

# FAITH OVER FEAR

By John Richardson

## SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:12–17

*[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.*

## OBSERVATION

Paul wrote to the church of Rome with strong words; some regard Romans as one of the weightiest books in all of the New Testament. It is clear that Paul had a heart that was concerned about the church of Rome. Here Paul wanted the church to focus on repenting from sin and walking in faith as a son/daughter of God. Having our debt paid by Christ and being freed to walk in the Spirit, we no longer have to be paralyzed by fear. Fear is an incredible burden in the midst of a growing disease.

- Living in the Spirit is aligning your heart to the plans and purposes of God over our own desires. John Owens echoes the idea with his quote: “Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” Sin is not just mistakes or accidents but rebellion to our holy God, so much that we can live in sin and be enslaved by it. Some of the sinfulness in our hearts becomes a breeding ground for fear—fear that we may lose a job, fear that we may get sick, fear that God will miss us in His plan. Fear is a result of trusting in circumstances over God (vv. 12-13).
- Paul encourages the church, “You do not have to fall back into fear.” We have nothing to fear in this life because we are in the sovereign hand of God. God is not distant; He is near as a Father. We cry Abba/Father because we know God is bigger than fear or sin. As sons and daughters of God, we can continually cry for help, understanding that He will care for us.

- The position of heir is incredible; from dead sinner to pending ruler with Christ is a huge swing of position. Christ suffered and died so that we could be part of the family of God, so that we would live in a way that looks different from the world. Christ's death and resurrection creates a path toward obedience to God. The lives of believers can be images of the kingdom of God when people do not live in fear, but trust the plan of God with love (v. 15)
- The most interesting part of this passage is the final verse "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." The path to becoming an heir with Christ is suffering. Suffering is the path because it was the path of Jesus. When Jesus was obedient to God it cost Him relationships, social standing, and eventually His life. Loving others beyond fear and turning from sin is the path to suffering and ultimately the path with Jesus.

## OBEDIENCE

Working to suppress fear by trusting God as our Father is key, especially during uncertain circumstances. Paul encouraged this church to live differently than the world and embrace the path of suffering. Self-preservation has to bow in submission to obedience to God. How will you live a life that is in line with the work of Jesus?

- Continue to volunteer in the community. People still need help passing out meals at schools and working with the homeless. Will you choose the path of potential exposure to display Christ?
- Turn from the sin in your life. Confess the sin to God and ask a friend/family member to hold you accountable. Seeking forgiveness is the first step in trusting God.
- Do not turn back to slavery or fear in our times of distress and potential pandemic. Spend time asking God what He desires for you to do in this time.
- Seek Christ with the time that He has given you this day or week. Jesus is worth pursuing.

## PRAYER

Pray for an increase of faith. Request the help of your Father to suppress fear and walk in obedience. Confess sin and embrace the forgiveness of Abba.