“Obligated To Who?”

September 2, 2018

Matthew 8:5-13

Please find with me the eighth chapter of Romans.

If you were to ask me “Why is the Holy Spirit here today?” I would answer this way. The purpose, work, and ministry of the Holy Spirit is to attract and direct attention to Jesus Christ. John 16:13 *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (14)* ***He shall glorify me****: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

This eight chapter of the Book of Romans has a word for each of us on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. And the word for today is “obligate.” Obligate is a thinking word. If there is something that a Christian must do, it’s “Read God’s word and then think on the things you’ve read. Then do exactly what the LORD says.” I’ve titled today’s sermon “Obligated to Whom?” Shall we pray?

Is there a mother here today who is obligated to care for her children? Is there a dad here who is obligated to get to work on time each day and to put in his day’s work, to love his children, and to supply the needs of his family? Are children obligated to submit to their parents? Are you obligated to pay what you owe to your credit card company? How about people you don’t know? Are you obligated to do anything for them?

Do you see what I mean when I say that “obligation” is a thinking word? Here’s what it means. Obligation: “an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or commitment.” When you are obligated to do something, it’s often because something has been done for you. That’s because obligation is a moral quality.

Now, first I want to tell you a true story. Then I want to read for you what the LORD says here in Romans 8 about “obligation.” And then I’d like to say to you what the LORD has laid on my heart.

It was Wednesday, January 13th, 1982. In Washington, DC snow had been falling all day long. The Government, businesses, schools, some highways, and all the airports around Washington, DC had closed because of the snow. Finally, around 3:00 p.m., the snow had slowed and the airports opened. Florida jet flight 90 boarded, then waited one hour and forty-five minutes to take off from Washington National Airport on runway 36. There were 74 people on board and five crew members.

But just thirty seconds after takeoff, the plane smashed into the 14th Street Bridge, 1,200 yards from the Pentagon and then crashed into the ice and snow-covered Potomac River, just forty yards from the Virginia shore. Out of the 79 people on board, only six survived the crash.

Within minutes, a US Park Police helicopter arrived and began rescuing the six survivors. One man, Arland Williams, Jr, 46 years old, made history that day. Each time the rescue harness was descended from the helicopter to Mr. Williams, he handed it off to the five others people who had survived the crash.

At 4:20 p.m. the helicopter carried Bert Hamilton to the shore. Ten minutes later the harness was dropped to Mr. Williams, who passed it to the fifth survivor, Kelly Duncan, who was safely transferred to shore also. But, when the helicopter returned for Mr. Williams, the pilot Jim Usher searched and searched for the bald-headed man. “By then Williams had been in the icy Potomac for 29 minutes. But there was no sign of him. He had drowned. And the pilot began to weep. *“He could have gone on the first trip. But he put everyone ahead of himself. Everyone.”*

[Found on http://www.nbcnews.com “The Hidden Cost Of Heroism” by Christopher MacDougall].

Now, of course, my question. “Was Armand Williams, Jr. *obligated* to hand off that rescue harness to those five individuals? In other words, did he “have to” do it? Or, did he “want” to do it? Or, both?

Now, we don’t know for sure. But someone had to have instilled into Armand Williams the need to put other people, people he did *not* even know, ahead of himself. Mr. Williams was an only son. His father was the president of his home-town bank and, at the time, battling cancer. And Armand Williams always made sure to call his mother every single day. Oh, and one more thing. He’d always been afraid of water. So, he couldn’t swim until his first year of college at the Citadel in South Carolina, where he was required to learn to swim. And, at the Citadel he’d also learned this. *“Always take care of your people first. That’s an unbreakable code. You go last. Your people go first.”*

So, on September 13th, 1982, he felt an obligation to make sure the other five passengers who had survived the crash were safe before he allowed himself to take the rescue harness.

Now, here’s why today’s word is “obligated.” Look with me at today’s passage and see if you can locate the Old English word for “obligated.”

Romans 8:9 *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

*(11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

*(12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

Did you see the word “obligated”? It’s in verse twelve.

Romans 8:12 *“Therefore, brethren, we are* ***debtors****, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

Based upon Romans 8:12, Christians are people who are obligated both negatively and positively. You are obligated. You are a debtor, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; but, you are obligated to live after the Spirit.

I would guess that most of you are in debt. Now, do you have any plans to *not* pay off those debts? You see, for all sorts of reasons, you *choose* to be obligated to pay ‘em off. You have a sense of duty, a moral duty to do so.

So, of all the things Paul says here about the Holy Spirit, this is among the most important. You are *not* obligated and you are not in debt in any way to your flesh. Instead, you *are* obligated to the live after the Holy Spirit; obligated through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body.

Some Christians think they have to “give in” to sin every time it arises as a temptation in your heart and mind. God says “no.” And then some Christians think they “do *no*t have to” give in to the desires of the Holy Spirit. But God says otherwise. *You do*. You are obligated.

Folks, to live by the flesh is to miss out on the life that God has bestowed upon you in Christ. Here’s the reality for a Christian. God has placed *His* righteousness within every one of His children. You have *life* in your spirit because of that free gift of righteousness. Where there’s righteousness, there’s life and vice versa.

So, says the Apostle Paul, do not live by the listening to the voice of your flesh because giving in to fleshly desires is actually giving in to death.

And what does it mean to live “after the flesh?” Here’s what it means. “Living after the flesh refers to any desires, any activity, any behavior, any attitude, or any speech that is contrary to the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit.” Repeat. And this comes directly from your Bible. Here’s Galatians 5:16 *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusteth [desires] against the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires] against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”*

Folks, life begets life and death begets death. Every time you submit to the Holy Spirit, you surrender to life. And every time you submit to your flesh, you are surrendering to death. Life attracts life. Flesh always attracts death.

How many times have you submitted to your flesh lately and not noticed this: a complete *decrease* in spiritual strength?

We live in a world that exalts the wrong things. First, the world exalts the mind over the spirit. And second, the world exalts the physical strength over the spirit. God’s way is the total opposite.

Here’s a practical example. Today you know you quote “need” to do something. Now, think carefully about yourself in this way. Are you weighing what you plan to do by consid-ering whether it’s right or wrong? Are you asking the LORD *“What are you saying to my spirit?”* You see, God calls Christians to carefully considering what is happening in your spirit *first*. Yes, use your physical strength. And yes, use your mind. But first, weigh those choices in your spirit. And when you do, you will find yourself looking to the LORD for *His* way, *His* counsel, *His* Word.

Your spirit, by the way, is the center of your existence. But when you put *your* mind and *your* physical abilities in front of your spirit, you not only decrease your spiritual strength. You operate in the leading of you flesh.

God’s way is for you to walk after the Spirit. God’s way is for you to sense a personal obligation to *Him*. And His way is always the way of life.

But, let’s back up for just a moment.

First, a Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; verse nine. Romans 8:9 *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

Now, what does the LORD mean by this? Every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in him or her. And, more importantly, a Christian is not someone who has the Holy Spirit within him or her as a *Divine* Resident. Rather, the Spirit Who lives in you is the *Owner* of your body and your spirit. Here’s I Corinthians 6:19 *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

It’s like you live in His house. You are a guest in Someone Else’s home. He’s the owner. Your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost. You can imagine what it would be like to live in someone else’s house. You aren’t the owner. Your body is the Temple of the Living God. So, you are not your own. You’ve been purchased with the precious blood of Christ; which means then, that you are obligated to glorify God in your body and your spirit, both of which are God’s.

That’s the message of Romans 8.

You see, what you do with your body and your spirit is a matter of being obligated to God. What do you put into your body? What do you put into your mind? What do you say with your tongue? Can you say anything you please? How about your eyes? How about your time? How about your checking account? How about your thoughts?

A Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. You are in the Spirit because the Spirit is in you.

First, a Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

Second, a Christian’s body is dead. It will be quickened in the resurrection; verse ten. Romans 8:10*“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

What is the Christian’s view of his or her body?

One, it does not belong to you. And two, it’s dead. That’s the reality. And the reason God says it’s dead is because of sin. When it comes to the matter of sin, your body is dead. What does that mean? It means that sin exerts its “death-ness” through your flesh. You are still “tempt-able”. Satan, the world, and the flesh still have an influence over you.

So, when the Bible says that your body is dead, it’s a reference to spiritual and moral death; all of which we inherited from the first man Adam.

Paul even calls it “the body of this death.” Here’s how he puts it. Romans 7:21 *“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from* ***the body of this death****?”*

You see, your body is where God has placed you until either you die or He redeems it when Christ returns. And, in the meanwhile, it belongs to Someone Else. It belongs to the Holy Spirit. Your body is dead while *you*, as you live inside your body, *you* are alive to God. And for today, your body is unredeemed. Every Christian waits for the redemption of his body.

Now, folks, I realize some of you think this is, as someone said, *“too much to think about.”* But let me ask you this. “How have you found living your Christian life according to the way *you* think?” Is what you know and understand working for you? Are you enjoying your Christian life? Or, like many, are you enduring your experience as a Christian?

Some of you think like this. “I was saved on such and such a date and at such and such a place. Now, I am trying to do all I can for Jesus.” So, you try to keep all the rules and you do all the “Christian things.” And you find frustration. And sometimes you wish you’d never been quote “saved.”

Nobody, none of us, not a single one of us, can get our-selves saved, keep ourselves saved, or live the Christian life. For some, it’s like this *“I’m doing my best. Why can’t I find peace and happiness in the LORD?”*

The answer is twofold. One, who are you? Two, whose fruit are you bearing?

First, who are you? You have become a servant who is accountable to God. And second, you are living in this world to bear *His* fruit.

Romans 6:22 *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

Here’s how the LORD says it. You’re free from sin. You’ve become a servant to God. And who is it that bears fruit through you? It is Christ Himself. Nowhere in the Bible does God ask you to bear fruit for Him.

Your place (your calling) is to surrender to Him your body, your soul, and your spirit, all of which are His. And when you do that, He takes over and lives His life through you. Then He’s the One Who loves and serves others, and controls your temper, and enables you to pray and to read His Word and to meditate on it. Each moment of your life, as you turn yourself to the LORD, He works within you. He works through you. And He works for you. And so, each moment, as you depend upon Him, He bears His fruit through you; all the fruits of Galatians five; love, joy, peace, long-suffering patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Those are not your fruits you bring to Him. They are fruits *He* bears through you when you fill up your obligation to walk after the Holy Spirit.

So, when you read *“that you are obligated to the Holy Spirit,”* you recognize that your life is completely His *and* you are under no obligation whatsoever to surrender yourself to your flesh. Why? Because your body is dead.

First, a Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

Second, a Christian’s body is dead. It will be quickened in the resurrection.

Now, third, your spirit is life because of righteousness; Romans 8:10*“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”*

Romans 8 has a lot to say to the Christian about the Holy Spirit. But, this might be the most important. Since the Holy Spirit lives in you, you have a Divine Obligation, not to your flesh, but to the Holy Spirit Who lives in you. And for two reasons. One, your old man was crucified with Christ. And two, God has placed His righteousness within you.

What actually happened at the moment you trusted in the LORD for His salvation? Here’s Romans 4:3 *“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and* ***it was counted unto him for righteousness****. (4) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

*(5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,* ***his faith is counted for righteousness****. (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom* ***God imputeth righteousness without works*** *…”*

You see, you were saved completely apart from good works. And what did God do for you. He counted you righteous.

And now, as a righteous human being, what is it that God commands Romans 6:11 *“Likewise* ***reckon ye also your-selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ*** *our Lord. (12) Let not sin [stop letting sin] therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

*(13) Neither yield [present] ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield [present] yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and [present] your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”*

This folks, it your obligation as a child of righteousness. You must reckon, count true only things that are true. And then, of course, stop letting sin reign in your mortal body to obey it. Stop presenting the members of your body to sin. And rather, begin to present them to God as members of righteousness.

Folks, your spirit is life because righteousness is life. And you have been given the gift of righteousness by God through His Son. And where there is righteousness there is life.

And just like a Mom has a moral and spiritual obligation to care for her children; just like a dad feels that moral obligation to get to work on time and serve the people at his job; just like you have a duty to do good things for others as a human being in the setting God has placed you. You have an obligation to let the Holy Spirit have His way with you.

First, a Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

Second, a Christian’s body is dead. It will be quickened in the resurrection.

And third, your spirit is life because of righteousness.

Fourth, and finally, you are commanded to mortify the deeds of your body by the power of the Holy Spirit; verse thirteen. Romans 8:13*“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do* ***mortify the deeds of the body****, ye shall live.”*

The command here is clear; mortify the deeds of the body.” The key, though, is here; “through the Spirit.”

All that a Christian does, he does either from his own power or from the power of the Holy Spirit. And there is no Christian anywhere who is obligated to operate from the power of his or her flesh. Folks, getting to know the Holy Spirit is getting to know the most important Person in existence.

Paul says Romans 8:13*“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye* ***through the Spirit*** *do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*  “Through the Spirit” means that you rely fully upon *Him* to enable you to do anything God calls you to do.

Think about what you did on the day you heard the Gospel and believed it. The Bible says you were born again by the Spirit. And just like your physical birth was an event that happened to you. So, your spiritual birth was an event that happened to you. From your viewpoint, you simply repented and believed.

So, when it comes to mortifying the deeds of the body through the Person of the Holy Spirit, realize that you must depend upon Him to supply you with that ability.

Now, lastly, what is this “mortifying the deeds of the body” like? Folks, whether it’s lying or speaking filthy communication out of your mouth, or any other sin, you need to kill it; stop it in its tracks.

You see, the Holy Spirit is always ready to enable you to do *only* those things He commands you to do. So, whatever you do, do through the power of the One Who owns you. Do that thing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The entire Christian life can be summed up as “walking in the Spirit.” Watchman Nee describes it this way. *“Walking in the Spirit means that I trust the Holy Spirit to do in me what I cannot do myself. This life is completely different from the life I would naturally live by myself. Each time I am faced with a new demand from the Lord, I look to Him to do in me whatever He requires of me. It is not a case of trying but of trusting; not of struggling but of resting in Him.”* [Found in “The Normal Christian Life” by Watchman Nee, p. 176].

Let me conclude today with just three things to see and do.

First, your rights versus God’s loving, perfect will. Have you surrendered the rights to yourself to the LORD?

One day, while the family was at our house, both Dan and Michelle reminded Tessa that she needed to practice her violin. Now, at the moment, Tessa was using her IPad. So, Dan says “Tessa, put the IPad away and get your violin out. You need to practice.”

Now, Tessa has a choice. Will she put away the IPad and get out her violin? Or will she resist her parents and insist on continuing to use the IPad? I watched her and she made a decision. She did what Dan asked her to do.

What I know about them is this. Dan and Michelle totally love Tessa and only want what’s best for her. So, when they ask or tell her to do something, it’s coming from a heart of love. So, just like Tessa had to surrender her right to do as she pleased; you and I have to surrender our rights to do as we please.

Now, is there really any difference with the LORD? Doesn’t He totally and perfectly love you? And doesn’t He always have your best interests at heart? So, why would you feel any obligation whatsoever to surrender to sin when you can present yourself to the LORD and operate under His power?

Second, your possessions versus being stewards of His things.

Now, let’s say someone has a need. Can you meet that need? I John 3:17 *“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”*

And here’s Hebrews 13:15 *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (16) But to do good and to communicate [share] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”*

Can you see your duty? Can you see your moral obligation? Can you see how you need to put to death the deeds of your body so that someone else can be helped? And can you see that it is the Holy Spirit Who enables you to do those things?

First, your rights versus God’s loving, perfect will.

Second, your possessions versus being stewards of His things.

And third, your worry versus His peace. What happens when you are worried about something? Worry is just one more work of the flesh. Philippians 4:6 *“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every-thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

But, you say, “what if I’m tempted to worry?” How is it possible for me to put to death, to mortify, that deed of the body? You do it by using the mind God has given you. You think as follows. “The source of that temptation is not me, but my flesh. It is not I, says Paul, but sin that dwells in me.” So, I surrender to the Holy Spirit and I say this to the LORD. *“LORD, I submit myself to you right now. Strengthen me to only do things and to only say things that are true.”*

And since He’s the Spirit of truth, He will enable you to rest in Him rather than given in to the temptation to worry. And, if you do give in to worry, do the one thing that only a Christian can do. Go to the LORD and confess. And do it immediately. He will forgive and completely cleanse you of all unrighteousness. I John 1:9 *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

You see, a Christian is obligated, not to the flesh to walk according to the flesh. Instead, you are obligated to walk after the Spirit, the One Who lives in your spirit; obligated to mortify, put to death all the deeds of the body.

So, here’s a prayer of surrender. “Holy Spirit, I give you my spirit, my soul, and my body to use as you please. Streng-then me so that the LORD Jesus dwells in my heart by faith and so that I am grounded in Your love.”

I can’t imagine the Holy Spirit being anything but ready to head your cry.

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 705 “It Is Well With My Soul”