

REVEALED TO US. 19 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. 23 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. 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 [G]
THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR THE SAINTS
ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD. 28 AND
WE KNOW THAT FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD
ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR
GOOD. [H] FOR THOSE WHO ARE CALLED

THE GRACE OF GOD

A STUDY IN ROMANS 8

Group Study Guide

Series: The Grace of God

ROMANS 8:1-4

INTRODUCTION

What is one news story you heard this week that reminded you of the changing standards of morality in society?

How would you describe the concept of right versus wrong to a child?

Righteousness is the attribute of God by which He does what is right and in accordance with His nature and law. God always acts righteously, and as we'll see this week, He has imputed His righteousness onto us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Although we are predisposed to unrighteousness, God enables us to live righteously, too.

UNDERSTANDING

| READ ROMANS 8:1-4.

How would you define condemnation, and what does it have to do with a person's relationship with God?

Why is there no condemnation for people in Christ Jesus? What does that mean?

A person under condemnation is one who has been pronounced guilty and sentenced to punishment. Because of the fallen state of humanity, we all enter this world as those guilty of sin and deserving of death. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to have a relationship with God and receive the eternal life and grace He offers.

How does the truth of Romans 8:1-2—in Christ we have no condemnation—impact your life both today and for eternity?

In the Book of Romans, Paul answers a basic question: How can people be righteous before God? Here he answered that in Christ we have no condemnation. We do not need to fear rejection from God. The focus here is not only on the end of life. No condemnation means we have no reason to live with guilt in the present.

Verse 2 compares “the law of the Spirit of life” with the “law of sin and death.” What characterizes each of these ways of living?

As a Christian, your life is defined by the law of the Spirit. In what ways are we tempted to live under the law of sin and death even after we become Christians?

Paul added a new dimension to the definition of life in Christ with the Spirit's law. The law of the Spirit is responsible for breaking the hold of the law of sin and of death. This law enslaved and led to death. The Spirit is freeing and life-giving. The former life relied on rules. Life in Christ relies on relationship.



What “law” is Paul referring to in verse 3, and what are its requirements? How did Jesus’ meeting the law’s requirements affect our position before God and our relationship with sin?

The law, which refers to the Ten Commandments, could not bring life because it was limited by the flesh—it depended on sinful humans living sinlessly. With the exception of Jesus, no one has ever been able to keep the law perfectly. Because of our sin the law only highlights the depth and breadth of our problem with temptation. In this way it condemns us. What we were unable to do in the flesh, however, Christ was able to do in flesh like ours, meaning He was perfect where we are imperfect.

What makes Jesus’ work on the cross so significant?

God condemned sin in that He broke its power by sending His Son. Having perfectly fulfilled the law, Jesus was uniquely qualified to serve as a sin offering. He could take on Himself the penalty for sin and offer forgiveness to us. Christ’s accomplishment is even more impressive because He submitted to sin’s domain. Jesus took on Himself the same weakness we have in the flesh. He was subject to the full reality of temptation. He knows what we face. To be in flesh like ours underscores this truth and means the divine Jesus Christ took on a body that was like ours in every way, yet He remained sinless.

Read verse 4 again. In everyday terms, what does it mean to be righteous before God?

Jesus’ death on the cross makes us righteous in God’s eyes. What part do we play in securing that righteousness?

To be righteous means to live in obedience to God and His law. Verse 4 underscores the purpose of God’s condemning sin, or breaking its power. Jesus’ death fulfilled the law’s requirement that we be righteous, that we live in obedience to the law. We couldn’t do that, but Jesus did it for us. Having fulfilled perfectly the overarching requirement, Jesus imparts His righteousness to believers. In this way the requirement of the law is accomplished in us. We now fulfill the law by having faith in Christ. We accept His gracious gift and rely on Him rather than our own strength to try to please God. That is the basic difference between living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit.

From verses 1-4, how would you explain the gospel to someone who feels they are not “good enough” for God?

Although Jesus was not a sinner, He received punishment for our sins as if He were a sinner. He died in our place. Through faith in Him, we experience the gift of right standing, or right relationship, with God. God’s righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle was speaking of a righteousness from God that He granted to people, not one earned by works. Such righteousness is available to all who believe without distinction. No one is without sin; we all have sinned. Furthermore, as sinners we always and continually fall short of God’s standard for us. Our only hope was for God to mercifully offer us a way of salvation in Jesus Christ, His Son.

APPLICATION

Is there a sin in your life that causes you to question if God sees you as righteous? How can you incorporate the truth of this lesson into your life to help combat those feelings this week?

Is there anything you might be doing subconsciously as a way to earn righteousness? What do you need to do differently to approach that area of your life appropriately?



Who in your life needs to be encouraged to accept God's righteousness rather than trying to earn it?

COMMENTARY

| ROMANS 8:1-4

8:1-2. Paul's therefore ... now occurs this way only here in Paul's epistles. Coupled together, the two particles call attention to a turning point in Paul's epistle (see 5:1 and 12:1 for other major turning points signified by therefore). The main text of Paul's argument can be seen most clearly by skipping from 7:6 directly to 8:1: "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (7:6). Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).

In Christ Jesus and "in Christ" occur 119 times in Paul's epistles. The other epistles add only four additional occurrences (none in Acts and the Gospels). It is fitting that the apostle who received the revelation of the mystery of the union of Jew and Gentile into one body should coin a phrase to describe those incorporated into one body by that union. The body is, of course, the body of Christ, the church (see Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24). But it is not the membership of all Christendom's organized churches. Rather, the body of Christ is that mystical body made up of those who have died together with Christ through faith, and have been made "one with him in spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). Being in Christ Jesus means we are free from the law of sin and death which blocked our way to every other blessing which is ours in Christ. The law of the Spirit of life which Paul says has set us free from the law of sin and death is more of a principle, or controlling power, than a law (see Rom. 7:23).

8:3-4. When a prisoner is freed from condemnation and penal servitude, he or she is freed to something else. Regardless of where the prisoner ends up, at the moment of release he or she has been freed to life. Such is the transition from verses 1-2 to 3-4. If verses 1-2 are about position (freed from servitude to sin and death), then verses 3-4 are about practice—free to live according to the Spirit. It is here that Paul moves beyond his summary statement of chapters 6 and 7 (see Rom. 8:1-2) and continues his treatise on sanctification—the position of holiness (set-apartness) which is ours in Christ which forms the basis of our becoming holy in practice. These four verses are not unlike the position/practice parallel found in Ephesians 2:8-10: "by grace you have been saved, through faith ... to do good works."

All along, it was God's intent that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met [fulfilled] in his people. Unfortunately, a perfect set of requirements was given to an imperfect people. This was not a mistake on God's part; rather, it was part of a glorious plan to bestow grace and mercy on those who needed it most—those who had become enslaved by the nature they inherited from Adam and which had been revealed by the law. So the law had two purposes: to provide life and to reveal the death in man—man's sinful nature. Because the law had no power of its own, it could not overcome the power of sin in humankind. But in a sinless person, the law could be fulfilled since a sinless person has his or her own spiritual power by which to keep the law. What God did in Christ Jesus to overcome the dilemma of a perfect law being given to imperfect people was to send his own Son in the likeness of



sinful man to be a sin offering. God condemned sin in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.

To return to the Old Testament roots of the necessity for the requirements of the law to be kept by those who would live, Christ condemned sin for that very purpose. In order that we might be credited with having kept the law, the one who kept the law perfectly sacrificed himself for us—those who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Paul's point is not that Christ's condemning of sin is valid only for those who walk in the Spirit, as if walking in the Spirit were a condition to be met in order to receive the benefit of Christ's work. He is using the phrase to refer to believers in Christ; those who died and were raised with Christ.

Did God expect that we would keep the requirements of the law having been filled with the Spirit? That apparently was the intent of the new covenant promises in Jeremiah 31:33 (see Heb. 8:11-12), and seems as well to be Paul's intent as expressed later in Romans: "The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. ... Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:9-10). Freeing believers from sin and death means that they are also free from being controlled by the power of sin in our members.

| 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

5:19-21. What Christ did, God did. Christ's death mainly affected the world, that is, human sinners (rather than evil supernatural beings, for whom no divine provision for reconciliation has been made). Christ's death upholds God's righteousness. Trespasses were placed on the One who did not know sin. In return, the righteousness of God is credited (imputed) to all who are in Him. The message of reconciliation is known to others only when ambassadors for Christ spread it. The Great Commission is the responsibility of reconciled human beings, not angels (Matt. 28:18-20).



Group Study Guide

Series: The Grace of God

ROMANS 8:5-13

INTRODUCTION

When you were young, who had the most power over your behavior? Why were they so influential, either positively or negatively?

Who or what influences you the most today?

Have you heard someone say the Holy Spirit directed them to take some specific action? How does the Holy Spirit direct a person?

Last week, we discussed who we are in Christ—children of God declared righteous and free from condemnation. This week, we will see how we live in light of this truth.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:5-8.

What characterizes a person who lives according to the flesh?

What characterizes a person who lives according to the Spirit?

To live according to the flesh means to think about the things of the flesh. Thinking precedes action. The mind determines the direction of the body. A sinful mindset inevitably leads to sinful living. On the other hand, Christians are to live according to the Spirit. We can subject ourselves to the control of God's Spirit within us and then live in a way that reflects His presence. The challenge is to continually concentrate on the Spirit. Death is the experience of someone who has the mindset of the flesh. However, the consequence for following the Holy Spirit is life—because the Spirit lives in us and the Spirit is life.

How would you describe the role of the Holy Spirit?

How did Paul see the Spirit impacting our position as “sons”?

The Holy Spirit is the guide for our spiritual lives. The Spirit dwells in us, meaning that He is an internal source of encouragement, discernment, and revelation. God, who is perfectly holy, wants to have us in fellowship with Him. Because He is holy, however, He cannot abide with any degree of sin. Those who are in fellowship with Him must be perfectly holy. He expects us to live holy lives, and this can only happen through life in the Spirit.

What are we taught about the unbeliever's mind in verses 6-8? Why is it impossible for them to please God?

In Christ, God broke the bondage to sin and death; thus believers are no longer under any threat of condemnation. The law had no power to free, but those who are in Christ receive the



Spirit. The Spirit enables Christians to live in ways that please God and to say no to the temptations of their fleshly nature. Because unbelievers do not have the power of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for them to please God.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:9-13.

What are the benefits of life in the Spirit discussed in these verses?

After describing the futility and consequence of life in the flesh (vv. 5-8), Paul returned to the theme of life in the Spirit and directly addressed his readers. He reminded them they were not in the flesh. Though the flesh can still exert a powerful tug in our lives as Christians, we are in fact no longer under its domination. We have been fundamentally changed and are different people. The presence of the Spirit is the assurance that life is our final destination. Physical death is not the end of life for a Christian. This great promise is possible because of righteousness. This means we are in a right standing with God. Additionally, the Spirit in us includes the promise of our future, bodily resurrection.

Why is knowing the constant presence of God's Spirit a powerful deterrent to giving in to the temptations that come with our struggle with sin?

Why does having the Spirit guarantee our future bodily resurrection?

What is our obligation as Christians, according to verses 12-13?

As Christians we have a new obligation that is the result of the great blessing of having God's Spirit within us. Paul's concern here, however, was to stress that we must avoid behaviors that reflect "the mindset of the flesh." Through the Holy Spirit's work in believers' lives, sin's power has been broken. The Spirit also leads us to live in a manner that honors God.

How does the Spirit help us fight our battles? Give an example.

Though the power of sin is still present in our lives, the Holy Spirit frees the believer from being controlled by what this appetite desires. Through the Spirit's work in believers' lives, sin's power has been broken. The Spirit also leads us to live in a manner that honors God.

APPLICATION

In what way have you recently sensed the Spirit leading you? Have you gone in the Spirit's direction?

How can you be more aware and sensitive to the Spirit's presence and power?

Even though you live by the Spirit, what areas of your life most often tempt you to live in the flesh? What are some practical ways you can fight against that tendency? How can you rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you in the fight against the flesh?

PRAYER



COMMENTARY

ROMANS 8:5-13

8:5. Paul often contrasted ideas in order to clarify the point he was making. Here he contrasted two opposing ways of living: flesh and Spirit. The lower nature (flesh) is in constant rebellion against the higher nature (Spirit). To live according to the flesh means to think about the things of the flesh. Thinking precedes action. A sinful mind-set inevitably leads to sinful living.

8:6. The contrast continues in this verse as Paul noted the difference between the consequences of living in these two ways. Death is the experience of someone who has the mindset of the flesh. Notice Paul did not write death will come, but rather death is the present experience of anyone apart from Christ. Separation from the source of life means death. The consequence for those of us who adopt the mindset of the Spirit is completely different. Life is precisely what we expect and what we receive as a result of having the source of life within us. The second benefit for those of us guided by the Spirit is peace. This refers primarily to the state of our relationship with God.

8:7-8. Additionally, the mindset of the flesh is hostile toward God. It is not willing to submit to God but insists on its own way. The original sin of Adam set a pattern for all sin. It is a basic mistrust of God and a selfish desire to resist God's way. For this reason this mind-set leads to the death described in the previous verse. Our sin creates a chasm that remains regardless of how many times we may attempt self-renovation. This verse essentially repeats the substance of the previous verse but at the same time gives an important conclusion. To be in the flesh describes a life that is determined by the flesh in the same way the Spirit determines the lives of believers.

8:9. After describing the futility of life in the flesh, Paul returned to the theme of life in the Spirit and directly addressed his readers. He reminded them they were not in the flesh. We have been fundamentally changed and are different people. We are no longer in the flesh. This is a statement of fact, not an illustration or analogy. The reason we are in the Spirit is not because of anything we have done but because the Spirit of God lives in us. Notice Paul did not say the Spirit moves in slowly. Neither did he say the Spirit comes and goes. Once we have accepted Christ, God's Holy Spirit enters our lives and never leaves. The Spirit of Christ is another way of identifying the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. There is no interim period between confession and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

8:10. Christ indwells the believer. In this and the previous verse we have seen the phrases Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, and Christ in you. This does not represent a confusion of phrases for Paul or an identification of the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit. The meaning is that the presence of Christ is mediated to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. One consequence of Christ in you is that the body is dead because of sin. Sin ushers in the death of the body, that is, we die physically as a result of the corrupting presence of sin. Death is still a reality, but it is not the final disposition of a Christian. The presence of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of a person) is the assurance that life is our final destination. Physical death is not the end of life for a Christian.



8:11. Once again, the word if is not intended to imply uncertainty or a condition. As is true of verse 10, this too introduces a statement of fact. The Spirit of Him is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, and this Spirit is in you. The action of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is essentially the same as it was in Jesus' tomb. The Spirit will bring your mortal bodies to life. Here is the promise of the resurrection. We are never without a body. We are never disembodied spirits.

8:12-13. Paul's concern here, however, was to stress that we must avoid behaviors that reflect "the mind-set of the flesh." Through the Holy Spirit's work in believers' lives, sin's power has been broken. The Spirit also leads us to live in a manner that honors God. Paul included another warning against living according to the flesh, probably because he knew the struggle would be so great. You are going to die is as stark a pronouncement as we find in Romans. The second person plural you makes this warning especially strong. The end of the life of a person who lived according to the flesh is death in every sense of the word, physical and spiritual. By the Spirit, or with His power, we are able to put to death the deeds of the body. The tense of the verb for put to death is present, and in Greek the tense refers not only to the time of action but more importantly to the kind of action. In this case the present tense verb means we are to consistently engage in putting to death the deeds of the body.



Group Study Guide

Series: The Grace of God

ROMANS 8:14-17

INTRODUCTION

Is anyone in your group adopted? If so, describe what it means to you to be adopted and what your relationship with your parents is/was like.

Has anyone in your group adopted a child? If so, describe what adoption means to you and what your relationship with your child is like.

When someone is adopted, they become a member of the family. While not genetically a son or daughter, adopted children become full children, receiving all the same privileges and honors given to a biological child. As believers in Christ, Paul tells us that we have been adopted as God's children and should live as such.

UNDERSTANDING

READ ROMANS 8:14-17.

According to these verses, who were we before salvation?

How does Paul describe our relationship with God after salvation?

Though Paul had used the analogy of slavery favorably to describe our obligation as Christians, here he portrayed it negatively. To have a spirit of slavery is to submit to the life of the flesh that Paul described earlier. Such a spirit can produce only fear, not confidence or certainty. A person who lives apart from Christ has no assurance in life, and any form of confidence is an illusion. By contrast, the Christian has received the Spirit of adoption. The Holy Spirit confirms this adoption as part of God's family.

In verses 15-17, what does Paul say about the Spirit's work in our lives?

Trusting Christ as Savior creates within us a conviction God has fulfilled His promise. We have a new relationship with Him through Christ. The Bible assures us this is true. Many times, however, the pressures and strains of life can create doubt. At this point one function of the Spirit Himself is to reassure us God is true to His word. We are secure in Him. The Holy Spirit communicates this reassurance together with our spirit, that is, He reconfirms our inner belief. God does not want us to live in doubt but wants to reassure us we are His children.

Look at verse 17. What does it mean to be an heir of something? If we're coheirs with Christ, what do we inherit?

How do you feel knowing that being in God's family means experiencing suffering because of that relationship? How have you experienced this?

When we become God's children, we don't just become members of the family—we become heirs. Being heirs means we are heirs of God's blessings and of all He has promised. Being



heirs of God means we are heirs of God Himself, that God Himself is our portion. Life won't be easy; we're guaranteed struggles as children of God. But we can bear the sufferings we face because of the hope we have in our future glory: eternity in God's presence, devoid of sorrow, sickness, death, and sin.

Can the Spirit guide us if we're trying to control the situation? Why? What will the Spirit guide us into if we give control over to Him?

The Spirit will guide us into intimacy with God, into the full assurance that we belong to God, through suffering to the glory of our inheritance. The Spirit's presence in our lives does not result in bondage by which we're constantly afraid of not being enough. Instead, the Spirit guides us straight into a loving father/child relationship with God. We can approach God the Father with confidence and intimacy because it is Jesus Himself calling God "Abba, Father" through them.

READ GALATIANS 4:1-7.

How is a child described in these verses? What else do you learn about your relationship with God from this text?

What were the Galatians enslaved to?

What religious practices threaten to enslave you?

Paul compared the sons of God (heirs) to people who used to be under the control of guardians (the law), while they were children, but who then grew into their status as adult heirs and recipients of their inheritance (freedom from the law). While still a minor, an heir did not have control over his future inheritance. In fact, he had little more control over his destiny than would a slave. Only when he came of age did the heir begin to enjoy the privileges of his inheritance. Paul's point was that the Galatian believers were behaving like slaves to the law instead of enjoying the freedom given them in Christ.

APPLICATION

What do we inherit with Christ as a result of our adoption as sons and daughters? What part of your inheritance excites you the most? Why?

Why is it important that you have confidence in your relationship with Christ? When you are confident in Him, what are you motivated and empowered to do?

PRAYER

As you close your group time in prayer, thank God for the assurance He gives us so we can be confident in who we are in Christ. Thank Him for sending His Son that we may have eternal life. Thank Him for answering our prayers and revealing His will to us. Challenge your group members to prayerfully assess their confidence and assurance level this week.



COMMENTARY

ROMANS 8:14-17

8:14. We have been adopted into a holy household—because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. There is a better way, Paul is saying, and that way is to enter wholeheartedly into fellowship with the Father who is holy. One senses that Paul could have been writing about many contemporary believers when he makes this transitional statement. How many Christians today—genuine believers in whom the Spirit dwells—are not putting to death the misdeeds of the body? A great many, it would appear. And how many are living on the edge of the family of God, never having taken the steps to move into close fellowship with the Father and his other sons and daughters?

Paul's hint at sonship is now exploded into its full glory by the apostle in the final of his three freedoms: freedom from the fear of separation from God. When one begins to enjoy the role of heir, the insecurities which fed much of our fleshly disposition begin to disappear, and the misdeeds of the body with them.

8:15-16. Paul declares that believers are children of God in whom there should be no fear. What is the fear that Paul says has been removed by the presence of the Spirit of God? The new believer fears a new relationship as a child of God. The void left by the absence of sin will be filled by the Spirit and works of righteousness in time, but there is an initial fear. Instead of a spirit of fear, we have received a spirit of sonship, or adoption. Adoption is a strictly Pauline metaphor, one common to him and his readers in Rome, due to the practice of adoption in the Roman Empire. Paul says in Ephesians 1:5 that adoption is a sovereign act of God, the result of his predestined pleasure and will. In Galatians 4:5-7, he repeats much of what he says in our Romans text, with one important addition: "That we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal. 4:5). Therein lies the heart of sonship, or adoption. One who was not a natural son is adopted by a father and given every legal right of sonship held by the natural sons. He is made an heir of the father, and given equal standing (often a more privileged standing) with the father's natural progeny. Jesus Christ is God's (only) natural Son and believers are adopted into the family of God and made "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

As an adoption record in a court of law receives a stamp, seal, or signature verifying its authenticity, and validating the adoptee's rights from that day forward, so the believer is given a seal by God. The Holy Spirit is given to believers to be a "deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 1:22). "Having believed," Paul says, we were "marked in [Christ] with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). In Romans Paul says that the Holy Spirit plays a unique role, testifying with the spirit of the believer that we are God's children. By the presence and power of the Spirit, we call out to God in a personal way—Abba, Father. The Spirit gives us that liberty in our spirits because we know from Him that we are God's children. Because it is the Spirit of God who is given to believers, the heart of the child is linked with the heart of the Father in permanent intimacy. But the believer is not just a child of God, but an heir of God as well. Being a child means that I have a family now; being an heir means I am included in the family forever.

8:17. No more dramatic validation of our status as coheirs with Christ can be found than that which came through the Son's own request to the Father. First, Christ told His Father that He had given the disciples the glory that had been given to Him (see John 17:22). The purpose of



that was that the unity (solidarity) of believers with Christ might be evident to all the world, and that the Father's love for believers was the same as His love for the Son (John 17:23). Finally, Christ asked the Father: "I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24). Christ offers to share His own inheritance, His glory, with those whom the Father has given to Him, meaning the disciples and all who would believe in Him. But there is a "catch." Coheirs will share in glory only in the same manner in which the heir achieves glory. In the case of Christ, it was through suffering. If suffering is the son's portion, then it will likewise be the portion of the adopted coheirs. But Paul never shrunk from this inheritance in his own life, and encourages the believers in Rome to view their past, present, and future sufferings for the cause of Christ as part of their sonship. We are called to share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

GALATIANS 4:1-7

4:1. In verses 1-7 Paul shifted his emphasis from the inheritance to the heir. He based his analogy on the legal practice of guardianship. While still a minor, an heir did not have control over his future inheritance. In fact, he had little more control over his destiny than would a slave. Only when he came of age did the heir begin to enjoy the privileges of his inheritance.

4:2. Guardians and trustees controlled the property or estate in behalf of the heir until he came of age. Although such guardians could be trustworthy stewards, in Paul's analogy they were sinister custodians as verse 3 indicates.

4:3. The phrase the basic principles refers to essential ingredients or basic components. For example, letters of the alphabet are the basic components or building blocks of words and sentences. Some have suggested that Paul used the phrase the basic principles of the world to refer to a basic set of philosophical or religious ideas. Others have interpreted the phrase as designating the four elemental substances that many ancients believed composed the physical world—earth, water, air, and fire. It was held that warring among these elements would eventually result in the world's destruction. Most likely Paul used the phrase in the context of verse 3 to designate evil spiritual powers and any expression of these powers in the world. In any case, the Galatian believers were behaving like slaves to these basic principles instead of enjoying the freedom given them in Christ.

4:4. The time appointed by God the Father for redemption represents a divine prerogative that can never be completely understood by the human mind. We might wonder why the Savior was not introduced earlier in history. Yet, with the perspective of perfect knowledge and wisdom, God chose the right moment in time to send His Son. The phrase God sent his Son emphasizes the eternal deity of Christ. However, this Son was born of a woman, a phrase stressing that Christ was fully human as well as fully divine. Further, He was born under law in order to redeem those enslaved by it. Although Christ was under the law, He was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

4:5. The benefits of Christ's atoning work referred to in this verse are those of redemption and adoption. The term redemption may suggest a basically negative connotation—we are redeemed from slavery to sin, from the curse of the law, and from the control of evil spiritual powers. On the other hand, the phrase the full rights of sons addresses the positive aspect of salvation. The expression refers to the giving of sonship status to one who is not a natural



child. It reflects the marvelous transformation that occurs in our relationship with God as a result of our faith in Christ who made provision for our redemption.

4:6. The Holy Spirit is the sign and pledge of our adoption as God's children. His presence in our hearts assures us of our salvation. The most basic indication of our adoption as God's children is that of an intimate relationship with God. We can address God as Abba [AB buh] an Aramaic expression meaning "father" The term carries connotations of respect and affection.

4:7. In this verse Paul changed from addressing his readers as a group to addressing them individually. In so doing, his application became direct and personal. Christian reader, "You are no longer a slave, but rather a child of God and thereby a joint heir with Christ."



Group Study Guide

Series: The Grace of God

ROMANS 8:18-25

INTRODUCTION

Think back over a difficult time in your life. What did you feel during that time?

What is something you wish you could have heard during that time?

At the time, how did you think God felt about it and what did you think He was doing? How was that different from what He actually had planned?

Sadly, suffering is a staple of life. We have all been through it and it's easy to look around and know that we are not the only ones. What is not so obvious, though, is that even God has suffered. Isaiah tells us that Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Look at the cross and it is clear that the Father, Spirit, and Son all experienced suffering. Fortunately, as we will see today in Romans 8, God has more than sympathy for our pain. He has a solution. He has a plan to turn your suffering into glory and the power to see it come to pass.

UNDERSTANDING

READ ROMANS 8:18-23.

What does this passage have to say about personal and global suffering?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-27. What made Paul the appropriate teacher on suffering? What can we learn from Paul about the attitude God wants us to have as we face suffering?

Paul was not concerned with answering the question of why Christians suffer. Rather, he wanted to put suffering in perspective. Paul considered the sufferings of this present time negligible when compared to the glory that will one day be revealed to us in heaven (see vv. 18, 30). At that time, our salvation will be complete, and we will be like Jesus (see 1 John 3:2). Our future glorification will be the time when God delivers forever His people from sin's presence. Not only believers but creation itself eagerly waits with anticipation for that day of glorification and freedom from sin's dominion, a day when God's sons will be revealed.

How have you experienced the groaning of creation recently? What news stories have given evidence of this reality?

Read Revelation 21:1-5. What is the goal of all redemption?

What do you think it will be like to live without fear, pain, or death? What do you think it will be like to live in the continual and direct presence of God?

As a result of God's final redemption, every Christian and creation itself will be set free from the bondage of corruption. The earth will far exceed even the garden of Eden in its perfection.



Because of sin, creation has never reached the perfection God originally intended. Sin brought the curse of death to the physical universe, but the day is approaching when a new order will be in place. The children of God one day will live in the perfect freedom of a sinless universe.

From what aspects of life on earth do you most look forward to being set free?

Read verse 23 again. The Holy Spirit acts as the firstfruit, or down payment, for our future glorification. What do you know about the Old Testament principle of harvest firstfruits?

How does this enhance your understanding of what's coming for Christians?

In the Old Testament God commanded His people to give a portion of their harvest that ripened first as an offering to Him (see Ex. 23:19; Neh. 10:35). By giving this offering, the Israelites acknowledged that all the harvest was from God—it all belonged to Him. By giving their firstfruits to God, the Israelites displayed audacious faith. They rested in the confidence that the rest of their harvest would surely come.

What are some of the key benefits of having the Spirit within you? How has the Holy Spirit's presence changed the way you view the sufferings of this life?

God's gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is His pledge to us that He will surely complete our salvation. Even though we have been adopted into God's family and redeemed by Christ's blood, we will experience more of the power and privileges of adoption and redemption in the future (see Eph. 1:13-14; 1 John 3:2). When will this occur? It will happen when Christ returns and glorifies our bodies by making them immortal (see 1 Cor. 15:44).

READ ROMANS 8:24-25.

How are we to live in the meantime while we wait for our future glory?

How do you know the future glorification you read about in Scripture will actually happen? What does Paul teach about Christian hope?

Our salvation ushers us into an entirely new present and future. Christians may long for the complete fulfillment of God's promise, but Paul pointed out this is the nature of hope. If what we hope for is seen, then it is not hope. Lack of fulfillment does not mean God is not working; it simply means we must embrace hope. Hope is a powerful medicine, and the good news is that no Christian is ever without hope. We were saved with hope, and it's with hope that we can triumph over present tribulations.

APPLICATION

How does the promise of future glory help you live more positively in our broken world? How can the Holy Spirit help you endure trials this week?

How can we encourage one another to live in hope and patience in suffering?

PRAYER



COMMENTARY

ROMANS 8:18-25

8:18. Paul knew firsthand a degree of suffering that most of us cannot imagine (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28). He must have wondered about the reason for these difficulties and perhaps wondered if somehow he could avoid them. He came to an inescapable and rational decision that his sufferings were not worth comparing with the glory that would be his in the future. Paul knew his ultimate destination was heaven. The reward of heaven would be for him far better both in terms of quality and of duration. He would not allow his focus in this life to be consumed by his suffering. He was always striving to keep an eye toward his ultimate reward.

8:19. The “glory” that will be revealed to us became the occasion for Paul to think about the redemption of all creation. By our sin, we have brought a great corruption into the world. Sin has stained everything. God’s concern and plan is to make all things right again, reflecting anew His original plan. Paul personified creation to indicate the extent of this redemption. God will cleanse every form of evil from His creation. God’s preeminent example of this regeneration is His sons who will be revealed. One day God’s children will be made perfectly into what God intended for them. We do not know exactly what all this will mean, but the beauty reflected by God’s children will resonate with the beauty of God’s entire universe. In this sense creation waits with anticipation, looking forward to the day when all of God’s creation will perfectly reflect His original plan.

8:20. For the creation was subjected to futility refers to the corruption of nature because of sin. Genesis 3:17-19 describes the ruin that resulted from Adam and Eve’s sin and provides the imagery for Paul’s use of futility in this verse. The word can also be translated as “vanity” or “emptiness.” It describes accurately the contrast between the fullness God intended and the emptiness that resulted from sin. Creation was stained by sin. Creation did not spin out of control, going off on its own, but was still subject to God. He remained sovereign though sin corrupted. God forced humanity to endure the consequences of sin because He would not allow sinful humanity to live in a perfect creation. For this reason, creation had to suffer as well. God did this, however, in hope. He had a plan to return to His original design.

8:21-22. The bondage of corruption again reflects the images of Genesis 3:17-19. Just as sin enslaved humanity, it also bound creation and prevented the fulfillment of its purpose, testifying to all that God is. Though nature still testifies to “God’s eternal power and divine nature” (1:20), we can only imagine what will happen once it is set free from all of sin’s effects. This freedom coincides with the glorious freedom of God’s children. Though wrong seems powerful, it is limited. Paul consistently had reminded his readers that suffering, affliction, and difficulties of every kind are not the last word in God’s plan. Nor do they represent a frustration of God’s plan. Joy will come.

8:23. To have the Spirit as the firstfruits means to have the down payment on this future glory and joy. God’s Spirit is present in Christians, God is at work in the creation, and His promises are being fulfilled. We know these truths, yet at the same time we groan within ourselves as we strain forward to the glorious future. The presence of sin pains Christians precisely because we have a clear hint of what God will bring about. We groan because we long for God to bring His



plan to completion. Paul focused here on the redemption of our bodies. We experience the effects of sin in various ways. Sin takes a physical toll on us, and in fact physical death itself is a result of sin. Where we feel sin's effect most acutely, we also will experience God's blessing. Redemption means "purchased from bondage." God will liberate our bodies, restoring us to divine health that is both spiritual and physical.

8:24. Our salvation ushers us into an entirely new present and future. Paul described the regeneration of the entire created order and then affirmed it is in this hope we were saved. In English the word hope may refer to an uncertain possibility, as in hoping our team wins or a disease is cured. The Greek word has an altogether different meaning. Paul referred to Christian hope, which has no uncertainty. It is still in the future, not fully realized; but its reality is beyond question. Our future is secure because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. This is our certain hope.

8:25. Christians are saved, as the previous verse stated, but we look forward to the full realization of the meaning of being saved. We hope for what we do not see describes the abiding mind-set of a Christian. We eagerly wait describes our yearning. The necessary strength to embrace hope and continually wait is found in the word patience. Difficult circumstances may seem to be direct evidence for either God's lack of care or lack of ability. But this is not the case. Difficult circumstances simply call for our need to endure. Endurance and victory are often precisely the same.



Group Study Guide

Series: The Grace of God

ROMANS 8:31-39

INTRODUCTION

What situation in your life has required the most perseverance and determination from you? What motivated you to go the distance?

At what times do you find it the most challenging to persevere in your relationship with God and the work He has called you to? What makes perseverance so tough in those moments?

Throughout Romans 1–8, Paul describes God’s redeeming grace and the result of Jesus’ sacrificial work on the cross. In Romans 8:28-30, Paul described a sequence of salvation that ends in the Christian’s glorification, as God’s character is being revealed in us even now. In light of this truth, we enjoy a right standing before God that cannot be revoked. On the heels of this truth, Paul encouraged the believers in Rome to endure in their faith.

UNDERSTANDING

READ ROMANS 8:31-32.

Name some things that can be against us in this world. Why did Paul say God is enough to overcome all that is against us?

What does it mean to you to read that God is for you? If you are “for” someone or something, what does that involve?

How can we be assured God won’t get tired of being for us?

What are some of the needs (v. 32) you have on a regular basis? How has the enemy attempted to defeat you when it comes to those specific needs? How can the certainty of God’s love help you fight off the enemy’s attack?

God being for us means we do not need to be afraid of God or uncertain about the present or the future. The offer of His own Son is the ultimate demonstration of God’s favor, and the Spirit’s presence in our life is our guarantee. God held nothing back. His love for us has no limits. God granting us everything means our blessings now and in the future are limitless. Any challenge in life is trivial compared to what God has done and is prepared to do for us.

READ ROMANS 8:33-34.

Read Romans 8:1. What do verses 8:31-34 reveal as the reason why “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”? Why is this good news for us? How should this truth change how we live each day?



Paul had been laughed at, stoned, beaten, and imprisoned because of his faith. Ultimately, these calamities did not shatter his confidence in God but reaffirmed and deepened it. In fact, God alone is qualified to bring an accusation; but God is the One who justifies, or puts Christians in a right standing before Him. Likewise, only one could condemn us, Christ Jesus. Instead of condemning us, however, He actually has done the unthinkable. He died and has been raised for us. His sacrifice means believers are free from condemnation.

READ ROMANS 8:35-39.

In this closing section of chapter 8, he asked perhaps the most important question a Christian can consider: Can anything separate me from the love of Christ?

What in verses 35-39 gives you evidence of God's unwavering love for you?

What could Paul mean by calling us *more* than conquerors?

Christians do not merely survive the onslaught of persecution but actually grow stronger in the process (see Rom. 8:28). Our victory is not through any of our strength but through Him who loved us. Christians who trust in their strength, cleverness, experience, or ego will soon fail. Our victory only comes through Christ.

Of the things listed in Romans 8:35,38-39, which stands out to you the most, and why? Share an example from your own experience that relates to that point.

Why can these things not separate believers from the love of Christ? How does this assurance help you in your current challenges?

This passage reaches the highest point of spiritual triumph in Romans. There is nothing that can separate Christians from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. Moreover, our faith is built not only on the death of Jesus, but more importantly, it is built upon the resurrection, the ascension, the dominion, and the assurance of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Though there are persecutions and sufferings of various kinds, we can go through all trials with victory.

APPLICATION

What evidence of God's love do you see in your day-to-day life?

What difference does trusting in God's love for you make as you try to persevere through difficult times? In what situation will you trust Him more this week?

What is the closest you have come to feeling the despair and loneliness of being separated from God described in 8:31-39? How was your relationship with Him impacted? What will you do differently if you are ever in a similar situation?

What steps can you take to be more aware of all that Christ Jesus has done/is doing for you? How can we help remind each other of this truth?

PRAYER

Give your group members the opportunity to spend some personal time in prayer, confessing to God the things that cause them fear and thanking God for the truth of His unwavering love.



COMMENTARY

ROMANS 8:31-39

8:31-32. Beginning in verse 31, there are five critical questions asked by the apostle that lend a sub-structure to the entire final section of verses 31-39. The first two questions deal with precedent:

Question 1: If God is for us, who is against us? This question is a good theoretical one, but certainly a practical one for Christians living in Rome in the first century. Paul's heart was to see the believers in Rome partner with him to launch a missionary effort into Spain and the regions beyond. How successful could one man, even all the believers in one city, be in such an undertaking, especially in light of combustible Roman opposition? In light of the verses Paul has just written, it would seem clear that those whom God intends to save will be saved, the opposition of humankind notwithstanding. Since salvation turns on the will of God, not the will of man, opposition to God from the human realm is not really an issue.

Question 2: He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything? It seems hard to deny the background of the Abraham and Isaac story here as a model for Paul's argument (Gen. 22:1-19). Because Abraham did not withhold his son, his only son, Isaac, God blessed him with everything else that he could be blessed with. The logical argument in that scenario could also have been Paul's prompting: it is illogical to conceive that God would give His most treasured "possession"—His only Son—to secure the salvation of sinners, and then not also give all else that is necessary to bring that salvation to completion. The precedents God has already established—by demonstrating in Paul and the believers in Rome that no one can thwart His salvific ends, and by giving the best he had to give—provide good reason for believers to rest in God's protection. Precedent is critical in any legal setting, but Paul's next two questions deal with the legal standing of believers before God.

8:33-34. Question 3: Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? This question is raised as a defense of what Paul taught in Romans 3:21–5:21 concerning justification—the legal position of believers before God. All have sinned, all fall short of the glory of God, but all (who believe) are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. As the judge, God was perfectly just in paying the penalty for and declaring "free to go" the unjust (Rom. 3:23-26). As a result, no charge can be brought against those whom God has chosen (foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified).

Question 4: Who is the one who condemns? If no charge can be brought against the elect of God, then certainly no condemnation can be brought against them either. Again, Paul is summarizing what he has taught previously: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" because of having been set free through Jesus Christ from the law which condemns us from our sin (Rom. 8:1-2). Continuing the legal motif which insures our freedom from charges and condemnation, believers have their own divine advocate who continually defends them before the bar of heavenly justice (1 John 2:1; Heb. 4:14-16).

8:35-36. Question 5: Who can separate us from the love of Christ? In this final section, Paul asks his final question in the first verse of the section and answers it in the last: What can



separate the believer from God's love (v. 35)? Nothing can separate the believer from God's love (v. 39). Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22 to demonstrate that there will always be opposition to God's people and the work of God in the world. The world is cursed; it is an antagonistic environment; it is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19). There will be many natural and supernatural attempts made to convince the believer that he or she has been separated from the love of God.

8:37. Paul reflected upon the words of the psalmist (in Ps. 44:22), which he found so appropriate to his situation. The troubles to be faced by the Christian are nothing new but have always been the experience of God's people. At every moment of the day we face death. We are considered no better than sheep that are marked for slaughter. Nevertheless in all these difficult situations we are winning an overwhelming victory through the one who has proven his love for us. It is the love of Christ that supports and enables the believer to face adversity and to conquer it.

8:38-39. The final two verses of chapter 8 call for reflection rather than for interpretation. They supply the climax of Paul's inspired and eloquent words of praise to the love of God. The apostle voiced his confidence that there is nothing that could separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. His list of ten terms moves from physical danger through the hierarchy of superhuman powers, those that now exist or ever will, powers from on high or from below, and culminates in the inclusive phrase any other created thing. There is absolutely nothing that can ever drive a wedge between the children of God and their Heavenly Father. It is true that life contains its full share of hardships (v. 18). But God is at work in all the circumstances of life to conform those whom He has chosen into the likeness of His dear Son. The process is God's. We are His workmanship (Eph 2:10). The process of sanctification is intended to bring us into conformity with the nature of our Creator. Although it may at times involve some serious pruning (John 15:2; cf. Heb 12:5-11), we may be sure that love is at work on our behalf. We are forever united with the one who is perfect love.

