



R · O · M · A · N · S

NOTHING can SEPARATE ME



BOOK III



R • O • M • A • N • S

NOTHING can SEPARATE ME

DR. ROB GODARD

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DEDICATION

Romans is a book that has impacted my life more than any other. It's depth, breadth, and call to trust in God no matter what has enriched my experience of God's love unlike any other book. Romans is a book we could live in and never tire of. As we enter our third section of sermons on this historically transforming book, we hit its peak. Romans 8 is perhaps the chapter of Scripture that has most captivated those struggling with acceptance from God, or experiencing His love. It calls us to trust and rest in struggle, and to fight in the power of the Spirit for holiness. This chapter is my favourite in all of God's Word, and the foundation for my living a "super Nike" life.

May God be glorified and His church blessed through using this book to help His people to find rest in Him. I long for our God, through the power of His Spirit to use this book to grow His people in conformity to His image, that Jesus might be supreme, and receive all the glory! I am thankful for the privilege of serving Cloverdale Baptist Church with my family, and seeing God at work with power in this place.

Lori, Ryan, Jeff and Hannah, Ben and Graeme, I love you, and hope that God will use this book, and the Scripture that it seeks to be loyal to, to help you in your walk with God. He is worthy of our praise, our passionate pursuit and our prayerful rest. I long to grow in my intimacy with God, and impact for Him, and it begins and overflows with you, my precious family. Thank you for your love and support, and being my greatest cheerleader in the times where steadfastness is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is exciting to serve God at Cloverdale Baptist Church. I am thankful for great elders and deacons, and a staff that seeks God-glorifying excellence. Judi, Pastor Les, and Elias, well done again on pushing for this to get done. It is good to serve Jesus together in this local church!

I love Jesus' church and am honoured to serve her!

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GROWTH GROUPS

This book was developed together to help Growth Groups at Cloverdale Baptist Church effectively apply God's Word to everyday life. We want the Word of God not only to be preached, but applied, and one of the key ways of ensuring this reality is if we discuss what was shared on Sunday in a way that seeks to deepen the impact. Certainly we can do this with families and friends, however at CBC the programmed way we seek to maximize this impact is Growth Groups. There are three reasons for making the development of these study books a priority at Cloverdale Baptist Church:

1. We want to prioritize the hearing and applying of God's Word.

This is essential for the authentication of who God's people are (Matthew 7:21–28) and our growth into being who God wants us to be (Psalm 138:2; James 1:22–25). It is our prayer and desire that this book helps you to focus on what God's Word is saying, and that it helps to lead you into applying His Word to everyday life.

2. We value small group ministry.

It is our belief that small group ministry can produce passion in God's people (Hebrews 10:25), and serve as a protection for God's people (Hebrews 3:12–14). Sin can be deceitful, and hardened hearts can lead to despair. Small group ministry protects us from sin, and engages our hearts for devotion. We would love for all our people to be engaged in small group ministry, growing to love one another, and God, more and more.

3. We are looking for long term change.

It is our hope, as we interact with God's Word together, that these books will help you remember what you are learning and longing to apply. It is our desire that they become for you a tool to look back at, and grow with in the coming years as you continue to progress in conformity to the image of our Lord Jesus (Galatians 4:19). We believe that God's Word is powerful and will not return void (Isaiah 55:11), and it is helpful for His people to have reminders of where He has equipped them for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If you are not in a small group we encourage you to join one, and until you do, use the questions part of this notebook not only for reflection, but to interact with your family and/or friends in a way that is actively seeking to apply the Bible to your life (Deuteronomy 6:1–9). May our God use this book through the power of His Spirit to bring change in His people for His glory.

OVERVIEW

Perhaps no other letter in the history of the world has had such a tremendous impact as the book of Romans.

John MacArthur states, “Most, if not all, of the great revivals and reformations in the history of the church have been directly related to the book of Romans [...] It’s commonly agreed that the Epistle to the Romans is one of the greatest Christian writings. Its power has been demonstrated again and again at critical points in the history of the church.”

As I long for revival in my own life and in this church, Romans is one of the most powerful places to go to produce it in us.

Romans is written somewhere between 56–58 AD; Paul is in Corinth on his third missionary journey and longing to be a part of what is going on in the Roman church. The book is about life change as an overflow of experiencing the gospel (1:5, 16–17). It draws us closer to God so we can without shame draw others in the same direction.

It is not a systematic theology, and yet the theology in the book of Romans is overwhelmingly rich, with each part adding to the whole and leaving every Spirit-filled believer overwhelmed with God’s love. Romans is a book that changes the world by changing people. So, as we prayerfully engage in this journey together, may we offer ourselves afresh to God, to the impact of His gospel and the glory of the message of this letter.

Oh that we would be revived in our passion and first love for God as we experience His love!

Romans: Book 3 follows the richness of Romans 8, the sovereign exaltation of the God of Romans 9–11, and the joy of full devotion in Romans 12. Rejoice and join us as we seek to be loyal to God and long for more.

KEY WORDS & CONCEPTS IN ROMANS ¹

Condemnation: This is a word used in Romans to show God's right view of sinful humanity in their guilt before Him. It is what He views us as (condemned) in showing what we rightly deserve because of our sin and is the opposite of justification.

Faith: Hebrews 11:1, 6 describes it as being certain of what we hope for and certain of what we cannot see. It is also something that allows us to please God, and without it, it becomes impossible to please God. Perhaps simply understood, it is "the unqualified acceptance of and dependence on the completed work of Jesus Christ to secure God's mercy toward believers (Swindoll)". It is all of grace (Ephesians 2:1–10) and is essential for salvation and sanctification.

Flesh: As used in theology, it describes the identity of humans who are not saved by grace through faith and the orientation that believers battle after being saved. Those who belong to Jesus battle the flesh, the world, and the devil. The battle against the flesh is a battle against habits and patterns of thinking that are in opposition to God and are ultimately self-centred.

Glorification: This is the end of salvation. It will be the reality that all who die in Christ receive—most fully when Jesus returns for His church. This will include an absolute freedom from sin and its consequences and a beauty in conformity to Christ in incorruptible perfect bodies that will last for all eternity in the presence of God.

Gospel: The word gospel simply means "*good news*". When Christians use this term, they mean the good news about Jesus Christ.

This includes the holiness of God and His demand for perfection, the fallenness of humans and their sin that falls short of God's glory, the wonder of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and the call to respond to this grace by faith in Jesus alone.

The Gospel is, broadly speaking, the entire Bible, but, simply, it is focused on Jesus and the cross.

¹ Idea taken from Swindoll, Charles: *Coming To Terms With Sin*. IFL

A good summary of the gospel from 9 Marks is:

1. *God*. God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5–8).
2. *Man*. All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26–28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1–3).
3. *Christ*. Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God’s wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21–26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20–22).
4. *Response*. God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9–10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever, p. 43) <https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>

Grace: God’s unmerited favour given to sinners who deserve His wrath yet from Him receive good. Being saved by grace includes the reality that there is nothing in humans that could earn or cause them to deserve being saved, but God who is rich in grace chooses in that grace to save those who deserve wrath. Sometimes an acrostic for this has been used: “*God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense*”. It is good but leaves out the undeserved nature of this. Instead of receiving God’s wrath and judgment, which all humans deserve, those who experience saving grace receive His love and blessing. Salvation is *all of grace*.

Justification: This is a precious word that some have defined as “the declared reality for Christians that we are righteous—just as if I had never sinned”, and that is helpful, but awesomely it is more. It includes “just as if I had always obeyed”. Swindoll helpfully defines it like this, “God’s declaration or pronouncement that sinners, upon believing in Christ, are righteous because of Christ—even though still in a sinning state.” Those who believe are declared righteous.

Propitiation: This is the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. For Christians it is the reality that God's wrath, rightly being poured out against sin and sinners, has been satisfied on their behalf by Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Regeneration: This word refers to rebirth, or being born again. Humans are born in sin, and are dead in their trespasses and sin. Spiritual birth results in regeneration and changes who the believer is. Christ is formed in their hearts, and they are made partakers in the divine nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Sanctification: The basic meaning of "*sanctify*", is to be set apart. As this word is used, it is the pursuit of becoming who we are, or the pursuit of holiness. It is the process by which Christians move towards practical holiness. It is the growth process towards being like Jesus (Romans 8:29). God's Spirit works in His followers to will and to act as they discipline their lives for holiness.

Sin: Sin is anything that falls short of God's glory. It means to have missed the mark, and humans are sinful by nature, nurture, and choice. The condition under which sin places humans is called slavery, and freedom can only be found in Christ. It is a transgression of God's holy law and includes action and passivity. It places humans under God's righteous holy judgment as those born in sin who are slaves to sin and continue to sin.

Sovereignty: What does it mean that God is sovereign? It means that God is *all powerful, all knowing, and all wise* and is working everything out in conformity to the purpose of His Will (Ephesians 1:11). He is over all things and is the *Sovereign Ruler*.

I

EXPERIENCING FREEDOM IN CHRIST**Romans 8:1–4**

How is it possible for a thrice Holy God to use someone like me? This is a question that every Christian who is growing closer to God is apt to ask, for the closer we get to God, the clearer we see ourselves in the brightness of His glory, and the further we realize we have to go. Is it possible to be a Christian without feeling defeated by our sin, and overwhelmed in self-condemnation that feels debilitating? Romans 8 shouts out yes, if we know who we are in Christ Jesus. In fact, the idea of “no condemnation” is one of the most freeing concepts that the gospel provides and calls for believers to experience. Jesus paid the sin debt of His followers in full, on the cross, and provides for them absolute perfection (Hebrews 10:14). In fact, one of the ways that the love of Jesus is most beautifully displayed is in the context of our need for Him.

Romans 5:6–11 shows us that this demonstration of love is while we were still weak, ungodly, sinners, objects of wrath and enemies of God. Salvation can never be earned, you can't be good enough, and to even try leads to the chaos of apathy or legalism. Both dishonour God. Nothing you can do can make God love you more, and nothing you can do can make God love you less. Read that over again. Your “no condemnation” is found in Christ. So how do we experience this kind of freedom in Christ? We must know the gospel story, respond to it in faith and repentance, and never let it out of our hearts. To experience this reality of “no condemnation” is a work of the Spirit, and we can pursue it with an ever deepening understanding of what Jesus did for us, and how that shapes our past, present and future (2 Corinthians 5:21).

It is my prayer as you take the time to work through this passage with us, that you delight in the grace of God, and desire to experience this reality of what it means to be in Christ ever more deeply. In my prayer journal, on almost every day you will find 8:1, a way I preach the gospel to my own heart and seek to experience freedom in Christ. However you choose to do this, the reality of what Jesus has accomplished for those who believe is to be experienced!



EXPERIENCING FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Romans 8:1-4

Introduction

1. Freedom from condemnation | HEBREWS 10:14



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:1-4

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:1-4

- How does the context of Romans 7:15-25 help us feel biblically as we get to Romans 8:1?

- Describe the phrase "no condemnation" in your own words.

- Why is it important to learn how to experience this in every life for the follower of Jesus? How can you do this?

- In your own words, what does it mean to preach the gospel to yourself every day?

- Why is this significant in the context of Romans 8:1-4

- Remember a time that you felt overwhelmed in your sin. What steps did you take to move from that experience to a rest in Christ's righteousness for you?

- Ray Stedman states, "All your life, as many times as you sin, you cannot out-sin the grace of God. No matter how many trespasses are involved in your record there is freedom in Christ and forgiveness for all of them."

- Is there a danger to believing this?

- Does Romans address this danger of grace in any other place (6:1; 15)?

- Why do you think we rarely hear this danger of grace being addressed?

- What are some steps that you can take to experience this reality of "no condemnation" more richly in your life?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

As we work through the book of Romans, we want to learn to pray together from Jesus. The disciples asked Jesus how to pray, and His answer is found in these verses and so we want to learn along with the disciples to pray in the way that Jesus taught.

- Why do you think the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray?
- What are your first reflections about the way that Jesus taught them, and His actual words?
- Take the time to define together (write it down) what prayer is, and why prayer is important.
- Pray: try to follow this pattern in your own words.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our **Children's Ministries**, that God would strengthen those serving in these ministries, that there would be protection and power, and children would be drawn closer to Jesus, from wherever they are spiritually.

Other prayer requests:

It is good to keep track of what you pray about for three main reasons:

- It displays your heart: prayer is an overflow of the heart.
- It delights your heart: God answers prayer and this can cause us to praise Him.
- It deepens your resolve: (Luke 18:1) always pray and don't give up!



**MEMORIZE
& MEDITATE**

There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 8:1

EXTRA NOTES

II

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:5-13

When we experience the reality of God's love, it leaves us free from condemnation and fully devoted to pursuing purity. True freedom in Christ always comes from fellowship with Him, and this produces growth towards conformity to His image. Romans 8 rejoices in the reality of what it means to be in Christ, and then develops one of the most encouraging and challenging passages of Scripture on the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer. To pursue holiness in a way that promises victory, this passage must be understood and applied. The passage begins by comparing what it means to be an authentic Christian, and what it means to live according to the flesh. This comparison should cause those who claim to be followers of Jesus to be alert to what follows.

What marks the difference between authenticity and hypocrisy? There is a way of seeing the world that the text calls a mindset, a focus on the world around that is radically transformed if you have life in the Spirit. Where your mind goes when you are coasting, and perhaps as important where you focus your mind when you want to stop coasting displays your spiritual life.

The mind set on the flesh is selfish—it wants to be happy, no matter what the cost to others (or themselves). This mindset puts themselves first, and usually thinks of others only in the context of how that best benefits their own life. This fleshly mindset closes the ears, or maybe easier to hear, limits the ability of the mind set on the flesh to hear, for it is hostile to God and His law and cannot please God. The contrast is clear, and if we understand this passage, it should be easy to see it manifested in the life of the follower of God. If you live according to the Spirit, you want what the Spirit desires. How do we know what this is? We find it in the Bible, where it is Spirit-inspired. The Spirit dwells in the lives of those who belong to Jesus, and causes them to have a biblical mindset (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Corinthians 10:5), God centred, peace-filled and alive. Life changes when one finds themselves in Christ, and empowered with the Spirit to truly live! These are not only exciting concepts, they are deadly serious, for our eternity is known by the Spirit's life in us. The only way to please God, is through faith in Jesus, and a life in the Spirit.



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:5-13

Introduction

Romans 8 is *“one of the supreme life-changing chapters in Scripture.”*

1. The contrast | VERSES 5-11

- Those who live according to the flesh

- Those who live according to the Spirit

- Galatians 2:20
- Romans 12:1–2
- Colossians 3:1–3
- 2 Corinthians 10:5

2. The calling | VERSES 12–13

Implications

- See the difference displayed | 2 Peter 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:5
- See the Saviour | ROMANS 7:25–8:4
- So then, we are debtors



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:5-13

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:5-13
- What do you think is the main idea of this text?
- Why does Paul (inspired by the Holy Spirit) spend so much time contrasting what life in the Spirit looks like compared to life in the flesh?
- In your own life, when you hear the words "life in the Spirit", what does this make you think of?
- How has this text shaped your thinking about this?
- Talk about the main differences between the flesh and the Spirit displayed in the text.
- What does it mean to have a mind set on the flesh?

- What does it mean to have a mind set on the Spirit?
- Paul places an exclamation point on how important this is by declaring that if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if you live according to the Spirit you will live. What does this mean for you? For our church? Try to be practical in your answers.
- If you're not sure if you're in the flesh or in the Spirit, what should you do?
- How does this text help us to understand what a Spirit-filled life looks like?
- How does Romans 8:13 help in understanding how to live a victorious Christian life? (We will look more intensely at this next week.)
- Read 2 Peter 1:10 and 2 Corinthians 13:5
- Is it good to reflect on where we are at in our faith?
- How can we do this in a healthy way? Romans 8:1; Romans 12:1–2

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

Prayer is relational.

Our Father (or *literally, dearest daddy*)

This is a shocking way to approach the God of the Bible, especially when we consider that He is in heaven (sovereign), and the holy holy holy One revealed in Isaiah 6, among other places. This is perhaps the most precious way to address God in the Bible, and in all of life. When we pray we are taught by Jesus to always remember who we pray to, that it is corporate and personal, and we are praying together to *our* Father. As you pray tonight remember that prayer is not only personal and corporate, remember that God loves you as your dearest Daddy. It is relational, not formal religion, and it is an overflow of the heart more than a moral duty.

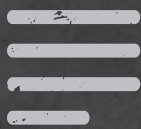
J. I. Packer states, in his must-read book *Knowing God*, "You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."^a As you pray today, let this relational reality overwhelm you, approach in reverence and respect and in the deep intimacy of hope!

Dearest Daddy:

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our **elders, deacons, and staff**. It is a joy to serve God by serving His people, but this can be tiring. Pray for closeness to God, and impact for God. Try to pray for them by name!

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

ROMANS 8:5

EXTRA NOTES

III

KILL OR BE KILLED

Romans 8:12-14

I have often been told that the greatest book written on pursuing holiness as a follower of God is by John Owen, *The Mortification Of Sin*. It may be the greatest book on killing sin that has been written, but for me, reading it was always difficult. There are very few books that I start, and don't complete, but this particular one has been started many times, and only finished once. Probably the reason why so many applaud this book and so few get through it, is the way Owen writes (I would suggest all of you download a copy and try to read it). However, the subject of this book is a non-negotiable for the follower of Jesus. Every authentic Christian is killing sin, or it will be killing them. My favourite quote from this book, "Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you." It is a reminder that our Christian walk must be one of constant war on sin. In a sermon by John Piper that impacted my life, he states, "Until you believe that life is war—that the stakes are your soul—you will probably just play at Christianity with no blood-earnestness and no vigilance and no passion and no wartime mindset."^b So, how do we do this? That is the subject that Romans 8:13 takes head on. If there is a contrast between those who live by the flesh, and those who live in the Spirit, how can we fight to be those who live in the Spirit. How can we have a Spirit filled life in the midst of the battle we all face for true holiness.

This passage helps us understand that killing sin effectively must always be set in the context of the gospel, or knowing that we don't belong to ourselves (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20.) When we grasp this reality, we know how to enter the battle ground against the flesh with humility and boldness, for we are not our own. It is also helpful to note in Romans 8:13 that if we are not engaged in this all out war, we will be destroyed. It is a deadly conflict that we are called to engage in, *kill or be killed*. So many of us are coasting and not engaged as we should be. My children listened to a style of music that was a little outside of my comfort zone, and one of the songs that was sung by their favourite artist at the time said it like this, "I hear so many Christians, murmuring about their imperfections and their failures, and their addictions, and their shortcomings. And I see so little war! Murmur, murmur, murmur. Why am I this way? *Make war!*" Perhaps you need a wakeup call today, and Romans 8:13 is your alarm clock. Remember to battle, to do it dependently (it is by the Spirit), and to do it with all your might.



KILL OR BE KILLED

Romans 8:12-14

Introduction

John Owen: *“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”*

John Piper: *“Until you believe life is war, and the stakes are your own soul, you will probably play at Christianity...no blood earnestness in your life about warfare on your own sin.”*

1. Doctrine | 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

2. Deadly



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:12-14

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:1-13
- Why do you think so few Christians view their everyday life as a battle?
- Why does Paul use words that are warrior words, displaying the battle with sin as a life and death fight?
- The text begins with the words "so then", reminding us of the gospel before we enter the combat verse. Why do you think this is so?
- How can you make sure that the doctrine of the gospel is the foundation of your fight?
- What does it mean to put to death sin by the Spirit?
- The Bible often emphasizes discipline and dependence, and sometimes it is hard for us as humans to understand and focus on both at the same time. What are some ways that you can fight for holiness with both discipline, and dependence? PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

- What are some ways that you can see your Christian life as a battle?

- Why is this important?

- If in our making war on sin we lose sight of Jesus, we lose the war. How can you keep your focus on Jesus in the midst of the battle? HEBREWS 12:1-3

- How can you make the implications from the sermon sing in your life?
 - > Wake up

 - > Walk in the Spirit

 - > Wonder at your Father

- If victorious Christian living is impacted by how we see the world (Christian worldview), how does this passage in Romans help you to have a more biblical worldview?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9–15

Our Father

Corporate and relational: God is our dearest Daddy.

In Heaven

As the words “dearest daddy” call for intimacy, so “in heaven” calls for respect.

Theologians have often said that the great overarching tension in theology is the transcendence and immanence of God. I am not sure that this is the overarching tension. However, it certainly is addressed in Jesus’ pattern in teaching His followers to pray. Here the idea is that God is in heaven, He is “sovereign, and reigning (Hughes)” and over all things. He is not to be trifled with or treated with lazy contempt. He is God, and He reigns over all.

The reminder of this prayer is that God is transcendent and sovereign. He is over all things. The entrance into the throne room of God in Jesus teaching displays the relational reality we should be reminded of each time—God loves us deeply, and is over us supremely. Approach boldly, and approach humbly.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our youth, and for those who serve them who need your prayers. Please pray that they would be strong in their faith and be able follow Jesus fully. Many revivals have been led by young adults and youth, and our longing would be that our youth would be firm in their faith, fight worldliness and would be a force for Jesus every day.

Other prayer requests:



**MEMORIZE
& MEDITATE**

"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."

ROMANS 8:13

EXTRA NOTES

IV

I AM A CHILD OF GOD

Romans 8:14–17

A. W. Tozer has stated in one of my favourite books: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God (Knowledge of the Holy)”. I try to work that into all of the Bible study guides I write, so if you have read them before you have seen it. I think he is right.

If J. I. Packer is right when he states “You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one’s holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. ‘Father’ is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption”, then this passage in Romans becomes one of the most important ones in the Bible. This reality allows us to trust deeper, and rest in His sovereign care. It is the only right we need as followers of Jesus (John 1:12–13), and in reality this relationship changes all of life. The Father leads us, and we learn to trust Him, and not our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6). The Father tenderly loves us, and cares for us by choosing His best for His glory and our good in our lives. These realities are already overwhelming and yet there is more, we become, through this relationship, a part of His inheritors. In a world that is so full of broken relationships and chaos and confusion, knowing God is our good Father allows us to experience a life to the fullest. If Tozer and Packer are right, we should keep Romans 8 in our vision if we want to live in *victory*!



I AM A CHILD OF GOD

Romans 8:14-17

Introduction

1. God is our Abba | JOHN 1:12-13

2. Having God as our Abba changes everything

- He leads us

- He loves us

- He lavishes us

- He makes us his legatees

Implications

- Know

- Experience

- Live



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:14–17

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:1–17
- Why do you think experiencing the reality of God being your Father is so important?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping this reality to be experienced by the child of God?
- What does it mean to be led by the Spirit?
- How does this assure us that we belong to Him?
- Discuss how we become a child of God (John 1:12–13) and how we know we are children of God.
- Knowing and experiencing God as your Abba, changes everything. How has this reality changed your life to this point?

> How do you think this should change your everyday life?

- How does God your Father lead you? PROVERBS 3:5-6; ROMANS 12:1-2; PSALMS 25:9-10
- How does God your Father help you to experience His love? EPHESIANS 5:1-2
- What have you experienced that displays this precious love?
- What does it mean to be an heir of God?
- How does this reality change your reality?
- As you apply this to your lives, in community, discuss how you can more effectively know God as your Father, experience the richness of this relationship in your everyday life, and find in this the rich experience of peace, rest and passion. I am a child of God. Wow!

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

Our Father

Corporate and relational: God is our dearest Daddy.

In Heaven

As “dearest daddy” calls for intimacy, so “in heaven” calls for respect.

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

Many have pointed out that the first three requests in this prayer are Godward, and this is a good observation. It is helpful to note also that we are a part of fulfilling these prayer requests as we seek to be an answer to them by living Spirit-filled lives. God’s name in the context is Father, but we know well that it is more than this. When name is used this way in the Bible it represents all of who that person is. Really, name is a way of declaring who they are. Psalm 20:7 talks about boasting in the name of the LORD, not in what we call Him, although that matters, but in who He is! Hallowed be your name, is asking God to help us to set apart His name as Holy. That God would be revered for who He is, and that this reverence would be life-changing. This is a request that people who know who God is reverence Him for who He is. It is a request that we as His children would know Him as He has revealed Himself (His Name), and respond to this in faith with our lips and lives so that others would revere Him. It includes those who flippantly use God’s name in vain with their lips, but it is so much more. The first and foundational request is that God’s name would be seen and experienced as *holy*, set apart, utterly pure. As you pray tonight, approach the throne of grace with boldness, and in that boldness have a deep reverence for the Holiness of God and a radical commitment to help others to know Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our **Over 55s**. Pray that they would continue to grow in their faith and serve in the church. Pray for their relationships with kids and grandkids (and great grandkids) and that they would effectively model a love relationship with Jesus. Pray that this ministry would be an encouragement and challenge and that our church would serve them, and be served by them, effectively.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"

ROMANS 8:15

EXTRA NOTES



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (PT. 2)

Romans 8:5–30

Who is the Holy Spirit, and why does it matter? It seems to me that in the modern Canadian church the Holy Spirit is either misunderstood and misused, or ignored. The problem with both of those extremes (mistakes) is that they lead to a defeated Christianity. Knowing who the Holy Spirit is, experiencing His work in your life, is the only pathway to victorious Christian living. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and plays a very personal role in the ability of the follower of God to believe in God and live the life that He desires and demands. He is fully God! His role is so important that if we don't pay attention to Him, and who He has revealed Himself to be, we are in peril. In this discussion of Him, it is essential to remember that the Holy Spirit focuses us on Jesus, so we discover quickly in a study on Him that there are no prayers to Him, and that He powerfully helps us to know and exalt Jesus in a way that rarely focuses the spotlight on Him. True praise to Jesus is one of the surest ways of knowing we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit helps us to see the truth of God's Word, and to live in light of this reality. He is the *truth revealer*. 1 Corinthians 2:10–13 tells us that God the Holy Spirit helps us understand the things that the Word teaches. In John 6 Jesus promises Him as a guide, who will "guide you into all truth". The Holy Spirit is the Gift Giver. 1 Corinthians 12:7 calls spiritual gifts a "manifestation of the Spirit". He gives gifts to followers of Jesus and helps them to use them to build the local church for the glory of God. He unifies true followers of Jesus and helps them to serve in His power so that these gifts in action yield a mature family of believers. The Holy Spirit is the Fruit Producer. He is the one who produces spiritual fruit in Jesus' followers. This fruit includes characteristics that honour God, praise that overflows from a heart devoted to God, holiness, others trusting in God through you, and so much more. God the Holy Spirit's work in your life is essential to victorious Christian living. The Holy Spirit is the Holiness Helper. Covered already in Fruit Producer, but worth singling out, He helps followers of Jesus put to death the deeds of the flesh and live in a way that displays the glory of God and the greatness of the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the Comfort Giver. He comes alongside those who know the Father through the Son, and brings them counsel and comfort. He helps them to know how to live, and to experience comfort in the midst of their lives in a fallen world that is filled with suffering. Any study of God is limited by the knowledge of the one studying (which for us is huge), resources used, and the way God has revealed Himself, so my hope is that this brief snapshot will cause you to passionately pursue a new understanding and experience of your relationship with the Holy Spirit.



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (PT. 2)

Romans 8:5-30

Introduction

The Spirit

- Sets us free
- Makes us holy
- Helps us love God's Word and apply it
- Gives us life
- Leads us
- Lets us know we are His
- Helps us in our sufferings

1. The Holy Spirit's role in the children of God | 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

- Truth revealer
- Gift giver
- Fruit producer

- Holiness helper

- Comfort giver

- Prayer supporter

2. The reality of being heirs

3. The suffering helper

Implications

- Keep your view of the Holy Spirit biblical

- Walk in the Spirit



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:5–30

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:5–30
- If the two ditches that cause the Canadian church to not know who the Holy Spirit is are misunderstanding and misusing, or ignoring. Which do you think that you fall into? Or the church you grew up in? Take the time to interact on some of those misconceptions together.
- How can you make sure that your view of God the Holy Spirit is biblical?
- How has our study of Romans 8 helped you to get to know the Holy Spirit better?
- Why is understanding His role so important?
- Is it possible to understand God's Word without the Holy Spirit at work in you? Why or why not?
- What is your spiritual gift?

- Where are you using that gift (those gifts) to build the body of Christ where He has placed you?

- Read Galatians 5:16–26

- How does this passage help you understand the Spirit’s role in producing this fruit?

- How can you keep in step with the Spirit?

- How do you practically apply Romans 8:13?

- How do you think the Holy Spirit is the Counsellor? What does this mean?

- What is the impact in your life?

- The sermon addressed the following questions. Interact on the answers and what they mean in your pursuit of a proper relationship with God the Holy Spirit.

- > Can we pray to the Holy Spirit? Yes, but no one in the Bible did.

- > Should we focus on Him? Yes but His role is to focus us on Jesus.

- > Should we sing to worship Him? We can, but the pattern given in the Bible does not single Him out.

- > Does the Holy Spirit lead us? Yes!

- What are some practical ways that you can keep in step with the Spirit in the coming days?

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

Our Father

Corporate and relational: God is our dearest Daddy.

In Heaven

As “dearest daddy” calls for intimacy, so “in heaven” calls for respect.

Hallowed Be Your Name

May His Name be set apart as Holy, and displayed by His followers as amazing.
May His character be known, and His works displayed.

YOUR KINGDOM COME

The next two Godward requests are an overflow of the *foundational* request, the hallowing of God’s name. They are ways that we hallow God’s name. Your Kingdom Come is a prayer, ultimately, for the return of Jesus, and temporarily that we would experience His rule effectively here on earth. It is a longing for the King (He rules now, however in the coming Kingdom all will be made perfect), and a longing to see people now submitting to Him. How does this happen? Through authentic faith in Him. This is a prayer for our lives to be submitted to Him (living in His Kingdom) and for the gospel to bear fruit and draw many other people to live under His rule. This is a prayer for Jesus’ return, for full surrender to the King now, and for God’s rule to come to others through His children. Carson states correctly, “It is therefore impossible to pray this prayer in sincerity without humbly committing oneself to such a course.”

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our **pastoral staff**. Choose one of our pastoral staff and ask that God would help them to watch their life and doctrine closely. Please throughout the week make a habit of joining them in their struggle by praying for them.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/how-to-pray-for-your-pastor/>

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

ROMANS 8:26

EXTRA NOTES

VI

HEALTH AND WEALTH FOREVER

Romans 8:17-30

How we see the world matters. Typically we call this “worldview”. It simply refers to how we, from the core of who we are, see life. Worldview shapes how we respond to what is happening to us, and in many ways produces our emotional response to what is going on around us. To be joyful always takes a deep faith in God that knows He is *good, sovereign, all wise, and loves me*.

For the Christian (and the non-Christian) life sometimes feels like it is sucking the life out of us, and leaving us in a dark joyless hole. God’s word never promises us an easy life (in fact, the opposite is true), but if we have the foundations that faith in the God of the Bible bring, when we face these trials, joy overwhelms our journey. Obeying God’s will for us to be joyful is always impossible unless our worldview is shaped by God’s Word. This text is one of the richest in the Bible on suffering in the context of salvation. It brings hope, perseverance and joy to the follower of God, for when we think biblically, we know that eternity is real and we are never alone.

The reality of being a child of the King should shape our response to all of life, and the joy this should always yield will supersede any and all surface situations. Not only are we loved, and never alone, the Holy Spirit actually intercedes for us and His prayers help us to experience life obedient to the will of our Lord. *Wow!* God the Holy Spirit is praying for me! Realizing this allows us to keep our focus on the eternal and to use the temporary to accomplish great things for the glory of God! Joni Erickson was paralyzed in the summer of 1967, through much pain and confusion she went from being angry with God and His lack of willingness to heal her, to being awed with God at His love for her and helping her to trust Him as she waits for full healing in eternity. Her pain and the power of her experience of God’s love should help us to follow her as she follows Christ and live above our circumstances as we make much of God. The better we know God the more our lives will reflect our trust in Him, and the more we will be able to rest in His love for us, no matter what we are going through. How we view life matters, and God’s Word gives us the right perspective on life so that we can hold on to our joy, and persevere through any trial for God’s glory.



HEALTH AND WEALTH FOREVER

Romans 8:17-30

Introduction

1. Children of God suffer | 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18; 2 TIMOTHY 3:12

2. Children of God have hope

- Focus is future

- Future is better by far

- Follow Jesus with forbearance

3. Children of God are never alone

Implications

- Make much out of being His child

- Make much of the eternal

- Make much of God



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:17–30

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:5–30
- Discuss the term “worldview”. What does it mean?
- How can we seek to inform our worldview so that it aligns with God’s Word?
- Where can you see worldview most clearly on display in real life?
- Why is it important to realize that God’s children will suffer in this world?
- How does this help you in your life as you experience suffering, or to love on others who are going through difficult times?
- Interact with 2 Timothy 3:12 and discuss how this promise is applied in your life
- What is the hope that we are promised in this text?
- Why is it important to know the hope to which we have been called?

- What does Paul teach us in his sufferings by comparing the future with the temporary? 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–18

- How does this text help us to grasp that an eager anticipation of Jesus' return is needed to suffer well for God's glory?

- What are some other texts in the Bible about suffering and the Christian that can help inform your worldview, and bring you hope in the midst of turmoil?

- How does the reality of never being alone bring comfort to your heart?

- As you review Pastor Rob's implications talk together about how you can actively produce these responses in your life.
 - > Make much out of being His child

 - > Make much out of the eternal

 - > Make much out of God

- How has this text and this time in discussion with God's people helped you shape your worldview today?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

Our Father

Corporate and relational: God is our dearest Daddy.

In Heaven

As “dearest daddy” calls for intimacy, so “in heaven” calls for respect.

Hallowed Be Your Name

May His Name be set apart as Holy, and displayed by His followers as amazing.

May His character be known, and His works displayed.

Your Kingdom Come

Lord Jesus come soon for your church, and while we wait would you rule in our lives and help us to introduce people to you so they will live in submission to you.

YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

This is the third and final Godward request, and fits in well with hallowing His name. It is a prayer of submission, an offering of our lives to Him, as well as longing for others also to obey His Word in their lives. The second part, “as it is in heaven”, is a cry to have this obedience be full, joyful and absolute. That God will reign fully in our lives and our world. To be a part of the answer to this prayer we are going to be a people who: **(1)** fully surrender to God’s Word ourselves; **(2)** find others to share the gospel with; **(3)** follow in community, and help and be helped to do God’s Will. Elizabeth Elliot shares, “To experience the glory of God’s will for us means absolute trust. It means the will to do His will, and means joy”. Amen and Amen! Carson helpfully sums up these three Godward requests, that these are “prayers that He may act in such a way with His people will hallow His name, submit to His reign, and do His will. It is therefore impossible to pray this prayer in sincerity without humbly committing yourself to such a course.” Pray this prayer in your own words as you are learning the lessons of Jesus on prayer.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for a **culture of evangelism** at CBC. That we would be so full of the Master’s love that we would have to share it or burst. That each of us who calls this church home would know the gospel, experience the gospel and share the gospel.

Other prayer requests:



**MEMORIZE
& MEDITATE**

"And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

ROMANS 8:27

EXTRA NOTES

VII

CONFIDENT IN CRISIS

Romans 8:28–29

Our world is falling apart. It is not the first time, in fact, it would appear to me that most cultures at some time or another have felt strongly impacted by the fall, and overwhelmed with the things that are out of their control. How do we respond when relationships break, when we fail, when our job seems to be wrong, when our health hiccups, and the hiccup might kill us, when loved ones die or abandon us, etc. And so many other things. Psalm 46 gives a very simple answer: ¹“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah.”

Maybe you have felt some of the earth giving way under your feet, or the mountains shaking or waters foaming and you don't know what to do. The simple answer, though not easy, is trust in God. Perhaps the most precious promise in the Bible for followers of Jesus who sometimes live in a shaking world is found in Romans 8:28–29. If this is true, than there never needs to be a time when believers need be anxious or fear. Basically as Piper sums it up, this verse simply means, “God is so supremely in charge of the world that all the things that happen to Christians are ordered in such a way that they serve our good”. If that is true, than in the midst of the storm we can still rest. God has a plan, and is all powerful so nothing can stop His plan (Ephesians 1:11). God's plan is the best plan possible because He is all wise. God's plan is the best plan possible for you, because He is good and loves you, and nothing can separate you from that love. If we comprehend these true truths (as Francis Schaeffer would call them) we can find peace in pain, rest in reality, and sleep in storms. As A. W. Tozer has rightly said, what comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you, and if what comes into our minds is loyal to God's Word (and these two precious verses) how we feel in trembling times will be radically reformed. We live in the age of anxiety, and these verses are ones we should believe, treasure, and apply. If we live in light of who God is, everything else will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. John Oxenham is said to have written: “He writes in characters too grand for our short sight to understand; we catch but broken strokes, and try to fathom all the mystery of withered hopes, of death, of life, the endless war, the useless strife—but there, with larger, clearer sight, we shall see this—His way was right.” Amen, and Amen.



CONFIDENT IN CRISIS

Romans 8:28-29

Introduction

1. Confidence because of our comprehension

2. Confidence because of God's character

- All powerful

- All wise

- Good

- Loves me

3. Confidence because of completeness

4. Confidence because of God's call

5. Confidence because of God's coordination:

Implications

- Anxiety and fear swallowed up in victory

- God's character impacting our core beliefs and emotions



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:28–29

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:28–39
- Have you ever doubted that God really cared about you? If you are willing, share that experience, and what helped you to trust in His tender care.
- How do these verses inform your heart of God's power?
- How does Joseph's faith work to inform ours? **GENESIS 50:19–20**
- One pastor describes this as perhaps, "the most glorious promise in Scripture", and when understood in its depth, I agree with that. Discuss together why this is so.
- What do we need to understand from this passage that will help us to live an anxiety free life?
- How does the character of God inform our experiences that are not pleasant? Especially here focus on His sovereignty and love.

- What do we have to believe about God to trust Him when everything else is falling apart? Psalm 46:2
- Jerry Bridges develops a 3 legged stool for Trusting God, He is good, sovereign and all wise. Discuss what these three attributes are, and why they help you trust God if you believe them in your heart. Would you add any other attributes of God to your focus in seeking to experience peace in anxious situations?
- Paul uses absolute language. How does this help to give us confidence in Christ when our lives feel like they are in chaos?
- Why do you think Paul spends so much time on what can't separate us from God's love?
- As you look at verse 29, what is the purpose of God in "all things"?
- What are some specific steps that you can take to live in the courage and rest that these verses provide to the authentic believer?
- Why do you think this is sometimes so difficult?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9–15

Our Father

In Heaven

Hallowed Be Your Name

Your Kingdom Come

Your Will Be Done

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

The last three petitions of the Lord's prayer turn from Godward to our own needs. The first is a declaration of our daily dependence on God. We need Him, and if He doesn't actively work in our lives our physical needs will not be met. This request is simple, and "for our needs, not our greeds" (Carson). One of the realities that must always be put before God's people is our utter dependence on God, and His sufficient supply always. This prayer request does not deflect our need to work—rather it displays our dependence on God for all good things, including work (Deuteronomy 8:18). We are to be a people that even in the simple things are completely dependent on God. Notice that this is not an individual prayer, but one prayed in community. We are in this simple trust and dependence daily walk together, and as a family dependent for even what satisfies our tummies. Together pray this prayer, as you are learning to pray from Jesus.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for **Cloverdale Baptist Church**—that we would develop and live out a culture of worship. Worship is all that we are, and all that we have responding correctly to who God is. This always overflows in praise, and supersedes style. May God help us to be a people who are so filled in our hearts with His love that we can't help but praise Him together with our lips.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

ROMANS 8:28-29

William Cowper's Powerful Hymn

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain

VIII

THE STRONG FOUNDATION

Romans 8:28–30

There are verses in the Bible that are hard to leave, as you move through a book, and Romans 8 is filled with them. If there was one chapter in the Bible that you could park in for the rest of your life, my car would be in Romans 8. As you reflect on these two verses in this life altering chapter, they not only call for us to have no anxiety, they display for us what God is doing in His perfect plan. We can trust Him if we are called according to His purpose for accomplishing the two most important things to Him and His followers. What are these two *most important* things you ask? Conformity to Jesus and the supremacy of Jesus. When Jesus gave the church His mission (Matthew 28:16–20), it was to make disciples, and ultimately to teach them to obey all that He has commanded us. We are to know His Word and apply it to our lives (Matthew 7:21–27). This is what makes us most like Jesus, and ultimately is what God wants for us (Galatians 4:19). It has been said that God doesn't want us happy, He wants us holy. And although I like that sentiment, I would adjust it to say He wants us happy and holy, because we know holiness is not only His plan, but what is best for us. God's plan for us is to help us be like Jesus. God's plan for us is also to display with our lives the "firstborn's" majesty and beauty, to glorify Jesus and display His value, or as Paul would say in Philippians 1, to honour Him.

So as we define the good of Romans 8:28, the Holy Spirit is very helpful and specific, and we should join in this joy and jump in this pursuit. Sometimes verse 30 is seen as threatening for those who have a large view of man, and a small view of God, and yet my hope and prayer is that if this is you, this will be shattered. Romans 8:30 contains five beautiful words that act as a guarantee of our salvation. **Foreknew:** a predetermined choice of God that He knows about from before the creation of the world. **Predestined:** to mark out, appoint, or determine beforehand. This is so precious to those who are loved by God, He not only knows your name, He chose you before the creation of the world. **Called:** foreknowledge and predestination supernaturally lead to calling. This is the divine call that leads a person to choose God's gospel freely with their will. **Justified:** perhaps no more precious concept in all of Scripture, the reality that those who are called not only have all of their sin forgiven, they also have been given the righteousness of Jesus. Just as if I'd never sinned. Just as if I'd always obeyed. **Glorified:** God finishes what He starts, salvation from start to finish is a work of the grace of God. All who are called will be kept, and spend eternity in heaven. Oh that we would grasp the richness of His promise, His plan, and His power!



THE STRONG FOUNDATION

Romans 8:28-30

Introduction

1. Our passionate priorities

- Conformity to Christ | GALATIANS 4:19; COLOSSIANS 1:27-29

- The supremacy of Christ | 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31; PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

2. Our particular pillars

- Foreknew
- Predestined
- Called
- Justified
- Glorified

Implications

- Trust and obey



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:28–30

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:28–39
- Why do you think so many people today and in history struggle with the Sovereignty of God in the plan of salvation?
- What does it look like to be conformed to the image of Jesus?
- How do we pursue this in God's power and plan?
- What does it look like that Jesus will be supreme?
- How do we pursue this together?
- What does it mean to glorify God?

- Are there steps you can take personally and as a group to become more effective at pursuing the two goals of God as outlined here (be like Jesus, glorify Jesus)?

- Walk through each of the pillars of salvation and discuss what each means.
 - > Foreknew

 - > Predestined

 - > Called

 - > Justified

 - > Glorified

- How do these pillars provide us with security?

- In my ministry experience, people in pain reflect on these verses with anger, or worship. Discuss why you think this radical difference occurs.

- What can you do to make sure you're a worshipper, not a wanderer?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9–15

Our Father

In Heaven

Hallowed be your Name

Your Kingdom come

Your Will be done

Give us this day our daily bread

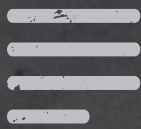
FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS

Augustine called this request, “the terrible petition”, because by praying it we are asking God not to forgive us if we don’t forgive others. Jesus deepens this “terror”, by declaring in verses 14–15 that if we don’t forgive those who sin against us, we will not be forgiven. Spurgeon understood this when he famously said, “Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord’s Prayer”. This is simply a prayer for our spiritual needs, and it is a prayer that covers our need from God and our responsibility to others. **Forgive us:** We are called to live a life of repentance (1 John 1:9), and confess all of our sins to God and bask in His grace and forgiveness. **Help me forgive others:** Let me be so overwhelmed with your grace and forgiveness that I offer this to all who ask (Matthew 18:21–35). As you pray through the Lord’s Prayer this week and focus on this portion, take the time to forgive all who have asked, and be ready to be gracious to any and all who have wronged you. If you struggle with this, **Note Appendix 1** (What if I can’t forgive?; What if they don’t ask for forgiveness?; Does forgiving mean forgetting?)

Prayer for the church

Please pray for a **culture of care**. By this we mean that we will be a church filled with people filled with the love of God in such a way that it overflows. So pray that we would experience God’s love (Ephesians 3:14–21) and that we would share God’s love with one another (John 13:34–35). Ask God to help us to be those who are aware of people who need God’s love through us, and to pro-actively seek to display this in our Sunday gatherings (and beyond).

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

ROMANS 8:30

EXTRA NOTES

IX

MOUNTAIN TOP

Romans 8:28–39

Have you ever been on a hike that never seemed to end? When I was a boy, dad took my older brother and me on one of those hikes. We started very early in the morning, hiked in behind a huge mountain, to a beautiful lake, and then up from the lake to the mountain top. It was not easy, in fact, often we were without a path and struggling over massive boulders, but when we reached the top, it was all worth it! The view from the top of Castle Mountain was breathtaking, above all other mountains in the area. It felt like you could see forever. Not only that, but there was a cairn on the top of the peak, and in it was a book where we could write our names. We were the few, the brave, the top of the mountain club, and in that book on the top of the mountain is my name. I never wanted to leave that place. We did, and the journey home was long and filled with shadows and fear, but I will not forget the top of the mountain experience (thanks dad for making me go). This is now *my mountain*, I love it, it goes on encouragement cards, it is on my wall in the office and anywhere else I can put it without seeming too strange. It was not easy, but it was worth it, and something I will never forget.

Far greater than that journey and experience is the mountain top of Romans 8, where we have now arrived. A great Bible teacher, James Montgomery Boice stated, “anyone who has studied the Bible with care knows that there are times when we come to some soaring pinnacle of revelation and are left nearly breathless by the view. This is what happens when we come to the last great paragraph of Romans 8.” I agree, and this is a place, if you love God, that you will never want to leave. If grasped and experienced, there is perhaps no greater passage in the Bible for helping us to live victorious (overwhelming conqueror) lives. This passage is filled with questions, and their answers will leave us breathless and worshipping in peace and joy! God is for us, and He shows that in what He did in Jesus and through Jesus! God is actually for us, therefore nothing and no one can cause us to fear. Who can be against us? Will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Yes! Look at what He did and is doing! No one can bring any charge that will stick, for we are found in Christ! He has forgiven fully and freely every past sin, every present sin, every future sin of those who truly believe. Wow! Who is it that condemns? Clearly those who want us to feel insecure or don’t believe what Jesus has done in us and for us! Oh that we would answer these questions in the strength of the Holy Spirit and apply them to our hearts so that this mountain top experience can be one we put on our encouragement cards, place on our walls, and most importantly, apply to our hearts!



MOUNTAIN TOP

Romans 8:28-39

Introduction

1. If God is for us, who can be against us?

2. How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

3. Who will bring any charge?

4. Who is it that condemns?

Implications

- Let God answer the questions!

- Look to Jesus

- Look to Jesus

- Look to Jesus



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:28–39

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:28–39
- Share any “mountain top” experience you have had and are willing to speak about.
- What is your favourite passage of Scripture and why?
- Why do you think that this passage has risen above the rest for so many Christians in history as their favourite?
- Why do you think Paul (the Holy Spirit) uses questions and answers to help us to experience the love of God?
- What does it mean that God is for us?
- How can this help us to be confident in any and every situation where we find ourselves?
- What does it mean that God will graciously give us all things?

- Why does it sometimes feel like this is not the case?
- Respond to John Stott, "the cross proves God's generosity". Try to have this apply to your life in your response.
- Where do you practically see God's generosity in your life?
- Why is Paul wanting to declare to us that no one can bring a charge against us?
- How does knowing this is Satan's attack strategy help you to be aware of how to battle against him and his forces in this? Revelation 12:10
- If you have ever felt condemned, how does clinging to the cross free you from that condemnation and help you experience His grace?
- Reflect on Romans 8:1
- What are some practical ways you can keep these "mountain top" realities in sight as you seek to honour Jesus with your lives?

PRAYER

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

Our Father

In Heaven

Hallowed be your Name

Your Kingdom come

Your Will be done

Give us this day our daily bread

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors

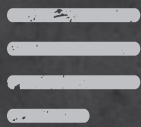
AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

This does not mean that God will tempt us with evil (James 1:13). However, it does mean that we are encouraged to pray, "Don't allow us to come under the sway of temptation that will overpower us and cause us to sin (Kent Hughes)". It is a prayer to stay pure in the midst of the trials and temptations of life, to be a person that focuses on Jesus, and lives life for His honour and glory! When life is difficult, help me to glorify your name in every circumstance by responding in a way that honours You! Deliver us from evil, or more likely, the evil one, acknowledges the spiritual battle, and calls for the Christian to be one who is always praying in this combat to be victorious! Victory in our spiritual battle can only come in dependence on God, and living life in His power. The battle is real, the outcome sure, the key to victory is prayerful dependence and passionate pursuit. Pray through the entire prayer to this point together, knowing that vain repetition is a waste, and that your goal is to relate to the Father in the way the Son has taught us in prayer.

Prayer for the church

Please pray for our women's ministry. Pray that our women would be fully devoted to Jesus, and display to the people around them what living for Him looks like. Please pray for their safety and impact for God's glory. Please pray for their leaders, that they would have wisdom, energy, and passion in helping our women follow Jesus fully in joy.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

ROMANS 8:32

EXTRA NOTES

X

COMING OFF THE MOUNTAIN TOP: REAL LIFE**Romans 8:31–39**

The gospel is the centre of the Christian life, and a real life experience of Jesus' love is the core of victorious Christian living. When we left the top of Castle Mountain, it was beautiful. The sun was shining and we could see forever, and it was the best experience of my life to that point (well at the very least among them!). We started down the windy pathway, and pretty soon it was dusk, and growing darker. We managed to get through the rocky scrambly places, but little did we know what awaited for us in the darkness of the pathway to come. As dusk settled, the noises of the forest seemed louder, and the dark patches along the path larger.

We could hear noises of animals moving, and we came to a complete stop when we saw a bear cub a few metres ahead of us on the path. By this time it was too dark to see into the forest, and the fear of this moment was not the cub, but the mother which must have been lurking close by. We waited, and whispered, and finally worked up the courage to try to slip by the sleeping cub, slowly working our way forward in the darkening night, until we noticed it was not a sleeping cub after all, but a sleeping root. From here on down we quickened our pace, loudened our voices and made it safely home (poor mom and two little brothers were very worried by the time we made it). Sometimes on the journey down the mountain, life is not easy, and shadows might even turn out to be real danger. So Romans 8:31–39 is absolutely necessary for our hearts and minds. In a fallen world there are many things that can threaten our experience of God's love, but here is the reality that supersedes any of those threats, nothing can separate us from the love of God! Nothing.

Stop. Steady your mind and read that last sentence again. Believe it! Cling to it! Live in light of it, for if it is true (and God said it, so it is) then we can find hope and joy and victory, even when there are shadows that look like bear cubs, or even if there are mother bears lurking in the darkness of the forest. Cling to God with all your might, and know that this experience is based in the reality of the confidence we can have in a text like this. Nothing can separate you from the love of God.



COMING OFF THE MOUNTAIN TOP: REAL LIFE

Romans 8:31-39

Introduction

Threats to our experience of God's love:

Tribulation

Distress

Persecution

Famine

Nakedness

Danger

Sword

Implications

- Perceive it: mind
- Pray for it: feelings
- Pursue it: action



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 8:31–39

- Review the text out loud: Romans 8:28–39
- Why is it sometimes hard to experience God's love?

- Are you willing to share a time in your life when you struggled with your own feelings of being separated from God's love?

- Paul mentions a number of things that might separate us from God's love experientially. Why do you think He does this? Discuss each of them and what you think they mean in our lives in this era.
 - > Tribulation

 - > Distress

 - > Persecution

 - > Famine

 - > Nakedness

 - > Danger

 - > Sword

- Paul adds:

- > Death

- > Life

- > Demons

- > All else in all of creation

- Why do you think he takes the time to add these?
- How does this passage make you feel? Try more than a one word answer here, as you seek to understand and describe it.
- What are ways you can more effectively experience the love of God?
- Work through Pastor Rob's implications:
- What does it mean to perceive, pursue and pray for this experience.
- Reflect together on the importance of praying Ephesians 3:14–21 together.

PRAYER

EPHESIANS 3:14–21

“¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

There are endless things that we can pray for, and that we should pray for. Philippians 4:4–6 is so clear, anything that makes us anxious we should pray about. However, we get to see what is on the heart of God through seeing the prayers He inspired. We have seen that with the Lord’s Prayer. We also see it through the many recorded prayers found in Scripture. The more mature we are spiritually the more we will be a people who pray in line with the heart of God as revealed in Scripture. This prayer is one of my favourites and fits so beautifully our study of Romans 8 as a pursuit of God to give us a deep experience of His love for us. Hear His prayer requests in our hearts, and repeat in our own words:

- Strength in our inner beings through His Spirit
- Strength to comprehend the love of Christ and to know (experience) it
- Be filled with all the fullness of God

All in the context of relationship with the living God. Take the time to reflect on this prayer not only to understand it, but to let it guide your prayers together, not only displaying your maturity, but pursuing a deeper maturity in your prayers.

Praying for our church

Please pray that we would be a church that has a first-love devotion to God. That we would truly be a people who have encountered Jesus and are growing in grace. This is a relationally focused prayer, and one that longs for us to love God first.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

ROMANS 8:38-39

EXTRA NOTES

XI

AMAZING POWER

Romans 9:1-13

I love watching sports. Sometimes though, watching is difficult. When we were still at Caronport, a friend invited us over to watch a playoff game between the Flames and the Oilers. It was close the entire game, and I found myself pacing, up and down, in the kitchen, outside, barely able to watch and yet not wanting to miss anything. It went into overtime and that just made my deep anxiety worse, and then, my world fell apart for evil won. It broke my heart.

What does it take to break your heart? I hope you are more mature than I was, and if not that the good team (Flames or Canucks if you are wondering) wins. The text we are studying today is a hard one to work through and they get more complex as we go through Romans 9–11. As much as people love to spend time in Romans 8, they seem to skip through these three chapters to the strong commitment of Romans 12. These chapters are humbling for all humans, and display God as sovereign, over all and awesome. When we truly know the value of God and set our hearts on who He has revealed Himself to be, what breaks His heart will break ours. For Paul, He is heartbroken when people reject God and His grace. The Jewish people should have known better, but they abandoned their Savior.

How he words this is astounding, in verse 3 he actually declares that if he could he would take their place in hell (Jesus did this for all who will believe), and yet he can't and so it instigates a passionate pursuit of them for God. Paul trusts in God's love, knows God's plan is good, and pursues God's will with all His might. Knowing that God is sovereign should drive us to prayer and action. Knowing God has a plan at work that will not fail might at times break our hearts, but it must always drive us to faith and full devotion. God is sovereign, and His plan will always move forward, and we are called to trust and obey, even when our minds fall short in grasping His thoughts.



AMAZING POWER

Romans 9:1-13

Introduction

1. A crushed heart | VERSES 1-3

2. A crying over wasted opportunity | VERSES 4-5

3. A call to trust God and His plan | VERSES 6-13

Implications

- We must submit our realities to His

- We must show His heart in our hearts

- We must speak the gospel

Commitment: *Today I commit to trust Jesus even when life is confusing. I commit to pray for one person who does not know Jesus and pursue an opportunity to share the gospel with them. I commit to Jesus to live my life for the praise of His glorious grace.*

Signed _____



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 9:1–13

- Review the text out loud: Romans 9:1–13
- What breaks your heart?
- What is a worldview, and why is it important for us to have a biblical worldview?
- What in this text is most shocking to a pagan worldview?
- Why is it helpful to see what broke the Paul's heart?
- What is the question that Paul is trying to answer in these verses?
- How did/does God value the Jewish people?
- This is one of the more difficult texts for people in our world to read. In fact, many would prefer to ignore it, and instead focus on chapter 8, or chapter 12.
- Why do you think this is?

- One of the worst sermons I have ever heard was on this passage, discussing what it doesn't mean, but never coming to terms with what it does.
- What do you think it means?
- How do texts like Isaiah 55:8–9 help us to rest when things are difficult for us to grasp?
- What does the word "hate" in this text imply?
- Why do you think biblical doctrines like election are so hard for us as humans to accept?
- Romans scholar, Douglas Moo, writes, Any basis for God's election outside God Himself defies both the language and the logic of what Paul has written. Interact on this.
- How can we be a church that is Berean (Acts 17:11) and fully submissive to the whole counsel of God, especially with difficult passages like this one for us to understand?

PRAYER

ROMANS 15:5-6

“⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Praying what the Spirit has inspired as an overflow of our hearts is not always easy! Our desire is to grow in our maturity and to make it our passion to be those who overflow with the things that most concern God. The easiest way to do this is to learn the prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit.

All in the context of relationship with the living God. Take the time to reflect on this prayer not only to understand it, but to let it guide your prayers together, not only displaying your maturity, but pursuing a deeper maturity in your prayers.

Praying requests

- That God would help us endure
- That God would help us to be encouraged
- That we might have huge harmony with one another
- That we might together be in accord with Jesus
- That we might with one voice glorify God

Prayer for one another and our church family

L: First LOVE relationship with God

O: That we would be ONE, unified for the glory of our King around our loyalty to God.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"I am speaking the truth in Christ
—I am not lying; my conscience bears
me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that
I have great sorrow and unceasing
anguish in my heart."

ROMANS 9:1–2

EXTRA NOTES

XII

AMAZING POWER (PT. 2)

Romans 9:14–33

“Next to the bare facts of salvation the greatest lesson a Christian can learn is that nothing can separate him or her from the love of Jesus Christ, which is the love of God” (Boice). Almost all Christians would agree with Boice on that. The problem is that having an all-powerful God, who is active in all of life means that there is some confusion on how the freedom of man and the sovereignty of God interact. This is not an easy problem to answer, and in fact, has been a confusing problem for many over time. Almost always when Christians entertain the greatness of God and His sovereignty over all things like this passage forces us to do, we tend to go to extremes. Some try to turn God into a puppet master, with no responsibility or choice for humans, others attempt to show that God is a helpless Santa-like figure wanting to bless us but dependent on our behaviour. Both are wrong and lead to a distorted view of God and life. Romans presents us with a God who is over all, who is the potter and who delights in His creation and calls us to respond in joyful worship, submission and service with our wills. We would call this “compatibilism”, and we see that God’s Word values our responsibility as well as God’s absolute sovereignty. We will not fully grasp this until glory, but we can fully trust Him in the things that still confuse us.

This text is clear: God is big, and this should dominate our thinking even as we seek to not lose what is clearly taught elsewhere. A big view of God will mean that you will trust Him, and when you don’t understand some of the more difficult issues, your faith in Him and who He is will crowd out your doubts. I love the Taco Bell commercial where the little chihuahua is trying to trap Godzilla with a little twig and cardboard box, and when he sees the massive shadow coming around the corner, famously says, “I think I need a bigger box”. To some degree we all need a bigger box, and God has given us His Word to help us to know Him, and build our box bigger. Understanding who God is, is the most important thing about us, and often growing in this understanding is not easy, but it is rewarding and will reshape how we see all of life. This text was used to help someone I deeply love to move from a man-centred Christianity to a God-centred one, and I hope that in some way it does the same for us as we seek to constantly grow in our biblical understanding of God and see all of life through that lens.



AMAZING POWER (PT. 2)

Romans 9:14–33

Introduction | PSALM 115:3

1. Is there injustice on God's part? EXODUS 32:9

2. Why does God still find fault?

- God is the creator

- The potter chooses what to make out of the clay

- We would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah

Turn to Jesus in faith

"Everybody has to decide how to relate to this rock which God has laid down. There are only two possibilities. One is to put our trust in Him, to take Him as the foundation of our lives and build on Him. The other is to bark our shins against Him, and so to stumble and fall."^c

Implications

- Love
- Life
- Lost
- Leave



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 9:14–33

- Review the text out loud: Romans 9:14–33
- Why do you think it is sometimes hard to gain a biblical view of God?

- What is the best way to learn who God is, and to have that shape our view of Him?

- How does the text answer the question “if God is sovereign how can He justly condemn anyone?”?

- How do you usually answer this?

- How does God find fault with us if He truly is sovereign according to this text? Would you add anything?

- How does a passage like this help you trust God?

- Romans 10:1 is Paul's response to what he has just taught. How does this help us to know how to respond?
- How can a chapter about the greatness of God produce that kind of passion in you?
- How does this passage on the greatness of God's sovereignty help us to know that what was taught in Romans 8 about not being separated from God's love is true?
- How does God's Word hold in balance our responsibility and God's sovereignty?
 - Job 1:21–22; 2:10
 - Genesis 45:4–8; 50:20
 - Acts 2:23; 4:27–28
 - Romans 12:1–2
 - Matthew 11:28
 - Luke 9:23
 - Romans 19:9–10
- What questions does this study leave you with?
- How can you answer them, or be content when they are not answered?

PRAYER

ROMANS 15:13

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

God is the God of HOPE, and we as His people need this. Take the time to thank Him for this, and ask Him to fill you with all joy and peace.

- Pray this as well for those around you.
- Pray also that you would have a strong and growing faith in the God of the Bible.
- Pray that you would in this power of the Holy Spirit, abound in hope!

These prayer requests are powerful, and should be a part of our patterns of prayer as we grow in these things together.

Prayer for one another and our church family

L: First LOVE relationship with God

O: That we would be ONE, unified for the glory of our King around our loyalty to God.

V: That we would accomplish God’s Vision for His church at CBC.

- Holiness: that we would be Holy as God is holy
- Love: that we would experience His love so richly that we love one another
- Truth: that we would be loyal to His Word and live it out in our lives
- Mission: that we would live Romans 10:1 lives in our community and world and be on mission for Him and His glory.

Other prayer requests:



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

ROMANS 10:1-2

EXTRA NOTES

XIII

PRAYER AND THE PASSIONATE PATHWAY

Romans 10:1-15

Why does it matter whether you are passionate about the gospel or not? Should you care if people don't know Jesus enough to do something about it, or can you enjoy life without letting this kind of passion create angst in your heart? If the realities of heaven and hell weigh on your heart, and the joy of experiencing salvation in Jesus alone, by grace through faith, have impacted your life, you will long to see others know Jesus and be reconciled to God through Him. What difference must this make in your life? You will pray for those who don't know Jesus as an overflow of your heart's desire. You will long for people to trust in Him, and through that to find freedom and obedience. To know God deeply is to pray for others to know Him!

The pathway to reconciliation with God is narrow, in fact, the only gate by which we can be saved is Jesus Christ. You can't be zealous enough, or good enough to earn your way in. In our Canadian context many are adjusting their Christianity to fit with the culture, and to allow for those they love to be saved without truly trusting in Jesus. This is deadly and dangerous (Galatians 1:8-9).

The only way into relationship with God is confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, meaning we know who He is and long to submit to Him, and believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, meaning we know He conquered sin and death and is the risen One!

Have you confessed and believed? Are you longing for others to know Him as an overflow of your relationship with Him? Today, choose to know Him, and as you grow ever deeper, your passion will overflow in prayer and pursuit of those who don't know our Lord.



PRAYER AND THE PASSIONATE PATHWAY

Romans 10:1–15

Introduction

1. You can't be saved by zeal

2. You can't be saved by good works

How then can you must you be saved?

1. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord

2. Believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead

Implications

- Have a heart

- Know the path



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 10:1–15

- Review the text out loud: Romans 10:1–15
- If you could describe your heart's desire, how would you describe it?

- What is Paul's heart's desire?

- What other passages show us his heart, and how do they intersect with this passage?

- How would you define "a man after God's own heart?"

- How could you become more of a person who has a heart after God?

- Why is it important to know you can't be saved by zeal?

- What does this look like in real life when people think they can?

- What knowledge is necessary to be saved?

- Why is it important to know that good works can't save you, or keep you?

- How does Romans 10:9–10 tell us we must be saved?

- What does it mean to:
 - > Confess with our mouth Jesus is LORD

 - > Believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead

- Why do you think that Paul chose these as a summary for the gospel that must be received?

- How does Ephesians 2:1–10 inform your knowledge on this?

- How can you grow your heart for the lost?

- Why is knowing the gospel is exclusive important to our passion for evangelism?

- Take the time to outline the gospel as you would share it:
 - > What content is important?

- > What response does God demand so that we can be saved?

- > What is your role, the Holy Spirit's role, and the role of the person you are sharing with?

- > What is the role of prayer in this pursuit?

- How can we develop a culture of evangelism at Cloverdale Baptist Church?

- How would you define a culture of evangelism?

- How can your group be a part of this?

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4–9

“⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

- All we have is from God, and is part of His gracious gift to us. Thank Him for His work in your life, and the life of others!
- Pray that His grace would impact how we speak, and what we know, as we live the gospel life.
- Thank God that we have all the spiritual gifts we need as a family to be successful for God’s work at Cloverdale Baptist and the surrounding community.
- Pray that we would have a passion for Jesus’ return, and a peace as we know that He will keep us to the end while our purity is found in the Person of Jesus

Prayer for one another and our church family

L: First *love* relationship with God

O: That we would be *one*, unified for the glory of our King around our loyalty to God.

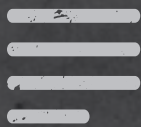
V: That we would accomplish God’s *vision* for His church at CBC.

E: That we would be a church filled with *eager* servants

We are those who actively serve the church selflessly. Pray that the gospel would so impact your Growth Group and our church that we would eagerly look for places to build the church for the glory of God. Pray through the entire LOVE acrostic together, and let it overflow from your heart.

Other prayer requests (Romans 10:1–2)

- Please continue to pray for those in your sphere of influence who don’t know Jesus and that we as a church would have a healthy culture of evangelism.



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

ROMANS 10:9-10

EXTRA NOTES

XIV

LIVING THE GOSPEL-CENTRED LIFE

Romans 10:14-21

How can we learn to care about what God cares about? In life there is much that is going on, and we can easily be distracted from His mission for us by bullfrogs and butterflies. Grasping that there is only One true God, and that the only way to reconciliation with Him is through Jesus Christ, our Lord, should change how we live our lives from moment to moment. The truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done should not only call us to live a gospel-centred life, it should cause us to live it. People matter to God, and therefore should matter to us, and our view of eternity in light of the gospel should shape our world.

In his must-read essay, *The Weight of Glory*, C. S. Lewis states “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” This is the seeing through the eyes of the gospel that leads to a gospel-centred Life. If people don’t hear the gospel, they can’t believe the gospel and so we must learn its content, share its Christ, and pray for other communicators! To live a life of faith is to live in the context of the gospel always. Way to many people who claim to know Jesus live their lives in a “normal” way. We are called to so much more than that. We are called to walk by faith, and to see others in light of that faith. Does your heart ache for those who don’t know Jesus? Do you see yourself as a part of the plan of God to reach them? Are you living your life in light of the gospel? Are you ready to give a reason for the hope you have in you (1 Peter 3:15)? Are you living the gospel-centred life?



LIVING THE GOSPEL-CENTRED LIFE

Romans 10:14–21

Introduction

Conditions:

1. Preachers sent from God | 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11–21; 1 PETER 2:11–12

2. The centrality of the gospel

- Get the gospel right! GALATIANS 1:8-9; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

3. Gospel submission

Implications

- Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?

- Do you see all of life in light of this?



Ruthlessly Seeking to Apply God's Word in Community

Romans 10:14–21

- Review the text out loud: Romans 10:5–21
- What does it mean, in your own words, to be gospel-centred?

- Why do you think it is easy to be distracted with other things?

- Read C. S. Lewis' Quote (it is in the introduction to this text), and discuss it.
Do you think he is right? What would it change in your life if you began to see people this way? How can you take steps to live life with eternity in view?

- Why are preachers so important to the plan of God?

- How can you pray for those who are in your sphere of influence who are preachers of the gospel?

- Why are your prayers important?

- How are all Christians (you and your group specifically) called to share the gospel?
- Have you recently shared the gospel with anyone?
- Why is knowing the content of the gospel message so important?
- Review the essential aspects of the gospel message together.
- Why is faith so important as a response to the gospel, and a way of life for those who have believed?
- Define faith.
- How can you learn to walk more and more by faith and not by sight?

- Share how you know you are saved by grace through faith.
- Do you have a relationship with Jesus?
- Share how you will grow to see all of life, especially other people in light of this.
- How will you minimize the distraction of bullfrogs and butterflies?

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

ROMANS 15:30–33

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Together brainstorm on missionaries you know and prayer requests that you have for those missionaries. When we pray for people we actually join them in their struggle. Your prayers for those in ministry matter. Paul's is seeking to have people join him in his ministry through prayer and asks:

- Freedom to keep on serving where people are seeking to limit his ministry.
- That people will accept and be impacted by his ministry.
- That he might be refreshed and be someone who refreshes other believers.
- Pick a few of the missionaries you are praying for and pray these three things for them.

Prayer for our church

- Pick two or three missionaries from our church and pray for them. Bring to your meetings letters from them that can help you pray for them effectively and specifically.
- Send them a note expressing that you are praying for them, and ask for any further requests they might have.

Other requests

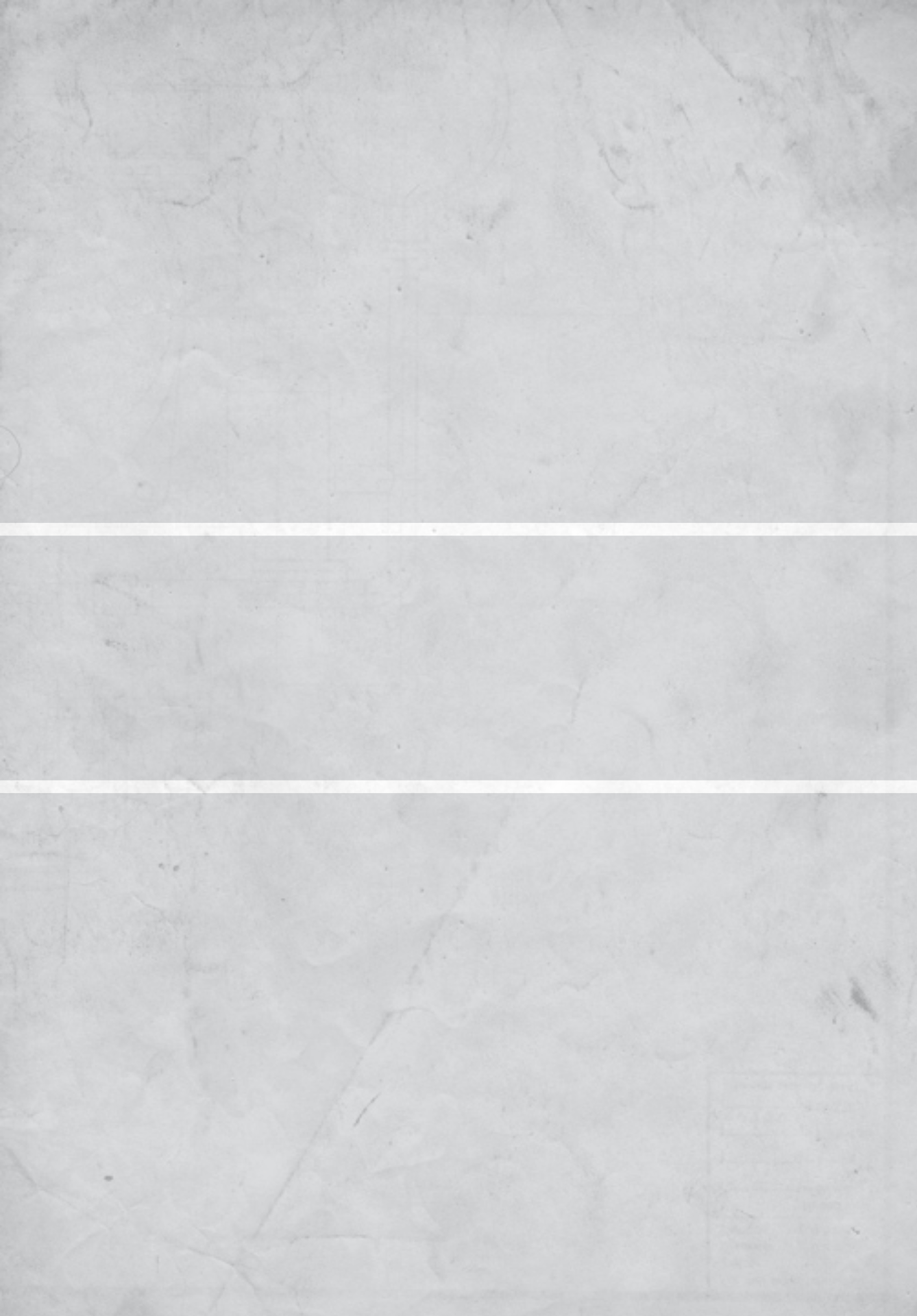


MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

ROMANS 10:14-15, 17



**ARTICLES &
DEVOTIONALS**

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

We often talk about being gospel-centred or gospel-focused. To understand how to build a culture that is honouring to God, it is essential that we understand, experience, and constantly bathe in the gospel. To begin growth in being a gospel-centred culture, we must grasp what the gospel is. There are many in our world who use the term but don't understand or experience the transformation. The gospel is literally "*the good news*," and it is good because it addresses the deepest and most desperate need that all humans have. The Bible is clear that getting the gospel wrong is dangerous (Galatians 1:8–10) and leads to destruction. It is very sad that there are those who think they are saved but are not (Matthew 7:21–27) and those who are saved by grace through faith who are not living in the fullness of what experiencing the gospel daily provides. To experience this good news there are five realities that must be grasped, believed, and then lived in light of daily experience.

1. God: A rich experience of the gospel is God-centred and always includes a belief about who God is that matches how He has revealed Himself in His Word. There is only one true God, who is holy, who made us in His image to worship Him. His holiness refers to His separateness from His creation and His absolute purity.

2. Humans: All humans have sinned (Romans 3:23) and in this have separated ourselves from God and are placed under His righteous wrath. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and the only way for sinners to pay for sin is to spend eternity separated from God in hell.

3. Jesus: God loved us so much that He, according to His eternal plan, sent Jesus, His only Son into the world. Jesus lived a perfect life thus fulfilling the law Himself in our place; He died on the cross in our place thus taking on Himself the sins of those who believe in Him. He rose again from the dead and in this conquered sin and death. This displayed that God accepted His sacrifice, and that God's wrath against sinners who believe in Jesus has been fully exhausted.

4. Humans: God now calls on humans, by grace through faith, to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus alone for forgiveness. This belief in Jesus alone is a faith that saves. When humans believe they are forgiven and reconciled to God, this new relationship becomes the centre of their lives.

5. Spirit-Filled Life: All who are saved by grace through faith are made new creations, and seek to live a life that is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus and devoted to His glory. This pursuit of holiness is a progression that He helps believers to pursue. The Spirit-filled life will include a desire to never ignore so great a salvation.

Mark Dever summarizes it like this:

A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response.

1. God: God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5–8).

2. Man: All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26–28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1–3).

3. Christ: Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God’s wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21–26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20–22).

4. Response: God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9–10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever, p. 43. <https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>)

The gospel is so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound, that it will be something those who know Jesus will spend eternity celebrating (Ephesians 2:7). These realities of the gospel are amazing and must be grasped, believed, and experienced to be saved and to live a victorious Christian life. It is not enough to know them, or even to believe them—they *must never be neglected* (Heb 2:3). The best way to “escape” this danger is to preach the gospel to ourselves every day.

KEEPING THE GOSPEL IN YOUR TESTIMONY

Q: Are we supposed to be able to share our faith?

A: 1 Peter 3:15–16: *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”*

Q: Is the gospel an important part of this sharing? Can we just talk about how we helped ourselves, or our Grandma helped us, or our friend, or our auto-mechanic, or, or, or...

A: 2 Corinthians 4:5: *“For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord...”*
1 Corinthians 1:23: *“But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”*

Q: How can I structure my testimony?

A straightforward way to structure your testimony is in three stages:

Before: Simply tell what your life was like before you surrendered to Christ. What were you searching for before coming to know Christ? What was the key problem, emotion, situation or attitude you were dealing with? What motivated you? What were your actions? How did you try to satisfy your inner needs? (Examples of inner needs are loneliness, fear of death, insecurity. Possible ways to fill those needs include work, money, drugs, relationships, sports, sex.)

How: How were you converted? Simply tell the events and circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your searching. Take time to identify the steps that brought you to the point of trusting Christ. Where were you? What was happening at the time? What people or problems influenced your decision?

Since: How has your life in Christ made a difference? How has his forgiveness impacted you? How have your thoughts, attitudes and emotions changed? Share how Christ is meeting your needs and what a relationship with him means to you now.

IMPORTANT TIPS TO REMEMBER

Stick to the point. Your conversion and new life in Christ should be the main points.

Be specific. Include events, genuine feelings and personal insights that clarify your main point. This makes your testimony tangible—something others can relate to.

Be current. Tell what is happening in your life with God now, today.

Be honest. Don't exaggerate or dramatize your life for effect. The simple truth of what God has done in your life is all the Holy Spirit needs to convict others of their sin and convince them of his love and grace.

Things to avoid:

Stay away from “Christianese” phrases. These “foreign” or “churchy” words can alienate listeners and readers and keep them from identifying with your life.

COMPONENTS OF THE GOSPEL TO INCLUDE IN YOUR TESTIMONY

Based on the colours of the bracelet.

Yellow

The first colour on our bracelet is yellow. What does yellow symbolize? Heaven. God's Home. This is where we should all want to go, and it is where we can go if we are in right relationship with God. This is by grace, through faith, resulting in obedience. Focus on God and His *holiness* (God has no sin and is morally perfect, and set apart from everyone else. There is no one like Him!) Heaven is a place to rightly want to go. The gospel is God-centred!

Black

But—we have one problem. That is we have sin in our lives. The black colour represents our sin. The Bible says that all of us have sin. Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” God does not allow any sin in heaven. So how can we get into heaven? We can't. God says the punishment of sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell. “For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) At this point you want people to understand that they have done wrong things and that these wrong things have broken their relationship with God, and they can't earn their way back—ever.

Red

The red colour symbolizes Christ's blood. When we accept His free gift of salvation, God washes us with his blood. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place so that we don't have to receive the punishment we deserve for our sins! (*Grace*: It is important to talk about how this was something that we didn't deserve, and can't earn even in part.) To make our relationship with God right, what we have to do is believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and accept

what He did on the cross for us as a replacement for the punishment of sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 10:9–10; Ephesians 2:8–10; John 3:16–17; Acts 4:12

When we really believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, this will include submission to God and learning to follow Him with our lives.

At this point you want the people to understand what it means to believe, and follow. Please focus on the person of Jesus and what He has done for us. Repentance summarizes this concept well—a change of mind that impacts every area of life, a change of direction.

White

Once Jesus washes us with His blood we are pure. We are no longer black with sin, but we are clean like the white colour. Because God took the place of our sin, when we die God can let us into heaven because our sin is paid for by Jesus' death on the cross. Romans 8:1; 1 Peter 2:24; John 1:12, 29; John 3:16

Green

After we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we want to grow so that we can become closer to God. The green symbolizes growth much like green grass. We can grow by reading the Bible, praying to God, going to church and learning to obey God in all of life (baptism and beyond).

Jude 1:20 *"But you dear friends build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."*

TESTIMONY

KEN BAYNE

I was brought up in an unchurched family. We occasionally went to a United Church at Easter, but I really can remember doing that only once. When I met my wife Carol, she was attending a Lutheran Church and, in order to get married in that church, they insisted I must be baptized. I always thought I had a belief in God and going through this formality did not seem to be too big of an ask, or inconvenience. I recall asking the Pastor at that time, during my interview with him, if it was sin to play football on a Sunday. He said 'yes'. I thought, if that was the case, I really didn't want too much to do with religion.

Carol and I were married and did not live a Godly lifestyle. We were transferred to Edmonton from Winnipeg and eventually to the Lower Mainland. The Lower Mainland (Cloverdale) was a big adjustment. Rain every day, a muddy yard that had not been landscaped as yet, two rambunctious boys. We were used to the 'big sky' of the prairies. I was working all the time, Carol home alone. She was invited by a neighbour to something called 'Mothers' Morning Out'. It was an exercise class and coffee time at Cloverdale Baptist Church. A new church on 64th avenue that had recently been built. Ironically, the person who had built our home, went to CBC. Carol enjoyed the morning out and making friends and started attending the Sunday services. She took the boys to Sunday School. I soon realized how relaxed it was for me, watching football on Sunday mornings, unencumbered by any family responsibility. It didn't take long for the boys to figure out, if dad doesn't have to go to church, why do we? I tried to explain it was a good thing for them and they should go. I finally relented and went to church, so the boys had no excuse.

Church at Cloverdale Baptist was a huge culture shock for me. The dress of the day was jacket and tie. CBC was formal and traditional, and I was like a fish out of water. I recall speaking to a gentleman and asked what he did. He told me he was a farmer. I replied, (as a salesman) I represented some products that he could use and would be happy to help him out. He replied, "I don't do business on Sundays." As I read my Bible, I struggled. On one hand I knew I should be in church, read my bible, be a good example for my children. On the other hand, I did not fit in to a conservative environment, not wanting to offend, walking on eggshells, fearing I would say something wrong, or not live up to what was expected from someone who attended this church.

One day I read Romans 14 and the light went on. It clearly said don't worry about disputable matters. God had accepted me. Before Him I would stand or fall—not before people. This truly changed my life. I was free to worship God, not worry about what I thought at the time were a bunch of *fuddy duds*. God showed me clearly there was room for a sinner like me, and through Him and Him alone, who died on the cross for me, that I had been forgiven, and because He lives, I could live a life in His strength, for His glory, my risen Saviour!

Well that was around 35 years ago. My wife and I are still at Cloverdale Baptist Church. Our youngest son was born at this church. There have been light and momentary troubles, but God has so blessed us in our spiritual growth, our marriage, our church life, and so many other ways.

If there is one lesson (of many) for me, it is God's faithfulness that I have witnessed to me, my family and my church. He who started that good work many years ago, will see it through to completion. I am so thankful God called me to Himself, and placed me (ironically) in a wonderful church and now I can be one of the *fuddy duds*.

APPENDIX 1

FORGIVENESS

There is much that is written in Christian circles about forgiveness and yet it is so often misunderstood, or confused with other things. What does it mean to forgive? How often do I have to forgive? Does forgiveness mean that I must forget? Do I have to forgive if someone doesn't ask for it? Does forgiveness happen all at once, or is it something that I have to do over and over again? What if the person that I am trying to forgive could still hurt me? Does the Bible say that if I don't forgive, then I won't be forgiven, and if so does this imply a works theology? What if I am trying to forgive and struggling, then what should I do? Those are all excellent questions. To be fair they are not ones that I necessarily came up with, rather they are ones that over the years I have been asked. In my own life I have always found it easy to forgive those who offend me because I seek to live in the light of the gospel. Usually since I am aware that my own offenses before God are much, and I know and have experienced being forgiven by God, forgiveness towards others is an easy overflow of that. However, this all took a horrific turn in the past year.

I have been a pastor for over 25 years, and was shocked to discover in my own heart a struggle with forgiveness. My own journey has helped me to empathize with others who are struggling with this as well, and perhaps my pursuit of understanding and experience can help you, if this is something that you are struggling with. For me, about 8 years after I became a pastor at Cloverdale Baptist, our church went through a crisis. In many ways I was at the center of it, and some people who I thought were my friends, even team mates were among those who most ruthlessly attacked me, my family and our church. As time moved on, these people not only left the church and called others to do the same, many lied about some very important things and it seemed to me that no one held them accountable to their lies. One met with an old friend of mine, and the day after this, my old friend would neither look at me nor shake my hand. What he had heard was not only not true, it was terrorizing my reputation. About a month ago the one who led the rebellion and was the most hurtful to me, our church and my family (from my perspective) got sick, and a prayer request came through our church prayer chain for him and his family. My response was not what I wanted it to be, and my heart did not want to pray for him. I have worked through this (and still work through it at times), and now pray for him as he comes to mind, and I hope my struggle, and victories can help you with yours. First, the questions, then my answer and journey, and I hope

all together victory in love, freedom and a pursuit together of God's glory. The answers to the questions are not meant to be a complete theological treatise, rather they are written to give you a steady answer from my heart to yours, and if you want to do further research is a great place to start.

What does it mean to forgive?

Forgiveness is the cancelling of the debt of those who offend us. It is keeping no record of the wrong. Forgiveness for the Christian is to be as Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13), and means that we no longer need payback for the wrongs done to us.

How often do I have to forgive?

The Bible is clear here. As followers of Jesus, we need to forgive as many times as we are asked (Matthew 18:21–22). Although it seems if you do the math to peak at a high number, but this is just for effect. When we are asked, with open hands we are called to forgive.

Does forgiveness mean I have to forget?

No. In fact, it would be unloving at times to forget. If one of my children stole \$5 from my wallet, and then asked for forgiveness, it would be very easy for me to forgive them. However, it would be unloving of me to leave my wallet around until the maturity of the offender was such that it would not tempt him. Forgiving means releasing the debt owed to me personally, not forgetting. Closely tied to this question is, if someone has committed a criminal offense against me (say rape), and asks for forgiveness should I still press charges. My answer is yes, the debt that you pursue in this case is not personal, but one owed to society. So although you release the person from the debt owed to you, and you are careful never to put yourself at risk with that person again (don't forget), you also make sure that the debt owed to society is something that is paid, even if you weep with them when the sentence is passed.

Do I have to forgive someone if they don't ask me for forgiveness or repent?

This is a difficult question, because our definition of forgiveness is essential to answering this question correctly and this definition is often not uniformly understood. It would seem from Luke 17:4 that the condition for forgiving is the request for forgiveness. The model for forgiveness is Jesus and He does not forgive unless

He is asked. So the quick answer to this difficult question is no, however, it does not allow the follower of Jesus to be bitter with an offender, for in other places in Scripture, Jesus calls His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matthew 5:44). So although my view of the Bible's call to forgive does not include those who don't ask, followers of Jesus must have open hands to forgive when asked and not be bitter, in fact, be loving and in prayer for those who have offended them.

Does forgiveness happen all at once, or is it something that I have to do over and over again?

This is a little bit of a difficult question, for theologically, the answer is that it should be all at once, however practically we don't do this as well as we could. So, my counsel for you is that if you wake up, or in your waking hours, struggle at forgiving someone, choose that day, that moment to forgive. For me, in my situation, I opened my hands and heart to God's love and was ready to forgive, and then the next prayer request came, and to a lesser extent I went through the process again. So, if you are asked for forgiveness, or find yourself not ready or willing to forgive, whether you did better yesterday or not, today, this moment, choose the posture of grace. Bitterness is a weed that wrecks the fruit of the Spirit.

What if the person that I am trying to forgive could still hurt me?

All people you forgive could hurt you again, and when the request comes to forgive, those who have richly experienced God's forgiveness will choose His path. However, this does not mean that you put yourself at physical risk. I have heard way too many stories of people who have physically hurt others, repented and then done it again, to not know the risk of returning to a place of vulnerability. If you believe you are at physical risk, remove yourself from that place of risk and talk to an advisor for further help (if you are being assaulted report it to the police). Forgiveness does not mean stupidity, or naivety, and if you have been hurt physically, emotionally, or spiritually, forgiveness does not mean putting yourself at the mercy of the other person without careful protections in place, especially when it come to the physical realm. A woman who has been sexually assaulted should never be alone with the one who assaulted her, even after forgiveness has taken place, and where children are involved this becomes even more important. If you are unsure what to do in a situation like this, remember secrecy, or hiding someone else's sin is not forgiveness, so share it with a trusted adviser, the authorities, get help, and stay safe.

Does the Bible say that if I don't forgive, then I won't be forgiven, and if so does this imply a works theology?

Not that I am being critical of the questions, but that is not one, it is two. The Bible does say that if I don't forgive I won't be forgiven (Matthew 6:14–15; Matthew 18:21–35), however the assumption is not a works theology, but an experience of God's grace that overflows. When we truly realize what God's forgiveness of us is, we will seek to forgive others like that. When we truly experience God's love, we will joyfully offer forgiveness to others. The texts in question teach that experiencing the grace of God transforms the child of God, and one of the significant ways this experience is displayed is in a forgiving spirit.

What if I am trying to forgive and struggling, then what should I do?

Given the seriousness of the last question, and its biblical answer, this question is essential for those who live in the real world and want to honour Jesus with all of their lives. What if you want to forgive (or love and pray for your enemies), but your heart is still struggling with bitterness and resentment? Four simple repeatable steps, that are helpful to do in order, however often need to be repeated out of order. These are the steps I took, and sometimes in this one situation still need to take, and they have led me too (and are leading me still) victory.

Step 1: Realize That You Have a Problem

Way too often we justify our own sin by our pain. For me, this was something that my mind jumped to immediately. I did not want to pray for my enemy, in fact, I wanted to rejoice in his pain. This is ungodly and a problem of the heart. This is not to minimize the offense against me and our church, or to shrug at my own experience of pain, rather it is to take that to the Word of God and realize what He says is right and mandated. My pain is perhaps small in comparison to yours and what you have experienced, but the mandate remains the same. Our willingness to forgive is wrapped up in our relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior, not in the offender or the offense. Once you realize you have a problem you can leave this step, and if you find yourself bitter or self-justifying, come back, and meditate on:

• Matthew 18:21–35

• Ephesians 4:32

• Matthew 5:43–48

Step 2: Rejoice in the Greatness of Jesus' Forgiveness of You

This is the focus point of moving to freedom and joy in our walk with God. We not only want to know the richness of our freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1) and the depth of our depravity (Romans 5:6–11) and His love, but also experience

this. If we want to be mature enough to forgive all others when asked, it begins and basks in the glorious realities of the gospel. If we experience what we have been forgiven we will love much (Luke 7:36–50) and forgive all that is asked of us (Matthew 18:21–35). The better we experience the love of Jesus, the more we will live like Him (Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 4:32). If you are struggling with forgiveness (or if you haven't been asked for forgiveness, and your struggle is in loving and praying for that person) then this is the place to focus. Preach the gospel to yourself and beg that God would have you experience it. Never miss communion, and long for the spiritual depth that comes from partaking in community the body and blood of Jesus. Experiencing the grace of God always leads to being gracious, and knowing the love of God to being known for your love (John 13:34–35). Keep your eyes on Jesus and your heart filled with His love. If you are struggling, meditate and pray through the following passages:

- Ephesians 3:14–21
- Psalm 42
- Romans 5:6–11
- John 18:1–20:31

For me, this is the most repeated step in my journey to freedom and a willingness to pray, love and forgive.

Step 3: Radically Surrender

This is the step that responds to the gospel with open hands and a willing heart (Romans 12:1–2). Following Jesus is not easy (Luke 9:23) but it is eager. We are to be those who truly choose to obey no matter what the cost, and who live our lives fully devoted to Him. The battle is spiritual, and so we choose to resist in the context of full submission (James 4:7). The battle is with the flesh, so we put to death the deeds of the flesh in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13). The battle is with the world, so we learn to think with the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5) and take captive every thought. Victory is always a result of word saturation (Matthew 4:1–11; Romans 12:2; Psalm 119:11) and something we need to constantly pursue (Colossians 3:16–17). Radical surrender means always choosing God's path in big and little things and, in that, longing for it to come from the heart, overflowing to all of life. It is a choice of obedience and a longing for that choice to be not only simple, but also easy (Matthew 7:17–20). Radical surrender is a choice, pursuit and then realization of living a first love devoted life. If you are struggling with this, meditate on the following passages:

- Romans 12:1–2
- Colossians 3

- Luke 9:23; 14:25–33

- Matthew 7:21–27

Step 4: Revere God

In the midst of your battle to forgive from the heart, delight in God. Sing praises to Him, and let the music and words shape your emotions. If you don't feel free, use your worship of God in song and life to shape your heart and to gain your emotions obedience. Sometimes in the midst of the battle, as you seek to never give up, remember that we serve an awesome, all powerful, loving God, and He is at work in your even as you work out your salvation (Philippians 2:12–13). When you truly have the God of the Bible in focus, trust and peace are the supernatural overflow of your devotion (Philippians 4:4–6). Trust Him, even as you tremble at your lack of heart obedience. This trust led Joseph to forgive his brothers of their horrific offense (Genesis 50:20), and if you truly believe you can follow in the line of Steven and Jesus and forgive those who do not know what they do. Study the greatness of God, and realize that everything that happened to you passes through His sovereign loving hand and is for your good and His glory (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28–29). This takes incredible maturity, especially when the pain is deep, so take the time to grow towards this every day as you get a biblical view of God.

Quoting Tozer, from his book, *Knowledge Of The Holy*, is a pattern in our study guides, so here it goes, "Your view of God is the most important thing about you", and that is true in the pursuit of a forgiving heart as well! Romans 8:32 is true (take the time to look it up and read it), and was true when you were offended against as well! God is sovereign, all wise and good! He loves you and has a plan for your life and your pain, so rest in Him and His plan and let bitterness disappear. In my life, I do not ever remember having trouble forgiving someone (or loving and praying for them). This past year was a first for me, and although I am not where I want to be I am far beyond where I was. I hope my journey, and these questions answered in a simple way, will help you to find victory on the path where God has placed you. Trust Him, rest in Him, and choose His ways for His glory. "Give what You command, and command what You will" Or easier to understand, God I choose to obey, now please help me have the strength to win!

Today, I am praying for my enemy, and seeking to love him. It is not an easy path, but it is God's and if we belong to Him, there is no other path I would rather be following! If he asked me for forgiveness, in God's strength (I love Corrie ten Boom's story on this about the prison guard) he would get all I can offer in the strength of my relationship with God!

31 DAYS IN ROMANS 8

One of my favourite childhood memories is climbing Castle Mountain. It was not easy, and coming home a little frightening, but the view from the top of this mountain is something I will never forget! There are many mountain peaks in the Bible, and often what we read at different times in our lives comes to life in different ways. To have a favourite passage or chapter that never changes almost feels like we are betraying the rest of the Bible. So although my view would be that Romans 8 is the greatest chapter in the Bible, I am unsure that will be my view in a day, month or year. That being said, it is at the very least in the top 5 treasured chapters in the Bible and its theology is truly life changing, not only in how we live, but also in how we feel. Much could be written on this great chapter and its depth and beauty would not be exhausted.

My challenge for those reading this book is that we would take a 31 day Romans 8 saturation journey. If you are willing to spend the next 31 days in this great chapter you will leave transformed and never be the same. My proposal is that for the next 31 days you read the entire chapter (for those who don't like reading that should only take you about 5 minutes, and you spend a lot more time than that watching hockey, or scrap booking, etc.) each day, and then read through the daily devotional that we provide for you. If you miss a day, keep going. If you don't read the entire chapter ever, you will still benefit from the journey. However, maximum life change will come if you are willing to invest 30 minutes (maybe less) into reading Romans 8, the devotional and talking to two other people that day about what you are learning (okay you can text or email as well.)

Will you join me on the climb? Will you look with me at the beauty of the hills and valleys around us that Romans 8 brings into color and focus? Will you delight with me in the richness of our salvation, the radical nature of the Spirit-filled life, and the revelling in the love of God that will leave us secure and satisfied no matter what we are going through? Start. Keep going. Start again, and take the time to see the richness of God's Word. Lloyd-Jones wrote of Romans 8, "It is one of the brightest gems of all. Someone has said that in the whole of the Scriptures the brightest and the most lustrous and flashing stone, or collection of stones, is this epistle to the Romans, and that of these (chapter 8) is the brightest gem in the cluster. The most moving chapter in Romans is this chapter 8." I agree. so let us look at this amazing gem, and allow its shine to change our lives.

And, choose to do this in community. Share with someone else what you are learning every day, and then the blessing and growth will not just be for you, but will include others that God can bless and grow through you. Romans 8 when experienced will change your life, you will know better, feel brighter, and live blessed.

Psalm 19:7-11

- ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 1

THE NEED OF YOUR HEART FOR 8:1

Read Romans 8

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) Spiritual warfare is real and one of the main ways that the demonic realm attacks Christians is through accusation. In fact, Satan is known as the accuser of the brethren. Martin Luther shared that often he would feel overwhelmed with his own sin and sinful tendencies, and in this long to give up. He at one point felt this attack of the demonic realm so strongly that he hurled his ink at where he imagined the devil to be, leaving a mark on the wall and a mess to clean up. For Luther the battle was real, and it is real for every follower of Jesus. The pathway to victory that he often learned to follow was one that included an agreeing with the accusations, and then a delight in Jesus and the gospel.

This pathway from accusation to the gospel is one that all Christians need to learn to walk, and mine is well worn. After years of training and an amazing internship at Ebenezer Baptist Church, they invited me back to preach. Lori joined me and we drove the 3 hour trek to Saskatoon from Caronport, excited to see what God would have for us. As I walked up the stairs to where the pulpit stood, having been introduced in a wonderful way, my mind was filled with sins I had committed and it caused me to feel overwhelmed with my unworthiness to be a preacher of the gospel. Before you judge me, remember that I was a good Mennonite boy, so my sins, although major and grievous before God, would not have shocked most around me if they had the accuser next to them at the same time.

The onslaught of my sin almost knocked me over physically, and left me insecure and unsure if I could or should preach. I was thankful when the Spirit delivered the Romans 8:1 message to my heart. I did not fight quite as well then as I do now, but the reality of the gospel and God’s grace is so important for those who are serving Jesus in any capacity, and it allowed me to experience God’s forgiveness enough that I could fight on and serve Him. The accusations that came my way that Sunday so long ago were true, and the reality that I fell short of God’s glory real and right. That is why these accusations must be met with a rich gospel experience, and in fact, today, after 27 years of ministry the sin has only piled up, and the need for Romans 8:1 only deepened. If you were to take a look at my prayer journal, almost every day you would see, 8:1, early on. A reminder for

my heart of the desperate need I have for His grace, and the never ending joy of being found without condemnation in Christ. Every authentic follower of Jesus knows that the closer you get to Jesus the further away you realize you are. The more you draw close the light the easier it is to see your filth. This means that included in our drawing near to God must be an experience of the gospel that moves to the heart and frees the mind from the weight of our past, so that we can live with a passion for our penalty payer.

As we begin this journey in the context of the end of Romans 7, and the real struggle of every follower of Jesus to experience His forgiveness of our past, never forget that in Christ there is "no condemnation". Lloyd-Jones states "Most of our troubles are due to our failure to realize the truth of this verse."^d Pretty strong, and a great reason to pursue prayerfully an experiential knowledge of this great reality!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How can you realize this reality of "no condemnation" in your mind and heart?
- What does this reality of "no condemnation" mean for you personally when you are struggling under the weight of your past sins?
- For you personally, how can you learn to preach the gospel to yourself every day?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 2

THE MESSAGE FOR YOUR HEART: 8:1*Read Romans 8*

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) Jerry Bridges has declared that we must be a people who preach the gospel to ourselves every day. This can be confusing to those who have never heard of this idea before and transformative to those who will do this simple gospel preaching to the mirror. I believe the greatest thing you can learn once you are a Christian is to live in the context of the gospel. The gospel is not only the beginning place for the follower of Jesus, but an ever growing pursuit of the experience of the gospel is the key to maturity in your Christian life.

- Freedom: Romans 8:1
- Passion: 2 Corinthians 5:14
- Love: Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 5:1–2
- Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21–35; Ephesians 4:32
- Identity: 2 Corinthians 5:21
- Humility: Matthew 5:3
- Passion for Mission: 2 Corinthians 5:18–21
- Joy: 1 Peter 1:8

A good summary of what it means to preach the gospel to ourselves every day is, it is the discipline of actively calling to mind what Jesus has done, and the wonderful results of this gift of salvation, and personalizing this relational reality. The more you grow, the richer this calling to mind of what the Saviour has done for you will become. The Bible gives the church two ordinances that remind her of the gospel and the experiential benefits of living in the context of the gospel always: baptism and communion. However this is not enough for each individual, and what followers of Jesus will need is the choice to preach the gospel to themselves every day, in fact, in the midst of all that life brings at you, it will be multiple times a day.

What does this look like? For every person this will be different, but I will walk you through what I seek to do to have the gospel message dominate my heart and encourage you to follow me as I follow Jesus, or create your own well-worn path to the foot of the cross.

Reminders

The idea of a reminder is to keep your focus when you might drift or struggle with devastation. My alarm is a song written by a friend of mine called *Jesus, Thank You^e*, and it is a reminder to me every time I awake of God's grace. In the past I have worn shoes (Romans 8:37), jewelry, and other reminders that constantly point me back to Jesus and what He has done for me and how that changes my life. The writing instruments I use (pens) have verses on them, and often include a cross. My heart is prone to wander, so I build into my life reminders that refocus my mind and heart on Jesus.

Relational Living: Remember Jesus is Real

This might seem silly at first, but sometimes when we pattern in our victorious Christian living we forget that at the heart of authentic Christianity is a first love relationship with the living God. Don't make the mistake of the church in Ephesus and abandon your first love. Christianity takes discipline but is so much more than that, it is always first and foremost an all defining relationship. Don't forget this! Practice His Presence (Psalm 16:8).

Rallying Points: Take the Time to Refocus

Not only do you need constant reminders and a call to relational living, there needs to be centering time in your routine. For me it is during my prayer time that I call to mind what Jesus has done for me, and give my life again to Him in fullness and freedom. I do this usually by drawing a cross and then journaling my prayers over that, but again how you do it is not the key, rather that you do it.

The greatest thing you can do is learn to live in the context of the gospel. Romans 8:1 is one of the key places that God's Word give us a delightful experience, so build into your life reminders, relational living and rallying points.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What are some practical things you can do to keep the gospel central in your living experience?
- In your own words, what does it mean to preach the gospel to yourself every day?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 3

IDENTITY SHIFT: I AM IN CHRIST*Read Romans 8*

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) It is important for us before we move on from this incredible verse to realize that it is a conditional promise. There is condemnation for those who are not in Christ Jesus. This phrase, in Christ, is perhaps the most important designation of those who are followers of Jesus, and one that when understood correctly is rich beyond measure. We will answer two very important questions from this text: 1. How do I get in Christ Jesus?; 2. What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Of course neither of these questions can be answered to the depth that they should so I hope this day in the month of Romans 8 will whet your appetite so that you will not be satisfied with the surface sweetness, but through continued study, you will plumb the depths of how and what!

How Do I Get in Christ Jesus?

The answer is to trust in the gospel, or to use biblical language, to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and repent (change your mind) from your previous way of life. My favourite quick summary is one done by Mark Dever. This is what you must believe:

A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response.

1. **God:** God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5–8).
2. **Man:** All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26–28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1–3).
3. **Christ:** Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God’s wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21–26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20–22).
4. **Response:** God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9–10).^f

So, this is a great time to affirm your confession of Jesus as Lord, to ensure that you are in Christ.

Do you believe? Have you repented?

I am often asked the question, "If I am not sure, what should I do?" That is a great question, and the answer is to go back to the basics and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and stay there. If you believe this you are saved (Romans 10:9–10).

Now that I know *I am in Christ*, what does this mean? Come back tomorrow for our quick summary of what this means!

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 4

IDENTITY SHIFT: I AM IN CHRIST (PT. 2)*Read Romans 8*

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 8:1)

Who are you? That can be answered in many different ways. For me, I am a husband, father, pastor, doctor, hockey player (okay ex hockey player), Canucks super fan, and this list could go on and on. Often we define who we are by other relationships and/or what we do, or who we cheer for (go Cowboys go). This is okay, but ultimately leaves us as feeling a little empty (especially when we fail, or our team loses). So much better than any other answer we can give to the question of who we are, as authentic followers of Jesus is. I am in Christ.

Who are you? I am in Christ! This is the one relationship that defines me the most, and when understood helps me to live that out with passion and purity. If you are a true follower of Jesus, whether you realize it or not, this is also true of you. Look yourself in the eye and say “I am in Christ!” So what does that actually mean? Hearts and books could be filled with this answer, but a good summary focuses on three realities that are life changing, in Christ:

1. I Am Clothed with The Righteousness of Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:21

This means that when God looks at me, He sees the righteousness of Jesus. On the cross, He took my sin, and replaced it with His righteousness. Not only just as if I'd never sinned, but also as profound, just as if I'd always been perfect. This is the *great exchange*, this is my sin for His righteousness, and this is something if we even only begin to grasp will make us forever confident in His presence and thankful for the power of the gospel. No charge against me will ever stick, for the price has been paid in full, my salvation is secure, and my Savior clothes me in His righteousness. Wow! In Christ.

2. I Am A New Creation: 2 Corinthians 5:17

The gospel always begins where we are, as we come to God in faith, but it never leaves us as we are. He changes us, and in that change we are found not only justified but now with a new heart, by the Spirit, and we are pursuing new things. We are transformed, and cannot be the same. In Christ.

3.1 Am His Work of Art: Ephesians 2:10

This means He is at work on my life, so that I can serve Him confidently. This means every day I can wake up with the anticipation that He has good works for me to do, and will empower me to walk in them. This means I have value, significance, and a sure hope in a future that matters, will last for eternity and be lived in His presence for His glory! It means a lot more than those three things, but what an amazing place to start and to stay! He took our place, and we now stand in Him fully free and forgiven! *It is finished*, price paid in full!

What now?

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Are you beginning to grasp what it means to find your identity IN CHRIST?
- Write a thank you letter to God, and focus on thanking Him for your salvation, and what it means for you to be found IN HIM.
- Pray that you would understand and experience this reality ever more richly and that it would mark you, and make you who you really are!
- Remember when we started this study, one of the challenges was to share with two other people what you were learning, take the time to do this today.
- For Further Study:
 - Galatians 3:26–28
 - 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - 1 Peter 5:14
 - Bridges, Jerry: *Who Am I? Identity in Christ*
 - Philippians 1:1
 - Colossians 3:3

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 5

IDENTITY SHIFT: WALKING BY THE SPIRIT*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:1–8**

Not sure if you have noticed yet, or if you care, but we are still on Romans 8:1 and this is the fifth day of your devotions. We have 31 devotionals to cover all of Romans 8, so clearly we will be flying through some of the later rich verses. If you didn't notice, pretend you didn't read this paragraph and keep going strong! Well, for the sake of time, and broader content, we move into the next section and it is rich. If you are one who has been saved this will always be marked not only by your identity in Christ, but also by your walking according to the Spirit. Romans 8 is one of the great chapters in the Bible that teaches us how to live the Spirit-filled life.

How do we keep in step with the Spirit? These verses tell us that foundationally it is a matter of what we do with our minds. We are to have our mind set on what the Spirit desires. Right living is always an overflow of right thinking. Tim Keller states on this verse, "wherever your mind goes most naturally and freely when there is nothing else to distract it—that is what you really live for. That is your religion[...]your life is shaped by what preoccupies your mind."⁹

These verses tell us that there are two mindsets, one that is according to the flesh, and one that is according to the Spirit, and each overflows into real life. And if you are of the flesh, you can't please God.

So how do we set our minds?

1. We must be aware that this matters

What we do with our minds when we coast is set by what we do with our minds when we are not coasting. We can train our hearts by feeding them with God's Word and God's ways. We must know that this matters or we will coast into fleshly thinking and chaos.

2. We must choose to be Word-saturated

One never drifts into a biblical saturation, it takes discipline and delight. What does it mean to have a mind set on the things of the Spirit? It means that we take

the time to be in God's Word more than we are being impacted by the world. We memorize, meditate on passages of Scripture, read, study, and listen actively when God's Word is taught and preached. It is a hunger to not, "conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. (Romans 12:1–2)" This means not only a choice to be a living sacrifice, but little choices to be one who has God's Word dwelling in us richly (Colossians 3:16–17). To have a mind that drifts to delighting in God takes a mind that has been trained to go there.

3. We must stay focused.

The idea of a mindset is not only purposeful, it is also pervading. Having a mindset dominates our lives, and if your brain is like mine, the drifting mind is not always one that delights in God's Word. So we need reminders. Lori's prayer partner in Houston had her watch set, and each time it went off she was reminded of this focus. Perhaps your reminders from yesterday could include this kind of reminder. If we want to walk by the Spirit we must keep our minds set on the things that the Spirit desires and that will yield life and peace, perhaps even greater, a life that is pleasing to God. Keep in step with the Spirit! Keep your mind set on the things that the Spirit desires.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Where does your mind drift when it is drifting?
- What steps can you take (small and large) to be one whose thoughts are driven by the Spirit and not the flesh?
- Other passages for further study:
 - Romans 12:1–10
 - Colossians 3:1–18
 - Packer, J.I., *Keeping in Step With the Spirit*

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 6

IDENTITY SHIFT: LOSING ANXIETY/LIFTING UP GOD*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:1–8**

If you were flying in an airplane and I asked you which wing you would prefer to lose, what would you say? I am pretty sure that if you lost either wing, you would be in trouble, so it is a lose-lose proposition. If you are seeking to find peace in your life, would you rather be disciplined or dependent? Hmmm, the answer must be that you need both desperately or you will find yourself in an anxious world filled with anxiety. If you have ever struggled with anxiety, then God's Word has a gift for you through dependence on the Spirit and passionate discipline.

How can you avoid anxiety?

Prayer: Philippians 4:4–6 tell us that if we are willing to take everything that makes us anxious to God in prayer we can gain through the power of His care a peace from him that transcends understanding that will guard our hearts and minds. This means if you are anxious today you should pray. However, that is not the only Scripture that teaches us how we can have peace. In fact, in Romans we discover that peace is a result of a Spirit controlled mind, or perhaps more accurately a mind set on the things of the Spirit.

Pray. Yes, and then set your mind on things that the Spirit wants you to. To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Peace with God, absolutely, but also the peace of God that comes from knowing Him. An internal peace and rest in His sovereign love. Sometimes storms will cause us to lose focus, and create chaos in our hearts. In the midst of those storms if we can get our minds set in the right place we will find peace in the heart of the storms, this is a battle for our minds and our faith (Mark 4:35–41).

Jesus knew this peace and when the storms were experienced by those around Him, He called them to rest in Him, and His care of them. Romans 8 does the same. In fact, as the intensity of worldly chaos heats up, and as we near the end of this magnificent chapter, strength will be needed to experience His love and captivate our hearts. If you are experiencing anxiety, keep your prayers strong, and the wing intact. If you are experiencing anxiety, keep your discipline strong, and the wing intact. Then your heart will fly straight into the peace-filled reality

of the greatness of God and His inseparable love, and a calmness in His sovereign care will define your life.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Where do you struggle with anxiety?
- How can you find peace in a hostile world?
- Take the time to ask God for peace as you present your requests to Him, as well as to set your MIND on the things of the Spirit (review yesterday's commitments.)
- Rejoice in the peace and life that come from walking in the Spirit.

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 7
DEBTORS TO GOD

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:12

Have you ever had a debt that seemed so large you could never repay it? I had a friend who owned a house in Arizona when the market collapsed and his house was worth substantially less than the mortgage that he had on the house. You can hope that the housing market bounces back, or you can declare bankruptcy and start all over, or you can chip away at it, even as it chips away at your hope. Being in debt is not a fun thing! In fact, if it is a big debt, it can dominate your life.

Romans 8:12 tells us that we are not debtors to the flesh, and the obvious insinuation is that we are debtors to grace, to therefore live a certain way. This does not mean that we are to work to repay God, for that is a silly impossibility. Rather it means that when we realize the immensity of our salvation, we will live our lives as those who have been bought with a price, and have the privilege of offering Him all we are and all we have. In the home where I was raised, the word “obligation” or “duty” was a good word, so it fits well here. When we grasp how great God’s love for us is, as demonstrated on the cross, we realize that all we are and all we have is His. It is an all defining debt.

We serve with all our might and then realize with Luke 17:10 that we are just servants and it is our joyful “unworthy servants who have only done our duty”, that our relationship is all of grace. The more we understand and experience the richness of the gospel, the more we will rejoice together in the privilege of seeking to honour Him with our lives. In modern Christianity many have chosen to see God as their servant, and life as something He now owes them. His tender love is amazing, and He is a servant in the Matthew 20:28 kind of way, but if your God is so small that you don’t understand the debt you owe Him, your view of God and salvation is way too small! You need a bigger box!

Romans is teaching us that when we grasp the greatness of our salvation, we don’t ask, “shall we sin so that grace may abound”. Rather we declare, “here I am send me”. This is the logical response found in Romans 12:1–2 to the gospel and the grasp of His love that can be experienced. This is the walking worthy passion found in Paul’s response to his life and death quandary (Philippians 1:27). This is

the life of love that comes from being an imitator of God, and experiencing His love so richly that you are changed (Ephesians 4:1–2; 5:1–2; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

So if you live like you have a debt to pay to your flesh, you are not understanding or experiencing the gospel and it is time to go to war. Tomorrow we will make a call to kill, but until then, remember the gospel has purchasing power, and one of the things it purchases is your life, and the joy of your heart will be to choose to respond to your salvation with an eagerness to do good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:11–14).

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What does it mean to not be a debtor to the flesh?
- What does this insinuate?
- How can you live your life with joy, in this relationship that leaves you all His?
- What should this do to your pursuit of holiness?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 8

KILLING SIN BEFORE IT KILLS YOU*Romans 8:13*

Every Christian is called to war, and the war includes a battle against sin. John Owen in his classic book *Mortification of Sin in Believers* wrote “Be killing sin or it will be killing you”, this quote is sometimes modernized in the back of Bibles like this: “This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book”.

Killing sin does not save you, but as John Piper states in his great sermon on this text, “the daily practice of killing sin in your life — is the result of being justified and the evidence that you are justified by faith alone apart from works of the law. If you are making war on your sin, and walking by the Spirit, then you know that you have been united with Christ by faith alone. And if you have been united to Christ, then his blood and righteousness provide the unshakable ground of your justification.”^h If that is the case, the question comes as to how. How do we engage in this battle and fight against sin, and so prove ourselves to belong to God?

Romans 8:13 tells us what it is to be by the Spirit. We are to engage in battle with the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and helps us to know and submit to God’s Word. The believers mind is to be saturated in God’s Word, and heart devoted to God’s way, and then, in the strength the Spirit provides, they choose holiness over the patterns of the flesh. To put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit is to choose a life that pleases the Spirit—a life of joy-filled obedience

Sinful desires war against our soul (1 Peter 2:11–12) and followers of Jesus are called to a life of practical holiness that comes from turning away from the deeds of the flesh and towards life in the Spirit (Colossians 3:5). It is relational, it is disciplined and dependent (keep both wings healthy so your plane stays in the air) and it is victorious because the fight is from the position of purity to walk in purity.

To Fight By the Spirit Means:

1. **To Be Word-Saturated.** Remember the weapon the Spirit uses is God’s Word (Ephesians 6:17).
2. **Be Spirit Filled.** This means to be surrendered and controlled by the Spirit, so it involves a willingness to obey God’s Word as you know it (Ephesians 5:18).

3. **Be dependent in prayer.** This means pray!
4. **Be trusting of God,** and always remember to define Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word through his Spirit. Trust in His promises, His character, His love!

Romans 8:13 is a promise, a challenge and a command. It is to be a pattern of your life, but more than a pattern, a willingness when the flesh is strong, or the demonic realm is attacking, or the world overwhelming, to fight back, to kill or be killed, to put to death the deeds of the flesh!

“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.” (Romans 8:13)

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How do you typically engage in the battle with your flesh?
- Why do you think Paul uses such strong language?
- What are some practical steps you can take to make sure the pattern of your life leads to life and not death, and that you are ready when the attacks intensify?
- Who are two people you can share with today that you are in a battle, and by the Spirit you will put to death the deeds of the flesh?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 9

IDENTITY SHIFT: I AM A CHILD OF GOD*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:12–17**

We live in an age where our rights often dominate our thinking. How can I make sure I get what I deserve? How can I make sure my rights are never trampled on? How can I protect my rights? For the biblical Christian, rights are important to us as well, in fact, essential and the one (and perhaps only one) that we focus on and protect with all our might is the right to be called a child of God (John 1:12). This is for us, as Christians, the *Wow* factor. In fact, so much so, that J. I. Packer states in his great book, *Knowing God*, “You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one’s holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. ‘Father’ is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.” Those are pretty lofty words for what it means to call God Father! Wow! But what does this actually mean? The Bible makes a big deal about this—it means you have been born again (Galatians 3:26) and have entered into a precious relationship with God. It means that you have a new standing as an heir of His, and this means that all that God has for Jesus, He now has for us. This means that we are lavished with all the riches of Christ and as such heirs according to promise (Galatians 4:4–7; 3:29). This means we are led by the Spirit, that He actually will help us walk with Him in obedience to God and it will be an inside out reality.

Ultimately the *wow* is deepened when we grasp that we are His children, and as His children accepted, loved, held and promised a future in eternity filled with blessing beyond measure. It means that nothing can separate you from His love, and He is all powerful and all wise, so you can trust Him always in everything! It means that life is forever changed and eternity is sure and awesome. No wonder

J. I. Packer thinks this is such a big deal. It is! So what difference should this make in my life? It should bring joy, hope, a crying out of *Abba Father* in deep relational clinging, and a beautiful enduring faithfulness as we suffer here on earth and anticipate glory there with Him. Make much about being a child of God, for it means that the creator of the universe is making much of you!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What does it mean to you personally to be a child of God?
- How can you grow in this experience so that you understand Christianity better?
- How do you feel about being His child?
- When you address God as Father, what does that mean to you personally?
- Make sure today to share with two other people why God being your Father is so significant to you.

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 10
ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:18

When is the worst pain you have ever felt? The most brokenness you have ever experienced? For me it was back in Houston, B.C., when I had a sore throat that led to incredible pain and a lot of codeine and then morphine and feeling sorry for myself. In the midst of the pain I would tremble, and hide my head under the covers hoping to die, drug up and survive the next hour. Perhaps that sounds a little extreme, but it is where I was at—I wanted the pain to stop, and felt completely overwhelmed by my “sore throat”. In my defense it was pretty serious, and eventually I had a surgeon waiting to see if my cyst would burst on its own or need some help, but before I knew any of that I knew my pain was worse than any human had ever experienced.

I don’t know the pain you are in, or have been in, nor would I want to say that my pain was worse or better (the previous sentence was my attempt at humour), however I do know that the answer for our troubles is the same. Romans 8:13 calls for us to make a comparison with the immediate and the future—to realize that we have something waiting for us that far outweighs anything and everything that we are going through. So although I don’t know the extent of your past, current, or future pain, I do know how the Bible calls for us to walk in a healthy way through it. So, three steps to a thriving response to the sufferings of the present:

1. Make a Comparison

Notice Paul who experienced a lot of pain states that when we put our pain in the context of eternity in the presence of God in heaven, it is not worth comparing. If we were to say to Paul that he doesn’t understand our pain, then we clearly have not read about his. So here is a man who journeyed through so much pain, rejection, stoning, fed to wild animals, abandoned by close friends, shipwrecked, recipient of a thorn in the flesh, and we could go on, saying that in light of heaven, it disappears into the survivable (even thrivable) account. This same reality is found in 2 Corinthians 4: “¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen, ¹⁸ but to the things that

are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16–18) Make a comparison of your pain or troubles with eternity and if you know what the Bible teaches about eternity, you will find that your mindset will change! How do we keep this mindset?

2. Keep Your Eyes Focused

Let your eyes shift up and read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 again. Notice that the reality that helps Paul not lose heart is not only known, but also focused on! There is a quick reckoning followed by a consistent focus. This falls in line with many other passages that help us to keep our eyes in the right place. Two that are most helpful to me:

- Colossians 3:1–3

- Hebrews 12:1–3

So in your life, when you hit the hiccup, make a quick comparison, and then take a long, never ending gaze at the eternal, and the most important person in the eternal, God! Compare, focus, and lastly:

3. Don't Stop In Your Mandate and Mission

What I mean by this is remember that God is sovereign over your life, and this means that your pain has purpose. You have been placed where you are to conform you to Jesus (Romans 8:28–29) and help others to see how amazing His Person and works are. You are never out of His care (much more on this coming), or out of His plan (Ephesians 1:11; 2:10). So, as you face trouble today, tomorrow, or even reflect on your pain yesterday, always do so in the context of comparing, focusing and living for God's glory.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What was the worst pain that came to mind in your life when you answered the opening question of this devotional?
- How can you deepen your delight in heaven and the person of Jesus so that when you make the comparison, your light and momentary troubles are *not worth* comparing to it?
- How can you learn to fix your eyes on Jesus, or as the NIV would put 2 Corinthians 4, “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”?
- What good works do you think God has for you today? What did He have for you yesterday? How can you learn to walk in them?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 11

HOLY SPIRIT YOU ARE WELCOME HERE*Read Romans 8*

Romans 8 discusses life in the Spirit extensively. It helps the follower of God to know what it means to walk in accordance with the Holy Spirit, or know God's Word, or have life, or be led by the Spirit, or know we are children of God, or have victory of sin, or help us in our sufferings. Knowing and living in the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to a victorious Christian life. Most Christians throughout the centuries have believed this, and yet so few are keeping in step with Him. It seems that the demonic realm would trick those who speak of this relationship with the Holy Spirit into a non-biblical emphasis (typically found in charismatic circles) or ignoring Him all together (typically the rest of the evangelical world). In the last few years this has changed in both camps as evangelicals are becoming more aware of one another and unified in pursuit of biblical truth. However, the problem of what life in the Spirit looks like biblically is still on the horizon. The Holy Spirit is God and at work in the people of God in powerful ways. Much has been written on what a Spirit filled life looks like, and in the pattern of a devotional that is not our goal. Rather, if we are to simplify, how can I know if I am walking in the Spirit according to Romans 8?

3 Key realities will be a part of your life if you are walking in the Spirit:

1. You will love Jesus and spend time praising Him and experiencing His love. The Holy Spirit shows us who Jesus is through illuminating the Word and helps us to engage with Jesus relationally. The best way to praise the Spirit is to praise the Son, and live in a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (John 16) and draws sinners into faith and forgiveness and a new life in Jesus. Did you know that there is no place in the Bible where the Spirit is prayed to, in fact, His focus is to get our eyes onto Jesus. The best way to display a fullness in the Spirit is to be one who worships Jesus and glories in the gospel.
2. You will produce the *fruit of the Spirit*. A lot of people think that the Spirit filled life is emotional, and is shown by raising your hands, or dancing, or certain spiritual gifts, etc. This is not so. Not that raising your hands or dancing is wrong, and all Christians have gifts of the Spirit (unique and for the good of the church) *rather* how you show the Spirit of God is at work in you is by living in a way that displays the fruit of the Spirit in your life, and how you live in the local

church. Galatians 5 reads “¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Galatians 5:16–26)

3. You will be growing in your personal holiness. He is the holiness Helper, in fact, He comes along side us and helps us to live in a way that shows our conformity to Jesus. If your life is displaying the “Christ formed in you” reality, you are displaying the power of the Holy Spirit.

So how can you pursue the Spirit filled life? You yield your life to God, you plead for and pursue His influence over every area of your life (Ephesians 4:30), and this means time in the Word, time in prayer, and a pursuit of community in the local church as we seek to model who Jesus is and spread His gospel message to the world. It also means setting our minds on Jesus and glorying in the gospel. Put into practice the Keystone Habits, and constantly grow in your intimacy with the Almighty. Christian, *walk by the Spirit*. Live the Spirit-filled life and you will experience His power for a changed life and impact for the glory of your Savior!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What do you think being filled with the Spirit looks like?
- What error on living the Spirit-filled life can you fall into?
- How can you better relate to the Holy Spirit in your life, and live the Spirit-filled life?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 12

WE LIVE IN A BROKEN WORLD*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:25**

I have had enough. Life is difficult and people are painful. I am groaning and I live in a groaning world. The news rarely has anything uplifting to say, and most of it is fake anyway. Broken, painful, unfixable in the near future, hopeless if we are just looking at it from under the sun.

Poor Poor Pitiful Me

If you have ever felt this, you are not alone. In fact, the garden has lost a lot of worms (inside joke, keep reading later devotionals) and at times we feel overwhelmed. God's Word does not deny or downplay the reality of the broken world we live in. In fact, brokenness is a part of life after the fall. The difference between the hopelessness of someone who does not believe in God, and our hope in the midst of pain is that we do believe in God and His plan and our future.

Swindoll compares Romans 8:16–27 with childbirth from the perspective of a mom (verse 22).ⁱ Fathers who have been there, I know we hurt as well, and I still haven't recovered the full use of my hand, or from the heart-wrenching helplessness of watching the one I love in incredible pain, but focus with me on moms if that is okay for this comparison. While in the pain of childbirth, they say that this pain is overwhelming. I only know from what has been shared with me (although I have had the odd man-cold that may be worse) but what is amazing to me is that when my wife was holding each of our children, the joy on her face was as Swindoll describes it, "Joy. Pure unadulterated joy!" He goes on to say, "The Christian life is a lot like pregnancy and childbirth. At the end of our labours are a glory and a joy so great that our pains won't even be remembered." Suffering for the Christian is something that will occur, sometimes from others sins, sometimes from the broken world we live in, sometimes even from our own sin. So what does Romans 8 teach us that can help us suffer in a way that honours God.

1. Don't be surprised by it

That is what we can see all over Romans 8. The idea that once you become a Christian life will be easy is not one that is found in the Bible. In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. Here in our text, all of creation is groaning. The curse of

Genesis 3 is real and impacts us now, even as it impacts the world we live in. We will suffer.

2. Don't surrender to it

When you suffer, don't let it swallow you up, for there is a freedom coming that is way beyond the suffering you are experiencing. Stay strong in your faith and follow Jesus in His mandate of conformity to Christ and the message of gospel sharing.

3. Don't suppose you can avoid it

We should never seek suffering as followers of Jesus, but when it comes we should learn to "consider it pure joy". I don't like to suffer, but the whole creation is groaning, and as humans impacted by the fall living among other humans impacted by the fall, realize that life in a fallen world will include groaning.

4. Do show your trust in God in the brokenness

Romans 8 will not let us out of this showing of trust for the rest of the chapter, but in our short section of verses today, realize the richness of the reality that the Holy Spirit is groaning for us, praying to the Father when our pain is so overwhelming we can't speak with our true spiritual needs. This is amazing, we are never alone! In a broken world filled with broken people and pain, the reality of the Spirit's role in praying for us in a way that is always aligned with God's perfect plan and will is the best news we could have.

So, as you suffer, set your sights on the future, your heart on God's promises and your feet on the path He has for you. He is worthy of your trust, and His prayers are heard by the Father and will help you through. Hope in Him!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- If you have had a child, remember what the childbirth process was like together with your spouse (if they are alive). For Lori and I, as she held Ryan she said to me she would love another one. I was terrified of ever going through that again, which proves not only her toughness, but my...
- What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit is interceding on your behalf?
- How can you learn to trust in Him in the midst of the groaning of the world and your world?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 13

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8: THE PROMISE*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:28–30**

There are some who read Romans 8:28–30 and feel panic in their hearts. I have never fully understood that panic. As for me, it brings peace, but others have shared that it seems surface and doesn't take into consideration the immensity of their pain. Perhaps that is because someone has quoted this to them without tears in the night of their terror. But for me, when properly understood, this is the most precious promise in the Bible for anyone who is in pain. There are conditions to this promise, as well as causes for trust, as well as a claim on what is good.

What is the promise?

The promise is simple and all encompassing. The promise is this, no matter what you are going through (all things) God who is over all things will work them together for good. *Selah*.

This actually means that in any situation, at all times, you can rest not only in God's love for you, but also the reality that He is at work in your situation for your good! Notice this does not say we will understand, nor does it say we will feel. Rather it is a confidence in God's sovereignty over all things. Nothing is left to chance! We call this Divine Providence. Packer helpfully defines providence as, "The unceasing activity of the Creator whereby, in overflowing bounty and goodwill [...] He upholds His creatures in ordered existence [...] guides and governs all events, circumstances and free acts of angels and men [...] and directs everything to its appointed goal, for His own glory."ⁱ

Swindoll develops this personally and says, "the events of our lives are not ruled by chance or fate but by our sovereign loving Lord who works out His plan and purpose in the lives of all His children [...] it also speaks of God's gracious provision and care for our daily needs." This promise means that no matter how we feel, God is at work in and through all things for good.

Now the brokenness of the world becomes a place that we can bask in the love and purpose of our God. Now the groaning becomes an opportunity for glorifying God. Now nothing can steal our joy, or our security in Christ because we know

this promise in our hearts. This is so precious for all who live on this fallen planet we call earth. This must be something that we can experience even in the midst of being overwhelmed in our pain, for God's Word is sure and true and right!

Read Romans 8:28–30 and instead of feeling any panic, experience peace, a peace that comes from the knowledge that God is reigning providentially over all things and that your life in all of its brokenness matters to Him.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Have you ever experienced the preciousness of this promise in your life?
The panic?
- Why is it important to realize that this promise is all encompassing?
- What are some things you can do to ensure that you are resting in God's tender care?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 14

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: THE PRE-CONDITIONS

*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:28–30**

One of the greatest comforts to people in a broken world is the providence of God. The problem with this is that this precious promise of Romans 8 is not for all people. We might struggle with this in our world that misunderstands fairness, but it is what God's Word teaches and therefore what we must believe and apply as followers of Jesus. The promise of Romans 8:28–30 is an exclusive promise only for those who meet the conditions that the verse gives. There are two conditions for the promise given in verse 28, the first is that they love God, and the second is that they are called according to His purpose.

Condition #1: I Love God

What does this even mean? Daniel Block has argued convincingly that this claim of loving God is so strong in the Old Testament that no one would use this language. In the New Testament it is clearly defined and includes feeling, but is so much more. Charles Colson in his classic little book, *Loving God*, claims that most followers of Jesus believe they love God but don't even know what this means in real life.

To Love God Means

1. **To Be Consumed With Him:** Mark 12:30. This is the first and greatest command and it is all encompassing. It is an undivided loyalty that supersedes all others, and is focused on pursuing Him (Psalm 73:25; Luke 14:25–35).
2. **To Obey Him:** This is an overflow of our love for Him and the Bible states it as something that is always there if we love Him (John 14:14; 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3). No one can do this perfectly outside of Jesus, but the one who loves God is seeking to obey Him in His strength, and is growing in this all of the time (Matthew 7:21–27).
3. **To Worship and Praise Him:** Loving God will always overflow into a lifting up of His name in praise and pursuit of others to praise Him. Those who love God will sing and speak well of Him, and seek to help others to know and experience

His great love. Really this is a passion to glorify His name!

4. **To Be Like Him:** This is the pursuit of all who authentically love God, to be conformed to the image of Jesus (Galatians 4:19), or perhaps more clearly to be imitators of God as dearly loved children (Ephesians 5:1–2).

So how can we meet this first condition? The only way is to experience the love of God through the gospel (1 John 4:19). The foundation and fullness of loving God always starts and stays in experiencing His love! How do you do that? By grace through faith. You know the gospel and you treasure it through faith and repentance. Love for God is always produced through an experience of the gospel and always flourishes through a deeper familiarity of His grace. So, know the gospel, and bathe yourself in God's love!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Do you know the gospel?
- Review it, and ask for God to give you a deeper more profound experience of His love. A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response.

1. **God.** God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5–8).

2. **Man.** All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26–28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1–3).

3. **Christ.** Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21–26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20–22).

4. **Response.** God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9–10).^k

- If you have some extra time, read and pray for yourself and your pastor Ephesians 3:14–21.

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 15

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: THE PRE-CONDITIONS (PT. 2)

*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:28–30**

Security comes from resting in the sure promise of God! The better we know His promises the more we can experience His peace, *if* we meet the conditions of the promise. For the believer in God, almost always the conditions are met by God in Christ by grace through faith, and in Romans 8:28 the second condition that must be met for this precious promise to be true and authentically experienced is being “called according to his purpose”. So what does it mean for us to meet this second qualifier? This is what scholars refer to as God’s effectual call. It is His predestination of those for whom this promise is given. It is His sovereignty in salvation, and it is precious.

The golden chain of verse 30 will develop this further, but for our experience today, this calling of God on our lives reminds us that, left to our own freedom, we will always choose to reject God. Those whom God calls are called according to His sovereign will, and it is never something they deserve or earn, it is all of grace (Ephesians 2:1–10). In fact, Romans 5 makes it abundantly clear that it is something no human deserves and comes because of God’s sovereign love (Romans 9:11–13; John 6:65).

So this promise is conditioned upon God’s call, and causes us to long to know the answer to the question, “How do we know if we have met this condition or not?” Has He called me? God’s purpose is to save those whom He has called, so we know this reality of being called is true of us if we have saving faith. The meeting of this condition (as was with the first condition) is seeing the response of our own hearts and wills to the instigation of God’s call, so that we are children of God by grace through faith. If you have saving faith, you have been called. If you have been called according to God’s purpose, you meet condition #2 of this great and precious promise, and it is true for you in all of life.

So, as you seek to deepen your trust in God, do you believe? Have you trusted in what Jesus did for you for salvation, and are you trusting Him now as you live your life for power and “no condemnation”?

One of my favourite preachers states, “this verse contains perhaps the most glorious promise in Scripture. It is breathtaking in its magnitude, encompassing absolutely everything that pertains to a believer’s life”¹ and it is for you if you meet the conditions. So, do you love God?

Have you believed in the gospel in response to His effectual call on your life? If you have, then your world might be shattered but you will always trust God and find hope in His Word. We live in a broken world, but believe in this Book’s promises and your life will be lived in eager expectations of the sovereign plan of God as it is worked on in His providence and power. Like, Joseph, Job, Jochebed and Jesus, you can join them in the *joy* set before you and jump at every opportunity to glorify His name. Wow!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Do you meet the pre-conditions of this promise?
- How have you seen this work out in your past?
- What can you do to understand and experience this promise if your experiencing the brokenness of life here on planet Earth?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 16

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: JOB, JOSEPH, JOCHEBED & JESUS

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:28–30

Sufferings and groanings are sometimes so intense that we feel overwhelmed. Romans 8 does not let us shift into a world where we are forced to reject our experiences of pain. It is real that we live in a broken world with broken people, and the experience of brokenness is bad! Sometimes overwhelming, and without the reality of God's sovereignty and love, it would lead to depression and desperation. But God has promised that He will never waste our pain! We can know that all of life is for His glory and no situation we experience is outside of His control.

How can we know if this is the promise and assumption for those who love God and are called according to His purpose? How can we know and be so sure of hope in God that our experience of pain is superseded by our trust in His plan? The answer is the promises for our future that God's Word is full of, and the past work of God that displays this power and love. What past work? The past work in our own lives and the past work that we read in the Bible that happened to real men and women who lived before us. God is good even when it is hard to see or understand. Characters all over the Bible prove this, and we desire to see it displayed in the lives of Joseph, Job, Jochebed, and Jesus.

Joseph

If you look at bad luck in the Bible, this man is full of its experience. His mother died when his brother was born. His brothers hated him and placed him in a pit and left him for dead (when he was around 17). When they saw a chance to profit on their hatred they sold him into slavery to those who mistreat slaves horrifically, perhaps a fate worse than death in some people's minds. Not only was he impacted by his evil brothers, and evil slave traders, when things started to look up a little, as luck would have it, his owner's wife fell in love with him, and then falsely accused him of rape (after around 3 years of faithful service—he would have been 20). Convicted and imprisoned, and then after God blessed him with wisdom in interpreting the dream of a fellow prisoner (well two, but one can be forgiven for forgetting) was left languishing in prison for even more time (a total of 10 years-ish in jail).

Talk about the dreams of a young man being put to the test, and the patience of any man or woman being overwhelmingly impacted by others' evil and bad luck. Chance left Joseph in chaos, or did it? Near the end of Joseph's life when his father had died, and his brothers were afraid that he would punish them for their evil choices, Joseph's response shows his faith in the goodness and providence of God. "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20)

Notice the words "but God meant it for good". Meant what for good? The answer, their throwing Joseph into a pit, selling him into slavery, and given the consequence of God's goodness we could add the false accusation of rape, the being forgotten in prison and any and all other things that happened to Joseph. *All!*

God is Good

All of the time. And so we know that in our own lives all that happens to us will happen for our good. How can we know? Well, our own experience, but sometimes in the depth of our pain this is hard to find, so we can find it in the people of God and their stories. Learn from Joseph that no matter what you are going through, or who you think is causing it, God is good and will use all things for good, to those that love Him and are called by His purpose.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- God wants us to get this message so clearly that His Word states Joseph's response twice. If you have the time, look up and learn from Genesis 45:4–5. Notice in these verses, we find not only God's goodness, but providence at work. It was God who actually sent Joseph.
- What does Joseph's story teach you about God's goodness?
- How can you use this story to shape your knowledge of Romans 8:28–30?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 17

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: JOB, JOSEPH, JOCHEBED & JESUS

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:28–30

How would you feel if you were rich, and then in one day lost everything? Would you be able to trust God? To make matters worse, how would you feel if all your children died in one day, as luck would have it, a building collapsed upon them all? Would you be able to trust God? To make matters worse, those you love and trust, call on you to curse God and die. Your friends blame you and your sin for the life of pain and shame you are now living. Your health is gone, and instead of sitting in the place of honour, you now sit in the place of shame, in pain, emotionally overwhelmed with the loss of your children, broken by the loss of your wealth, shamed in your pain with sores all over your body.

Does Romans 8 ring true if you are Job? Perhaps more importantly in our lives, although tied together, can you trust God if you feel like you look around and your life is like Job's? Few people in history have experienced what Job did. In fact, I think the only one that ever had it worse was Jesus, but each person's pain is real and can be overwhelming, leaving us dazed and confused and longing for death or full destruction. If you have felt like Job, or perhaps right now feel like Job, how can you know that God is at work and will use it for good? Joseph showed us that God is at work for good (and sovereign). Job declares with the affirmation of God that God is truly over all things, and his declaration comes in the midst of his shame and brokenness. A heart of trust, and a model for us to follow when the brokenness of this world overwhelms us. How can you know?

God is Sovereign

Job's response to his initial pain (and after to his physical pain as well, 2:10) was absolute trust in the sovereignty of God. In fact, it should shock us with how strongly He states this: "And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.'" (Job 1:21)

We know that Satan was at work in this situation as we read chapters 1 and 2. We know that there are weather issues and evil humans (Sabeans and Chaldeans),

who raided and burnt and killed. We know that evil men and bad weather and horrible health are hitting Job like a sledge hammer to the heart, and yet, he gives God all of the responsibility (in a positive way) for what happened. He tells his wife, and us who will listen that even though, as luck would have it, there was bad weather and evil people, He knows that God is over those things and notices and takes care of His people. It is the LORD who gave, and the LORD who took away and thus Job can trust fully and completely trust God even in the loss of his health, wealth and greatest treasure: family. So was Job right to know this? Are you right to know this? The answer is yes! "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." (Job 1:22)

That is God's comment on Job's statement. Job was right to believe that he was never at the mercy of evil people or the weather, or luck. He was always in the sovereign care of God! And we find out at the end of Job and the picture of God that Job receives (and we can as well if we will read it) that God is good, sovereign, all wise, and loving!

So how can we know? Joseph teaches us that God is at work for good. Job teaches us that God is the One who is over all things, and in fact, is the One in Job's case who gave and took away. God is all powerful, and no demonic power, act of nature, or evil people can stay His hand, or harm us outside of His allowance. All followers of God can always trust in His sovereign power! So we can know and trust and experience a peace that transcends understanding in the providential care of our God!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Why do you think that Job is so absolute in his statement in 1:21?
- If you have some extra time, it is worth it to read Job 42 and see Job's response to God's revelation and God's response to Job.
- How can you grow in your understanding and experience of God's sovereignty?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 18

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: JOB, JOSEPH, JOCHEBED & JESUS

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:28–30

What if you were a mother who lived in a time when the evil nation you lived in had decided that if you gave birth to a boy, they would kill him. Then, as you find yourself praying for a girl, hoping that you won't have the pain of the death of your infant, the mid-wife declares that you have given birth to a healthy baby (wait for it)...a boy! We don't know a lot of who Jochebed was, or her story, but we do know from Exodus 2:1–10 that when Moses was born she hid him for three months at home. When this became impossible and his death was sure, she made a small bed/boat for him, and placed him in the Nile river and had his sister watch over the baby.

Imagine the pain, the confusion, the horror that this woman must have felt. She was a child of God, a part of the family that God had chosen to be His very own prized possession and yet her own life was broken by pain, and her family torn apart. How could she know that God was at work even in Egypt, even when all around her the pain of the death of Hebrew boys was real, even when her own precious baby was floating in the Nile? Well, I am not sure how she could have known, but we now know the rest of the story. God had a plan, and His plan was best. God is all wise. He not only knows all things, He knows the best way to get the good. God had a plan, and this plan included Jochebed and her baby.

As luck would have it, Pharaoh's daughter was bathing near where the baby was floating in the river, and when she found the baby she wanted to keep him. Even more amazing, she saw young Miriam who was watching over the baby in the boat, and Jochebed was given the opportunity to continue to nurse her baby and then teach him the ways of God. In God's plan, Moses became a prince in Egypt, and in God's plan one of the greatest leaders of God's people in leading them out of Egypt and almost into the Promised Land. God had a plan, and His plan was best. We would be negligent to not realize that sometimes babies die, and that Jochebed's story is not the only story that came from that time in Egypt, but her story does help us to trust even when our feelings and understandings are distant in knowing that God has a plan. God is all wise, and His plan is best, and He is

at work in your life situations to accomplish that plan, even when there are evil people around you and circumstances way beyond your control. As luck would have it, it is never something that the authentic Christian need worry about, for they are always in the care of the sovereign, good, all-wise God of the Bible. So we can know and trust and experience a peace that transcends understanding in the providential care of our God!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER:

- How would you respond to Jochebed's situation?
- Looking over all that happened in her life, and through her son Moses, how does this help you trust in the wisdom of our God?
- Why is it important to know that God not only knows all things, but is also all-wise?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 19

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–30: JOB, JOSEPH, JOCHEBED & JESUS

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:28–30

What is the worst event in all of history? There have been many, and depending on your historical knowledge all sorts of things probably come to mind. They might include Hitler, or Stalin, or maybe Pearl Harbour or atomic bombs. They could include mass exterminations or martyrdom, and there would be many varied and horrific events to choose from. However, when we use the word “worst”, one stands out above all of the others: the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah. It is the worst because Jesus was the only innocent man that has ever lived. It is the worst because His pain was more extreme, physically, emotionally and spiritually than any human has ever experienced. It is the worst because (2 Corinthians 5:21) He became sin, and took upon Himself the wrath of God in our place! I also believe it is the best event in the history of the world, especially in the context of the resurrection, however, in the desire to increase our knowing that God works all to the good, it is the focus on worst that is essential for us to grasp.

So how does this help us to know that we can trust God no matter what is happening to us? I am glad you asked, and it is profound that in the first sermons of the church, the emphasis on God’s power is seen in the context of this beautiful display of His love.

“²² Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:22–24)

“²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” (Acts 4:27–29)

I am glad God didn't leave this to chance, and that He has the plan, power, and provision in mind so that I can know Him and live my life to the praise of His glorious grace! Those verses display in Jesus God's sovereign power, God's wisdom and, maybe most profoundly, God's goodness. He caused everything to work out for good, and we know He has the power, the wisdom, and the goodness so that even when we don't understand or our lives are dominated by confusion, we can trust Him! Yes, those involved in the sin were guilty and responsible for their evil choices, but over those choices the hand of God was at work.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- What is the worst event in your life?
- What is essential for you to know if you are to be someone who trusts God in the midst of circumstances like that if they happen again?
- Why is it essential, in a broken world, that we know who God is and what He has done?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 20

THE PRECIOUS PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28–32: JOB, JOSEPH, JOCHEBED & JESUS (PT. 2)

Read Romans 8

ROMANS 8:31–32

I love to make pens. Each one is artwork, and although I am yet to perfect the art of making pens they are special each in their own way, and the faults become a reason to keep them and treasure the memory of making them. On each pen that comes of my lathe, the brass tubes have verses on them, and one of the verses each pen gets is Romans 8:32, as a reminder for me of God's promise to love me and the confidence I can have all of the time in that love.

We live in a broken world filled with broken people and when we look in the mirror, if we are honest, we will see pain in the midst of whatever else is there that day. You can't live very long without knowing that the world and its inhabitants are groaning. So how can we have confidence in God and the inexpressible and glorious joy He commands? We can reflect on our own story, and see God's providence in and through our own pain. We can see those who have gone before us and rejoice in watching God work in their stories, and above their stories: Joseph, Job, Jochebed and Jesus have helped us with that. We can also gaze at the gospel and see God's tender love for us through what He was willing to give to us.

One of the most important verses in the Bible for trusting God in chaos is Romans 8:32. The chaos of false accusations, sin, despair, in anything we are going through we can trust that God has our best in mind because He is willing to guarantee it with what He has done for us in history. He will graciously give us all things. His plan is perfect and for our best, and Jesus' death and resurrection are the sure reality we can see and experience that gives us absolute assurance in the rest of our experiences and lives. Simply put, it would be beyond comprehension that God would send and sacrifice His own Son and then leave us at the whim of nature or other humans. There is no, "as luck would have it" for the one whom Jesus has died for, because that life and death is not only what has purchased their freedom it is also what protects their hearts from fear and being overwhelmed when properly understood.

One of the great benefits of preaching the gospel to ourselves every day is that, when understood, its reality brings a deeper understanding of the character of God and a delight in the assurance that if God did this for us already, then He is for us, and if He is for us, nothing and no one can impact us outside of His tender care and love. If you ever are in a situation where you feel overwhelmed, and you have lost sight of your own story, or even the stories of others in Scripture, do everything in your power to get your eyes onto Jesus. No matter what God allows in our life, a confidence in His sovereign power, His wisdom that is perfect, His goodness that always has our best and His glory in mind, and His love for us are powerful. But even greater is this precious reality of what God has done for us in Jesus.

Let the gospel be the guide to your heart when despair threatens to derail your joy. Let Jesus and His love infuse your life with Joy, a joy that can never be stolen or slip away when He is in sight.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How does the gospel inform our confidence in Jesus' goodness in a broken world?
- What does it mean that God will, "graciously give us all things?"
- What are some things you can do to remind yourself that God is for you?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 21

DEFINE GOOD FOR ME, PLEASE*Read Romans 8***ROMANS 8:29**

When my lovely wife is gone I make good meals for the boys. The problem is that my definition of good includes Kraft Dinner, cereal, and toast as multiple options for every meal. Sometimes our definition of good can become wonky, and it is important to grasp what God's definition of good is so we can align our thoughts with His. Since we know that God works all things together for good, and He is wise, powerful, good and loving, it is helpful to know what that good is described as being so that I can look for it, even pursue it. If we align our understanding of good with God's then we will rejoice when we see it, persevere when we are hurting and rejoice for what is our sure hope of His best. The good that God is accomplishing in all things involves two key elements, according to verse 29.

*Good #1:***That those who know Jesus would be conformed to the image of His Son**

This is the goal of every follower of Jesus, that we would be like Him, or as Galatians 4:19 would put it, that Christ would be formed in us. This means that we become like our teacher (Luke 6:40), that we learn to think and live like He wants us to think and live (1 Corinthians 2:16). This is the good of living in a way that displays who He is. Specifically, in Ephesians 5:1–2 it means living a life of sacrificial love. It is not only being Christ-centred, but being Christ-like. Specifically, in 1 Peter 1:16 it will mean that we are holy, pure, set apart to accomplish the good works which He prepared in advance for us to do. Our greatest goal should be to live like Jesus, to have His life lived through us, so that the good works we do are an overflow of the person He has made us! This good is why James can call for us to consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of many kinds for we are joyful when our character is being perfected.

*Good #2***That Jesus might be glorified**

This is not separate from good #1, in fact, the more intimately we are conformed to the image of Jesus the more we will be those who see His name lifted up. Being the firstborn among many brothers means being the supreme One, the preeminent One, the One above all others!

One scholar states "God's supreme purpose for bringing sinners to salvation is to glorify His Son, Jesus Christ, by making Him preeminent in the divine plan of redemption."^m I would add, to glorify Him, to display the marvellous glory of who He is and what He has done to all. Understanding this good brings us to the place where we rejoice in all of life, and eagerly look for opportunities to engage in pursuing God's good, our conformity to Jesus and His glory. This is why we exist, and how we will spend eternity. This is what God is doing in the world through providence. This is His plan, purpose, and pursuit in our lives as He works all things for this good.

It is best to align our minds with His purpose, and to trust Him in the midst of any Joseph, Job, Jochebed, or Jesus experience, and rest in Him and His goodness, wisdom, power. This text, and others, teaches me that God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life. This may include persecution, famine, even death, but it will always include my spiritual growth in conforming my life to Jesus, and His glory, and the joy of eternity with Him and the power at work in me that will never allow anything to separate me from His love!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How can we make sure that our perspective of good aligns with God's?
- What does it mean in your own words to conform to the image of Jesus?
- How can we glorify His name in practical ways?
- Why is aligning our view of good with God's key to our pursuit of joy in all of life?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 22
HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:30

When I first read D. A. Carson's book called, *The Gagging Of God*, I was shocked but did not think the idea that, "truth disappears, retreating before the culture of interpretation, dissolving in the mists of postmodernity"ⁿ was something I would deal with in my ministry life. I was wrong. This is now a way of thinking in and outside of the church, and the greatest casualty has been the degodding of God. Or, perhaps better put, the world and the church seem to have created their own view of god that may or may not have a similarity with who the God of the Bible has revealed Himself to be. This has all sorts of implications, and in Romans 8 the one that is focused on is trust in God.

If your view of god is small, man centred, contingent and weak, then when you read that nothing can separate you from His love you feel warm until you are in wretched pain. In other words, to trust God in the midst of all of life must come from a biblical view of who He is. Romans 8:30 places in the midst of this call to trust God in all of the brokenness of life a very high view of salvation that displays God as sovereign and gracious, and the initiator, not contingent at all upon those He saves. Romans 8:30 is radically God centred, so as we walk through the words of this precious verse, if you are man centred, or swim in a man centred world, you will struggle with some of what this teaches, but remember: without it, you will not have a God you can trust, or depend on in the midst of your own brokenness, let alone the groaning of the world or others in it. Here are the words and their meanings:

Foreknew: God knows all things, past present and future. He knows every possible possibility (middle knowledge), and there is nothing He does not know, and nothing He can learn. In terms of this text it means that He knew the future with the sense that He was not only a passive observer, but an active participant in making it happen. R. C. Sproul, in his commentary on Romans states, "We could reasonably translate this text, 'Those whom he foreloved (those who He knew in a personal, intimate, redemptive sense from all eternity past.'"^o Salvation has its origin in the mind and plan of God.

Predestined: In its wider sense the word includes God accomplishing His plan in all things (Ephesians 1:11). In the sense used in verse 30, it refers to “God’s selecting out of sinful humanity a multitude of people He would save through Christ”.^p

Called: This word for called is what we often refer to as effectual calling. It is the invitation of God that comes with His power to respond, and those called choose willingly to believe and follow Jesus. Without this call people can’t know God!

Justified: All those whom God called will be justified. Declared righteous. Simply put, just as if I had never sinned, just as if I had always obeyed.

Glorified: This is the eternal end of all who believe, of all whom God has called. It is in the past tense because it is so sure, it is God who is accomplishing this, the security is absolute and complete!

So, what does this mean? It means you can trust God always and in everything, including your own security of salvation in His love. Augustine of Hippo comments on today’s passage that “God elected believers in order that they might believe, not because they already believed.” God’s choice of us precedes in every sense our choice of Him. If the Lord had not chosen us, we never would have chosen to believe in Him, and because He chose His people without any view to their own merits or choices, His people will certainly believe. His predestination of us means we are His forever.”^q So where does it leave us in terms of our own hearts and minds? We know, God can and will and does work out all things for good—we can trust God. We know that when God says nothing can separate us from His love, He means it and is right; we can trust God. We know that salvation is all of grace, and He finishes what He starts, we can trust God. We know we are made to praise Him, and given it is all about Him and His work in our lives, He receives all of the praise and glory. It is hard to read this verse if you are man-centred without longing for it to mean something other than what it means. But when understood, there are very few other verses or realities that are more precious! How big is our God? Our God is greater!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How can you see your view of God being impacted by the world over the Word?
- Why do you think we struggle with what these words mean?
- How can we grow in our understanding and view of who God is?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 23

THE ASSURANCE OF AN INTERCEDING SAVIOR*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:31–34**

Sometimes in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death it is hard to feel the Shepherd's care. Does God notice? Is He really involved in my life when sickness feels overwhelming or children are not following Jesus? Romans 8 not only deepens our understanding of the greatness of God, it also shows us His intimate care. He is the God who created the world, Jesus is our Lord and Saviour who sustains the world, and this God, this Saviour, notices every intimate detail of our lives and loves us! One of the rich realities of Jesus' tender care for us is as Hebrews 7:24–25 teaches "that he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." One of the great realities that Romans 8 introduces the lover of God to is that Jesus not only saves, He keeps. Absolute assurance, and this is not only from His past work on the cross, it is also from His present work of intercession before the Father. This means that not only was Jesus active in living a perfect life, dying on the cross, and rising again, He also is right now active on our behalf to hold us to God.

One scholar states "Jesus is always pleading our case before the Father, like a defense lawyer on our behalf". When God looks at us, He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus, and when the accuser points out our sins and weaknesses to God, He is met with Jesus interceding on our behalf before the Father. This means that we are not only justified by the perfect work of Jesus on the cross, it means that Jesus actually lives to display this reality to God even as we struggle. He is there for us, as we are there in Him. There are those who will bring charges against you, whether that be your own flesh, or Satan (whose name literally means accuser) or his demons, or the world around you, when you belong to Him, He will hold you fast!

Knowing this should put our hearts at rest, and infuse in us a passion to please God. Knowing this should yield a gospel-centredness that we never lose sight of. Romans 8 is a book that repeatedly places the gospel before us, and in verses 32–34 it is actually preached twice. So if you are overwhelmed by your sin, or

feeling useless to God because of feeling condemned, let this text awaken in you a strong security and a passion to carry on in your pursuit of sanctification as one who belongs to God, and has Jesus not only knowing you, but interceding for you.

The authentic believer is absolutely secure, not only by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, which is amazing, but just as overwhelming, this living Savior now holds us by interceding on our behalf. Imagine your guilt and shame brought to the throne room of God and see it being met with your Savior's payment, and petition! Nothing can separate you from His love!

Questions To Mull Over

- Why is it important to know that Jesus is interceding for us?
- How can you feel the security that you should know comes from it?
- What are some ways you can preach the gospel to yourself and so experience the richness of this security?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 24

WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:35–36**

Is there anything stronger than God? That may seem like a silly question, but any time we are feeling threatened by anyone or anything it is a question that we must remember. Is God stronger than other people? Yes! Is God stronger than nature? Yes! Is God stronger than any health issues we might have? Yes. Is God stronger than death? Yes Is God stronger than demons? Yes Is God stronger than me? Yes. Romans 8:35 asks a question that should drive our hearts to peace and rest even as our minds begin to grasp the richness of His love for us. Probably in this text the love of Christ is synonymous with our salvation, and the question is, is there anything or anyone who can separate us from God's love, who can steal our eternal forgiveness, who can drive a wedge between us and Him?

The answer many would give is that sometimes our experiences and expectations cause us to struggle with this reality. What I love about this text is that there is no soft pedalling of the difficulties of life. Creation and Christians groan, and crisis calls on many fronts, but the reality remains—our God is greater! We can have confidence in the face of any trial, or even the valley of the shadow of death because our God is greater. This is a radically God centred call to trust in God and His love for us, even in the midst of any and every situation we might face, no matter how difficult it may be. Our experience of peace and rest is directly tied to our knowledge of the greatness of God in His power and wisdom and the tenderness of God in His love and intercession for us.

Do you now the God of the Bible? Have you trusted in Him for your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord? Do you trust Him now, even as life falls apart around you, or as Psalm 44:2 is recalled to remind us that "God's people have always born the pain of the world's hostility."^s If you are suffering (if you're not, you will), or have suffered, let the Word of God drive your mind to His power and wisdom, and your heart into His tender care!

No one and nothing can separate you from His love!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Why do you think Paul spends so much time on this?
- How does this help you experience God's love in the realities of life?
- How can you make sure that your view of God is biblical so that your faith remains sure and secure and your experience of His love rich through all of life?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 25

MORE THAN CONQUERORS*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:37**

Preaching God's Word is the greatest privilege and the greatest responsibility that I can ever imagine. It is amazing that God uses people to bless and encourage other people and draw them closer to Him, and to live on mission for Him. The preacher is not only called to preach as if he were preaching the very words of God (1 Peter 4:11), but also is constantly being evaluated by his own standards and the people whom he has been called to serve. In my life, my preaching has always been well received by others, but my own heart struggles every Sunday. I don't feel worthy (know I am not), and more often than not feel like a failure on Sunday afternoon as I try to distract myself with NFL football, or sleep. The simple answer for me (and you) is to do your best, knowing it is not enough, and trust God. To know that I am not worthy (other than in Christ), and that God uses donkeys and Delilahs, so He certainly can use me, should be a comfort to my confused heart. The Scripture is so encouraging in Moses' call to speak and God's response (Exodus 4), or even in Paul bragging about his weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12). So feeling this sense of failure is not only wrong, it displays a lack of understanding of who God is. So you don't condemn me too much, I am not alone, and no less than Spurgeon struggled with very similar feelings, however the reason the story is important is that if you are serving God or living life for Him in a broken groaning world, there is a good chance that you have felt, or will feel like I sometimes do on Sunday afternoons (sadly at other times as well).

There is a verse that I memorized, memorialized, and mandated my heart to listen to, and it is Romans 8:37. The verse reminds me that in Christ I am, "more than a conqueror" person. A super victor, a Nike person. What does this mean? It means that no matter what we face, I am a *super victor* (ὑπερνικῶμεν) through Jesus, and His love for me. As Moo points out in his great commentary on Romans, it is not just victory we gain in Christ, it is overwhelming victory.¹ We don't just survive in difficulties we thrive because we know that everything is used in God's providential love for our good and His glory. We thrive because we know that nothing can separate us from His love. We thrive because we know our eternity is absolutely secure.

So what keeps us from experiencing this precious reality?

Sin, selfishness and sloth. What can keep us in the knowledge and experience of being an overwhelming conqueror? Never forget! Meditate on this reality, memorialize it, and mandate your heart to experience it! For me, for years this meant constantly reminding myself of this verse and this reality. Of memorizing (know the verse), memorializing (wear Nike clothes, put the verse in front of me everywhere, etc.) and mandating (when I feel down, call it to mind) my heart to listen and never forget. It even meant that for a little while my Sunday morning dress shoes were actually Nike (named for the same Greek word) golf shoes without the cleats and many other strange ways to remind myself of this reality even when the world inside and outside of my life was groaning.

If you ever feel insecure, overwhelmed, sad, alone, in despair, hopeless, weak, sinful, Romans 8:37 in context when understood and experienced will chase those feelings away and replace them with a joyful confidence in Christ. This may be simple, but if you are anything like me, you will need to send it to your mind repeatedly and until glory, fight to experience it in and through all of your real life experiences. In Christ, you're a super conqueror.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Commit Romans 8:37 to mind for battle (Psalm 119:11). *Memorize*
- What are some ways you can remind yourself of this reality in the brokenness of life? *Memorialize*
- How can you teach your heart to experience this reality? *Mandate*

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 26

WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:35–39**

Why? Not only the painful cry of someone who has experienced incredible agony, but from all of us who see others go through torment. We understand the question, why me?, and it should break our hearts, but it is even deeper! Why? Why does a good God allow so much suffering here on earth, and why does it impact His children? As I sit in the truck of a friend whose son was killed in a car accident. Why? As I am at the bedside of a parishioner whose cancer is making it hard to breathe, and knowing they only have hours to live. Why? As a friend holds the precious lifeless baby that had been such a reason for celebration and now only ache with a hole in the heart that perhaps can never be replaced. Why? As I visit with a wife whose husband has abandoned her and her children, or a rape victim, or an abuse victim, etc. Why?

Why do bad things happen to good people? The answer of many is that this means that God is either good or all powerful, but he can't be both. The problem with this answer to the heart breaking question of why is that it is not in line with what Scripture teaches. I would struggle with the very question of why God lets bad things happen to good people, but the Bible actually claims that no one is good (except God). So, perhaps the better biblical question is why do good things happen to bad people. However, in the culture we live in that is not very helpful, so back to the one our world asks the most, "why do bad things happen to good people? To me? To my friends and loved ones?" Why? The reality is that the why question is rarely answered in the life of God's people who are suffering in God's Word. Specific answers to pain are sometimes there, but not as often as we would like. We do know that God's inspired Word promises that in this world we will have trouble (John 16:33). We do know that this trouble will include persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), the pain of health issues (2 Kings 13:14), and the reality that we live in a world filled with the consequences of sin, our own, others and Adam's. Job never did find out why he lost his wealth, health and family, Joseph for his pain did, although it took a long time. So the pattern of God's Word will not always give us a specific *why* (sometimes, but not always); however, it does give us a general *why*, and then powerfully in Romans 8, the best answer, *who*.

The *why* is found in James 1, and again it is something we are to grasp in our minds, and let our minds feed our hearts and our emotional response will be founded in joy. We are to consider it pure joy, whenever we face trials of many kinds, because we know that trials bring maturity when responded to with wisdom. We can rejoice in trials because we trust God! Because we know He is sovereign and good and we know that He is helping us grow to maturity in all that He allows in our lives. This is the *why* of Romans 8:28–29, and the *why* that is to offer us emotional support when we are struggling—to conform to the image of Jesus and to glorify Him in the church and in the world.

The *who*, is God and His love. The *who* is resting in His sovereign care. When I am in the truck with my friend, or any of the other situations that I mentioned earlier, the answer that I can give is weeping with them, and pointing them to God and His love that they can never be separated from if they belong to Him. Romans 8 does not give the answer to why (other than pointing to original sin earlier in the chapter, and the reality that God never wastes our pain), but it does tenderly give us the *who*, and this love can give us hope always! That is the Who whose love is seen in Jesus and whose power is over all! God is good, and God is sovereign, so if you are struggling, and the why question is breaking your heart, you may or may not find a satisfactory answer (Job never did), but if you focus your eyes on God, you will find comfort and hope in the midst of your crisis. If you are asking why in your life, or the life of someone you love, that is not wrong, and perhaps you will find an answer, my hope is that as you search, you will be drawn to *who*, and rest in His love for you, and through you to any and all in your world who are suffering.

Nothing can separate you from God's love!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Have you ever asked why?
- How does Romans 8 help you to answer that question?
- Why is the Who question more important for those who need to find rest in God in chaos more important than the why?
- How can you rest in God's love and the reality that nothing in this world can separate you from it?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 27

SPARROWOLOGY #1: HE KNOWS*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:32–39**

When we face suffering (and we will face suffering) we can choose to focus on the worm, or the sparrow, and I do both fairly well. The worm, “nobody loves me, everybody hates me, think I’ll go to the garden and eat another worm”—feeling sorry for ourselves, overwhelmed and defined by our circumstances. The sparrow, “God knows every detail of my life, and nothing escapes His attention. God is sovereign over every event that happens to me, and nothing can happen to me without His approval for my good and His glory”—feeling trusting and hopeful in all circumstances, fearing only Him. So how can we learn from sparrows, rather than worms? There are two lessons that Jesus teaches us through sparrows, the first is related to His care and knowledge, the second to His care and power.

“⁴ I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:4–7)

You may feel forgotten, but in reality you never are. God is the one who knows the sparrows, and these sparrows are not worth a lot. In fact, two pennies, a pittance, yet God values them. Jesus compares your value to that of sparrows with this goal in mind: whatever you face, you may do so without fear because God is aware of all things in your life and around your life, and He loves and values you!

Stop

God is aware of all things and loves and values you. In the midst of anything you are going through, God is never looking the other way, or in the bathroom or musing (1 Kings 18:27: “And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.”). He is always there, and always knows what you are going through. You are never alone!

The next time you feel abandoned, or tempted to despair, remember the sparrow, and God's tender knowledge of you always and in everything, and don't fear. Nothing can separate you from God's love! Look to the sparrow, not the worm.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Why does God compare us to sparrows?
- In Luke 12, what is the key attribute of God that calls for us to trust Him?
- How can you learn to be more of a sparrow than a worm, and help others to do the same?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 28

SPARROWOLOGY #2: HE WILL*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:32–39**

I choose the sparrow. If you come into my office you will notice on a wall a picture of a sparrow. Every pastor in our church has posted a saying about our character being foundational to our ministry, and the one in my office is extra special. The sparrow for me became a treasured bird when I was going through a difficult time and wondered if God cared or was in control. Now every time I look at this bird on my wall, I not only appreciate the friend who took the picture, I rejoice in the reality that this picture represents in my own life and heart. Jesus uses the sparrow to teach us how to respond to trials, and Luke 12 is a reminder that no sparrow falls to the ground without God knowing it. This is hugely comforting—we are never outside His sight.

In Matthew, the focus of Jesus is a little different. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:28–31) This text states that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of the Father. In other words He is over all things, and even the sparrow falls into His tender care, and cannot be harmed apart from His control. “If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God’s sovereign control, then we cannot trust Him.”^u

Charles Spurgeon stated “I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnowing is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of [...] leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.”^v This means that because we are more valuable than sparrows anything and everything that God allows into our lives is something we don’t have to fear, or despair in.

God knows all, and is over all, and if you need to be reminded of this, find a picture of a sparrow, put it on your wall, and leave the worms behind. Nothing Can Separate You From The Love Of God. Choose the sparrow, not the worm, for His eye is on the sparrow, His will is over the sparrow, and you are of more value than they!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Why is it hard for us to trust God in the midst of our difficulties?
- Why do you think Jesus used the sparrow to teach this reality of His caring knowledge and caring power?
- How can you live in a way that displays this trust to others?

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 29

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:32–39**

How can I experience this love from God that sometimes feels distant in my every day experience? Faith and prayer! 2 Corinthians 5:7 calls us to walk by faith, and not by sight. To believe and apply God's Word to our lives even when our feelings are not in line with the realities of what God's Word teaches. Experiencing God's love is a matter of choosing to believe what He says and resting in it. When we are confused, and feel forsaken by God, we can let Scripture give us hope, and the very words of God awaken and deepen our faith.

"¹⁴ But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' ¹⁵ 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.'" (Isaiah 49:14–15) This is the promise as one theologian states, that helps us see, "in a word, the prophet here describes to us the inconceivable carefulness with which God unceasingly watches over our salvation that we may be fully convinced that He will never forsake us, though we may be afflicted with great and numerous calamities."^w This will take faith, a faith that is founded in and full of the richness of God's love for us as displayed in what Jesus has done for us (1 John 4:9–10). Not only is experiencing God's love a matter of choosing to walk by faith, it is also a matter of prayer.

"¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:14–21)

Notice the prayer that is given here, that we would be have the strength to comprehend the love of Christ. There are in this passage a lot of amazing results, but the request should be one that is ever on our lips as we seek to live our lives resting in His care. Yes, know His Word, believe it and walk by faith and not by sight, but more than that, as you live your life in His presence, constantly ask that you would be one who comprehends the love of Jesus, for if you want to live in the fullness of God, this is the pathway to this experience.

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- How is your experience of God's love?
- Read over Ephesians 3:14–21 and pray it for yourself and at least three other people.
- We are two days away from our Romans 8 saturation, if you want to experience God's love more fully, choose for the next 31 days to read over and pray Ephesians 3:14–21, and as you receive answers to your prayers, make sure to share those with others in God's family.

Lamentations 3:19–23

¹⁹ Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!

²⁰ My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.

²¹ But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness."

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 30

KNOWING HIS NAME LEADS TO TRUSTING IN HIS CARE

Read Romans 8

Romans 8:32–39

Lori was shopping in Seattle a few years ago with a friend and learned a new phrase that causes me to shudder every time I hear it, “It’s not a want, it’s a need”. It is almost always said in fun, but carries with it a seriousness of desire that means that this need is probably going to get met. I am thankful she is careful, and doesn’t use that very often, but when it comes to our experience of God’s love, the phrase adjusted a little fits—it’s a want and a need. All people want to feel loved, in fact, it is one of the highest needs of humans. For the follower of Jesus, it is more than a want (although we do long for this experience of God’s love), it is a need! We must experience God’s love! This is why Paul spends so much time on this subject in the heart of the rich theology of Romans. This is why Romans 8 is probably the most loved chapter of Scripture in the Bible. This is why we have spent so much time over the last 30 days reading Romans 8. It is not just a want, it is a *need*.

Why Must I Experience His Love?

To Stay Faithful: Fear will hold you loyal only so long, but a true experience of God’s love will cause the one loved to be faithful no matter what the cost. His love when truly experienced will give the loved one the strength to stay loyal to God and God’s people even at great cost.

To Give: Jesus made this clear in Luke 7:47 that the more we experience His forgiveness the more lavishly we will bless others. One of the main reasons that Christians do not give what they should to the church, and in service to God is that they have not experienced His lavish love.

To Stay Peaceful: When you know that God’s love is real, and that He is sovereign, you can experience peace always, no matter what situation you are in (Isaiah 54:10). The experience of His love yields a rest that transcends all situations!

To Stay Hopeful: Sometimes the experiences of life can drive us to despair, yet when we hope in His unfailing love. This despair disappears and is replaced with delight (Psalm 147:11).

To Be Loving: We love because He first loved us, and to be a true imitator of Him we must experience His love (Ephesians 5:1–2). We are to be known for our love, and the only way to have this kind of reputation is to be those who know His love so richly that it overflows (John 13:34–35).

To live a victorious Christian life, the follower of Jesus must be secure in the love of Jesus, so this is not just a want, it is a need!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Can you remember a time that you deeply experienced the love of Jesus?
- Why do you think it is hard sometimes to experience this?
- Pray for this, and pray it for your family and friends, and if you can't think of anyone else, your pastor.

DEVOTIONAL | DAY 31

WHAT NOW? KEEP THE GOSPEL IN SIGHT*Read Romans 8***Romans 8:32**

31 days. How have you done? For some it has been a delight and easy, for others this is actually day 91, and Romans 8 has not always been read in its entirety. Either way, welcome to day 31. This is the day we delight together in what God has been teaching us and encourage you to share it with others. So, a reminder, then some reflections, and lastly a call to radical devotion.

A Reminder

“Any time that we are tempted to doubt God’s love for us, we should go back to the cross. We should reason somewhat in this fashion: If God loved me enough to give His Son to die for me when I was His enemy, surely He loves me enough to care for me now that I am His child.”^x ⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:7–10) Stop, stay, and saturate yourself in His grace, for if you truly experience this love you will never be the same. Always keep the gospel in sight and your life will be filled with hope and joy!

A Reflection

God’s Word will not return void. What this means is that our time together, if you have read the Scriptures has been valuable. I hope my words have helped you, I know if you were faithful in reading Romans 8 31 times, it has helped you! Never forget when you are reading devotionals, or being driven into God’s ways, the most powerful tool by far is His Word!

A Call to Radical Devotion

Psalm 9:10 And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you. Remember that “name” in the Bible represents who that person is. Those who know who God is will put their trust in Him.

This is a call to devotion to the God of the Bible, and a longing to know Him better, trust Him more, delight in Him completely. This is a call to live your life in relationship with the God who loves you, and be driven and defined by that relationship.

May this be a start, or a continuation of a new love for Romans 8, a renewed experience of His love, and a radical commitment to living your life in light of the gospel. May God be praised, and remember: nothing can separate you from His love!

QUESTIONS TO MULL OVER

- Write some of the rich things you have gleaned from Romans 8 during this 31 day journey.
- Share them with at least 2 other people.
- Write some of your reflections out that you might remember them at a later date and allow the ministry from this focus to carry forward.

AFTERWORD

I hope that our time together in Romans 8 has been rich and transforming. It has been my goal to get you into the, “greatest chapter in the Bible”, and if this short devotional accomplished that and nothing else, it was worth it. May God use my words to draw you to His, and His to help you get to know Him better, conform to Jesus more fully, and impact the world you are in more widely.

Romans 8

“Would you like to be rid of this spiritual depression? The first thing you have to do is to say farewell now once and forever to your past. Never look back at your sins again. Say, “It is finished, it is covered by the blood of Christ.” That is your first step. Take that and finish with yourself and all this talk about goodness, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only then that true happiness and joy are possible for you. What you need is not to make resolutions and to live a better life, to start fasting and sweating and praying. No! You just begin to say, “I rest my faith on him alone, who died for my transgressions to atone.”^y (Lloyd-Jones)

ENDNOTES

- ^a Packer, J. I. *Knowing God*. Pg. 201.
- ^b Piper, John. *Kill Sin by the Spirit*.
- ^c Stott, John. *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*.
- ^d Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Romans*.
- ^e Sovereign Grace Music. *Jesus, Thank You* (<https://youtu.be/tHp8eThI2qk>).
- ^f Dever, Mark. *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*. Pg. 43.
- ^g Keller, Tim. *Romans 8–16 For You*. Pg. 19.
- ^h Piper, John. *How to Kill Sin Pt. 1* (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-to-kill-sin-part-1>).
- ⁱ Swindoll, Charles. *Learning To Walk By Grace*, Chapter 6.
- ^j Packer, J. I. *The New Bible Dictionary*.
- ^k Dever, Mark. *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*. Pg. 43.
- ^l MacArthur, John. *Romans 1–8*. Pg. 471.
- ^m MacArthur, John. *Sermon On Romans 8:29*.
- ⁿ Carson, D. A. *The Gagging Of God*. Pg. 91.
- ^o Sproul, R. C. *Romans*.
- ^p Swindoll, Charles. *Learning to Walk By Grace*. Pg. 18.
- ^q Taken from *Tabletalk*.
- ^r Got Questions. *Jesus Interceding* (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-interceding.html>).
- ^s Swindoll, Charles. *Learning to Walk by Grace*. Pg. 64.
- ^t Moo, Douglas. *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary: Romans 1–8*. Pg. 587.
- ^u Bridges, Jerry. *Trusting God*. Pg. 35.
- ^v Taylor, Justin. *Spurgeon on the Extent of God's Sovereignty* (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/spurgeon-on-the-extent-of-gods-sovereignty/>).
- ^w Calvin, John. *John Calvin's Commentaries On Isaiah 49–66*. Pg. 21.
- ^x Bridges, Jerry. *Trusting God*. Pg. 148.
- ^y Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Spiritual Depression*. Pg. 35.