

GOD'S FIRSTBORN SON

PART II "THE CHURCH"

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH ONE DAY BECOMING GOD'S
FIRSTBORN SON

By Arlen L. Chirwood

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity

against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

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.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But is 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.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:1-12).

In the New Testament passages where Christians are presently called "sons" (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:6, 7; Heb. 12:5-8), each passage presents a different facet of Biblical truth surrounding *sonship*. In Romans, the central issue is *flesh and spirit*, with *adoption* in view; In Galatians, the central issue is "*the faith*" in relation to Law, with *adoption* in view; and in Hebrews the central issue is *God's child-training of sons*, with *adoption* in view.

Romans Chapter Eight

"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.

For as many as are led [lit., 'are being led'] by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (vv. 13-15).

Chapters one through seven in the Book of Romans build into what could be considered an apex in chapter eight, which begins with "There is therefore..." These opening words are based on that which has preceded, and they introduce that which is about to follow. And that which follows brings to the forefront teachings surrounding *flesh* and *spirit*, dealt with different ways in the preceding chapters.

All Christians possess two natures, "the old man [the man of flesh]," and "the new man [the man of spirit]" (Col. 3:9, 10). And the far-reaching ramifications of Christians (all Christians, none excluded) following one nature or the other is graphically stated in Rom. 8:13.

Christians following the fleshly nature, living after the flesh, *will die*; but, Christians following the leadership of the Spirit, putting to death "the deeds of the body," putting to death that associated with the flesh, *will live*.

Life in this respect is then explained (vv. 14ff), with *death* simply being the absence of that seen in the explanation.

Those following the leadership of the Spirit are presently being looked upon and dealt with as *sons* (v. 14), and this is with a view to a future *adoption and manifestation of sons, with the sons corporately (as Israel) forming a firstborn son* (vv. 15-23).

But those following after and minding the works of the flesh (cf. vv. 5-8) can have no part in these things. They are not pres-

ently being looked upon and dealt with as sons, and they will have no part in the things seen in this chapter awaiting sons.

The preceding is the manner in which both *life* and *death* are used in this chapter. And the salvation or loss of the soul/life is in view, which is simply another way seen in Scripture to state the matter at hand (cf. Matt. 16:24-27; Heb. 10:35-39; I Peter 1:3-9). Christians following after the things pertaining to their fleshly nature will lose their souls/lives; but Christians following the leadership of the Spirit, putting to death “the deeds of the body,” will realize the salvation of their souls/lives.

For all Christians, it is either one or the other. No middle ground exists (cf. Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23; I John 3:6-9).

The salvation or loss of the soul has to do with *occupying or being denied a position with Christ in the coming kingdom, living or not living with Him in this respect*. And, with “sonship” implying *rulership*, Romans chapter eight places the emphasis on a *present recognition of sons*, for a reason seen in the context: *a future manifestation of adopted sons*.

Messianic Era, Eternal Ages

Both *life* and *death* are dealt with in the chapter, with both relating to the saved and covering the same time period, which can only be *millennial*, not eternal. If for no other reason (though there are other reasons), this time period would be evident from both I Cor. 15:25, 26 and Rev. 21:4, which specifically state that *death will not exist* during the ages beyond the Messianic Era.

Thus, that portended by *death* in Rom. 8:13 cannot extend into these subsequent ages; and, viewing the other side of the matter, neither can that portended by *life* in this same verse.

(The Messianic Era will be the last 1,000 years of a septenary arrangement of 1,000-year periods, which are foreshadowed in the opening verses of Genesis through the use of six and seven days. Scripture deals at length with events during these 7,000 years but sparingly with events outside this septenary period.)

During the Messianic Era, man’s rule will be confined to this earth. The manifestation of sons during this time will have to do with bringing one province in God’s kingdom back into the condition and use for which it was originally intended, with governmental power emanating from the Son’s throne in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom [cf. Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21].

The Son, with His co-heirs, will take 1,000 years to bring order out of disorder. Then, once order has been restored, the kingdom will be delivered back to the Father, that the Father might be “all in all [*lit.*, ‘all things in all of these things’ (I Cor. 15:24-28)].”

During the eternal ages beyond the Messianic Era, man’s rule will emanate from “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” a throne from which universal rule will issue forth. And this throne will both rest upon a new earth and be the central governmental point in the universe. Thus, the manifestation of sons at that time will no longer have to do with governmental affairs of the present earth but with an apparent restructuring of the government of the universe itself, possibly beginning with the new earth.)

As previously seen, though all Christians are “sons” (because of creation), God’s dealings with Christians as “sons” is limited. In Rom. 8:14, God is seen dealing *only* with those Christians as “sons” who are being led by the Spirit and, as a result, are putting to death the deeds of the body. And the reason why God limits dealing with Christians as His “sons” in this manner need not be stated in so many words. God’s evident reasoning can be easily ascertained from *the context* and that which “sonship” implies — *rulership*.

It is *only* those Christians presently allowing the Spirit to control their lives who will, in that coming day, *live, be adopted* (vv. 14-23), and *be among those manifested as sons* (forming God’s firstborn son). And it is with this high end in view that God only looks upon certain Christians with respect to *sonship* during the present time (v. 19; cf. Heb. 12:23).

Those Christians failing to govern their lives in this manner *will die, and there will be no adoption or manifestation as sons for them*. And with this end in view, there would be no reason for God to deal with these Christians as “sons” during the present time. Thus, He deals with them only as “children.”