

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 11 – Study Questions

Romans 8:1-30

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

NOTE: All commentators agree that Romans 8 is something special. If Romans is a breathtaking landscape, this chapter is a majestic peak towering above its surroundings...Paul's focus in this chapter is threefold: the divine work of the *Spirit*, the divine gift of *sonship*, and the divine purpose of *suffering*, each in relation to the practical realities of Christian living. Thus he puts the capstone on everything he said in Romans 5-7. Paul gave us glimpses of these themes in earlier chapters; finally, the time has come to elaborate on them, and to glory in the blessings that God has lavished upon his people. *Hahn and Mitch*

DAY ONE

Read Romans 8:1-4

1. From our study of chapters 5-7, we see that Paul has clearly confirmed the need for the saving power of Jesus for all humanity, since all of us are weak and prone to enslavement to the powers of sin and death. With chapter 8, Paul begins a very positive section of his letter. According to the beginning of verse 1, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What does it mean to be “in” Christ Jesus?

2. According to verse 2 people were formerly subject to “the law of sin and death.” What is the new law which now replaces “the law of sin and death”? Record the entire phrase Paul uses to refer to this new law, which our Commentary refers to as “the indwelling presence of the Trinity in the Christian.”

NOTE: We have to understand Paul’s use of the word “law” to designate the Mosaic law as well as the second law, the “law of sin that dwells in fallen man and interferes with his intentions to keep the Mosaic law. This is what Catholic theology calls concupiscence. Now Paul adds a third law: Christians are the recipients of the law of God’s life-giving Spirit, which can liberate us from the law of sin...We could say that the third law (the Spirit) enables us to restrain the urges of the second law (concupiscence) in order to fulfill the moral requirements of the first law (the Torah). *Hahn and Mitch*

3. In verse 3 Paul says that the Law of Moses could not save humanity; it was “weakened by the flesh.” Rather, God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin and condemn sin in the flesh. According to the first part of verse 4, what was the reason for this?

NOTE: The “just fulfillment of the law” does not refer to the several hundred commandments considered individually, but the overarching intent of the whole. For Paul, as for Jesus, “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10; see Matthew 22:34-40). Love for God and others constitutes the primary objective of the law.” *Hahn and Mitch*

4. Read Psalm 119:10-11 and note what you see as its relationship to the “new law.”

5. In verse 4 Paul says that we must now live a life which reflects the goodness of God within us by walking “not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” How do you think we are meant to do this?

6. CONNECTION: The life of Jesus, the Son of God, offers us many examples of how we should “walk in the Spirit”; in other words, how we should conform our lives to Christ’s. When Paul speaks of God sending his own Son in sinful flesh to redeem the world, we think of how Jesus lived, taught, died and rose again so that we had not only his example, but also the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to aid us in our battle to overcome sin. We need only to call on him. In what way(s) do you enlist the Holy Spirit to help you in your everyday life? Are there times when you, indeed, “feel the Spirit”?

Offer the following prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Breathe into me Holy Spirit, that all my thoughts may be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 8:5-9

7a. In today's verses Paul contrasts "the things of the flesh" and "the things of the Spirit." Read Galatians 5:19-21 and list some of the things which Paul considers to be works of the flesh.

b. Read Galatians 5:22-23 and record some of the fruits of the Spirit.

8. According to verses 5-6, Paul says that there are two ways to approach life: To set the mind on the flesh or to set the mind on the Spirit. What can we expect as the result of each of the two ways?

9. The first words Jesus spoke to the apostles after the resurrection were "Peace be with you." (John 20:19) How do these words relate to what Paul says is the goal of life in the Spirit?

THINK: If the mind is "set on the flesh" (verse 7) the person "lacks both the willingness and the capacity to offer the required obedience – literally: submit to God's law." The inability to please God in this verse frustrates the relationship with the Creator upon which the attainment of life depends...Paul reminds his audience that they live "in the Spirit" in the sense of having the Spirit as the determining force of their lives. This creates the possibility of living a life truly pleasing to God and so being set towards a destiny of eternal life. *Sacra Pagina* Spend a few moments thinking about your own level of obedience and how it could be improved.

10. In verse 8 Paul says, “those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” This implies that those who are in the Spirit can please God. What are ways we can be pleasing to God?

11. Paul reassures his readers, the believers in verse 9, that since they are in the spirit the Spirit of God dwells within them. What does he say about non-believers at the end of verse 9?

12. CONNECTION: In the past two lessons, Paul has been challenging his readers to live the life of the Spirit as fully as possible. Re-read the list of the fruits of the Spirit which you recorded in a previous question. Share a few thoughts on which one of these fruits has most “ripened” in your life? Is there a fruit of the spirit that seems to be the most difficult for you to attain?

Read and record Galatians 6:9-10. Begin your prayer aware that through his Spirit, God can continue to guide you and ripen these fruits within you.

NOTE: Be sure to read Msgr. Mikesch’s “Side Note” on the mystery of the Trinity, which includes a wonderful explanation offered by St. Augustine.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 8:10-15

THINK: Central to Paul's argument for living in the Spirit is the sense of the Spirit as "indwelling power." In the old era under the law, the root of the problem had been "sin dwelling within me." What makes all the difference in the new situation is the replacement of sin by the Spirit. *Sacra Pagina* The presence of the Spirit fosters the growth of the Kingdom of God, both in the individual and in the Church as a whole. What event involving the Spirit is described in Acts 2:1-8?

13. Today we continue Paul's description of life in the Spirit. According to verse 10 what impact does Christ's Spirit within us have on our spirits and why?

14a. According to the beginning of verse 11, if the Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, what does Paul say will happen to our mortal bodies?

b. Read and record 1 Corinthians 3:16. What image does Paul use in this verse from Corinthians which relates to verse 11?

15. In verses 12 and 13 Paul uses a different metaphor to compare living in the flesh versus overcoming sin by the Spirit. What would be an example of being a "debtor to the flesh"?

16. In verse 14 Paul describes a new relationship with God, saying that “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” (Good memory verse) Record some thoughts about how you see your relationship to God in light of this.

17. Because of the presence of the indwelling Spirit, Christians are free from fear. Because we are now adopted sons and daughters, how can we address God according to the end of verse 15?

NOTE: The Aramaic word “Abba” is expressive of love, reverence, affection and admiration. It was used, for example, by children in addressing their father, or by students addressing a revered master.” *Cameron*

Jesus uses this intimate form of address in his own prayer in Mark 14:36. The Spirit makes the prayer of Jesus the prayer of all God’s children as they call to the Father for grace and help in times of need. *Ignatius Study Bible*

18. CONNECTION: Again and again Paul repeats this theme of “the Spirit of life” because his whole life was transformed after he was filled with the Spirit and he wants to spread this joy to others. What greater joy can there be than the privilege of calling God “Abba! Father!” What thoughts come to mind when you think of calling God “Abba!”?

Write your prayer today asking your “Abba” to hear your needs and to walk with you through any challenges or fears you face. Let the thought of God’s love for you as his precious child lead you further into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Romans 8:16-23

19. Today Paul again reminds us of how fortunate we are. Paul tells us, “When we cry, Abba! Father! it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” Verse 17 completes the “if-then”: If we are God’s children, then what does that make us and what is the requirement?

20. With verse 18 Paul continues his thoughts about suffering, telling us that he considers the suffering of our life on earth not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. In what way do you see this as a message of hope?

NOTE: Verses 19-22 are a curious mixture of theological prose and imaginative poetry. Paul personifies creation in order to dramatize its predicament much as the Scriptures of Israel had done. The nonhuman world – excluding the angels – is compared both to a slave yearning for freedom and to an expectant mother longing to give birth. Paul envisions the revelation of the children of God coinciding with a massive renovation of the visible cosmos.
Hahn and Mitch

21. After reading Romans 8:19 refer to the Commentary to determine what creation is waiting upon and what this could mean?

22a. Verse 20 states: “Creation was made subject to futility...” Consider the definition of futility and determine who would have imposed futility upon the world. Once again, the Commentary is very helpful with this section.

b. At the end of verse 20 we learn that creation is not without “hope.” What is that hope according to verse 21?

NOTE: Verses 22 and 23 show that “Adam’s trespass had catastrophic consequences not only for himself but for the world in which we lived.” *Ignatius Study Bible*
And yet the frustrated material universe (is) destined to share in the freedom given to the children of God in the resurrection of their bodies. *Cameron*

23. Msgr. Mikesch explains the “first fruits of the Spirit” from verse 23 in this way: “The gift of the Spirit, which Christians have already received in baptism, is the pledge or promise of the fullness which is yet to come.” Read and record Ephesians 1:13.

24. CONNECTION: As the earth waits to be freed from death and decay, God has made humankind to be the stewards of his creation. “So God created humankind in his image...God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” (Genesis 1:27-28) Yet all too clearly we see around us the devastating effects that humankind’s sins have caused to our world. In contrast, as people of hope, record ways you see the actions of men and women positively affecting God’s creation.

With the many serious threats to the earth and our environment, we can lose sight of the hope to which Paul refers in these verses. Read Revelation 21:1-4. Record the phrase or verse that fills you with hope, not only for the world but for yourself, and begin your prayer.

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 8:24-27

NOTE: As today’s lesson begins, Paul focuses on the topic of Christian hope. “We know by *faith* that God’s purposes will be fully and finally realized for creation as a whole, but *hope* is our personal confidence that God will make good on his promises to us, provided we uphold our end of the deal (5:1-5). Final salvation is held out before us but is not yet within our grasp. And so we must wait with endurance to attain it.” *Hahn and Mitch*

25. Record the first sentence of verse 24. (Good memory verse) Comment on your understanding of what Paul means.

26. The CCC 1817 states, “Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Share some thoughts on how Christian hope helps you during times of grief, disillusionment or discouragement.

27. Refer back to verse 23, where Paul says “we (Christians) are waiting in hope for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” According to verse 25, in what fruit of the Holy Spirit must we grow while waiting for this hope to be fulfilled?

THINK: Paul’s use of the word “hope” does not refer to a vain longing (or wishing) for something that may or may not come about. Paul uses the word “hope” in the context of a promise made by God that we are expectantly waiting to be fulfilled. Hope helps us endure the hardships of life. In light of this, consider that there is nothing in your life that is hopeless. Now consider Paul’s words “For in hope we were saved.”

28. We can be assured that God’s Spirit will help us pray when human words become too inadequate to express our prayers. With thoughts of how the Spirit has helped you to pray in time of confusion or trouble, complete verse 26. (Good memory verse)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness

but that very Spirit intercedes

29. Paul continues, “And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (verse 27). What does this mean to you when you pray?

30. CONNECTION: Our hopes are so often expressed in prayer, sometimes in a list of our wants and needs. We forget that the ultimate purpose of prayer is to unite the desires of our hearts to be in complete accord with God’s will for us. In our humanity that is not always achieved; we are too often self-centered and our vision is limited. We need the Holy Spirit to help us pray according to God’s will. Write your prayer for the day, asking the Holy Spirit to intercede on behalf of your intentions and to transform them into the desires that God wants for you.

CCC 2671- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Heavenly King, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, treasure of all good and source of all life, come dwell in us, cleanse us and save us, you who are All-Good.

Let the Spirit’s presence within you lead you further into prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Romans 8:28-30

31. We begin today's lesson with one of Paul's most famous verses (Romans 28): "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Good memory verse) The last phrase of verse 28 refers to those "who are called according to [God's] purpose." As you look at your life right now, what would you say is one purpose for which God called you?

32. Read Msgr. Mikesch's Commentary in regard to verse 29 and comment on what is meant by Jesus having the destiny of being the "firstborn within a large family."

33. Read and complete verse 30:

And those whom he predestined

And those whom he called

And those whom he justified

34. In verse 30 Paul uses the word, "predestined" to mean "in accord with God's plan." What three verbs in this verse indicate the progression in our relationship with God?

NOTE: The Catholic Church permits a range of views on the subject of predestination, but there are certain points on which it is firm: "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end" (CCC 1037). It also rejects the idea of unconditional election, stating that when God "establishes his eternal plan of 'predestination,' he includes in it each person's free response to his grace" (CCC 600).

35. The word "justified" here has been said to mean "just- as- if- I'd never sinned." Who is the one who justifies us and why would this step need to occur before we can be glorified?

36. CONNECTION: The words of Romans 8:28 are some of the most quoted and most consoling in all of Scripture. What a comfort it is to "know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." This verse isn't telling us that everything that happens to us is good, nor is it telling us that only good things can happen to us. But it is telling us that whatever happens, God will work something good from it. Recall a time when something in your life seemed no good at all, but then in time you were able to see the good that God "worked."

Romans 8:28 can be a source of comfort and solace for us no matter what trials we face in life. Take some time now to commit this verse to memory so that you will always have the promise ready to claim when suffering, hardship or sorrow come your way. Let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

Read pages 56-65 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M. Div., M.A. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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