

# **A Study of “Life In The Spirit”**



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December 2017

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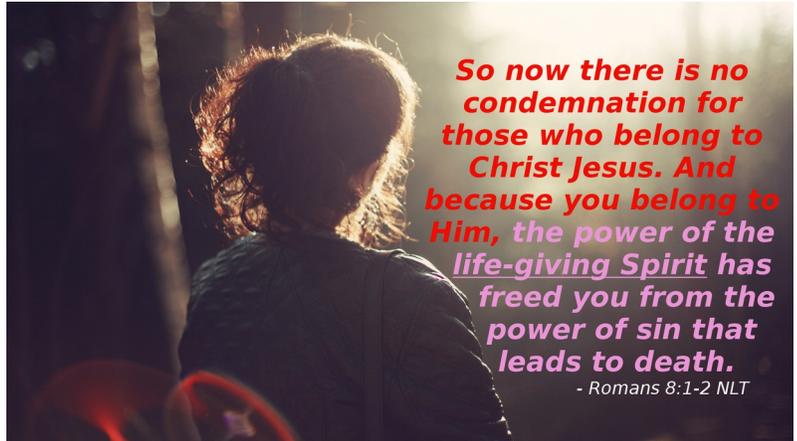
## ***“The Power of The Life-Giving Spirit”***

It is my desire to share with you what it means to live in the Spirit. We will be doing a short walk through one of my favorite sections in the Bible. I read Romans 6, 7, & 8 almost every day of my life. I have been honored to learn much about it through my mentor Don Pickerill and through my own studies of over 40 years.

### **Romans 8:1-2 (NLT)**

*1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.*

Paul begins this chapter with one of the most vital truths of all if you really want to live and move in the power of the Holy Spirit. That truth is that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Many people who call themselves true Christ followers may be going to heaven, but as for their life here on planet earth they have chosen to accept the lie of the enemy and of others.



The word "Condemn" means: "to declare to be reprehensible, wrong, or evil. It is the thought of pronouncing a person guilty. It is removing the value that has been placed on someone or something."

Paul declares the opposite over us. Rather than saying you have no value he is declaring that you are valuable in God's eyes when you are "in Christ Jesus." It is vital for the true Christ follower to never listen to the lie of the enemy saying that we are condemned or made of no value.

You see, God has chosen to inhabit this world, not in "holy buildings", "holy church programs" or "holy church traditions." God chose to inhabit this world in these days through His children. Through those who have chosen to be found in Christ. Therefore, rather than trying to find our value in this world, this government or even in your church; we find our value as we walk, live, breath and talk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit (the third person of the God head) did not come to condemn, make you weird or strange. The Holy Spirit came to be a "life-giving Spirit" through you and through me. He, the Holy Spirit, has freed us from the power of sin that leads to death. Aren't you glad you have been freed from the power of sin? I sure am. When I falter in my walk, I try to repent right away that way there is no room for the devil to come and declare the word "condemned" over my life.

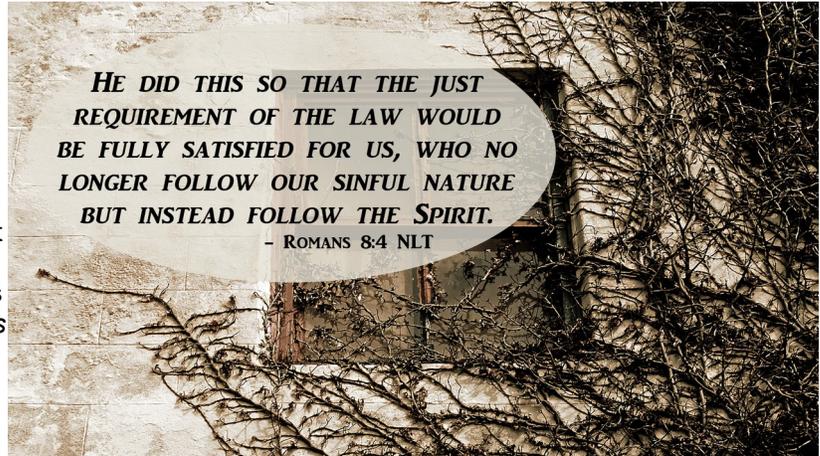
Please do not try to find your value in anything other than the person of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit leads and guides you into all of the truth of God's Word. "No condemnation"...what a sweet sound to our ears.

## ***“Fully Follow The Spirit”***

As you pursue the study of grace you will find that the opposite of the law is not as much grace, as it is life in the Spirit. (Romans 7:6) God intended that we live and move and breathe in the Holy Spirit. (Acts 17:28)

### **Romans 8:3-4 (NLT)**

3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 *He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.*



***HE DID THIS SO THAT THE JUST  
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***- ROMANS 8:4 NLT***

In these two verses the Apostle Paul helps us understand that we cannot be saved by the law. The problem is not with the law, it is "Holy, right, and good and spiritual..." (Romans 7:12,14)

The problem is that, in my flesh, I cannot keep it. The reason is because the law is good but it gives us no power to keep it. The law is any external code, written or not written, expressed or not expressed that tries to govern the way we live.

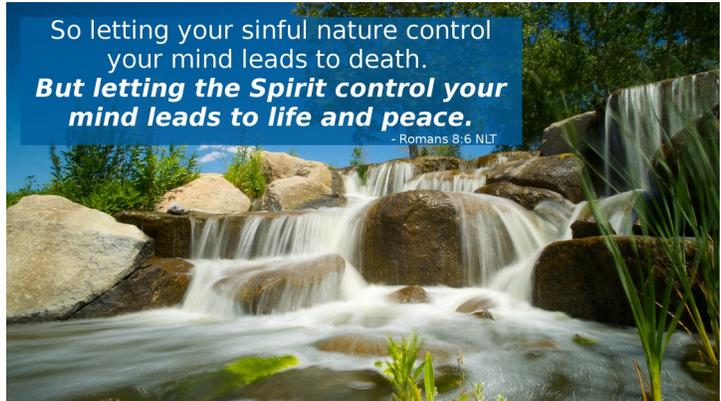
Therefore, we cannot be made right by doing good works, or keeping the law. We become right with God because God sent His Son to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. I am so glad that He paid the debt I could not pay, and He paid it in full. This external code is fully satisfied in Him. This was His purpose.

He did this for those who no longer "live by the sin nature" but instead "fully follow the Spirit." As Romans 8 develops we will see just what it means to live in the Spirit.

## **“It Leads to Life and Peace”**

### **Romans 8:5-8 (NLT)**

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. 6 *So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.* 7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.



The battle lines are drawn here to determine if you are going to “dominated” by your sinful nature or “controlled” by the Holy Spirit. The mind set is completely different between the dominated sinful nature versus being Spirit controlled.

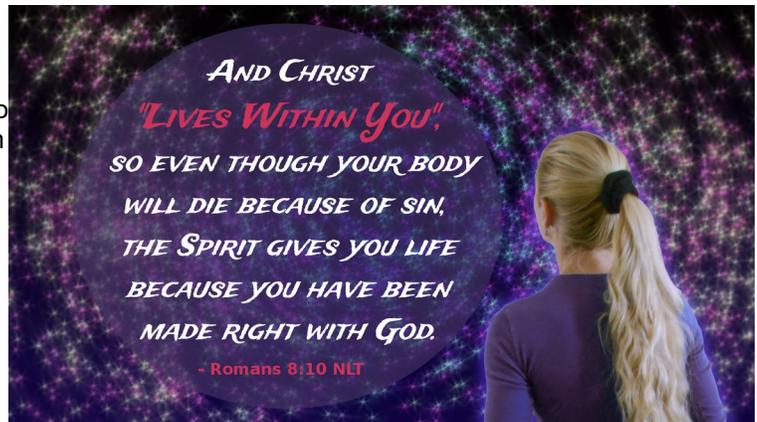
In our modern English language and American thought patterns we probably don't care for either of these words “dominated” or “controlled.” However, in this context one is not good and one is very good. One leads to bondage and the other leads to freedom. The sinful nature is hostile to God and cannot please God and will most certainly lead to death. However, we can trust the goodness of the Holy Spirit. He will only lead to a lifestyle that is a pleasure to God and to life itself. To be dominated by your sinful nature means that we are completely under its dominion. Our mind is set on sinful things. But when someone is controlled by the Spirit then their mind will be set on things that please the Spirit of God.

Therefore, we each have a choice to make. Are we going to allow our sinful nature, (the old man, the flesh) to dominate our mind and bring the outcome of a “death like experience” in this life as well as eternal death? The other choice is to choose the Holy Spirit's control that leads to life and peace that resides deep in our soul? I choose life!

## ***“The Spirit of God that Lives Inside You”***

### **Romans 8:9-11 (NLT)**

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 *And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.* 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.



Paul declares to these Roman believers that they are not controlled by their sinful nature. He describes what a person is like that has the Spirit living in them.

The power here is connected to those who have the Spirit of God living in them. He quickly reminds us that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to God at all.

There are those today that seem to want to put the Holy Spirit in a back room to function in small groups or something. However, Paul makes it clear that if we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, then we do not belong to Him. My question would be this—with all of the wonderful things the Holy Spirit does who would ever want to try to live without Him working daily in your life.

As you read further in verse 10 Paul is declaring that Christ "lives within you" even though our body will die because of sin. The Spirit gives us life because you have been made right with God. Take note that this is not something you or I can do on our own. We are made right with God because of the righteous act of our Savior.

The same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead now lives in you. The same resurrection power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead lives in you. What an incredible thought, and He (Holy Spirit) will give life to your mortal (human body). There is not two different spirits living in you. It is the one Holy Spirit that is living in you. That is powerful!

If your mortal body is in pain today or struggling in some way it is vital to allow the Holy Spirit to live in us. He is not spooky, He did not come to make us super spiritual or over exuberant. He came to make us supernaturally natural. Don't be afraid to open your heart for more of the Holy Spirit. He comes to makes us whole in this life and in the one to come.

## **“Children of God”**

### **Romans 8:12-14 (NLT)**

12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. 14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*



This passage of scripture is just packed with much truth. It is interesting that Paul begins by telling us we are under no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges or pressures us to do. We do not have to give into the pressure of the flesh to sin—the result of that is (spiritual) death. I am not saying that it is not a very real source of difficulty. I am just suggesting that we do not have to give into what our sinful nature dictates. There is a lot of freedom in that statement if you think about it. Freedom from the power of sin begins with a decision not an excuse.

Why is Paul so emphatic about it? Because he understands that if we just layback with the excuse that "we are just human," or something like that and live by the demands of your sinful nature we will die. This is not merely referring to a physical death, but rather to die spiritually. Many self-defined Christ Followers may have breath in their lungs and a beating heart, but they are living a kind of "cut flower" existence. It looks pretty and looks full of life but it is dying minute by minute.

However, if you put these demands of the sinful nature to death (i.e. we die to it) you will live. Again not just breath in your lungs or a heart that is beating but rather a life in the Spirit becomes available.

My suggestion: do yourself a favor just go ahead and die to it. The sooner you die, the better off we will all be. When we die to sin and live unto God we will open our lives up to the freedom of the Holy Spirit. It is hard to do because the Bible calls us a "living sacrifice." We keep putting that old sinful nature up on the altar, it looks dead, but the problem with a living sacrifice is that we just keep crawling off the altar. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into life. Those of us who are led by the Spirit we are the children of God. This is one of the greatest titles we can ever receive. There is nothing greater than knowing God recognizes you as His child.

## “Heirs of God (Part 1)”

In just about every society on earth we have the concept of being an heir. When our father dies he leaves an estate. In some cases it is a wealthy estate and sometimes it is a broke or even an in debt estate. The heir (usually the oldest child) becomes responsible then to continue the father's legacy by using whatever is left to further the father's purpose in the earth.

### **Romans 8:15-17 (NLT)**

*15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.*

*SO YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED A SPIRIT THAT MAKES YOU FEARFUL SLAVES. INSTEAD, YOU RECEIVED GOD'S SPIRIT WHEN HE ADOPTED YOU AS HIS OWN CHILDREN. NOW WE CALL HIM, "ABBA, FATHER"*

- Romans 8:15 NLT



In this passage, the Apostle Paul describes what we have received from God. We have not received a spirit of fear but we have received God's Spirit since we are adopted as His own children. There is a lot to say about adoption but even in our society adoption is forever. A father can disown his son, but he can never disown his adopted son. Therefore we can call Him "Abba Father."

"Abba" is the Aramaic word for "father." Some have helped us understand by defining these words as "Daddy God." Now that's not bad. It may be that this word "Abba" could be a more personal term that would indicate the intimacy God desires for His children to enjoy with Him.

From the beginning of time God has desired to have a face-to-face relationship with man. When sin entered it caused "shame" and "blame" to enter man's vocabulary. God gave us the heart of the gospel way back in Genesis 3 when he told us "without the shedding of blood there is no remission (payment) for sin." (see Hebrews 9:22; Exodus 24:8) In fact, the entire Bible is the story about how our Father has been trying to restore that face-to-face relationship with Him.

He sent Moses, Joshua, David, the Prophets, and all kinds of people and they were killed or died out. Finally God sent His One and Only Son who paid the penalty for the sin that separated us from God. He paid the price in full for "He that knew no sin, became sin, so that we could become right with God." (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus has settled the claim against us with his own blood and went back to the Father He gave us the Holy Spirit. It is this Holy Spirit that affirms our "sonship." We are therefore heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

## “Heirs of God (Part 2)”

In Part 1, I discussed how we are not called to be a slave to fear. In contrast we have received God's Holy Spirit, which came at the time God adopted us as his own children. Remember adoption is a covenant entered into with the Father that can never be severed.

Because of that adoption, we can call him, "Abba Father." We are no longer slaves to fear but now we have received the right to be called the child of God. (Galatians 4:5-6) I am so glad I no longer have to be subject to fear but have the right to walk as a child of God.

### **Romans 8:15-17 (NLT)**

15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Life in the Spirit is not some spooky, strange odd thing. God came to make us supernaturally natural. It is not walking around in some daze with your eyes closed and hands lifted. If you do that too long there is a pretty good chance you are going to walk into a wall and smash your nose.

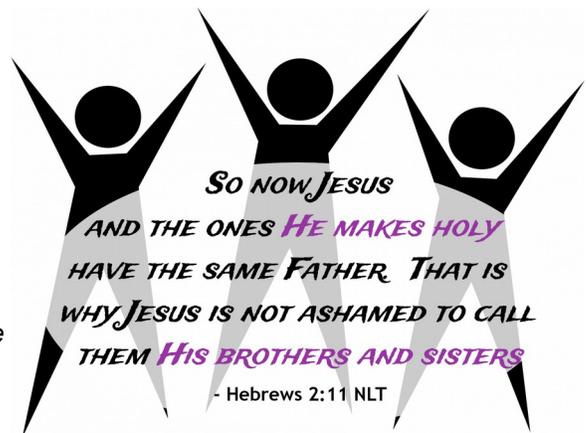
Life in the Spirit is simply the ability to know by the Holy Spirit that He bears with your human spirit and that you are a child of God. Simply put; it is walking in communication with God, which is not just words hummed out in King James English. There is the Holy Spirit that can help you to know in your "knower" that you truly are a son or daughter of the living God.

Lastly, Paul says in verse 17 that since childhood we are his heirs. That means that all God is and has is available to you because there has been a death. Jesus Christ came to this earth as the heir of God and died in our place so that the inheritance could be released. He is our Elder brother - a joint heir with us. What are we heirs of? God's glory—that is the visible effects of His presence. However, if we are going to get to be stewards of His glory we must also share his suffering.

What an honor this truth is. By the power of the Spirit we get to walk as children of God, heirs of all that God has and is. We share this with our elder brother Jesus. Now, I have older brothers who gave me a lot of grief when we were children, but this big brother says, He will "never be ashamed to call you brother."

### **Hebrews 2:11 (NLT)**

11 So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.



## **“The Future Glory”**

### **Romans 8:18-21 (NLT)**

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 *For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.* 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.



These verses as well as the rest of Romans chapter 8 become very intense.

Paul continues the discussion with the knowledge that whatever we suffer here on this earth will be nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later. I have been so honored that God has allowed me to preach, not only in America, but also in a few other countries around the globe and experience His glory in very real ways.

Anytime there is a group of people (2 or 3 in agreement) who were willing to stand up for Jesus and, believe in His name, there are people saved, healed, and set free with signs and wonders that followed. These wonderful experiences, when the glory of God showed itself strong among us, it was very real. I will not be so bold as to say that I can speak for everyone in the church, but I think most of God's people really want to experience God's glory in an authentic way.

We may have not always seen "a pillar of cloud" by day or "a pillar of fire" at night. However, the glory of God was just as real to those joining on those occasions as it was with Moses and the Children of Israel coming out of the bondage and suffering from Egypt and moving toward the promised land which was their inheritance. As God calls us to be "His heirs" and "joint heirs" with Jesus Christ, we must "hold out" to experience the Holy Spirit in a real way. For Paul calls the Holy Spirit the "inheritance of the saints." (Ephesians 1:12-23)

Why do we not see God's power gifts in America as we have in the past or in other countries? Frankly, it may be because we care to get the glory. Honestly, we might not ever say it out loud that we want the glory. However, God alone should receive all of the honor and praise and glory for those special times when He moves in our midst.

The unfortunate problem with the cultural church in America is that we can become so self-centered that we begin to think that it was somehow "me" or "my gifts" that was functioning. No! If God's glory comes then it is God showing Himself to His humbled people.

I don't mean this to be either harsh or judgmental; I am just calling God's church back to experiencing His presence, His power, His purpose and His glory.

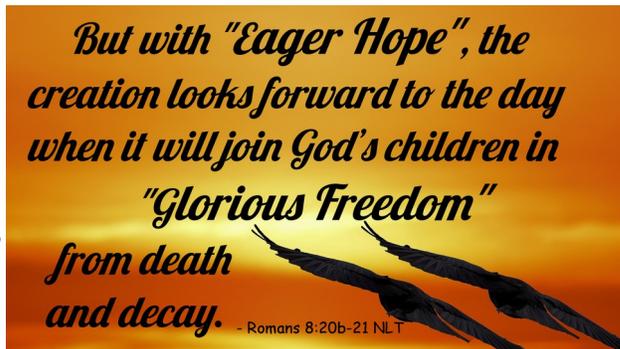
We must never settle for anything that can be produced by man. Let's never settle for lighting systems, smoke and fog machines, and even the greatest digital sounds. There is nothing primarily wrong with using these cool things. However, if we ever think that these cool things will produce the opportunity to experience the genuine and authentic glory of God then we will be very disappointed.

If we ever settle for human produced entertainment and allow that to infiltrate our worship [all of what we do when we gather, not just music] then we will always settle for much less than what God can actually do. God is a Creator and as a Creator He can produce a new and genuine worship experience for us, both in the corporate gathering and when we are alone in our own daily devotions. Come on church! Let's never have a settler spirit! Let's always have that pioneering spirit that digs deep to experience the glory of God here and eagerly awaiting for it to happen in eternity.

## “Eager Hope - Glorious Freedom”

### Romans 8:18-21 (NLT)

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. *But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*



Once again we see that these verses, and the ones that follow are just packed full of important truth. Paul lets us know that there is this present and there is the future. If you ever wonder if there is anything that follows the 70 to 80 years in this life (average life span) this is a great place to begin reading.

We cannot do much to change our past. Jesus took care of EVERYTHING that needed to be taken care of almost 2000 years ago when He died on the cross in our place. The Bible tells us "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us..."

Just read this incredible passage—if possible just read it out loud right where you are:

### Romans 5:6-11 (NLT)

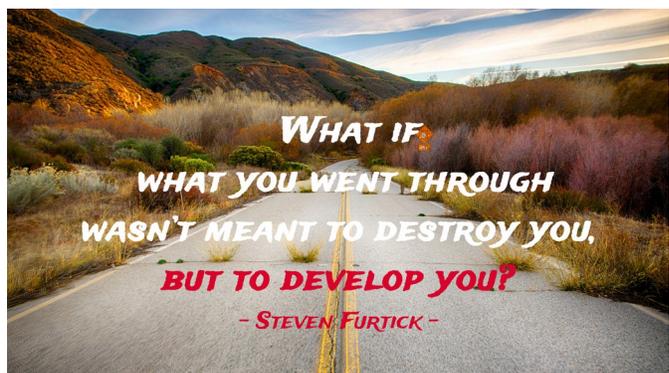
6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

I love this quote by Steven Furtick:

*“What if what you went through wasn't meant to destroy you, but to develop you?”*

Jesus has taken care of our past by paying in full the claim that was against us. We would have never come close to satisfying this claim.

He didn't do it when we got our act together. He did it while we were still caught in the traps of our sin and of Satan. The Bible says in 1 John 3:1 (NKJV) "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."



Jesus not only took care of the past, but he takes care of the present. John 1:16 (RSV) declares it is "grace upon grace." In the NLT the verse says "one gracious blessing after another."

If you go back to Romans 8 in our original passage He declares He is taking care of it in our future as well; "All creation is eagerly waiting eagerly for the future day." It also says in verses 20-21 "...But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."

This is an incredible understanding of how we, in our spirit man, have been redeemed, how we are being redeemed, and how one day we be fully redeemed in the name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Bless you!

## ***“Eagerly Waiting”***

The day after Thanksgiving, in America is affectionately called "Black Friday." This is the day that people fight over things they "gave thanks" for the day before. I have never been out for these crazy shopping days because I am not willing to go out on Thanksgiving Day—pitch my tent—lay out in the parking lot all night—waiting to get that item for my family member that I think they can't live without—only to see it laying on their Garage Sale table nine months later. That may be a little extreme but I don't think were off by much.

### **Romans 8:18-21 (NLT)**

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.

In verse 19 Paul writes with a deep intensity, telling us that all "creation is waiting eagerly" for that future day when "God will reveal who his children really are." This denotes an eagerness to finally see if we made the list. When I was in Bible College some of the professors would put a list of the students and their Semester Test scores on their office door. As soon as we could get to that professor's door after the building was open, we would hurry to see if we made the list or not. What a relief when knew if we had passed that test or not.

Let me ask you: Do you live your Christian walk with an eagerness to see how we did in this life? The Bible even tells us that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom. (Matthew 7:21)

What is He looking for? To see if we can be on this list? That we are perfect? Or, does He look to find those who are willing to suffer for Him here, knowing that whatever we suffer through in this life cannot compare to the glory that will be revealed later? Maybe it is just, by looking through His foreknowledge that He knows the ones will run the race and finish the course? (1 Corinthians 9:24; Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 12:1)

Paul writes in

### **2 Timothy 4:6-8:**

6. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

I look to the future glory. I am ready for Jesus to come. I fully expect to make that list, not because I made a good grade on a test score. It is because God has placed deep in my heart an "eager hope" (Rom 8:20) based on His promise.

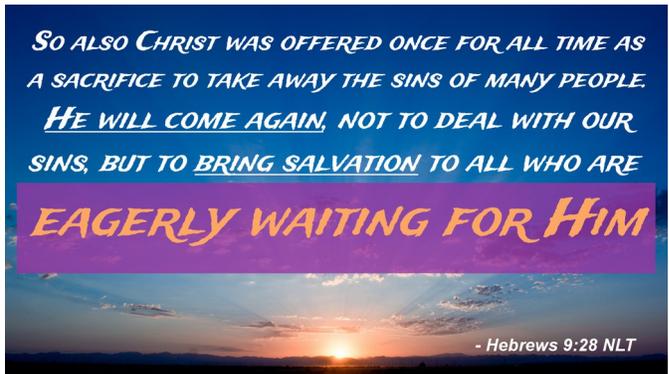
(Rom 8:21)—"All creation is looking forward to the day, when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."

Lastly, "all creation is waiting eagerly for that future..." Are you "eagerly waiting" for the day when all of God's promises come to their full completion? Do you talk often with great hope that Jesus will be coming soon? Jesus said in John 16:33 (NIV) "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

May I invite you to join me—to walk with an eager expectation of Jesus' return—there will be trouble—but don't worry it cannot compare.

**Hebrews 9:28 (NLT)**

*28 So also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.*



## **“Creation Groans”**

The older I get the better my hearing is. Well, that is not exactly true. What is true is that there is a part of me that seems to “tune-in-to” a lot more noise in creation. I am not surprised because the Apostle Paul referred to it here in Romans 8:19 saying, “All creation is groaning as in childbirth.”

### **Romans 8:19 (NLT)**

19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.

First, we have Paul speaking of how all of creation is waiting eagerly for a future day. It will be a day when there will be no more guessing about who God's children really are.

### **Romans 8:20-21 (NLT)**

20 against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay”

The issue here seems to be that all creation was subject to God's curse. Maybe we can understand it better if we realize that these verses are really just describing how futile all of these present days really are. However, God offers an “eager hope” to the true children of God. For they will experience the glorious freedom planned for the children of God. A place with no more “death and decay—but only glory!”

The whole section beginning in Romans 8:17-26 is developing the connection between suffering and glory. Paul is showing us that Christians must go the way of Jesus. He assures us that our present status as the children of God guarantees participation in the present and the future joy of God's kingdom. In fact, in verse 17 indicates that God leads His children through suffering before they can ever reach His glory.

You might think, “Well, that's not very good news. Who wants to have to suffer?” The Bible is clear that there is a suffering we must experience with Christ. Jesus has talked about it from the beginning of His teaching. He told us radical things like:

### **Luke 9: 23-25 (NLT)**

23 Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. 24 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 25 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?”

This is the way Jesus talked to us. He was very frank about the true cost of being a Christ follower. If you think about it, you will see that it is very radical.

This next section of Romans 8:22-26 seems to clear all of this up. Read it along with me.

**Romans 8:22-26 (NLT)**

*22 for we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.) 26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.*



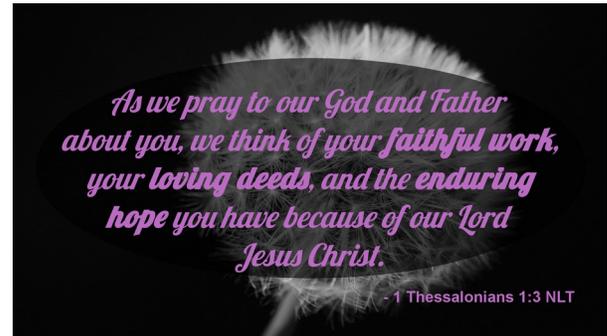
Join our devotion for “we wait with eager hope when we will receive our full rights and adopted children...” I'm excited!

## “What We Think”

### 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (NLT)

*3 As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As Paul writes this letter to the church of Thessalonica along with Silas and Timothy. There are three things that they see in the people of this church. Paul says: "as we pray to our God and Father about you we think of your..."



1) **Faithful Work** - This is a quality and an action. They saw in these people as they prayed that they had a quality of being "faithful." It is so important that this quality is seen in us as God's people today. Their action was that they were "workers." Obviously they didn't see lazy people or those who waited for someone else to do what needed to be done. They were "faithful" in their "work" for the Lord. May this be true in the church of Jesus today. May it be seen and recognized in us.

2) **Loving Deeds** - Once again there is a quality and an action. They were "loving" in their approach of ministry. Their action was that they accomplished "deeds" for God and to bless the people. May this be known in the Body of Christ today.

3) **Enduring Hope** - This quality is so vital today. We must be those who can endure through these last days. There is such an attack on God's people today and we must be "enduring." This is the action is that we must walk in with real "hope." This word sometimes is used almost as a negative. Someone might say, "God is going to do..." and the other person says "Well I hope so!" That is not hope at all. Our hope must be that we know who we are in Christ according to His Word and we understand that He has called us to be Hope Ambassadors as my friend [Karen Sebastian](#) calls it.

Father, help these three qualities: "Faithful", "Loving" and "Enduring" be deeply ingrained into our lives everyday so that others can see it as they are praying for us or as they are watching our lives.

Then, Lord, may we be a people of action. That we are people who are actively at "work" for the Kingdom of God and its expansion. Lord, may we be those who are doing good "deeds," not just to get something for doing them, but rather that we might be an expression Your love in the earth. And then, Lord, may we be people filled with an abiding and real "hope" that people can see. May this help others in their own hope to be ignited from the flame of hope that burns brightly through the way we live. In Jesus name! Amen!

## “Groaning with Hope (Part 1)”

### **Romans 8:22-23 (NLT)**

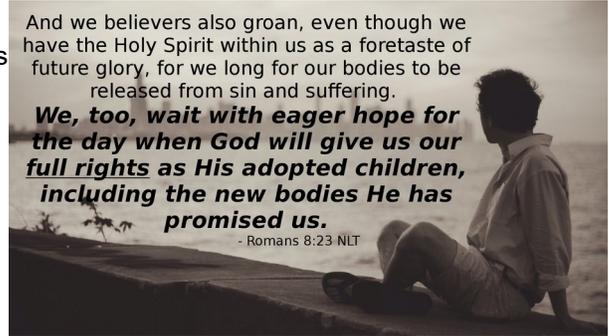
22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

23 *And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.*

And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.

***We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us.***

- Romans 8:23 NLT



I've broken this section into two parts. Paul says that creation has been “groaning as in the pain of childbirth right up to the present time.” Well, what is it groaning for? FULFILLMENT! The creation of this world and its system were not created for eternity. So, the moment it was created it began to die. God had the plan to bring His life to us. He did that in Jesus Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection. However, Jesus has not returned yet and so we are still subject to this creation.

He goes on to say that we as believers (present day) “groan even though we have the Holy Spirit.” In Ephesians 1:14, Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is given as a "guarantee", "a down payment", "a deposit"; and, the KJV class it as "earnest". He refers to the Holy Spirit this way also in 2 Corinthians 1:18 & 5:5.

The word “guarantee” or “earnest” is a business term that speaks of earnest, a part of the purchase price paid in advance. The Greek word "Arrabon" is the first installment or payment, which guarantees full possession, when the whole is paid later. "Arrabon" describes the Holy Spirit as the pledge of our future joys and bliss in heaven. Living in the Spirit gives us a foretaste or a guarantee of things to come.

Many of us do not know this role the Holy Spirit holds in our life, or at least we can forget it at times. That is why creation is groaning because we can't wait to experience the fullness of this promise. I am excited aren't you?

## “Groaning with Hope (Part 2)”

### Romans 8:22-25 (NLT)

22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 *We were given this hope when we were saved.* (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)



We discussed the idea of why creation and present day believers are groaning. Then we discussed what it means where it says the Holy Spirit is the "guarantee" or "down payment" for our future hope in heaven.

I want to just make a few notes because it is self explanatory in this translation as to "What are we groaning for" because WE:

1) ". . . **Long** for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering." - Amen to that! If you live in this world you struggle with this kind of total victory. In fact, Jesus promised there would be trouble. (John 16:33) I am looking for that new body.

2) ". . . **Wait** with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children including the new bodies he has promised us." - "New bodies," it is promised again. I am pumped. Now it is not just that we wait, Paul tells us that we are to wait with "hope." We groan because though our souls are saved, our bodies are still subject to pain and to sin. However, we look forward with hope. Remember the wonderful description of the word "faith" that we are given in Hebrews 11:1 "Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see." Romans 8:20-21 talks about this as well.

3) ". . . **Were given** this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it." - God's Word does not promise absolute and complete deliverance in this life. There are lots of great things promised here. However, not all are healed or have complete victory over sin, at least I don't and I don't think you do either. This kind of explains itself, hope is a part of that process of faith. Knowing God's Word and reading his promises about heaven is our hope. We simply ask God for us to live in victory in every way we can and walk through with confidence.

4) ". . . **Look forward** to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently." - So, lastly, we wait with hope, but we also are to "wait patiently and confidently." Believe me, this gets hard at times when we see the things going on in our world. However, God gives us patience and confidence as we walk through this life by faith, in hope and in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Bless you!

## “A Groaning Prayer”

### **Romans 8:26-28 (NLT)**

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 *And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.* 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.



A major theme of this chapter has obviously been the idea of "groaning." Paul gives us another very vital and important groan of the believer who chooses to live by and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is obvious to all of us, who pray, that there are times that we do not know how to pray. Many times we just simply do not know what to pray for. However, when we live in the Spirit the Bible says "the Holy Spirit prays for us with groaning that cannot be expressed in words." There are times when we do not know how to put into words the prayer that brings the will of God. It is in these times that we pray in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit puts our prayers into words the Father can understand.

Verse 27 reads "the Father who knows all hearts, knows what the Holy Spirit is saying..." This is vital. Because prayer, in the Spirit, is not passively throwing up our hands and declaring, "I don't know what to say." Sometimes it is just groaning it out and allowing the Holy Spirit to put into words the Father responds to. You might look at the story of Hannah in the Old Testament who was barren and look at how she prayed. Her lips were moving, but no sound was coming out and the priests thought she was drunk. (1 Samuel 1) Nine months later she gave birth to Samuel who became one of the greatest Prophets in the Old Testament. That, my friends, is truly answered prayer from barrenness to fruitfulness.

One last thing I would like to share. It is not that the Father cannot understand our words or groans. After all, The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all One. The Father, who knows our hearts, hears by the Holy Spirit, who is pleading on behalf of the believer in harmony with God's will. This makes for full proof prayer. When we pray perfectly the will of God we get our prayers answered in what is best for us and for the kingdom. However, there are times we do not have a clue what the will of God is, but the Holy Spirit always knows, because He is God. This leads into the outcome, which is found in verse 28. Blessings on each of you!

## “Work Together”

### **Romans 8:26-28 (NLT)**

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

We do not always know how to pray the will of God. So, the Holy Spirit helps us intercede (pray) with groaning that cannot be “expressed in words.” The promise of the Holy Spirit to help us intercede carries with it the promise of deep instruction. We could never suppose that we always know how to pray the perfect will of God based on our own perspective or understanding. Since we do not know how to pray, we should stay humble and in faith for the Holy Spirit to help us “pray in harmony with God's Will” To be presumptuous and suppose that we know how to intercede for others or difficult situations will also hinder the amazing adventure God gives us as we receive His insight and enablement for intercessory prayer.

Romans 8:28 is well known. “All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” God has this incredible way of “causing everything to work together.” We can relate to our own day to day experiences and see how hard it is to get anything to work together, but God causes “everything” to work together for those who “love God” and are “called according to His purpose.”

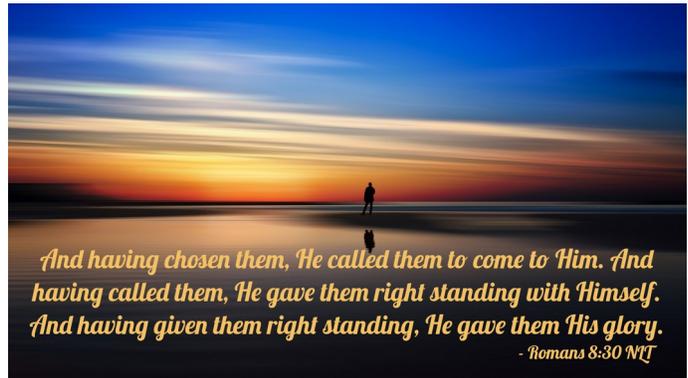
This word “purpose” is the Greek word “pro-thesis.” It comes from the word “pro” (before) and “thesis” (a place). Putting that together means “a place” or “a setting forth.” This gives us the idea that God has a “deliberate plan or an “advance plan.” It is God's intention or design. God has an advance plan for our salvation. *God has an advance plan that demonstrates His abiding faithfulness as He completes the great plans of “end things” and for His people and His church.* Bless you as you walk in God's advance plan for you and your life.



## “Standing in His Glory”

### **Romans 8:28-30 (NLT)**

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. 29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 *And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. Having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.*



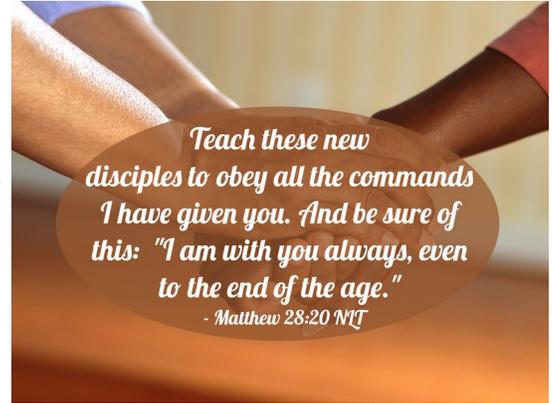
One of the more powerful truths in the New Testament is that Jesus has this incredible foreknowledge to know the outcomes before the event even has the opportunity to come together. Jesus, the son of God, has already begun to turn it around for "our good" and for "His glory."

Many people believe that God has just predetermined everything before the world began and we, as His created people, have no input for all time. They feel that God is God so He can just do whatever He wants with us. That His created ones play only a passive role—merely a little pawn in fulfilling God's creation and purpose. Of course, He is the Lord of the universe and He is the Lord of our life. The difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this earth is that God the King, only wants His goodness for us. If you would listen to many people they are just convinced that God is out to take advantage of His weak creation and we must just cower down into the dirt on our knees and say, "k-sera sera, sera"—"whatever will be will be..."

No! God outrageously loves us. He wants His very best for us. He takes the good things and the hard things in this life and turns them around for our good and for His glory. God is a God of purpose. He is not running His creation through a meat grinder trying to let them know just how arbitrary everything in the new creation can be. God does have a purpose for us, brothers and sisters! Not to do us harm but to only do us good. (Jeremiah 29:11)

As I mentioned God is not a tyrant arbitrarily running around just doing evil to His creation. Listen, He chose us out, God called us to Him! He gave us a right standing with Him. In the process of giving us right standing—He gave us His Glory (The visible effects of His presence). May I ask you to think about and ask yourself this question? When was the last time you really experienced a powerful expression of the presence of God? If you can get in touch with those powerful moments in your life you will remember that "it was good to be in God's presence". For "it is safe there," you feel the touch of his irresistible love in those moments. You immediately recognize that there is a freedom like you have never experienced before. By the way, this level of experiencing the presence of God is always available. Reach out to Him, He is right there for you.

God only wants to do you good. In fact, He rejoices in doing you good. I pray that you begin to know the God who works the night shift—He is with you in the night—but He is always with you during the day shift too! In fact, that sums it up! He promised to be with you even unto the “end of the age”. He only wants to do you good—bless you as you experience His goodness!



## “Does It Matter, At All, Who Is For Us?”

### Romans 8:31-34 (NLT)

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? *If God is for us, who can ever be against us?* 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

As a sort of prelude to one of the most marvelous rhetorical questions found in the Bible, is this powerful statement in verse 31. He asks in Romans 8:35-39 (NLT) where God asks us through the "Rhetorical Eye"—Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Well, of course, the quick answer is a resounding No! "If God is for us, who can EVER be against us?" Hang on a bit—this is a powerful truth.

Paul takes a moment in this passage to rejoice in the wonderful things we have discovered in this Romans 8 so far. I find the truths of Romans 8—especially what it means to experience life in the Spirit—to be some of the most important words found in the entire Bible. Since we discover "grace" in the first seven chapters of Romans, it is easy to try to come to the conclusion that—the opposite of living under the law is living under grace. And of course, that is very true in some ways. However, the “true” opposite of living under the law is—understanding how, to live, and move, and have our being in Him. Simplifying, this is what it means to live in the Spirit.

While meditating on this, let's introduce ourselves to this huge question, "***If God is for us then who can EVER be against us?***" Well, the answer is, of course, "No one!" If God is for us then no one can possibly stand against us, because to do so they would have to stand against "Christ in us—the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)



Listen closely now. God is for you! He is not against you. You are under God's favor (grace). That means you are one of God's favorites. You say "no, no" for God does not show any favoritism. Of course, you are exactly correct. (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; James 3:17) To be God's “favorite”—means He has “graced” you and “gifted” you. This never happens at the expense of anyone else. For a parent to choose one of their children over another child—the only way this could show up—is for the the favored child to get all of the good things the parent could provide, but only at the expense the un-favored child. That child would have to get nothing or at least a very reduced amount. When I use this term or idea that “you are one of God’s favorites”, I am only saying that in light that He has placed His grace upon you. You

might remember that the angel spoke of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He called her “Highly favored.” Luke 1:28 (NIV) Meaning that she had been chosen to fulfill a task for God and she was gifted and prepared to accomplish it. Though I believe Mary should be remembered and honored I do not believe that she was to be worshiped or prayed to.

Listen to me! God is NOT mad at you! He is NOT out to keep you down! It is NOT His agenda to keep you in constant worry that He is not going to be there for you! You may have never experienced something like this in your family. However, let me tell you that more people experience this worry than don't in the human family.

Let me give you a personal experience. When my first-born son was born I was immediately deeply and madly in love with the most incredible little baby that had ever been born. After we had a couple of years with Caleb, my wife Diane began to talk about having another child. I was scared to death, because I loved Caleb so much. I didn't know where the love would come from for the second child. Well, it finally happened Diane became pregnant and we watched and waited for 9 months to know if this baby was a boy or a girl. We were excited, but I felt this hesitancy because the question in the back of my mind constantly was, “What if there is not enough love for this second child?” The day Jon was born and I saw him as he entered the world—there came flooding into my soul that day [in a small hospital in Vinita, OK] all of the love I have ever needed to love Jon just as I have ever loved Caleb. I've never had to steal love from Caleb to give to Jon or the other way around. Well, God loves all of us with all of Himself. He does it because He does not just love, He IS love. We can do it too, because of the beautiful expression of the love of God in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Bless each of you, *God outrageously loves you and He always will!*

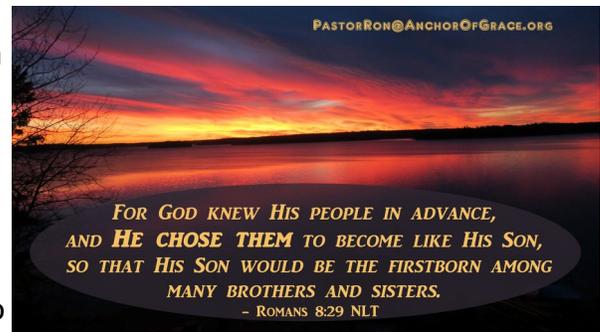
## “God Chose You!”

During this discussion of Romans chapter 8, I realized that in the process of getting excited about the thoughts I was addressing that I left a couple of very important thoughts out. I would like to take time now to go back & pick up a couple of important thoughts before we dive into the great crescendo at the end of this incredible chapter. Incidentally, It is my prayer that you enjoy the experience of walking through Romans 8—Life in the Spirit!

### **Romans 8:29-30 (NLT)**

*29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.*

I think you would agree, that if your desire is to know and experience Jesus, then the truth found in this section is vital! We should forever keep these thoughts on the forefront of our mind and heart. Paul says in verse 29, “**For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.**” Just think about it! In our society, people give up on things so quickly. It might be—a car—a house—a tool, you name it. If that thing loses its value in our life “for like a minute,” then it’s being found on the FaceBook Marketplace or whatever. Relationships get this treatment as well.



In past times it seemed that people just didn't give up on stuff. If they had an old comfortable jacket and it was getting older and had a hole or two then they would hang on to it. Simply because that old jacket "had been loyal to them." In present day people don't hold onto things as much from a sentimental or emotional perspective. They just buy the jeans with holes already in them right from the beginning, rather than earn those stripes over time. Quite often I have couples come into my counseling office and some “little thing” has gone South in their marriage they are ready to write it off.

During counseling, I had two couples that entered the door talking divorce, saying things like "I am done!" or "I can't do this anymore." Both of these precious couples would be considered "nominal Christians," which just means they believe that faith was not a day to day experience as much as it is a once or twice a year experience. In just a matter of 6 weeks I was graced with a front row seat as God restored these two marriages. They are so excited. One just returned from the cruise of a lifetime. The other sent a card telling how God is still working as they shared their gratitude.

Honestly, here is the key. The key is in not having to “throw away relationships” and to

actually do relationships like Father God does relationships. Keep it in perspective. Listen, God knew you in advance! When it says God knew you, I mean He intimately, freely and thoroughly, intimately “knew you”! Guess what? He didn't toss you aside declaring, “This one is just going to be WAY too much work.” God knew you in advance and He kept you anyway. That is good news for most of us. Honestly, in most every case, God is not getting the best deal to work with when He begins the journey with you. We are getting the best deal!

The second thing God says here is that after knowing you, “He kept you!” (read Rom 8:30) But not only that, “He chose you.” In a relationship when you really “choose someone,” you didn't just start going out because your buddy set you up, or she was cute or he was handsome. You can honestly say, “I chose you!” If things don't go well at times it does not change the fact that “I chose you” [warts and all]. We have a Father who chose us! He does not give up on us, even when we move into rebellion in an area of our life, or just start walking in outward obvious sin. God does not stop pursuing us. “He chose you”—He is not giving up on you, even if you give up on yourself. Lastly, He chose you for the highest position—which is “Sonship.”

## ***“The Gift of Sonship”***

### **Romans 8:29-30 (NLT)**

29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

I am jumping in and picking up a couple of thoughts that we want to cover before we hit that most incredible crescendo found at the end of Romans 8. Previously, we discovered and celebrated that Jesus knew us “in advance” and still kept us on. That is real grace! Jesus makes us His kingdom agents, in the earth, not because He sees us in all of our wonderful glory and thinks we are perfect for the job. He uses us because of that which He has done for us through His “only begotten Son”.

The Father, sees us how we really are, when no one else is looking and He still calls us His sons and daughters. What kind of love is that? (1 John 3:1 NLT). This is some really good news. We may give up on ourselves or others because of a lot of stuff, but the One who knows us best, still loves us, never gives up on us, and is willing to give us some incredible gifts to walk around with. What? Yeah! Watch this!

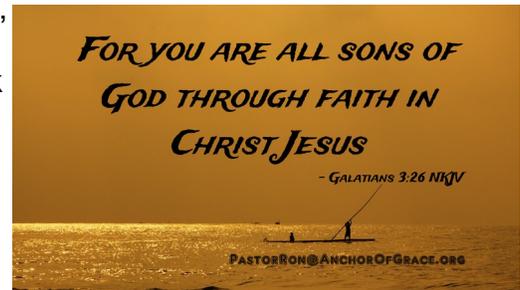
Paul says first, "He knew us in advance." Second, "He chose them (us) to become like His Son." I mean, He could have said I am going to make you like Billy Graham or whomever, as great as that might be. He said that He "called us to be like His most prized and amazing Son, Jesus Christ". What mercy! What grace! He sees us how we really are and then He still says – “I am going to make you” become like my Son. I think that is just incredible. This will fulfill God's eternal plan, when we get to be like His Son, so that Jesus can be the “firstborn of many brothers and sisters.” He sounds like He is almost saying, "thanks for being my child, because now I can make you like my Son, so my Son can be what I have always said He was going to be." What an honor!

Thirdly, from that place in us being "chosen", He calls us to “come to Him.” Our Father is not a far away God. He is the God who has come close. He called us to “come to Him,” to be close. Oh wow! Does that get to you at all yet?

Fourthly, He gave us "right standing with himself." This is the idea that God has made His throne room available to all of us who have become like His Son, who has right standing. Literally, we have the rights of the Son. You couldn't just walk into a King's Court without a lot of arrangement in the Bible times. Well, this arrangement was not made, not based on anything we have done, it was made and based on what Jesus did at the cross. That is what caused Father, to do all of these things in this verse on our behalf. Why would we ever want to try to approach, The Father, through another human person, if we have the rights of the Son.

Lastly, after making us have "right standing with Himself", He gives us this one last thing; "His glory!" Are you kidding? That means those who God has done this work of grace for are "accepted in the beloved." (Ephesians 1:6 NKJV) We have access to the Father based on that which He has done. That is what He has given us. It is totally unearned, or un-earnable. Then He says I am giving you "my glory". That is the visible effects of My presence. Literally, the guiding work of the Holy Spirit.

The openness of dull minds to understand the Word of God, because it is understood out of relationship with God, not religion. Oh I could go on and on here. This just pumps me up, because it was all God's idea. I don't deserve any of this. I know all of you do, but me? I mean do you know me? Well, He does and He calls me "son". (Gal 3:26 NKJV) This is life in the Spirit.



## **“Who Dares To Accuse Us?”**

### **Romans 8:31-34 (NLT)**

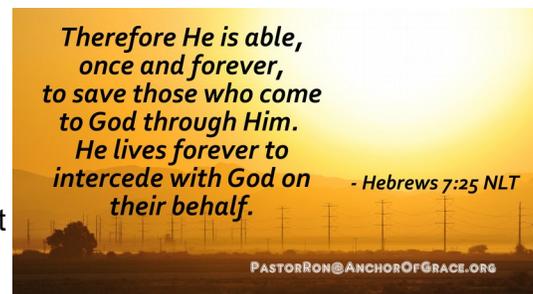
31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

What an incredible statement Paul writes in Romans 8:31 saying, **“If God be for us, who can ever be against us?”** He addresses many of the fears of man in just a few words. If God is for you, who would dare be against you? What a comforting and yet a sobering thought that no one would even dare stand against those who God is for. When David fought Goliath, the comparisons the giant saw had to do with outward appearances, choice of weapons etc. However, David saw it as a spiritual war. It was not David against Goliath. It was like this: (2 Samuel 17:45)—David replied to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”

Paul goes on in Romans 8:32 to say, **“Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?”** I mean God put it all on the line to make us co-heirs with Jesus Christ. He didn't spare His own Son who could win the battle against the evil one! Thereby, He blesses those of us who chose to put our faith in Jesus. For Jesus overcame the enemy in the cross.

In Romans 8:33 Pauls says, **“Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself.”** Who would even dare to accuse the ones God has chosen and has given right standing with Him. We didn't earn it and we don't deserve it. We couldn't afford it no matter what we could muster up. God made us right with Him! Therefore, who could even dare to bring accusation against us? There is an "accuser of the brethren" found in Revelation 12:10 (NKJV); look that up and see what happens to him.

Finally, Paul in Romans 8:34 says, **“Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.”** The only One who could possibly accuse us is the only perfect One—Jesus Christ. Notice Jesus died and was raised for us and that He is sitting in the place of honor. He is not condemning us but rather He is in the place of honor interceding on our behalf. That is good news! The only One who would have the right to condemn us is not condemning us. Instead, He is speaking up for us. Glory be to God! We are free because of the great work of Christ.

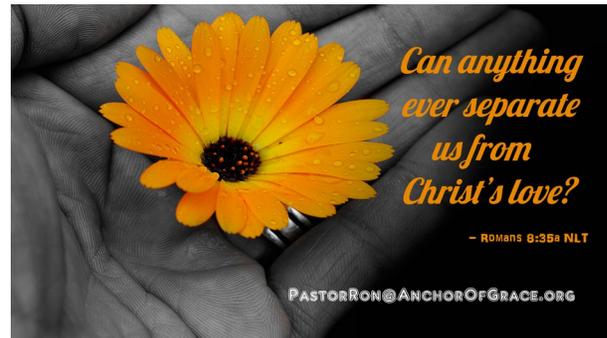


## “A God Kind of Love”

### Romans 8:35-37 (NLT)

35 *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?* Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

Paul now comes to the great crescendo of this incredible chapter. He begins with a very important question, as the Apostle is known for in some of his writings. It is a question that has a seemingly obvious answer. He asks, “**Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?**” For me, the answer is obvious! “No!—Nothing can ever separate us from God's incredible love.”



However, not all people walk with confidence in God's love because they compare it to the human love found in our present sin condition. This kind of human love is based on feelings, it is based on actions, and it is based on performance, or in some cases the lack of those things. What we learn in this chapter is that God's love is unconditional. It does not come and go based on our behavior. We may do things that grieve the heart of the Father, but the constant of His love is not based on that.

It has been my honor to serve God in love through counseling in my 40 years as a pastor. I have been honored to see God restore so many broken relationships, in marriage, families and even business and church relationships. The one thing that seems to help a lot in these situations is to look at the kind of amazing love that God has for us. Many people only know the worldly attitudes of love that permeate so many relationships even among "Christ Followers." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a gives us a wonderful description of God's love. (also read 1 John 3:1) We must discover that the way God loves is so much different than the way we seem to love in our world. God, does not just love us, He is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

God does not just have a loving disposition for those who can do something right or at least not do something wrong. God just simply loves us. One day, a long time ago, God turned on His spout of love and He has never turned it off. Though it is true, that sometimes we do not feel very lovable, especially after falling short—again—in some area of our walk with God. However, I want to assure you today. The answer to the question Paul begins this section with has a very easy answer. “*Nothing can separate us from God's love—Absolutely nothing!*”

## “Overwhelming Victory (Part 1)”

### Romans 8:35-37 (NLT)

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

Previously, we shared about God's love. The Word of God tells us in this passage, "nothing can separate us from God's love." I am so glad for that. I have known that truth a long time. Each time I read it I discover more and more of the depth of God's tremendous nature which is His incredible love.

In these verses Paul names seven things that cannot separate us from God's love: "trouble," "calamity," "persecution," "hunger," "destitution," "danger," or "threatened with death." Now that is quite a list of hard times that we may face in life. If we find ourselves in any of those seven things [brought on by our actions or by the actions of others] then we should never have the thought that, "God must not love me anymore." Sometimes God's love removes us FROM hard times, and sometimes His love gives us the power to WALK RIGHT THROUGH those things. We are taught to pray "God deliver me from this..." However, sometimes God will show us "overwhelming victory" in the midst of that storm. In either case, His amazing love for us is always ever present in times of trouble. (read Psalm 46:1)

Then Paul quotes Psalm 44:22, "But for your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." We are, of course, in this spiritual battle everyday. Sheep follow the shepherd their whole life. Therefore, it does not seem odd to them when they follow the shepherd into the place of death. Psalm 23:4 says, "...I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." However, we follow a loving Shepherd! Though we begin moving toward death even from the day we are born, we can trust our "Great Shepherd" because we know that this world is not our home. "We are looking for a city with eternal foundations..." (Hebrews 11:10) That is not all there is! God's love is the source that leads us through anything this world, the devil, or even hell can throw at us because in Him... "overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." (Romans 8:37 NLT) I like this verse in another translation, which may sound more familiar to some for it says: *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37 NIV) I long to be "more than a conqueror" in the love of Christ. How about you? Blessings!



## “Overwhelming Victory (Part 2)”

**Romans 8:37 (NLT)**—“No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.”

**Romans 8:37 (NIV)**—“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”



In this passage Paul refers to the possibility that we can live in "Overwhelming Victory" or we can be **"more than conquerors"** through the love of Christ. Now, that sounds really good. I mean, have you ever thought during your Christian walk, "I just wish I could have victory in even ONE part of my life?" There are so many things that we face in this world, so many temptations, so many struggles, and so much trouble comes our way. Even though that is true God tells us that He wants to make us "more than a conqueror." What does that mean?

For the Christ follower who finds themselves discouraged in the battle, this is a powerful passage and one we should take to memory. At least print it out and put it up in strategic places in our home and work to remind us of the "overwhelming victory" we can have. This is not in our own strength, but in the One who loves us. This is so vital. To have the constant assurance of God's present and active love that is available in every moment of our walk is a very freeing thought. I think we would be hard pressed to think of any discouraging moments that we might have greater than the seven things Paul mentions in Romans 8:35-36. This means that even during the hardest parts of our lives we can be "more than a conqueror" in Christ.

"More than a conqueror" in Greek is the word, "hypernikaao". The first part of this Greek word is "hyper" means "over and above." The next part of the word "nikaoo" means to conquer. Putting them together we have the idea of a person who is super victorious, or has "overwhelming victory." It is much more than doing the minimum to get victory by the skin of your teeth. It is the idea of having a complete victory. This word describes a believer who is overpowering the enemy by achieving abundant victory. This is not describing a conceited or self-confident person. It has to do with a person who is walking in a deep Biblical confidence. The love of Christ conquers death. Because of His love for us and in us, we are "more than a conqueror".

The reason we live in such defeat in life and walk without a Biblical confidence is because we compare it to how this world operates. A parent, a boss, a coach, a leader, pastor or someone will say, "If you would do this or not do that then I will be so proud of you." Therefore we try to go and win their love. However, in Christ we are loved first. We are loved no matter where we are on the victory journey. Christ loved us and died for us while we were still sinners. He didn't wait until we had our life all together and then say, "they earned it, I will die for them now." There may be things in your life that you have struggled finding victory

over. I have heard believers just knock themselves down verbally mistaking thinking that the way they have acted would somehow cause God to withdraw or at least withhold His love. God knows us! He knows we are just dirt. After all, that is what He made man out of. We are a people in the making, not one of us has arrived. Yet and still, God's love toward us is just outrageous.

Listen to me. God loves you in an outrageous way and you can be a victorious Christian; just, settle in and enjoy the overwhelming love of God in your life. Trust it, you can depend totally on His love, no matter what.

## **“I Am Convinced!”**

### **Romans 8:38-39 (NLT)**

38 And *I am convinced* that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We will look one last time at this great 8th chapter of Romans. The Apostle Paul addresses this issue of **“*what can separate us from God's love.*”** Of course, the answer once again is nothing can separate us from God's love neither, "death nor life", "angels nor demons" [this word demons may mean "rulers"]. This could include both, spiritual or human rulers, but it seems the emphasis is placed on possible negative spiritual forces. None of these things can separate us from the love of God.

Then Paul puts more emphasis on "fears for today or worries about tomorrow." This is all centered around one of the forces that attack us day in and day out. (read Psalm 46:1) The Bible has 365 verses that directly deal with our need NOT to walk in worry and fear. Fear might attach itself to a deep emotion that we feel when we are not trusting in God with our life. Worry is pretty much the same thing with the emphasis on allowing ourselves to think, that we can somehow control what is happening in life by taking on the role of being someone who worries about it. Jesus has much to say about this issue of worry in His great Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Take a few minutes to read this great message. When we worry, doubt, or take on a responsibility to make life work on our own without trusting God, then we begin to walk in a sin issue.

Romans 14:23 (NKJV) says, "...*For whatever is not from faith is sin.*" In the days that we live, it is a time that fulfills the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah's words from **Isaiah 5:20-21 (NLT)** saying, "20 *What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.* 21. *What sorrow for those who are wise in their own eyes and think themselves so clever.*"

Today, we live in the age of the church. We must not the flesh, in our own strength, or our own abilities. (read Philippians 2:6) We must walk fully "convinced" lives. Romans 4:21 as I end this statement on Life in the Spirit Romans 8. May I ask you as I ask myself, **“Are you a *fully convinced* life in the love of God empowered by the ever-present person of the Holy Spirit?”** I have no place to judge you in this, I am just so that you can live out a fully convinced life. Where absolutely nothing, could ever separate you from the incredible love of God in Christ Jesus.



walk in  
Read  
from  
living  
asking