

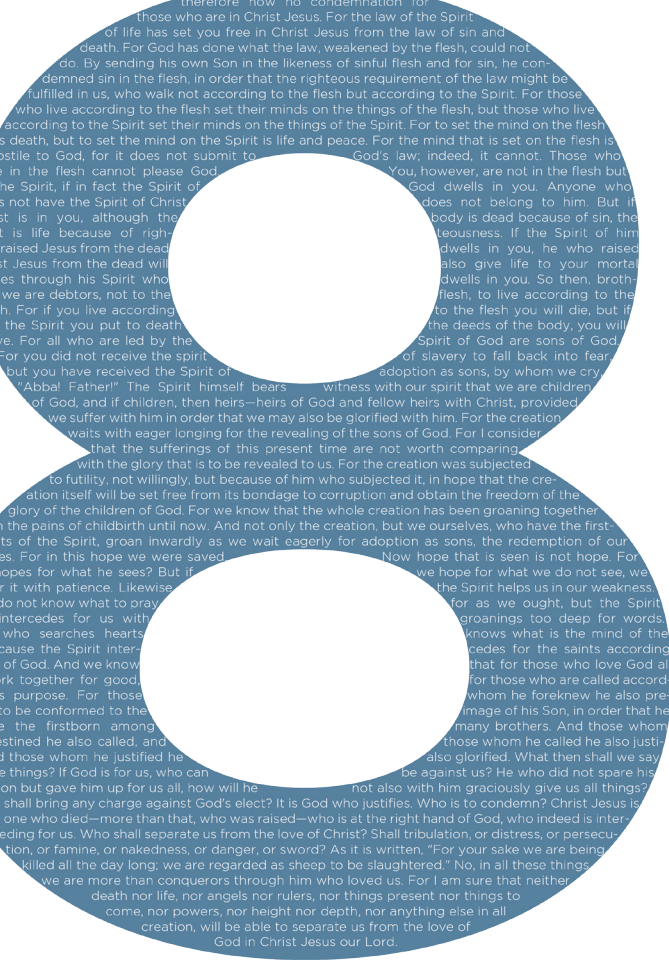
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the Spirit of Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



ROMANS 8 CURRICULUM

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WEEK ONE

FREED FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

ROMANS 8:1-4

OVERVIEW

Three huge truths highlight 8:1-4. 1) We are eternally secure; now as well as when we face judgment (v. 1). God has officially declared our justification and He never takes back His Word. 2) We are eternally free from the control of sin; now as well as when we get to heaven (v. 2). The Spirit of life has set us free. 3) We are positionally righteous now as well as when we stand before our heavenly Judge (vv. 3-4). What the Law could not accomplish, God has accomplished on our behalf through His Son.

PREP

The first word of Romans 8:1 is “therefore”. This reminds us we are starting midway through Paul’s letter to the Romans. Read the following verses to understand what Paul is saying in 8:1. Briefly summarize the key point(s) in each passage.

Romans 1:18-21

Romans 2:1-3, 5

Romans 3:9-11

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 5:1-2

Romans 6:5-7

Romans 7:21-25

START

READ ROMANS 8:1-4

What does the phrase “no condemnation” mean? Put Romans 8:1 into your own words.

Paul is saying there is “no condemnation” at all – not only no condemnation of our past, but of our present and future too. Why is this important?

Many believe that Christians who confess sin and then live a good life are not condemned at that moment. But if they should sin again, they are back under condemnation until they confess and repent. In a nutshell, if a Christian were to sin he would again come under condemnation and could be lost if he died in that state. If this was true, then Christians would be people who are always moving back and forth, in and out of condemnation. How does Romans 8:1 refute this opinion?

DICTIONARY

The law (v. 2): Meaning principle or controlling power.

The law (v. 3, 4): Here, Paul is referring to God's law in the Old Testament.

Likeness of sinful flesh (v. 3): Christ in His incarnation became truly a man, but unlike all other men, was sinless. He took our sin upon Himself in order to die in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).

To be a sin offering (v. 3): A sacrifice that pays the debt for people's sin.

The Spirit of life has set believers free from "the law of sin and death."
How does the "Spirit of life" set a believer free (v. 2)?

What does it look like in a person's life when they live according to the Spirit of life?
Be specific.

GETTING PERSONAL

If we forget that there can never be any condemnation for us if we are in Christ, what happens? We probably feel more guilt, unworthiness and pain than we should. We're defensive when criticized; maybe lack confidence in prayer; and obey out of fear. If we can remember we are accepted, we can handle disappointment and criticism; we pray with confidence; we obey out of gratitude and love.

Do you live life feeling that you are condemned, that you are not good enough? If so, how can you remember that “there is now no condemnation?”

What could the law (trying to obey God’s commands) not do, and why (v. 3)? How did God do it?

If Jesus was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” how did he “condemn sin in the flesh”?

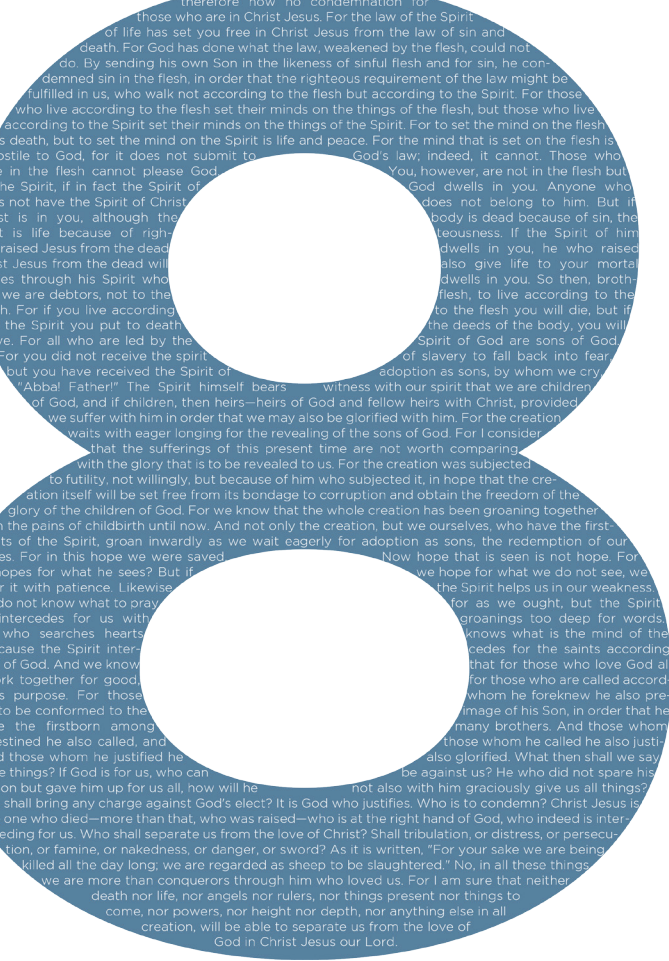
APPLY

Verse 4 tells us that everything that Jesus went through – His incarnation, death, and resurrection – was all in order for us to live according to the righteous requirements of God’s law, in the power of His Spirit. Imagine you could live each moment of your life with the assurance that God loves you and looks at you with the eyes of a grace-filled Father. How might this reality impact your life?

- » How you look at your children
- » How you care for strangers in need
- » How you deal with a person who has wronged and hurt you
- » How you make time to be with God throughout the day
- » How you share God’s love with the people in your life

PRAY

Spend time praising God for the great truth that, in Christ, “there is now no condemnation.” Finish your time of prayer by reading a verse or verses from this week’s passage and praising God for the truths it contains.



WEEK TWO

FREED FROM THE POWER OF SIN

ROMANS 8:5-13

OVERVIEW

Two natures struggle for control: “the flesh,” our old sin nature, and “the Spirit,” the gift of God’s presence within us. After being reassured of the truths in 8:1-4, this struggle looks difficult but winnable. Even though the old nature never stops and never gives up, we can live with the assurance that the Holy Spirit is stronger. So the question to each of us is: “To whom will we yield control?”

START

READ ROMANS 8:5-13

What is the difference between those who live according to their sinful nature and those who live according to the Spirit? List the contrasts:

Spirit

Flesh

EXPLORE MORE

READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-14

How does the apostle Paul distinguish between the characteristics of living in the flesh vs. living in the Spirit? How do Paul's words here help to know how to set our minds on spiritual things?

GETTING PERSONAL

The twentieth-century Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple said the following: "Your religion is what you do with your solitude." In other words, wherever your mind goes most naturally when there is nothing else to distract you – that is what you really live for. Your life is shaped by whatever preoccupies your mind.

Where does your mind go most naturally? What does this say about you?

What do you do with your solitude?

APPLY

The overcoming of sin in our lives first begins in our minds. What steps can you take (or have you taken) to have your mind set on the Spirit instead of the flesh?

DICTIONARY

Controlled by (vv. 8-9): Literally “in” the flesh or “in” the Spirit (ESV). To be “in” the flesh or the Spirit means to be united with, directed toward, and impelled by one or the other. It means to be controlled, but not in the extreme sense of loss of free will.

Righteousness (v 10): Right standing before God.

NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

If the Spirit is in you, what else is true of you now (v. 10)? In the future (v. 11)?

PUT TO DEATH

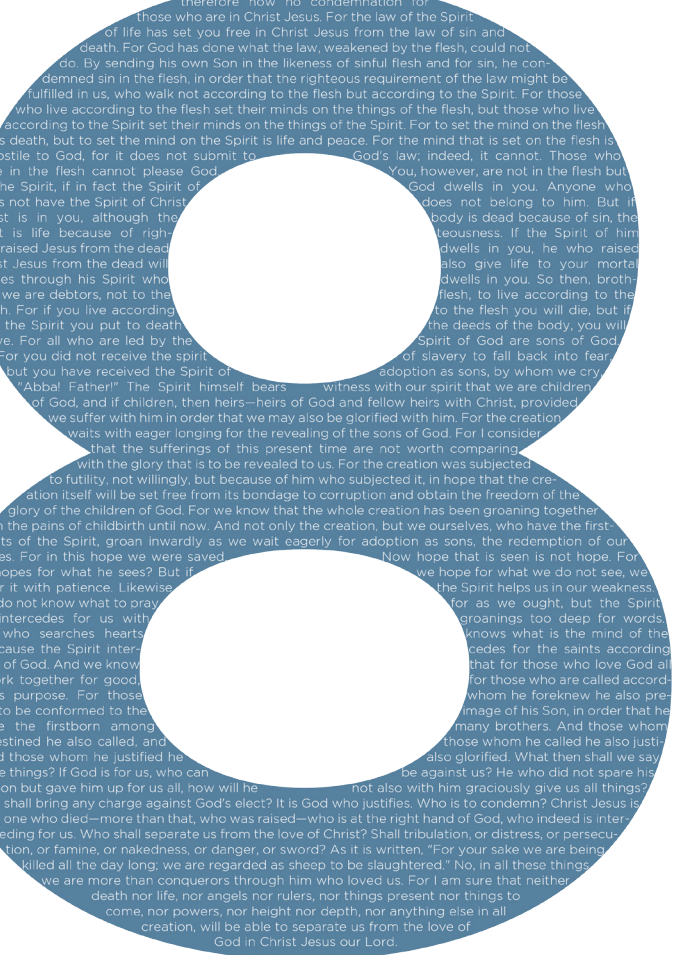
In Romans 8:12-13, “So” looks back to 8:1-11, and “For” points to a reason in 8:13.

What obligation does Paul imply we do have (v. 12)? Why do we have this obligation?

In which area of your life do you need to put the deeds of the body to death and set your mind on the desires of the Spirit? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in your life in helping you accomplish this?

PRAY

Thank God for the gift of the Spirit in your life. Speak to Him now about ways in which you find it difficult “to live in accordance with what the Spirit desires.” Finish your time of prayer by reading a verse or verses from this week’s passage and praising God for the truths it contains.



WEEK THREE

FREED TO BECOME SONS OF GOD

ROMANS 8:14-17

OVERVIEW

The apostle Paul has been focused on the negative (telling us what not to do). Now in this week's passage he turns to the positive. In each of the next four verses, we find a practical benefit of living in the Spirit. If there is a key to be found in Paul's description of the Spirit life, it is to quit trying so hard to be spiritual. Instead, let the Spirit be spiritual. When that makes sense to us, we can be sure we are setting our mind on the things of the Spirit.

START

READ ROMANS 8:14-17

How does Paul describe the identity of those who are “led by the Spirit” (i.e. people with faith in Christ)?

EXPLAIN

This isn't something we have because we are humans. It's something that is “received” (v. 15) by faith. Paul is talking about divine adoption. In Roman society, a wealthy adult who had no heir would often adopt someone as his heir. If you were adopted, all your debts were paid for and canceled; you received a new name; you stood to inherit all your new father had; and you had new obligations to honor and please your father.

FOUR BENEFITS

In verses 8:1-13 Paul has focused on the negative (telling us what *not* to do). Now in verses 14-17 he turns to the positive. In each of the next four verses, we find a practical benefit of living in the Spirit.

BENEFIT #1: PRACTICAL EVERYDAY LEADING FROM GOD (V. 14)

Those who are actively following the Spirit will bear the unmistakable evidence of that leading. Read Galatians 5:18-25 and identify the evidence of that leading. Does your life exhibit these characteristics?

The Holy Spirit is a gift, not a dictator. The Holy Spirit does lead, but the believer may elect to go his own way. How does the Spirit respond when we ignore or rebuff his leading (see Ephesians 4:30). How can you tell when the Spirit is leading you? Are you aware when you push away the leading of the Holy Spirit?

DICTIONARY

Abba (v. 15): An affectionate, intimate Aramaic word for “father,” comparable to “papa.”

Bears witness (v. 16): Testifies; tells the truth.

BENEFIT #2: FEARLESS INTIMACY WITH GOD (V. 15)

We are free. God has purchased us through His Son’s death. He had every right to own us as slaves, but He tore up the bill of sale and drafted new adoption papers! He is not only our Master; He is our “Abba,” our “daddy.”

As a believer you have intimacy with the Almighty Creator of the universe! Describe what this means to you.

As believers what is our obligation, not as slaves repaying a debt, but as sons who have a genuine stake in our Daddy’s estate?

BENEFIT #3: ASSURANCE OF BELONGING TO GOD (V. 16)

The Holy Spirit clearly says that you are a precious child of the Father. What difference does it make to us that we know God as a Father, not simply as a Master?

Compare the differences between a spirit of slavery and the spirit of sonship:

A slave	A son
Obeys under compulsion, because they have to.	Obeys out of love for and joy of “Daddy.”
Works under threat of pain or loss.	Discipline is not reprisal, but loving instruction.
Insecurity: “If I slip up, I will be punished.”	Security: “If I slip up, my father will forgive me.”
Has to work, but is given no honor.	Is honored, and invited to join the work.

What sort of attitudes and actions will follow if we are calling God “Abba, Father” sincerely?

BENEFIT #4: A CONTINUAL REMINDER OF OUR VALUE BEFORE GOD (V. 17)

All who are God’s children are also heirs of His promises, but a willingness to follow Christ in suffering is another sign of being God’s children. Through adoption, believers have become coheirs with God’s one and only Son. And through our identification with Him, we stand to inherit everything that is due Him.

Fast forward to Revelation 5:12 to see what that entails. Define what each of these items in Revelation 5:12 means to us:

Power

Wealth

Wisdom

Might

Honor

Glory

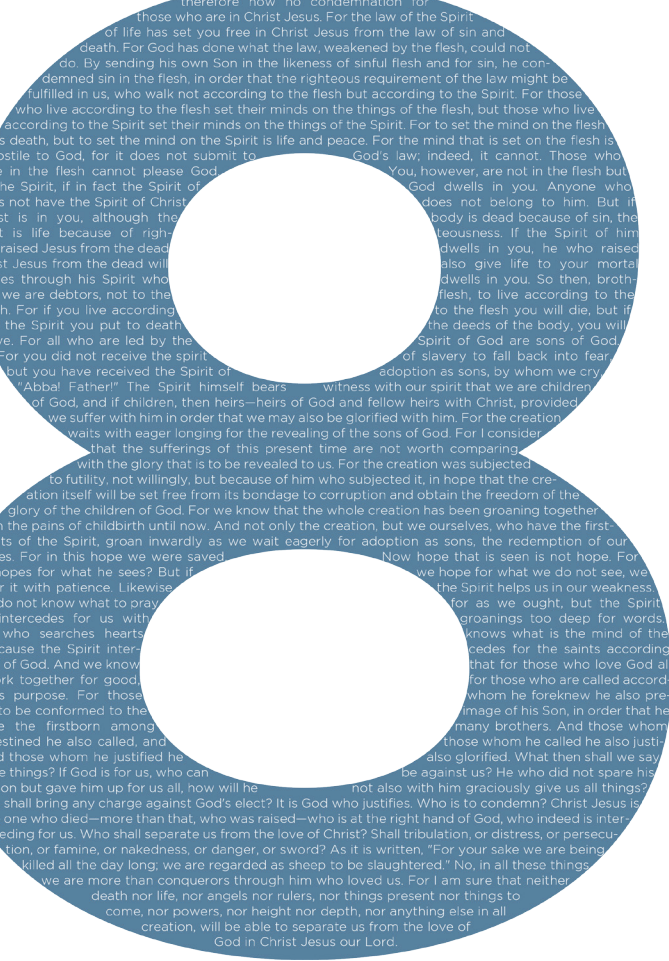
Blessing

GETTING PERSONAL

Author and pastor Chuck Swindoll made this comment about Romans 8:14-17. He said, “So, what must we do? What is our obligation? The answer is uncomplicated. Nothing. If you have the Spirit within you, you are as spiritual as you’re ever going to be. Quit trying so hard to be spiritual. Stop all of that. Instead, let the Spirit be spiritual. When that makes sense to you, you can be sure you’re setting your mind on things of the Spirit...and you’re starting to understand grace.” Discuss Chuck’s comment in your group.

PRAY

Speak to your Abba now, asking the Spirit to help you pray. Spend time praising and thanking Him.



WEEK FOUR

OVERCOMING SUFFERING

PART 1: HOPE

ROMANS 8:18-25

OVERVIEW

This passage of Scripture shows two principles at work. First, the greater the groan, the greater the glory. God is not the source of pain and He did not promise to prevent our suffering. Instead, He promises that no pain will go to waste. What the world would use for harm, God will use for our good. He will use afflictions to give us a greater ability for future blessing. Second, the weaker our spirit, the stronger His support. When affliction and suffering bring you to your knees, that is when the power of God has the greatest effect in your life (2 Corinthians 12:10).

START

READ ROMANS 8:18-25

Paul starts this section of Romans 8 by declaring that the sufferings of this life can't even be compared to the glory that awaits us. How can the suffering in this life actually help a person focus more on the eternal and less on what this world offers?

SUFFERING

In verse 17, Paul says that God's family will share in Jesus' sufferings and that if we do, we will share in His glory. But is it worth it? How does Paul answer that question in verse 18? How are his words stronger than simply saying: "Yes, it is?"

GETTING PERSONAL

Suffering is difficult. How would you answer this comment about suffering: "If there is now no condemnation, and I am now a son of God, why do I feel as if I'm being punished?" In other words, why are sharing Christ's sufferings worth the pain? Read Paul's example of his suffering in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 for perspective.

GLORY RECEIVED

What are two things in which to look forward?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1 – 22:5

DICTIONARY

Consider (v. 18): Believe.

Sons of God (v. 19): Believers who have the rights of inheritance of all that God has in store for them.

Firstfruits (v. 23): The first batch of an incoming harvest – a foretaste of what is to come.

Redemption (v. 23): Freedom.

Hope (v. 24): In the Bible, hope is not wishing something might happen, but rather knowing with confidence that it will happen.

GROANING

Creation is groaning. The creation is waiting, frustrated but with hope, for something to happen. For what is it waiting (vv. 19-22)?

People are groaning, longing for the completion of His saving work. What are the “firstfruits of the Spirit” that believers have received (2 Corinthians 5:5; James 1:18)?

What will happen when our adoption is fully realized (Romans 8:11, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44)? Why is it significant that our bodies, not just our disembodied souls, will be redeemed?

HOPE

Why is hope such a powerful motivator in life? How can we as believers be confident in the hope that is stated in verses 24-25?

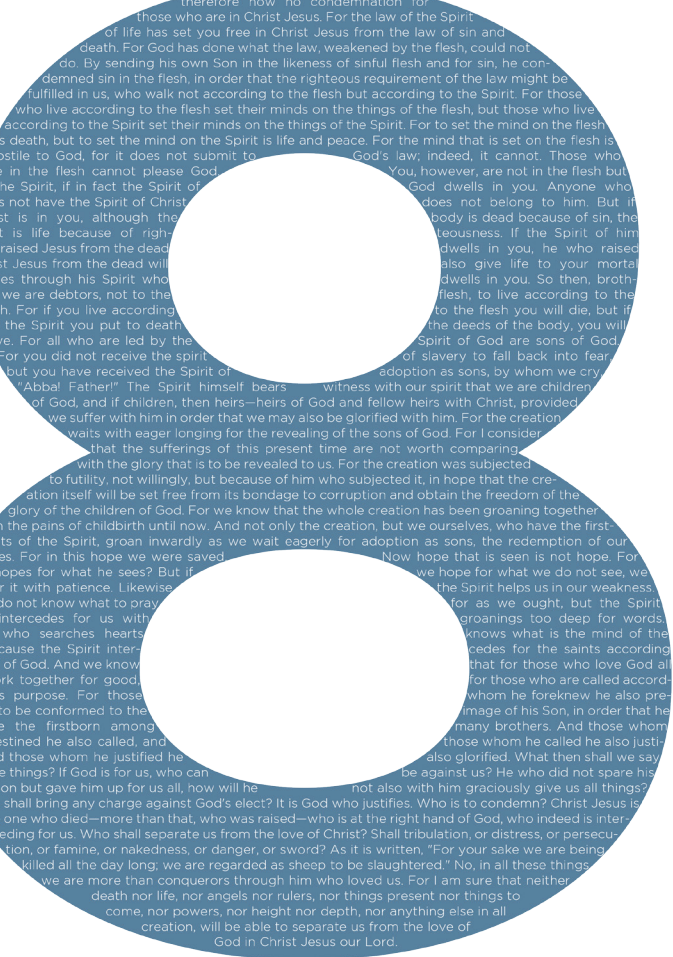
How should we be waiting for the day when we see our Father face-to-face (vv. 23, 25)? When is it hardest to do these? What difference would being eager and/or patient make at those moments?

APPLY

Think about your present status with God and the Spirit you have as a down payment. Then think about your hope. What specific areas of your life can your hope and down payment help you deal with patiently? How does your hope affect your attitude toward these circumstances?

PRAY

Pray Titus 2:13 which says "...awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Pray for patience and perseverance.



WEEK FIVE

OVERCOMING SUFFERING

PART 2: PRAYER

ROMANS 8:26-27

OVERVIEW

God is concerned about the trials of His people. When He was ministering on earth, Jesus groaned when he saw what sin was doing to humankind (Mark 7:34; John 11:33, 38). Today, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in what we want to pray, but don't have the words to make it happen. He prays for us in His groaning so that we might be led into the will of God.

START

READ ROMANS 8:26-27

The Spirit will help us when we do not know how to pray. But Paul says there is one thing a Christian can always know. What is it (v. 28)?

If God knows our needs and the Spirit is praying for us, why do we need to pray (Matthew 6:8)?

If God has determined His sovereign will, does prayer really change things? If so, how? If not, why pray?

DICTIONARY

Intercedes (v. 26): Represents; speaks for.

Saints (v. 27): holy ones, i.e.: Christians.

DEITY

Understanding the Holy Spirit allows us to grasp how He helps us in prayer and many other aspects of our lives. How do the following verses teach the deity of the Holy Spirit?

2 Corinthians 3:18

Hebrews 9:14

Psalms 139:7-10

Luke 1:35

1 Corinthians 2:10, 11

ACTIVE

The Holy Spirit is God, actively involved in the world and with humanity. What do the following verses say about His involvement?

Job 33:4

John 16:5-15

John 3:3-5

Titus 3:5

John 6:63

1 Corinthians 6:19

Romans 8:9

IMPACT

What do these verses say are some things we can do to the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 4:30

Acts 5:3-4

Hebrews 10:29

Matthew 12:31-32

ANNOINTS

The Holy Spirit also anoints the believer. His anointing is for at least two particular things.

1 John 2:27

John 16:13

REFLECT

If the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, does God always answer the requests of the Spirit in the affirmative (assuming the Holy Spirit always prays in accord with God's will)? Explain your answer.

GETTING PERSONAL

Describe an example of the Spirit doing in you what 8:26-27 describes. How is this promise a comfort to you?

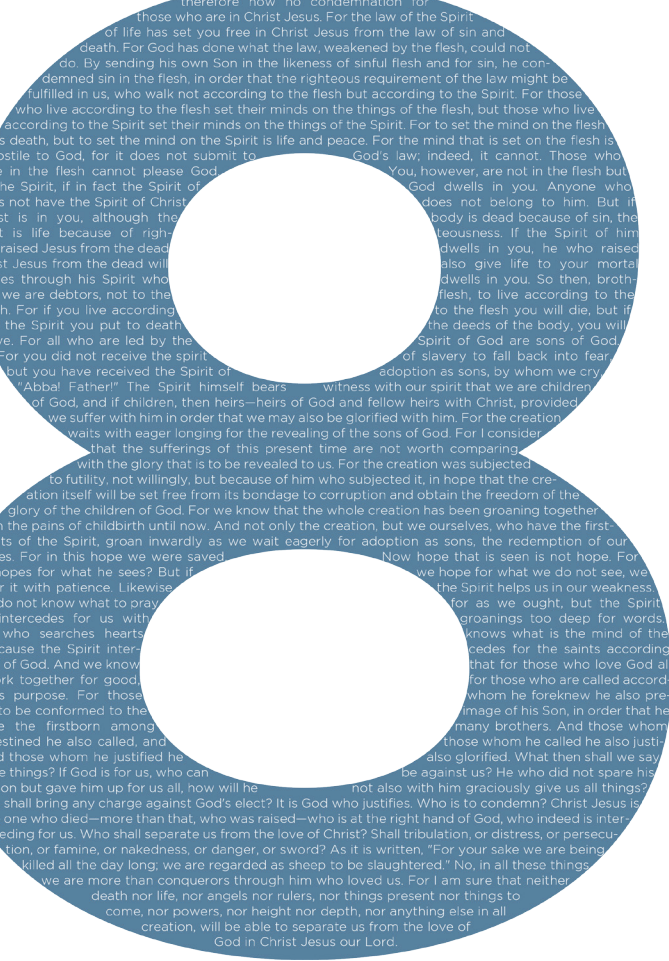
CELEBRATE

As your community group ends this discussion, spend time and celebrate these good things:

- » The glory that awaits us is greater than any suffering this world can bring.
- » The Holy Spirit intercedes for us and expresses what we cannot.
- » Through Christ we are experiencing and will one day fully realize what it means to be adopted as God's children.

PRAY

We all face times when we don't know how to pray. In these moments we are not alone. The Holy Spirit comes near and prays for and with us. One way God can minister to us in these times is through the Spirit-led prayers of His people. If you have hit a road-block in your prayer life, share this with your community group and allow them to briefly pray for you right now.



WEEK SIX

OVERCOMING SUFFERING

PART 3: GOD IS AT WORK

ROMANS 8:28-30

OVERVIEW

This week's passage is an amazing promise that no matter what pain, suffering, or loss you face in this life, God will eventually knit it into something that brings glory to His name and goodness to this broken world. Tragedy, heartfelt loss, and pain may still bring tears to your eyes and keep your heart somber. But though you may never fully grasp the how, you will realize that our gracious and mighty God has brought good out of evil, hope out of pain, glory out of loss.

START

READ ROMANS 8:28-30

How can a person be sure that bad times aren't a signal of God's displeasure with him or her?

OTHERS

Much of the suffering we may try to blame on God is the result of unwise/sinful choices made by people. Even those who claim they don't believe in God can be quick to blame Him when things go wrong. Give examples of how we can face suffering and pain in this life because of the sinful and unwise actions/decisions of:

Family & friends

Government

Our own choices and decisions

DICTIONARY

Conformed (v. 29): Change into.

Predestined (v. 29): Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.

NOT

Romans 8:28 is not saying the following:

“All things work out”

“God causes all things”

“All things bring good to everyone”

How is 8:28 not saying these things? Describe what it is saying.

EXPLORE MORE

How do we see Paul living out what he says in Romans 8:28-29 in:

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Philippians 3:10-11

Describe an example in your life where you lived out what Paul says in verses 28-29.

REALITY

What does the apostle Peter teach us about the reality and place of suffering in the life of a Christian (1 Peter 1:6-9; 3:14-17)?

APPLY

What might the apostle Paul or Peter say to one of the following people?

A new believer who declares, "I'm so glad I'm a Christian because now God will protect me from all suffering and pain."

A nonbeliever who says, "If there really were a loving and all-powerful God, He would remove all suffering from the face of the earth."

A Christian who asks, "Why would God allow me to go through this time of pain and suffering?"

GETTING PERSONAL

Reflect on how God has been working for your good in:

The good

The bad

Your failings

Now, think about how each of those circumstances could harden you toward God, or lead you to rely on Him and become more Christ-like. What's more important: to change your circumstances or to change your heart attitude and stance toward them? How might you do this today?

PRAY

We all move through suffering in our lives, whether we are currently Before Pain, In Pain, or After Pain. As a group, use the three seasons of suffering to direct your prayers of celebration:

BEFORE PAIN

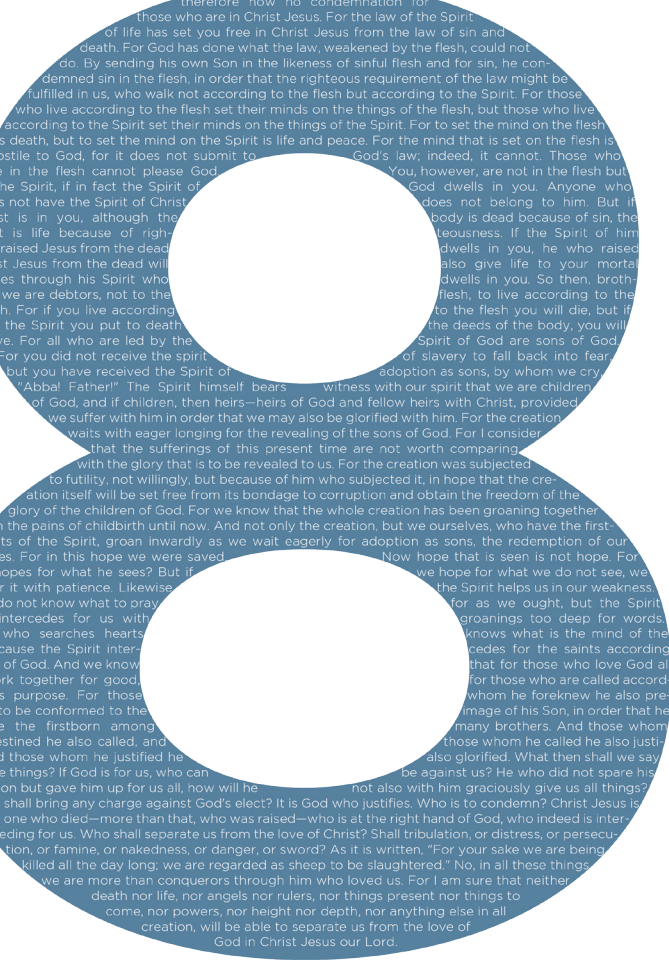
Thank God for a season when pain, loss, and struggle are not in the forefront of your mind. Celebrate that whatever comes your way, your faith in Jesus can never be taken away.

IN PAIN

Rejoice that Jesus is with you no matter what you are facing. Thank God He never lets you go or abandons you. Celebrate the truth that nothing can separate you from God's love, that no one can take you from your Father's secure hand (John 10:28-29).

AFTER PAIN

Thank God for carrying you through the fire and helping you make it to the other side. Celebrate that God can bring good out of the most awful situations.



WEEK SEVEN

THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE PART 1: FOUR UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

ROMANS 8:31-34

OVERVIEW

Believers are not condemned, because we share the righteousness of God and the law cannot condemn us. We have no obligation, because we have the Spirit of God who enables us to overcome the flesh and live for God. We have no frustration, because we share the glory of God, the blessed hope of Christ's return. We have no separation, because we experience the love of God in our lives. The emphasis in the remaining verses (vv. 31-39) is one of the security of the believer. We do not need to fear the past, present, or future because we are secure in the love of Christ.

REVIEW

REREAD AND REVIEW ROMANS 8:18-30

Describe/list at least four (4) truths in these verses. List/describe how you can live out these truths (what does living out these truths look like in your life).

Truth	How Lived Out in Your Life
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

START

READ ROMANS 8:31-34

So, the central question of the Christian life – the one that prompts all our doubts and worries and tensions is this: “Is there anyone or anything that can separate me from Christ’s love for me?” If you look around, you might see many things that would seem to. Trouble, hardship, trials, and persecution come to mind. How do you answer the question? Explain your answer.

DICTIONARY

“These things” (v. 31): previous contents of Paul’s letter (1:18-8:30).

“Graciously give”(v. 32): to bestow out of grace.

FOUR QUESTIONS

QUESTION #1: “IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?” (V. 31)

If God is for us, then why do we often operate as if He’s against us?

Give an example of a time where you faced a hardship and God’s power was evident in responding to the hardship.

QUESTION #2: “HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO GIVE US ALL THINGS? (V. 32)

If God has already given His best, why do we feel He’s being stingy in what He gives?

Describe ways in which God’s generosity became real in your life.

QUESTION #3: “WHO WILL BRING ANY CHARGE? IT IS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES.” (V. 33)

Our debt for sin has been paid in full. We are and forever will be considered just before the Judge of heaven. So, If God has fully granted our pardon, why would we carry around guilt over our sins and failures?

GETTING PERSONAL

The word “forgive” means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt. Forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a decision to not hold something against another person, despite what they have done to you. Why can it be difficult for us to forgive others, especially if our example is how God has forgiven us for all our sins?

QUESTION #4: “WHO IS IT THAT CONDEMNS? IT IS CHRIST JESUS WHO DIED, WAS RAISED AND IS INTERCEDING.” (V. 34)

If Christ is interceding for us before the Father, why do we live under the condemnation of the evil one?

FOUR DOCTRINES

Paul’s answer in verse 34 highlights four great Christian doctrines. Discuss each doctrine in your group. Which doctrine is the easiest to accept and which doctrine is the most difficult to accept? Why?

“Christ Jesus is He who died.” That’s the doctrine of substitution. Jesus paid the debt of sin on our behalf.

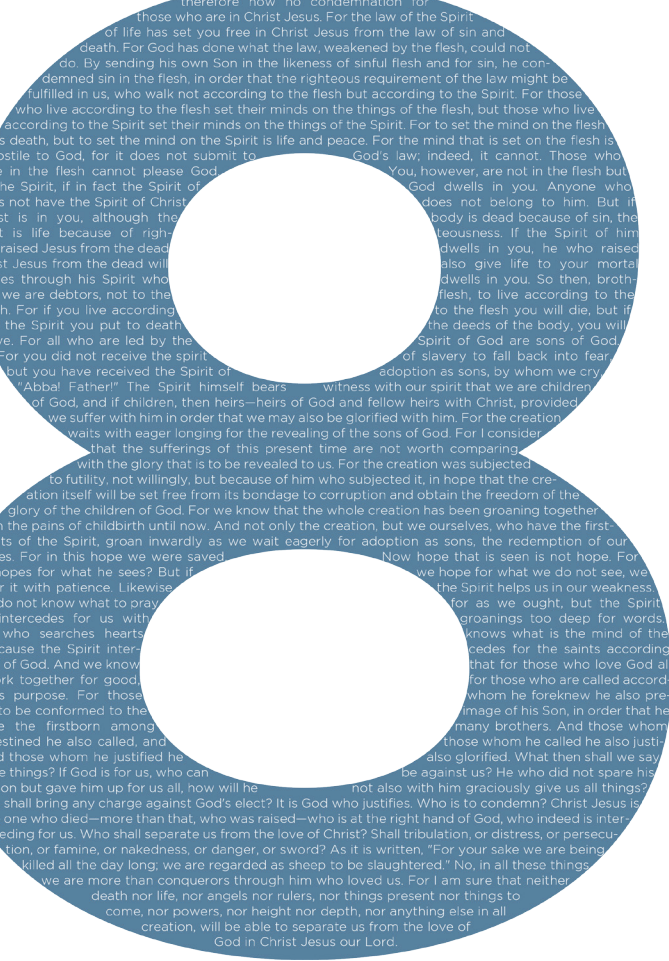
“Who was raised...” That’s the doctrine of resurrection. Jesus was raised to new life, and by our identification with Him, we too have new life.

“Who is at the right hand of God...” That’s the doctrine of accession. Jesus has received title to the entire universe and now rules as its king and ultimate judge.

“Who also intercedes for us.” That’s the doctrine of intercession. Jesus is our advocate, our representative in heaven, diligently looking out for welfare.

PRAY

Spend time praising God for all things. Why? Because we have the Father, who sacrificed His one and only Son to free us from bondage to sin. We have the Son, who paid the price to set us free and now holds title to everything. And we have the Holy Spirit, who lives within us to share our suffering, to help us and encourage us. With God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit working for us on all sides, how can anything stand against us? Praise God!



WEEK EIGHT

THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE PART 2: FIFTH UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

ROMANS 8:35-39

OVERVIEW

In Romans 8:31-34 Paul showed that God cannot fail us. However, can we fail Him? Paul deals with that question and explains that nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Nothing! God is always working for the good of those who love Him. Nothing in human experience, in the spiritual realm, in time, in anything that opposes God's people, in space, and in all creation can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Nothing! Why? It is because God loves us simply because of His choice to love us, not because of anything in us or around us.

START

READ ROMANS 8:35-39

Why does God not shelter us from the difficulties of life (see Romans 5:3-5)? How can a believer say that the difficulties of life are working for us and not against us?

PERSONALLY ENDURED

Paul gives seven possibilities of what could separate us from the love of Christ in verses 35-36, all of which he endured. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 for Paul's personal testimony of these trials. Paul names one after another of the strategies and tactics the enemy uses to defeat us and make us feel distant from God. Which of the following have you endured from the following list?

- » Troubles and hardships
- » Persecution
- » Economic struggles
- » Wars and conflicts with people
- » Facing death (yours or that of someone you love)
- » Demonic attack
- » Fear of the future

How have you seen God's power exhibited in your life in response to one of the difficulties listed above? What did you learn from the trouble you experienced and God's response to it?

GETTING PERSONAL

Playing the victim is common today, blaming others is a standard tactic, and complaining is widespread. Christians face the same struggles as others, but our attitude should be radically different. Why? What would Paul say to a Christian who has a pattern of complaining about the difficulties in life? Does this passage and Paul's response impact you personally? How?

APPLY

How do Paul's questions and answers in verses 31-39 help us when we:

Are afraid (v. 31)?

Are unsure we will keep going as Christians (v. 32)?

Feel guilty (vv. 33-34)?

Worry whether God loves us (vv. 35-39)?

DICTIONARY

“In all these things” (v. 37): Everything the Christian experiences which includes the joys, the sorrows, the setbacks, and triumphs. All of it.

“I am sure” (v. 38): I stand convinced. The verb is a Greek perfect tense, meaning that something occurred in the past with ongoing results to the present time. Paul was convinced that nothing in life, or even death, can keep the love of Christ from us.

FINAL THOUGHTS + FEEDBACK

Romans 8 is a wonderful chapter that convincingly shows that the believer is totally victorious. We are free from judgment because Christ died for us and we have His righteousness. We are free from defeat because Christ lives in us by His Spirit and we share His life. We are free from discouragement because Christ is coming for us and we will share His glory. And we are free from fear because Christ intercedes for us and we cannot be separated from His love. No condemnation...no obligation...no frustration...no separation!

In your group share the key “takeaways” you have realized in our study of this wonderful chapter eight of the book of Romans.

PRAY

Pray to God about circumstances in your life you are finding difficult right now. Ask Him to be at work for your good in those things, as He promises to be. Pray that you would want to be conformed to Christ-likeness more than you want to change your circumstances. Offer praise to Him that nothing can separate His love from us.

