

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday After Trinity, June 26, 2022**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 409, 58:7, 375, 408, 413:5

Lessons: Genesis 3:1-15, Galatians 3:21-29, Mark 1:29-39.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-17.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You should all know about obligations – things you must do and are obligated to do. The word in the Greek New Testament in our text is simply “debtors”. No matter how we take on a debt, it is something that must be paid. There are things we have to do, things we are indebted to do.

The apostle Paul is writing to Christians, brothers in the faith, and he writes: ***“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.”***

Today let’s talk about

**OBLIGATIONS AND DEBT**

- 1. When you follow the obligation to the sinful flesh, the result is death.**
- 2. Children of God, believers in Christ, have an obligation to the Spirit of God, because**
- 3. You have received the Spirit of Sonship.**

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul is talking about the struggle within the Christian between the flesh and the Spirit of God at work in the Christian.

Because Christ has set us free from the debt of sin, the debt that sin causes, we have an obligation.

Let’s talk for a minute about two debts or obligations. First, we are all in debt to God for redeeming us to give us eternal life in heaven, but that is a debt we can never repay. God saved us and we cannot repay that debt. We can’t pay for our salvation.

Secondly, we have a debt, an obligation to live according to the Spirit of God, to live as God wants us to live. Like the Apostle Paul we are slaves, servants of Christ.

The obligation, the debt he is talking about here is a debt to live according to what the Spirit of God tells us. And, of course, what the Spirit of God tells us is clear, plain, and obvious. The Spirit of God speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. We know that ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”*** 2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) We also know that such ***“prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*** 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV)

The unbeliever, the one who has not learned what Jesus Christ has done for him or her or has learned of it but rejects it and refuses to believe it is bound to the sinful nature. Such a person has an obligation to the sinful nature within him and her. This includes an obligation to Satan, who controls all that is evil in the world, and who controls everyone in the unbelieving world.

Though some may make a pretense of being “good people” and try to do things that will make people think highly of them, without faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, it is all vain, mockery, deception and hypocrisy.

The discussion of the contrast you heard about last Sunday continues today. The contrast is plainly life or death. The Word of God is clear: ***“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.”***

Why? ***“Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*** You are not led by the Spirit of God because you decided to believe and pulled yourself up by your own bootstraps. You did not come to God

by yourself! You needed God the Holy Ghost working in you to bring you to faith and to kill, to crucify the sinful deeds and words and thoughts of the body.

Paul tells us about what people are obligated to do. If we live according to sinful nature, we will die.

But on the other hand, if we live according to the Holy Spirit, this shows that we are sons of God. God works faith and feeds faith with his Holy, inspired Word. If we live according to the Spirit of God, we ***“put to death the misdeeds of the body.”***

In fact, we don't just live but we even become Sons of God. We are adopted sons of God with all the blessings as if we were natural born Sons of God. And the Word of God is clear about how we become Sons of God. We read in Galatians: ***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*** Galatians 3:26-27 (NIV)

In our text, Paul talks about what you really got from God: You did not get a spirit, an attitude, a mindset that makes you a slave to sin again. Instead, it is a spirit of sonship.

Our text goes on to talk about sonship. ***“But you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”***

The Holy Spirit has freed us from death and has given us life. What kind of life should that now be? The answer, of course, is obvious: It is a life lived in close connection with the Spirit, who has given us life, not just physical life here on earth, but eternal life in heaven with Christ.

While we are here on earth we have an obligation to live by the Holy Spirit's leading. ***“If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”***

All Christians have a strong obligation because of benefits and blessings received. But not to the flesh, to live in accordance with the flesh, as natural man tends to believe that his life should be. By nature man's life is dedicated to the gratification of the desires of the flesh, and he is obligated to live in accordance with its demands.

We who have been called by God to be his children are debtors to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God. But if Christians through the power of the Holy Ghost in them, will put to death the practices of the sinful flesh, then they will live and be preserved for eternal life, receiving from God holiness, happiness, and everlasting bliss.

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. Only those who have the Spirit of God are really members of Christ. And this Spirit moves, leads, urges the Christians on.

In and through faith in Christ they have been adopted by God. He is their Father and they are his children by adoption,

This relationship to God is a pleasant, happy, blessed relationship. It invites and creates confidence. That confidence leads you to talk to your heavenly father in prayer and ask him as dear children ask their dear Father.

Every man by nature leads a life of fear, like that of a slave who fears the anger and punishment of his master. If you really think of your greatest fear, isn't it being separated from God eternally in hell, a place of indescribable torment? And of course, the unbeliever especially fears death, thinking that is the end. But the real end doesn't start until after earthly death. That end is eternal separation from God in hell and from all that is good.

Jews would be in fear and doubt as to whether they kept the laws of God well enough because God demands perfect obedience. But the Spirit which the believers have received is the Spirit of adoption, that of being made the children of God. The Holy Ghost brings about this relationship of the believers toward God, and he assures them with the confidence worked by faith that God has adopted them as his children for the sake of Jesus, and in this confidence they cry out to him: ***“Abba, Father”***. Paul here uses the Hebrew word which is in use to this day. Just as a child would cry out to his earthly father, recognizing him as his protector and provider, so the child of God calls out to God in child-like faith. It is an earnest cry, full of trust, and faith. ***“We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”*** 1 John 4:13 (NIV)

Thus the Spirit of God in us, in teaching us to trust in God with simple, childlike faith, gives us a sure witness, a definite proof and certainty, that we are the children of God. It is a conviction which does not come

from ourselves because no man can earn or have it by his own reason and strength, The Spirit of God alone can and does give that conviction, that confidence.

The very fact that this witnessing of the Spirit is entirely independent of our own feelings, of our state of mind at any given time, makes it certain and reliable that we are dear children of our heavenly Father. But if we are children, then we are also heirs. We read in Galatians: ***“So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”*** Galatians 4:7 (NIV)

If we are the children of God, then we are also sure of sharing in the inheritance of all the saints. We are sure of the possession of the inheritance of Christ Himself, with whom we are joint-heirs by the fact of our adoption. As children of God we have a claim to the bliss of heaven, as God has prepared it for His only-begotten Son.

If we suffer with him, we will also be glorified with him. Because Christians are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, they are bound to endure afflictions of many kinds for his name's sake. We read in Mark's Gospel that Jesus ***“called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”*** Mark 8:34 (NIV) Bearing a cross in following Jesus is the inevitable lot of those who are awaiting the glory of eternal bliss.

And so we see the beautiful, comforting doctrine of the adoption of the Christians as children of God, of their inheritance of eternal life. This serves to admonish them to die unto the flesh and to live by the Spirit. The Son of God is our brother. We are in line for all the blessings the Father gives to his Son. Our inheritance is a sure thing – as is the certainty that we also will have to suffer if we follow the Spirit's lead in a sinful and perverse world. And yet, the inevitability of suffering is not a cause for concern. The sufferings of this present life are no match for the glorious future that awaits all believers in Christ. In fact, Paul compares any such sufferings with the glory to come in the very next words of Romans: ***“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*** Romans 8:18 (NIV)

As we await that glory, let us daily live in the Spirit! Amen.