

## **Romans 8:12-39**

### **Romans 8:12-13**

“So then, brothers and sisters, 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.”

“For he will not say that we are debtors to the spirit, but before we were indebted to, sold to, captured by this economy of sin, debt, and death. This is what walking in, or being indebted to, or bound by, the economy of death means: we die; we are condemned to death, death comes to all through Adamic fate... The practices here that are being put to death are of course those that arise from anxiety in the face of death, those that make us like Cain, voluntarily or involuntarily (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 126).”

“The whole business of dying to the world, or of ‘putting to death’ the ways of embodying injustice, has been connected by several contemporary thinkers with Paul’s reflections in 1 Corinthians about living in the structures of the world ‘as if not.’ This ‘as if not’ means treating these structures as if they no longer have the capacity to enforce themselves upon one, the define one’s identity and ‘compartment’ (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 126).”

“This unplugging does not mean an ascetic withdrawal from the world but a living in the world without being determined by it or its classifications and structures (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 127).”

“What seems to be at stake here, as we shall see in Paul’s development of this argument, is a corporate style of life in which we become more rather than less interconnected with one another and with the messianic reality that has dawned. Paul will speak of love, mutual care, and concern instead of detachment (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 127).”

### **Romans 8:14-17**

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is that very Spirit bearing 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, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

“The acclamation of God as *abba/Pater* then appears for the first time in Paul’s letters, and it is here that we must discover its significance: an acclamation of God as father in two languages. Why two? Which two? The language of Judeans [Aramaic] and the language of gentiles [Greek]. Paul has said ‘to the Judeans first and then the Greeks.’ It is Paul’s concern, not only in this letter, to put together Judean and pagan believers (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 129).”

“That we have been adopted enables us to thus acclaim God as father, to know that we are not slaves [of sin or law] but adopted children (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 129).”

“As heirs of God, we are also jointly heirs with another who is called son: the messiah. Being jointly heirs will also have to do with being joined to one another in and through the messianic (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 130).”

### **Romans 8:18-39 - Affliction and Solidarity**

Paul transitions into a discussion about being in solidarity as heirs of the messianic event, heirs with the one who is the messiah. This solidarity does not come without suffering. He sets this up in verse 17 - “...if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

“As we said in discussing baptism, what is in view here is no virtual cultic death or virtual suffering but sharing in affliction that demonstrates or testifies to our solidarity with the executed messiah. Later Christians will call this testimony martyrdom (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 130).”

An important aspect of Paul’s upcoming argument is humanity’s intimate connection to creation, to all of creation.

“This further extension of the Pauline frame of reference follows almost naturally from the designation of Adam as humanity. In Hebrew *adam* speaks of the earth, the earthling made of earth, of the solidarity of earth and earthing - hence we have the extension of the good news also with respect to creation and thus to all creatures (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 131).”

### **Romans 8:18-25**

“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

“In the modern West we have lost track of solidarity between the human and the rest of creation. And in theology it has sometimes been forgotten that biology, including evolutionary biology, has at least retained something of the sense of our bound-up-ness with creation. Most of our DNA, for example, is the same as that of the lowliest earthworm (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 132).”

“The bondage to death [which has to do with the entry of violation and violence into the world, accelerated by law] not only concerns the human but also the whole of creation. And the promise of liberation from this law of violence pertains not only to the human but also to the earth and its denizens. Such is the amplitude of Paul’s message of the good news that stems from what the divine has done in and through the messianic event (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 133).”

Verse 23: “... and not only the creation, but we ourselves...”

“Adoption may be spoken of here both as already and as to come. For it is the redemption of the body, so of creation itself, that is the horizon of hope. What we are or have is the first fruits, the springtime promise of more to come. But we have not ceased to groan. Our adoption is behind [so we cry *abba*]; our adoption is yet to come [so we groan] (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 134).”

Verse 24a: “For in hope we were saved.”

“The ‘were saved’ occurs within the framework of hope. It is precisely in hope that we live. Like Abraham, who believed the promise and whose *confidence* in the promise was *fidelity* [faithfulness] and so reckoned up as, or credited toward, justice (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 134).”

### **Romans 8:26**

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”

“**Likewise the spirit partakes of our weakness.** The traditional translation, ‘helps us,’ is I think, flat wrong - the spirit is a sharer, a partaker, in this very weakness of groaning, of yearning (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 135).”

“**The spirit itself intercedes on behalf** [of us, of creation, of God] **with unutterable groanings.** We/creation/spirit all groan, all yearn, all beyond speech, the earth-spirit groan. Before language. Before speech. Inarticulate. Somehow in this groaning and yearning, we glimpse the awaited solidarity of earth and humanity and spirit (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 135).”