times to repent, he considered that important, do you agree?

² Luke 24:46-48 NIV

One other word in Jesus’ final instruction deserves emphasis.

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Over time, many words undergo change.

Most of you drive a car.

We tend to forget that *car* is a shortened form of *carriage*.

In the early 1900s, many folks called automobiles, horseless carriages.

Of course horseless carriages derived from horse-drawn carriages.

The word carriage derives from *carry*.

The word *carriage* came from litters used to transport royalty.



Litters had long poles at the four corners; slaves usually did the strenuous carrying.

The Greek word for *witness* also radically changed over time.

In verse 12 of III John, shortest book in the New Testament, a form of *witness* or *testimony* appears three times.

“Demetrius has the *testimony* of all, and of the truth itself; yes, we also *testify*, and you know that our *testimony* is true.

(World English Bible)

Early preaching focused on publicly witnessing about what Jesus did.

First century communion services centered on testifying that Jesus died and rose again for our sin and encouraging one another to remain faithful.

Because early Christians witnessed and testified that Jesus died for our sin and rose again, their enemies killed them.

The Greek term that appears 3 times in 3rd John 12 as testify is the word martyr.

Greek for witness and testify is the same term as *martyr* In English.

The word martyr originally meant to witness something, not to die for your faith.

Did you notice the two big "ifs" in this text?

Living in heaven with God is conditional:

A. **"If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die."**

That *will* is predestined; preachers rarely notice it and translators don't emphasize it.

Tonight and tomorrow, read Colossians 3 noting what we must put to death.

Not just sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires, but greed, anger, rage, malice, slander (which includes anonymous and unconfirmed reports), filthy language and lying to one another.

This is a big daily homework assignment for me, I know.

B. "If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

- We hear Jesus' Good News and repent; we die to what we once were.
- We witness to the truth about Jesus and let people know the truth that repentance precedes salvation.
- We proceed lovingly believing God's word.

God bless you as you imitate Christ and live according to God's Spirit!

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