

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a black top and a grey cardigan, stands on the right side of the frame, looking out over a winding asphalt road that stretches into the distance. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, and a faint rainbow is visible in the distance where the road curves. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

LEADERS NOTES

ASSURANCE

HUMBLE CONFIDENCE FOR THE JOURNEY HOME

ROMANS 8

Additional Helpful Resources

BOOKS

Ray Galea, *From Here to Eternity - Assurance in the face of Sin and Suffering*

Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You*
(Good Book Company, 2015)

COMMENTARIES

Kruse, *Romans* (Pillar Series)

Moo, *Romans* (NICNT Series)

Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic Series)

Peterson, *Romans*
(Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary Series)

VIDEOS

<https://www.desiringgod.org/series/the-greatest-chapter/labs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SVTl4Xa5fY>

Contents and Overview of studies

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- 8. **Romans 1-7**
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How to use this book

At St Paul's we are committed to growing as disciples of Jesus, spurring each other on to know and grow in Jesus. We know that God works through His Word powerfully to teach and transform us. We therefore know the importance of seeing God's Word regularly sown into our lives, through our sermon series and also during the week. We see this process as we daily open God's Word and depend on Him in prayer. We also grow as we meet in our households and study groups to read God's Word together. Over time we've seen that as we study the same passage from God's Word, that God builds depth in our understanding, stronger application in our lives, and encouragement in our households and church as we learn together. As we together dig into Romans 8 this term, we are exploring the concepts in at least three ways...

Church

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church, or keep it handy when you watch church online. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided. Then, be ready to reflect on these personally, as you meet with someone 121, and as you meet up with your Small Group.

Small Groups

Take this guide with you to your Small Group each week. There are Bible studies for each topic within the Shaped by Jesus series, with space to write down your answers plus prayer points that arise from the study and prayer requests from the members of your group.

Family Devotions

Use your family devotions time to open up the concept of Assurance together as a household (keeping the devotions suitable for a range of ages). You can open up the passages at dinner time, just before bed, or as you are baby-sitting your grandchildren.

Setting the scene for our "Assurance" series

Purpose

As a church, we agreed that we want to be “Shaped by Jesus” as we head into 2023. This series will remind us of the work of Christ to free us from the condemnation of the law, so that we can live now through the power of the Spirit and know that we are loved and kept close by God every step of the way through this life. Romans 8 will remind us of our status as precious children of God, which gives rise to hope in trouble, prayer in all circumstances, and the assurance of destiny with God, who is moulding us into the image of Jesus day by day. This should fill us with humble confidence – we are humble, because its grounding is nothing to do with us or our performance (it’s all Christ’s doing), and yet we can also be confident (because nothing can take it away from us). This allows us to live lives for his glory, individually and as a church, helping us be all that we are meant to be.

Authorship

The letter to the Romans was written by Paul, according to Romans 1:1. There is a reference to Tertius in Rom 16:22 with the claim that he “wrote down this letter” (most likely as Paul dictated it). What a privilege this would have been for Tertius. There is little doubt that this letter is God’s word through his Apostle Paul.

About the book

- The Letter to the Romans was written between A.D. 55 and 58.
- There have been many suggestions as to the structure of the letter. Perhaps the most useful and simple is Chapters 1-5:11; 5:12-8; 9-11; 12-16. Chapter 8 comes in the middle of the letter and is considered a highlight of this masterpiece.
- This letter draws together theological insights as God's plan for salvation has unfolded. A key verse for the whole book is 1:16-17, *'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*' The high point of this gospel is explained in Romans 8.
- Martin Luther said of Romans, *"This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul."*¹

John Calvin says that the theme of Romans is as follows: "Man's only righteousness is the mercy of God in Christ, when it is offered by the Gospel and received by faith."²

Historical Context

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from the **city of Corinth**, while he was on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:2-3).

One of the aims of the letter is to unify the church in Rome. The church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles and it is believed that it was started by Jews. In A.D. 49 Jewish Christians were expelled from Rome and returned in A.D. 54. Paul met Priscilla and Aquila, in Corinth after they had been expelled from Rome by Claudius (See Acts 18:1-2 and Romans 16).

1. Luther's Works – Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 365.

2. Calvin John. *Commentary on Romans* - <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom38.iv.html> (Sighted 2 February 2023).

As a result of the return of the Jews to Rome, the social distance between the groups had widened and Gentiles would have demonstrated little or no adherence to Jewish law. This distance was bridged by the Gospel that Paul preached and taught. As Schreiner points out, *“Paul could not arbitrate the debate simply by declaring his opinion. He needed to summarise the basic content of the gospel he preached, especially as it pertained to issues relating to Jews and Gentiles.”*³

The gospel changes everything!

Theological Context

Romans is thought of as a theological highpoint of the Bible. It knits together all that God has been working towards throughout salvation history. It does this through the lens of the Gospel that was given to Paul and the Apostles to pass on.

It is worth noting that this letter is not the total of Paul's theology. There are things that he does not address in this letter that are central to his thinking, for example, the Lord's Supper. It has also been suggested that Paul's eschatology (theology of the end times) is not fully developed or expounded in this letter.

Romans 8

In Romans 8 Paul *“relays the means by which the power of sin is broken.”*⁴ The answer is in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Schreiner goes on to say, *“Christ's work on the cross provides the basis for the deliverance of believers from condemnation, while the Holy Spirit provides the power for conquering sin so that the law can now be kept (8:1-4).”*⁵

Romans 8 provides us with words of assurance through the work of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit. Our future is assured based on the work of Christ, revealed to us by the Spirit. The chapter finishes with the beautiful and powerful declaration that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Thomas R. Schreiner. Romans – Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Page 20-21.

4. Thomas R. Schreiner. Romans – Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Page 395.

5. Thomas R. Schreiner. Romans – Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Page 395.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 5th February



STUDY ONE

Romans 1-7

Introduction

Romans unfolds for us the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:16-17 we read, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”*

The gospel “reveals the righteousness of God, creates a new humanity, fulfils God’s promise to Israel and unifies the church.”⁶

Romans 1-4 could be summarised as revealing God’s righteousness which is in direct opposition to our own. In fact, we learn from these chapters that we are all guilty of sin (rooted in self-righteousness), whether Jew or Gentile. This self-righteousness may appear differently but results in each of us being left with guilt and shame. For the Jew, self-righteousness can appear as if they are serving God, and is founded on the boast of **being** God’s chosen people, not **living** as God’s chosen people. For the Gentile, the image of God is exchanged for a lesser one (Romans 1:23) and life spirals into the depths of calling evil things good (Romans 1:32). Sin is not static or a one-off proposition, but something which leads to further and further decline. Our response to sin is repentance or repeat. When we repeat sin, eventually there is no remorse and this leaves our conscience deadened.

6. The Bible Project. *Illustrated summaries of Biblical Books*. Page 103.

The good news is that through justification by faith (in Jesus and his death and resurrection) we are brought into a new status (being right with God), a new family and a new future, which includes a transformed life. Being declared righteous by virtue of Jesus' death and resurrection (together with our response of repentance and belief in him) undoes the peril of self-righteousness and our ill-placed allegiance.

Chapters 5-7 begin by describing the creation of a new humanity, from Adam to Jesus. In Chapter 7 Paul is answering the question of the point of the Law. In the Bible we have the story of the Torah (the story of the Law) and the Laws themselves and Paul is referring to the latter in chapter 7. The Law is good, but it reveals evil (and even increases evil). This will lead us into chapter 8 next week.

Questions

1. Share with others in the group some of your story: from alienation from God to being declared right with him. Alternatively, share how the Holy Spirit is working in your life to make you more like Christ.

Give people time to share there is no need to rush this.

2. Read Romans 1:16-17. What is revealed about the gospel in these verses?

This is a comprehension question generally. Do not be afraid to push into this further. Perhaps ask people about what the gospel is. What part does it play in their lives? Why is the gospel considered by Paul to be powerful?

3. Read Romans 1:18-32. What do these verses say about the human condition? What does the cartoon by Michael Leunig reveal?



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig

The human condition is generally thought of as the tension between self-improvement and self-destruction (or the problem of good in us and the evil that that is so evident from us). We have exchanged the image of God for a lesser one. Exchanging this image leads to a continuing downward spiral, not just a momentary change (Perhaps think about Genesis 1-11). Leunig's cartoon shows what people are really like on the other side of that gate. Are the adult and child heading toward it or just looking on? Is the problem that we are needing a way out of the gardens rather than entering into them? Is the deception that we enter the gardens rather than we begin in them? We need to be released from this, not through avoidance or our own efforts, but through what Jesus has done for us, and then our response of gratitude and worship.

4. Read Romans 2:17-29. What do these verses reveal about the danger of self-righteousness when following a religion such as Judaism?

5. Read Romans 3:9-20 and 3:23. In Chapter 3 Paul is making the point that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile as “all are under the power of sin.” (Romans 3:9). In this series of Old Testament quotes Paul is showing that this has always been the case. Look at Psalm 36 (the final quote in the series). What is the difference between verses 1-4 and 5-12? Why do you think Paul uses this Psalm in his letter and how does the Psalm help us to understand what he has been writing about?

Remember that when a NT writer quotes the OT they are considering the whole context not just the verse in isolation. Verses 1-4 of Psalm 36 point out what humans are like and Verse 2 points to their self-righteousness. Verse 5 brings in hope, through knowing that God is loving and greater than our sin. Perhaps you could ask “In verse 10-12, who are the righteous, the upright in heart, those whom the feet of the proud come against?” Be careful when answering because the tendency is to put ourselves in the role of the upright rather than considering we might be the “proud.” He is most likely referring to the man of Psalm 1.

6. Read Romans 3:21-31. Why do these verses produce hope?
Our salvation is based upon Jesus’ work not our own. It is his boast not ours. Faith in Jesus is the same requirement for everyone. There is one way to God, to salvation.

7. Read Romans 5:1-11. What do you notice about these verses?
Perhaps talk about justification. You could also ask what it means to have peace with God. How do people feel about the sequence of joy in sufferings through to hope (Romans 5:3-4). When were we saved? What have we been saved from (Rom 5:9)? What does it mean to be reconciled (Rom 5:11)? These verses are essential to knowing how we can be saved and we must return to them when we doubt. This is how we know we are right with God and it cannot be taken from us. Perhaps you could ask people in your group, “Are you right with God?” Follow this up with, “How do you know?” We know because of Jesus’ work, not our own.

8. Read Romans 7:7-25. What do these verses say about the Law?

This is talking about the specific Mosaic law, not the story of the Torah. The Law is not evil but shines a light on our evil. Paul says that it even increases our sin. This is most likely because even though our sin is revealed in the Law, we continue to do these things.

Making It Stick

Spend time in quiet confession.

Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- John Gray. Pray that he will continue to heal as he prepares to return full time. Our wardens, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- Rod and Abby Bishop, in their roles at ECM (European Christian Mission)
- Our church family, that we will grow in our love and knowledge of Jesus.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 12th February



STUDY TWO

Romans 8:1-2

Introduction

The verses at the beginning of Romans 8 explain what it means for the believer in Jesus Christ. The chapter begins with “Therefore.” It signals a big change from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ”. We no longer live under the law of sin and death but the law of the Spirit.

Questions

1. Read Romans 8:1-2. Why do you think it is important that “there is now no condemnation”?

This is a big change from Romans 3:23 to there being no condemnation. No condemnation means that we can now approach God directly through Jesus Christ and we can call him “Father” (Romans 8:15). We cannot approach God with anything less than the perfection which God provides in Jesus. There is nothing to pay for, no sacrifice to make, no action to lean upon. This is an expression of God’s grace toward us. A Christian is not above correction. A Christian is not always right. But a Christian is never condemned under the judgement of God. The gospel does not deny the enslaving grip of sin, but the gospel does deny the damning authority of sin. It also means that we are right with God.

2. How does this help us in the battle against sin?

It means that the evil one has no argument to make. The deception (or faulty teaching) would be that you are not really saved unless you do something to pay for it. “Did God really say” you are forgiven? These verses tell us that we are no longer condemned for past actions. We no longer carry the weight of sin and death, shame, or guilt. Our lives ought to be characterised by living for his glory because of what he has done to remove (through forgiveness) the chains of sin and death.

We do not need more frightening punishments and more withering scoldings. We need the all-sufficiency of Jesus, applied in rich measure to our deepest points of personal need. And that is what the Holy Spirit does. He internalizes the triumphs of Christ crucified within the depths of the human being, so that our inclinations start changing from evil to good.

Raymond C Ortlund from Supernatural Living for Natural People (page 15).

3. What do you think it means in these verses to be “in Christ”?

In this context “in Christ” is in direct contrast to “in Adam”.

The fact that believers now will face no condemnation represents a major shift in status – they have moved from being under God’s wrath to being in a state of acquittal.

Con Campbell from Paul and Union with Christ (page 116).

This status of acquittal is not possible unless we are “in Christ”, unless God looks upon and sees Christ’s credentials. To be united with Jesus is a profound reality that provides with us with all we need to have peace with God and each other. It also means that we are not holding on to Christ as much as he is holding on to us.

4. How does the Spirit give us life?

Grace is empowered by the Holy Spirit as opposed to the Law. The Law depends on our own good intentions, which contribute nothing to our salvation (as the Law itself points out).

You may or may be walking with the Spirit at any given moment. But there is no condemnation for you, none at all – not because your behaviour is so Christian but because your Saviour is Christ. And this is true for you right now.

Raymond C Ortlund from Supernatural Living for Natural People (page 18).

5. What is the difference between legalism and spirituality?

Legalism is externalised holiness, while spirituality is internalised holiness. Legalism is based on judgement, while spirituality is based on grace. Spirituality produces the kind of people that the law had in mind all along. Perhaps look at Ezekiel 36:24-27. Perhaps ask how God fulfils this in the words of Romans 8:1.

6. Are you right with God?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9.

You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

Making It Stick

How is your worship influenced by the fact that you are “in Christ”?

What can make it hard for you to continue to believe that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”?

What could you say to someone who is struggling with guilt or a sense of shame?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Ben Razey as he leads our youth ministries. Ask for wisdom, and for God to sustain him. Pray that the leaders in youth ministry will show God’s love to those in their care and that many will be won for the kingdom.
- Our Parish Council, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- John and Fiona McIvor. Pray that God will use them in SE Asia in their new role. Pray God will sustain them and be with Zeke and Clay.
- Us all, that we will remain “in Christ” and allow the Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Jesus.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 19th February



STUDY THREE

Romans 8:3-4

Introduction

If the law is powerless to save, then how does God deal with this problem? The solution does not come from within us, because the flesh is too weak to follow the law.

Martin Lloyd Jones said, “The terrible, tragic fallacy of the last hundred years has been to think that all man’s troubles are due to his environment, and that to change the man you have nothing to do but change his environment. That is a tragic fallacy. It overlooks the fact that it was in Paradise that man fell.”⁷

We are no longer judged on the standard of our religious observance, because Christ has been judged in our place, and his righteousness is credited to us who are united to Him by faith. And so there is no place for pride (‘look at how good I have kept the rules’), and no need for fear (“Oh no! I could never keep all the rules”).

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9.

7. Martin Lloyd-Jones quoted in *From here to Eternity* by Ray Galea. Page 50.

You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:3-4. Why is God’s Law powerless to transform us? *The Law is not weak, it is powerless. It is powerless because it can only expose us and shine a light on our status as enemies of God, but cannot fix the problem. The power is lessened by the flesh (our weakness) not the quality of the Law*

3. “The “flesh” is a concept used in different contexts throughout the bible. Can you think of any way that “the flesh” is used positively in the Bible? What it is about the flesh that makes the law powerless?

Genesis 2:23, Exekiel 37:1-6, Luke 24:39. Flesh was made by God and it will be redeemed by God. In its fallen state it craves the satisfaction of our desires and reorders them so they (our desires) lead us to break God’s law. We worship the flesh rather than God, or as Paul puts it (in Romans 1:22-23), we exchange the image of God for something else.

4. How does God turn around this problem of the flesh weakening the Law?

He sent his own Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” to be a sin offering in order to condemn sin in the flesh. It says sin is condemned not the flesh (because the flesh is not evil in itself).

Perhaps you could ask what have we done to contribute to this salvation?

5. In verse 3b-4 Paul says that “sin in the flesh” is condemned, with the result that “the requirement of the Law might be fully met in us”. What does this say about God’s view of the law?

We all sin. The Law condemns our sin. The Law demands death as our punishment. Jesus takes that punishment in our place, BUT this

does not mean that the Law has been swept away, On the contrary, Jesus' death fulfils the Law and God's sense of Justice.

Sometimes we push back so far against the Law that we neglect it. Jesus says that if we love him we will obey his commands. God holds the Law in high regard as it is from him. He will make sure that it is fulfilled and complied with.

6. What does it mean that we do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit? What could be some common mistakes made with interpreting this verse?

We live according to the Spirit, even though we still exist on earth in the flesh. We do not live according to the flesh. We obey God, not our fleshly desires. Verses 3b-4 show a connection between the spiritual and physical. It means we are responsible for our sin, yet God takes the punishment for us when we come to him and repent. This is the kind of life we are to live until our flesh is redeemed, according to God's intentions for it.

Making It Stick

What difference does the Spirit make in your life?

Can you think of a time when you saw or felt the Spirit at work in you?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Linda Stephens and Chelsea Rumbel as they lead our children's ministries.
- Keith Baker as he continues as Acting Senior Minister.
- Norm and Janelle Gorrie serving with CMS in Kenya, as they strengthen believers and reach the lost.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 26th February



STUDY FOUR

Romans 8:5-8

Introduction

In the NIV translation of verse 5 the word “For” is missing but it is important. Verses 5-8 (probably verses 5-11) have a logical follow on from verse 4 given the “For”. “The reason that believers fulfill the law is because they have the Spirit, and conversely unbelievers cannot keep the law precisely because they lack the Spirit.”⁸

There are two meanings in the New Testament for the word “flesh”. One is that it refers to the physical aspect of a person’s existence. The second, “the flesh” is the tendency within fallen people to disobey God in every area of life. In our passage, given the context, the second definition is being followed.

It is thought that this tendency to disobey God in every way stems from who we are and not merely the decisions we make and subsequently do. These decisions are based on who we are. We are in Christ and therefore in the Spirit OR we are in the flesh.

The flesh is something created by God. Like many other things, it has been corrupted. The flesh too has been redeemed and will be fully restored on the final day. The desires of our flesh will no longer be at odds with the desires of the Spirit. In fact, the full redemption of our flesh will mean that we will be complete in our worship of God and our minds will become free from the battle with sin.

8. Schreiner, Thomas R. from Romans (Baker series). Page 409.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9.

You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:5-8. What do you observe in these verses?

3. From these verses what is the mark of a true Christian?

“Let’s understand what Paul is doing here. He is not exhorting us to become more spiritually-minded, though that is surely implied. But primarily, Paul is pointing out that Christians are, by nature, spiritually-minded. What identifies a real Christian is a spiritual mindset, so that the believer is ready to suffer earthly loss out of desire for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit is nurturing that attitude in you. And he is actively working against the earthly-mindedness still left in you – and in me.”⁹

4. How does being in Christ and valuing him above all else help us live according to the Spirit (rather than increasing in willpower)?

Valuing Jesus above all else means we are adopting his mindset, his values, becoming more like him. Paul tells us that means life and peace. He becomes our life which means the struggle is not only ours

*(there will be struggles and even failures as we grow) but his Spirit is at work in us. “Authentic Christianity is not increasing levels of commitment grudgingly given to God; it is surrender to Jesus out of a sense of privilege in having him.”*¹⁰

5. In verses 7-8 what does Paul say about a person’s ability to please God or to keep God’s law? What does this tell us about Jesus’ sacrifice? *Paul says not only do we refuse to submit to God’s law, but that we cannot do it!. If this is true then Jesus’ sacrifice is the only way we can be changed, that we can live according to the Spirit. God’s grace is again on display.*

Making It Stick

What stands in the way of us giving ourselves fully to Jesus?

When do you notice that your mind is governed by the flesh? What do you need to do to change this?

How can we encourage others to remain faithful to Jesus?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Sunday Care Teams at each of our services, prayer ministry, practical care, Help at Home Days, and the many teams providing care and support to people across our church.
- The Revd Ruth Walton, Anglican Dean of Nungalinya College, who is serving with BCA in the Northern Territory. Pray God will keep Ruth well and enthusiastic as she teaches those who come to college.

10. Ortlund, Raymond C. *Supernatural Living for Natural People*. Page 43.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 5th March



STUDY FIVE

Romans 8:9-13

Introduction

In these verses we see how comprehensive the work of God in Christ is. Paul alternates several different titles, showing and emphasising the oneness of God. Paul uses “the Spirit”, “the Spirit of God”, “Spirit of Christ” and “Christ”.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9.

You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:9-13. How can we know that we are in the realm of the Spirit?

Our hostility toward God changes, to love for him. A deep gratitude. A desire to serve. A hatred for our sin. There will be times of struggle, but God is working in us to mark us as his own.

We confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9).

These verses convict us, and therefore bring us closer to Jesus. They are not a problem for us if we are convicted by them.

3. In what ways does the Spirit give us life?

Life is no longer limited to the flesh. We experience all the good things around us and Jesus himself. We have hope, we can love freely, no longer carrying the weight of sin and death, for his “yoke is light”.

4. Verse 12 seems like an incomplete thought. Why do you think Paul is not balancing this verse with a comment about the Spirit?

Perhaps Paul is wanting us to fill in the symmetry of this verse. We are not in debt to the flesh but to the Spirit. We give God our thanks for every good thing in our lives ... and we owe the flesh nothing. To think we owe something to the flesh waters down the work of Christ. Our salvation must always remain his boast, completely and wholly. Perhaps it is not about an “obligation” to the Spirit as such, even though that is true, but it is about a relationship that meets all our needs. We have such affection for Jesus that it is natural to live his way, rather than according to the flesh.

5. Living according to the flesh means we will die. If we have faith in Jesus as our Saviour and put to death the misdeeds of the body, we will live. In verse 13 why do you think Paul uses the language of death?

Death is an absolute. We can be killed spiritually by the ways of the flesh or we can put to death the ways of the flesh. Sometimes there are things we like to hold on to, such as little pleasures where we think, “What can it hurt?”. We place boundaries on the level of grace that we think Jesus has shown us, that is, there are things about God’s we like and others we do not. We also place boundaries on the level of change that we think Jesus expects from us.

6. What would it look like for you to “declare war” on the deeds of the body? How would your life be different?

Making It Stick

What Spirit-empowered initiatives can you embark upon to kill sin? To “put to death the misdeeds of the body”?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Discipleship ministry at church and Paul Lucas as he leads the Discipleship Team.
- Small Group leaders across the church, for their encouragement and growth and the raising up of new leaders.
- Those involved with Read with Me (one-to-one bible reading) with others. Pray for the growth of this ministry for sharing the gospel. Pray for growth as disciples.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 12th March



STUDY SIX

Romans 8:14-17

Introduction

As we continue through this important and inspiring chapter, verse 1 ought to be revisited as this is the context for all that Paul writes here. How has this verse influenced the way you have been reading this chapter and increased your affection for Jesus?

In verses 14-17 Paul introduces a further benefit of there now being no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We are adopted as children of God. Adoption in the first century carried with it all the privileges of a biological child. You would be included in the inheritance and any other benefits. For Pauls' readers this idea would carry some astounding implications and a further view of God's grace to those who are saved. This is a display of assurance of to whom we belong and one we ought to take with relief and gratitude.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called "Assurance", we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct "Yes!" There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be "How do you know?" We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9.

You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Romans 8:14-17. What is the transition between 8:13 and 8:14?

Those who are in Christ go from having their sins cancelled and the misdeeds of the body put to death. It does not end there as we move into verse 14 children of God are lead by the Spirit they grow and look forward to sharing in his glory.

3. Paul is saying that the Spirit is working in us to change to be children of God. What are some reasons we can get bogged down from this growth? Why is it that we accept a mediocre relationship with the Lord Jesus?

“Augustine understood that the spring of authentic Christianity is not simply in the notions of our heads or in the choices of our wills. If we are applying the gospel only to those domains within, we should not be surprised if we are not getting the traction we need for forward movement. The spring of Christian power runs all the way down to what we desire. Most of what we do in life, we do out of the desire of our hearts. This is humbling, but true. So the more our hearts love the Lord, the progress we will make.”¹¹

4. What do you think it means that the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children?

There is close connection now with God not just knowledge. The Spirit guides us in the the fact that we are accepted by God because of verse 1 and we recognise. We are buying in. It is also the work of God that we are his children, and the witness of the Spirit is the assurance of this.

5. Do you ever call upon God as *Abba* Father? Why is it important for us to have such a close relationship with our Maker?

6. What does it mean that we share in his sufferings in order that we share in his glory?

Perhaps look back at Romans 6:1-10. It is important to remember also that our sufferings do not compare to glory to come as it says in the next verse.

Making It Stick

Can you think of a time when you did not feel close to God? Why do think this was the case?

Can you think of a time when you felt close to God or you knew you were close to him?

How can we show that we are children of God?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:


- Pat Jones and the young adult ministry.
- Brendan and Karina Pont, that they will be sustained as they serve their community, and that God will keep them safe and healthy.

Give thanks to God:

- for his being generous to us and for the generosity of his people in their giving, so that ministries in our church can continue.
- That in Christ we are children of God and that his Spirit is working in us to make us more like Jesus.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 19th March



STUDY SEVEN

Romans 8:18-21

Introduction

In these verses Paul is addressing suffering. It is not limited to the suffering we endure as humans in a cursed world but suffering for the sake of Jesus. In fact he says, “that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

It begs the question how big is the glory that God is promising? Paul explains here that it extends to the whole creation. God’s redemptive plan leaves no stone unturned so that our joy is complete and his promises fulfilled. This is the kind of God we believe in, where we find our assurance.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those.

A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9. You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:18-21. Suffering can be a stumbling block to Christianity for many people. Why is suffering only seen as a bad thing? What will be the alternative to suffering?

One of the mistakes we make with suffering is that it seems synonymous with being bad. Suffering is a result of evil, but not always of our own making.

Look at Romans 5:1-4 and work out why suffering can be good for us. The result of suffering is glory. In fact, suffering highlights the glory of God. Perhaps you could ask “How is this possible?”

3. What kind of suffering do think Paul is talking about? How can suffering motivate those who believe? How does suffering prepare believers for glory?

Suffering makes us want to see change. It reminds there is something wrong with the world. C.S. Lewis says that if nothing in this world can satisfy, then maybe we were meant for another world (my paraphrase). How we respond to suffering and see our way through it is more important than the suffering itself, as it will lead to glory.

**** It is important to remember that there may be people in your group suffering through something that is unjust or causing anxiety. Please be aware that suffering under DFV (Domestic or Family Violence) or another traumatic event is not what we are talking about here. So please be careful with this area. Suffering for the sake of Jesus’ name is different to suffering at the hands of an evil person who is unjustly hurting someone else.*

4. In verse 17 the reader has been reminded that there is an inheritance. It does not however stop there, as we will also be glorified. An inheritance only goes so far; it is about what you get ... but not who we are. We are glorified. What do you think it means for us to be glorified? Why do our sufferings not compare “with the glory that will be revealed” (verse 18)?

We are not only co-heirs with Christ, but we rule with Christ. We will rule a liberated and restored creation as verses 19ff allude to.

Creation is waiting for this.

5. What does the description of the creation tell us about our world?

It is not as it should be. This is not just describing humanity but also the entire cosmos. God's promises are big enough to restore all he has made and into its right order. That is why the creation longs to see who the "children of God" will be. It will be looked after as it was intended.

6. How does the restoration of the whole cosmos impact the way you think of the Gospel?

Making It Stick

How does knowing that we will be glorified affect the way we live, work and play?

Do you think it is important that we look after the planet? How can we do this?

Are you looking forward to glory?


Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Our interns, Holly Turner and Sam Fletcher. Pray that they will enjoy their time, that they will grow in their love and knowledge of Jesus and that they will make good decisions about ministry in the future.
- Matt and Paula Crowe in Colombia.
- Our church family, that we will love one another with our words and our actions as we disciple each other to prepare each other for glory.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 26th March



STUDY EIGHT

Romans 8:22-27

Introduction

The future for a believer in Jesus is bright. It is something to really hope for and look forward to, even though we may not fully understand it.

As a Christian, the future is not merely about avoiding hell, but being with our Maker. It will mean full adoption as children of God, as we receive our inheritance (and even the redemption of our bodies) to be added to the salvation of our hearts, minds and souls.

Just as we do not see what we hope for, we do not always know what to pray. God, by his Spirit, however, intercedes for us. God has not abandoned us while we wait for the blessed hope, but walks with us, preparing us to meet him face to face.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those. A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9. 2. You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:22-27. What comes to mind when you think of the final home for humans saved by God? Do these verses change your ideas or perception?

New heavens and new earth. Restored bodies. Not choirs in the sky.

3. How do you emotionally balance loving this life as a gift from God, while remaining free from slavery to the transient? ¹²

A Christian is expectant about unseen things. The world, in contrast, can really only be satisfied with seen things, which are transient and do not last, even though they are gifts from God.

Hope is similar for the believer and unbeliever alike. It is the object of our hope or the one who makes a promise of hope which makes all the difference. “We do not panic over the disappointments of this life. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2), because we know it will be worth the wait.”¹³ We have only begun to see what God does for us.

4. Our hope is in what we treasure or love the most. How do we treasure Jesus above all else in response to the distractions, temptations and threats of this world?

Maybe start by asking what people think current threats or dangers are. Dangers and threats can be things we set up as idols (material or non-material), hostility towards God which can lead us astray, lack of repentance or change, making the best version of yourself, “you do you”, “being whoever you want to be” and being permitted to express it without judgement. Your group may be able to think of others. To treasure Jesus above all else means we obey his commands: we love, we forgive, we persevere. Your group may think of more. We trust him that he will fulfil his promises to us. This is not all there is, but Jesus is what matters most. Perhaps you could ask, “How does the gospel speak into this?” It is a response to the goodness and faithfulness of Jesus. He does not threaten us, but removes the threat to us from the world (the main one being death which he has conquered).

12. Grateful for this question from, Ortlund, Raymond C. *Supernatural Living for Natural People*. Page 103.

13. Ortlund, Raymond C. *Supernatural Living for Natural People*. Page 102.

5. In what ways does the Spirit stir and prompt you see Jesus as your treasure?

6. When do you find it hard to pray? Have you ever felt helpless in prayer or felt it is ineffective? How does the Spirit help us with this?
He intercedes on our behalf, and we can be confident of this.
Look for other answers from the group. Be careful not to get side-tracked on theology or practicalities of the Spirit. Stay on point.

Making It Stick

What can we do to live as people who have a sure future (live now knowing who we are and who we will be)?

What are some suggestions to help with our prayer life?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Our small group leaders, that God will sustain them, give them insight and endurance.
- Jess Forrester, Scott Lavender and the production team (both paid and volunteer). Thank God for their gifts and their work, which makes it possible to meet online.
- Our church family, that we will be able to love others as we have been loved and will gain a greater understanding of the grace and love God has shown us in Jesus. Pray that as we relate to each other we will do so with genuine humility and love. That we will do this for the sake of Jesus' name and the good of our brothers and sisters.

SERMON NOTES

Sunday 2nd April



STUDY NINE

Romans 8:28-30

Introduction

These verses from Romans 8 have been controversial, comforting, often quoted and remembered. They are important words and need to be considered carefully.

These verses are a condensed version of what is known as the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified). This concept refers to the way God works in us to save us, and our response to his grace.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those. A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9. 2. You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:28-30. These verses begin with a contrast from the past few verses (from what we do not know to what we do know): “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love

him ...” ...’ When you read, “all things” what things are you tempted to leave out? (e.g., What things in your life seem to be outside God’s plan for your good?)

This can be hard to get our head around as there are things that we think God has no part in or may not even know about. One of the dangers here of course is that we become cold toward others or hard on ourselves when things are difficult or painful. An attitude of just “sucking it up” or “She’ll be right” can become our response. God does care about us, and our pain. He cares about our circumstances, and verse 28 is not saying that we just have to grin and bear situations where we are being hurt or that everything will just turn out well. While we may struggle with evil, it will not have its way in the end. This brings us assurance that life is not in vain and has meaning.

3. How does verse 28 help us with our view of hardship and our response to it?

4. Romans 8:28-30 remind us that what God starts he will finish. What is the link between verse 28 and 29-30?

God has not abandoned us. He has already worked in our world to bring about our redemption. If he can do this, then he can be trusted with what we cannot see. Furthermore, he works in all things, so given what he has already done for us, he can be trusted in all things.

5. What do you understand by predestination?

Refer to Appendix from Ray Galea book. When looking at predestination and the context of Romans 8, do not forget to draw attention to the qualifiers added in verse 29 (that is, what are we predestined for?). We will be conformed to the image of his Son. The image of God will be restored in us; we will be co heirs with him as he is the first born among many brothers and sisters. It is not just theological concepts, but relational.

6. How would you describe the connection between each part of the

order salutis, that is, foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified?
There are many things that could be discussed here but try to stick to connections.

7. How does this order help us with being assured of our salvation?
It was planned by God. It is evident to the apostle Paul so there is something noticeable. God finishes the work he starts.

Making It Stick

How does this order, particularly the first two, motivate us to share Jesus with others?

It is God's message, it is his work to convert. I am free to share, but I need to trust that God will do the work to convert.

What does glorification look like for you?

Prayer

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Our D-Team leaders as they lead the youth of our church each week
- Mark Pozorski and our administration team. Thank God for them and ask him to sustain them in their work as they give admin support for the ministries of St Paul's.
- Our church family, that we will have the courage to obey and make disciples.
- Our governments, that they will govern for the good of all people.
- Chris and Erin serving with CMS in South East Asia.

SERMON NOTES

Easter Weekend



STUDY TEN

Romans 8:31-39

Introduction

The words that began our series, “There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”, lead us to a point where nothing can separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Not a sentimental love, but a deep certainty that God is “for us”. He saves us and he shapes us. He forgives us and he disciplines us. He is faithful and merciful. Nothing can separate us from HIS love.

This ought to give us unwavering assurance of who we are and to whom we belong.

Questions

1. Are you right with God? How do you know?

As this series is called “Assurance”, we will ask this question each week. Hopefully, you will get a direct “Yes!” There will be other responses, so you can work through those. A follow-up question MUST be “How do you know?” We know we are right with God because it is based on the work of Jesus (not us). This comes out of Romans 8 1-8, especially Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:8-9. 2. You could suggest that your group members memorise Romans 8:1 as a reminder of this and the status of people who are in Christ. When they are “in Christ” they are right with God.

2. Read Romans 8:31-39. Let these verses wash over you. Perhaps read them out loud (and again later, in your devotions). How do these verses help us with our assurance and our affection for Jesus?

3. What do you think Paul means when he says in verse 32, "...graciously give us all things"?

"God wants us to know that he withholds nothing that we need to become like Christ and to live forever with Christ. God takes a bold, "whatever it takes" attitude toward you and me. He stands ready to give us whatever we need to be prepared for heaven."¹⁴

4. When Satan tempts us to despair by condemning us, how do verses 34-35 help us?

One of the ways Satan tries to get to us is by asking the question, "Did God really say you were not condemned?" when we do something wrong. We must stand on God's promises and use those promises to push back against anything that tries to take away our assurance (which is based on the work of Jesus and our response of repentance).

5. What is different about God's love compared to love as defined by the world?

Talk about how the world defines love.

God's love is faithful. It is not sentimental. God's love is always found in the places he promises. Perhaps you could ask in what areas and in what ways does God promise his love?

6. Are you confident that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Why or why not?

Making It Stick

What can we do to keep the love of God and our love for him at the centre of our lives?

Prayer

Give thanks that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Pray for each other that you will remain assured that you are loved and known by God.

APPENDIX

On predestination

Historically, there have been a number of challenges to what is called the Reformed view of predestination, a view to which I hold. Because predestination is such an important theme in Romans 8 (and even more so in Romans 9), it's worth outlining some of those challenges, along with my responses.

Predestination refers to God's choice for a particular ministry role, not for salvation. So God chooses Paul and the Twelve to be apostles, and he chooses Israel to be a light to the nations.

It is true that God chooses people for certain roles. However, Romans 9 addresses the salvation of the Jews, many of whom had rejected the long-awaited Messiah. This same chapter begins with Paul's willingness to be cursed for the sake of Israel, if that were possible. Predestination clearly refers to salvation, not just ministry roles.

Predestination refers to God choosing people for the purpose of sanctification (to be holy and blameless), not for salvation.

The context of Romans 8:28-29 sees the goal of predestination as being our justification and glorification. While being more like Christ is a central theme in Roman 8:28, it's located within the broader plan of salvation. Interestingly, sanctification is not one of the five words used in the 'golden chain' of verses 28-29.

Predestination refers to God's choice on the basis of some future response on the part of the recipient. That is, God chooses them because he knows they will choose him.

The grounds for election—whether Israel's (Deut 9:4) or ours as new covenant believers—are never our response or the worthiness of the recipient (Rom 9:16). So, speaking of God's choice of Jacob (the younger brother) over Esau (the older brother), Paul affirms that this took place "in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls" (Rom 9:11b-12a).

Hence, God's sovereign grace in election reinforces the utterly undeserved nature of our salvation, for even faith and repentance are gifts from God (cf. Eph 2:8; 2 Tim 2:25).

Predestination is a corporate concept, not an individual idea. Hence it refers to chosen Israel, or those collectively in Christ, or the church of Christ. An individual becomes part of that elect group freely and willingly, via faith. The questions raised about unfairness in Romans 9:14 and 9:19 make no sense if Paul is only dealing with corporate

concepts. There is nothing that can be described as 'unfair' if people simply choose to be part of God's elect church. That is, these questions themselves testify to the seemingly offensive nature of Paul's view of God's sovereignty in individual and personal election. And the comfort of Romans 8:31-36 is rendered empty if the ones whom God chooses are, in fact, simply those who choose God.

Predestination reflects the theology of Paul, not Jesus.

Jesus may not have used the word 'predestined', but he repeatedly teaches the concept. See, for example, Matthew 11:25-26; John 1:13; 6:37, 44; 10:26, 29.

Predestination as described here can't be right, as it violates God's just and loving character.

There are several problems with this argument. Firstly, you could say the same for any of God's judgements in the Bible, especially hell itself. Such arguments tend to use one doctrine against another, and one verse against another. In reality, we need to hold to all that God has said, not just some of it.

Secondly, we need to be more nuanced when it comes to understanding the love of God in Scripture. Don Carson rightly notices that God's love is used in five different ways in the Bible.⁸³ It simply will not do to reduce God's love to one concept.

83 DA Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, IVP, Leicester, 2000, pp. 17-21. The five ways that Carson identifies are: (1) The peculiar love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father; (2) God's providential love over all that he has made; (3) God's salvific stance toward his fallen world; (4) God's particular, selecting, effective love toward his elect; (5) God's love is sometimes said to be directed toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way—conditional, that is, on obedience.

Thirdly, it's worth noting that before Paul outlines God's electing love in Romans 8 and 9, he has already taken us to the cross, where God has demonstrated his justice (3:25-26) and his love (5:8-10). While I may feel that God's selective love in election is unfair, I am told to look to the cross, where God could not demonstrate more clearly that he is the definition of both love and justice.

Concerning predestination, Luther warns of the importance of approaching this subject through the lens of the cross:

But do you follow the order of this Epistle [Romans]? Worry first about Christ and the Gospel, that you may recognize your sin and His grace; then fight your sin, as the first eight chapters here have taught; then, when you have reached the eighth chapter, and are under the cross and suffering, that will teach you the right doctrine of predestination, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, and how comforting it is. For in the absence of suffering and the cross and the danger of death, one cannot deal with predestination without harm and without secret wrath against God.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans J Theodore Mueller, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1954, p. xxiv.

Common misconceptions on predestination, and responses from Romans

If God predestines, I don't have to worry about the lost.
 "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel." (9:2-4)

If God predestines, I don't have to evangelize because all God's elect will be saved anyway.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (10:14-15)

If God predestines, how can he blame us for our response to him?

"One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?' But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?"' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?" (9:19-21)

If God predestines, I don't have to pray because it makes no difference.

"Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and *prayer* to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." (10:1)

If God predestines, I can remain ignorant or proud.

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in...” (11:25)

If God predestines, then he is unfair.

“What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses,

‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have
compassion.’” (9:14-15)

If God predestines, then people are in hell because they are not chosen.

“For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written:

“There is no-one righteous, not even one;
there is no-one who understands;
there is no-one who seeks God.
All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no-one who does good,
not even one...’

“There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (3:9b-12, 22b-23)



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