

Monday, March 16, 2026

Romans 8:1-4

We read today from Romans 8:1-4. Read the passage now or at the end of this devotion. What can we learn today from the light of God's word to us?

Settle yourself in a comfortable posture. Sit up straight and breathe into your stomach. Focus on slowly taking calming breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. After a moment or two, breathe out and breathe in four times slowly to these phrases. "I am in Christ." "I am a new creation." "The old has gone." "The new has come."

This week, we are going to talk about selflessness. Our study will take us through the first 17 verses of Romans 8. We will break the bigger section into smaller texts that we will discuss and learn more about how our selflessness must be centered in Christ.

I am a people pleaser by nature. That is often the case for those who are in ministry. While there are pitfalls that must be avoided as I seek to bring others joy and blessing, people pleasing can often equip me to serve others well.

But those pitfalls are there and one in particular often shifts our selflessness and servanthood to exactly the opposite of what we intend. This pitfall is often seen in the charity and benevolence of those who do not know Jesus.

Serving others without being in union with Christ can lead to an ugly form of selfishness that pollutes what could otherwise be energy for good.

Some examples of this pitfall might be seen in wealthy benefactors who ask to "name" that thing that they are giving to. Buildings, gymnasiums, academic chairs, museums, libraries are often marked with names that are more about stroking the ego that sources the donation and not a heart marked by charity.

In other cases, some 'servants' need to be needed by others and that leads to places where a person gains a "Messiah" complex. Such servants constantly surround themselves with the brokenness of others to avoid their own pain. A term often used for such leaders (and many pastors and Christian leaders fall into this category) is "Wounded Healer". We want to heal others to avoid the tenderness of our own wounds.

The point is that selflessness and service of others is not only good, but it is commanded. In fulfilling that command, we are best served by sourcing our energy for selflessness where it belongs, in Christ.

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

It should be noted that these four verses of Romans 8 are clarifying the work of Christ in saving us from the power of sin. Paul is explaining the 'justification' work (making us right with the Father) that Jesus is doing through his death. When we are included in Christ through grace, we are no longer condemned but are seen by God as clothed with the righteousness of Jesus.

But we can take the miraculous work of Christ a step further. We can see that as our union with Christ is received, acknowledged, and responded to with gratitude, our freedom from sin is affirmed.

To say it differently, when we live more in union with Christ, he makes us more like him.

Our pursuit of an intimate relationship with Christ centers us on those things he is leading us to. Our focus on who he is reminds us of his selflessness and servanthood of others, even unto death. Our connection to Jesus through his word reminds us that his desire was to always make the glory of his Father great even while he avoided that glory for himself.

As our union with Christ makes us more like him, we then join him in 'emptying ourselves' (Philippians 2) for the glory of the Father. Our selflessness is not because we do not care about our own needs and desires, but because we understand that our needs and desires are best met in allowing ourselves to become less so that Christ might become more in us.

Practically, that might shift how selfless we are and how we serve others. We might look for more quiet, private ways to give to causes and ministry without fanfare, demand, or acknowledgement. We might obey Christ to serve him in the capacities he calls us to but with a heart that magnifies the glory of Christ and not our own. We reflect praise give us towards Jesus and receive acknowledgement inasmuch as we have been obedient to the Spirit.

Our posture in our selflessness and servanthood gains its greatest strength from our growing union with Christ.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.

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