

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 7TH - 8TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

HOPE IN GOD'S PROMISES (ROMANS 8:18-25)

Paul is describing to us the way that gospel makes possible a new way of life - a kind of life lived in freedom, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit in an intimate relationship with the Father (Rom. 8:1-17).

- We're no longer under condemnation, we're no longer controlled by our flesh, and we've been adopted by Father God.
- But what about our suffering?

CREATION GROANS (VS. 18 - 22)

Some Christians hold to the myth that because they live well and God loves them, they'll never have to suffer.

- But Paul isn't naïve about or dismissive of the current state of the world - this "present time" has sufferings.
- The creation itself is in bondage to "corruption" (vs. 21) - something is broken in our world.

Because of the curse that sin brought upon our world from Adam's rebellion, we live in a world of natural evil (diseases, disasters, death, accidents) and moral evil (violence, abuse, fraud, theft).

- All of creation "waits for eager longing", "was subjected to futility" "...is in bondage to corruption", "...groans together in the pain of childbirth" (vs. 19-22).
- Creation is groaning for "future glory" - the redemption of this broken planet and broken humanity from the curse of sin.

Paul compares this "groaning" to a woman in labor - there is pain, but the pain will come to an end when the child is delivered, and new life is celebrated.

- One day creation will be delivered, the pain will end, and all of creation will celebrate new life.
- The pain of the here and now is real - none of us get out of here unscathed.
- But the glory of that day is greater than any of the pain we'll experience on this broken planet.

WE AS BELIEVERS GROAN (VS. 23-25)

As children of God, we also "groan inwardly" in this brokenness as we await eagerly "...the redemption of our bodies" (vs. 23).

- We have experienced the "first-fruits of the Spirit", a foretaste of the glory to come through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- This makes us want to see Jesus, receive a new body, and live with Him forever in the Kingdom.

It was "in this hope we were saved" (vs. 24), but we can't quite see it yet because we hope for what we "do not see" (vs. 25).

- We wait with patience - we don't get surprised and confused as we see suffering and pain in the world around us because we understand this world is not our home.
- It will still hurt - but it's "birth pains" - one day we will be delivered, the pain will end, and we'll celebrate new life!

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER (ROMANS 8:26-30)

Hope sustains us in our present suffering, and "likewise" the Spirit help us in our weakness (vs. 26a).

- When we're in need of communing with God in prayer, but the words and thoughts just don't come, the Holy Spirit steps in and "intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words".
- The Father searches the human heart where the Spirit dwells and hears the Spirit praying for us!

So often the most renewing, healing, and faith-building times of prayer are the most ineloquent and scattered if they're offered up with a desperate, humble heart.

- The Father and Spirit are in perfect harmony for the purposes of God to be accomplished in us through this instrument of prayer (vs. 27).
- Prayer changes things - and so often it's us and our hearts that need the biggest change.

Verse 28 is one of the most popular Bible verses of all time - but we need to understand its context.

- In Christ, we've been given the spirit of adoption (vs. 15), we will suffer in this present world (vs. 18-23), but we have hope (vs. 24-25) and we have the Spirit's work in our lives in the midst of our suffering (vs. 26-27).
- With that in mind, "we know that for those who love God, ALL THINGS work together for good..."

The "good" this verse is talking about is not giving you ideal circumstances, it's accomplishing God's purpose in you (vs. 28b).

- What is God's purpose in you? To make you look like Jesus!
- At every moment, in every painful chapter of your life, God has purposed to "conform you to the image of His Son" (vs. 29) - and "all things" are working together for that glorious end!

All things work together for "those who are called according to His purpose, and for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined..." (vs. 28-29)

- The word translated "predestined" is the Greek word *proorizo*, which carries the meaning of "determining beforehand," "ordaining," "deciding ahead of time."
- For God to "predestine" means to determine certain things to occur ahead of time.

So, this verse tells us that God foreknew & predetermined that you as a believer would be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, be called, justified, and glorified - you've been chosen.

- This is a difficult concept for many of us to wrap our minds around!
- It's difficult because the doctrine seems to teach that God predetermines that certain individuals will be saved.

There are a number of different interpretations concerning predestination/election, but it's an undeniable doctrine of scripture (Eph. 1:11, 1 Thess. 1:4, Col. 3:12, 2 Pet. 1:10, Mark 13:20).

- God is completely sovereign in all things, but at same time our choices are meaningful and our response to the invitation of the gospel matters.
- God predestines who will be saved, AND we must actively respond to Christ in order to be saved - both realities are equally true.

The Bible says that we must respond to God and that all who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved (Jn. 3:16, Rom. 10:9-10), and the Bible never describes God rejecting anyone who believes in Him or turning away anyone who truly seeking Him (Deut. 4:29).

- Somehow, in the mystery of God, predestination works hand-in-hand with a person being drawn by God (John 6:44) and believing unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Paul isn't bringing up the "p word" to spark a theological debate - he's using it to give us as believers assurance.

- In vs. 30 Paul reminds us that even in our suffering and discouragement when we're barely holding on, we have an assurance that what God started in us, He's going to finish.
- If we have evidence in our lives of being called and justified (saved), we're going to be glorified!

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE (ROMANS 8:31-39)

In this final section of the chapter, Paul asks five critical questions that show us the power and security of the love of God.

- If all we had was the first few chapters of Romans, we might believe God is against us because our sin has put us in the crosshairs of His wrath.
- But now we've seen the great lengths that God went to in order to save us from His wrath and bring us into a new kind of abundant life.

QUESTION #1: IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

Many have and will falsely believe that God is for them and on their side (terrorists, criminals, cults, etc.), so the word "if" is exceptionally important.

- God is only for us if we are reconciled to Him through Jesus, but if He's for us, NOTHING can overcome us or defeat us.
- God wants what is best for His children, and in trials we must always remember this truth.

QUESTION #2: HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO GRACIOUSLY GIVE US ALL THINGS?

If our Father went to such extravagant lengths to give His only son as the ultimate gift, how we can think that He won't provide for our needs?

- Why is that we doubt His goodness, faithfulness, and provision when we know that God was willing to send Jesus to pay for our sin?
- This gives us confidence to ask for God's provision in every need in our lives.

QUESTION #3: WHO WILL BRING ANY CHARGE AGAINST GOD'S ELECT?

If we are declared "not guilty" by the highest Judge, who is able to bring any additional charge against us?

QUESTION #4: WHO IS TO CONDEMN?

Since Jesus was already condemned in our place and presently "interceding for us" to the Father in heaven, we have no reason to live under condemnation.

QUESTION #5: WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

God does not necessarily remove the difficulties of life's trials and hardships from us - in fact, He often uses them to make us more like Jesus.

- But God will NEVER remove His love and His presence from us, even through hardships and trials.
- No matter what we go through, God is with us.

"Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword" (vs. 35) - the most difficult and painful situations that we will experience as believers are not evidences that God has abandoned us.

- In fact, many times we experience God's love and presence in a new and more profound way in the midst of these things as He gives us strength to be "more than" conquerors (vs. 37).

Nothing seen or unseen, tangible or intangible, in this world or out of this world can separate us from His love in Christ (vs. 38-39).

- This isn't a promise with strings attached: it's not, "if as a believer you never fail, then God's love will be with you" - nothing in all of creation (ourselves included) can separate us from God's love!
- Chapter 8 begins with "no condemnation", and it ends with "no separation" IF we are in Christ.

MORE THAN LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE THEOLOGY...

- All of the promises Romans 8 gives us are only true because of who Jesus is AND they're only true for us because we have given ourselves to Him.
- If you are outside of Jesus, NONE of these promises are true for you (they can be, but you must receive Jesus).
- For those of us in Christ, our cries of suffering in this fallen world are like the cries coming out of the Labor & Delivery ward of the hospital - painful, yet temporary and shrouded in joy.
- But for those outside of Christ, the cries of pain in this broken world are the ones coming from someone who knows they're dying.

IF WE ARE IN CHRIST, GOD IS FOR US!

- It's ok to admit that life is painful and hard (vs. 18-25).
- God is using all of my difficulties to make me more like Jesus (vs. 28-29).
- In the meantime, the Spirit perfectly intercedes for me (vs. 26)
- What God started, He's going to finish (vs. 29-30).
- There's no room for condemnation or guilt, and nothing I will go through will separate from God's love (vs. 31-39).
- My story ends with the redemption of my body (vs. 22-23).