

**Review of Romans #3**  
**Romans 7-8**  
**2/11/18**

After our study through Romans, I trust we all know the greatest need we each have is to trust Jesus as our righteousness & not look to ourselves to earn it. Our greatest need is to know that He fulfilled the law & died in our place taking the punishment of our sins. He then rose from the grave to prove it was accomplished. Those are the glorious truths of the gospel of Jesus. He achieved what was needed to uphold the law & to forgive us as law-breakers. Those are the truths that we need to preach to ourselves every day because the implications of them impact everything we face. Our spiritual battles boil down to what we believe & how the gospel should transform our beliefs. At its root, all sin is not trusting God. That's why when John Piper wrote a book on how to fight sin, he entitled it *Battling Unbelief*. Our approach to fighting sin is an issue of faith. It's not about self-discipline or accountability or good habits or knowing where to draw the line or when to run. All those things are good & helpful, but at its root, fighting sin happens by grace through faith in Jesus. Sin is overcome when we actually believe & respond to God as a Person who has given us His promises. When we act by faith to trust Him & His grace in Christ, then we have renewed thinking & desires. That's why Christian growth isn't just behavior modification. We mustn't think we've honored God if we merely stop a bad habit & start a good habit. We can't think we've fulfilled God's purposes if we don't 1<sup>st</sup> believe He is who He says He is & that His ways are better than our ways. True biblical living includes feeling attracted to God & all He is. That's why Piper wrote a follow-up book entitled *When I Don't Desire God*, because our true need for change plunges down into the depths of our lack of good desires. We need to know how to fight by grace through faith to desire God. After all, isn't that what it means to love God? So when we talk about placing our faith in Jesus to be saved, much more is involved than simply agreeing to some facts about Him. Much more is also involved than making changes to our behavior. If you really have saving faith in Jesus, then the Bible is clear that you have a totally new relationship with God Himself. & an integral part of that relationship is loving Him & longing to enjoy what He's said life should be like. Kids & young adults, you need to know this

too. We want far more for you than you're just being nice people who stay out of trouble. We want you to love & enjoy the God who rescues us through Jesus. We want you to have a relationship with God which will help you in your struggles with obedience because they are struggles of faith. If you know the gospel & want to be saved, but you never have assurance because you fail so much, then there's hope. There's hope in the new life in Christ that promises new power & new desires. That hope isn't in being free from the battle against sin. That hope is in being free to fight the battle by faith in Christ. If you're wrestling with lack of obedience as if you can't measure up to what it means to be a Christian, I pray today's text will help, that Paul's inspired writings will give you hope from the perspective of how you approach God & His law & life in His Spirit. PRAY

**1. Chapter 7** As I said back on March 8, 2015, *Romans 7 is one of the most difficult portions of Romans* & has been interpreted in a number of ways. But if I can summarize, & oversimplify, Christians have a new relationship with God with new life under His grace rather than under His law. One of the most difficult issues in the Bible is that of the Christian's relationship to God's law. Since the word law is used about 20 times in Rom 7, clearly it's Paul's theme. Here Paul expounds on his statement in 6:14: **For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.** Now he explains what it means to be free from the law & how this relates to breaking free from sin's tyranny. Paul begins chpt 7 with an illustration of a wife who is bound to her husband while he's still living. He wasn't giving a full explanation of the biblical view of marriage or of divorce & remarriage here. He's using marriage as an illustration of how the Christian's freedom from the law is like a widow's freedom to remarry. Just as the death of a husband frees a woman to remarry, so also the Christian's death to the law frees us to marry Jesus. We were married to the law, but when we trust Christ we die to that relationship & are free to serve Him. **1-6**

We're no longer married to the law. A death has taken place & nwe're joined to Jesus so we can bear fruit for God. When Jesus died on the cross, every person who puts their faith in Him died there in our relationship to the law as our husband. That truth becomes reality when we trust

Christ & then live our life applying that reality. We all tend to forget this new reality of being dead to the law & alive & free in Christ. But it's so vital & helpful not only for how we view God, but also how we see His law & respond to His commands. Being married to the law is miserable. The law never gives you any encouragement or affection or praise. There's no love coming from the law itself. If you want the law to love you or give you peace, you'll be greatly disappointed. Of course, many people misuse the law & assume they live up to its standards & proudly think it affirms them. They think they're OK & don't see themselves as sinful. If that's you, you're blind to your sin & lost. God didn't give the law to make us feel good about ourselves. God gave the law to show us our sin & to continually reveal His high & holy standards that we'll never attain on our own. That's why we need to die to the law & be released from our marriage to it in order to experience the love of Christ. When we're freed from the law & married to Jesus, we enter a new relationship where we serve in newness of the Spirit. We are freed from the law as our ruler & governor. Instead, we're joined to Christ as our Ruler & Governor & it's now by His grace that we live. Living to follow the law's standard by the detailed letter brought only death because the law has no power to change us. But living to follow Jesus as our loving Savior brings new power by the Holy Spirit to live a new & fruitful life. Instead of an oppressive standard to measure up to, Christians approach the law as fulfilled in Christ. It's no longer a heavy, *I have to obey*, but a happy, *I get to obey*. & in that scenario, though God's law could never save us, we still see the law itself as good. The law had a primary purpose in God's plan. What was it? To show us our sin & our need for the Savior. We see this in **7-13**.

Before his conversion, Paul was outwardly a self-righteous Pharisee. He thought all his works & rituals commended him to God. With regard to the law, he saw himself as blameless (Phil 3:6). But when the Holy Spirit brought the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment to his conscience, he realized he'd broken God's law. At that point, he came to know sin. The law catches us all, doesn't it? It forces us to look not simply on the outside where we may look pretty good but at the inside where sin lives. Twice Paul says God's law is neither sin nor a cause of sin & death. It isn't the law's problem when people break it. It's a problem with the law-breakers. God's law does what it

should do; it proves to all people that God alone is the source & standard of goodness, righteousness, & holiness. The law therefore is good & it reflects God's goodness. The law is good when we see it & use it as God designed. That design is to lead us to die to the law by faith in Jesus & to enjoy Him as the new husband we love & serve. Then when we hear God's commands, we don't react & call it legalism or say that any attempt to govern us is legalistic. Instead, we want to obey God because we trust Him as good & we trust that He promises to help us in Christ. We don't obey to get love, we obey in a grace-filled relationship of assured love with Jesus as our loving husband. Think what it would be like if God never gave any commands or directions on how we should live. How awful it would be if God made us as complex creatures in His image & never told us how to live. It would be worse than abandoning a baby alone with pieces to an engine & expect him to put it all together in working condition. But God is not like that. He's good in giving His law. He didn't leave us clueless & He didn't leave us hopeless. God gave us His law & He came to fulfill that law. God told us what perfection should look like & He came to display it in Jesus & then He offers Jesus' perfect righteousness as ours by faith. By grace, He rescues people out from the oppression of living under law & continually failing & never measuring up. Jesus fulfilled the law for us so we can stand justified & counted as having fulfilled the law too. Then He empowers us to respond with love & faith to obey Him with joy. This doesn't mean that the Christian life is easy. All these marvelous promises & freedom & power don't make the road of obedience a cakewalk. It's a daily battle that keeps us dependent on the gospel both for God's acceptance & for His power. We see that reality from Paul's words in **14-25**. The key to being encouraged by this passage is seeing the good & holy desires Paul described as a Christian wanting to obey. God doesn't make us totally perfect in this life because He wants us to be continually humbled under our need for His grace. After salvation, sin, like a powerless & exiled ruler, no longer reigns over us, but it still survives. It no longer resides in the innermost self but finds its dwelling in the unredeemed humanness that remains until we meet the Lord at the Rapture or at death. If we understand this is a battle of love & trust rather than mere behavior, it'll cultivate humility & gratitude & love & faith. & we'll shout the thanks to God that

Jesus sets us free & that one day He'll set us free from sin forever. & as frustrating & painful as our present struggle with sin is, this temporary earthly predicament is nothing compared with the eternal glory that awaits us in heaven.

Paul has summarized for us 2 great principles here. 1<sup>st</sup>, as Christians we struggle with sin. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the law isn't the answer to that problem. In fact, it's part of the problem when we're apart from Christ. There must be some other answer. What is it? Jesus. Step back again & remember the big topic Paul's been talking about. Freedom from the law. Paul is telling us that if our freedom & salvation & assurance depended on the law, we're all wretched men. But thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are saved by grace. Aren't you thankful. As Christians we should expect to battle sin but we know that the victory is won.

**2. Chapter 8** No Christian can overcome sin by his own strength through the law. We need a supernatural power. How many times is the Holy Spirit mentioned in chpt 7? Once. That's important because Paul is whetting our appetites for chpt 8 where the Spirit is mentioned at least 17 times. One pastor put it this way:

*Vs 25 says, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." Then you come into chpt 8, & that is what makes chpt 8 so wonderful. This is what grace is all about. This is the Holy Spirit of God living in a person's life.*

*Vss 1-4: The Role of the Holy Spirit.*

*Vss 5-11: The Result of the Holy Spirit.*

*Vss 12-14: The Rights of the Holy Spirit.*

*Vss 15-17: The Relationship that the Holy Spirit brings.*

*Vss 18-21: The Reward the Holy Spirit guarantees.*

*Vss 22-27: The Resource of the Holy Spirit (who prays when we don't know how to pray).*

*Vss 28-29: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit (the fact that God is actually causing everything to work together for good for His pre-resolve, that means we are going to be changed into the image of His Son).*

*& vss 30-35: The Resolve of the Holy Spirit (to carry out the plan of God, all the way until that event when we are glorified & the sons of God are revealed).<sup>1</sup>*

## **8:1**

Our conscience may try to condemn us & other people may do the same, but God says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We see how this can be true in **2-4**.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Wayne A. Barber, [www.preceptaustin.org/roman-review\\_1-8\\_pt\\_2](http://www.preceptaustin.org/roman-review_1-8_pt_2)

Paul's speaking of the new relationship we have in Christ, but here he's applying it in a different way. He's making clear that the power & Person of this new life in Christians is God the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit, we are assured & kept forever in God's grace. God not only forgives us & secures us in His love. He also gives us the Spirit as power to fulfill His commands. When the Spirit moves us, love happens & the heart of God's law is fulfilled through love. The next several vss describe that change of mindset. **5-11**

Christians have a new direction in life, a new pursuit after the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh. A new dominion with new desires has come to reign in us. This same Spirit is the One who secures future resurrection. So if you have the Holy Spirit in you, He shows Himself by transforming your passions & priorities. That doesn't mean we'll be perfect or we won't have to fight to put faith into action. Read vs 12 where Paul again turns the promise of power into a command. **12**

Because Christians have the Spirit, **we are under obligation**. The obligation to live according to the Spirit is implied in the command not **to live according to the flesh**. Because we can live by the Spirit, we must do so. That's how God commands us by grace. Because of who He has made us & what He has done for us, He commands us to go enjoy & live it out. It's like someone making a delicious meal & saying, *Eat*. We don't snarl at them & tell them not to tell us what to do, right? When you headed for vacation & someone says, *Enjoy your vacation!*, you didn't respond, *I don't have to!* Those scenarios sound silly but they're like the command or obligation God gives to obey Him by the grace He has provided. It's ridiculous to think of arguing against that because God has supplied all we need to feast at His table & to enjoy His rest. So when He says, *Follow Me & do this & not that*, we should be gladly eager to trust Him & embrace that obligation. Vss 13-17 remind us we are forever in God's family when we are in Christ. **13-17**

God has spiritually adopted every person who trusts Jesus & He doesn't kick His family members out & disown them. He securely keeps us even through suffering we face as His children. & we haven't begun to imagine how much greater it will be to see God's glory face-to-face as His

children. Vs 18 says God's presence will be so much greater that all suffering & sorrow in this life will not begin to compare & even creation longs for God's future glory. 18-25

If you're a Christian, don't look for this life to satisfy you. It won't because this is a fallen world of sin & corruption & even the creation itself looks forward to a better time yet ahead. If creation itself longs for future redemption, why should we get caught up looking to this creation for fulfillment? The sin & sorrow & suffering of this world are like a neon arrow pointing forward in time & upward in hope. & the goodness of God is that He's promised persevering assurance of reaching the greater glory of the end. Even suffering itself can give us hope to point us forward & upward. God's goal is for us to take our eyes off this world so we won't be perpetually & forever disappointed. Pain & problems help to pry us away from clinging to creation. Creation is God's tool, even in its corruption, to prove that our Creator must be so much better. Paul gives further assurance that the Holy Spirit intercedes to be sure God's plan is finished. 26-27

Within the 3 Persons of the Trinity, there's inter-relational communication that anchors every Christian. With that kind of inter-Trinitarian assurance, it's no wonder we're assured that God is working all things for our good. 28

This is a wonderful promise, but is often taken wrongly. Briefly, **all things ... work together for good** only because God, by His Spirit, so directs them. But we mustn't interpret **good** in a selfish or materialistic way. This vs certainly doesn't promise easy, no-suffering living. It promises that God is working things out so that the very best **good** will be true in us. What is that? Being conformed to the image of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Obviously, this promise is only **to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose**. This is a way of describing Christians from both the divine vantage point (God calls us) & the human vantage point (we love God). The call here is God's own irresistible summons to enter into the salvation won for us by Christ. We then come to the unbreakable chain of God's work in salvation in vss 29-30.

In the Bible, **foreknowledge** doesn't mean that God knows beforehand who will respond to Him or to the preaching of the gospel & then He determines their destiny on that basis. If that were the case, what would God possibly see or foreknow as He looked down the corridor of time? The only

thing He would see in all of humanity, apart from His intervention, is unbelief.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the only thing God would see ahead of time, is rejection of the gospel & opposition to His grace. Paul wrote, **There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God** (Rom 3:10-11). & that the unbeliever **does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him** (1 Cor 2:14). He tells us **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ** (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus Himself said, **the Light has come into the world, & men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil** (Jn 3:19). In other words, without the initiating work of God on behalf of His people, they would never believe the gospel nor even want to accept the light of Christ. God's foreknowledge not only means God sees in advance, but that He ordains in advance. His foreknowledge includes His intention. That's how this word is used throughout the Bible. God said to Jeremiah, **Before I formed you in the womb I knew you** (1:5). What did God mean? Did He mean that He knew there was a baby in the womb? God knows that of every baby. But He tells Jeremiah He **knew** him. God is implying that a relationship with Jeremiah is part of His sovereign plan, even before Jeremiah is born. The prophet Amos records God saying, **You** (Israel) **only have I chosen** or known **among all the families of the earth** (3:2). Does that mean God only knows about Israel? & He doesn't know about the Philistines, the Amorites, the Egyptians, & the Americans? No! Israel is the only nation predetermined by God in His knowledge & counsel, to have an intimate relationship with Himself. Jesus said in Jn 10:14, **I am the good Shepherd, & I know My own**. That is, *I have a relationship with them that's intimate*. Then, He also says those terrifying words in Mt 7:22-23 to a host of religious people who actually served God, but weren't true believers, **Many shall say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, & in Your name cast out demons, & in Your name perform many miracles?" & then I will declare to them, "I never knew you."** Was He saying, *Sorry, I never met you. I don't know who you are?* No. God is saying, *I don't have a relationship with you*. An even more specific text regarding God's foreknowledge is Acts 2:23, when Peter is preaching & says, **This Man** (Jesus), **delivered over by**

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans, Vol 2, p 913*

the predetermined plan & foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men & put Him to death. Was Jesus a puppet? No. Was Jesus able to choose to follow the will of the Father? Yes. We heard Him pray in the garden, **not My will, but Yours be done** (Lk 22:42). However, Peter says Jesus was handed over by God's foreknowledge, that it was exactly what God had planned & purposed. In his 1<sup>st</sup> letter, Peter was writing about God's determination to send Jesus to earth & he says Jesus **was foreknown before the foundation of the world** (1 Pt 1:20). That doesn't mean the Father looked down through time & saw Jesus come to earth & die for the sins of the world & say, *Well, that's great. Since Christ is coming to earth, I'll just work it out so that He dies on a cross for the sins of the world.* No, it means God the Father, along with the Spirit & the Son, determined ahead of time that this would occur. God's foreknowledge isn't simply knowing what people will do but that He has decided to have a relationship with them. Paul then moves on to **predestined**, which simply means God has destined us beforehand for a certain end. But we sometimes think of it as fatalism & that we are puppets with no free will or that God is playing games with humanity. Jesus said, **You did not choose Me but I chose you, & appointed you that you should go & bear fruit, & that your fruit would remain** (Jn 15:16). Did you catch that? **You did not choose Me but I chose you.** I can see you thinking, *Hold on there Nate. I remember choosing God!* Yes, I remember too! We made a decision to place our faith in Jesus. But we were able to choose God because God had already chosen us. In 2 Thes 2:13 we're told, **But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, (why?) because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit & faith in the truth.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> link in this unbreakable chain is **called** which can be defined as the inward drawing of God toward salvation. Jesus said, **No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him** (Jn 6:44). In the Bible there are 2 kinds of calling. There's a general or open call & there's an effective call. Jesus gave a general call when He said, **Come to Me, all who are weary & heavy laden, & I will give you rest.** What did the vast majority of people do? They refused Him; they rejected Him. Did that mean Jesus was insincere with this invitation? Of course not. The general,

open invitation is necessary because within that general calling, is God's effective calling, which is His irresistible call.

Those whom God calls, He also justifies. Justification is the legal declaration that we are right before God based on Christ's payment for sin on our behalf & the crediting of His righteousness to our account.

What does all this result in? **These whom He justified, He also glorified.** I love the fact that this is in the past tense. It refers to our glorification as if it's already happened. The future is regarded as if it's in the past. Again, this is God's perspective. If you have been foreknown by God, you are already secure in your glorification. You can no more work your way out of salvation than you could work your way in. If you haven't picked up on it yet, salvation is the work of God. This text is all about God!

- God foreknew;
- God predestined;
- God called;
- God justified;
- God glorified.

Our ultimate end is glory as we are **conformed to the image of His Son.** God's foreknowledge (choosing to have a relationship with us) leads to His predestining, His predestining leads to His calling, His calling to His justifying, & His justifying to His glorifying. God is determined to bring all those who belong to Him to glory. He's decided it; we can depend on it. The salvation of every person in Christ is so sure that our future glorification can be spoken of as already accomplished. God planned it, began it, caused it, is accomplishing it, & will finish it & it is all by His grace for His glory in Christ. God started it & He will finish it & it's all free to us in Christ. That just seems overwhelmingly too good to be true. But it is true & may God open our eyes to these eternal marvels that are too grand to grasp & too amazing to fully appreciate. How peaceful, how restful, how unconditionally loved & accepted we are now & forever in Christ! Nothing & no one in all of creation compares to this. & nothing or no one can come close to threatening or undermining or changing this wondrous love in Christ. We see this in **31-39**.

We've read a lot & barely skimmed the surface. But it all can seem too good to be true. But it is true that those in Christ have God's Spirit & His persevering assurance. So if you are in Christ, don't doubt God's love or whether He'll forgive you again or give up on you or whether He'll accept you or somehow think you don't measure up. The gospel of Jesus Christ really is this gracious & free! It really is all about what Jesus has already accomplished & applied to us by the Spirit so that nothing can take it away. Turn from every other trust to rest your soul in Christ alone. & live every day glad to have a new relationship with Him by grace alone through faith alone so that we may bear fruit for His glory because we are forever loved by Him.