**Romans**

**Lesson 3: Then Indwelling Holy Spirit! Romans 8**

**Note:** Because this is such an important lesson, it is a little longer!

The Book of Romans is probably the greatest theological book of the entire Bible. In Romans, Paul puts forth an incredible treatise on how to be a Christian without being religious. If I had to choose one, and only one, book of the Bible to which I could have access the rest of my life, it would be Romans. Romans is the one book in the Bible that thoroughly explains what it means to be a genuine child of God. That being said, if I had to choose one, and only one, chapter in the book of Romans to which I could have access the rest of my life, it would probably be chapter 8. If Romans is the pinnacle of the entire written word and chapter 8 is the pinnacle of the whole book of Romans, then Romans 8 is the pinnacle of the Bible. Therefore, everyone should spend considerable time on this mountain top of Scripture.

As we begin chapter 8, a brief overview of previous lessons will help unify themes in Romans. In the first seven chapters, Paul has shown:

* The gospel is *the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes* (1:16). For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, *a righteousness that is by faith* (1:17).
* Man’s basic problem, including moral people, is indwelling sin (1:18-32; 2:1-4; 3:10-18).
* *No one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law* (3:20).
* Men in the past, e.g., Abraham and David, were saved not by works or circumcision but *by faith. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness* (4:3).
* When a believer has been justified by God, he has peace with him, access to his grace, and can rejoice in the coming glory of God (5:1-2). All of this comes through the believer’s union with Christ in both his death and resurrection (6:1-7).
* All believers have been set free from the demands of the law and have freedom to live under God’s grace and mercy (6:22).
* Though the believer is engaged in an internal civil war (7:14-25), he is now free to live in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which brings us to chapter 8.

Chapter 8 begins with a word we have seen before— “therefore.” Remember, when you see “therefore,” you should ask, “What is it there for?” It is there to point the believer back to the first seven chapters. Assuming the reader has come to God the only possible way, through faith in Christ Jesus, Paul now declares one of the greatest truths found in the Bible: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (verse 1). Wow! This is incredible! Think about it. No condemnation—this means that no matter what you have done, are doing, or are going to do, all condemnation has been removed forever. God has declared you righteous in his courtroom…forever! The slate of sin has been wiped clean. You are totally and eternally forgiven. Why? Because of God’s grace. However, grace doesn’t give the believer license to sin. On the contrary, our love for Christ drives us to sin no more. Jude 4 states, “They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

**DAY 1. No Condemnation!**

1. Read Romans 8:1-17 (Optional) and pages 68-83 in *How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious*. What is the good news that Paul gives in verse 1 concerning the legal status of every true believer? What does this mean to you personally?
2. Recall verses 3-4, “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature (‘the flesh’ ESV), God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man (‘the flesh’ ESV), in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature (‘the flesh’ ESV) but according to the Spirit.”
   1. What did God do to provide a way for men to be set free?
   2. What was God’s purpose for sending His Son into the world to be this sin offering   
      (1 Peter 1:18-21)?
3. In verses 5-11, Paul contrasts the life of a believer with that of a non-believer. The key difference has to do with the mind. Dr. John MacArthur writes, “*Phroneo*, the verb behind   
   **set their minds**, refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of the mind, rather than to the mind or intellect itself. It includes a person’s affections, his will, as well as his reasoning.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

What distinguishes the mind/focus of the believer from that of the unbeliever?

1. Romans 8:6 says, “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” Explain.
2. According to Romans 8:9, what or Who determines whether a person is/is not a true Christian (believer, child of God)?

**DAY 2. Live According to the Spirit!**

1. Read Romans 8:12-17. Again, in verse 12, we see the word “therefore.” Think about why it is there! We read in verses 12-14: Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature (‘the flesh’ ESV), to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature (‘the flesh’ ESV), you will die: but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
   1. What do believers have an obligation to do?
   2. Who gives the believer strength to live according to God’s law?
   3. If a believer lives his life according to the Spirit, what will he experience? In your own words, what does this mean (John 10:10)?
2. In Romans 8:15-17, Paul writes: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him, we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory.

When a man places his trust in Jesus and is sealed with the Spirit, what does he become to God (John 1:12-13; Galatians 4:4-7)? What does this mean to you?

**DAY 3. The Coming Glory!**

In the next section of Romans 8, Paul moves from his discussion on living in the power of the Holy Spirit to the coming glory that will be revealed in both believers and creation itself. Paul has already expressed some incredible truths regarding those who are in Christ. For instance, believers are no longer under condemnation; they have been set free from the law's legal requirements and the power of sin. Now, in Christ, believers are free to live out the righteous requirements of the law through the power of the Spirit. As children of God, controlled by the Spirit, their minds are occupied with heavenly thoughts—the same thoughts that occupy the mind of the Spirit, which are the very thoughts of God. The Spirit leads believers because they are the true sons of God. Why? Because those who are in Christ have been adopted into God’s family. He is their heavenly Father, “Abba,” Daddy. Believers have the assurance and security of knowing they belong to God as the Spirit “testifies” with their spirit concerning this reality. As adopted “sons,” they are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. What a privileged position, which merits an additional comment from theologian Sinclair Ferguson:

The notion that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters…is the mainspring of Christian living…Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Paul concludes the first section of chapter 8 with a subtle reminder that believers still live in a fallen world that is in rebellion against God. For this reason, they should expect to suffer just as Jesus suffered. Scripture confirms, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in his sufferings** so that we may also share in his glory” (v. 17). Jesus warned his followers that the world would hate them just as it hated him (John 15:18). And, because of this hatred, Jesus warned followers to expect persecution (John 15:20) and trouble in this world (John 16:33). However, Paul also encourages believers by reminding them of this sure hope—just as they shared in the sufferings of Christ, they will also, one day, share in his glory. This promise of coming glory, for which both believers and creation long, is foremost in Paul’s mind as he begins the next section of Romans, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”(v. 18).

1. Read Romans 8:17-27. Verses 17-18 say, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”
   1. As God’s children, believers are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Explain what you think this means.
   2. Paul writes, “Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” He points to the coming glory that will be revealed in God’s true children (believers). This glory should be seen from God’s perspective in order to convey the value that he places on his children, his acceptance of them, and his personal delight in and approval of them. It will include honor and reward that will be displayed in them as they share in the glory of Christ. Now, state what you learn about his coming glory from the following verses.

* Romans 5:2
* Philippians 3:21
* 1 Corinthians 15:40-42
* Colossians 1:27

1. Verses 19-21: “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”
   1. Who are the “sons of God” (Galatians 4:4-7)?
   2. What do you think Paul means by stating that “creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed?”
   3. Who subjected creation to frustration (Genesis 3:17-19)?
   4. What promise is given regarding creation (Isaiah 65:17-25; Matthew 19:28; John 14:1-4; Acts 3:19-21; Revelation 21 [‘new’ means “restored”])?
2. Verse 23: “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”
   1. Read Ephesians 1:13-14 along with 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Who is this first fruit or deposit? When and how does a person receive Him?
   2. We have been adopted by God. In Christ, we become his “sons.” So, what do you think it means that we “wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44)?
3. Read verses 24-25 along with Hebrews 11:8-16: “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” What is one of a believer’s greatest hopes?
4. Verse 26: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” Who does God give to help us through the struggles of life?
5. Verse 27: “And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”
   1. Why do you think God the Father searches the believer’s heart?
   2. How does this verse point to the close connection/relationship between God the Father and God the Spirit?
   3. Notice that the Spirit prays according to God’s will for us. Why should this give us great peace and comfort?

**DAY 4. Who Can Be Against Us?**

By the time Paul wrote this portion of his letter to the believers in Rome, he must have been overwhelmed with wonder at the realization of all the privileges that accrue to believers:

* peace with God (5:1)
* a brand-new life to live in Christ (6:4)
* freedom from the power of sin through our union with Christ (6:1-14)
* freedom from the law’s condemnation (7:1-25)
* power to live a godly life through the indwelling Spirit (8:1-27)

Furthermore, Paul must have been overwhelmed by the truth that believers are actually “sons of God!” Believers have been adopted into God’s family; thus, they are both heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Moreover, believers have a confident hope in the coming resurrection and are willing to wait patiently, knowing that one day, they will share in Christ’s glory. Paul must have been thinking this was too good to be true. How could it be? But it was true then, and it is true now!

In verses 28-39, Paul concludes this chapter with some of the greatest truths in all Scripture. Paul soars to new theological heights and offers incredible words of assurance. He writes: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (v. 28). Verse 28 is one of the most comforting verses in the Bible. Through the centuries, countless believers have been encouraged by these words on long nights and through tremendous hardships. Once again, Paul writes, “We know!” The word “know” comes from the Greek word *oida*. It means to have full or complete knowledge without any doubt or uncertainty. We know beyond a shadow of a doubt! What do we know? As God’s children, we know that he will take the circumstances of our lives and work them out for our good. It doesn’t matter what those circumstances are—good or bad—ultimately, God will work them out for our good.

In *all* *things*

*God works*

*for the good* of those

*who love him*,  
*who have been called*

according to *his purpose*.

Do you see *who* is at work? God!

In *which things* does he work? All!

Do see you his *ultimate goal*? Our good!

For whom does he work? For *those who love him* and *have been called* by him!

Do you love him? Have you been called by him? If yes, then understand that God will work in all things, the good, the bad, the easy, the difficult, the pleasant, the painful; yes, in all things, God works for your good. However, this does not mean that God works in all things for the good of *everyone*. He is only working for his children—believers. Believers are a very privileged group, and God is working for them to ensure that everything that happens in their lives works to bring about good for them. What is that ultimate good? To be more and more like Jesus—God’s son. Stott comments,

We do not always understand what God is doing, let alone welcome it. Nor are we told   
that he is at work for our comfort. But we know that in all things he is working towards our supreme good. And one of the reasons we know this is that we are given many examples of   
it in Scripture. For instance, this was Joseph’s conviction about his brothers’ cruelty in selling him into Egypt: ‘You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good…the   
saving of many lives’…The same concurrence of human evil and divine plan had its most conspicuous display in the cross, which Peter attributed both to the wickedness of men  
 and to ‘God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.’[[3]](#footnote-3)

Why is God working to make sure all things work for the good of his children? First, because God loves his children. John writes, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Second, because God has a plan and purpose for the life of every believer. What is that plan? The answer is found in v. 29: “For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” From before time began, God's plan was to have a family. Thus, God has been calling men and women to himself, through his foreknowledge, to conform them into the likeness of his son, Jesus Christ. The word “foreknowledge” is very interesting. What does it mean? First, let me tell you what it does not mean. It does not mean that God looked down the tunnel of time, saw those who would hear the gospel and believe, and then chose them. Stott continues,

If God predestines people because they are going to believe, then the ground of their salvation is in themselves and their merit, instead of in him and his mercy, whereas Paul’s whole emphasis is on God’s free initiative of grace.[[4]](#footnote-4)

According to Keller, “foreknowledge” means *forelove*. Keller explains,

In the Bible, when we are told God “knows” someone, it means he has set his love on him in a personal way. For instance, when Jesus says to some: “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23), he doesn’t mean he won’t know about them, but that he will have no relationship with them. Therefore “foreknew” means “forelove”…thus, God set his love on us back before the beginning of time. This is stunning![[5]](#footnote-5)

There is a lot of mystery in these deep terms, e.g., predestination, foreknowledge, and called. Therefore, it is better to approach them in great humility, acknowledging that we cannot really understand God and his ways. God foreknew certain people before time began, and those people were predestined to become a part of his family and to be conformed into the likeness of God’s son, Jesus. Thus, Jesus became the “firstborn (highest honored) among many brothers.” Think about it—if you are in Christ, then Jesus is your brother. What a place of high privilege we have in Christ!

Paul goes on to say, “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (v.30). In verses 29-30, Paul reveals five incredible verbs to describe what God has done not merely for some, but for all “those” who are in Christ, that is, for all true believers. This group that God “foreknows,” he also predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies. Consider each of these words which apply only to God’s true children. (Remember, these are mysterious terms. We can only understand them to the extent Scripture provides illumination!)

**Foreknew:** God set his love on us. He foreknew his children in a personal way. This term refers to a deep, intimate, personal relationship with God. God foreknew, set his love upon, his children even before he created them.

**Predestined:** God pre-determined to conform believers into the very likeness of his son. Yes, God determined, even before creation, to transform us who belong to him by faith, the ones he called by grace, to be with him one day in heaven, to be perfect like his son and to share in his glory. Once a man places his trust in Jesus, he is on a predetermined path to glory.

**Called:** When God calls a man, the Spirit provides illumination and deep inner conviction. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 explains this process. “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” These verses speak to God’s electing love— another deep mystery. When God calls a man, that man responds by faith. Keller explains, *Anyone who is called by God in this sense must eventually become justified and glorified. This is therefore an internal illumination that God sends to awaken us to the truth.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

**Justified:** As we have already learned, to be justified is to be “declared righteous” in God’s courtroom. All guilt and condemnation are removed. The believer stands blameless before God forever. Justification comes to all whom God calls and who were foreknown by him.

**Glorified:** To be glorified is God’s predetermined destiny for every one of his chosen children. Glorification is the end of the chain that began with justification and was followed by sanctification. Glorification is so certain that Paul confirms it as if it has already happened. John alludes to this in 1 John 3:2, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Wow! Consider this: One day, every believer will be perfectly holy, like Jesus. We will never know sin again. Believers are destined to live in glorified bodies, in a glorious city that will be illuminated by the glory of God. Keller expounds,

Now, Christians are able to look back “down” the chain, and know that before creation God fore-loved them, and predestined them to be justified. And a Christian can look “up” the chain, and know that in eternity they will know unimaginable glory in his presence. If we love God, we are called (v 28). And if we are called people, then we are fore-loved, predestined, justified, soon-to-be-glorified people. This is wonderful![[7]](#footnote-7)

**What Shall We Say in Response?**

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long: we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” (Verses 31-36)

In these verses, Paul reminds believers that we should have no doubt about things God has promised to “work out” for his children. How can there be any doubt? If God is for us, who can stand against us? No one! If God was willing to give that which was most precious to him, his very own son, how much more willing is he to give us all the things he has promised—eternal life, a home in heaven, glorified bodies, and himself, forever? And who can bring any charge against us? Yes, there is an accuser (Revelation 12:10), and his name is Satan. But consider this: we have an Advocate, whose name is Jesus. 1 John 2:1 states, “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” I am so thankful that Jesus stands before the Father in heaven as my Advocate to defend me when Satan makes accusations against me. All Jesus has to say to his Father is this: “I paid the price. His sins are covered, and I remember them no more.”

Whenever you are overwhelmed by guilt due to some past sin that you have truly confessed, you need to remember the words of Paul, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Furthermore, those who are in Christ Jesus belong to God. He is our Abba, Father. And nothing can ever separate us from his love. Nothing! Not trouble! Not hardship! Not famine! Not nakedness! Neither danger nor sword! And not even sin! Though believers face persecution and death in this world, neither can separate us from the love of God. Even in the face of death, believers are victorious. Chapter 8 concludes with this blessing,

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Verses 37-39)

With God for us and with us, who can stand against us? No one! Thus, we are more than conquerors. Consider this: we have the same power that raised Jesus from the dead! Jesus said, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus will never leave or forsake us. We should never be afraid. God is with us; one day, Jesus will return for us. Therefore, we should live each day with confidence in His Word and hope that we will soon be with him and be like him forever. Do you have this hope? Are you living as a conqueror? Are you convinced that nothing could separate you from the love of God? If not, read his promises and know that if you have been called by God, one day, you will stand glorified before him.

1. Read Romans 8:28-39.

Romans 8 is considered by some to be the greatest chapter in all of Scripture. Additionally, Romans 8:28 is not only one of the most comforting but also one of the most quoted verses   
in all of Scripture: *And we know that* *in all things* *God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

* 1. Paul begins this verse with the third-person plural word “we.” With that in mind, to whom is this verse addressed?
  2. What does it mean to you that “in all things God works for the good of those who   
     love him?”

1. Verse 29 states, For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (verse 29). What do the following terms mean to you? Try to express this in your own words after reading the cross-references below.

* [God] **foreknew** (Amos 3:2 begins, “You only have I **chosen** of all the families of the earth.” The word “chosen” comes from the Hebrew word *yada*, which means “to know.” Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:1-2)
* **Predestined** (Acts 2:23, 17:26-28; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11)
* **Conformed** to the likeness of his Son (Romans 12:2; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13)
* **Called** (effectual; John 11:43-44; Ephesians 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:9)
* **Justified** (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 3:24, 5:1, 10:10; Titus 3:5-7)
* **Glorified** (Romans 8:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 John 3:2)

1. In terms of a believer’s eternal standing before God, can anyone bring any charge against   
   us that will stick?
   1. Who is our Advocate (1 John 2:1)?
   2. What is Jesus doing for us even now (v. 34)?
   3. Can anything, including death, or anyone, including Satan, separate those who are in Christ from the love of God?
   4. What happens to a believer at the moment of death (Philippians 1:21-23;   
      2 Corinthians 5:8)?

1. John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody Press,

   1991), 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God,* (May 1989): 5-6, quoted in Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for*

   *You* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2015), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Timothy Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You* (Epsom, Surry, England: The Good Book Company, 2014), 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)