

Romans – Fall 2023 D-Groups

For Wednesday, October 11

Romans 8:14-39 with a Focus on 8:31-39



The Big Picture - READ Romans 8:14-39

(Throughout the Fall, we're making our way through the entire book of Romans. Even though our primary focus in D-Groups is on a smaller text, it's good also to read this broader section.)

As we get into our text for this week, let's take a step back to see the even bigger picture. In this section of Romans, Paul is highlighting what God accomplishes in our lives through the Gospel. Remember, it's not *just* about salvation from sin's eternal consequences (his earlier focus); it's also about being set free from sin's ongoing power over our lives (his focus especially starting in chapter 6). Even as we continue on as part of this world *in this flesh*, our struggle with sin is ongoing. Yet, already, we are under "no condemnation" through Christ (8:1) despite what the law itself would declare. We should obviously celebrate this Good News. It goes one important step further: **the Holy Spirit is also present and at work within us to help us live in freedom from the power of sin (8:2ff)**. In contrast to the ineffectiveness of the law (it's not a problem with the law itself, but because of the weakness of our flesh), living under the control of the Holy Spirit can actually lead to the life God's designed for us. As this "civil war" between our flesh and the indwelling Spirit rages on, we experience victory to the extent that we surrender to Him. Good News indeed!

The rest of chapter 8 whets our appetites for what is still to come. As with 5:1-11, Paul seems to slow down to make sure we joyfully grasp the assurance we have in Christ even amidst our present struggles. The Holy Spirit is at the center of his focus this time around (He also appears in 5:5, but the primary focus in that text is more on God's love demonstrated through the cross). **He helps us live in freedom from the sin; He also affirms what is ours as God's children!** Here's the basic flow:

8:14 (a "hinge" verse) - Following the Spirit's leading identifies us as God's children. *(The original language uses the term "sons" not to the neglect of women, but because only sons had any rights in the 1st century. In fact, Paul saw women as being full participants in this status as those who had full rights as God's children; see Galatians 3:26-29.)*

8:15-17 - The Spirit bears ongoing witness - through His presence and activity - to this identity as His adopted children and, as a result, to what we're promised through faith. We are heirs, even co-heirs with Christ. This glory is guaranteed even as we share in His earthly sufferings.

8:18-25 (such a rich and powerful text worthy of reflection) - While significant, such present sufferings pale in comparison to this future glory that is in store for us. In fact, like creation itself, we are "groaning" for that day when we receive our full inheritance, including glorified bodies. Notice also the Spirit's role in this (v. 23): amidst our longing for that release from sin and struggle, He is a "foretaste" (NLT's word) of what is promised, even Himself guaranteeing it all. A Day is coming when our confident hope - still unrealized - will become reality!

8:26-30 - Many are well-acquainted with the promise of 8:28; in context, it is actually even richer. The Spirit is actively at work helping those who are God's people amidst our weakness,

interceding on our behalf. Through His presence, we can have confidence that God is working amidst hard things for our good, even to bring us to glory (the end result of the progression in vv. 29-30). In that sense, this section ends in the same spot as 5:1-11 = **we can have great assurance regarding the promised glory in store for us as God's children!**

8:31-39 (see below) - Because of all of this, we can rest securely in God's powerful love through which we have "overwhelming victory" (NLT - we are "more than conquerors"). We should not see troubles as threats to God's love or allow them to cause us to question God's love. Rather, we can rejoice that, in spite of them, God's love will deliver on His promise of what's in store; His love is greater than anything we might face!

This overall section certainly deserves our attention. Even as it whets our appetite for what is to come, there's a present purpose to it all. The more we grasp the Spirit's testimony about us (including what is promised to us as heirs), the more assured we'll live out that status and identity as God's children! While sin strives to undermine who we are and keep us shackled, the Good News frees us by calling us to embrace who we are, and so, to live accordingly.

The Close-Up - READ and reflect on Romans 8:31-39

We've already seen how these verses function within the broader section. Let's un-pack Paul's train of thought a little more specifically:

8:31-34 ... a series of rhetorical questions designed to help us celebrate our assurance through Christ. Given the truth of the Gospel as demonstrated in Jesus' death for us, God is clearly for us (what a beautiful statement!). Because of that, there is no accusation that can stick and there is no one left who can bring condemnation. The only One who could is the very One who demonstrated God's love and is even now interceding on our behalf.

8:35-37 ... a reminder that His love is greater than whatever threat we might face. While such things may be part of our experience in this life, we have victory over them through the love He has for us. In the context of Romans, these verses assume our ongoing faith in Christ; as that is present, we can rest in great assurance because of God's love!

8:38-39 ... a concluding celebration of God's love. Our assurance comes through our confidence in God's love.

Some reflections leading-up to next week's D-Group (especially focus on 8:31-39):

- It's one thing to acknowledge the Spirit's role inside of us; it's another thing altogether to actually *experience* that. ***How can this reminder about the Spirit's role encourage us even if/when we don't "feel" His assurance?***
- ***Use your "sanctified imagination" a bit. What comes to mind about the glorious future - both for us and for the creation as a whole - in light of vv. 18-25?***
- ***What do the rhetorical questions (vv. 31-34) speak to you about God's love for us?***
- This whole section is meant to encourage us about our assurance in Christ. ***How does the overall message (throughout this section, but especially in vv. 37-39) specifically encourage us to live in freedom from sin by living according to the Spirit?***