

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
CHAPTER 8

15 For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God:

17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified with *him*.

v. 15 – Paul speaks of the Spirit in terms of what it is not – a Spirit of bondage again unto fear. In becoming children of God we do not again enter into a bondage wherein we serve through fear. They were free from the bondage of sin. They had not traded one fear for another. They received the Spirit as a sign of adoption or sonship. They received the Spirit not to make them sons, but because they were sons. Gal. 6:4. They received the Spirit as an earnest of their inheritance. Eph. 1:13-14. As a result, the language also discloses an attitude – they serve not through a spirit of slavish fear, but through a spirit of filial obedience.

vv. 16,17 - further development of vv. 14, 15.

The Spirit bears witness **with** our spirit. Our spirit is one of two witnesses. The Spirit does not bear witness "to" our spirit as a judge. Many who thus read it place more stock in what they feel than in the testimony of the Spirit.

How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit? The Spirit bears witness through the Word; our spirit knows whether it has complied with or agrees with the witness (leading or teaching) of the Spirit. Further, the fruit of the Spirit is borne in our lives. Gal. 5:22 ff. Whatever assurance we have has no basis in fact unless it is based on scripture.

Those who base their salvation on their experience or feeling have no

assurance of salvation, no matter how they feel. Many pulpits, including some in the Lord's church ring with experience rather than precept. This is not to say that the Christian's experience is not important. It is. It is to say that experience must be based on precept instead of interpreting precept by experience. Too many preach the "gospel of the changed life" instead of "the gospel of life that changes lives." This changes the emphasis from the solid rock of the Gospel to the sand of human experience and feeling.

If we are children (not enemies or slaves), then we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Wages are earned; heirs earn nothing. Joint-heirs stresses identification and blessedness. It assures us that there is an inheritance. The value of an inheritance depends on the Testator and our relationship to him. We are Heirs of God!

The inheritance is not unconditional. "If so be that we suffer with him." There is a joint suffering and a joint glorification.

Thus this section ends. Paul's teaching does not lead to the conclusion that we should lead a life of sin to glorify God. Christians are debtors not to the flesh, but to acceptable service to God. Acceptable service does not come through the law that demands perfect obedience. It comes through following the leading that the Spirit provides through the Word, by which we become children and heirs of God.

8:18-30 - The hope of ultimate glory as secured by Christ sufficient to the redeemed

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only so, but ourselves also, who

through all trials.

In verses 16 - 18 Paul reaches the climax of his argument on the theme that the gospel is the power of God for saving people. Even the sufferings that we undergo for the gospel serve a purpose in helping to fit us for the glory that shall be revealed to us. "For our light affliction which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17. "Shall be revealed" speaks not of the nearness but of the certainty of the glory to be revealed.

To draw back on account of suffering is to fail of the reward. "Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us." 2 Tim. 2:11,12. Paul looks here at the redemption of the body. Here we suffer and grow weary in the outward man, even though the inward man may be renewed day by day. 2 Cor. 4:16.

vv. 19 - 23 - Cause of much difficulty. No one has given an explanation that is satisfactory to all. Main trouble is in determining the meaning and application of the terms "the creation," "the whole creation," "the first-fruits of the Spirit," and "we ourselves." There are two reasonable possibilities.

1. Some assume that "the creation" and the "whole creation" are the same and refer to Christians, and it is they who are represented as looking forward to the time when the curse of death shall have been removed.

have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for *our* adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

They ask, "Where is it taught that death came upon animals and vegetables as a result of Adam's sin?" Upon what did the animal and fish feed before Adam sinned? What did Adam and Eve eat before they sinned? It does not seem possible that Paul had in mind the lower creation in verses 19-21.

It seems unreasonable that Paul should, by a figure of speech, represent animals and vegetables as expecting and awaiting the revealing of the sons of God; and it seems especially strange that he would affirm that animals and vegetables "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," or that they were subject to vanity, "not of their own will." Every statement indicates that he was talking about intelligent beings who had a real interest in the resurrection and glorification of the children of God.

The verses are closely connected with verse 18 and were evidently written to encourage the Christian to endure the suffering for the sake of the glory that shall be revealed. It would not be helpful in enduring suffering to be told that the lower creation was longing to be delivered from suffering into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

What then is the creation of 19-21? Who or what is it that with earnest expectation - strong hope - waits for the revealing of the sons of God? Who but Christians are so hopefully interested in that event? Of what creation could it be said that it hopes to be "delivered from the

bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God"? Who but Christians have such hope. But are Christians, either individually or as a group ever referred to as a "creation"? 2 Cor. 5:17. Creature in 2 Cor. 5:17 is same as for "creation" in 19-21. The church is said to be created: "That he might create in himself of the two one new man." Eph. 2:15. Here we have the verb form of the word from which we have creation.

2. Others understand the "creation" to be the earth with its animal and vegetable kingdoms. It cannot be the **church** because it is distinguished from the children of God. It cannot be the **unforgiven** because they will not be revealed in glory and have not been subjected to bondage by another's will, but by their own. It cannot be **unfallen angels** because they have not been subjected to a bondage of corruption (v. 21). It cannot be **fallen angels** because they are not to enjoy the coming day, nor are they eagerly looking for the revealing of the sons of God. Further, they are under judgment and in bondage because of their own will while the creation is not. It cannot be the **ancient worthies** who were waiting for the coming of Christ to set them free from Judaism. The Messiah had already come and freed those who had been in the grave of Judaism. Heb. 7:11ff; 10:29; Rom. 7:1-6. If all the above are eliminated, then by that process all that is left is the earth that is to be rejuvenated. In fact, it is suggested, we sing of it. "Earth shall keep her jubilee. Jesus

saves. Jesus saves.” It is true that the earth was put under a curse because of sin. Gen 3:17ff; 5:29.

But what of 2 Peter 3? Some who hold that it is literal suggest that the fire is purging rather than annihilating. Others suggest that it is not literal. For example, see Isa. 13:6, 10, 11, 13; 19:1; 24:1, 3, 4, 5, 18-20, 23; 34:3-5, 8-10; Jer. 4:23, 24; Nahum 1:4-5; Zephaniah 1:2-3, 14-15. If this is the case, then 2 Pet. 3 refers to the judgment against the Jewish world in the destruction of Jerusalem.

But can the creation moan? It is often spoken of in scripture as rejoicing, clapping its hands, etc. Mountains are said to skip, trees sing together, and Israel’s land is promised a marriage.

Either of these may be correct. Either of them, as explained, is in harmony with what the scriptures elsewhere say concerning the present condition and future destiny of Christians. The groaning indicates that the adoption is not that as sons, but which blesses sons – the redemption of the body. It had not been fulfilled, but was of certain fulfillment. For the sons of God, the day will come when the body of their humiliation will be transformed into the likeness of the glorious body of Christ. Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:42ff.

If the first is correct (creation = church), those who possess the first fruits of the Spirit would refer to the apostles. If the second is correct (creation = all creation below humans), those who possess the first

fruits of the Spirit would refer to the church.

24 For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth?

25 But if we hope for that which we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it.

vv. 24 - 25 -- "for" shows close connection with preceding verses. We hope to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. vv. 20,21. In this hope we were saved. It is the air that the Christian breathes. It is the environment in which they live. We can't see the future blessings, but faith is the evidence of things not seen. But a person does not hope for what he sees or experiences. If our salvation were already complete, if there was nothing yet to be expected, there would be no hope. But we desire and expect a glorious future and this hope for full deliverance causes us to be patient during our period of waiting. Hope anchors our soul to the eternal world. Heb. 6:18-20.

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for *us* with groanings which cannot be uttered;

v. 26 – “In like manner” may refer to the Spirit’s helping us endure patiently just as hope helps us endure. It may also mean that in addition to the other manners in which the Spirit helps us (cry “Abba, Father,” (v. 15; leads us, v. 14; bears witness, v. 16), the Spirit also helps us in our infirmities. In either case the Spirit helps us. The word rendered “help” is only used in one other N.T. text, Luke 10:40. Martha asks Christ to instruct Martha to “give her a hand.” The Holy Spirit lends us a helping hand in our infirmities.

The specific infirmity mentioned here is that we don’t know how to pray as we ought. There are urgings and ongings in the

heart of a child of God that he cannot express. He has a feeling of helplessness or of deep need, without knowing what the need is or what would meet that need. It is what Paul calls unutterable groanings. It is the groaning within ourselves mentioned in v. 23. The Spirit understands our longing and needs and makes them known to God.

27 and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

v. 27 – The fact that someone knows our innermost thoughts and purposes and the deepest longings of our hearts is apt to bring terror to our hearts. But God is telling us not to mind because everything is all right and he is on our side.

Since God and the Spirit are both members of the Godhead, it is not surprising that God knows the mind of the Spirit. Thus, he knows that of which we have unexpressed and inexpressible need and he hastens to respond.

Why not then let the Spirit do all of the praying? Simple. He translates our groanings. If they are not present there is nothing for the Spirit to take before the throne of God on our behalf.

28 And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, *even to them that are called according to his purpose*.

29 For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained *to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*:

30 and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he

vv. 28-30 – These verses stress the sovereignty and adequacy of God to bring to pass all that he has planned. V. 28 is a kind of summary of 8:1-27. It prepares for, and in some respects is similar to, the grand climax found in verses 37-39. It draws a very comforting conclusion.

What is included in the "all things" of this verse? Does Paul include the Devil and all his works and agents? Does he include

also glorified.

the lusts of the flesh that war against the soul? The context and the very nature of the case demand that we take the "all things" in a limited sense. In all that he had said up to this point Paul was talking about what God had done and is doing for us through Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He had also shown how hope sustains us and how the Holy Spirit interprets to God the unutterable longings of our hearts. Why not understand Paul to refer to the things he had been talking about? It is not fair to him to make him to refer to things he had not mentioned.

Why should we conclude that he now speaks of every conceivable thing, every conceivable force and circumstance, and that he affirms that all these things, both good and bad, work together for good to those who love God? To do so is to entirely miss the trend of his thought.

Rom. 8:32 and 8:37 confirm that he speaks of the things that belong to us in Christ Jesus.

v. 29-30 – v. 33 refers to the "elect." They are the ones discussed here. The plurals in the passage must be given their full effect. The corporate body of believers is under discussion and is an example of the Biblical doctrine of corporate election. They are identified as those who love God. It is his love that causes humanity to love him. 1 John 4:19. For those who respond to his love (John 14:15, 23), God works in all things for their eschatological good.

v. 29 -30: "For" adds the reasons for such

assurance in v. 28. This whole thing, Paul wants them to know, is no fly-by-night affair. It has all been planned out. It is working according to schedule. Nothing sneaks up on God. He knows the end from the beginning. Verses 29 and 30 scope the whole scheme of redemption from beginning to end to let the saints know in the midst of their confusion and their (sometimes) bewilderment that "he who has begun this good work in you will complete it unto the end." Philippians 1:6.

"Foreknew" is more than "prescience." It has the notion of "knowing in a relational way." The people whom he foreknew (11:2) are the people whom he knew beforehand in a relational way. The foreknown are the same ones who love God.

"Foreknown" stresses the priority of God's initiative. See, Rom. 5:5-8. There is nothing necessarily pretemporal here. God's historical initiative was in the death of Christ. Foreknowledge is connected with God's foreordination or determination (Acts 2:23), so it is not merely an intellectual knowledge. The items in the list are equivalent and the emphasis is on God's plans for a people.

The word "predestination" or "foreordination" has brought fear to the hearts of millions throughout the centuries. It needn't have done so. The Bible doesn't teach that God has ordained endless millions to everlasting torment without recourse to their choice. George Whitfield, a Calvinist, once said to John Wesley, "I agree with St. Augustine, that the floors of

hell are crawling with unbaptized infants." Wesley responded: "Whitfield! Your god is my Devil!" Listen to this and wonder. It's from Calvin's Institutes (Book 3, chapter 21. Sec. 5):

All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or to death. This God has testified, not only in the case of single individuals; he has also given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, to make it plain that the future condition of each nation was entirely at his disposal.

What a gloomy doctrine! I'm glad it isn't so. Such monstrous doctrine did not issue from him who would have all men saved in Christ. I John 2:2; I Tim. 4:10.

“Foreordained,” as in Ephesians 1, is related to Christ. A future is realized in the present. God has marked out this destiny for his people, and that destiny is to be conformed to Christ. To be conformed to the image of Christ is to put off the old man and put on the new (Rom. 6; Col. 3; Eph. 4). The content and purpose of the divine design is for people to become like Christ, who is the firstborn (preeminent in position, not first in time) among many brethren. He

is not ashamed to call us brethren. Notice the group concept again based on a family resemblance. Heb. 2:11. Christ is firmly identified with us. He is no spectator. He is not only the revelation of God; he is the true and full revelation of man.

“Called” is used, as it often is in the N.T., as a shorthand version for Christians. It commonly meant “invited,” but sometimes meant “named.” Here Paul refers not just to the invitation, but to the effective calling through the preaching of the gospel. 2 Thess. 2:13-14.

The “justified” are those declared righteous. It is always connected in Romans with faith. Compare v. 33 where the “elect” are justified just as here the “called” are justified.

“Glorified” is the final step in God’s process. While there is an apparent temporal sequence in the process, that is not Paul’s main idea. His main idea is God’s sovereignty to bring that which he promised to pass. All of the verbs here are aorists. “Glorified” indicates that they should all be considered as timeless aorists. There is a present glorification, but there is a final glorification for which we hope when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. 1 Pet. 1:6-9.

"Glorified" is spoken of as already accomplished. God said something similar in connection with Abraham ("have I made thee") as Paul reminds us in 4:17. This "glory" which is to be revealed to usward

(8:18) involves God's approval of us (see 3:23), our glorious resurrection (2:7; 2 Cor. 4:16-17), and our glorious and incorruptible inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:5ff).

8:31-39 - The Believer's triumphant assurance as founded on the greatness and constancy of Divine love, or The Ground of our Assurance Concerning the Coming Glory.

31 What then shall we say to these things?
If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?

v. 31, 32 – To what conclusion do these things lead us? “These things” probably refers to Paul’s entire argument thus far in the epistle. What, then, is the summary of all that Paul has said in this letter. Here again we have “all things” as in v. 28. If God is for us it matters little who is against us. Certainly if God gave us the greatest gift of his Son, he will not withhold any of the lesser things that might be good for us. God searched heaven and earth to find a way to redeem us. There was no one. There was nothing. Only His Son. And he wouldn't even spare him. Are not the “all things” which he gives us with Christ the “all things” that work together for our good?

Paul has pointed out that the one thing a sinner needs above all else is right standing with God. He has admonished that this right standing is not attainable through human merit. It is available only as a free gift of God attainable by faith. It was Christ who attained it by his life, and substitutionary death, and his resurrection.

If, then, God is on our side as he has

clearly proved by what he has done through Christ, who can be against us? All enemies have not been swept away. In fact the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed at his coming. 1 Cor. 15:54. But what enemy can achieve anything against us when God is for us. Even death belongs to us. 1 Cor. 3:21-23. (Note here Paul's use of "all things.")

"If" here is not an "if" of doubt. It is used in the sense of certainty – "Since" God is for us. Paul is not calling God's promises into question.

How can he? God has already given us the greatest gift in Jesus. If he has given us the greatest gift will he withhold from us the lesser?

God, the Judge, has a Son, an only Son, very precious to him. That Son never committed any sin. In all he did he was pleasing to his Father (John 8:29). All we, however, have gone astray like sheep. Isa. 53:6. Yet on this precious beloved Son, God now pronounces the sentence we deserved. It is a sentence immeasurable in its severity, and is carried out in every detail. God did not spare his Son, did not mitigate the severity of the sentence in any way whatsoever. The Son fully bore that horrendous curse. He drank the cup of unspeakable agony to the very last drop.

But we ask, why was the curse lifted from our shoulders and transferred to the Son of God. Paul's inspired answer that God loved us so deeply intensely, and marvelously that he gave his only-begotten

son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We recall the similarity of the experience of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Recall God's words, "You [Abraham] have not withheld your son, your only son." Gen. 22:12. Recall Paul's words, "God did not spare even his own son. Rom. 8:32. Similar, in language, but how different in result. God provided a ram for Abraham. There was no one to provide a ram for God. In fact a ram would not do since the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. Heb. 10:4.

How will God not with him freely give us all things. The all things are clearly that which is related to salvation through Jesus Christ.

vv. 33, 34 - There follows a series of rhetorical questions. They amount to a vigorous denial of the suggestion that there could be any valid charge against or condemnation of God's chosen. The section echoes Isaiah 50:4-9. There we have the description of the righteous servant (at least including the Messiah) who presents himself as under God's protection. The righteous one has many opponents but the Lord is his helper. This is the thrust of Paul's section also. Certainly God will not lay anything to the charge of his chosen ones; he justifies them. Hence, no one can bring a charge against God's elect, so as to induce him to condemn them.

Will Christ condemn them? It is he

33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth;

34 who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

that is to be judge. (Mt. 25:31, 46; John 5:22; Acts 17:30,31). But certainly he will not condemn them that God justifies, for he died for them and now makes intercession for them. Hence, only those whom God does not justify will be condemned.

If God does not condemn, who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect? When someone comes striding into view as though he were the sovereign Lord of all Judgment, check his hands, feet and side. If he isn't wounded, ignore him. Jesus has earned the right to judge mankind! John 12:48.

The good news is that Jesus did not only die, he lived again. And he continues to live. He lives to make intercession for the saints. Heb. 7:25.

vv. 35, 36 - "Love of Christ" can mean his love for us or our love for him.

This is Christ's love for us. The extended answer is - no one and nothing can separate us from that love. To give an adequate description of that love is impossible. Eph. 3:19. All we can do is stammer. Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn, *Love Divine*,

Jesus Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art.

Christ is the manifestation of the eternal will of the Godhead toward man. It is a message of loving concern. Paul took one look at the Cross and from that time forth nothing could convince him that God did not love him. He was persuaded and nothing could change his mind. When

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

sickening brutality comes hounding him and asking him, "Well, how do you view God's supposed love now?" Paul had an answer. If God was able at the cross to take cruelty and sin at their most brutal and senseless level and work redemption for the world through it; If God could do that, then, he has made it clear that he loves me. What is the basis of this assurance? An emotional surge? The possession of the comforts of life? Are these the things that lead him to believe that God loves him? Were it so, when they were gone, the conviction would be gone. His conviction was based on the historic and historical work of Jesus Christ. Let no man say because of famine and war I cannot believe in a loving God. Let him look to Golgotha and see the divine exhibition that took place in the midst of war and cursing and wickedness. To the time and place where God said: I DO love you. I will ALWAYS love you. Trust me.

v. 37 - "In all these things" - the evils just mentioned. "More than conquerors" if we successfully endure all these things, we have done more than merely triumph over them; we have made a decided gain in Christian character. In conquering we have grown in character and in favor with God.

For the moment it seems that Paul was able to think only of suffering and hardship. His real intention, however, was just the opposite. He wanted to emphasize that in the midst of all these unpleasant experiences we *are* (not just "shall be") more than conquerors [super conquerors].

These things cannot harm us because through Christ we have conquered.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

vv. 38, 39 - Notice again that all things mentioned are things from without. Nothing is said here about what corrupting influence might do to the heart. If one quits he does it of his own accord. Love cannot be destroyed by force or by imperial command, but it may wax cold. Some even depart from their first love. Rev. 2:4. We must keep ourselves in the love of God. Jude 21. Paul recognized that people might depart from the faith, but he was persuaded that no evils coming on us from without could destroy the love of God. In Christ, God's love for us and our love for him meet. 2 Tim. 1:12.

And so this lengthy section (chs. 5:12 – 8) of Paul's letter to the Romans ends as it began, by reference to Jesus Christ our Lord. Everything mentioned must serve to strengthen the saints' experience of the love of God that is in his Son. Surely our hearts should rise in gratitude when we sing:

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To God be the glory,
Great things he hath done;
So loved he the world
That he gave us his Son,
Who yielded his life
An atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate
That all may go in.

And let the congregation say, "Amen."

