

## Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF  
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Abba, Father...

Romans 8:5-17

Here's our outline for this morning.

**A sobering observation** (8:5-8)

**A special occupation** (8:9-11)

And...

**A spiritual obligation** (8:12-17)

Woody Hayes, the extraordinarily successful ex-coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes was famous for his grind it out three yards at a time offense. It was affectionately dubbed by sport's broadcasters as the **"three yards and a cloud of dust"** offense. Once a sportswriter asked him, **"Hey Woody, how come you guys never pass?"** **"I do not like for my teams to pass,"** Woody answered. **Whenever you throw a pass only three things can happen and two of them are bad.** Now what he meant by that is that when you throw a pass in a football game, you might complete the pass or the pass intercepted could get intercepted or be incomplete. As far as Woody Hayes was concerned, there was only a one in three chance that anything good could come out of a forward pass so he stuck to the run.

Anyway, one of my ex-seminary professors, Donald Sunukjian, thinking that Woody's words were really cute, decided once to write a journal article for pastors entitled **"Four Things Happen When You Alliterate, And Four of Them**

**Are Bad.”<sup>1</sup>** What he meant by that was he didn’t think it was a good idea to make outline points start with the same letter and he certainly did not think it a good idea to extend alliteration beyond a single word. Instead, he thought Bible teachers ought to sift through all the best possible words in the universe and make their choice of words based upon absolute precision and clarity of thought and not upon assonance or sound.

Of course, I totally agree with that, so...what I have decided to do today is to use an alliterative outline this morning to discuss Romans 8:5-17. Here it is.

**A sobering observation (8:5-8)**

**A special occupation (8:9-11)**

And...

**A spiritual obligation (8:12-17)**

Now I do want to “**fess up**” and tell you why I’m resorting to this kind of forced alliteration. It is because Paul’s argument gets pretty complex here and I want you to be able both to remember what is actually being said and where we are in that argument as we go through the text this morning. I thought perhaps the fact that I never use alliteration might seem so strange that it might help you remember what is happening in our text.

Now last time we considered together the incomprehensible thought that there is now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We also took note that what Paul was really doing was taking back up the argument he had left off at the end of chapter five. We even talked about the parallel structure and meaning of the Romans 5:1 and Romans 8:1 and we discussed how it was that the word “**condemnation**” meant more than just an accusation. When first century writers used the word “**condemnation**” they meant both the accusation and the

punishment attached to that accusation. So when Paul uses **“condemnation”** here he’s not just talking about being accused, he’s talking about being executed. And what he says is this, **“There is now no condemnation, no accusation and no execution of any sentence of judgment against those in Christ. No, not any at all.”**

Now we saw that last time and my hope is that you’ll remember just how emphatic the Romans 8:1 actually was. Anyway, what we saw there was that we are out from under God’s condemnation and in Romans 8:2-4 Paul took the time to explain just how it was that our great God worked that out. Paul explained that there was no longer any condemnation toward us because the wrath of God was poured out on Christ Jesus as our representative and our sin offering. But Paul didn’t stop there. He went even beyond that to explain that not only did Christ Jesus bear our sin but also that He bore our sin and redeemed us from sin’s penalty and curse for a purpose. And what was that purpose? That purpose was that now...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:4...** the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us...

Now what does that mean? That is, what does it mean for the right requirements of the law to be fully met in us?

- 1) DOES THAT MEAN THAT JESUS BOTH DIED AS OUR SIN OFFERING AND LIVED A LIFE OF PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT WAS IMPUTED TO US AND THE RESULT OF THAT IS THAT THE LAW WAS PERFECTLY FULFILLED ON OUR BEHALF IN CHRIST ALONE?
- 2) DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS DIED AS OUR SIN OFFERING AND THE END RESULT OF THAT IS THAT NOW EITHER ACTUALLY ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW OR SOMEWHAT ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW AND THAT OUR INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE IS NOW MADE COMPLETE BECAUSE OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST?
- 3) DOES IT MEAN THAT THAT JESUS DIED AS OUR SIN OFFERING AND THAT THE END RESULT OF THAT IS THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT KEEPING THE LAW ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BECAUSE WE ARE NOW PEOPLE OF THE SPIRIT AND CAN THUS LIVE QUITE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE LAW AND ANY WAY WE WANT?

- 1) Does that mean that Jesus both died as our sin offering and lived a life of perfect righteousness that was imputed to us and the result of that is that the law was perfectly fulfilled on our behalf in Christ alone?
- 2) Or does it mean that Jesus died as our sin offering and the end result of that is that now either actually able to keep the law or somewhat able to keep the law and that our incomplete obedience is now made complete because of our union with Christ?
- 3) Or does it mean that that Jesus died as our sin offering and that the end result of that is that we don't have to worry about keeping the law one way or the other because we are now people of the Spirit and can thus live quite independently of the law and any way we want?

Well obviously, there are a hundred other possible permutations beyond these three but I've chosen these three possibilities because they are sufficiently different to allow us to think through some of the issues together.

I have purposely tried to avoid making anyone of them a simple straw man to knock over and yet I have to say that I am quick to dismiss one of my own options. What I mean by that is that I don't think number three is an option. It seems to me that verse 12 makes it pretty clear that we cannot live just any old way we choose but rather are under an obligation to live in a very specific manner and that that specific manner is a way of life contrary to those who live after the flesh or to say it another way live only for self-gratification. You can see that in Romans 8:12:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:12**...Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

Now if that is the case and there are only these two options, which option would you choose? Do you see what I am asking? Let me repeat the two remaining options again.

- 1) DOES THAT MEAN THAT JESUS BOTH DIED AS OUR SIN OFFERING AND LIVED A LIFE OF PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT WAS IMPUTED TO US AND THE RESULT OF THAT IS THAT THE LAW WAS PERFECTLY FULFILLED ON OUR BEHALF IN CHRIST ALONE?
- 2) DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS DIED AS OUR SIN OFFERING AND THE END RESULT OF THAT IS THAT NOW EITHER ACTUALLY ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW OR SOMEWHAT ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW AND THAT OUR INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE IS NOW MADE COMPLETE BECAUSE OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST?

- 1) Does that mean that Jesus both died as our sin offering and lived a life of perfect righteousness that was imputed to us and the result of that is that the law was perfectly fulfilled on our behalf in Christ alone?
- 2) Or does it mean that Jesus died as our sin offering and the end result of that is that now either actually able to keep the law or somewhat able to keep the law and that our incomplete obedience is now made complete because of our union with Christ?

Now I bring this issue not because I am trying to set up any kind of false antithesis or because I am even trying to rope you into making a decision between one of these two options but rather because those are two options you will most often see in the commentaries.

For example, Calvin holds the first view:

They who understand that the renewed, by the Spirit of Christ, fulfill the law, introduce an *idea* wholly alien to the meaning of Paul; for the faithful, while they sojourn in this world, never make *so much progress*, that the justification of the law becomes in them full or complete. This then must be applied to forgiveness; for when the obedience of Christ is accepted for us, the law is satisfied, so that we are counted just.<sup>2</sup>

Now what that means is that Calvin thinks the law is fulfilled in us when the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to us or put on our account. It may be that we make some progress in sanctification but the issue of our fulfilling the law here is not dependent upon our works in any sense but rather upon what

Christ did and what was imputed to us. But that is not just the view of Calvin; it is also the view of John Owen, the great Puritan:

And that which we plead is, that the obedience and righteousness of Christ imputed unto us is that whereon we are judged and esteemed to have answered the righteousness of the law. And *because of that* we argue, *that* there be no other way whereby the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us *other than that* the righteousness of Christ *be* imputed unto us; *this* then is that the sole righteousness whereby we are justified in the sight of God.<sup>3</sup>

And wonderful Scotch commentator, Robert Haldane, holds the same view as well:

God not only sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He might punish sin in that nature in which it had been committed, but that all which the law demands might by Him be fulfilled in those who are united to Him; for which purpose He obeyed its precepts as well as fulfilled its penalty.<sup>4</sup>

And it is the view of the great American Presbyterian Charles Hodge:

Finally, as intimated in the above quotation from Calvin, it is not true that, the righteousness of the law, in the sense of complete obedience, is fulfilled in believers. The interpretation which makes the apostle say, that we are delivered from the law by the work of Christ, in order that the complete obedience which the law demands might be rendered by us, supposes what all Scripture and experience contradicts.<sup>5</sup>

Now, why would have it have been so important for Calvin, Owen, Haldane and Hodge and this other great men to hold their view here so fervently. Well, I think for one thing they are trying to emphasize the notion that occurs in verse 3 that...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:3**...For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did...

That is, they are trying to argue that the passage really does speak to the Christian's security and that Christ's obedience is counted as our obedience and the fact that we struggle with sin ought not to do us in. In other words, they are trying to argue that justification is not, in fact, by sanctification alone but by faith alone. And if you consider the historical times in which they lived, in which they were slugging it out with the Roman Catholic Church over the doctrine of justification and whether our salvation was by faith alone or by some synthesis of faith and righteous deeds, you can see why they would have argued the way they did. So then that settles it, right?

Well, maybe not, because against these great and wonderful scholars are the modern day Calvinists, men like F.F. Bruce, John Stott, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James Montgomery Boice and R.C. Sproul. What they argue is that Paul is not talking about justification and the imputed righteousness of Christ but rather the practical sanctification issues faced by the believer. As a result they hold the second view that that Jesus died as our sin offering and the end result of that is that now either actually able to keep the law or somewhat able to keep the law and that our incomplete obedience is now made complete because of our union with Christ?

F.F. Bruce writes this:

God's commands have now become God's enablings.<sup>6</sup>

Now what he means by that is that the Spirit of God has done such a work in us that we are now able to keep God's law or at least partially keep God's law and that that was in fact the very purpose of Christ's death and atoning work. And that is exactly the view of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Listen to what he says:

His power is now in me delivering me, and enabling **'the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled'** in me. That is the argument; that is what Paul is saying. The life and power of Christ, the reign of grace, are now in us as Christians, and working in us actively. Thus it becomes possible for me to 'bear fruit unto God', to 'serve' in a new way, **'in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter'**. Thus, the righteousness of the Law *is* fulfilled in me...The learned commentators with whom I am disagreeing (by that he means Calvin and Hodge) are at great pains elsewhere to say that you must never separate justification and sanctification, yet they themselves separate them here by saying that the theme here is justification. But you cannot be justified without being placed **'in Christ'**, and the moment you are in Him sanctification has already started within you.<sup>7</sup>

And James Montgomery Boice, my beloved Boice, writes this:

All this is directed toward one goal, which is that **'the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.'** What Paul says here is...that God saved us apart from good works precisely so we might be able to do good works. We could also say, since Jesus died to save us *from* and not merely *in* our sins that the purpose of Jesus' incarnation and death was that all who are saved by him might live holy lives.<sup>8</sup>

And John Stott says this:

It is this phrase, which directs our attention to law-abiding Christian behavior as the ultimate purpose of God's action through Christ. In this case the law's 'just requirement' refers to the commandments of the moral law viewed as a whole, which God wants to be 'fulfilled' (*i.e.* 'obeyed', not 'satisfied') in his people... This is not perfectionism; it is simply to say that obedience is a necessary and possible aspect of Christian discipleship. Although the law cannot secure this obedience, the Spirit can.<sup>9</sup>

Now, obviously they are passionate about the Christian being able to do good works and about the absolute essential fact of that actually occurring. But when you read these kinds of statements I think you ought to ask yourself, **"Why do**



**they hold this view so passionately?"** I have to tell you, I think the reason they are so passionate about this issue is because they see the overwhelming scope of lawlessness of in our age. You see the Reformers had to deal with the notion that men thought they could work their way to heaven and were, in fact, trying to do just that. They had to fight the notion that men thought they were justified by sanctification alone. But these modern Calvinist commentators see a completely different issue and are compelled, I think, to deal with it and this is the thought they are fighting, that man is justified by death alone. In other words, in our culture and time in history men think all that has to happen for them to get to heaven is for them to die. And these men want to make it clear that Paul says that a genuine justifying faith is not like that at all. They want it understood that genuine justifying will result in actual progress in sanctification in this life. They want to make it clear that Paul knows nothing of a Christianity that saves but does not change. They want to make certain that this notion of easy-believism is rightly countered and you know what, I think that is a right and just concern. In fact, I think that that issue even comes up in Romans chapter 8. I just don't think it comes up until verse 12.

So in that regard, my own view is stuck in the mid-sixteenth century but I am at home there. I think this is talking about Christ's righteousness fulfilling in us, the righteous demands of the law. Of course, I do agree that that kind of imputation will lead to '**righteous behavior**' but I don't think that is the point of verse 4 and there are two reasons in particular why I say that. First, the preceding context tells us that that what the law could not do, because of our weakness, God did. And I take that to mean that Christ has already fulfilled the law's righteous demands upon us. In the same way Christ paid for our failure, Christ also obtained our obedience.

The second reason I hold the view that this is about what Christ has done for us is that this second view implies that the law's standard can be met by our partial obedience. Now, not one single one of these good men that argue that that we can now obey the law believes that we can obey the law perfectly. Rather, what they argue is that Christ's obedience and the presence of the Spirit come alongside our obedience to lift it up to suitable standard before God. In other words, Christ's obedience makes up for what we can only partially do and I agree with that. Only I don't think we can do anything and thus Christ's obedience has to make up for everything by fulfilling the law's righteous demands for us.<sup>10</sup>

Now, that is my view regarding verse four. I do not believe that Christians are now able to fulfill the law as it demands. That does not mean that I don't think Christians ought to try. It just means that I don't think they can do it perfectly and that is the only thing the law will accept. On the other hand, I think Christ has fulfilled the law for us as our great champion. Still, I have to tell you if are trying to decide between the opinion of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James Boice, John Stott, F.F. Bruce, and Charles Cranfield or Tom Browning. You ought to go with them every time.

Now finally, let's pickup the text starting in verse five. What we are going to see is a continuing contrast between the "flesh" and the "spirit." When Paul uses the word "flesh" he is not speaking of the soft material that covers over our bones but rather that way of living and thinking that characterizes the sinful, fallen world. When he uses the word "spirit" he is not thinking of some, mystical, non-material aspect of life but rather of the Holy Spirit and a way of living that is

characterized by goodness and light and holiness. Do you remember our alliterative outline? If not I'll give it to you one more time. Here it is:

**A sobering observation (8:5-8)**

**A special occupation (8:9-11)**

And...

**A spiritual obligation (8:12-17)**

Now let's look verse at this notion of **"a sobering observation"** in verse 5-8.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:5**...Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup>The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup>the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup>Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Now I have made this point before but Paul is contrasting here not three different kinds of people but two different kinds of people. His point is that a person is either a Christian or a non-Christian and that there is no third thing. Now when he makes this description he focuses on the overall view of life and not just isolated instances out of a person's life and you can see that by the kind of life a person lives. That phrase **"who live according"** in Romans 8:5 is really a participle in Greek and probably ought to be translated as something like **"who are continually being."** The idea is not so much that such people live blatantly sinful lives, that is that they are engaged in sinful, immorality but rather that they are just overwhelmed with and totally focused on the same things that the world loves, that the world does. And to make his point even clearer, Paul says in verse 5 that their "minds are set on what that nature desire." Now in Greek, it literally says **"they are thinking the flesh."** The verb is a present tense verb and the idea is durative or continual. Here's the idea, **"Those that are continually**

**being according to the flesh...just keep on thinking about the flesh...in fact, that is all they think about...all the time."**

Now I have to make a couple of points here. The first is this. Paul is not talking just about lustful passions. He is talking about all of the things related to the world and the overwhelming desire of such people to be given over to worldly things. In other words, he is talking about people who are wholly given over to self-centeredness. Secondly, Paul is not making any sort of appeal here for the Romans to stop being this way. As a matter of fact there is no appeal here at all. He is simply making an observation and it is a sobering observation that. He is saying that such people, people constantly focused on the desires of this world, are just that of this world. Now at the end of verse 5, he sets forth the other kind of person, the person who cares about the things of the Spirit.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:5**...but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

And the contrast is just as focused the other way. A person whose being **"is according to the Spirit"** constantly thinks on the things of the Spirit.

Now in verse 6-8, Paul explains why that matters.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:6**... The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Paul's point is that such overwhelmingly "fleshly people" are spiritually dead and wind up gaining spiritual death after this life. Their minds are hostile to God and the word here for "hostile" is ἔχθρα which means "ill-will" or "hatred."

What Paul is saying is that such people's minds are a war with God. They cannot submit to God or God's law because they hate God and all that God stands for.

Yesterday, I performed a funeral for a forty-two year old man that killed himself. Now I am not saying that the man was an unbeliever. I don't know one way or the other about that. But I can tell you thing, he certainly had no perspective of the damage that he was going to do when he took his life. He had no concern for his poor ailing mother and his precious, frail, little old father. He had no understanding of the devastating wreckage he was going to leave behind. If he just thought about that way he was going to break his sisters hearts or if he had thought about what he was asking his brothers to do without him he might have reconsidered his action. But in the two or three weeks it took him to plan his death, he had every opportunity to think those things through and to consider at least what He was about to do but he didn't. He wanted to hurt someone. He wanted to get even and he didn't care how much human wreckage he left along the way. You see he was single-minded in his desire to devastate somewhere else. Now I make that point because his life was given over to thinking about to meditating on only one thing.

And that is the same kind of thinking that Paul is describing here as he talks about a "flesh-centered life." You see a "flesh-centered life" is not focused just on sensual or sexual pleasures. Rather it is focused on all the things the sinful world loves and holds dear. It only knows the world and only the world and it knows it only from the point of view of the world. It only sees the world as the world from the world's point of view and it only sees the world as the world relates to it. On the other hand, a Spirit-centered life sees the world through the lenses of faith. That is why such people, people who live according to the flesh, cannot

please God. That is why they have no desire, no intention, and no strength to obey the law of God. They cannot please God and worse, they do not want to please God.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes this in his commentary on Romans:

There is a well-known story, which seems to me to supply a perfect illustration of this point. It concerns two great men, William Wilberforce the leader in the movement for the abolition of slavery, and William Pitt the Younger, one time Prime Minister of Britain. They were both brilliant men, they were both politicians, and they were very great friends. But William Wilberforce was converted and became a Christian, while William Pitt, like so many others, was but a formal Christian. William Wilberforce was very much concerned about his friend. He loved him as a man and was greatly concerned about his soul. He was most anxious therefore that Pitt should go with him to listen to a certain preacher, a London clergyman of the Church of England named Richard Cecil. Cecil was a great evangelical preacher, and Wilberforce delighted in his ministry, so he was ever trying to persuade Pitt to go with him to listen to Cecil. At long last Pitt agreed to do so. Wilberforce was delighted and they went together to a service. Richard Cecil was at his best, preaching in his most spiritual and elevated and exalted manner. Wilberforce was enjoying himself, and feeling lifted up into the very heavens. He could not imagine anything better, anything more enjoyable, anything more wonderful; and he was wondering what was happening to his friend William Pitt, the Prime Minister. Well, he was not left long in a state of uncertainty as to what had been happening, because, before they were even out of the building Pitt turned to Wilberforce and said, **“You know, Wilberforce. I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about.”** And he hadn’t, of course. As a man can be tone deaf to music, all who are non-Christians are tone deaf to the spiritual. That which was ravishing the mind and the heart of Wilberforce conveyed nothing to Pitt. He was bored, he could not follow it; he could not understand it; he did not know what it was about.<sup>11</sup>

Now Paul wraps up his sobering observation in verse 8 and moves quickly to the idea of the special occupation enjoyed by the Romans in verse 9-11 and you can

see why he would do that. You see he wants the Romans to know that that is not how he thinks of them. That is, he wants them to know he does not think they are fleshly or of the world.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:9**...You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Now the two times the word “if” are used in these verse supply a condition but the fact is they may also be used understood by the English word “since” and I think the context almost demands that they actually be understood just that way. So that Paul’s meaning here is not focusing here on the fact that the Romans may not be spiritual. He is not saying “**And you Romans, if the Spirit of God lives in and I’m am pretty sure He does not**” but rather this...

<sup>TRB</sup> **Romans 8:9**...You, however, **are** controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, **since** the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But **since** Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

And then Paul goes on in verse 11, to make the point that this same Spirit that lives in us is the Spirit that raised Christ form the dead and that he will also one day raise our bodies from the dead. You can see that in verse 11.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:11**...And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Now because we enjoy this special occupation in our bodies by the Holy Spirit we have a spiritual obligation and the thing I want you to see is that the way Paul lays out this spiritual obligation is almost exactly parallel to the way he first explained it way back in Romans 6:11 when he said:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 6:11**...In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Look at how he says what he he says in Romans 8:12.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:12**...Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For 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, <sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "**Abba, Father.**" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> 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.

You see, because all these things are true, we have an obligation to live a certain way. We have an obligation to put to death the remaining remnants of sin in our lives and we do not live in desperate fear because the Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts and lives make real to us the fact that we are the precious adopted children of God. Now you will notice that phrase "**Abba, Father.**" It is really a word expressing tremendous familiarity. It is something like our English word, "Papa." Now to me, it is an extraordinary thing that we should ever be granted the holy privilege to use that word. But it is not just the utterance of that word that is extraordinary. To me, it is more about the fact that we have been moved from the realm of unbelief to the realm of belief and adoption and mercy and



that our status has been changed. And while I express that awkwardly, Luther did not. Listen to what he writes:

This is indeed a very short word, but it includes everything. Not the lips, but the feelings are speaking here, as though one were to say: "Even though I am surrounded by anxieties and seem to be deserted and banished from Thy presence, nevertheless I am a child of God on account of Christ; I am beloved on account of the Beloved." Therefore the term "abba," when spoken meaningfully in the heart, is an eloquence that Demosthenes, Cicero, and the most eloquent men there have ever been in the world cannot attain. For this is a matter that is expressed, not in words but in sighs, which are not articulated in all the words of all the orators; for they are too deep for words.<sup>12</sup>

Bothers and sisters, we are blessed beyond our wildest imaginings to be the adopted children of Almighty God and we are called to a certain way of life; we have an obligation to live in light of what we are. Will you do it?

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Sunukjian, "Four Things Happen When You Alliterate and Four of Them Are Bad." Taken from an article at [www.preaching.com](http://www.preaching.com).

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*. See 8:4.

<sup>3</sup> John Owen, *Justification By Faith*. Chapter 11.11.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*. See 8:4. Slightly (faithfully?) modernized by me for our congregation.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on Romans*. See 8:4.

<sup>6</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 127.

<sup>7</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 7:1-8:4, The Law: It's Functions and Limits* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1973; reprinted 1974 and 1976), 25.

<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 2: Reign of Grace, Romans 5-8* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 800.

<sup>9</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 281.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 483. "Some think that Christians, participants in the New Covenant, with 'the law written on the heart' and the Spirit empowering them within, fulfill the demand of the law by righteous living. While it is true that God's act in Christ has as one of its intents that we produce 'fruit,' and that the law cannot be cavalierly dismissed as of no significance to the Christian life, we do not think that is what Paul is saying here."

<sup>11</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17, The Sons of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1974; reprinted 1975 and 1976), 191-2.

<sup>12</sup>Luther, M. (1999, c1963). *Vol. 26: Luther's works, vol. 26 : Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.