



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 13: Romans 8:18-39

Romans chapter eight begins by focusing on the differences in those who walk by the flesh, and those who walk by the spirit. Paul reminded us that Christianity is what is seen in our daily lives, and that as Christians we must set our minds on the things of the Spirit, rather than the things of the world. Why? Because we are children of God! We are heirs with Jesus Christ, and we will one day share in his glory!

This is where our next section begins. Paul is going to describe for us the tremendous blessings that come to those who are in Christ Jesus. He is going to remind us of the hope to which we are called, and the confidence we can have, even in this world, because of the future glory that awaits us.

Throughout this section Paul will describe 3 groaning: the groanings of creation, the groanings of man, and the groanings of the Holy Spirit. As we go through this text watch for the relationship between these concepts, and how each ultimately points to the glory that awaits us.

Read 8:18-39 and mark any key words or phrases.

Read Romans 8:18-22

In verse 17 Paul wrote that we would only be glorified with Christ *if* we suffer with him. That might be scary, but he follows this statement with verse 18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” The word for “suffering” here can have the connotation of struggles endured specifically for the cause of Christ. We are being reminded that no matter what difficulties this world brings it will all be worth it when God’s glory is revealed to us.

Also, in this section we learn several things about the physical world that God created:

1. It waits with longing for the revealing of the sons of God (19)
2. It was not willingly subjected to futility (the universe did not sin) (20)
3. It hopes to be set free (21)
4. It has been groaning (22)

This is a testament to the care that God took in creating this world for us. Although the earth, as an inanimate object, is incapable of sin, it has still suffered because of the sin that man brought into the world (Genesis 3:17). Yet ultimately the universe answers to



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its creator, and it longs for the day sin will be eradicated once and for all. This will happen when Christ returns, and man's incorruptible form is revealed. Some believe this will be a re-creation of our physical body, and some believe it will be a spiritual body. Paul doesn't specify, but what is clear is that Jesus will come again, and we will be made eternally, spiritually whole and glorified alongside his Son.

Two other phrases in this text that lead to a lot of discussion are, "that the creation itself will be set free from it's bondage," (vs 21) and, "the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth," (vs 22). Many believe this means that the world will be cleansed from the stain of sinful man by fire and restored to a Garden of Eden purity. Thus, establishing a new, physical earth where man will live in harmony with God for eternity.

Others believe that Paul's personification of creation should not be taken so literally, and that any Scripture that refers to a "new earth" is referring to Heaven.

Sadly, this topic is leading to a lot of arguing and division in our brotherhood. When it comes to this subject, I advise a plethora of caution, grace and understanding. As is pointed out in the Truth for Today commentary on Romans, even with hundreds of prophecies, no one got the exact details of Jesus' first coming correct. We have even less information about Jesus' second coming, so we should cautious binding our beliefs

regarding the specifics of the second coming on others. As Christians it is vital that we believe that Jesus will return, and we will spend eternity with him in glory. As for exactly what that will look/be like, I suggest we focus on Ephesians 4:4-6 and the unity that we have in Christ so that, whatever it is like, we can all spend eternity together worshipping our Almighty God.

As the one creation that was made in the image of God, what can we learn from the universe's longing for eternity?

Read Romans 8:23-25

At first glance this may seem a little contradictory, since verse 15 told us that we have adoption as sons, and verse 23 says that we are eagerly awaiting our adoption as sons. Yet 23b explains what Paul means, "the redemption of our bodies." The word for "redemption" here means deliverance or release. Once again it is difficult to tell whether Paul is describing the release of our spiritual selves from a binding physical body, or the release of our perishable body to that which is imperishable.

Either way, just as the creation groans for release, as Christians we should be groaning for release from our fleshly struggles. We are longing to be eternally united with our Heavenly Father. We already have the firstfruits of the Spirit, He is bearing witness that we are children of God (8:16).



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Why are we groaning? Because of our hope! We know that, although we can't see it, there is something unimaginably greater than anything this world has to offer waiting for us! Yet while we groan and we long for the glory that is waiting for us, we also wait with patience. This word for patience means long-suffering, referring back to verse 18. We are willing to endure anything this life throws at us because we know that, in the end, it will be more than worth it.

What are some practical ways we can adopt this mindset even in times of suffering and struggle?

What are some practical ways we can encourage this mindset in our brethren in a church culture that is often consumer-minded? (Meaning we like things to be easy, and preferably our way.)

Read Romans 8:26-27

Have you ever been through something that left you in complete despair? That left you heartbroken, without any idea of what to do or where to turn? A situation where there were not even words for the soul-deep agony you were experiencing? I have, and that is why I am immeasurably grateful for these verses.

Once again Paul specifies that he is speaking about the Holy Spirit when he adds the personal pronoun, "himself." While I would certainly never claim to fully understand how the Holy Spirit works or what all he does for us, these verses tell us that at our lowest moments he is there for us, to intercede for us in our prayers. When we don't have the words, he fills in the gaps.

It is also important to note who this intercession is for according to verse 27: the saints. This word literally means, "those who are dedicated to God." If we are willing to suffer with Christ in complete dedication, then the Spirit will intercede for us. And how does God know if we are fully dedicated to him? Because he searches our hearts. Just like with the Pharisees (Matthew 15:8), God is not interested in followers who profess obedience but live however they want. He is only interested in inside-out believers, those whose faith begins in their hearts and is manifested in their daily lives.

Take a moment and pray, specifically thanking God for the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Thank him for caring about us so deeply that he is willing to intercede for us when we cannot do it for ourselves.



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Does the phrase, “inside-out believer,” truly describe you? If not, what changes need to be made?

Read Romans 8:28-30

Verse 28 is one of the most used and abused passages in all of Scripture. Because clearly, according to this verse, if anything bad happens to you then you must not truly believe. Or at least that is what some teach. Yet we must keep in mind when this letter was written; around 57 AD. This is just a few short years before the reign of Nero began in 64 AD. The same Nero who hated Christians so much that he burned the city of Rome so he could blame it on them. The same Nero who hated Christians so much that he would literally put them on stakes and burn them alive to light his garden paths. That seems like some pretty horrible stuff is going to happen to these Roman Christians in just a few short years.

So, if verse 28 is not teaching that bad things won't happen to true believers, what is it teaching? No matter how bad things get on this earth, God can and will bring good from it. Sometimes we see that good while we are still on the earth. For instance, when we are able to help or encourage someone else who is struggling because of our own experiences. Or when one opportunity does not work out, only for an even better one to come along. While these situations are wonderful and

certainly blessings, I don't believe that is what Paul had in mind.

Keeping to our context, remember back to verse 18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” What greater good is there than our coming glory? No matter what bad things happen or what difficulties arise, we have been bought with the blood of Christ (chapter six) and are awaiting our adoption as heirs (8:23). That is the good that God will work for us!

But who is that good for? Those who are called according to his purpose. Verses 29-30 describe these individuals even more for us. In these verses we see four descriptors of the same people:

- the called
- the justified
- the glorified
- the predestined
- the foreknown

It is always best to allow the author to define the language when possible. In Romans 1:7 Paul addresses this letter, “To those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” When and how were they called to be saints? Paul reminded them of this in 6:3-4, he is writing to those who were buried with Christ in baptism. Who are the justified? According to 5:9 those who have the blood of Jesus. Who are the glorified?



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They are those who are heirs with Christ (8:17).

The only two descriptions not seen elsewhere in Romans are, “predestined,” and “foreknown.” However, Paul has been clear about the called, the justified, and the glorified throughout his letter, and in these verses all five terms are used to describe the same people. The predestined are those who are called, justified and glorified. The foreknown are those who are called, justified and glorified.

Paul has not switched his focus. He is still talking about those who have been baptized into Christ and are striving daily to live faithfully for him. He is not throwing out a new theology here, we must keep these verses in context with the rest of his letter. We see this in his phrasing, what were these people predestined for? To be conformed to the image of his Son.

Some teach that predestination means that God chose, before we were ever created, who would be with him eternally. We really have no say in the matter, we can only pray that we made the cut. Yet according to verse 29 God need not predestined the specific people, but the plan. How were these people called, foreknown and predestined? By their willingness to conform their lives to Jesus Christ. If we are willing to conform to his image (keeping in mind this includes his suffering, verse 17) then we will be glorified with him.

What have you always believed about Romans 8:28? Does it fit Paul’s purpose in this text?

How have you viewed predestination? Is it the same as Paul’s description in Romans 8:29?

Read Romans 8:31-36

In this section Paul raises five important questions:

1. If God is for us, who can be against us? (31)
2. Will he not also graciously give us all things? (32)
3. Who can bring any charge against God’s elect? (33)
4. Who is to condemn? (34)
5. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Once again, Paul’s subject has not changed. With these rhetorical questions he is still reminding the Roman Christians that the glory awaiting them is worth anything they will endure on this earth. God was willing to give his own son for us, there is nothing he has not done to give us the opportunity to share in his glory, so who



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could possibly stand against us if God is on our side?

What can any man say against us? The Spirit knows our heart and is interceding for us. No one can bring a charge against us because God himself has already justified us. Not only is the Spirit interceding for us, but Jesus Christ who died for us is interceding for us (verse 35).

In a court of law, there would be no more impeccable witnesses than Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus has already stood condemned in our place, so there is nothing on this earth that can separate us from the glory that awaits us. Not false witnesses, not tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword (verse 35).

For Paul's readers these were not some random, extreme examples he was using to make a point. According to verse 36 these examples are in fact the future that awaits many of these brethren. What is unfathomable to us was reality for them. Looking back at verse 28 how is this thing working together for their good? Because none of these horrible things can separate them from Jesus Christ. No matter what happened to their physical bodies, their eternal soul was safe. What comfort during a time of horrible persecution, and what comfort for us today.

While Paul is clear that nothing can tear us away from Jesus, Scripture is also clear that we can choose to let the things of this life come between us and our God. Are there changes that need to be made in your life?

In this fallen world people can be harsh, sometimes even in the Lord's church. It is human nature to want to defend ourselves against harsh, critical, or false accusations. Yet there are times when our efforts to defend ourselves only result in more division and strife. Let us remember that God himself has said that no one can bring a charge against us before him. No man's opinion matters if God is on our side.

Read Romans 8:37-38

If you have never heard the song, "More Than Conquerors," I encourage you to find it today (you can find a version by Zoe Group on YouTube). Based off of verse 37, it is a favorite of our family and our youth group. Sisters, we are more than conquerors through Christ! At no other time in history will you be able to pick your side after the war has been fought! But the war is over and Jesus is victorious! The war was won because God loved us so much that Jesus died for us, and now nothing in this world, spiritual or otherwise, can separate us from that love. We are more than conquerors!



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Find the lyrics and sing the song, "More Than Conquerors."