



Book of Romans

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Experiencing the Love of God as shared in Romans 7, 8, 9,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For many life has because a state of endurance, a struggle to survive. To those who believed that victory came through following the law Paul declared in Romans 7:6, “But now that we’re no longer shackled to that domineering mate of sin, and out from under all those oppressive regulations and fine print, we’re free to live a new life in the freedom of God.”(The Message Bible) “I can already hear your next question: ‘Does that mean I can’t even trust what is good (that is the law)? Is good just as dangerous as evil?’ No again! Sin simply did what sin is so famous for doing, using the good as a cover to tempt me to do what would finally destroy me. By hiding within God’s good command, sin did far more mischief than it could ever have accomplished on its own. I can anticipate the response that is coming. ‘I know that all God’s commands are spiritual, but I’m not. Isn’t this also your experience?’ Yes, I’m full of myself—after all, I’ve spent a long time in sin’s prison. What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary.”(Roman 7:13-17 the Message Bible)

What hope is there for each of us in the middle of this complex often confusing life? Paul describes this battle by saying, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have a desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”(Romans 7:18 NIV) This all seems despairing, hopeless, and overwhelming. Yet Paul doesn’t leave us there. He goes on and declares, “I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.”(Romans 7:24,25 The Message Bible)

The stage is set. The solution is life on God’s terms and that is what Romans 8 shows us. The chapter begins by sharing with us that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, the chapter closes assuring us that there is no separation from God’s love, and in between we discover that all things work together for good

to those that love God. In Romans 8 we are given the means as to how the victory sought in Romans 7 can actually be achieved. “Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”(Roman 8:2 NIV) “God went for the jugular when He sent His own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In His Son, Jesus, He personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.”(Roman 8:3 The Message Bible) What does this mean to you personally? How does it make a difference in your daily life?

Now the question is as you go about living, where is your head? What is your mind focused on? The mind is the gate way to your spirit and soul. “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”(Roman 8:5-8 NIV) Do you understand that long as your mind is on sinful things your life will be a mess? If you want life and peace then you must let your mind be controlled by the Holy Spirit. As Isaiah 26:3,4 says, “You will keep in perfect peace him (or her) whose mind is steadfast, because he trust in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock Eternal.” We have a choice. We can either spend the rest of our lives with our minds focused on this sinful world and the lusts of the flesh resulting in death, or we can let our minds be controlled by the Spirit and experience life and peace? Which one do you choose? Why? If you choose to let your mind be controlled by the Spirit what steps are you going to take to be assured this will happen?

“You are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”(Roman 8:9 NIV) This verse teaches us two important things concerning the Holy Spirit. First it teaches that the true believer has the Holy Spirit living in him or her. Those who do not know Christ have only sin dwelling in them.(see Romans 7:17,20) The children of God have the indwelling Spirit to fight sin. Jesus promised “He lives with you and will be in you.”(John 14:17) As a result our bodies become “a temple of the Holy Spirit” in which He lives.(ICor.6:19) As a result “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

After Paul points out that the Spirit living in us distinguishes us as Christians (Jesus people who live for and with the revolutionary Christ) he goes on and declares, “if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you.”(Romans 8:10,11 NIV) Because of sin our bodies are dying a little each day and will soon turn to dust (see Gen.3:19). But if Christ is in us, because of righteousness, the Living God who raised Christ from the dead will also give us life in these dying bodies to live for Him both now and for all eternity. The destiny of our body is not death but resurrection because of the power of the Holy Trinity within us. This involves the resurrecting Father the resurrected Son and the Spirit of the resurrection. This resurrection involves the transformation of our body into a new and glorious personality free from the bondage to sin. When these bodies experience death they will discover the further freedom from disease and pain as they are resurrected into the eternal presence of the Living God for all eternity.

As children of the resurrection we have been set free from the slavery to sin and resurrected to the peace, power and purpose Christ has provided for each of us. We are now told that, “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”(Roman 8:14,15 NIV) We are not driven but led by the Living Lord who sets us free from fear and makes us His very our children. Being a child of God means that we are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”(Roman 8:17) What assurance this should give each of us that we are not alone in our daily sufferings but are children of God destined to be heirs of God. God does not abandon His children. Just as He rose Jesus from the dead He now makes us co-heirs with Christ assured that as we share the sufferings of Jesus we shall also share His glory for all eternal.

Reviewing the first half of Romans 8 we are reminded of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who believe. The Spirit has freed us from the bondage of the law.(verse 2) He empowers us to fulfill its just requirements (verse 4). We now live daily under the Spirit’s direction and set our minds on His desires (verse 5). The Spirit lives in us (verse 9), gives life to our spirit (verse 10), and will one day give life to our bodies (verse 11). His indwelling causes us to live God’s way (verse 12), and His power enables us to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh (verse 13). The Holy Spirit leads us as God’s children (verse 14) and bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (verse 15:16). It is the work of

the Holy Spirit in our lives shared in Romans 8, which answers the questions concerning the struggles described in Romans 7.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”(Romans 8:18) Suffering and glory are united as one. They cannot be broken apart. “The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”(I Peter 1:10) We can’t let our troubles diminish our faith or disillusion us. There is purpose for our suffering. This suffering keep us mindful of Christ’s suffering for us, proves our faith and gives God the opportunity to demonstrate His power. “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”(I Cor. 4:17)

“The creation waits in eager, expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.”(Romans 8:19) Creation which has been adversely affected by sin and its destruction waits eagerly for the glorification of the people of God. Sin has resulted in all of creation falling from the perfect state God had created and subjecting it to bondage and decay. “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.”(Romans 8:20) The reason being, “in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”(Romans 8:21) This is possible because of Jesus who died on the cross and is now alive with a resurrection power that death can’t touch. It is this resurrection that provides hope for all of creation in the midst of the hopelessness and decay caused by sin.

Along with creation all of us, “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”(Romans 8:24,25) Hope is that oxygen for the soul. A oxygen pumped into the very essence of creation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through the resurrected Christ that we can experience intimacy with the creation of the universe. As “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, “we are a people of expectancy filled with hope as we wait patiently for the full glory of God to be revealed in the redeemed heaven and earth.

In this life of expectancy Paul reminds us that while we are waiting, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”(Romans 8:26) As children of God we have two

divine intercessors. In heaven Jesus intercedes for us while the Holy Spirit “intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”(Romans 8:26,27)

Creation is groaning, “we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly,”(Romans 8:24) and now the Holy Spirit “groans” in identification with us as we await Christ’s return. As we experience sufferings and groans we are sustained in the midst of them by the hope of glory. This hope is solidly grounded in the love of God. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”(Romans 8:28) While in verse 22 we read that, “we know that the whole of creation has been groaning” we see in verse 28 that we can also “know that in all things God works for good.” But what about when “we do not know what we are to pray for”? Romans 8:26 tells us that “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” It’s a fact God loves us and will not leave us alone in our struggles between the first victorious Easter and the return of our victorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Scripture testifies of many examples of God working for good in behalf of those who faced impossible situations. Joseph told his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good,”(Gen.50:20) Jeremiah proclaimed to the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem, “I know the plans I have for you” declared the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”(Jer.29:11)

There is no limit to God’s love. It is this love which provides the foundation for our hope in spite of the present circumstances. How do verses 29 and 30 of Romans 8 show God’s love through His foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification? What seven questions does Paul ask in verses 31-35? How do these questions drive home the fact that God loves us?

“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”(Romans 8:37-39) For Paul there is no guesswork. As a result of his experience from putting his faith in Christ he’s convinced of God’s love manifested through Jesus Christ. Paul declares that everything in creation is under the control of God the Creator and Jesus Christ. That is why nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, God does not promise us

that we will not have to suffer. What He does promise is it will never separate us from His love.

This wonderful love of God was demonstrated on the cross.(Romans 5:8; 8:32,37) It is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). God's love causes everything to work for good for those who love Him.(Romans 8:35,38,39) Our confidence does not lie in our love for Him but His love for us which is inseparable. What a tremendous foundation of hope this love of God provides for us in the midst of our daily trials and tribulations. Are you convinced like Paul that nothing can separate you from the love of God? If so, how is it making a difference in your life?

The hope and love of God, which Romans 8 speaks of is not only a future love but a living reality which is present now. Because Jesus rose from the dead the love of God has broken into the present world. That is the revolutionary message of the resurrection. The world has been turned upside down since that first Easter. Believers in the resurrection aren't a people who are just waiting for the end of the world. God has already turned the world upside down through the resurrected Christ. As a result Jesus declared the Kingdom of God is at hand and His love resulting in justice has come forth. It is much more than dualism considering of only an upstairs—downstairs reality. This dualism is prevalent where injustice can be seen but it is inconvenient to do anything about it. Those advocating such are frequently a people who say they care about souls and may even put bandaids on the social problems but then they refuse to address the social structure which create these injustices. The Scripture tells us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.(I Cor. 15:58) This means we are a resurrected people who are determined to see justice as God's desire to put the whole world right through His love.

If God is for us, who can be against us?"(Romans 8:31) Doing justice in the world is part of our tasks as followers of the one who declared, "As often as you have done it to the least of these even so you have done it unto Me." If we pray His will be done on earth as it is in heaven there is no way we can be content with the injustice in this world. The defeatism of those who say they have hope yet do not have the faith and courage to take a stand against injustice is not accepted by believers. Such hope is impotent and void of the real hope and love of God that Paul speaks of in Romans 8. If we remain silent at this time of global injustice, environment destruction, and the global debt of poor nations we will stand condemned along with those who in the past supported slavery and Nazism.

In the same way we don't wait until the second coming to allow the Lord Jesus to change us we also are willing to work for change now through the love of God in our communities. We refuse to accept social Darwinism that allows the rich to get richer and the poor poorer. It is tragic that those who often fight Darwinism the most in their schools accept the economic policies that support economic Darwinism. This is unacceptable to the people of God who believe in God's justice. It is the resurrection of Jesus which points true believers toward God's justice and gives them the energy to fight for this justice. "As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."(Romans 8:36,37)

Paul's motivation for justice was anchored in the love of Christ. A love which compelled him to declare, "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 brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel."(Romans 9:2,3) How does Paul's great love for his people challenge us to intercede and work for justice as we pray and share the salvation of Jesus Christ?

Paul also reminds us that, "It does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."(Romans 9:16) "But who are you O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him 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 noble purposes and some for common use?' What if God choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath—prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory know to the object of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory?"(Romans 9:20-23NIV)

"How can we sum this up? All those people who didn't seem interested in what God was doing actually embraced what God was doing as He straightened out their lives. And Israel, who seemed so interested in reading and talking about what God was doing, missed it. How could they miss it? Because instead of trusting God, they took over. They were absorbed in what they themselves were doing. They were so absorbed in their 'God projects' that they didn't notice God right in front of them, like a huge rock in the middle of the road. And so they stumbled into Him and went sprawling. Isaiah (again!) gives us the metaphor for pulling this together; Careful! I've put a huge stone on the road of Mount Zion, a stone you can't get around. But the stone is Me! If you're looking for Me, you'll find Me on the way not in the way."(Romans 9:30-33 The Message Bible) It

comes down to trusting in God. Unless we are trusting His Love, His Power, His Presence we going to get so absorbed in what we are doing we going to fall on our face. How we need to place our faith in the fact that “nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.”(Romans 8: 38, 39 The Message Bible) Do you believe this? If so, how is it changing your life.

This week please join me as we read Romans 10, 11, 12. As we read let us believe God to let His Word take root in our lives enabling us to grow in the faith that God is love and He has everything under control.

Yours in Christ’s Love,

Larry Rice