

I thought it would be appropriate this Thanksgiving season to review the month we spent in Romans chapter eight. If you missed the last two sermons in that chapter, The Greatest Hope and The Greatest Assurance, I encourage you to take the 35 minutes per sermon to listen to them. I guarantee you will be encouraged. The whole chapter is a guide to our walk with the Lord through this life and the hope we should have now and into eternity. It has had a profound affect on my life. I keep learning more from it through the years. It is filled with encouragement which is truly something for which we can always be thankful.

The chapter begins by telling us ¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Romans 8:1 (ESV) The Spirit convicts us but Satan tries to condemn us (Revelation 12:10). Don't listen to him. Paul goes on to tell us why we should never listen to condemnation. Jesus did what you couldn't do (8:3). Our sin was condemned on the cross but our spirit was given the righteousness of Christ. The Spirit of God living in you now empowers you to be led by Him (8:4).

When we talk about gratitude, this is where we should begin. We deserved hell. Our sins did condemn us. A just God would send us to eternal punishment because we lived for self, ignored our Creator, and refused to do what is righteous. As Paul said in the letter to the Ephesians, "We were by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)." Treason, like sin, is punishable by death. We lived as traitors to the One who gave us everything we are and have. But God loved us in spite of our condition and paid our sin debt so we could be with Him through eternity (5:8). Hallelujah! **Never take for granted the reality that you have been redeemed.** Our destiny was changed forever! And we have been set free from the enslavement of sin so that we can live in newness of life right now (6:4)! This is at the top of our list of things for which we are grateful. This is forever!

Our family usually goes around the Thanksgiving table and each one says what they are thankful for. This should be number one. I was on my way to eternal separation from God, but God loved me enough to pay my sin debt and give me His righteousness (5:20-21). Now I'm bound for heaven. I'm empowered by His Spirit to live in newness of life. Every physical blessing has to come way down on the list from this greatest of blessings.

With the presence of the Holy Spirit comes the enabling to set our mind on the Spirit. ⁶ *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* Romans 8:6 (ESV) I couldn't do that before. My mind naturally went toward the flesh, which is death (8:7). It is all temporal and soon to pass. But now we can set our mind on the things of the Spirit. That is life and peace. As we go through this chapter,

Commented [notes1]: Revelation 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Commented [notes2]: Romans 8:3 (ESV)

³ 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,

Commented [notes3]: Romans 8:4 (ESV)

⁴ 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.

Commented [notes4]: Ephesians 2:3 (ESV)

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Commented [notes5]: Romans 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Commented [notes6]: Romans 6:4 (ESV)

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Commented [notes7]: Romans 5:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Commented [notes8]: Romans 8:7 (ESV)

⁷ 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.

Paul will explain further why this is so. The things of the Spirit are eternal. It is Christ centered, and He becomes our life. In Him is life. And we have peace with God. That is what is behind the fact that we don't yield to condemnation. While we lived in rebellion we were at war with God. Now we are at peace with Him. **When you are at peace with God, you should have peace in any circumstance.** That is because all other things are temporal, and you know God will use all those things to grow you and prepare you for eternity. When our minds and hearts grasp these truths, we should have unshakable peace. Why would you ever be distressed when you know that God is all-powerful? When you know you are at peace with the God that sees all and knows all and has all power, what can disturb your peace? Other religions seek this kind of peace. I think everyone longs for it. Only Christians have a real reason and the power to live continually in it (5:1).

¹¹ 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. Romans 8:11 (ESV) The Spirit of the One that raised Jesus from death lives in us! He gives life to our mortal bodies right now. We can be instruments of righteousness (6:13). We can cooperate with Almighty God as He works in this world. That is to have life. We can commune with the Holy Spirit. We can experience Him speaking to us through His Word. Resurrection power opens our eyes to the work of God all around us as He invites us to participate with Him at His leading (Ephesians 1:19-20). What He does through us will sometimes put us in awe of His power. Nothing else is as fulfilling or meaningful. You know you are participating in something with eternal results.

¹⁵ 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!"¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:15-16 (ESV) We don't have to fear being a slave to sin or to the Law. We are led by the Spirit, and He confirms that we have a relationship as adopted children of Almighty God. Your earthly father may have been good, but to the heavenly Father, none compares. He is always there with you and perfectly knows all that you experience. He has the very best plans for your eternal good. His direction is perfect. His love knows no equal. His grace is abundant. He always provides what we need. I am so thankful I am His child! Aren't you?

Romans eight is written like one rising crescendo. Salvation is underserved grace and love. We could hardly hope for more. But then He promises life and peace for all eternity. He goes on to say He will live in us by His Spirit to give life to our mortal bodies right now by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Then He says He will be a father to us. It is all too much to take in, but Paul is just midway into explaining the wonder of being in Christ. As sons, we are heirs of God!

Commented [notes9]: Romans 5:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes10]: Romans 6:13 (ESV)

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Commented [notes11]: Ephesians 1:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

¹⁷ 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 (ESV)
 What does it mean to be an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ? Let me just say that it is *infinitely* better than being an heir of the wealthiest man that ever lived. After all, our Father created all things. In fact, that is what we inherit, all things (1Corinthians 3:21-23)! Paul will later tell us how he knows for sure that is the case.

The crescendo continues to rise in that Paul said if we suffer with Him then we will be glorified with Him. A missionary once asked me what that meant. It was the first time I really pondered it. Everything in this world that is lost to you because of your relationship to Christ, every heartache in His service, every discomfort and affliction whether in spirit or the body is a part of the suffering of Christ. He suffers with you. That is because you are a part of the body of Christ (1Corinthians 6:15). He lives in you. Only His suffering upon the cross saved us from our sins, but the suffering didn't stop there. **And because we are a part of the body that suffers with Him, then we can be sure we will be glorified with Him!**

It's too much for my mind to grasp. It is super-abounding grace. In Ephesians Paul wrote that in the coming age we would see the "incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7)". Although I can't quite grasp it, I'm so thankful that this is my destiny, to be glorified with Christ.

We can't take these earthly bodies in their present form to heaven. So here is the next reason in Romans eight for which to be thankful. *²³ 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 8:23 (ESV) When we see Jesus face to face our bodies will be transformed and be like His glorious body. The Apostle Paul wrote that description to the Philippians (Philippians 3:21). I'm thankful that my aging body with its frailties and aches and pains will be transformed into one that can stand being in His glorious presence (Revelation 1:17). I'm even more thankful that it will be like His glorious body!

²⁷ 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 (ESV) I'm thankful the Spirit is continually interceding for me. Knowing exactly what is in my heart, He can pray for my deepest need in line with the will of God. That means it will certainly be answered (1John 5:14). When we realize what a blessing it is to have the Spirit of God searching our hearts for what we need and asking according to God's will, then we can understand why the next verse is true.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (ESV) Because the Spirit is asking the Father for what our heart needs, whatever comes our way, God will use for

Commented [notes12]: 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Commented [notes13]: 1 Corinthians 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

Commented [notes14]: Ephesians 2:7 (ESV)

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes15]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Commented [notes16]: Revelation 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,

Commented [notes17]: 1 John 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

our good. Man can do his worst, but the Spirit is interceding. It may be an intense trial, but the Spirit is praying God's will into my life. Man can wrong me, but He can't stop God from using that wrong for my good. This is true for all who love God and are called according to His purpose. We should be so thankful that, unlike those who do not love God and are not called, we have the assurance that somehow everything that comes our way today will be for our good.

Our eternal good and God's purpose are one in the same. Because we are His children, that which is our eternal good coincides with His purposes. We can have the peace that whatever we are going through will be good for us (Philippians 4:7). Thank God! The world can only wonder how things will turn out. We know! As God allows us to discern that goodness, our hearts are filled with gratitude.

One of the great purposes of God is revealed in the following verse. 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 8:29 (ESV) We are being conformed now, but the day will come when the work will be complete (Philippians 1:6). God foreknew we would accept His gracious invitation and predestined us to end up like the Son of God. We will never be the same as Jesus. He is eternal and has attributes that we cannot attain. But as much as is possible we will be like Him. When I concluded that sermon the Holy Spirit reminded me of that little chorus I had written many years ago. "Someday I'm gonna be like Him!" No more battles with my flesh. No more distractions by my sinful nature. No more regret that I failed to obey. We will be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). That is His command, and so He will do it in us. This is why heaven is so wonderful. Everyone there is gracious and loving like Jesus (Revelation 21:4).

The crescendo has risen to such a pitch that my spiritual ears are hardly able to take it. But Paul is not done. ³² *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 (ESV) This is what it means to be an heir of God. All things are ours in Christ. Every good thing is ours! And Paul's clear logic is easy for anyone to follow. If God gave His Son for us, is there any good thing He would withhold from you? Of course not! It's all ours.

That doesn't mean you can have whatever you desire because at times what we desire may not be good for us (James 1:17). You may want to win the lottery, but God might see how it would destroy your life. You may want all kinds of things that in the end would not serve your eternal good, including relationships and security. You want to give your children whatever will be for their good don't you? The heavenly Father has that same desire, only He has the ability and the discernment to do it. God will give you all things that will work for your eternal good. When you are perfected, you will only want that which is good. It will be yours. Can you say, "Thank you gracious heavenly Father!"

Commented [notes18]: Philippians 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes19]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ 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.

Commented [notes20]: Matthew 5:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Commented [notes21]: Revelation 21:4 (ESV)

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. E

Commented [notes22]: James 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* Romans 8:37 (ESV) Through Jesus we can face whatever the world throws at us. Paul lists tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword. (Romans 8:35 (ESV)) He is saying that whatever trouble we face, through Jesus, we will be more than a conqueror! We won't just be victorious. We will be more than victorious, for it will turn around and strengthen our character and bring glory to God. It will prepare us for a glorious eternity. It will be suffering with Christ and therefore result in glory.

Commented [notes23]: ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

For the final cymbal crash of this symphony of promise, Paul concludes, ³⁸ *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 (ESV) Paul is absolutely certain that there is nothing on earth or in heaven that can come between the heavenly Father and His children. His plan is sure. His love is that powerful. You are His and He is yours, forever (Song of Songs 1:16)! Since He created all things and loves you enough to die for you, is there anything He would create to separate you from His love? With that kind of assurance, we can march boldly into the future, with hearts overflowing with gratitude.

Commented [notes24]: Song of Songs 2:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

I hope your spiritual ears could hear this glorious symphony. It is a majestic song of the love and grace of God and His love for man (Song of Songs 1:4). You might wonder how you can become the recipient of such incredible promises, the likes of which are so great no human has dared to imagine. John the Apostle told us in the first chapter of his gospel, ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* John 1:12 (ESV) God has made it so easy for us, though it cost Him so much. We simply believe who He is and receive what He has done for us. That will transform your mind and heart. It will cause you to be increasingly like Him in service and love. If you haven't done so, there's no better time to accept this amazing future than right now. Then you will have more than you can comprehend to thank God for this Thanksgiving and forever.

Commented [notes25]: Song of Songs 1:4 (ESV)
⁴ Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. OTHERS We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

Questions

- 1 Why are we free from condemnation?
- 2 How can we know life and peace?
- 3 What does the Spirit do in us?
- 4 What does adoption imply?
- 5 How does the Spirit intercede for us?
- 6 What kind of things work together for our good? Why is it so?
- 7 How should that affect our attitude?
- 8 What is God making of us?
- 9 What do we inherit?
- 10 What can separate us from the love of God?
- 11 What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?