

DO  
NOT  
CONFIRM

BE TRANS-

FORMED

THE BOOK OF ROMANS  
PART TWO: CHAPTER 8

OCTOBER 2024

# **ROMANS**

Part II: Chapter 8

*Do Not Conform. Be Transformed.*

Commentary by Andrew Forrest

**ASBURY**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1**

**ROMANS 8:1-39**

THE GREATEST CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE?

### **Life in the Spirit**

**8** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

### **Heirs with Christ**

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

### **Future Glory**

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free

from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### **God's Everlasting Love**

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>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? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

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Is Romans chapter 8 the greatest chapter in the Bible?

To quote Kip Dynamite: *“Like anyone could even know that.”*

However, it is justifiably loved and treasured as one of the greatest sustained arguments and passages of writing in the Bible. The insights that Paul provides into God’s plan for humanity deserve to be studied and considered over and over again.

And that’s exactly what we are going to do for the next month.

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We are going to take our time and look carefully at each verse in Paul’s great chapter, some days reading only one verse, and at other times re-reading larger passages to see how it all fits together.

Our theme for this Romans study is taken from Paul’s words in chapter 12: **Do not conform. Be transformed.**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect [Romans 12:2].*

This next month is an opportunity for us to really focus on the words of Scripture, and in the process, to have our very mindset—the patterns of our thoughts—transformed.

This won’t be easy, but it will be worth it. This eighth chapter of Romans is Paul’s masterpiece.

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In the previous seven chapters, Paul has explained that both Gentiles—who didn’t have the Law—and Jews—who did—were enslaved by sin and death.

In Romans 8, Paul will first explain how Jesus has set people free from sin and death. Then he will describe the vocation—the calling—of the Jesus-people: What is the particular mission of a Christian? Finally, Paul will assure us that despite life’s difficulties, those who are in Christ are ultimately completely safe.

Overall, as we read Romans 8, we will learn what the new life looks like in the midst of the old world.

Is there a particular verse from chapter 8 that jumps out at you?

P.S. Personally, I've come to love every word of Paul's great eighth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, but if I had to pick one verse that shocks me with its implications, it would be v. 17. What Paul is saying here is HUGE: The way to glory and victory lies through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. I can't wait to share some thoughts with you when we get there.

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2

### ROMANS 8:1-11

#### OVERVIEW OF THE TWO WAYS TO LIVE

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

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Verses 1–11 are an overview of Paul's basic argument, namely that there are two ways to live:

1. You can live according to the flesh—according to the ways of the world. This way leads to death.
2. Or, you can live according to the Spirit. This way is life and leads to life. Life in the Spirit is made possible by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus, i.e., it is by *faith in Christ*.

This is the only true difference between people: those who are in the world and headed toward death, and those who are in the Spirit and headed toward life.

And the way you move from death to life is simply through trust in Jesus.

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

#### ROMANS 8:1

WARNING: LONG POST ABOUT A SHORT VERSE!

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

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WARNING: Today we will cover just one verse, but it's a verse that is crammed with meaning and we are going to take our time to work through it.

In the Romans reading plan we are following, we designated chapters 1-7 as Part 1.

Let's quickly recap what Paul was arguing in Part 1:

- The Gentiles were idolators, and they were enslaved to sin and death (even though their consciences should have been guiding them away from sin);
- But the Jews were also enslaved to sin and death, even though they had the Law;
- The reason Jews were enslaved is that their hearts were just as sinful as the hearts of the Gentiles, and the Law could do nothing to change hearts;
- So, both Gentiles and Jews are in the same position: enslaved to sin and death, and unable to free themselves.

Paul closes chapter 7 with this question, speaking as if he is Old Testament Israel personified:

<sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*  
[Romans 7:24].

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For seven chapters, Paul has been ratcheting up the tension—what hope is there for humanity if even Israel—God's covenant people—is enslaved

to sin? The tension builds until Paul's hopeless and helpless question bursts out at the end of chapter 7:

*<sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

To me, it's as if Paul is here giving voice to one of those shuffling addicts that we see all too often in our cities these days, enslaved in his body and tormented in his mind, unable to free himself from the prison of his own desires. He is shuffling along, mumbling to himself until he suddenly screams out:

*"PLEASE. Can anyone save me from my fate? Can anyone save me from death?"*

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With that question in mind, chapter 8 begins with a response:

**8** *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* [Romans 8:1].

In Greek the word translated here as "therefore" is a connecting word, meant to connect this first sentence of chapter 8 with the sentences that came before it at the end of chapter 7. In Greek, word order in a sentence is not as important as in English, so when we move Paul's words around a bit, the meaning on this sentence becomes clearer.

To put it another way, this is the Andrew Forrest version:

**8** *But NOW for the people of Jesus Christ there is NO condemnation* [Romans 8:1, AFV].

By connecting the end of chapter 7 with the opening of chapter 8 we can see what Paul is saying:

Humanity was enslaved to sin, and—because the consequence of sin is death—humanity was condemned to death. But now, for the Jesus-people, there is no condemnation, because Jesus has taken the consequence of sin onto Himself, once and for all.

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What does it mean to be "in Christ Jesus"?

"Messiah" (Hebrew) and "Christ" (Greek) both mean "anointed one." In the Old Testament, the anointed one represents His people, and what's true of Him becomes true of the people.



God made a covenant—a promise—with Abraham. Later, at Mt. Sinai, God made another covenant with Abraham’s descendants, the Israelites. Moses was the man God chose to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. In his final speech to Israel before his death and their entry into the Promised Land, Moses reminds them of the terms of the covenant:

*<sup>15</sup>See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them [Deuteronomy 30:15-20].*

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The Law—the Torah—summed up the responsibilities of the covenant. If the people kept the Law, then blessing and life would inevitably follow. Israel would be blessed, and then through Israel, God would bless and give life to the world.

But, if Israel ignored the Law, then curse and death would follow. This is because the Law is really God’s teaching—God’s *Torah*, which means “instruction”—and the Law was meant to show the Israelites how to live well. If they ignored those instructions, then life would not go well for them.

What’s worse, if they ignored the Law, then not only would Israel receive the consequences of disobedience—curses and death—but through Israel, curses and death would come for *the nations*.

Israel was supposed to be God’s covenant partner to rescue the world, but Israel’s disobedience meant that rather than being the vehicle for the world’s rescue, Israel just compounded the world’s misery and sin!

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Jesus was an Israelite—a descendant of Abraham, a member of the covenant people. He was the Anointed One of the people—the Messiah or Christ—which meant that He represented the people, and what was true of Him was true of His people.

Unlike the people, Jesus was perfectly obedient and perfectly followed the Law. His obedience was so complete that He even went to die for the people.

*<sup>s</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross [Philippians 2:8].*

Remember the promise of the covenant—*obedience would mean life and blessing for Israel, and through Israel, life and blessing for the world.*

Jesus followed the Law even to death on the cross, and His perfect obedience released life and blessing to the world. It's like a bomb of blessing was detonated on the cross, and the fallout spread to the nations.

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Jesus, as the Messiah, represents His people. What's true of Him is true of them. So, how do you become part of the Messiah's people?

*This is a central question in Romans!*

To the Jews, it was obvious—you become part of the Messiah's people, Israel, by becoming Jewish and observing all the Jewish ethnic markers, including male circumcision.

But because the Holy Spirit was given to Gentile believers in Jesus, Paul and the other apostles realized that you no longer had to be Jewish to be part of the Messiah's people, Israel. In fact, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, blessing and life have now been released to the entire world *and all it takes to be united with Jesus and be adopted into His people is to have faith in Him, to trust in Him.*

Those who are “in Christ” are those who, through their trust in Him, now belong to His people. We are getting ahead of ourselves, but in the rest of chapter 8 Paul will explain that the mark of those people in Christ is that they live by the Holy Spirit, not the law of sin and death, and therefore there is no condemnation for them, since Christ Himself has defeated death.

In Romans 7 Paul imagines himself as Israel, under the Law.

- He has already explained in chapter 1 that the nations (the Gentiles) were totally lost and walking in darkness, enslaved to sin.
- And then, he has gone on to explain that Israel (the Jews) were also enslaved to sin *despite the fact that they had God's Law, which was meant to be a light and a guide to them.*
- Why?

**This is a key insight to understanding Romans: the reason the Law didn't save Israel was because it couldn't; Israel—and all of humanity, in fact—was enslaved to sin, so the Law was unable to make a difference in a people with sinful hearts.**

So, what do you do?

Well, as Paul will explain in the rest of chapter 8, God sent Jesus to die in the place of sinful humanity and thereby defeat the power that sin and death hold over people. Now, all people who are “in Christ” are freed from the power of sin and death.

Which brings us back to Romans 8:1:

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

or

*But NOW for the people of Jesus Christ there is NO condemnation.*

Paul will go on to explain why this is the case.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4**

**ROMANS 8:2**

YOU ARE EITHER UNDER BLESSING OR CURSE

<sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

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Today's is another long section of commentary, because there is a lot of background we need to understand if we are going to get the most out of our reading. Don't give up!

To recap:

Paul has been explaining that even though Israel had the Law—Torah—that Law couldn't save them because their hearts were still enslaved to sin and death. Here, Paul explains how the death and resurrection of Jesus has solved that problem.

*<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

The Law has two sides to it, the blessing side and the curse side, and every person is living on either one side or the other.

This is how Moses puts it in his farewell sermon to the Israelites, before they enter the Promised Land:

*<sup>26</sup> See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: <sup>27</sup> the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today,<sup>28</sup> and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known [Deuteronomy 11:26-28].*

1. If you obey the Law, then blessing is the result;
2. If you disobey the Law, then curse is the result.

It's either one or the other.

What Paul calls here “the law of sin and death” is what happens to people who turn aside from God and choose not to honor Him. (See Romans 1:18-32.) The problem is that ultimately everyone has turned aside from God, which means that as a consequence everyone is facing death. This is the problem that Paul is working through in chapters 1–7, namely that both Gentiles and Jews are under the law of sin and death.

But there is another side to the law, and this is the side that applies to people who are obedient to God, who choose to honor Him as God. Just as Moses promised the Israelites, those who choose to obey God will receive blessing and life:

*<sup>15</sup> See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving*

*the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.* <sup>17</sup> *But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them,* <sup>18</sup> *I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.* <sup>19</sup> *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,* <sup>20</sup> *loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them*  
[Deuteronomy 30:15-20].

Jesus was obedient even to the cross, and His obedience unleashed blessing and life on his people, namely all who trust in Him. (This is what we looked at yesterday.)

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In the very first chapter of the Bible, we learn that God created mankind for the purpose of representing Him and ruling over the rest of creation:

<sup>26</sup> *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

<sup>27</sup> *So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.*

<sup>28</sup> *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth”* [Genesis 1:26-28].

It would seem that humanity’s rebellion—which begins in Genesis 3, in the Garden of Eden—would put an end to that plan. NO. God never gives up on His plan to have His human creations work alongside Him. But how can God make that happen?

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God sets His plan into motion starting in Genesis 12 with the call of Abraham. Abraham’s family will be key to God’s plan. When the time is right, God sends His Son Jesus to be the perfect Israelite, to die for the people, and to release blessing and life to all who trust in Him.

God then sends the Holy Spirit to everyone who trusts in Jesus, and this Spirit is the Spirit of life. **Now, everyone who trusts in Jesus lives in the reality of the Spirit, and the Spirit makes it possible for them to actually live the way God wanted them to live all along.** This is what Paul means when he says

*<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

People in Christ are still under the Law, but it is no longer the law of sin and death—now it is the law of the Spirit of life.

In the rest of chapter 8, Paul will explain what is now possible for people who are living in the reality of the Holy Spirit.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 7

### ROMANS 8:3-4

#### PAUL EXPLAINS THE MATH OF SALVATION

<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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For the last two days, we've looked at only two verses in total. Today, we'll look at two more, but there will be a payoff when we see that what Paul has explained in verses 1 and 2 will be put together in verses 3 and 4.

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As we have discussed previously, the Law was God's gift to Israel on Mt. Sinai. It was meant to be a light and a guide, and if followed, it would release blessing and life to the world. The Law was a good thing. The problem was that the Law was working with rebellious humanity, and the good Law could not fulfill its purpose when it was used by bad people. This what Paul means by:

*<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do [Romans 8:3a].*

The Law wasn't the problem; the people were the problem. But God was planning all along to use the Law as a trap against sin. The Law was the trap and Jesus was the bait, and at the crucifixion, God sprung the trap. Jesus gathered the sin of the world onto Himself, and when He died, He took death down with Him:

<sup>3</sup>*By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh [Romans 8:3b].*

What the Law did was gather sin into one place; what Jesus did was gather the Law's penalties onto one person. The Law set out clearly the consequence of disobedience—death—and because the Law was given to Israel, the consequences for disobedience fell upon Israel. Jesus, being Israel's Messiah—the Anointed One—was the representative of His people. Jesus was Himself perfectly obedient, but through His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, He showed that He completely identified with His people. Jesus, being the perfectly obedient Israelite, died on the cross on behalf of His disobedient people, thereby taking the consequence of disobedience—death—on Himself, and when He died He carried death down with Him. But because Jesus was perfectly obedient and died for the world in an act of steadfast love, He was raised to new life by the power of the Holy Spirit; though He came back up, sin and death stayed down. So, when Jesus was raised to new life in the Spirit, He permanently defeated the power of sin and death and satisfied, once and for all, the terms of the Law:

<sup>4</sup>*In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit [Romans 8:4].*

Because of what Jesus did, the Spirit now enables the Jesus-people to actually fulfill the Law. All of us who are in Christ now live by the Law of the Spirit who gives life.

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This is the Gospel in a nutshell:

- God *Himself* fulfilled the law's demands by sending His own Son.
- God pulled sin into one place and nailed it to the cross, thereby defeating it.
- As a result, we who now live by the Spirit are actually enabled to live faithful lives.

In the rest of the chapter, Paul will explain the implications for Christians that we now live according to the Spirit.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8

### ROMANS 8:1-4

#### NOTHING CAN STOP US NOW

**8** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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Today we pause and look back over the previous four verses so as to see the forest and the trees, so to speak.

The problem with humanity was that it was enslaved to sin. The Law God gave Israel was good, but because the Israelites were enslaved to sin just like Gentiles, both Israel and the nations were in the same position—needing to be rescued.

- The Law gathered sin into one place;
  - Jesus gathered sin onto one person;
  - On the cross, God condemned sin once and for all;
  - And now those who trust Jesus live by the Spirit, who enables them to actually fulfill the Law and live righteous lives.
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**O Christian: there is nothing that is stopping you from living a faithful life today.**

**Let's go.**

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9

### ROMANS 8:5-8

#### TWO DIFFERENT WAYS TO LIVE

<sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it



cannot.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

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We are going to break down this larger passage in the days ahead, but today we are going to look at what Paul says about the two different ways to live in a larger chunk.

Paul is explaining here that the fundamental orientation of humanity while enslaved to sin is toward “the flesh,” and that a mindset set on the things of the flesh will always take you away from God and make it impossible to live an obedient life.

In contrast, those who are set free by Jesus now live in the Spirit, and their mindset is changed. And even though their bodies are still mortal and headed toward death, through the power of the Spirit, Jesus will give new life to mortal bodies and raise the dead.

Where are you directing your thoughts today?

## **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10**

### **ROMANS 8:5–8**

#### **THE ZOMBIE MINDSET**

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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Paul has just told us something really important:

**Those who are in Christ now live according to the Law of the Spirit, and that Spirit makes it possible for us to live obedient, faithful lives, pleasing to God.**

Romans is a long, unrolling argument. The further you get into it, the more you look back and understand what Paul has been previously saying.

- In chapter one, Paul told us that the nations—the pagans, the Gentiles—were totally lost, living with darkened hearts and futile thoughts;
- In chapter two, Paul told us that Israel wasn't any better—even though the Israelites knew the Law they were unable to keep it;

Now, Paul explains why both Jews and Gentiles were completely unable to live obediently—*because their minds were totally given over to a worldly point of view.*

*“Verses 5–9 teach that the flesh is necessarily in opposition to God, turning every person into a rebel against God and His law and reaping death in consequence.”* —Douglas Moo

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Our theme for this Romans series is:

**Do not conform. Be transformed.**

We've taken this theme from what Paul says in Romans 12:2:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The reason Paul is insisting that the Jesus-people do not think according to the world's pattern is because that way of thinking leads to death!

What would it look like for you to think with a renewed mind today?

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11**  
**ROMANS 8:9-11**  
THE LIFE MINDSET

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

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Without Christ, people's minds are enslaved to sin; now, those who are in Christ live according to the Spirit and focus on life and peace. When a person's mind is enslaved to sin, it is impossible for him to live righteously.

The Good News is that those who trust in Jesus are now living in the Spirit, and their mindset is totally different. The Spirit raised Jesus from death to life, and He does the same thing for Christians now, and though our mortal bodies are heading towards death, the Holy Spirit turns death into life.

*"This explains why it is only by being in the Spirit' (v. 9) and 'walking according to the Spirit' (v. 4b) that life and peace can be had and the life that the Spirit gives is by no means ended by the grave, for the presence of the Spirit guarantees that the bodies of believers will be raised from physical death (vv. 10-11)." —Douglas Moo*

Walk in the Spirit today.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 14**  
**ROMANS 8:12-17**  
GOD'S SECRET PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!”<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

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Paul tells the Romans that the result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is that those who are in Jesus—i.e., those who trust and believe in Him—also share in His Sonship. Jesus is the Son, and through His death and resurrection, all who trust Him have been adopted into the family. We owe nothing to the flesh and everything to the Spirit who gives us life. The love the Father has for the Son is now poured out on us through the Holy Spirit. (This is another way of thinking about salvation, with trinitarian language—the Son came to bring us back into the love of the Father, and the Father’s desire is to share the love He has for the Son, and the Spirit is the love They share.) How do we know that we are sons and daughters? Because the Spirit tells us so, “bearing witness with our spirit.” In other words, the Spirit helps us know in a way deeper than words that we are beloved children of God. This inner witness of the Spirit is an important part of life in Christ. If you have never felt that you are in Christ, then an important prayer to pray is, “Lord, would you please give me a sense of your presence, would you let me know that I am a child of God?”

And then we get to the heart of the chapter:

*<sup>17</sup> And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him [Romans 8:17].*

We will inherit what Christ inherits, *provided that we walk the way of the cross.*

Since the first chapter of Genesis, it has been clear that humanity was created to rule in God’s image over all of creation:

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” [Genesis 1:26].*

Humanity was made to reign, but the rebellion in the Garden of Eden made that impossible, because sinful humanity was in no position to

rule over creation on God's behalf. In fact, rather than being a part of God's life-giving plan, rebellious humanity brought death and destruction to creation. But God never gave up the original plan, and the Bible kept talking about it. Here is Psalm 8, for example, marveling at how the Lord created humanity to reign:

<sup>3</sup> *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,*  
<sup>4</sup> *what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*  
<sup>5</sup> *Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.*  
<sup>6</sup> *You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet,*  
<sup>7</sup> *all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,*  
<sup>8</sup> *the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas [Psalm 8:3-8].*

On the cross, Jesus drew all the sin of the world into His own flesh, and then He died, carrying sin down with Him. But He was raised again in the power of the Spirit while death and sin stayed dead, and thereby the resurrection defeated death and sin forever. Then Jesus ascended into the heavenly places and sits at the right hand of the Father.

**The way of Jesus is a way of suffering that leads to glorification.** This is how Paul explains this strange path in his letter to the Philippians:

<sup>5</sup> *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father [Philippians 2:5-11].* Because Jesus was obedient, even to the point of death, the Father has raised Him to rule.

In Romans 8:17, this is the path that Paul lays out for all who believe. Paul says that all who are in Christ Jesus will reign in the New

Creation—just as God originally intended—*provided that they walk the way of the cross.*

The inheritance of Christ is to rule over all, and those are in Christ share in that inheritance. But first, they have to share in His sufferings.

Glory comes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

## **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15**

### **ROMANS 8:1-17**

#### **WHY IS SUFFERING PART OF GOD'S PLAN?**

**8** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

#### **Heirs with Christ**

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Here, when we look at Romans 8:1–17 as a whole, we can see that Paul is emphasizing the nature and importance of life in the Spirit for those who are in Christ.

Yes, Christ’s death set us free from sin and death, but that is merely the first step in God’s plan for humanity, and there is more for those who are in Christ. It’s important to Paul that we understand that God has given the Holy Spirit to those who are in Christ and that He now enables them to live a new kind of life, empowered by the Spirit. To Paul, this is what it means to be a Christian—to live in this new way.

One of the aspects of the Christian vocation is to be at the place where the world’s pain and our prayers meet. In other words, those who are in Christ are meant to be like Christ and intercede for the suffering world.

This is a deep insight into the calling of a Christian that we need to sit with today. In our next day’s reading, Paul will explain that today’s suffering will not compare with tomorrow’s glory.

But, before we get there, we should sit with the idea of suffering in the Christian life.

*Why is suffering part of God’s plan to prepare us for our place in God’s glorious future?*

## **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16**

### **ROMANS 8:18**

#### LIFE PHILOSOPHY

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

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Paul was no stranger to suffering and difficulty, and neither are we.

How do we keep going when things get hard?

We remember that these struggles are temporary.

In The End, everything will be okay;  
If it’s not okay, then it’s not The End;  
(And if it’s not The End, God still has work for us to do.)

Keep going.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17**  
**ROMANS 8:18–25**

HOW “BEAUTY AND THE BEAST” EXPLAINS THE BIBLE

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

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This is a dense passage and it’s worth working our way through it verse by verse:

We read in vv. 16-17 that those who are in Christ will share in the inheritance He has received from the Father *provided that we suffer with him and walk in the way of the cross.*

*<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him [Romans 8:16–17].*

Suffering is not what anyone would prefer, but Paul then reminds us that it will be worth it:

*<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us [Romans 8:18].* A key idea here is “the glory that is to be revealed to us.” That is, we are waiting to see how God will one day show us our place in the New Creation.

Right now, the (old) creation itself is eagerly waiting for the new humanity that God is remaking in Christ’s image to take their place:



<sup>19</sup> *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God* [Romans 8:19].

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Remember how the curse works in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*? The old witch curses the master of the castle, and he becomes a beast. But the curse does more than just affect him—it also affects everything else that belongs to him or is related to him. So, the servants become talking clocks or teapots or candlesticks, the castle grounds become dingy and decayed, and a pall is cast over the entire property.

With this analogy in mind, let's recap what the Bible says in general about creation and what Paul says specifically in Romans chapter 8 about humanity's role:

- God created humanity with the express purpose of representing Him and ruling over the non-human creation (Genesis 1:26–28);
- Humans rebelled against God, and the terrible consequence of the human rebellion was that a curse fell upon creation. The reason there are hurricanes and diseases and death and decay in creation—the reason creation is the way it is—is because human rebellion caused it.
- But God never gave up on His plan to have humanity rule over creation and now the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit have made it possible for everyone who trusts in Jesus to take their God-designed place in the ruling of creation.

This is what Paul means in vv. 20–21:

<sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope* <sup>21</sup> *that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God* [Romans 8:20–21].

The creation is waiting to be renewed, but for that to happen, the people must be renewed first, because the creation can't work without renewed humanity to rule over it in God's image. Redeemed humanity has a "glory" that comes from being created in that image, and when the redeemed humanity arrives, creation will be set free from the consequences that rebellious humanity caused.

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## Salvation Isn't About Going to Heaven When You Die

In Romans, Paul is explaining that God's ultimate plan is to fix everything that's wrong with the world. Yes, the sacrificial death of Jesus means people can be forgiven of their sins and escape the consequence of their sins, but forgiveness is the means to the end God has in mind, not the end in itself. In fact, the end God is working towards is to restore humanity to its original, God-given position: to rule over creation in God's name.

What's the problem with creation? The Bible says that people are the reason why death and decay reign—human rebellion caused creation to be like this. So, for God to fix creation He has first to fix people.

*The entire purpose of the salvation project is a redeemed and perfected New Creation.*

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*<sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies [Romans 8:22–23].*

The world is in a mess, and it knows it. When is God going to fix everything?

Paul uses the image of a mother in labor, painfully laboring for the new baby to be born.

Then Paul says that we are also in this state of painful waiting, even though the Holy Spirit has been given to us as a down payment, a guarantee—“the firstfruits”—has been given to us to assure us that things are going to be okay. The firstfruits are the early part of the crop the farmer sees before the rest is ripe and ready.

What are we waiting for? We are waiting for the time when we are fully in the New Creation and death and decay have no more place in our lives.

At every funeral, this is why we cry—we are eagerly waiting for death to be finally removed.

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*<sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience [Romans 8:24–25].*

Paul says that all along, this is what we've been hoping for—that everything sad will become untrue. And yes, things are still a mess, but that's where hope comes in—we are hoping for what we cannot yet completely see. And in hope, we are patiently waiting.

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These are dense, deep verses that are worth reading through over several times.

The overarching point: in the end, everything will be okay.

How can you be patiently hopeful today?

## **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18**

### **ROMANS 8:23–25**

#### **PATIENCE**

<sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.<sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

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Paul explains that the Jesus-people are waiting for God to fix everything. Jesus is the Son, beloved of the Father, and He has been raised from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God. From there He shall judge the living and the dead.

The Son came to bring us back into the love of the Father, and the Father's desire is to share with us love He has for the Son, and the Spirit is the love They share.

This is why Paul talks about our "adoption as sons." He does not mean "male children" and not female children—rather, he is speaking of our inclusion into the life of the Son. We are waiting for God to do the same thing for us that He has already done for Jesus—to be raised to new life, in incorruptible bodies.

Obviously, this hasn't happened yet. And so, we wait in hope. But Paul makes the point that our waiting needs to be a "patient" waiting. That is, we need to trust that though we don't understand the timeline, that nevertheless God is good and can be trusted.

Where in your life in God do you need to exercise more patience today?

## **MONDAY, OCTOBER 21**

### **ROMANS 8:26–27**

#### **LIKE SPIRITUAL FIREMAN, RUNNING TOWARD A 5-ALARM EMERGENCY**

<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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.

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Paul has been talking about the painful realities of life in a fallen world. But in a previous reading (verse 23) he reminded us that the fact that God has given us the Holy Spirit is proof that things are going to be okay :

*<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience [Romans 8:22–25].*

The Holy Spirit is "the firstfruits," the down payment or guarantee that we have reason to hope. The firstfruits were the part of the farmer's crop that ripened first, and the appearance of the firstfruits were indication that the rest would later follow. God has given us His Holy Spirit now, in the midst of the broken world, and so the joy and hope that the Holy Spirit gives us now—even while things can still be really difficult—is a sign of better things yet to come.

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But, despite the presence of the Holy Spirit's and the encouragement He gives, there are still many times when it seems impossible to feel hopeful.

What do you say, what do you do in the midst of great suffering, loss, and pain?

Since Columbine, there have been more and more mass shootings at American schools. What could you possibly say at the funeral for a mass shooting victim? What could you possibly say that wouldn't seem totally empty and useless to the grieving family?

This is exactly the kind of scenario that Paul is describing in v. 26:

*<sup>26</sup> 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].*

Paul says that the Jesus-people should be right there in the midst of tragedy and pain, interceding in prayer, and that when we do not know what to say—when there are no words—that the Holy Spirit Himself prays for us in a way that is deeper than words.

**It's as if God wants and expects His people to be right in the midst of the world's pains but that He also knows that the pain is too much for us, so His Spirit comes alongside and helps us be what the world needs.**

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*<sup>27</sup> 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].*

You don't know what to say? The Spirit knows your heart and can formulate your unspoken and unformed prayers.

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I think, therefore, that the message of Romans 8:26–27 for us is that, as the Jesus-people, living in the Spirit, our role is to be right at the world's painful places—to run to the world's suffering, like spiritual firemen responding to a 5-alarm emergency—but that we don't need to worry about what to say when we have no words—the Spirit knows our hearts and can take our unformed prayers to the Father.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22

### ROMANS 8:28

YOU SHOULD MEMORIZE THIS VERSE

<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

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This is one of the most well-known and beloved verses in the entire Bible, and for good reason.

It can be translated in three different ways:

- “for those who love God all things work together for good” [ESV]
- “God makes all things work together for good” [NRSV]
- “in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good” [NIV textual note]

I think Paul deliberately wants us to think of all three meanings at once. God is working with everything and working with and through and around His people to bring about the good.

We have to be careful not to twist Romans 8:28 to a sort of magic formula, however. What Paul is NOT saying is that those who love God will not have any problems. Rather, what Paul is saying is that *even problems can be used by God to bring about the ultimate good*. The definitive example of this is the crucifixion of Jesus, which was a bad thing but which God, through the Holy Spirit, turned into the good thing of the resurrection.

Keep going—even the bad things will be used for good.

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23

### ROMANS 8:28–30

LET’S TALK “PREDESTINATION”

<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

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Romans 8:28 is one of the greatest verses in the entire scripture: God is taking EVERYTHING and turning it to the good of His beloved children, even their sufferings.

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

In verses 29-30, Paul goes on to tell us that God has been actually working out this plan *from before The Beginning*.

*<sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

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“Predestination” is the theological idea in some parts of the Christian tradition that God has already chosen who will believe—and therefore be saved—and who will not believe—and therefore be condemned. But that is not what Romans 8:29-30 is about! In v. 29, God has “predetermined” that those who love God (see v. 28) will be shaped to be more like Jesus. In other words what is predestined is not *who* will believe but *what God’s plan is* for those who believe.

Romans 8:28 tells us that God is working everything together for good. Verses 29-30 tell us that God will not abandon the Jesus-people until they take their place in glory. He doesn’t just forgive and leave it at that, but rather God works all the way through until the plan is complete. Paul puts it like this in his letter to the Philippians:

*<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ [Philippians 1:6].*

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Paul tells us that God “foreknows” who will believe, but that is not the same thing as “forcing” belief. In the same way, God foreknows that human beings will sin, but that foreknowledge does not force sin. What vv. 28-30 tell us is that God is working everything together for good, and that part of His divine plan is to keep working in the lives of those who are in Christ until God’s ultimate purpose is realized—a restored and glorified humanity taking its place in the restored new creation. And God

has always planned to involve humanity in this way—it was “predestined.”

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*God’s intention, Paul emphasizes, is to bring to glory every person who has been justified [made right, declared innocent—AF] by faith in Jesus Christ. Our assurance of ultimate victory rests on this promise of God to us. But Paul, ever the realist, knows that that ultimate victory may lie many years ahead—years that might be filled with pain, anxiety, distress, and injustice. Thus he also encourages us by reminding us that God sends his Spirit into the heart of everyone he justifies. The Spirit brings power and comfort to the believer in the midst of suffering and he brings assurance in the midst of doubt. Christians who are unduly anxious about their relationship to the Lord are failing to let the Spirit exercise that ministry. It is by committing ourselves anew to the life of devotion—prayer, Scripture reading, Christian fellowship—that we enable the Spirit to have this ministry of assurance in our hearts. —Douglas Moo*

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These verses are meant to be a comfort to people who are struggling and suffering.

“I’m having a hard time.”

“Well, God is working all things together for good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.”

“Can you say more?”

“Well, from before time He knew you and had a plan for you, a plan to save you and put you in right relationship with Him and to ultimately restore you to rule in His name.”

In this way, we can see that verse 28 runs right into vv. 29-30, which are meant to comfort the afflicted believer in exactly the same way as v. 28 and, as we shall see, vv. 31-39.

**“Yes, stuff is hard but it’s actually still part of God’s plan.”**



## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24

### ROMANS 8:31–32

#### SKIN IN THE GAME

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>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?

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It's really this simple:

God can be trusted because He has skin in the game, so to speak:

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...* [Romans 8:32]

Therefore, we believe God is good even when things are difficult.

*If God is for us, who can be against us?*

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25

### ROMANS 8:33–34

#### IT LITERALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHAT ANYONE ELSE SAYS

<sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

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Paul was no stranger to persecution. He knew that the Christian life required fortitude and perseverance under pressure.

So, part of what he is doing in this letter is giving the Roman church what it needs to stand firm under pressure.

He imagines Christians being accused by hostile Roman society the way Jesus was accused in front of Pontius Pilate. But because God is the ultimate and only judge who matters and because Jesus has died and has taken His place at the right hand of the Father—"from where He shall come to judge the living and the dead"—he reminds that Romans that *it doesn't matter what anyone else says*. People can lie about you and accuse you and insult you, but nothing they say will affect your status as part of "God's elect," that is God's people. And since God is working all things

for good and because that includes your future position in glory and because the Holy Spirit is with us now and gives us comfort in the midst of difficulties—because of all those things, the only word that matters is God’s word.

Keep going, and do not be afraid.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

### ROMANS 8:35

#### PENULTIMATE ASSURANCE

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

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When I was in high school, I distinctly remember trying to seem smart by working the word “penultimate” into an essay. I thought “penultimate” meant something like “*extremely* ultimate” or “*super* ultimate” or something like that. (It shows how little thought I really gave to it, since “ultimate” implies last or final, so how could something be extremely final?!)

It was several years later that I learned what that “penultimate” actually means “the next-to-last” or “second to last” or “the one before the last one.”

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It is important that we remember that Paul has been talking to the Roman Christians about how even suffering and difficulty can be part of God’s plan. He has assured them that all things are working together for good, even the hard things (see Romans 8:28). He has reminded them that the presence of the Holy Spirit is a comfort even in the midst of suffering, and that the inner witness of the Spirit tells them that they are beloved children of God (see Romans 8:16).

Here, Paul is not merely reminding the Romans that *ultimately* things will be okay—though of course that’s true and he believes that—rather he is also giving them what N.T. Wright helpfully refers to as “penultimate assurance.” That is, he is assuring things that even *in the midst of hard things in this life, God is still with them*. This is the great testimony of the martyrs—that even at the darkest hour, the love of God was still with them.

Many people reading this will have had similar experiences: at a really dark point—say a cancer ward—they still knew that God was with them. As he builds toward his majestic climactic point, Paul wants the Romans to know that none of the bad things that occur are enough to move them out of experiencing the love of God.

- Famine was all-too-common in the ancient world;
- Nakedness was the situation one found oneself in before crucifixion for example, or after shipwreck;
- Danger from both man and beast was often encountered by travelers;
- The sword was used by the executioner (Paul uses the word for “short sword,” the kind executioners used).

What these and the other examples do is show us that there is no situation in life whereby we are totally bereft and separated from God. Looking back on your life in Christ, what could you add to that list?

Not grief

Not cancer

Not divorce

Not addiction

None of these things can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29**

**ROMANS 8:36**

**SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER**

<sup>36</sup>As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

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When Paul quotes from the Old Testament, he uses one verse or phrase as a hyperlink into a larger idea. Here he takes just one verse from Psalm 44, but the idea he wants to convey is powerful.

Psalm 44 is a complaint against God. This is how the psalmist begins:

**44** *O God, we have heard with our ears,  
our fathers have told us,  
what deeds you performed in their days,  
in the days of old:  
<sup>2</sup>you with your own hand drove out the nations,  
but them you planted;  
you afflicted the peoples,  
but them you set free;  
<sup>3</sup>for not by their own sword did they win the land,  
nor did their own arm save them,  
but your right hand and your arm,  
and the light of your face,  
for you delighted in them.*

But the psalmist has a complaint against God, namely that in his day God seems to have forgotten the people:

<sup>9</sup>*But you have rejected us and disgraced us  
and have not gone out with our armies.  
<sup>10</sup>You have made us turn back from the foe,  
and those who hate us have gotten spoil.  
<sup>11</sup>You have made us like sheep for slaughter  
and have scattered us among the nations.*

If the people had been sinful or idolatrous, then the psalmist could understand that they were simply bearing the consequences for their actions. But the psalmist knows that the people are innocent of wrongdoing, and yet still they are being persecuted and oppressed:

<sup>17</sup>*All this has come upon us,  
though we have not forgotten you,  
and we have not been false to your covenant.  
<sup>18</sup>Our heart has not turned back,  
nor have our steps departed from your way;  
<sup>19</sup>yet you have broken us in the place of jackals  
and covered us with the shadow of death.  
<sup>20</sup>If we had forgotten the name of our God  
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,  
<sup>21</sup>would not God discover this?  
For he knows the secrets of the heart.  
<sup>22</sup>Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered [Psalm 44:1–22].*

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Why would Paul quote Psalm 44:22 here, at the end of his great eighth chapter?

He is reminding the Romans that suffering is not a sign that they have done anything wrong or are somehow abandoned by God.

Suffering can be part of God's redemptive plan, and the Jesus-people will face suffering.

*But just like Jesus, God will use the suffering of His people for their good.*

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30**

**ROMANS 8:37**

THE HYPER-NIKE-MEN

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

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“We are more than conquerors” is five words in English, but just one verb in Greek.

Until my recent study of Romans, I had always assumed that “more than conquerors” was just hyperbole that Paul is using for effect, like saying “we didn’t just win, we *dominated*.” But, in fact Paul is here making a profound point about the Christian life.

The Greek verb can be transliterated *hypernikōmen*. It is a compound verb that means “to be completely victorious.” In Greek the goddess Nike is the goddess of victory, and there is a verb based on that name—“to nike” something is to triumph over it. By using the prefix “hyper” Paul is talking about “hyper-nike-ing” something or “super nike-ing” something. It’s a verb for complete and total triumph.

What does he mean by that?

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In the deep mystery of the gospel, how is it that Jesus defeats death?

*By dying.*

In other words, Jesus uses the power of His enemy against itself. The very thing that is working *against* Him becomes the very thing that is working *for Him*.

This is why the devil is no match for God—God is so powerful that He can even turn weakness to strength.

It's the ultimate jiu-jitsu move.

In this way, Jesus is a “more-than-conqueror”—He doesn't just defeat His enemy, He uses His enemy's strength against Him. It is a complete, utter triumph.

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So, why would Paul use the phrase *hypernikōmen* here, when describing Christians who are facing difficulty and suffering?

Because it is *through* suffering and difficulty that we triumph. The things that are arrayed against us become part of a testimony of God's grace toward us.

In Revelation, John sees the beast kill the martyrs, but though it seems like the beast is victorious, it's actually the martyrs who have overcome the beast. Why?

*Because the very fact that the beast kills the martyrs proves that it doesn't have power over them—it can't make them renounce the truth.*

So, we are “more-than-conquerors” because even great suffering and difficulty are being turned to our good because they are shaping us into Christ's image and because through our weakness we testify to God's strength.

This is what Tertullian—the church father from the second century—meant when he said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” In other words, even when the Christians were killed by the Romans, their very deaths testified to the power of the Gospel, and more people came to faith as a result.

The way of Jesus is the way of the cross:

There is difficulty and suffering;  
But that very suffering becomes the sign of victory through the love of God.

How can you be “more-than-a-conqueror” through

Cancer?

Grief?

Divorce?

Addiction?

We are the “hyper-Nike-men.”

(Maybe my favorite Greek word ever.)

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31

### ROMANS 8:38–39

#### PAUL’S THUNDERING CLIMACTIC CRESCENDO

<sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

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Romans chapter 8 is like a symphonic movement with various musical themes appearing and then reappearing, all the while the piece is building to its breathtaking final measures, and here we have arrived at Paul’s thundering climactic crescendo.

Paul concludes his reassurance to the Romans not with precise argument but with ten poetic phrases that are meant to represent *anything* and *everything* that is arrayed against those who are in Christ Jesus. There is literally nothing in the created order that can take us out of God’s love because God is the one true Creator, and all things ultimately answer to Him.

The gift of Christ Jesus is proof of God’s love, and the believer ought to find peace and strength in that fact.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1

### ROMANS 8:1-39

#### THE GREATEST CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE?

#### Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ

Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

### **Heirs with Christ**

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

### **Future Glory**

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we



do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### **God's Everlasting Love**

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>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? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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

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