

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a black top and a grey cardigan, stands on the right side of a winding asphalt road. She is looking out over the road towards a distant horizon. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The road has double yellow lines and curves into the distance.

**SMALL GROUP
STUDIES**

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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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.

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



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig

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

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?

6. Read Romans 3:21-31. Why do these verses produce hope?

7. Read Romans 5:1-11. What do you notice about these verses?

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

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”?

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

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”.

4. How does the Spirit give us life?

5. What is the difference between legalism and spirituality?

6. Are you 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?

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

2. Read Romans 8:3-4. Why is God's Law powerless to transform us?

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?

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

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?

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?

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

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.

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

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

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

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?

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?

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

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?

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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)?

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

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?
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?

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

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?

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?

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?

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?)

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?

5. What do you understand by predestination?

6. How would you describe the connection between each part of the order salutis, that is, foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified?

7. How does this order help us with being assured of our salvation?

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?

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"?

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

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

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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