

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 8: 12 - 14
PREACHED ON APRIL 26, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- So far in our study of chapter 8, the apostle Paul has given us two main truths about the Christian man, woman, and child. In verses 1-4, he told us that the Christian is freed from God's condemnation. No true believer will experience hell. Secondly, in verses 5-11, he told us that Christians have the Holy Spirit living inside them. What actually makes you a Christian and distinguishes you from an unbeliever is the Spirit of God coming to take residence in your life at your conversion, that very moment you became born again.
- We are going to study one more truth about the Christian from our text today. In verses 12-14, the apostle tells us that the believer is indebted to God's grace. He or she has an obligation to God. The Spirit that resides in the Christian places an obligation on the person.

➤ **THE OBLIGATION THE SPIRIT IMPOSES ON CHRISTIANS**

- One question I have always asked myself concerns the Christian experience I have seen among some evangelical Christians since we moved to this area. My family moved from Connecticut to this area because we wanted to give our children a Christian education and to be part of and serve in a confessionally reformed church. At the time we moved here, my family had only a few years' experience with a confessionally reformed church, and we had many expectations: to know the truth of God's Word, to apply it to our lives, and to learn from the examples of other Christians. Unfortunately, it didn't take us that long to question ourselves after our experience with some professing Christians, whether they understood Christianity, even though they took pride in their Christian heritage.
- The Bible clearly teaches that not everyone is a child of God. The Bible consistently divides humanity into two groups: we are either the children of God, or else we are the children of wrath, the children of the devil. Paul told us last week that one of the distinctions between a Christian and a non-Christian is the pattern of their life. What they live for, what their priorities are, and their daily behavior determine whether they are in Christ or outside of Christ.
- So many people are deceiving themselves and others about their Christianity. I know a pastor who always gave his congregation a false assurance of salvation

just because they came to church, but we must ask and examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. It is biblical to have an assurance of your salvation. It is biblical to examine yourself whether you are in the faith. How can you receive assurance that you are a child of God and your sins have been pardoned? How can you come to any degree of certainty that you have eternal life in Christ?

- These are troubling questions because some people have obviously deceived themselves into thinking that they are Christians, and they have deceived others about their condition. In both the Old and New Testaments, we have people who were deceived into thinking that they belonged to God and deceived others, too, but they weren't. King Saul, for a while, seemed like a godly man, but ended his life in the way ungodly people did. Despite knowing God's prohibition against consulting mediums, Saul deliberately chose to seek advice from a witch.
- Judas Iscariot is another example. Every one of the disciples and other early believers thought that he was a follower of Christ. Among the disciples, he held the position of a treasurer, the first ever; perhaps he was seen as a trusted person. Judas thought that he was a believer, just like the other disciples thought of him, but he wasn't. Another example is Demas, who served with Paul in his missionary endeavors. Everyone thought that Demas was a believer, but he was not. He forsook Paul because he loved this present world more than to spend eternity with God and believers.
- Simon the sorcerer is another example of a false believer. For a while, the disciples and other believers thought he was a believer, and Philip, the deacon, was deceived by Simon's dedication to the church, which showed all signs of conversion, and even baptized him. There are many examples of people who have deceived themselves into believing that they are Christians and have deceived others, too, about their Christianity. So how do you know whether you are in the faith?
- Does Christianity end at justification? Is Christianity all about saying I believe in Jesus Christ, making a profession of faith, and then living as you please? No, this is not the kind of Christianity the Bible presents. This kind of Christianity leads to producing false believers who are deceiving themselves and others. True Christianity starts with justification, and sanctification follows immediately afterward, but progressively. God justifies those He would sanctify. Our sanctification is the logical result of our justification - because we are saved by grace, we should live accordingly.
- God, the Holy Spirit who dwells in the believer, imposes an obligation on the Christian to ruthlessly deal with sin in his or her life. We have a responsibility to God to deal with our personal sins. Paul writes in verse 12: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it."
- Yes, the Spirit imposes an obligation on the believer, but what is the obligation? Our obligation is to put sin to death in ourselves. We are to put to death sin in our hearts, minds, and in all of our members, such as hands, feet, lips, etc. We are to

starve sin and kill it immediately we become conscious of its presence. Is that what we are doing as believers? What sins are you attacking in your life at the moment?

- We are not observers or only play a passive role in our Christian experience. God does all the work of our sanctification, but He does so through means. The means God uses are our diligent efforts to ruthlessly fight sin in our lives. Paul says we have an obligation, we are debtors, not to the flesh, because we owe our flesh, our sinful nature, nothing. The flesh has brought us only sorrow, pain, and many sinful activities in the past, and it can only bring us nothing but more sin and eternal death in the future. We therefore owe the Devil, the flesh, and worldly pleasures nothing.

➤ **THE DOABILITY OF LIVING A HOLY LIFE**

- Paul is calling on believers to ruthlessly deal with our personal sins because we have an obligation to God to do so, but the question we must ask ourselves is this: Is it doable? Can I deal violently with my own sins with the goal of killing them? Paul wrote in verse 13: “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”
- The best translation of what Paul wrote is this: If you keep on living according to the flesh, you are about to die, but if you keep on putting to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Another term for putting to death the misdeeds of the body is mortification of sin.
- When the apostle wrote that “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,” Paul is not addressing occasional sin or the occasional stumbling of the believer here. The apostle is commenting on a pattern of sinful behavior, a life characterized by sin, and he says anyone who makes sin his or her way of life is about to die. Anyone who walks in sin as his or her way of life is about to die.
- In the same verse, when he wrote, “but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,” he is making the point that those whom God has saved persevere in their righteousness to the end. They might stumble along the way, but their delight is to live a life characterized by personal holiness, and they demonstrate their delight by their perseverance in killing sin in their lives. Those around them and even they themselves notice a progression of holiness in their lives. Even when they stumble, they confess their sin, repent of their sin, and immediately get back on the pathway to personal holiness.
- When Paul asked believers to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh, he was not talking about perfection, but about our seriousness to ruthlessly deal with sins in our own lives the moment we become conscious of them. Paul is talking about taking our sanctification very seriously. Paul is not saying that dealing with sin is a one-time event. He uses the present tense for mortify, that is, put to death, which means dealing with sin is a continuous, repeated action. Battling with your sins requires an ongoing effort and progress, not a one-time crisis experience.

- The Bible nowhere teaches that sin should be dealt with passively; it must be dealt with actively. Sin must be attacked vigorously. We are to mortify the deeds of the flesh by actively putting to death or subduing the sinful habits, desires, and actions stemming from the corrupted nature. This must be a daily and ongoing process of ruthlessly attacking sin. This is the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- In Matthew 5: 29 and 30, Jesus said: "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." Also in Matthew 18:9, he said: "And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell."
- Jesus is saying to believers that if there is something dear to you, something you are used to and comfortable with, but that same thing is not helping you to obey God, not helping you in your sanctification, or in defeating sin, we must actively let it go. We are to give up everything; however precious they are, which comes between us and our sanctification. We are to declare war on our sins by seeing our sins as enemies that must be fought with all seriousness.
- Fighting sin ruthlessly is taught throughout the New Testament. Believers are called to take action, such as to "flee fornication," "cleanse yourselves," "resist the devil," "purify yourselves," etc., rather than passively waiting for an experience.

➤ **WHY DID THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPOSE THIS OBLIGATION ON CHRISTIANS?**

- Why must we not allow sin in our bodies after we have become Christians? Paul gave us a clear answer in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."
- Paul used the language of the Old Testament Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem. The Law of Moses said that once a year, on Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, the high priest must enter the Holy of Holies, also called the Most Holy Place, to bring the blood of sacrifices to atone for his sin and the national sins of the people of Israel. The presence of God, or Shekinah, was believed to dwell at the Holy of Holies, making it a sacred space. The Holy of Holies of the Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments.
- The place God dwelt was so holy that only the High Priest could enter, and he only did so once a year. That was the reality in the Old Testament, but we are now in the New Testament dispensation. Where is the temple of God today? Where can you find God's temple where He dwells? Paul says you are the

temple of God; the believer is the temple of God because the Spirit of God lives in every Christian. I carry God with me wherever I go because He lives in me. God goes with me when I go to a brothel to spend time with a prostitute, when I rob a bank. We have an obligation, therefore, to honor God with our bodies. Just like the temple contained the Ten Commandments, Christians also have the Ten Commandments written on our hearts, making us a true temple of God. We can't dishonor the holy temple by bringing sin day after day into it.

- If the Spirit lives in you, you cannot go on living your life as you want or by worldly standards, but you will live just as God wants you to live. The obligation we have is to ruthlessly deal with anything that stands in the way of our obedience to God. This means we must refuse to allow our eyes to wander and lead to lust. We must refuse to let our minds and thoughts contemplate any sinful activities. We must refuse to let our affections run after anything that will draw us away from Christ. We must deliberately reject any sinful thoughts; we must consistently and actively do everything in our power to weaken the grip sin has on us. Like a farmer, we must weed out anything that would lead us to disobey God and choke the good seeds God has planted in our hearts.
- My brothers and sisters, do we daily make sure we don't feed any sinful activities in our lives, or do we entertain them? Do we radically deal with sin in our lives daily? The radical dealing with sin is the obligation the Spirit imposes on every believer, because we are His temple.
- It is a misunderstanding of Christianity to preach about the sovereignty of God and all these great reformed doctrines and not focus on personal holiness as well. The goal of our salvation is to make us holy people. When we entertain sin in our personal lives, in the privacy of our lives, sooner or later it will show forth in the way we live the Christian life. Men and women fall in private before they fall in public. Jesus dwells on personal holiness. He tells us to cut off the hand that causes us to sin and pluck out the eye that defeats personal holiness. We must battle personal sins. This is the obligation the Holy Spirit has imposed on us.

➤ **THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SANCTIFICATION**

- Paul then, in verse 14, tells us the link between being led by the Spirit and ruthlessly dealing with personal sins. Paul wrote: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." Due to my Pentecostal upbringing, I have heard statements like, "He was in the Spirit." He or she is a very spiritual person. Most of the time, what they meant was that the person described as spiritual prays in tongues, says meaningless, repetitive words, fasts for several days, memorizes Scripture, and is actively involved in church activities, among others.
- When Paul described a spiritual person in this verse and in several parts of Scripture, he was not referring to anyone who does any of these things taught by our Pentecostal and Charismatic friends as spiritual. A spiritual person or the person who is led by the Spirit is the man, woman, or child who is actively at war

with his or her own sins. The spiritual person is serious about getting rid of sin in their own heart, mind, and life. The spiritual person has the Holy Spirit, and the mark of the Spirit's presence is the desire of the person to live a holy life and to pursue holiness. That is what it means to be led by the Holy Spirit.

- As a Christian, you might encounter circumstances in your life, and the Holy Spirit might guide you on how to deal with them. The Holy Spirit, therefore, provides guidance. However, what Paul meant when he wrote in verse 14: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God," is not talking primarily about the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Again, it refers here to the Holy Spirit's leading in warfare against sin, and this is how the Holy Spirit mainly leads in the Bible. Paul is referring here to the Holy Spirit of God leading by providing moral governance over our behavior.
- The Holy Spirit leads by empowering the Christian to wage war against their own sins. The Holy Spirit leads us by enabling us to put to death the deeds of the flesh by our daily earnest battle against sin. The Spirit leads us to mortify sin in our own lives. If this is a characteristic of your life, you can be sure you are a Christian.
- The church is not made up of perfect people, but it is a place where imperfect people are being progressively perfected. Even if by a miracle you have discovered the perfect church, I can guarantee you that the moment you join it, it becomes imperfect. Despite our imperfection, God is using every means and resource at our disposal to perfect us for the second coming of Christ. We therefore have an obligation from God to make it a priority to battle sins in our lives as believers. It is said that you are either killing sin or sin is killing you. Paul says when you keep to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live.

➤ **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM STRUGGLING WITH A PARTICULAR SIN?**

- It is common to hear from Christians, even among evangelical Christians, who feel absolutely hopeless about their sins. Some Christians pity themselves because of some sins that still afflict them. You will hear them say things like. "You know I just can't help myself with this sin." "I have this weakness, and I don't seem to overcome it." "I can't break away from this habit of sin I have struggled with for many years." This habit of sin, some Christians feel absolutely hopeless to deal with, might be drunkenness, sexual impurity, gambling, anger, slander, self-centeredness – me first and me only.
- Paul, however, doesn't agree with anyone who claims to be a Christian and yet feels absolutely hopeless that he or she can come out of a particular sin and has therefore given up trying to stop it. Paul says, "Wake up, you have an obligation, a responsibility to live a holy life, and you are not alone. God has given you the means, a helper, the indwelling Holy Spirit, to help you kill that tormenting sin. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to live a holy life. The Psalmist wrote: "He

restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:3. If you are without the Holy Spirit, then you are not a Christian.

- The first thing we must understand about our sins is that they grieve the Holy Spirit living in us. Sin is not so serious, first of all, because of what it does to us; rather, sin is serious because of what it does to God. The believer who continues to sin is grieving the Holy Spirit of God living inside of him, whose primary work is to lead us into holiness.
- No true Christian is absolutely hopeless in fighting sin in his or her life. Before our conversion, we were absolutely hopeless in fighting sin in our lives because we were dead in our trespasses and sins. But in Romans 6:14 the apostle tells us, 'sin shall not have dominion over you.' The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as believers gives us the power to mortify the deeds of the body. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to put to death the sinful actions that come from our physical nature. It's an active process where believers, through the power of the Holy Spirit, continually put to death sinful desires and actions. This is not a one-time experience but an ongoing responsibility of the Christian.
- The Christian is also not absolutely hopeless in fighting sin; he or she desires to ruthlessly deal with it because he or she has a new nature. Because he or she has a new nature, he or she has new motives and new desires. The believer loves to do good works. God is working in the Christian, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Christians are also God's workmanship, according to Scripture, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.
- The Holy Spirit leads the believer by empowering him or her to abstain from sin, by stopping it and, in some instances, stopping it at once and never doing it again. You must deal with sin immediately you become conscious of it. Never let it get even a moment's foothold. The same spirit empowers you to avoid sinful company. You will have no pleasure in fellowshiping with people living according to the flesh. If you know people have a bad influence over you, just avoid them. You can also mortify sin by keeping the body under control, such as not eating too much, not drinking too much alcohol, and not becoming lazy by sleeping too much.

➤ **CONCLUSION**

- Paul tells us that there are eternal consequences for continuing to live according to the flesh, and there are consequences too if you keep on putting to death the misdeeds of the flesh. He wrote that if you keep on living according to the flesh, you are about to die. Paul is not talking about physical death here but death beyond the grave. This is death, which lasts forever and forever in hell, eternal damnation.
- He also mentioned that anyone who keeps on putting to death the misdeeds of the flesh, sinful activities, will live. He is talking about eternal life with God, access to the Tree of Life, dwelling in God's presence forever, and never

perishing. This is not the first time Paul has mentioned the eternal consequences of how we choose to live our lives on this earth. In Romans 2:5-10, the apostle wrote: “5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

- Sin is seeking your death and my death, and we have to kill it, or it kills us. Paul says you are about to die if you keep on living according to the flesh, so the logical thing to do is to put to death sin before it kills you. If you are trying to put to death all sins in your life and even keep one, it will still kill you because the wages of sin is death, regardless of how many sins or the severity of the sin. The only effective way to deal with your sins is to deal with them as a whole and work to kill all of them. We don’t pick and choose which sin to deal with and which one to keep. Paul is not saying that we will succeed in killing all the sins in our lives, but he exhorts us to ruthlessly keep on killing any sin we become aware of. He is calling for perseverance in ruthlessly dealing with our personal sins.
- In Colossians 3:5-6, Paul wrote: “5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.” He also wrote in Galatians 5:24: “24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” He calls on us to crucify sin, kill it.
- About a year ago, in Iraq, a 50-year-old man named Al-Din bought a lion to raise and tame at home. A few days after he bought the lion to tame, the local police reported that he was attacked by the lion in his own garden and died immediately. The neighbors witnessed that the lion had eaten a large portion of the man’s body, and because the lion refused to leave the remains, they were forced to shoot and kill it. The beast, by its nature, is to kill, but the man thought that he could tame it by feeding it, playing with it, and entertaining it. Just a few days later, the beast showed its true nature by killing the owner.
- This is what sin does to anyone who continues to entertain sin in his or her life. When you keep on living in the flesh, when you even keep one sin in your life and do not persevere in killing it, it turns on you and mauls you. We are to kill sin before it kills us. Sin is a beast that, by its nature, kills anyone who plays with it, and it doesn’t exclude anyone once you allow it in your life.