

SMALL GROUPS

Relentless Grace: How the Gospel Changes Everything

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Session 10 – Hope, Help, and Invincible Love | Romans Chapter 8:18–39

Paul wrote this letter to hundreds of Roman Christians he didn't know. In his mind's eye, he wrote to his old friends Aquila and Priscilla and a roomful of faces he'd never met, in a house he'd never been to, in a city he'd never visited. But he loved them like family—pouring himself, body and soul, into the pages for their spiritual wellbeing. How could he know that countless multitudes, centuries later would still be poring over this letter, gleaning truth, puzzling and praying their way through his tightly reasoned rhetoric?

He knew he was preaching the gospel, sharing the inspired writings as the Spirit of God led him. But he had no idea how far and wide this letter would go. He had no idea (yet) what it would cost him in time, and travel, and trials, and terrors at sea to finally reach Rome—in chains, so he could meet a few hundred believers, only to be snubbed by some and devotedly loved by others.

Eventually he would be imprisoned a second time in Rome, in the notorious Mamertine Prison. At his preliminary hearing, no one came to his support. He was condemned on charges of treason against the emperor. As a Roman citizen, he was entitled to a private beheading instead of public crucifixion or thrown into the arena with wild animals.

The day before his execution, Paul would be marched three miles out of the city where he would be kept in a tiny cell overnight near a place of tombs. At dawn Paul would be stripped to the waist and tied, kneeling upright, to a low pillar that left his neck free. They would beat him with rods one last time; and then, with one sharp swing of the axe, Paul would leave this earthly life.

But for now, sitting in Corinth writing this letter, Paul didn't know exactly when or how his life would end. But he was ready for suffering (again) and ready whenever, and however, God would bring him home to glory. It was on his mind as he wrote Romans 8 . . .

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:18, 39)

Icebreaker

What is the greatest legacy you want to leave when the Lord calls you home?

Goals for this Session:

- Discover the role of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life and prayers.
- Consider why nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.
- Pray authentic prayers that cultivate hope, help, and invincible love.

The Hope of Glory

Romans 8:18–25

So far in this chapter, Paul has identified two truths that set a Christian apart in life. For one thing, we aren't condemned to live in a perpetual cycle of sin, defeat, and failure. Better yet, the Holy Spirit of God is living in us, just as Jesus promised (John 14:16–18). Because we are family, we have all the rights and privileges that come with being a child of God.

1. **Perspective is everything** (verse 18). What does Paul say about suffering and glory?

- a. What “glory that is to be revealed in us” is Paul talking about? (Paul mentions it again in verse 23.) Use the verses below for help with your answer.

1 John 3:2

2 Corinthians 4:17–18

- b. **per-spec-tive** | Viewing one thing in relationship to another. The ability to understand the relative importance of things; a sense of proportion.

Paul depicts all of creation as groaning in pain (verses 19–22). Science does too, but it sees a dying planet moving toward extinction. Both involve suffering but what is the difference? Simply said, “One is the pain of hopeless dread, while the other is the pain of hopeful anticipation.”³ Perspective.

Paul doesn't trivialize suffering, but hope puts it in perspective. From verses 23–25, would you say that Paul's hope was a soft sentiment—or a force to be reckoned with? How so?

Scientists have recently made new predictions about the end of our Solar System: In the process of dying itself, the sun will engulf our planet and life on earth will end. **“In fact, humanity only has about one billion years left unless we find a way off this rock.”**¹

“All good things must come to an end. One day earth will be inhospitable to anything resembling life as we know it.”² Error! Bookmark not

¹ Michelle Starr, *Scientists Have Figured Out When and How Our Sun Will Die, And It's Going to Be Epic*, ©May 7, 2018, www.sciencealert.com

² Dave Mosher, *8 Truly Horrifying Ways the Earth Could Die: What Can Kill Planet Earth*, ©March 12, 2018, www.businessinsider.com

³ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, (Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2004. All rights reserved. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), p. 132.

2. **Unseen hope and tangible faith** (verses 23–25). Paul never conveyed the idea that life for the believer, this side of Heaven, would be easy.
 - a. Do your best to explain how the Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of Heaven. Why does His indwelling presence cause us to groan inwardly and wait eagerly?

 - b. Paul helps to answer a question that regularly comes up, one way or another, for every believer. Is suffering really necessary? Why can't we opt out? Use any (or all) of the verses below for help with your answer.

John 17:14–16

Philippians 1:29

1 Peter 1:6–7

1 Peter 4:12–13

James 1:2–4

A Very Present Help

Romans 8:26–30

Whether we are trying to make sense of the world around us or find meaning in our own life, we need to know that God is in control. The Holy Spirit joins us in our struggles and He doesn't come empty-handed.

1. **Perfect Prayers** (verses 26–27). When human words and wisdom fail—and even when they don't—how does the Holy Spirit (our Helper, Comforter, Advocate) intercede for us?
 - a. When you are particularly burdened to pray about something, but don't know what else to say, do you simply stop praying? Why or why not?

2. **Perfect Plans** (verses 28–30). As a believer looking back in our life, we learn to recognize how God’s hand fashioned our experiences for good. Time has a way of putting the correct price tag on most things, especially eternal things.

a. Long before the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this letter, God was teaching the truth of Romans 8:28 in various times and ways. Choose any (or all) that minister to you in a special way. Share one in discussion time.

Genesis 50:20

Isaiah 46:4

#wordstoknow

Greek words/terms at a glance.

Psalms 119:65–67

Isaiah 55:8–11

hope (elpis) Unwavering expectation of an unseen reality.

Proverbs 3:5–6

Jeremiah 29:11

foreknew (proginosko) Not simply what God knew in advance, but that which He favorably allowed.

Philippians 1:12

1 Thessalonians 5:18

predestined (proriso) Marked out beforehand. This is where our word “horizon” comes from. A Christian’s destiny or horizon is fixed by God to be made like His Son.

conformed (súmmorphos) To fashion into the likeness of; not forcibly; by cooperation.

glorified (doxázo) To esteem and honor; in this context, the believer’s place of honor in God’s family is because of saving faith in Jesus Christ and the refining work of the Holy Spirit.

b. Have you ever prayed for something you thought was best, but then God answered it differently? We all have, of course. Can you see God’s purpose in it now?

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, let it sink in and make it part of your prayers. Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and increase your understanding.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,
to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28 NKJV

Think About It . . .

Does this verse give you a reason to hope? How and in what way?

Invincible Love

Romans 8:31–39

Paul brings his meticulously laid out presentation of the gospel to a joyous conclusion. There is more to say, but for today Paul celebrates God’s unshakeable, immovable, invincible love.

1. **Nothing can separate** (verses 31–39). If Paul had asked *who can be against us*, we would be back in a world of hurt. But the real question was **IF GOD IS FOR US** *who can be against us?*
 - a. In simple terms, how would you share this with someone who needs to hear it?

 - b. For you personally, what is the most encouraging takeaway point from this chapter?

2. *How the gospel changes everything.* Paul was no stranger to suffering. Physical pain. Financial hardship. Mental stress. These were familiar issues to Paul. When we remember that God causes all things to work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose, the power of the gospel is good news all over again.

- a. **The gospel is incentive to let hope shape our perspective.** The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances (Colossians 1:27). Read Romans 8:28–29 once more and pay attention to the part about being *conformed to the image of His Son*. Since that’s the goal, a small—but significant—shift in our perspective could make a difference.

From: “Lord, it’s what You’re trying to teach me.”

To: “Lord, it’s *who* You’re *making* me.”

- b. **The gospel is incentive to rely on God’s Holy Spirit to pray through me.** Wordless prayers can accomplish so much more than prayerless words.

Identify a prayer that you have all but given up on. What might God want to do with that prayer?

Romans 8:26–27

James 5:15

“He confronted me with a life-changing question I would never have heard in the commotion of my happiness.

Do you want to know Me? The Holy Spirit groaned through my loneliness and disappointment with me. But where I would have given up all hope of joy, He interceded for me, praying the Father’s will into my life on my behalf.

The Spirit tugged me in the direction of God’s plan for my future.”

Charles Swindoll



Gospel at a Glance: Predestination | “The believer never need faint in times of suffering and trial because he knows that God is at work in the world, and He has a perfect plan. God’s plan has two purposes: our good and His glory. Ultimately, He will make us like Jesus Christ! Best of all, God’s plan is going to succeed! It started in eternity past when He chose us in Christ (Ephesians 1:4–5). He predetermined that one day we would be like His Son. Predestination applies only to saved people. Nowhere are we taught that God predestines people to be eternally condemned. If they are condemned, it is because of their refusal to trust Christ (John 3:18–21). Those whom He chose, He called (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14); when they responded to His call, He justified them, and He glorified them. This means that the believer has already been glorified in Christ (John 17:22); the revelation of this glory awaits the coming of the Lord (Romans 8:21–23).⁴

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18 NIV

In each session, we will pray—for ourselves, for others, for our church, and for our nation. As a focus for prayer, use the memory verse, another scripture, or what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Write a simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

⁴ Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary/New Testament, Volume 1*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Cook Communications, 2001), p. 541.

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