

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

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Someone once said “we are not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey’. So the challenge we face is can we live the spiritual life here in this world, in this human body? Can we live a life that pleases God? Find out the Apostle Paul says about this

Romans 8:12-25

12 Therefore, brethren, 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 as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "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 joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

The Apostle reminds us here that we are no longer bound to obey the desires of the flesh because if we live according to the flesh i.e. just following our desires or emotions the end result is death, but if we live by the Spirit of God we will live. He says that those who are led by the Spirit are children of God, and it is the Holy Spirit who testifies to our spirits that we are His children. The Spirit that we have received is a spirit of adoption that allows us to call God our Father and if we are His children then we are co-heirs with Messiah.

Some might find this passage a little contrary to what they believe; Most Christians believe that once they have said the “sinner’s prayer” they are saved and assured of their salvation. Yet the Apostle says here that if we “live by the Spirit”, this term is present continuous it tells us that must constantly live by the Spirit. Salvation is a funny thing, whilst it is a one time experience it must be constantly lived out in our lives, the warning here is that we can easily fall back into our old lifestyle when we don’t obey the Spirit. Yeshua himself said that if we love him we must follow His commandsⁱ, and when someone told him his family had come to see him, he said his family members were those who did the will of the Fatherⁱⁱ.

He further says that if we live according to the Spirit, we will put to death the flesh, it is only by fully submitting to the will of the Holy Spirit that we can die to the desires of the flesh, thus fulfilling the command of Yeshua to take up the cross daily and follow Himⁱⁱⁱ. We must rely on the Spirit to lead us, we may have this super spiritual idea of hearing the audible voice of God every day and having a Rhema Word to guide them, whilst I do not discount this and indeed have experienced this several times in my life, the Spirit of God does not work outside of the framework of the Word of God (Torah). It is the Spirit who enables us to keep the Torah because He writes in on our hearts^{iv}.

The Spirit of God within us assures us that we are His children, as children our Father wants us to obey Him out of a love relationship, not as a slave who has no choice, yet we are to reckon ourselves as slaves as the Apostle has said in the previous chapters, although we are His children we are to have the attitude that we can do nothing except to obey Him. This is the mark of a child of God and this will result in us gaining our inheritance which is in Messiah.



18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. NKJV

The Apostle here encourages the people not to give up hope because the glory that awaits them is far greater than any suffering they can experience on earth. He says that all of creation is groaning under the weight of sin and awaiting redemption, the day when God will reveal His sons and then creation itself will be redeemed. Even we ourselves who have the Holy Spirit are groaning in anticipation of the fullness of our redemption which will be revealed at the end of days. He reminds them this is what hope is about, waiting in anticipation for something they do not yet see.

Remember that Apostle Paul was writing to believers (and pre-believers) in a society that was facing persecution on a daily basis, the Roman government was in no way friendly to either Jews or Christians, therefore He had to encourage them by reminding them that there is more to life, that a day will come when we and all of creation will see the promise of God – everlasting life and we are to keep hoping and waiting. This is very relevant today as we look around and see what is happening in terms of Christian persecution that is happening in our day and age, we must never lose hope.

The Apostle speaks here of the firstfruits of the Spirit, how do understand this, he is referring to the Feast of the Lord known as Shavuot in Hebrew and Pentecost in Greek/English. During that feast an offering of the first grain harvest was brought to the temple to be offered by fire. This Feast is connected to the day God gave the Torah on Mt Sinai, it was also the very same day that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples of Yeshua in Jerusalem. The firstfruit of the Spirit thus refers to the Torah that was given by God or we could say by the Spirit of God and written on the hearts of men as Jeremiah promised on that same day in Jerusalem. Thus again the Spirit and the Torah work in tandem, we cannot separate them. We must have both the Word and the Spirit.

ⁱ John 14:15, 21

ⁱⁱ Matthew 12:47-50

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 9:23-24

^{iv} Jeremiah 31:33

