

2:42LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Life Group Study Guide

Killing Sin

Introduction and Review

In our study of Romans 8, we have been learning that the Holy Spirit indwells every person who believes in Christ (8:9-11). He guarantees that death will not have the final victory (8:11), and he frees us from the obligation to sin (8:12). We don't have to give sin an inch of our property, a minute of our time, or an ounce of our energy!

Now in Romans 8:13, in light of the Spirit's life-giving power, Paul gives a warning and a duty.

- *Warning: "If you live according to the flesh you will die."*
- *Duty: "But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*

This verse raises an important question: why would Paul give such a fearful-sounding warning to his readers? After all, Romans 8 is the classic chapter on assurance! Yet right near the middle, we find this troubling verse.

We must understand that Paul is *not* teaching that a person can lose their salvation ("if you live according to the flesh you will die") or that a person can earn their salvation ("if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"). That would contradict everything Paul has taught up to this point. Instead, he is stating two facts: "fleshly" living results in death; and righteous living (to state it positively) results in life (see Romans 6:22-23).

So what impact should these verses have on us? The *warning* teaches us that no one should derive assurance of salvation from living a sinful life. The *duty* teaches us that believers must be constantly engaged in putting their sin to death, and that the only way this is possible is "by the Spirit." This means that even though we are charged with the duty of killing sin in our lives, the fulfilling of this duty does not spring from ourselves, nor can we take credit for it—since it is all "by the Spirit."

Do not misunderstand. Salvation is *all* God's doing. But God did not save us so that we will be inactive, lazy, lethargic. Since God has declared us to be righteous, our actions should shout to "Yes!" to what God has declared us to be.

Discussion

1. We know that a true believer in Christ can never lose their salvation. So how should this warning impact us—"if you live according to the flesh you will die"?

2. The Bible teaches that God saves us—not just to forgive us of our sins, but to make us holy (see Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). What would a person's life look like who believed that God saved us *only* to forgive us, but *not* necessarily to make us holy?

3. Because of Christ's death for us, sin has lost its authority over us (Romans 6:9). However, in this life, it will never completely leave us alone. It will still try to gain the advantage over us if we allow it (Romans 6:12). Imagine sin as a stranger trying to get inside the door of your home. What kind of convincing excuses might sin give to get you to open the door? to let him inside? to let him take over the house?

4. Sin is never satisfied to remain little. It wants to grow up—to achieve its deadly outcome (see James 1:14-15). If given the right opportunity, a lustful glance would become adultery; a greedy thought would become theft; a doubting thought would become atheism. Picture sin as a weed growing in the garden of your heart. At which point would you pull it up? How would you do this?

5. The Holy Spirit is the only power by which we can kill sin. This is because he was sent to glorify Christ (John 16:14). By fixing our minds on what Christ has done for us, the Holy Spirit helps us to see our sin for what it is, and hate it; he helps us to see Christ for who he is, and delight in him. What does it look like when someone tries to kill sin in their own power, instead of in the power of the Holy Spirit? What does it look like when a person puts sin to death in the power of the Holy Spirit?