

The Christian Manual: Study 11, Romans 8:17-39

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: The author of Hebrews writes: Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3). We need to follow the example of Jesus and die with Him for the glory set before us.

Chapter 8b The Big Picture

Section 1: Romans 8:17-25 The Present Sufferings/The Future Glory

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

When we read the Book of Acts, we have to wonder what motivated Paul to continue in the face of such tremendous opposition and suffering—persecution that ultimately led to his beheading (see 2 Corinthians 11:16-33). Even at his call, Jesus told Ananias that he would show Paul all he would suffer for His name (Acts 9:16). So why was this okay with him? Even though he knew suffering was coming, he continued. He did this because he knew what the payoff was. He knew what he would gain through the suffering—the inheritance of a Son of God. This eternal inheritance was far more valuable than anything required of Paul to secure it. But there's one more thing here. Notice the location of this future glory—in us. There is a seed of glory already present in Christians that is going to burst in explosive glory. The apostle says it will be manifest (Gk. *apokalupsis*). This word means uncovering something that is already there. The glory is in us, it is just covered at the present time.

The creation is in eager expectation of the revealing of the sons of God. Eager expectation means literally, “Watching with the head outstretched” or straining to look out. All of creation will be released from the current bondage of sin when we are revealed. The creation, although still beautiful, has been subjected to sin since the time when Adam sinned. This disease on creation will be removed when we are revealed.

Even as the creation groans, we groan also. Our outer shell—the bodies we live in—hold us back. They are subject to the sin of this realm.

We have to battle our bodies constantly and subdue them in order to walk in holiness. Through discipline, dying to self, and controlling the body, we can see some gentle sputterings of the Spirit and of holiness in our lives. It will be different in that day when we are revealed. Then our bodies will be released, and with them, all of creation. In that day, everything will perfectly reveal the God's glory. This is our hope. It is what makes suffering bearable.

Section 2: Romans 8:26-30 All Works to the Good

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And

those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

So how do we walk in this holiness? How do we shake off the insidious flesh with its seductive influence? How do we escape the bondage to our sin-ridden bodies? If it were all on me, I could never be free. I would try programs, read books, or make promises I could not keep. Fortunately, there is another who knows me better than I know myself and who knows exactly what I need to break free of the flesh—the Spirit of God. God’s Spirit within me intercedes for me to the Father. And how does the Spirit intercede? He intercedes in accordance with God’s will. What is this will for us? That Christ be made in us. That we walk in Christ, in His holiness and righteousness, and that we are seen to be the sons and daughters of God. The Spirit intercedes for us to the Father to send into our lives whatever it takes to bring about Christ in us.

For this reason, God works all things to our good. This is not a simple Christian slogan. It is a declaration that everything that happens in my life—the good and the bad—is intended to move me closer to God and to break off of me the things that keep Christ from being manifest in me.

My daughter was once in a terrible accident. She nearly died. She suffered a traumatic brain injury and many other physical ailments. My wife had to quit her job and rehabilitate our daughter. And yet,

the Spirit knew that this is what I needed. Through this experience God broke me. He pulled all the props out from underneath me and forced me to rely only on Him. My pride was crushed. My tears and fears drove me to God. My prayers were no longer empty prattle, but heart-felt cries for help. And God answered. He restored my daughter, led my wife to go to college and become a nurse, and changed my heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

In all things, Christians can be sure that God is at work. When you suffer a loss, God is at work to break you of false dependences and to make you more like Jesus. When you become ill, it is not a random event—God is at work. Whatever the event, you can be sure that God is in it. Whatever happens, embrace it as God’s gift to bring Christ out of you. When persecuted, God gives glory.

Paul ends this section with a list of realities for the Christian:

For those He foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to Christ, that He might be the firstborn among many. Those He predestined, He called, and those He called He justified, and those He justified, He glorified. God knew from all eternity what He wanted to do with mankind. He mentions predestination. Some have built a theology on this verse saying that God predetermined some to be saved and others to be damned. But it does not say that God predestined people to be saved. What it does say is that God predestined mankind to be like His Son, that He would be the firstborn among many. Who has God predestined for this? Everyone who will

respond. There's not a person that God does not want in His kingdom, who God does not want to be born again, to be Christ's brother. Secondly, they are called. This word is full of Biblical significance. Think of it like being drafted into the army. When a person is drafted, they are called to serve. They must change their life's direction, their identity, and their purpose. In this way, Abraham was called and left his home (Isaiah 51:2). God calls each of us, individually, to change our identities, our life paths, everything in light of all that is now true of us in Christ. Thirdly, they are justified, or made just. This was Paul's theme in Romans chapter 4. Justification through faith means that Christ's death has now made us just before the judgment seat of God. Lastly, God has glorified us. This is what Paul has been talking about (see Romans 8:16, 21). We are glorified beings, but our glory has not yet been revealed. Oh how amazing it is to be in Christ! We're not only saved from our sins, we are sons or God and co-heirs with Christ. God personally called us, justified us, made us like Jesus, and glorified us with Him. Is it any wonder that Paul says that nothing he has lost or could lose can compare with what he has gained in Christ?

Section 3: Romans 8:31-39 Christian Invincibility

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with

him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I love the way Paul starts this section—What is our response to these things? By these things, He means everything he has taught in this book so far. He then gives his responses.

Who can be against us? The implied answer is, no one. Paul goes on to prove this.

Firstly, those in Christ lack nothing. Since God did not spare Jesus, He will not spare anything else. We have everything we need.

Secondly, there is no one to bring a charge against us. The judge himself has justified us. The judge has paid our fine. Who could convince the judge to now condemn us? No one. I spent this week on jury duty. I was the jury foreman. We found the defendant innocent. After the judge read the verdict, we were all dismissed. The case was over. The prosecuting attorney could say nothing more. So it is with us. The judge has paid our fine and found us not guilty. The case is closed.

Thirdly, no one can condemn us. The person sitting closest to God, the one with his ear, is our advocate, Jesus, Who died and rose again for our salvation.

Lastly, nothing can separate us from God's love. Nothing. No adversity, no persecution, no setbacks, no worldly loss, nothing. In his book, *Living as a Christian*, A. W. Tozer includes a chapter entitled, *The Christian Cannot Be Harmed*. He explains that the word 'harmed' means: 1) to reduce in quality; and 2) to make less, to prevent something from fulfilling its destiny. Thus, since our position in Christ will never be lessened and our destiny to be with Him forever cannot be forced out of our hands, then the Christian cannot be harmed.

It is the knowledge of what was his in Christ that empowered Paul to let go of the things of this earth and to endure such horrible persecution. It is this knowledge that enabled the martyrs across the centuries to suffer and die for Christ. It is this knowledge that

will allow us to live fully for Christ now and, possibly, to suffer persecution and the loss of our lives for Him in the future.

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28).

If these things seem hard to you, it is because you have invested yourself in the things that you have in this life and the things you want to have in this life. You cling to these things because they give you identity and a sense of meaning. They make you feel whole. But in these things you can, in fact, be harmed. These things can be lost. They can be taken away. They are vulnerable. Consider the women who put their identities in their appearance. When age begins to eat away at their perfect faces they begin to panic. They invest heavily in creams and treatments. They may go under the knife and have poisons pumped under their skin. In so many cases they become hideous inhuman creatures in their quest for perpetual beauty. Consider the men who jumped from buildings when the Stock Market crashed in the 1930s.

Everything we have in this world is unstable and subject to harm. There is no permanence in our relationships, our health, our fortunes, our possessions, our nation, our civilization, our family, in anything. This is why our hope and joy, our identity and purpose must come from God, set safely for us in heaven, "where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Mathew 6:20).



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

No matter what we go through, no matter what we might suffer, there is a much bigger picture we should always keep uppermost in our minds.

This bigger picture involves the profound changes that are going to happen to us in Christ when He returns and we are changed into His likeness. Firstly, all of creation will return to its original perfection. This is no small thing. Paul says that the creation groans in expectation. Secondly, our bodies will be transformed into perfection and glory. When this happens our groaning over the struggle we wage against sin will finally be over. Thirdly, when Jesus returns we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). We will enter into our inheritance. God will be our father for all eternity and Jesus our brother. As a child of God we will receive the inheritance of a son or daughter of God. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" -- the things God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What could we possibly trade for this heavenly heritage? What would we take in exchange for these things we hope for?

Would we trade safety for heaven? We will give up heaven for the chance to live a quiet safe life. Would we trade the treasure that is ours in Christ for not being hurt or killed for Christ? We might in fact secure wealth and luxury in this life, but is it worth having nothing in the next one. Can you see why it is so important to meditate on these things, to understand their worth, and to make the promise of them the thing that helps us carry on? BE READY!



CONNECT: Icebreaker

Have kids discuss the following in groups of 3 or 4.

In the book, *Man's Search For Meaning*, Victor Frankl explained something he observed while suffering in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. Mr. Frankl noticed that the prisoners who had something to live for (family, for instance) had a far greater chance of survival. When we have something very important to us to live for, we can survive anything.

Christians in America experience incredible freedom to exercise our faith. We can meet and identify ourselves as Christians without fearing government sanctioned attacks. But this is not the case everywhere. What can you do now to prepare yourself for the day God calls you to become a missionary in a place where Christians are routinely persecuted and even killed? Do you think American could ever come to the place where Christianity was seen as a threat to the government? What can you do now to prepare yourself for a time when America will change its view of Christianity and see it as a threat to the country and something that must be removed by force or execution? In the days before Christ returns we see the world turning against Christians and killing them.

Revelation 6:9 says, "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained." How can you prepare now so that you can be one of these faithful martyrs? How can you help your Christian brothers and sisters prepare?



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 8:17-25

How could Paul endure all the persecution he suffered for Christ? He explains it was nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed on us—the glory that resides within us now. In fact, all of creation has been compromised because of the sin of Adam. When we are revealed, the creation will be released from its bondage. In that day, our bodies will also be swallowed up in perfection. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit. The firstfruits were the first part of the harvest, the part that pointed to the richness of the harvest to come. The Holy Spirit in us is our down payment of all the riches that will be ours in that day.

Section 2 Romans 8:26-30

The Spirit also helps us now, knowing us completely, He shares with the Father what we need to better be transformed into the image of Christ. Therefore all that happens in our life happens for our good. We are not living a capricious life, a series of accidents. We are living a life tailor-made to bring Christ out of us.

Section 4 Romans 8:31-39

Paul ends this section with an amazing summation, a declaration that nothing can harm us. No one can bring a charge against us, for God is our justifier. No one, and nothing can separate us from the love of God. Because of all these things, we are more than conquerors. We are overwhelmingly victorious over all adversity. Again, this is how to handle all persecution. Remember what you have in Christ.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 8:17-25

1. What is the relationship between Christians and nature? What are we both waiting for? How does this relate to suffering for proclaiming Christ?
2. What freedom does Paul refer to? What glory does he refer to? What is going to happen to our bodies?

Section 2 Read Romans 8:26-30

1. What is God's purpose for your life? What helps us become like Christ? What does this tell you about the good and bad things that come to you in this life?
2. What is our relationship to God and Christ? How do we shift our understanding of ourselves in light of our place in this divine family?
3. Paul says that we were predestined, called, justified, and glorified. What do these words mean?

Section 3 Read Romans 8:31-39

1. Satan accuses us before God (Revelation 12:10). Is this something we should worry about? Can he successfully bring any charges against us?
2. Can anything separate us from the love of God that is in Christ? How will this help us deal with any rejection or persecution? In light of this, what is important to hang on to and what can we let go of?

Big Idea: What we might lose does not compare to what we have.



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Through Christ, who loved us, we are more than conquerors. “More than conquerors” is a combination of two words: Super and victorious. The key to being this super-conqueror, who can stand up in the face of all life’s problems, suffering, setbacks, loss and personal attacks, is our position. Where we stand is all that matters.

If we stand in our flesh—our selves—our hopes and dreams are all tied up in this world. We invest ourselves in our appearance, our performance, and our possessions. We build our holdings in this life. We hold onto things and our own comfort and safety above all.

In Christ, we let all these things go. They’re not important. In Jesus we don’t own our possessions, God does. We are stewards who use our resources as God would have us use them. This means we freely give them away when God tells us they are needed by others. As Christians we invest our time in spiritual activities—we worship and pray, we study the Bible, we fellowship with other believers. As we do this, our identity changes. We no longer see ourselves according to the labels of this world. Instead, we understand ourselves according to the spiritual realities that are true of us in Christ. We also relate to God differently. He is now our father and Jesus is our brother. We are members of a new family, adopted in. Although we need to love and respect our earthly families, our real family is the church and our common father is God. When we stand in this place, in Christ, then we are more than conquerors.

“What a safe and impregnable position is ours in Christ!”¹

¹ Miles J. Stanford, *The Principle of Position*, pg. 29