

# The Freedom of “Abba! Father!”

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## Romans 8:9-17

<sup>9</sup> **You, however, do not live lives determined by flesh but lives encompassed by Spirit, if in fact God’s Spirit dwells in you.**

Anyone who does not have **the Messiah’s Spirit** is not part of him. <sup>10</sup> **But if Messiah is in you, although the body is dying, still struggling with sin, the presence of God’s Spirit is life itself** because of God’s faithful righteousness. <sup>11</sup> **If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Messiah from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies** through his **Spirit** who dwells in you.

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, the fact that we are physical does not mean we owe a **debt** to keep on living **lives determined by the flesh**. <sup>13</sup> For if you live a life stamped by the flesh and its little gods, you’re rejecting the only true God and source of life and **you will die**.

But if you join with **the Spirit** in condemning to death sin itself, all the destructive practices that it has made part of the body’s everyday doings, **you will live**.

<sup>14</sup> For **all who are led** through life’s wanderings **by God’s Spirit** are **God’s sons and daughters**. <sup>15</sup> For you did **not** receive a **spirit of slavery** to fall back into **fear**, but you have received a **Spirit who declares us to be God’s children**, in whom we cry, **“Abba! Father!”**

<sup>16</sup> **The Spirit himself is bearing witness** with our spirit that **we are children of God**, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then **heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with the Messiah**, provided we **suffer with him** in order that we may also be **glorified with him**.

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## Romans 8:38-39

<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Messiah Jesus our Lord.

## Mark 14:35-36 In Gethsemane

<sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, Jesus fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

## Galatians 4:4-6

<sup>4</sup> In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as God’s sons and daughters.

<sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

## Romans 1:28-31

<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not think it fit to know God as God, God handed them over to their unfit mind to do what ought not to be done: <sup>29</sup> filled with all injustice, evil, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness; gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> senseless, promise-breakers, unfeeling, merciless.

## Galatians 2:20

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with the Messiah. I live, but it’s no longer just I, Messiah lives in me. And the life I now live in flesh, I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

## Mark 8:35

<sup>35</sup> [Jesus said] “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for the sake of me and of the good news will save it.”

## **Seeing Ourselves in the Reality of God (vv 9-11)**

In leading us to grasp what it means to be embraced by God's love, Paul takes us to amazing expression of intimacy with God expressed by Jesus in calling God "Abba" – a child's cry of "Papa," "Daddy." A sense of belonging/freedom/access with God of the universe.

Paul wants to help his ancient Roman readers (& us) get our minds / our way of thinking around what has actually happened in God's actions in Jesus and in giving His Spirit. It's the climax of his long journey with Israel and opens that history to the whole world. It deals with the sin and brokenness of all human life by bringing God's own life into it. In human Jesus, God takes our suffering, sin, and death into himself and creates life. For all who trust in him, God gives his Spirit, his ongoing presence and first taste of life.

We know & experience our vulnerability to sin and brokenness (what Paul calls "flesh," Rm 7). On our own that "flesh" inevitably succumbs. Like our physical "flesh," we die. But with God's Spirit (Breath, Life) dwelling in us, our life is enveloped in a more powerful reality.

Paul emphasizes that the whole deep reality of God, Messiah, Spirit is engaged with the whole complex mix that is us, mind, spirit, mortal body – our weakness and created potential. Here is real mysticism, uniting with God, not as an experience we create by discipline, but as a gift of God's faithfulness and love. Union with God, sharing Jesus' conquest of death.

## **But We Still are Bodies of Flesh! (vv 12-13)**

But Paul knows well that God doesn't immediately turn us humans into perfect embodiments of goodness. The struggle with anger, selfishness, injustice, etc. remains very real. In fact it becomes more real as we follow Jesus. "But maybe it's too much. We are flesh after all. We owe it to our physical flesh to let it go its own way. Focus on our spiritual elements."

Paul warn that there is a way of living that is really death. Our physical existence is complex. As physical beings we are created by God and God will overcome even the death of our physical bodies. But the dominance of our physical reality in our experience is also a great vulnerability. It blinds us to the reality and presence of God and substitutes little gods of power, desire, money, etc., idols of ourselves. That "flesh" rejects God's life and dies.

God's Spirit continues the work of Jesus death (8:3) in condemning sin itself. It challenges us to join in that work of renewing our distorted ways of thinking to grow toward God's love. God's Spirit gives the power for real transformation, living into the reality God has given.

## **The Journey through Life into God's Heart (vv 14-17)**

Paul's language echoes the archetypal struggle of Israel, delivered from slavery as God's "firstborn son" [Exod 4:22], but under the test of the wilderness wanting to go back to slavery in Egypt [Num 14:2-4]. It's the human story. We too travel through a life of hard challenges, with the values of the big/little gods of "flesh" celebrated all around us, pushing us into fear of circumstances and condemnation, trying to blind us to God.

But God's Spirit is the very life/Spirit of his Son. He boldly declares us to be God's sons and daughters. The God of the Universe, source of all life, who alone as creator can turn back the dissolution of death and create resurrection life, that God is our intimate "Abba."

We become heirs of that God, standing alongside Jesus, part of him. Everything belongs to us and we are called to live boldly in a world that has God's love at its deepest level. But like Jesus in the world he created, we also must share his suffering that flows from God's self-giving love. Present struggle, service, love, & sacrifice shape a life for God's glorious love.