



Romans 8:12-17 (ESV)

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:12-17 (HCSB)

¹² So then, brothers, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, ¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ All those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “*Abba*, Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children, ¹⁷ and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*¹

Romans 8:12-17

8:12 A conclusion is drawn from the previous verses. Since Christians live in the Spirit, they are no longer captive to the flesh and should no longer live **according to the flesh**.

8:13 Those who give their lives over to the flesh will face eternal death, but those who slay the desires of the flesh through the power of the Spirit will enjoy eternal life. God and believers each have a role in sanctification: it must be **by the Spirit** and his power, but **you put to death** shows that one must take an active role in battling sinful habits.

8:14 Those **who are led by the Spirit of God** (i.e., those who yield to the Spirit; see notes on [Gal. 5:16](#); [5:17](#); [5:18](#)) are those who are God's sons, i.e., they truly belong to his family.

8:15 Christians are no longer slaves to sin but are adopted as sons into God's family, as evidenced by the Spirit that cries out within them that God is their father. **sons**. See note on [Gal. 3:26](#). **Abba** is the Aramaic word for Father. Paul's use of the term likely stems from Jesus' addressing God as Abba ([Mark 14:36](#)).

8:16 The **witness** of the **Spirit** gives the Christian's **spirit** assurance that he or she is God's child.

8:17 All who are God's **children** are also **heirs** of his promises, but a willingness to follow Christ in suffering is another sign of being God's children.

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 8".

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible²

Romans 8:12-17

8:12-13 Freedom brings an obligation. If a person lives to the fallen nature, **death** is his destiny. The Christian is activated by the Holy **Spirit** to stop doing the sinful deeds of the body. He can mortify the flesh and its activities, and he lives.

8:14 The leading of **God's Spirit** is His providential sanctification ([Ps 23:3](#)). It is common to all sons, it is constant, and it will bring the believer to glory ([Rm 8:17](#)). The leading of the Spirit is not mystical direction or ecstasy. It is the Spirit's empowerment for mortification of fleshly desires ([v. 13](#)).

8:15-16 The Holy **Spirit** is not an agent of bondage but is instead the means of our **adoption** into God's family. By the Spirit we have a consciousness that God is our **Father**. It is the mark of a Christian to cry out to his Father in prayer. The Spirit also gives us assurance of our status and therefore of our salvation.

huiiothesia

Greek Pronunciation	[hwee ah theh SEE ah]
HCSB Translation	adoption
Uses in Romans	3
Uses in the NT	5
Focus passages	Romans 8:15,23

The Greek noun *huiiothesia* literally means *a son placing* and comes from *huios* (*son*) and *tithemi* (*to place*). The term refers to the legal act whereby a child is accepted into a family on an equal basis—including the same rights of inheritance—with any physical offspring of the parents. Although *huiiothesia* was quite common in Greek literature and *adoption* was widely practiced in the Greco-Roman world, only Paul used *huiiothesia* in the NT, and then only five times. Paul explained that to Israel belonged "the adoption" ([Rm 9:4](#)), which probably refers to the fact that God called Israel His son on occasion. In the other four passages where Paul used *huiiothesia*, the term refers to those who by faith in Christ have been accepted into God's family ([Rm 8:15](#); [Gal 4:5](#)), which was His plan before creation ([Eph 1:5](#)). Believers do not receive their full inheritance as sons of God until final salvation, "the redemption of our bodies" at the resurrection ([Rm 8:23](#)).

8:17 All God's **children** are His **heirs** and coheirs with Christ. We are joined to Him in suffering but also in our future destiny. As He is in glory ([1Tim 3:16](#); [Heb 1:3](#); [2:7,9-10](#)) so we will be **glorified with Him**.

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 8".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 8:12-17

8:13 When we turn away from sin's appeal in the Holy Spirit's power, regarding sin as dead, we can ignore temptation when it comes (see [6:11](#); [Galatians 5:24](#)).

8:14-17 Paul uses adoption to illustrate the believer's new relationship with God. In Roman culture, the adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate child in his new family. He became a full heir to his new father's estate. Likewise, when a person becomes a Christian, he or she gains all the privileges and responsibilities of a child in God's family. One of these outstanding privileges is being led by the Spirit (see [Galatians 4:5, 6](#)). We may not always feel as though we belong to God, but the Holy Spirit is our witness. His inward presence reminds us of who we are and encourages us with God's love ([5:5](#)).

8:14-17 We are no longer like "fearful slaves"; instead, we are the Master's children. What a privilege! Because we are God's children, we share in great treasures as co-heirs. God has already given us his best gifts: his Son, his Holy Spirit, forgiveness, and eternal life; and he encourages us to ask him for whatever we need.

8:17 There is a price for being identified with Jesus. Along with being "heirs of God's glory," Paul also mentions the suffering that Christians must face. What kinds of suffering are we to endure? For first-century believers, there was economic and social persecution, and some even faced death. We, too, must pay a price for following Jesus. In many parts of today's world, Christians face pressures just as severe as those faced by Christ's first followers. Even in countries where Christianity is tolerated or encouraged, Christians must not become complacent. To live as Jesus did—serving others, giving up one's rights, resisting pressures to conform to the world—always exacts a price. Nothing we suffer, however, can compare to the great price that Jesus paid to save us.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1908.

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Romans 8:12-17

8:12 Because of all that Christ has done and is going to do for us, we are under **no obligation whatsoever to do what the sinful nature urges** us to do. We are to refuse the drives and desires of our still attractive but crucified sinful nature, to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. The old, sinful nature may present its demands, based upon the past, but we have no obligation to cooperate.

8:13-14 Our sinful nature shows itself through the vehicle of the body. Therefore, we must **turn from** following the sinful nature and its **evil deeds**, the practices and habitual responses of the sinful nature. This is an action to be done, a moral decision to be made—every day we are to turn away from the desires that draw us away from God. The Jews already considered themselves to be **children of God** because of their heritage; but Paul explains that the term has new meaning. True children of God are those **who are led by the Spirit of God** as evidenced in their lifestyle. Believers not only have the Spirit (**8:9**); they are also led by the Spirit.

8:15-16 This slavery to fear most likely refers to life under the law, obedience that was concerned for scrupulous exactness with a constant fear of failure. Paul implies that believers are **not to be like slaves** who cower in fear before their master. Instead, we are **adopted** children who can call God our **Father**. We can know this is true because the **Holy Spirit** within tells us it is so. The Holy Spirit not only adopts us as God's children, but he also assures us of our family status (see [Galatians 4:6](#)). The Spirit within changes our obedience to God from slavery to a relationship where God is both our Master and our loving Father. The Scriptures indicate that believers can expect inward confirmation of the faith by the Spirit. Our very capacity and desire to approach God as our Father is itself evidence of the Spirit's witness with our spirit that we are children of God. We are motivated by the Spirit.

8:17 The Jews were convinced that they were the Lord's inheritance, and that as such they would inherit the Promised Land. Paul explains that God's promise includes all who believe in Christ—both Jews and Gentiles. Because we are God's **children**, we are his heirs and **will share his treasures**. The Jews thought this was to be the Promised Land—instead, it is another "land," God's Kingdom.

We are God's children only because of Christ's suffering on our behalf. As believers, therefore, **if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering**. We will enjoy our future inheritance if our relationship with Christ is genuine enough so that we will face suffering for his sake.

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 607-608.

Study and Discussion Questions



Life Through the Spirit - [Romans 8:1-17](#) (Part 2: vs 12-17)

Topics: [Desires](#), [Holy Spirit](#), [Law](#), [Sin](#), [Spiritual Rebirth](#), [Weaknesses](#)

Open It

1. What impact can a good father or a bad father have on a person's life?

Explore It

2. What kind of obligation do Christians have? ([8:12-14](#))
3. What happens to the person who lives according to the sinful nature? ([8:13](#))
4. By what means can a person find life? ([8:13](#))
5. What is true of people who are led by God's Spirit? ([8:14](#))
6. What kind of spirit do God's children have? ([8:15](#))
7. What are the benefits of being a child of God? ([8:15-17](#))

Get It

8. What have you seen the Spirit of God do in a person's life?
9. What does unchecked sin and selfishness produce in a person's life?
10. How does seeing and experiencing God as a loving Father change your understanding of what it means to live as a Christian?
11. What benefits does God give to His children?

Apply It

12. What changes have you been resisting in your life that you are now willing to allow your loving heavenly Father to complete?