



NextStep 103: *The Spiritual Life*



Week #6 – Future Glory Romans 8:18-39

Key Concepts:

Our Present Suffering in Light of our Future Glory
The Spirit's Involvement in our Future Glory
Assurance of our Future Glory

Background (*Romans 6:1-8:17*)

Now that we have a new **position** in Jesus Christ (*Romans 6:1-23*) through our belief in Him for salvation, we have a new relationship to the Mosaic Law; we have **died** to it (*Romans 7:1-12*). There is now a new law working within us that has the power to deliver us from the law of sin, but for whatever reason we still find ourselves in rebellion against what we know to be right. While we cannot escape temptation, we can turn to the one who grants us **victory** over it (*Romans 7:13-25*). He is the Holy Spirit of God who dwells within us and leads us on our spiritual journey as sons of God.

Our Present Suffering in Light of our Future Glory (*Romans 8:18-25*)

vv. 18-22 Our Suffering Leads to Anticipation

v. 18 – The present suffering associated with the Christian life is nothing compared to the glorious **future** that awaits us in Christ. The resurrection stands as the pinnacle of God's redemptive work in the world. Resurrection marks our entrance into **glorification**, which is the final end of our salvation experience!

v. 19-21 *Creation suffers*

v.19 - ALL of creation (not just humanity, cf. v. 22) awaits the revealing of the sons of God when God's kingdom will be established on earth. At that time the influence of sin will be **removed** from creation and all of creation will be **restored**. All of creation awaits with groaning for the restoration of all things.

v. 20 – Creation was subjected to futility by God as a result of the **Fall** (Genesis 3). Creation does not currently experience the paradise condition it knew before the Fall; hence, Creation is frustrated – desiring to be something it cannot.

v. 21 – Creation will one day be restored. **Slavery** to corruption is contrasted to the **freedom** of the glory of the children of God. This restoration could refer to Creation’s condition during the Messiah’s earthly reign¹ or it could refer to that which is presented in *Revelation 21:1*, “a new heaven and a new earth.”

v. 22 – The “childbirth” imagery powerfully communicates the idea of intense, ongoing pain in light of the birth of something new.

vv. 23-25 Hope in the Midst of Suffering

v. 23 – Christians share with Creation the groanings in our **imperfection** and anticipation of restoration. Just as Creation struggles, so do Christians (*Romans 7*). The indwelling presence of the Spirit does not **exempt** Christians from this struggle, “but actually creates or at least heightens that tension and brings it to more anguished expression.”²

The concept of “firstfruits” refers to an Israelite offering. Israelites were commanded to offer the first **portion** of their crop to God (*Exodus 23:19*) to acknowledge the crop was from God. This faith offering expressed confidence in God’s provision for the remainder of the harvest. God has given Christians the Holy Spirit at the beginning of our spiritual lives as his **pledge** that he will complete the process of total spiritual restoration. The remainder of this promise will occur in the **future** at glorification.

Implications of the “firstfruits” metaphor:

- 1) Since there are firstfruits, the **harvest** has begun,
- 2) The harvest refers to the **resurrection** of the body, when the dead are raised,
- 3) There is a clear connection between the **indwelling** presence and work of the Holy Spirit and the future resurrection of Christians.
- 4) “The final harvest initiated by Christ’s resurrection is **already** under way.”³

Paul mentions that we are eagerly awaiting **adoption** as sons, or the redemption of our bodies (i.e. the resurrection); however, Christians have already been adopted (8:15). Paul presents an “already-not-yet” tension in salvation. In one sense Christians have “**already**” been redeemed. At the same time, Christians have “**not yet**” experienced the fullness of their redemption because they still await their glorification, which is to come.

Paul draws attention to the “not yet” aspect of our body’s redemption. The term “**body**” (σωμα) refers to “man’s bodily participation in and with his environment.”⁴ The

¹ See Dr. Constable’s notes on Romans, www.Bible.org.

² James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38A, Word Books, Dallas, TX, 1998, 474.

³ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38A, Word Books, Dallas, TX, 1998, 474.

“body” “can only be transformed when this age itself is transformed with the whole of creation into a new environment in which a different embodiment... is possible.”⁵ The “body” is different than the “**flesh**” (σάρξ) which refers to “man’s belonging to and dependence on that environment and its society.”⁶

vv. 24-25 – Hope in God’s promise of total spiritual restoration is **essential** to our spiritual growth. Hope in God’s promise enables us to cope with our present sufferings. Hope gives us an eternal **perspective** on our temporal circumstances. Something much better, much greater is to come! While the firstfruits are extremely sweet, the final harvest is going to be out of this world!

Questions:

1. How can a Christian be “already” and “not yet” saved? Does Paul’s “not yet” thought concerning salvation mean that Christians have “not yet” been granted eternal life?
2. What do you hope in? How does the promise of future resurrection impact how you live your life and handle your circumstances?

The Spirit’s Involvement in our Future Glory (Romans 8:26-30)

vv. 26-27 Intercession of the Spirit

v. 26 – The Spirit’s intercession is connected to our hope. The theme of “groaning” continues (cf. vv. 22-23).

The NIV focuses on our inability to know **what** to pray (content), while the NASB focuses on our inability to know **how** to pray (method).⁷

“Perhaps what Paul meant was this. We know how to approach God in prayer and the general subjects that we should pray about. Still we struggle with exactly how to pray most effectively and with exactly what to pray about... The Holy Spirit comes to our aid by interceding for us.”⁸

⁴ Dunn, 475.

⁵ Dunn, 475.

⁶ Dunn, 475.

⁷ See Constable’s *Notes on Romans*, 95 (www.soniclight.com).

⁸ Ibid.

v. 27 – God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit because He is **one** with the Spirit (this verse offers support for the doctrine of the **Trinity**). We know that the Spirit’s mind is always in harmony with the will of the Father.

vv. 28-30 God’s Plans are for our Good

v. 28 – The outworking of God’s sovereign purposes is ultimately for the good of those who love God, or Christians. The definition of “good” is from **God’s** perspective and concerns that which accomplishes spiritual growth, or transformation into the image of God’s son. God causes all things to bring about **spiritual growth** in the lives of Christians, including those things that are bad such as tragedy.

v. 29 – “Foreknowledge is a term that specifically describes God’s decision to **elect** (cf. ch. 9; 1 Pet. 1:20).⁹ Foreknowledge is a “personal, relational knowledge by which God thought of certain people in a saving relationship to himself before creation. This is to be distinguished from the mere knowledge of **facts** about a person.”¹⁰

We are predestined to become like **Jesus Christ**. According to Paul here, we are not predestined to **believe** in Jesus Christ (although that could be assumed), but predestined to become like Him. The purpose of God’s work of predestination is so that Jesus Christ would become the “firstborn” among many brothers.

The sequence of spiritual life in vv. 29 & 30:

- 1) Foreknowledge – determines **who** God’s children will be,
- 2) Predestination – determines **what** God’s children will be (the elect will be conformed to the image of Christ),
- 3) Calling – the unbelieving elect is irresistibly **invited** to join God’s family,
- 4) Justification – the sinner’s participation in the benefits of **Christ’s** work,¹¹
- 5) Glorification – total future restoration. Glorification is our end hope. The hope of the gospel is not simply the **forgiveness** of our sins (although that is SO important), but our future glory.

Our spiritual growth relies completely on God!

⁹ Constable, 97.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1242.

¹¹ Bob Deffinbaugh, From Agony to Ecstasy, www.Bible.org.

Questions:

1. What is God's response to bad things that affect Christians?
2. What is the difference between foreknowledge and predestination?
3. What is God's role in the salvation of those who have not believed in Jesus Christ?
What is God's role in the salvation of Christians?

The Assurance of our Future Glory (*Romans 8:31-39*)

v. 31-34 God is for us – No one can be against us!

v. 31 – “Theses things” directs our attention to what immediately precedes as well as the entire context of Paul's discussion on sin and justification (*Romans 3:1-8:30*). Paul once again incorporates a series of rhetorical questions to drive home his argument.

Since God is for us, **nothing** can get in the way of God accomplishing his purposes in us. We may have many things or people against us, including our adversary, Satan. Compared to the sovereign God, however, everything and everyone who may be against us are as **nothing**. The one God of the universe has our back.

v. 32 – God sent his son to die for us. God gave us his Holy Spirit who **empowers** us to live the Christian life. God will do anything for us as his sons. He will graciously give us whatever is needed to transform us into the image of his son.¹²

v. 33 – No one can bring a charge against us because God has declared us **righteous** through Jesus Christ (8:1). The repetition of “God” in this section increases the emphasis on God's work in saving man.

v. 34 – Christ condemns, but we are not condemned because of Jesus Christ who:

- 1) Died,
- 2) Was raised,
- 3) Sits at God's right hand,
- 4) Intercedes for us.

Jesus **intercedes** for us as does the Holy Spirit (8:26-27).

¹² Constable, 99. Dunn views “all things” as a reference to man's lordship over creation.

vv. 35-39 God's Unfailing Love

v. 35 – Paul lists possible sources of trials and suffering. This list parallels his personal experience (2 Corinthians 11) and is understood as characteristic of the Christian life. The point is that no present circumstance can **separate** Christians from the love of Christ.

v. 36 – Paul quotes *Psalm 44:22*. This reference highlights the characteristic of suffering that Christians experience. In spite of this suffering, however, we are never separated from God's love.

v. 37 – This verse answers the question Paul raised in verse 35. We are victorious over **all things**. In fact, we are overwhelmingly victorious (ὑπερνικῶμεν).¹³ This term is related to the Greek word νικάω, from which we get our English word "Nike." Nike was also the Greek goddess of victory.

vv. 38-39 – Nothing, absolutely nothing will separate us from God's love. This is because the promises that we have in Christ are secure to the **end**. For us, this end is our future glorious resurrection from the dead into God's presence for eternity!

Conclusion

The spiritual life is fully a work of **God**. While you are responsible for living godly lives, you are not able to live the Christian life **apart** from the work of the Holy Spirit. You must cooperate with the Holy Spirit while being assured that God is at work transforming you into the image of Christ. Because God has your back, you can live the Christian life with confidence and experience **victory** over sin.

Definition of the "Spiritual Life:"

Part 1: "Understanding your identity in Christ ..."

Part 2: "... as a slave to righteousness ..."

Part 3: "... who has been released from the Law ..."

Part 4: "...to experience victory over sin ..."

Part 5: "... as you live by the Holy Spirit of God ..."

Part 6: "... and await your glorious resurrection in the future."

¹³ According to BDAG, 1034, ὑπερνικάω is used as "a heightened form of νικάω prevail completely ... we are winning a most glorious victory Ro 8:37."

Key Terms:

Firstfruits
Foreknowledge
Predestination
Calling
Justification
Glorification

Key Verses:

Exodus 23:19
Romans 8:28
Romans 8:1

Scripture Memory:

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose.” (*Romans 8:28 ESV*)

Homework Assignment #6:

- 1) Memorize *Romans 8:28*.
- 2) **NextStep APPLICATION:** Consider how God has brought all things together for good in your life. Reflect upon how God used bad things to conform you into the image of Christ. Move toward recognizing God’s work of bringing all things together for good through your daily circumstances.
- 3) Review class notes.