

# Once Slaves, Now Children

## Summary and Goal

God changes us in Christ. In exploring Romans 8, we see that Christians have undergone a radical transformation from being slaves of sin and fear to becoming children of God who can live with full assurance and hopeful anticipation that God is making all things new.

### ***Main Passage***

Romans 8:12-39

### ***Session Outline***

1. From Slaves to Sons (Rom. 8:12-17)
2. From Groaning to Glory (Rom. 8:18-30)
3. From Death to Life (Rom. 8:31-39)

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### ***Theological Theme***

God delivers us from slavery to sin and death, and He gives us life through the Spirit.

### ***Christ Connection***

God's people are in the process of being conformed to the image of His Son. We have been adopted into His family, no longer slaves to sin but children of God who call Him "Father." Because of Christ's work on the cross, we are welcomed into God's family and are now coheirs with Christ, eagerly awaiting the glorious future He has promised.

### ***Missional Application***

God calls us to rely on the Spirit's power to put to death the deeds of the body and to follow His commands as His children.

Date of My Bible Study: \_\_\_\_\_

## Session Plan

# Once Slaves, Now Children

### **Pack Item 1: Letters to God's People**

Display this poster in a place that will help group members follow the progression of sessions through this volume.

Ask group members to look at the titles for Unit 2 and to pick one they are looking forward to studying. If time permits, allow them a brief moment to explain their choices.

### **Introduction Option**

Play the clip from the movie *Up* that the author refers to in the Introduction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLprjxFhs8s>

Then ask the following questions for discussion:

- What do you think makes this sequence so endearing? How does it succeed in telling a story within a larger story?
- How does the sequence leave the viewer longing for the hope of God making all things new?

### **Pack Item 2: New Testament Letters Map**

Paul wrote this letter to Christians in **Rome**.

## Introduction

Make the comparison between the sequence in the movie *Up* and Romans 8 as masterpieces within larger masterpieces (leader p. 94; PSG p. 74).

- ❓ How might you sum up the way the gospel of Jesus changes us (ex. "once slaves, now children")?

Summarize this session on Romans and how God changes us in Christ (leader p. 94; PSG p. 74).

## 1. From Slaves to Sons (Rom. 8:12-17)

Set forth the gratitude we should feel as a result of being made sons of God (leader p. 95). Then ask a volunteer to read Romans 8:12-17 (leader p. 95; PSG p. 75).

- ❓ How should Christians think about sin and sinning in light of this passage?

Say that if we are in Christ, we are no longer slaves to the flesh. As Christians, we still *can* sin, but the gospel changes us so that we don't *have* to. Explain how adoption into God's family gives a person a brand new permanent identity that changes the way we see God and our standing before Him and the way we live as Christians (leader pp. 95-96; PSG pp. 75-76).

- ❓ Why might Christians be tempted to think of their relationship with God in terms of "payback"?
- ❓ How should the assurance of our adoption into God's family through faith in Christ impact how we see ourselves and live?

## 2. From Groaning to Glory (Rom. 8:18-30)

Comment that as coheirs with Christ, not everything we are entitled to share with Him is pleasant. Then read Romans 8:18-30. Point out the significance of the groanings of creation as anticipating the new heavens and the new earth (leader pp. 97-98; PSG pp. 77-78).

- ❓ How does it encourage you to know that Jesus is making all things new?
- ❓ How should God's plan for the world impact how we treat it now?

Talk about God's plan to restore fallen creation, including human beings, but for now we groan with creation. Assert that the gospel assures us that we will not groan forever (leader pp. 98-99; PSG p. 78).

- ❓ How does Romans 8:28 give us hope as we deal with the groanings of this life?

## 3. From Death to Life (Rom. 8:31-39)

Read Romans 8:31-39. Communicate that Paul's words mean we can live with full assurance of our relationship with God as we patiently await future glory. Explain the point of the courtroom drama Paul presents in this passage and the three questions he raises (leader pp. 99-100; PSG pp. 79-80).

- ❓ How has the gospel of God's unstoppable love helped you through a time of anxiety or doubt?

Stress that the key to living through anything we experience in life is to keep our gaze fixed on what is in store: We are beloved children of God waiting for the full consummation of God's irrevocable promises made to us in the gospel (leader pp. 100-101; PSG p. 81).

- ❓ How should the Christian's view of death be markedly different from the unbeliever's view of death?
- ❓ What are some ways our lives can be marked by worship in light of the implications of the gospel?

## Conclusion

Wrap things up by reiterating that God's love is stronger than our flesh, greater than our suffering, more eternal than death, and more powerful than sin (leader p. 101; PSG p. 81). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission"* (PSG p. 82).

### ❓ For Further Discussion

What aspects of living in a fallen world make you groan the most along with creation?

Other than death, which consequence of the fall do you most look forward to going away?

**Christ Connection:** God's people are in the process of being conformed to the image of His Son. We have been adopted into His family, no longer slaves to sin but children of God who call Him "Father." Because of Christ's work on the cross, we are welcomed into God's family and are now coheirs with Christ, eagerly awaiting the glorious future He has promised.

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**Missional Application:** God calls us to rely on the Spirit's power to put to death the deeds of the body and to follow His commands as His children.

## Expanded Session Content

# Once Slaves, Now Children

### Voices from the Church

“With chap. 8 we arrive at what may be called the inspirational highlight of the Book of Romans. Here the apostle is swept along in a wave of spiritual exaltation that begins with God’s provision of the Spirit for victory over the old nature, breaks through the sufferings that mark our present existence, and crests with a doxology of praise to the unfathomable love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. Nowhere in the annals of sacred literature do we find anything to match the power and beauty of this remarkable paean of praise.”<sup>1</sup>

—Robert H. Mounce

## Introduction

The Pixar movie *Up* opens with a powerful flashback sequence that sets up the story. In a few relatively short scenes, we see the backstory of the curmudgeonly widower Carl in tear-jerking detail. It is a masterful montage, in many ways encapsulating the heart of the entire story, and many moviegoers have hailed this flashback scene as a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling in its own right. It is, essentially, a great movie *within* a great movie.

The Book of Romans is considered by many as the ultimate hallmark of Paul’s letters to the churches, with some scholars suggesting that every major revival in church history has been preceded by the faithful preaching of it. And right there in the middle of this letter, the Mount Everest of theological writing, we find Romans 8, the peak of this great mountain. This chapter is perhaps the apex of the New Testament’s depiction of the glory of the good news of Christ’s finished work.

Romans 8 is “a movie within a movie,” the masterpiece within the masterpiece. In just a few short minutes, this chapter takes us into the great, panoramic sweep of how God’s story of redemption has so completely and utterly changed us—from suffering to celebration, from bondage to freedom, from death to resurrection. If you were to choose any chapter of Scripture to know inside and out, you’d be hard pressed to find one more rich in the gospel than Romans 8.

 How might you sum up the way the gospel of Jesus changes us (ex. “once slaves, now children”)?

## Session Summary

With this session, we will begin a unit examining how God changes us in Christ. Up first, we will explore Romans 8 and touch on some of the highlights of this high point of Scripture. We will see that Christians have undergone a radical transformation from being slaves of sin and fear to becoming children of God who can live with full assurance and hopeful anticipation that God is making all things new.

## 1. From Slaves to Sons (Rom. 8:12-17)

You may not have seen *Up*, but you're probably familiar with one of Jesus' most famous parables, often called "the prodigal son." You remember the broad strokes of the narrative: a man's younger son asks his father for his inheritance early. He uses this up on wild and hedonistic living, only to find himself eating pig food in the middle of a pigpen, dreaming of what life might be like if he could only summon up the courage to return home.

When the son does return home, the father doesn't go out to meet his son shaking his head, with a shovel in one hand and workman's coveralls in the other. No, he runs to him. He embraces him and affirms his position as a beloved son, not a servant. And then he throws a party to celebrate the return of his lost son with no reference to the hurtful and foolish choices the son had made before. All was forgiven. The son was fully restored and everything was again as it should have been.

Imagine the son's gratitude and love for his father when he was taken back as a son, not as a servant. This is how we should respond when we read Romans 8:12-17, where Paul summarizes the transformation we experience by the power of grace:

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> 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!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> 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.*



How should Christians think about sin and sinning in light of this passage?

Just before this, Paul contrasted living by the flesh and living by the Spirit and affirmed that it is impossible to please God by living in the flesh (v. 8). That warning should send shock waves through each of us as we consider the seriousness of living according to the flesh. Therefore, we should take inventory of our lives to consider if we are living in the flesh, and if so, what that implies about our position with God.

Paul anticipated this concern, which is why he addressed it here. If we are in Christ, we are no longer slaves to the flesh. We have been freed by Christ, and the Spirit enables us to put to death the works of the flesh that linger in us. As Christians, we still *can* sin, but the gospel changes us so that we don't *have* to. The chains of the flesh have been broken and shattered.

### Further Commentary

"Paul now reveals Christians' most glorious privilege: They are 'heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ' (8:17a). Christians are not God's slaves because slaves do not qualify for any inheritance. What belongs to God belongs to Christians. In fact, Jesus is eager to share his glory with believers (John 17:22-24). There is only one drawback: if we want to share in Christ's glory, we also have to be prepared to share in his *sufferings* (8:17b). As a Nepali proverb says, 'Flowers have thorns.' Salvation brings suffering, including persecution and physical and mental agony for the sake of our Saviour. Joyfully accepting this suffering further undermines our sinful nature (2 Cor. 4:16-17) and makes us more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21). That is the highest attainable glory."<sup>2</sup>

—Ramesh Khatri

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 75. Adoption

Adoption into God's family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we pardoned from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God (John 1:12; Gal. 4:5). Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a coheir with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).



## Voices from Church History

“If a slave is to be made free, and called a son of God, and brought from death into life, it can only be accomplished by Him who shares our nature and delivers it from slavery.”<sup>3</sup>

—Basil of Caesarea (circa 329-379)

Because of this, we are also no longer slaves to something else—fear. In Christ, there is no reason to fear rejection by God. Our ongoing struggle with the flesh will not end in us being separated from God one day. Why? Because the Spirit of adoption has replaced the spirit of slavery. We are now God’s sons and daughters.

In Paul’s day, like ours, adoption brought you fully into a new family, as if you had been born into it. Through adoption, a child was granted full rights as any other child in the family, and all of the previous relationships, obligations, and debts were ended. In essence, adoption gave a person a brand new permanent identity. That is why Paul placed adoption in opposition to being a slave to the flesh. They both cannot be true of us.

Because of Christ’s sinless life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, repentant sinners now relate in a completely different way to God. Where before we were bound to our own sinful desires, we are now recipients of Christ’s righteous work, which in effect becomes *our* work—this is called “imputation”—and therefore, His sonship becomes ours too!

Can you believe that? At salvation, the Holy Spirit has awakened our hearts to receive Christ and begun to dwell in us to establish Christ’s lordship in our lives. From that moment on, we don’t relate to God as slaves or servants, trying to work off a debt for the rest of our lives. No longer are we burdened by the reality that there is nothing we can do to make up for our eternal debt, nor are we plagued with fear that we haven’t done enough. Instead, we relate to God as a loving Father. We are not debtors to Him because Christ has paid the debt for us. And by His virtue, we become heirs alongside Him.

This not only changes the way we see God and our standing before Him, but it also changes the way we live as Christians. It doesn’t mean there isn’t work for us to do; it just means that the work we do, we do freely and joyfully, knowing that our sonship is irrevocable. We can neither pay back what has already been satisfied nor lose what has already been divinely given. We don’t live as slaves with an uncertain future but as sons and daughters with an assured inheritance.

But the gospel goes even deeper than that.

- ❓ Why might Christians be tempted to think of their relationship with God in terms of “payback”?
- ❓ How should the assurance of our adoption into God’s family through faith in Christ impact how we see ourselves and live?



## 2. From Groaning to Glory (Rom. 8:18-30)

When Paul stated that we are coheirs with Christ as adopted children, he was quick to qualify that not everything we are entitled to share with Christ is pleasant. We share in Christ's sufferings now as we wait for the day when we will be glorified with Him and everything will be right again.

This world is not as it should be. There is a better world in store, but it won't come through returning to a time in the past when people lived "better." Instead, we look forward to a time in the future when God will re-create everything and make all as it should be once more.

The Creator God's re-creating work through Christ has widespread effects, not just on us but on the systems and cultures and nations around us too. Indeed, Christ will re-create even the very creation itself, from the darkness of those deep-sea trenches to the cloud-swept peaks of the highest mountains to the farthest reaches of the universe.

Just as humankind's fall affected all of creation, bringing suffering into the world, it is through humankind's reconciliation with God through Christ that God is in fact reconciling all things to Himself (see Col. 1:20). This is how Paul expressed the far-reaching ramifications of Christ making all things new in Romans 8:18-30:



*<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

### Further Commentary

"Currently...the entire universe is in travail as if it were giving birth. As in childbirth, the pain is not meaningless but 'carries with it the hope of new life for all creation.' Likewise, we ourselves are inwardly groaning as we await the final phase of our adoption—the redemption of our bodies (cf. Phil. 3:21). Christians are those 'who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,' that is, who have the 'Spirit as a foretaste of the future'...Paul used the term in reference to the gift of the Spirit as an eschatological pledge (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5, where the Spirit is given 'as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come'). The Spirit is evidence that at the present time we are the sons of God (vv. 14,16). He is also the 'down payment'... on the inheritance that will be ours as members of the family of God."<sup>4</sup>

—Robert H. Mounce

### Further Commentary

"Hope is the expectation of faith that we will receive what God has promised. We hope for a day when life will be free of suffering, when we will be liberated from this world's tyranny. We hope for eternal life in God's new creation. As you endure hardships, losses, and pain, fix your eyes on God. When the day comes that we live with him for ever, we will be honoured as his special children."<sup>5</sup>

—Africa Study Bible

## Voices from the Church

“Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, His holy presence creates a hunger for holiness. His primary task is to magnify Christ (see John 16:14-15), and it is He who gives the believer a desire to be like Christ. In our natural condition we have no such passion. But in the Christian, the Spirit of God begins to carry out the will of God to make the child of God like the Son of God (see Rom. 8:29). And He who began this good work in the life of the believer ‘will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 1:6).”<sup>6</sup>

—Donald S. Whitney

## Voices from the Church

“Most of the time, we scratched our heads and wondered how the matted mesh of threads in Romans 8:28 could possibly be woven together for our good. On earth, the underside of the tapestry was tangled and unclear; but in heaven, we will stand amazed to see the topside of the tapestry and how God beautifully embroidered each circumstance into a pattern for our good and His glory.”<sup>7</sup>

—Joni Eareckson Tada

*<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

One of the interesting things in this passage full of interesting things is that the groanings of creation, while painful, are not the kind of groanings we’d associate with the throes of death. Yes, something is giving way, something is changing, but it is not giving way to death. Instead, the world is being renewed and will be remade, particularly at Christ’s second coming when He consummates His kingdom and ushers in the new heavens and the new earth. So the world is not groaning in death but groaning in birth!



How does it encourage you to know that Jesus is making all things new?



How should God’s plan for the world impact how we treat it now?

Paul wrote about God’s plan to restore fallen creation—to a state even better than the unfallen yet unglorified days of Eden, if you can believe that—and he connected men and women, the crown of God’s creation, to that restoration as well. One day this broken world will be set free from its bondage to corruption into the blessed and capable hands of God’s glorified children (v. 21).

But until then, we are groaning just as creation is. We groan in suffering. We groan in hardship. We groan from injustice. We groan from our sin. We groan in temptation. We groan simply from getting older and more frail. But just as there is a new earth coming, there are new bodies for God’s children coming too. If we have been made joint-heirs with Christ, it is because we have died with Him and live with Him. And though we expect to die someday, we know we will be resurrected because Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits and we have received the Spirit as the firstfruits of this promise’s fulfillment.

So we do continue groaning for now, but we groan with hope. As it stands now, this is not our final home; the brokenness of the world will not remain forever. Neither are these frail bodies ours forever. One day we will finally be rid of all the sin and suffering that plagues us. Until then, we live with full assurance and patient hope as God’s children, enduring through the shadows of God’s glory until we finally experience its fullness.

The gospel assures us that we will not groan forever. He who has called us is faithful. He doesn't just author our faith, but He perfects it as well (Heb. 12:2). He has justified us and He will also glorify us (Rom. 8:30). This is how thoroughly transformative the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is—all who trust in Him are guaranteed the kind of life that makes death itself, in a way, a non-factor.



How does Romans 8:28 give us hope as we deal with the groanings of this life?

### 3. From Death to Life (Rom. 8:31-39)

As we near the close of the masterpiece of Romans 8, we find Paul bringing the depths of the gospel explored in the chapter to a climax of exultation. In fact, he is so overcome by the wonders of grace and the power of the Spirit that he can't help but delve into poetry! As he rounds the final gospel-drenched corner, you can almost hear him preaching with a worshiper's tone:

*<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> 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? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

*<sup>36</sup> As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> 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.*

“What then shall we say to these things?” This is Paul's way of asking: “Well? What now? If you believe all this incredible stuff, what should it do to your heart and your life?”

As Paul reflected over what the Holy Spirit prompted him to write in the previous verses, he was overcome with joyful confidence. Yes, we still struggle with the flesh. Yes, we will experience suffering and pain. But God is faithful and His grace is unshakable. We can live with full assurance of our relationship with God as we patiently await future glory because there is no one and no thing that can undo what God has done.



#### Further Commentary

“‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ (8:35a). The answer to this question is the climax of Paul's argument concerning the security of the believer. He mentions seven situations which he himself had experienced that can stand between God and us: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword (8:35b-36). The love of Christ does not stop us from experiencing these things, but it carries us through them (8:37). Having looked at everything in life, Paul knows that nothing whatsoever can separate us from the love of Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

—David M. Kasali



#### Further Commentary

“Paul's ‘grand persuasion’ (Gk *pepeismai*) is in the perfect tense, which indicates a past action that has ongoing impact. Having been ‘persuaded’ (by God), he stood firm in the belief that nothing could separate him from the ‘love of God.’ Jesus conquered death and Satan on the cross, ensuring that nothing can change God's love or purpose for us. We ‘are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time’ (1 Pet. 1:5).”<sup>9</sup>

—Edwin A. Blum



## Voices from Church History

“If God be for us, who is the Judge of all and whose omnipotence calls into being all things, no one can be against us, since everything that He has created must be subject to the Creator. So also the converse is true! If God be against us no one can be for us.”<sup>10</sup>

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Paul portrayed a courtroom drama unfolding to drive home the reason for his confidence. We are pictured in the defendant’s seat, and God Himself is the judge behind the bench. The first question Paul asks is who will bring an accusation against us to the Judge. The answer is no one because God is the One who justifies defendants, and no charge can be brought against His own.

The entire courtroom should be dismissed in that moment because without an accusation, there is no case to move forward. But Paul continued the drama to add layers to the impossibility of a conviction.

The next question, then, is who can reach a guilty verdict and condemn? Again the answer is no one because Jesus has already paid that sentence through His death, and having been raised from the dead, He now intercedes for us on our behalf.

The final question is who can carry out a guilty sentence and separate us from the love of Christ. Once again, the answer is no one and no thing. Even if an accusation could be brought, even if a guilty verdict could be rendered, there is no way we can be separated from God’s love.

These are the implications of the indicatives of the gospel. In other words, if all that Paul has claimed to be promised to us in the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection for sinners is *true*, then the result should be nothing short of death-defying, fear-quenching, world-transforming confidence.

For Paul, the central point of his confidence lay in just how utterly transformed he was personally and relationally before God. Because of what Jesus has done, Paul was no longer to think of himself as a slave, always having to prove himself to God, to “earn his keep,” to measure up. Instead, he was a beloved son, a younger brother to Jesus (see Heb. 2:11-12), who received him not like the prodigal’s older brother with finger-wagging and eye-rolling but with the warm embrace of brotherly affection. Because of what Jesus has done, Paul was no longer a slave even to his groanings. Despite his suffering and hardship—and Paul, as a faithful missionary, endured hardships physical, emotional, and psychological, even to the point of martyrdom—he knew that God’s glory is bigger. “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

 How has the gospel of God’s unstoppable love helped you through a time of anxiety or doubt?

It should not surprise us that this theologically panoramic chapter covers a panorama of experience—“tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword”; “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.” Everything is subject to the supremacy of God’s glorious grace in Christ Jesus.

The key to living through anything we experience in life is to keep our gaze fixed on what is in store. Focusing on eternal life, then, frames our quality of life right now. We are not dead men and women walking. We are beloved children of God waiting for the full consummation of God's irrevocable promises made to us in the gospel.

This is our motivation to live on purpose for the gospel and through the power of the gospel. This is the joyful news we have to share. And this is the cause for us patiently to endure suffering and life's hardships, not with a plastic grin but with genuine peace, joy, and confidence that this world with its struggles is fleeting and temporary.

Romans 8 sends up a resounding hallelujah, and it is verses 31-39 specifically that give us the words of worship we need to respond to all that God has accomplished without us but nevertheless for us. This all boils down to the reality that we were dead apart from Christ, but in Christ we are totally, eternally, and irreversibly alive.

- ❓ How should the Christian's view of death be markedly different from the unbeliever's view of death?
- ❓ What are some ways our lives can be marked by worship in light of the implications of the gospel?

## Conclusion

From slaves to sons. From groaning to glory. From death to life. We worship a glorious God whose grace is fathoms deep. Why would He do this for us? Why would He treat unholy rebels in such a gracious way? Well, Paul helps us see why in this beautiful chapter in this beautiful letter in the most beautiful Book of all time. It is all because our God is love. And there is, in fact, more love in God than there is sin in us. That's a lot of love!

The love of God is the highest, deepest, greatest, and most glorious reality a human being could ever experience. It is stronger than our flesh. It is greater than our suffering. It is more eternal than death. And it is more powerful than sin. The love of God is the apex of the human experience, and it is ours by faith, unlimited in the deep fountain of Christ's atoning work. What a glorious gospel that has been given to us! And what a glorious gospel that has been entrusted to us to share with the world around us!

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** God's people are in the process of being conformed to the image of His Son. We have been adopted into His family, no longer slaves to sin but children of God who call Him "Father." Because of Christ's work on the cross, we are welcomed into God's family and are now coheirs with Christ, eagerly awaiting the glorious future He has promised.

## Voices from the Church

"Do you know why I believe in the Lord Jesus and what He says? Because He has proved to me that He has my best interests at heart. What could He do that He did not do? He already gave His life for us."<sup>11</sup>

—David Jeremiah

## Further Commentary

"The Jewish Christians who were a part of the Roman church had recently experienced organized harassment at the hands of the government...Soon, all believers living in Rome would face organized persecution at the hands of Nero. Paul's words would have strengthened their resolve to remain faithful and assured them that no attempt, as organized and systematic as it may be, could pull them from the Father's loving hands. Through the years, many have tried to separate believers from Christ to no avail. Interestingly, history has proven that persecution often does just the opposite. In the face of hatred many believers have strengthened their faith and grown closer to Christ, and the church has expanded into areas previously untouched by the gospel. Tertullian, the third-century church father, was correct when he wrote, 'The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.'<sup>12</sup>

—Michael Priest,  
*Biblical Illustrator*

## Additional Resources

# Once Slaves, Now Children

## References

1. Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B&H, 2003) [WORDsearch].
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3. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 50.
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5. *Africa Study Bible* (Oasis International, 2015), 1643.
6. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 237.
7. Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) [eBook].
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9. Edwin A. Blum, in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2017), 1795, n. 8:38-39.
10. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 133.
11. David Jeremiah, *Jesus' Final Warning: Hearing Christ's Voice in the Midst of Chaos* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999) [eBook].
12. Michael Priest, "Persecution: A Word Study," *Biblical Illustrator* (Spring 2017): 59.



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## Study Material

- "Why Is Earth's Redemption Essential to God's Plan?"—Chapter 9 from *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn
- "Creation's Groans Are Not Meaningless"—Article by Tim Keller; find a link to this article at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "Heir: A First-Century Understanding," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon

Crawford Loritts: "Confidence: A Done Deal"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

## Tip of the Week

### Training Parents to Pass On the Faith

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are excellent teaching moments for parents to instruct their children who are not yet believers (and even if they are). Young children are often unable to grasp the spiritual elements of the Christian faith, but the concreteness of baptism and the elements of the Lord's Supper allow for a unique opportunity for instruction. Because it is a parent's calling to raise their children in the "fear and admonition of the Lord" (see Deut. 6:7; Eph. 6:4), it is their responsibility to use baptism and the Supper to direct the curiosity of their children and help them ponder gospel truths.