

Session 8

Secured

All who accept the gospel have a sure hope for a future as children of God.

Romans 8:12-25



How would you describe the emotions that come with signing a loan agreement? How does paying off a loan free you?

When a buyer borrows money from an institution, he signs a contract. At that point, the buyer is under obligation to the lender. If he does not keep the terms of the contract, a penalty will be assessed. Unable to fulfill the law of sin and death, we were under its penalty. However, Jesus died on the cross as our sin offering, releasing us from the penalty of sin and death. Paul reminded us that we have no obligation to live according to the flesh. We are free to be guided by the Spirit.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the first four chapters of Romans, Paul built an argument for the sinfulness of all humanity. In chapters 5–7 he underscored the merciful work of Jesus in providing salvation for sinners. He showed how Christ provides a new way of life through His death and resurrection. Those who die to sin through Him are raised to walk in a completely new—and better—way. Because of that transformation, we serve a new Master. Sin no longer calls the shots in our lives. But we don't just flip a switch and turn off all the evil in our lives. Even the strongest believers face temptation. Paul mourned how he so easily gave in to what he shouldn't do and failed to do the things he should. Christians should understand that the flesh will always be a problem on this side of eternity, but we have overcome sin through Jesus. He gives us the power to live for His honor and glory each day.

Because we are God's children, we no longer live under His condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2). We might fall at times, but we don't fear the penalty that hangs over those who have not accepted His grace. What's more, God has given us His Spirit to help us live according to His desires (8:3-4).

Paul contrasted the life of the flesh (which leads to death) and the life of the Spirit (which produces life). The former has no hope of pleasing God, but those who live in the power of the Spirit have confidence that God is actively working in their lives (8:5-11). They can be sure that God has a plan for their lives—a plan that includes a future beyond comprehension. Our relationship with our heavenly Father guarantees our hope—not just for this life, but also for the next (8:12-25). Nothing can possibly separate us from the love our Father has for us. We are secure in Him, which means we win in this life and in eternity (8:31-39).

ROMANS 8:12-15

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, **13** because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you **put to death** **A** the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For all those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. **15** You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” **16** The **Spirit himself testifies** **B** together with our spirit that we are God’s children, **17** and if children, also heirs — heirs of God and coheirs with Christ — if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. **19** For the **creation eagerly waits** **C** with anticipation for God’s sons to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility — not willingly, but because of him who subjected it — in the hope **21** that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to **decay** **D** into the glorious freedom of God’s children. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with **labor pains until now** **E**. **23** Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits — we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. **24** Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? **25** Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

Passage Outline

Eternal Future
(Rom. 8:12-13)

Eternal Inheritance
(Rom. 8:14-18)

Creation Restored
(Rom. 8:19-22)

Humanity Restored
(Rom. 8:23-25)

Keywords

- A. Paul gets more specific about what we’re to put to death in Ephesus 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:5.
- B. Comparing Galatians 4:6 (“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’”) and Romans 8:15 (“we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’”), we begin to see how believers are God’s children.
- C. When Christ returns the curse will be reversed (Gen. 3:17-19; Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-3).
- D. Our fallen world reflects the curse and “corruption” (ESV) of sin.
- E. This pregnancy metaphor illustrates how creation has been expecting a better future and groans with intensity as the time draws near. Jesus used this metaphor to describe His return (Matt. 24:8).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

The apostle called his readers *brothers and sisters*, indicating the relationship they shared as children of God. He also reminded them that this relationship meant they no longer had to live *according to the flesh*. Sin wasn't their master anymore.

What does living by the Spirit look like? How is living by the Spirit connected to living in eternity?

KEY DOCTRINE: Last Things – The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord (2 Thess. 1:7-12).

Believers are *led by God's Spirit*. We follow His direction and His guidance. Following the Spirit isn't simply a matter of obedience. It's also a matter of identification. We—and the world around us—know we are *God's sons* because we walk with the Spirit. Jews saw themselves as God's children because of their history with Him. The parent-child relationship believers have with God produces great benefits for this life. The guidance of the Spirit and the peace of the Father give believers purpose and meaning. But this intimate relationship with God is not an easy road. Christ suffered, and His followers will *suffer with him*.

What single word would could be used to describe being a child of God? What single word could be used to describe being separated from Him?

God's glory (v. 18) won't change people only; God will restore all creation. While humans rebelled against God of their own volition, nature was a victim of sin. It became collateral damage in the war between good and evil. Both people and nature are trapped in bondage to decay.

Where do you see the impact of sin on nature? What can we do to be better stewards of God's creation?

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases. – Focus on the phrase “redemption of our bodies” in Romans 8:23. Compare the phrase in several trusted Bible translations. Jot down the various renderings of the term that you find. Using a Bible dictionary, review articles on our future hope. Scan passages listed and make notes of any findings that help you better understand the meaning.

Through our adoption, God gives us hope for the future. Hope, like faith, is based on what can't be experienced through human senses. Such hope was an important theme for Paul. Just as creation awaits its restoration, God calls Christians to eagerly wait for the fulfillment of our hope.

How does the groaning of creation compare to our groaning for renewal?

APPLY THE TEXT

- God provides eternal life to His children.
- God promises an eternal inheritance to His children.
- God will one day restore His creation, fully reflecting His glory.
- God will one day restore humanity so that humans can function fully as His children.

What are some things you can do daily to live by the Spirit instead of the flesh? How can you incorporate these actions into your daily routine?

How would you describe your relationship with God? What steps do you need to take to improve your relationship with Him?

Discuss as a group the connection between our hope and our witness. How can you and the members of your Bible study group learn to more effectively share His hope with others?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: We should live by the Spirit.

Read Romans 8:12-13, understanding the consequence of living according to the flesh.

So *then* builds on what came before. Paul had just contrasted the condemnation of the flesh and the freedom of the Spirit. Those who live by the flesh cannot please God, while those who live in the Spirit have died to sin and rely on Christ (Rom. 8:1-11).

Those who live according to the flesh are *going to die*. Because they are trusting in their own abilities to reach God, they will inevitably fall short. As a result, they will not only die physically—like everyone does—but they will also experience spiritual and eternal death.

By contrast, those who are empowered *by the Spirit* have a much different existence now and in eternity—you *will live*. The Greek wording of *put to death the deeds of the body* indicates a continual action, a choice made to kill sin each and every day.

What does living by the Spirit look like? How is living by the Spirit connected to living in eternity?

Day 2: We are adopted into the family of God.

Read Romans 8:14-15, highlighting the word adoption.

Paul had a deep appreciation for comparisons and contrasts. He provided another example in this passage—distinguishing between two spirits. The *spirit of slavery* is marked by *fear*. Those living in slavery are accountable to the law and are subject to its judgments. By comparison, *the Spirit of adoption* does not deal in fear. The Holy Spirit is the means of our adoption into God's family. (See also Eph. 1:3-12; Gal. 4:1-7.) By the work of the Spirit, old relationships are severed and new family connections are established.

Abba, Father is a tender Aramaic phrase akin to “daddy” in English. It is the language of a child running into the arms of a loving and protective father. The One we once ran away from out of fear and guilt is now the One we run to.

What are the benefits of being adopted into God's family?

Day 3: We are coheirs with Christ.

Read Romans 8:16-18, considering the suffering and the glory that comes with being a child of God.

Most parents want to provide a suitable inheritance for their children. Paul noted that Christians are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have full membership in God's family—including a brotherhood with Christ. As a result, believers have access to all of God's riches. Of course, these riches should not be reduced to mere financial blessings. Paul was not preaching a prosperity, name-it-claim-it gospel. Instead, he was stating that God's resources were enough to meet every need we can imagine.

But this intimate relationship with God is not an easy road. Christ suffered, and His followers will suffer with Him. Jesus said as much when He told His followers that students are not greater than their teachers (Luke 6:40). Hardship is a reality Christians must expect.

The Romans probably understood suffering for their faith. Paul reminded them that such suffering was not in vain. Those who suffered with Him would also be glorified with Him. The struggles of this life cannot begin to hold a candle to the blessings of eternity. The glory that will be revealed in heaven will surpass anything we can imagine in this lifetime.

If you had to describe being a child of God in one word, what would it be? What single word would you use to describe being separated from Him?

Day 4: We will be restored.

Read Romans 8:19-22, identifying the impact of sin on God's creation.

When God created the world, He declared it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). But sin marred creation (Gen. 3:17). This was not the fault of nature but of humans, who turned their backs on God. The created order was cursed at the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19) but will again be restored to its former state. Just as people will forget death and tears, nature will be rescued from its blights and flaws. Creation will again reflect God's glory in a way that hasn't been seen since Eden.

In verse 22, Paul used another human image to illustrate his point about the impact of sin on nature: childbirth. Creation has long been *groaning* under the weight of sin. Natural disasters and diseases may seem commonplace, but they are not part of God's initial plan for nature. These pains are not the result of fatal wounds that won't heal. Instead, they are more like a woman's *labor pains* as she draws closer to the point of delivering the baby. Such pains are incredibly intense and difficult but lead to a blessed event. Once the time of groaning has passed, nature will be renewed and restored.

Where do you see the impact of sin on nature? What can you do to be a better steward of God's creation?

Day 5: We have hope that our groanings will be replaced with glory.

Read Romans 8:23-25, underlining the word hope.

Firstfruits were the initial crops taken in a harvest and were often used for offerings to God. Paul said *the Spirit* served as firstfruits—a guarantee of our future. The Greek word used has a meaning similar to a pledge or down payment.

Because we have this promise from God, we also have confidence that our groaning and waiting won't be in vain. While we currently enjoy the benefits of spiritual adoption, our relationship with God will find its ultimate fulfillment in the redemption of our bodies.

Paul noted that *hope that is seen is not hope*. We don't need faith or trust for something we can see right in front of us. But faith in Christ energizes our hope and reminds us that one day our groanings will be replaced by glory. Hope also requires *patience*. Though it's part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), patience does not come easily for anyone—including believers.

How does the groaning of creation compare to your groaning for renewal?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Romans 8, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

What freedom do we experience with the Holy Spirit in our lives?

How did Paul view his sufferings? How did he connect his sufferings to his relationship with Christ?

As believers, how should we live while we await the promise of God's full redemption of His children and His creation?



For additional context, read “Adoption in the First Century,” an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided via digital download in the Spring 2020 Explore the Bible Leader Pack.