

1. **Introduction:** We began our study of Romans chapter 8 last lesson. As preparation for continuing that study, here is a summary of the 11 verses of chapter 8.
 - Paul’s initial point emphasized that there is now no condemnation for those who are justified in Christ Jesus (v.1). The point is that before their conversion believers were under God’s condemnation because of their sins.
 - But “now” that they have received the initial benefits of salvation, they are redeemed and no longer subject to God’s condemnation.
 - Justification (being declared legally righteous) frees believers from the Law’s requirement of perfect obedience to the Law to obtain righteousness (v.2).
 - Jesus atoned for the sins of all who will believe. He fully satisfied the Law by living a life of perfect obedience to the Law and then He took believers’ sins upon Himself and died to pay the death penalty due those sins.
 - Based on what Jesus did on their behalf, the Father declares those who believe to be judicially righteous, and pardons the penalty due their sins (v.3).
 - The indwelling Spirit works to transform believers into a likeness of Christ. When fully like Christ in holiness and righteousness in heaven, they will themselves be able to fulfill the requirements of God’s moral Law (v.4).
 - A believer’s life is to be lived according to the Spirit’s guidance which comes mostly while the believer is studying and meditating on Scripture.
 - Believers are to keep their minds set on the Spirit’s promptings and desires (v.5).
 - A mindset focused on the desires of the flesh leads to death, but a mindset focused on the promptings of the Spirit leads to life and peace (v.6).
 - Mindsets focused on the flesh (fleshly mindsets) are hostile to God and do not and cannot submit to God’s Law (v.7). Fleshly living cannot please God (v.8).
 - Paul says if the Holy Spirit does not live in you, you don’t belong to Christ (v.9).
 - He does live in each believer giving life to their spirits (v.10), and one day He will also give resurrection life to their new bodies (v.11).
 - The indwelling Spirit is both God’s “seal” authenticating believers as belonging to Christ, and a “sign” pointing to the certainty that in the future they will be transformed into a likeness of Christ.
 - Paul reminds his readers that their glorified spirits will one day be joined to a new resurrection body so that they will indeed be “like Christ.”

- In verse 12 he begins to draw conclusions from these powerful statements.

2. **Romans 8:12-17**: *“So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ 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!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ 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.”*

- Though the “flesh” strongly presses a believer to live according to the flesh, believers owe the flesh no debt. Living by fleshly desires leads to death.
- The indwelling Holy Spirit enables a believer to put to death fleshly deeds.
- All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
- The wording of verse 12 in the ESV says *“we are debtors, not to the flesh”* implying there is debt to God. Since Paul carefully explained in chapter 5 that salvation is a “free gift” from God, what does that mean?
- Paul doesn’t mean believers are debtors in the sense they must pay a price for salvation. The price enabling salvation was paid by Christ. It is free to us.
- What Paul means becomes clearer if we note Paul’s comment occurs in the context of pointing out benefits derived from the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Other translations (e.g., the NASB) translate the phrase as “we are under obligation” rather than “we are debtors.”
- The point is that the incredible gift of the indwelling Spirit, who will transform believers into a likeness of Christ, creates an **obligation of gratitude** to submit to the Spirit’s ministry by cooperating with His work.
- Think of the remarkable statement by Peter in 2 Peter 1:3: *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”*

- Believers are freed from the penalty of sin and provision has been made for them to acquire everything pertaining to life and godliness including being freed from the penalty for sin and declared legally righteous.
- With all the benefits of salvation in mind, Paul says believers are under obligation to live a righteous life thereby making manifest the provision God has made for life and godliness.
- One might categorize this obligation of gratitude as a “moral debt” or a debt of right behavior.
- It is not like a credit card obligation to pay the price for goods received. Jesus paid the “price” for the “salvation goods” believers receive.
- In verse 13 Paul says believers are to avoid living according to the flesh and instead live according to the prompting and the leading of the Spirit.
- The Spirit will never lead a believer into sin, but a believer’s own residual sin nature will strive to do exactly that.
- 1 John 1:8 says believers surely will sin (***“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”***). When a believer realizes they have sinned, they are to put to death urges and desires that led them to sin.
- The point is if a believer realizes they have sinned, they are to figure out what desires led to that sin and consciously refuse to follow them again.
- The process of putting to death misdeeds of the body is called “mortification.”
- It simply means recognizing evil as evil and repudiating it decisively through God’s provision (1 Corinthians 13:10).
- While mortification is required of believers, Paul says mortification is only possible if a person is living by Spirit.
- Verse 14 elaborates verses 12-13. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can a believer put to death the deeds of the body.
- To be led by the Spirit broadens the idea of verse 13 from the specific task of mortification to include being constantly directed by the Spirit in all of life.
- This broader leading by the Spirit is equated with being children of God.
- By creation, all people are God’s offspring, but only offspring who through new birth become reconciled to and recognized by God are His children.

- Those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit belong to Christ (9). Those who are led by the Spirit are the sons and daughters of God (14).
- Saying that another way, if you belong to Christ, you will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If you respond positively to the promptings of the indwelling Spirit, you are living by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, or led by the Spirit.
- The ministry of the Spirit of adoption (15) and the inner witness of the Spirit (16) are given to each believer to bring them assurance.
- All believers are adopted into God's family, all are indwelt by the Spirit and should be led by Him, and all are assured of their standing in Christ by the inner witness of the Spirit.
- As children of God, believers are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
- Discipleship means being in union with Christ, being transformed into a likeness of Christ, and being identified with Him in His labor on behalf of others. Suffering with and for Christ will lead to glory.
- Putting verses 1-17 together, we see that the Spirit lives in us (9), gives life to our spirits (10), and will one day give new resurrection life to our bodies (11).
- The Spirit's indwelling obligates us to live by His principles (12), and His power enables us to put to death (mortify) our body's misdeeds (13).
- He leads us as God's children (14) and bears witness to our spirit that we are indeed God's children (15-16).
- As children of God, believers are heirs of God, fellow-heirs with Christ. They are to be willing to suffer with Him that they may be glorified with Him (17).

3. Romans 8:18: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

- Suffering and glory were inseparably joined for Jesus and likewise for believers. Jesus repeatedly reminds that His message will be troubling to many, and as we deliver that message, some will react violently.
- 1Peter 5:10 reminds believers that suffering comes first and then after a little while they will enter God's eternal glory in Christ to which He has called us.
- Jesus has both a human and a divine nature. In His suffering on earth, it was through His human nature he suffered.

- Though without sin, He suffered from His human nature's mental and physical frailties as well as from the opposition of the world.
- When He was scourged and nailed to the cross, His pain was in every way as excruciating as our pain would have been in similar circumstances.
- As He prayed in the garden on the night He was betrayed, His mental anguish was very real and very human, and He sweat drops of blood.
- The terms "sufferings and glory" refer to two different ages. Suffering belongs to this present age while glory belongs to the age to come.
- Believers suffer from human frailties (mental, physical, and moral) and from the world's opposition as well..
- Sin also brings suffering to believers. Believers, during their mortal life, have been justified and given the indwelling Holy Spirit. But they are not made holy until they are glorified.
- The glory which, at the right time, will be revealed to believers (18) is the unutterable holy splendor of God, eternal, immortal, and incorruptible.
- Believers will ultimately see God's glory, will share in it, and be changed.
- 1 John 3:2 says the precise nature of what we will be in the age to come has not yet been made known, but we know we are God's children and what HE makes of us will be good.
- Paul personally knows worldly suffering. Yet, he considers (meaning after careful rational thought he thinks) that present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- In the next few verses Paul expands on what it means to share in Christ's suffering and glory – the suffering and glory of God's creation (verses 19-22) and of God's redeemed children (verses 23-27).

4. Romans 8:19-22: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ 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. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”

- Paul personifies the “creation” much as people personify “nature” today. Personifications are common in the OT.

- In Psalms 96 and 98, the heavens, earth and sea, with all their contents, the fields, trees of the forest, rivers and mountains are all personified.
- In the current verses Paul appears to use the term “creation” to include every created “physical thing” with the exception of humans.
- By being “subjected to futility” he seems to mean, when humans fell into sin, both humans and the nonhuman portion of creation were kept from fulfilling God’s intended purpose of their existence.
- This subjection of creation to futility (or meaningless existence) seems to refer to the curse on the natural order following Adam’s disobedience.
- Scripture says the ground was cursed because of Adam’s disobedience. After the curse producing food would require difficult and at times frustrating labor in the presence of weather variations and other natural phenomena.
- Subjection to futility was not a normal or willing consequence and did not occur because of any defect in the nonhuman creation.
- Futility was God’s curse following Adam’s sin, making human life more difficult. Not only were there now thorns and weeds to deal with, but everything in nature was also subjected to decay and corruption.
- The nonhuman part of creation is frustrated by inability to fulfill its created purpose to the point it groans in bondage to the curse and looks to obtain its freedom when glorified humanity returns to its rightful obedience to God.
- As a consequence of the Fall, Adam and Eve and all their progeny lost their holiness and acquired a sin nature.
- Christ’s atoning work enables believers to be justified, receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, and ultimately be transformed into a likeness of Christ.

5. ***Romans 8:23-27:*** ²³ *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* ²⁴ *For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?* ²⁵ *But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* ²⁶ *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.* ²⁷ *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.*

- Salvation includes past, present, and future events.

- Believers eagerly look forward to when their salvation will be complete and they, in new resurrection bodies, will be glorified, adopted children of God, living in His presence forever.
 - This is the hope into which every believer was saved.
 - Believers have received the first fruits of the harvest to be delivered by the Spirit - justification and the indwelling Spirit who is working to transform believers into a holy likeness of Christ.
 - But that is only the beginning. Ultimately, believers will be glorified (made holy and righteous like Christ), their glorified spirits will be united with a resurrection body, and they will dwell in the presence of God forever.
 - Believers cannot today see the ultimate future results of their salvation, but they are to wait patiently in faith in the assurance that the full benefits of salvation will be realized.
 - The Spirit helps believers in their weakness.
 - When tempted by their sin nature, the Spirit reminds believers of the glory and power of God, of God's promises, of the glory that awaits those who persevere, as well as the fact that only those who are made holy will see God.
 - Because believers cannot know everything about their present and future, they never know precisely how to pray.
 - God searches the hearts of believers and knows their innermost concerns and their true needs both now and future.
 - The indwelling Spirit intercedes on behalf of each believer communicating with the Son and the Father without the need of words.
 - He does so according to the will of the Father. The will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are always in accord.
6. **A Brief Retrospective:** In chapter 5 Paul began discussing key privileges of justified believers. He covered "Peace with God" in 5:1-5:11; union with Christ in 5:12-6:23; freedom from being under the Law in so far as justification and sanctification are concerned in 7:1-25; life in the Spirit in 8:1-27.
- In verses 28-39 Paul shifts from "present" benefits of justification to an overview of God's plan of salvation from eternity past to eternity future.
 - His shows the certainty of believers' eternal security.

- Believers are characterized by their love for God and having been called according to His purpose.
- God’s unchanging purpose is eternally grounded in His unchangeable love.
- In verse 27 Paul pointed out that the Spirit intercedes for believers according to the will of God and follows that by the wonderful statement in verse 28.

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

- This verse is both one of the best loved and most quoted verses of the NT and also among the most misinterpreted.
- Paul’s statement does not apply to everyone. He refers only to justified believers, those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
- As seen in verse 29, God’s purpose in calling people to faith is to transform them into a likeness of Christ.
- A difficulty can occur in interpreting verse 28 if it is thought that “all things” means “every individual thing.”
- Paul does not say every individual event is good nor that after enduring “bad things” for a time a believer will come to realize that it was all for the good.
- Clearly many events are not good and “bad things” may happen one after the other indefinitely. Paul’s focus is on the end of a believer’s mortal life.
- “All events” refers to the cumulative result of every event in a life.
- There is one possible event in every person’s mortal life that on judgment day will determine whether their mortal life has been bad or good.
- That crucial event is God’s regeneration bringing forth life-giving faith.
- Regardless of other events in a person’s life, the crucial factor determining whether a life has been “good” or “bad” is whether or not they received God’s gift of salvation.
- The ultimate outcome of a person’s faith in Christ is for them to be glorified (becoming holy and righteous as God is holy and righteous).
- To believers, “all things” includes God’s gift of faith and its guarantee of ultimate glorification.

- Glorification with Christ is an astounding “good.” There is no promise a believer’s mortal life will be free from events that are obviously “not good” nor that believers will necessarily see that all events work together for good.
- Bad things happen even to believers.
- But a believer’s faith in Christ enables them to know with certainty that their destiny of being glorified with Christ is the ultimate good.
- It is regeneration and subsequent work of God that enables Paul to say that “all events in a believer’s life work together for good.”
- The cumulative events in a believer’s life brings about ultimate glorification in Christ.”
- Paul says you can count on God weaving the consequences of events together such that the result is the incredible “good” of being glorified with Christ.
- A simple illustration from Randy Alcorn illustrates the difference between “every event good” and “all events work together for the good.”
- Once when Randy’s mom was about to make a chocolate cake, she laid out all the ingredients ready to use.
- Randy, who loved chocolate cake, decided to taste each ingredient. He was shocked. Taken individually no ingredient tasted very good, not even the chocolate which was not sweet.
- Several ingredients tasted terrible. But, when the cake was baked, the overall result was as usual delicious.
- That is what Paul is saying. If you look at the ingredients of a believer’s life one by one, there will be many that are not good.
- Some ingredients in life are essential for the overall life to be good.
- Regeneration and the subsequent gift of faith, justification, sanctification, and ultimate glorification are essential.
- At the end of life, when God has worked all things together including bad things and seemingly incidental events, the believer will stand forever glorified before Christ. That result is indeed very good!
- As was the case with the cross, human evil often intersects God’s divine plan.

- Peter in Acts 2:23 and following verses attributed Jesus' death on the cross both to the wickedness of men and to "God's set purpose and foreknowledge."
- Did wicked men deliver Jesus to be crucified or did God deliver Him for His own purposes? With Peter, we can only say – both.
- God often uses "bad things" to produce good. He did so with the death of Jesus on the cross. When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, they meant it for evil but God used it to produce good.
- God's overarching purpose is to produce a holy people for Himself. All things will work together to accomplish that purpose, even events that seem to us to intrinsically bad and seem the opposite of what God desires for His people.

8. **What is Next:** Romans 8:29-30.