

Sermon Title: **“Gospel Triumphant: To God Be the Glory!”**

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

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Text: Romans 8:28-30

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -Luke 21:19

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. **Standing Firm** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an **upward, consistent, contagious, and outward** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. Knowing and Seeing (Romans 8:28-29)

*“And **we know** that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” -**Romans 8:28***

I just *know!* How many of us ever received this answer to a question posed to someone? Isn’t it aggravating?! Yet many ask us, as believers, how we can keep holding on to our faith when it looks like the world around us is falling apart. Maybe even our own lives seem to be unraveling. How can you still believe this stuff, or even call yourself a Christian?

Paul is writing to believers who were either just coming through a difficult season of suffering, presently in a trying time, or about to go through hard times. This portion of his letter to the Roman believers is the central jewel of the Gospel message and why it would forever be a message of triumph. Further, at the center of this jewel is Christ. And while we can see that, the world cannot.

What is this ability to see through Christ what others cannot? Further, why is it so hard to hold on to our faith at times? With such variables, how can Paul boast that *we can know all things are working together for good?*

In the Greek this phrase *we know* is *eido* which *is to focus upon and see what otherwise blends into the surroundings*. Over time it becomes a skill, becoming sharper with time and personal discipline such as learning to do something well. In this context it means to see God working by what He has spoken versus what we may be seeing, feeling, or experiencing. Consider the following:

- *“Do not be like them (Gentiles believing phrases and codes get things from God), for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” -Matthew 6:8* When praying, God knows because we are His and He loves us and is involved in our lives-*He sees us*.
- *“Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.’ -Matthew 12:25* Beyond what people are saying, Jesus knows their inner thoughts and address’ that to get to the heart of the issues. *Jesus sees them*.
- *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,’ -he said to the paralytic- ‘Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” -Matthew 9:6* Jesus opened their eyes to see His power and authority for healing against what the natural eyes saw. Jesus invited His audience to *see what He sees*.

Yet, even in all of this which God knows and sees, there is the factor of faith for us. We have faith in what God has spoken, trusting that beyond what we might see He is faithful and working in us and through us for the Glory of His Son, Jesus. A faith that will one day be our sight- natural, pure, and with full realization of all that is in Him. *Yet for those outside of Christ, the ability to see is not there for it is not natural but a gift from Him.*

To further illustrate this let’s jump to the Old Testament.

“When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, “Please strike this people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, “This is

*not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.”
And he led them to Samaria.*

As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, “O Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.” So the Lord opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?” He answered, “You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.” So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.”

-2 Kings 6:15-23

In this passage the King of Syria wanted to stop the prophet Elisha- for God was revealing to him all that the King was doing against Israel and feared Elisha would help Israel fight back and win. What the King of Syria did not realize is that Elisha knows God’s plan because He sees Him. The sight / blindness contrast leads into the finale of Israel bringing into captivity their oppressors only to bless them (their enemies) and send them back. In this story Elisha is a type of Jesus who brings sight to those in Him against the blindness that is upon those outside of Him. We are the servant who sees the immediate world around us- chariots. *May we have eyes to see what Jesus sees!*

This is how we can know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

“For those 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.” -Romans 8:29

Before God created He **foreknew** all things. In His foreknowledge He **predestined** those who would be **conformed** to the Image of His Son (*restored* Image of God / without sin). God saw sin before the angels or man embraced it; God saw those redeemed from it before any in Christ would. God sees the BIG picture; we do not. The moment we embrace Jesus as our Savior and Lord may seem like the beginning of the journey it is not. According to this text, our relationship- yea our standing- with God began with Him in His predestination before He created the world. *Our personal salvation is the fruit from that act of God!*

II. Justified-We Have BEEN Saved from The GUILT of Sin! (Past Tense)

“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” -Romans 8:30

From the predestined (individual pre-selection) of men and women from sin to bring into Christ, God the Father has called us. The act of calling goes out in a general sense over all humanity; ye the act of calling that brings the response of those having come into Christ is the result of the Spirit making it effectual (intimate; personal and responded to). This is called **regeneration** - where we hear God call our name and we turn from the direction of sin to return to Him.

Regeneration is that miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in which we, being spiritually dead are made alive in Christ!

“And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

-Ezekiel 11:19-20

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” **-Titus 3:5**

This regeneration- coming of spiritual death unto life- brings us into the place of justification. It is with this new heart that we see the reality of our sin, our inability to do anything in and of ourselves to resolve, and flee to the Cross of Christ for the great exchange. The exchange of what?

First, we are fleeing from God’s Wrath being poured out against sin.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” **-Matthew 3:7**

Second, it is God who gave us this sobriety to take the Gospel invitation and flee such wrath.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” **-Ephesians 2:1-5**

Third, it is here at the cross that we exchange the filthy rags of our works deserving His wrath for the work of Christ (His Righteousness without sin).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” **-Ephesians 2:8-9**

“There is therefore 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.” **-Romans 8:1**

“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.” **-Hebrews 7:25-26**

It is here at the Cross, under the finished work of Christ, we receive His work as our own. We rest from our efforts to earn anything from God, receiving all things from the Father through Jesus Christ- for in Him all of God's promises are yes and amen (See -> 2 Corinthians 1:20).

From that moment forward- whether we live a few more seconds or decades- we are fully loved of the Father because He sees us as His Son. ***In God's eyes, we have been justified- fully forgiven and fully saved in Christ!***

III. Sanctified- We are BEING Saved from The POWER of Sin! (Present Tense)

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” -1 Corinthians 1:18

How can I know that I am saved? This is a question I get often; and it is one I've asked myself looking in the mirror off and on in my early days following Jesus. Much of the last two centuries in Christendom has been influenced by the decision for Christ of revivalism- raise your hand, walk the isle, pray the prayer and you are in! Others focus on baptism or being christened as the mark of genuine salvation. Still, the focus on God's Sovereignty in our election causes us to not question but simply to accept. Which is correct? Is there any way to measure our relationship with Jesus?

In all of scripture- both the Old and New Testaments the mark of walking with God is ***sanctification***. Being set apart and being transformed into who God is- His Holy moral character- is the fruit of genuine regenerating, saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is in our sanctification that God continues the moral transformation He began in our regeneration. This work will continue until we are resurrected and made completely holy (without sin) in heaven; more on that in a moment.

The moment we are regenerated God's Spirit comes into us in a filling that continues to mature us in the high calling of Christ over our lives (See -> **Philippians 3:14**). It is His work that increases the sorrow for sin, leads us to confess and know His ongoing forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration. It is His work that fruits out the character and supernatural power of God in and through our lives. The Apostle John captures this journey well in His letter,

*“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because **we shall see** him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever*

*does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” -1
John 3:1-10*

In Christ we are both **positioned** (set apart) and **progressing** (being transformed) into His Image. It is in our sanctification that the Spirit within us wrestles with our defeated sinful natures- like guerrilla warfare our former ways hang around and jump us in weak moments. In Christ we are free (See -> **Galatians 5:1**) and in this freedom we can be filled and led of the Spirit.

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.**” -**Galatians 5:16-25***

All this **sanctifying** work that the Spirit is doing in us is because of what Christ has done for us. The Spirit is in us because we are fully a son or a daughter of God in Christ. Further, Jesus, as our Sanctifier will finish what it is He has started in you!

*“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” -**Philippians 1:6***

IV. Glorified- We WILL Be Saved from The PRESENCE of Sin! (Future Tense)

*“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” -**Romans 8:30***

This is the final step of our journey from death to life. From being **dead in sin** to living eternally with God **free from sin**. It is in this state those who have died before us be raised alongside of those alive at His Appearing (Faith having now become sight) and we will forever be with Him. Not in these bodies, but heavenly bodies modeled after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Free from sin means free from pain, suffering, disease, brokenness, and death to name a few differences.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it

says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.” **-1 Corinthians 15:20-27**

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” **-1 Corinthians 15:51-57**

We are constantly reminded that this world is not our home. The state it is in is due to rebelling against God and running away from Him. The best of life with Him in this world is but a shadow of what awaits us. As a child I never read the last book in Lewis’ Narnia series, *The Last Battle* because I never wanted the story to end. I would re-read the other six volumes over and over. Finally, as an adult I’ve not only read it but it is now my favorite. Why? Because I have experienced loss- saying goodbye to those I love ravished by the effects of sin. The older I get the more I long for this state of Glorification- to be without sin in a universe without sin. To see all things in the freedom of joyful subjection to King Jesus.

Are you longing for this new reality? You are not alone. So is Jesus.

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the father only.” **-Matthew 24:36**

“I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” **-Matthew 26:29**

Sin came into our world through the promise of eyes being opened,

“But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” **-Genesis 3:4-5**

But true enlightenment will *always* be found in God alone through Jesus His Son,

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” **-Ephesians 1:17-18**

To God Alone Be the Glory!