

TRUE FREEDOM
Romans 8:1-8

Intro: Let me summarize for you the main points that the Apostle Paul has made regarding sanctification from the beginning of Romans 6 on to where we are in chapter 8.

There are various truths which enter into our sanctification, truths which are not independent of each other, but which all are joined together in the work of sanctification which God is doing in our hearts. There are three that we have had so far.

- 1) The first is the truth of our union with Christ.

Paul took this up in the first 10 verses of chapter 6.

This is not a truth that just applies to what our Lord did for us on the Cross, but it is a truth which indicates our relationship to the Lord now, and forever!

- 2) The second truth is the truth of our obedience to Christ. This is Paul's emphasis from Rom. 6:11 to the end of that chapter.

But we must remember that obedience in the life of a child of God is not something that we do for God. Obedience is what we are enabled by God to do. Remember Phil. 2:13. Nevertheless, obedience is necessary. We must, by God's enabling grace, obey the commands of Romans 6:11-13. And Paul enlarged upon this theme of obedience in the remainder of chapter 6.

- 3) The third truth is in chapter 7 where Paul shows that our sanctification is not by the Law, but by Christ alone!

It is not the function of the Law to sanctify; it is the function of the Law to expose sin, to unmask it, even to aggravate it.

Our ability to sin and our tendency to sin are not removed at salvation, but they are conquered. We can sin, but we no longer have to sin. In us dwells no good thing apart from Christ (see Rom. 7:18), but full provision is made for our sanctification as well as our justification, IN CHRIST.

Now we come in chapter 8 to a fourth truth having to do with our sanctification -- and that is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. No person is going to make progress in the Christian life as long as he is ignorant of the work of the Spirit.

Paul touched on this truth when he wrote to the Galatian churches. See Gal. 5:16, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit . . ."

Romans 8 has to be one of the most wonderful chapters in the Bible. Godet, in his commentary on Romans, quotes a writer by the name of Spener who said that, if the Holy Scriptures were a ring, Romans would be its precious stone, and chapter 8 "would be the sparkling point of the jewel" (Godet's commentary on Romans, p. 295).

Up to this point in Romans Paul has only referred to the Holy

Spirit twice -- and commentators differ about one of those. See Rom. 1:4 and 5:5.

But, not counting Rom. 8:1b which is not found in the best MSS, in the first 27 verses of Romans 8 Paul mentioned the Holy Spirit 18 times! He refers to Him not only as the Spirit, but as "the Spirit of life" (v. 2),
 "the Spirit of God" (v. 9),
 "the Spirit of Christ" (v. 9),
 "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead" (v. 11),
 "his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (v. 11),
 "the Spirit of God" (again in v. 14; see v. 9), and
 "the Spirit of adoption" (v. 15).

However, the return in the latter part of chapter 8 (from v. 28 on) to an emphasis on God and on Christ shows that our sanctification is not dependent upon only one member of the Godhead, but upon all three working together! This is brought out by the mention of all three in Romans 8:3, 4.

This is an important point because frequently you will hear teaching which focuses upon one Person of the Godhead in connection with our sanctification, but which ignores the other two. Or the teaching may speak of two, but not all three. The true teaching of sanctification is that all three Persons of the Godhead are involved in our becoming holy, or, to state it another way, in our becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the reason that the work cannot fail.

Paul has done just two things in the first 8 verses of Romans 8. First, in the first 4 verses, he relates our sanctification to our justification. No person can be sanctified who has not been justified. Secondly, he shows why justification is a necessary condition -- because an unregenerate man is incapable to pleasing God. This is in verses 5 through 8.

The key verse in the passage is verse 2, and the word that we need to notice in particular is the word, "free." The believer has been freed from the law of sin and death by a greater law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus! This is TRUE FREEDOM, not freedom to do whatever we want to do, but freedom from doing the things which otherwise would keep us in bondage.

Let us look, then, at our text.

I. THE MEANING OF OUR FREEDOM (Rom. 8:1-4).

Griffith Thomas makes a very interesting observation about these first 4 verses of Romans 8. He says that

- verse 1 looks back to Romans 5,
- verse 2 looks back to Romans 6,
- verse 3 looks back to Romans 7,

-- verse 4 anticipates what is coming in Romans 8.
There seems to be a lot of merit in this suggestion.

Since we are thinking about our freedom from sinning, notice what we have already considered in Romans 6:17-22.

This all confirms what I have been saying about how various truths are all tied in together. You cannot have sanctification without justification, but we must also recognize that where you have justification you will have sanctification. It is impossible to have one without the other, and where you have one you will have the other.

Notice the emphasis in each of these first four verses.

- A. Our position and our standing (Rom. 8:1). Only the first part seems to be the true text.

We are "in Christ Jesus," and so we have "no condemnation."

"In Christ Jesus" -- There is no statement in Scripture that is more important in justification and in sanctification than this, nor is there any that is more amazing.

Before we were saved we were "in Adam," with all of the dire consequences of that relationship; after we were saved, we are now "in Christ," with all of the blessings and privileges that that means.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3, 7, 10-14. We now share in all that Christ is.

- B. Our freedom (Rom. 8:2).

"Law" is used in this verse to indicate a controlling force.

We learned about the second of these in chapter 7; we are now to learn about the first in this chapter.

"The law of sin and death" has been likened to the law of gravity, which remains, but which can be overcome by employing a greater force. This is what enables us to fly in planes, or to travel to the moon.

There is one controlling force that is greater than that of sin, and that is the controlling force of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" -- and this is the power by which we are set free from sin and sinning!

- C. The intervention of God (Rom. 8:3).

1. Why was His intervention necessary?

Because, as we have seen in chapter 7, the Law was not adequate to help us. Why? Because of the weakness of the flesh. Man by himself is incapable of measuring up to the divine standard -- even redeemed man, if he is trying in his own strength.

2. How did God intervene?

By sending "his own Son" -- note the emphasis. It was not an angel, nor a prophet, nor an apostle, but "his own Son"!

Verse 3 gives us a statement of

- the incarnation,
- the Cross and the sin offering that our Lord provided there,
- the ultimate provision: "condemned sin in the flesh."

3. What did this accomplish?

See verse 4.

The one thing that is stated about the Holy Spirit's relationship to the believer prior to chapter 8 is that the Holy Spirit has been "given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Now we see why -- so we can walk in Him. Walking speaks of living and acting. We live in the enabling power of the Spirit, not in the crippling power of the flesh. The former has overcome the latter.

This brings us to the last 4 verses of our text.

II. THE NECESSITY FOR JUSTIFICATION IN SANCTIFICATION (Rom. 8: 5-8).

In verses 5 and 6 Paul is contrasting an unregenerate person with one who is regenerate. In verses 7 and 8 he is speaking just of one who is unregenerate.

"After the flesh" is lit. according to the flesh, and it describes one who is not a Christian. He minds "the things of the flesh." That is, he is concerned about them; he cares for them; he seeks them; he likes them. This is not only the limit of his interests, but the limit of his capabilities.

On the other hand, when a person has been saved, he is no longer "after the flesh," but "after the Spirit," and so his interests and desires and concerns are for "the things of the

Spirit."

"Minded" and "mind" in verses 6 and 7 are cognates, related to, the verb "mind" in verse 5.

- Thus, verse 6 describes the two kinds of people again -- the regenerate and the unregenerate. One leads to "death"; the other, to "life and peace." In fact, this is what each one is.

But the necessity for regeneration is brought out in vv. 7, 8. It is not only a case of unwillingness, but it is a case of total inability. Unregenerate man not only will not please God, but he cannot please God!

Thus we run right into the doctrines of grace -- the bondage of the will, the total inability and total depravity of man. His only hope is that God will intervene in his own life through justification, and set him free from the tyranny of sin.

Concl: What can we learn from this passage?

- 1) The utter bankruptcy of all men, both for justification and for sanctification.
- 2) The need for salvation. Our hope for deliverance from sin's penalty as well as from sin's power is to be "in Christ Jesus."
- 3) The absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need to be saved, but we need to be walking in the Spirit, too. All that is included in the work of salvation is essential to our sanctification.

How do we walk in the Spirit? By trusting Him to enable us to do that which is according to the Word of God. This is what it means to please God -- and it begins with a change in the things that we desire, the things that we are primarily concerned about.

Total Inability
Romans 8:5-8

- Intro: My text for this service is the last 4 verses of our Scripture reading: verses 5-8. But I want to take only
- the part of those verses which speak of the people whom Paul describes as being "after the flesh." Next Sunday, the Lord willing, I want to come back to these same 4 verses and speak about those who are "after the Spirit."

To clarify what I mean, let me state the difference between my message for this Sunday and my message for next Sunday in another way. This Sunday we are going to be considering what Paul wrote in this passage about those who are not Christians; next Sunday we will look at what he wrote about those who are Christians!

You must realize that Paul is not referring in these verses to two kinds of Christians, but he was speaking of Christians as compared with non-Christians.

In the first 4 verses he was describing a true Christian. At the end of verse 4 and then throughout verses 5, 6, 7, and 8 he was referring to those who are not Christians -- with two exceptions! And the two exceptions are the expressions that we will consider next Sunday. They are:

- 1) In v. 5, "... but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." It is to be understood from the first part of the verse that he means that they "do mind . . . the things of the Spirit."
- 2) In verse 6, "... but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

One of the reasons we have difficulty with a passage like this is because we are inclined to identify people as being Christians, or not, from their experience, instead of from the Word of God. We are inclined to feel that because a person always comes to church, or because a person seeks to live a good life, or because a person has a good personality, or even because a person reads his Bible and may know a great deal about the Bible, that that person is a Christian. But the solemn fact remains that a person is not a Christian unless he fits the description of a Christian which is given in the Word of God.

- For example, verses 1 through 4, as I have pointed out, describe a Christian. If these verses do not describe us, then it is because we are not saved. They describe only Christians, and they describe all Christians! There are no exceptions. There
- may be differences among us as to the degree in which those verses apply to us, but they apply to all who are saved!

We could cite many other passages to illustrate the same fact of Scripture. E.g., 2 Cor. 5:17. If a person is not "a new crea-

ture," it is because he is not "in Christ," and if he is not "in Christ," it means that he is not a Christian.

We must be very careful about watering down the clear statements of Scripture. There is all the difference in the world between a Christian and one who is not a Christian. The church today has tried to blend the two together, but it cannot be done!

To take our text for this service, if a person is not a Christian he is "after the flesh" and he minds "the things of the flesh." If a person is a Christian, he is "after the Spirit" and he minds "the things of the Spirit." There are no exceptions in either case!

So today we will consider the first part of verse 5, the first part of verse 6, all of verse 7, and all of verse 8. Next Sunday we will take up the last part of verse 5 and the last part of verse 6. My message for today might be called, God's Description of A Non-Christian. Next week, God's Description of A Christian.

There are certain things that a Christian does which identify him as a Christian. And there are certain things that the non-Christian does which identify him as a non-Christian. And there are things which a Christian does not do because he is a Christian just as there are certain things that a non-Christian cannot do because he is not a Christian.

Now all of this is important if we are to understand the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification applies only to Christians! As I have mentioned before, if a person is not being sanctified it is because he needs to be justified! We would save ourselves a lot of trouble in our churches if we would only recognize the very great difference that there is between Christians and non-Christians -- and it is possible for both to be members of the same church!

What is God's Description of A Non-Christian?

There are five parts to God's description, followed by the consequence, the result, the outcome.

First, then,

I. The Description of A Non-Christian.

A. He is "after the flesh." See Rom. 8:5a.

"The flesh" is a Biblical term which describes what every person is apart from the saving grace of God. It speaks of what we are by nature, of what we are because

of our relationship to Adam. "The flesh" refers to our sinful nature. It is that in man which makes him content to live without God. It includes not only those sins of the body, but also those sins which are more respectable, sins which often are concealed -- sins of the mind and the heart! "The flesh" is all that man is without God.

But for him to be "after the flesh" means not only that he lives according to the flesh, but that he cannot do anything else! The word "after" not only means according to, but under -- the non-Christian does what he does because he is under the dominion of the flesh, he is enslaved by the flesh. He is in bondage to the flesh and is unable to set himself free.

Note what verse 2 above says about a Christian. This has not happened to a non-Christian. He is not free, but is a slave to "the law of sin and death."

This is the first thing that we need to recognize about a non-Christian. The second is this:

B. He minds the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5a).

What does this mean -- that he minds the things of the flesh?

It means, to state it briefly, that he is delighted to have his life the way it is. This is what he is interested in. This is what he thinks about, what he is attracted to.

He is interested in the present, not in the future. He is interested in the material, not in the spiritual. He is out to please himself or other people who are dear to him, or who can bring him some advantage, but "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4b) -- unless it be a different kind of a God which he has created in his own mind. But it is not the God of the Bible.

Paul used this same expression in Phil. 3:18, 19.
(Read.)

A good test for all of us is, What is it that occupies our thoughts and motivates what we do?

Note the third thing:

C. Verse 6a, "For to be carnally minded is death."

It is unfortunate that our translators have not used the

some expressions to translate the same word throughout this passage. To be "carnally minded" means to have the mind of the flesh. It means to mind, to pursue, to be primarily concerned about the things of the flesh.

The expression means that a person lives like this because he has no spiritual life; he is dead, separated from God, without God, wholly bound up in himself and his sins. He does what he does because he is what he is: dead in trespasses and sins. He knows nothing of God as He ought to be known. He has no fellowship with God, nor does he even desire it.

He can no more help himself than a dead man can do anything for himself. What he needs is life, and only God can bestow that. A Christian, as I have mentioned, is "a new creature." This means that salvation is just as miraculous and just as much a work of God as when God called in the heavens and the earth into existence out of nothing!

But there are two more things which Paul mentioned here to describe a non-Christian.

D. Verse 7a, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."

Again it should be translated, the mind of the flesh, or to mind the things of the flesh, is enmity against God.

Now this is often where we are deceived — either about ourselves, or about other.

Paul does not say that a non-Christian will be irreligious, or uninterested in church, or even in doctrine. He may be a church member. He may be in church all of the time. He may even be a pastor. He may be a professor in a theological seminary. He may have even written books on Biblical subjects. He may be and do all of these things and yet not be a Christian if he is at enmity with God. What does this mean?

It means at least two things, possibly more.

It means that he does not accept the God Who is revealed in the Bible. He has made God what he wants Him to be. He accepts the love of God, but he does not accept the holiness of God, or the righteousness of God. He does not believe in the wrath of God. He does not believe in the sovereignty of God. He does not believe that the doctrine of God is anything specific; he prefers to think that God is whatever you would like for Him to be.

The other thing that this means is that the non-Christian does not like the ways of God. He does not like to be told that salvation is only through Christ. He does not like to be told that salvation is through faith. He believes that there is good in man and that this goodness influences God in determining our salvation.

The non-Christian often poses as a Christian, but in his heart he is ~~at~~ enmity with God.

Of course, there have always been millions of people in the world who make no pretense of being Christian and whose lives are a continual defiance of God. They are avowed enemies of God!

But notice the last thing which Paul mentioned here -- in verse 7b:

E. "It is not subject to the law of God."

And then Paul added: "neither indeed can be."

People can say a lot of nice things about the Bible. They can often quote certain things from the Bible which they like. But when you come right down to the message of the Bible, they reject it. They refuse to recognize its authority. But, more than that, they are incapable of obeying it. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14.

How naive we can be on this point!

A man who is "after the flesh" does not recognize the authority of the Word of God. He does not believe that the Word of God is enough, that it is sufficient. He believes that some things in the Bible no longer are true, that you have to pick and choose what you are going to accept.

In short, in what he believes and in the way he lives he "is not subject to the law of God," to the Word of God, and he is not because he cannot. He will not be and he cannot be. His case is hopeless. But you can spot a non-Christian by his attitude toward all that is written in Scripture.

This all brings us to:

— II. The Outcome -- or, The Result, The Consequence, of what Paul has written (Rom. 8:8).

Here it is: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Now let us not try to ease the blow of this statement. It is true in the case of every non-Christian, and it applies to everything that he does.

The non-Christian cannot please God by his church-going,
by his Bible reading,
by his praying,
by his good works,
or by anything else.

When Paul wrote these words he meant that there is not in man the capacity to please God. He is hopelessly afflicted with Total Disability. It applies to every part of his being, and to all that he does. As long as he is not a Christian, he cannot please God.

But what is different about a Christian, a true Christian? He has a new heart. He is a new creature. He has received divine life. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

But how does all of this take place?

It is the result of the sovereign work of God in appointing us to salvation, in calling us by His Gospel, and in imparting life to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's hope is not in himself, but in God, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

Concl: Call upon God for salvation. Recognize that there is only one way to Him, and that is through Christ -- the One Who died for all who would believe in Him. Seek faith from God. It comes from Him as a gift. Even that is not possible with man. Note again the majestic statements of the first 4 verses of this chapter. There you have God's full statement of what it means to be a Christian. It is not by trying to make yourself like Christ, but when God puts you in Christ, that you are truly saved and have the right to call yourself a Christian.

May God in His grace see fit to save you if, as you have looked at His portrait of one who is not a Christian, you have realized that this is a description of you.

IN PURSUIT OF THE SPIRIT
Romans 8:5, 6

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:1-8.

- Intro: Last Sunday I spoke to you about the person who is "after the flesh," and who minds "the things of the flesh." Today I want to talk about a completely different kind of a person -- one who is "after the Spirit," and who minds "the things of the Spirit."

The person who is "after the flesh" is not a Christian. The person who is "after the Spirit" is a Christian.

So today we are thinking about one who is a Christian, one who knows Christ in salvation, one who is a child of God. And this is God's description of a Christian -- he is "after the Spirit," and he minds "the things of the Spirit." A person who does not measure up to these standards simply is not a Christian. It is important that we know what the Word of God says as to what it means to be a Christian because that is the only true definition.

- I am using the term Christian to speak of a believer in Christ, or a saint, or a child of God. I am speaking of that which is the result of the new birth, of being born of God. Many people call themselves Christians who really do not know what it means in the Bible, and, of course, the Biblical definition is the only true definition. But here in Romans 8 as in many other parts of the Word of God, a Christian is defined in terms of what he does, the things that he is interested in, the way he lives. A person is not a Christian just because he goes to church, or because he belongs to a church, or just because he is in agreement with what a church teaches, or even because he tries to live by the Golden Rule or to be the best kind of a person that he can be. A person is a Christian when he is born of God through faith in Christ, and the evidence will be seen right away by the changes that begin to appear in his life. In the words of our text,
 - before, he was "after the flesh";
 - now, he is "after the Spirit."
 - Before, he minded "the things of the flesh";
 - now, he minds "the things of the Spirit."

So, before I go into what this means in terms of salvation, I need to explain again, as I did last Sunday, the meaning of the preposition "after," and the meaning of the verb, "mind."

- The word "after" has two possible meanings, and both really apply here. It means according to, and it means under. The person who is not a Christian lives according to the flesh because he is under the control, the dominion, the authority of the flesh, and he cannot do anything about it. The person who is a

Christian lives according to the Spirit because he is under the control, the dominion, the authority of the Spirit, and he likewise cannot change that fact.

Consequently, the person who is not a Christian is interested in "the things of the flesh." Those are the things that he is interested in, and those are the things that he seeks.

The Christian, on the other hand, is concerned about "the things of the Spirit." These are the things that he is interested in, and these are the things that he seeks.

The one is in pursuit of the flesh; the other is in pursuit of the Spirit. We saw what the first meant in the message last week; now we want to see what the second means -- that a Christian is in pursuit of the Spirit, and that this is an identifying characteristic of a believer. ~~He may need encouragement and exhortation, but the desire will be there regardless.~~

And so the first thing that I want you to see about our text in verses 5 and 6 is that this characteristic is

I. A POSITIVE EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

" . . . to be spiritually minded is life . . ." In other words, the person who pursues "the things of the Spirit" is a person who is spiritually alive. He is a child of God. He is justified. He is a new creature in Christ.

Why is this so?

Because you will never find a single unsaved person who is interested in "the things of the Spirit." It is impossible for them to know anything about them, and so they do not seek them in their daily living.

But let us ask, in the second place,

II. WHAT ARE "THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT"?

If we were reading the second chapter of 1 Corinthians, we would see that "the things of the Spirit of God" are actually "the things of God." But perhaps even that does not help us a great deal.

In order for us to understand the expression, "the things of the Spirit," it is necessary for us to go back to what our Lord said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in what is called, The Upper Room Discourse. It is found in John 14, 15, and 16, but I am referring especially to those parts of that message in which our Lord spoke of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Actually the Lord said that the Holy Spirit would do two

things:

1) He would guide them into all truth (John 16:13).

2) He would glorify Christ (John 16:14).

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that these are two parts of the same thing. The "truth" which the Lord spoke about was the Word of God. See John 17:17. And it is to be expected that the Holy Spirit would have a special interest in the Word of God because He is the Author of the Word. Cf. 2 Peter 1:21.

So for a man to pursue the things of the Holy Spirit means that he will seek from the Holy Spirit to know the Word of God, and to learn all that he can about Christ!

A true Christian loves to hear the Word of God. He loves to read the Word of God. He loves to hear about the Lord, and he always wants to know more about the Lord. These are "the things" that he is primarily interested in; these are "the things" which he seeks. If you keep him away from his Bible, he is going to be miserable until he gets back. If you fail to tell him about the Lord, he is really disappointed, and nothing else will satisfy him.

But let me go on in our text.

A true Christian not only has life, but he has peace.

III. THE PEACE THAT ACCOMPANIES LIFE.

Wherever you find true, spiritual life, you find peace also -- and there are no exceptions.

Paul reminded us back in Romans 3:17 that, concerning the non-Christian, all non-Christians, "the way of peace have they not known" -- ever! But whenever a man knows God, he has peace. His peace can and will grow, but it is there from the very beginning of his relationship with God.

*Illus. The
Gadarene
demoniac.
Cf. Luke 8:
26-39.*

Now place this in contrast with what Paul said about the person who is after the flesh -- he is at "enmity with God." (See Rom. 8:7.) "Enmity" and "peace" are contrary to each other. If a man is at "enmity against God" then he does not have "peace." But if he does have "peace," then it is evidence that he is no longer an enemy of God.

In what sense does he have "peace"?

Let me mention at least four ways in which he has "peace."

A. He has the peace of reconciliation. Cf. Rom. 5:1.

All of the enmity is gone. God has removed the cause: sin. The sinner has been reconciled, forgiven.

B. He has peace about God.

Do you remember that last Sunday I told you that one way in which man is at enmity with God is that he does not like what the Bible tells him about the nature of God? Well, when a person becomes a Christian, that is all gone. He loves to hear about God, and to learn about Him. Nothing gives him more joy than God. Remember Romans 5:11,

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Closely related to this is a third point:

C. He has peace about the Word of God.

He doesn't argue with Scripture any more. He may not understand it all, but he believes it all! And his heart is open to it. The Word of God is his authority. He accepts it as his final authority, and he seeks to obey it in all that he does.

Before, he could not please God; now, he can, and that has become the greatest object of his life.

He says with the Psalmist, and with our Lord,
I delight to do thy will, O my God:
yea, thy law is within my heart (Psa. 40:8).

D. Finally, he has peace about the ways of God.

He knows that God is sovereign. He sees the hand of God in everything, and believe that God is great enough to take the bad things as well as the good and work them together for the accomplishing of His purposes.

His trials may overwhelm him, and even cause his faith to falter, but he stands on the same ground with Job who said,

Though he slay me, yet will I trust him (Job 13:15).

A child of God would rather walk in God's ways than to have "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

Concl: This is God's description of a Christian. Does it fit you? Can you read over this passage and say to yourself, "Why, Paul was writing about me!"

If it does fit you, then give God the glory. He made you to be His friend so you would delight in Him.

If it does not fit you, then you are not a Christian, and you need to be saved. Seek the forgiveness of your sins through the sacrifice of Christ. Trust in Christ. Ask God to make you a new creature and to take away the enmity that is in your heart. Only He can do it, and He will!

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
Romans 8:9-13

Intro: If I were to summarize the teaching of Paul in Romans 8 as far as we have gone, I would point out three truths:

- 1) Our security in Christ -- which has to be considered the main point that Paul has made in this chapter. Note how the chapter begins in verse 1, and note how it ends in verses 38, 39. There are also several other statements in the chapter which give further proof of our security in Christ -- that once we are truly in Christ, we are always in Christ!
- 2) The fact that all people are either in the flesh, or they are in Christ. There is no third category; there is no middle ground. You will find differences between those who are in Christ just as you will find differences between those who are in the flesh, but there are only these two possibilities.

In this connection Paul has taught us that if a person is in the flesh he is also "after," or under, the flesh; he is dominated by the flesh so much that he cannot set himself free. And consequently he minds the things of the flesh. If a person is in Christ, then he is "after the Spirit," and he minds the things of the Spirit.

You cannot be in both categories, but you will be in either one or the other; there are no other categories. We are all born into the first; the only way to get into the second is through the saving grace of God.

The third truth is this:

- 3) The special relationship that every Christian has to the Holy Spirit: Christians are indwelt by the Spirit.

Three Sundays ago when we started to consider Romans 8 I mentioned that this chapter is peculiarly the chapter in Romans in which Paul concentrated on the Holy Spirit and His ministry. He is spoken of by name 18 times in the first 27 verses (and 19 if verse 1 is to be included).

This morning I want to consider with you what the Apostle Paul has taught us in this chapter, and especially in our text, concerning THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. Remember that these truths which we are considering now only apply to those who are the children of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, let us notice what Paul had to say about

I. THE NAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Look especially at verse 9. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 3 times. He is called "the Spirit," "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of Christ."

The fact that He is "the Spirit" means that He does not have a body like you and I do. He is a spiritual being. And this

why He is omnipresent--because He is not limited to a body. This does not in any way throw any doubt upon His personality nor upon His reality (the spiritual is just as real as the physical, and even more lasting).

The terms, "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ," indicate two things:

- 1) The Deity of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) The unity of all three Members of the Godhead.
- The Holy Spirit is God, and He has come forth from both the Father and the Son. Cf. John 15:26. It was over this that the Church experienced one of its first great controversies.

These are all facts of doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit which we need to have well in mind.

So much for that. We will not spend more time on that just now.

The second point that I want to make about the Holy Spirit is that of

II. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This is the main point of the Apostle's teaching in this section of Romans 8.

The Holy Spirit does not indwell every person; He only indwells those who are in Christ; in other words, those who are true believers in Christ.

On this fact, cf. John 14:16, 17.

Now I want to mention six things from our text about this important teaching, but it may be that I will not be able to cover all of them today. They are so important that I do not want to rush over them, but instead I want to make as sure as I possibly can that we all understand what the Apostle Paul was talking about.

The first is this:

- A. This is one very important fact that identifies a true believer in Christ -- that he has the Holy Spirit!

What amazing teaching this is! What proof of 1 Corinthians 2:9 -- that we would never have conceived of such a thing! Have we ever really come to understand what this means, that a Member of the Godhead actually lives in us?

The Scriptures actually teach that all Three Persons of the Godhead live in each child of God, but let us just

seek to understand this part of the truth for now.

What a difference it would make in our lives if we really understood what this means, and if we were continually conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us! (Elaborate on how we feel when some other Christian finds us doing something that they do not expect us to be doing.)

But there is a second truth here that is important for us to understand:

B. The Holy Spirit is in us to stay! Cf. v. 9.

Notice the word, "dwell." And then remember our Lord's words in John 14:16, 17 -- " . . . that he may abide with you for ever."

He does not come and go; He abides! You and I can grieve Him by our sin, but He will never leave us. It was this truth that Paul emphasized with the sinning Corinthian church. See 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

He begins to live in us when we are first saved, and He never even goes away for a short time.

There are a lot of Christians who do not understand this. They think that He does not come until He is invited, and they think that He may leave us at any times, especially if He is displeased with something that we have done.

But such is not the case. He abides! Make sure that you understand this. You may not always feel like He does, but we know that He remains because this is what the Scriptures teach.

But let us go on to the third point. It is stated negatively here in verse 9.

C. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit means that we are the Lord's, that we belong to Him.

This also is in verse 9, stated negatively: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." To turn that around and state it positively we can say this: If any man have the Spirit of Christ, it means that he belongs to Christ!

Let me refer again to 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. (Quote.)

Specifically this is what Paul called in Eph. 1:13, 14, the sealing work of the Holy Spirit.

This is one reason why Paul has written in this passage that a true Christian is "after the Spirit." He is under the authority of the Holy Spirit because he has been purchased by God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But somebody is probably saying, "Yes, pastor, this all may be true, but how can you know that the Holy Spirit is in you?"

You can tell it because of the changes that have taken place in you. You used to be an enemy of God; now you love Him. You used to be unconcerned and unable to please God; now that is what you desire above everything else. You formerly cared nothing about Christ; now His very Name brings peace and delight to your heart. It used to be that you did not like to read the Bible and you did not understand it. Now you love it and want to read it and to hear it preached -- even though there are still many things about it that you do not understand. In the past you could not think of anything more boring than to go to church, but now you love to be with the people of God and you love to worship God and to hear His Word taught. It used to be that you tried to excuse your sin in a multitude of ways, but now it really grieves you and you want God to keep you from sinning.

These are some of the ways you can tell that the Holy Spirit is living in you. This is how you can tell that you are the personal, private property of God Almighty!

But there is a fourth truth that I want you to see, and it is in verse 10:

- D. The Spirit indwelling us means that we have life, God's life, eternal life.

Teachers of the Word differ as to whether or not the word "Spirit" in this verse should be capitalized, or not. Was Paul referring to our spirits, or to the Holy Spirit.

Personally I believe it is right the way it is. It seems to be more consistent with what the Apostle Paul is teaching about the Holy Spirit. But, actually, the end result is the same whatever our understanding of this word "Spirit" may be. It is because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we are alive. He is there "because of righteousness," that is, because we have been justified by God. And so now we not only have a completely different set of desires toward God, but we

now have new capabilities. Things that we could not do before, and did not want to do, are things that now we want to do, and can do. Verse 8 no longer applies to us!

On Paul's reference to Christ in this verse, cf. 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life . . ."

Actually all Three Persons of the Godhead indwell us. What wonderful people we ought to be, and can be, by the grace of God.

But even this is not all. Note a fifth point. We will save the sixth for next Sunday -- the truth about mortifying our bodies, in verses 12 and 13.

For this fifth truth look at verse 11.

E. The Holy Spirit is in us to quicken our mortal bodies.

What does this mean?

Well, the twofold statement about Christ in the first part of this eleventh verse shows that this has to do with our physical resurrection, the resurrection of our bodies.

Right now, "the body is dead because of sin" (v. 10). Our bodies are "mortal bodies," i.e., they are subject to death. We are all going to die, if the Lord tarries. Every time somebody dies, remember that the same things is going to happen to you, and to me. All sickness is evidence that death is on the way. We get older for what? For death. The very process of aging leads to death. We are all fighting a losing battle.

But this is what is so wonderful about the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in all of us who belong to Christ. He is there because some day He is going to raise us from the dead.

Again I can say that the Scriptures teach that all Three Persons of the Godhead are going to be busy with our resurrection, but the emphasis here is on the Holy Spirit.

What assurance this should give us! Our faith is not in vain!

Please turn to 1 Cor. 15 while I read to you verses 51 through 58. This is just as certain as any promise that the Lord has ever given. We shall be raised and changed. There is no doubt about it! See Rom. 8:22-25.

Oh, there is so much that could be said about this, but let me just point out what Paul wrote in Phil. 3:20, 21. (Quote.)

So even in our bodies we are going to be like the Lord!

Concl: Next week I want to take up verses 12 and 13 -- the sixth and last thing that the Apostle has mentioned here with reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. It has to do with mortifying the flesh. It has to do with how we are changed in our hearts from what we are now to what we will be when even our bodies are made like the Lord's body.

But let me close with a word to those who are not Christians, and then a word to those of us who are.

All that I have been saying about the Holy Spirit indwelling human beings has to do only with those who know the Lord. So, if Christ is not your Saviour, then this has nothing at all to do with you. But perhaps the Lord has you here so that you will know that all of your struggles against sin are in vain unless and until you know Christ in salvation. Therefore your first concern must be that you know the Lord as your Saviour.

For those of us who do know the Lord, let me ask you this: What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit indwells you? Have you ever really come under the power of this great truth? Can you see the effect of it upon your daily life, and upon your hope and expectation for the future? Has it caused you to set your affections on heaven and heavenly things? It is the truth that changes us, not the passing emotions which so quickly come, and just as quickly go. It is when this becomes a reality to us that our lives are going to be changed because of the changes that will take place in us!

Spend time meditating on this marvelous truth, praying that the Lord will make it a glorious reality to you.

THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN
Romans 8:12, 13

Intro: I probably could have chosen other words to express my subject for today, but I deliberately chose this one because I want you to get acquainted with the word, mortification.

The verb, mortify, is used twice in the NT: here, and in Col. 3:5. But in these two instances Paul has used two different Greek verbs: is used here; is used in Col. 3:5. However, there does not seem to be any reason to distinguish between the two of them. They both mean that there is something that needs to be put to death.

Cf. also Gal. 5:24.

A **verse** like Matt. 5:29 also applies. But it needs to be understood as Eadie explained it: The actual organs are not to be cut off, or plucked out, but "the lust that uses and debases these organs or members as its instruments, is to be extirpated" (Colossians, p. 221).

But let me examine this truth in the light of our text. I want to take it up under three headings:

- I. WHAT IT MEANS.
- II. HOW IT IS DONE.
- III. THE RESULT.

I. WHAT IT MEANS.

That is, What does it mean to "mortify the deeds of the body"?

Actually the Apostle Paul had been talking specifically about this since verse 2 of chapter 8, but it has been his subject from the beginning of chapter 6.

This is sanctification. This is holiness. This is what it means not to "live after the flesh," but to live "after the Spirit."

It is the realization in our experience of the truth of Rom. 8:2.

The "Therefore" of verse 12 shows that this is the consequence of that which Paul had been writing. It is the inevitable result of salvation, of being justified! We are no longer bound ("debtors") "to the flesh."

Now the fact that the Apostle Paul used such strong language did not mean (and it does not mean now) that we get beyond the place where it is possible to sin. Let me give you an

illustration of its meaning from a passage found right here in the book of Romans. See Rom. 4:19. Abraham's body was not actually dead, but his natural ability to father a child had abated. The physical organs were there, but they were powerless because of his age. The same was true of Sarah.

And so for us to "mortify our members" means, not that the capacity for sinning is removed, but that the sinful nature is rendered powerless so that it cannot produce what it otherwise would produce: sin. The possibility is still there, and it can be revived (as was the case with Abraham and Sarah), but it is the mortification that renders it powerless.

On Abraham, cf. also Heb. 11:12, " . . . and him as good as dead . . ."

So this means that one power is overcome by a greater power. Cf. Rom. 8:2.

But there are several other important facts that we learn from our text:

- 1) The mortifying of the deeds of the body is a mark of a true believer.
- 2) Mortification can only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit. This has been Paul's emphasis throughout the passage. This is really the reason that the Holy Spirit indwells us.
- 3) But there is something for us to do. Note: " . . . but if ye . . ." John Owen, speaking of the Holy Spirit, wrote: " . . . the Holy Spirit is the author of this work in us, so that although it is our duty, it is his grace and strength whereby it is performed . . ." (Vol. III, p. 547).

This shows the fallacy of those who teach that there is nothing for us to do, that we must simply "let go and let God . . ."

But there is more.

- 4) The whole emphasis throughout Romans 8 is that this is a work that is internal as well as being external. It only becomes external when it has its roots in our hearts.

And this shows the fallacy of those who try to mortify the flesh externally, but punishing the flesh, etc.

- 5) The verb which Paul used here is in the present tense indicating that this is a continual, life-long, work that we must do. It must be a daily way of life because the work of sanctification will never be completed until we are with the Lord. The goal of mortification is glorification!

But now we must consider

II. HOW IT IS DONE.

The first thing that we need to recognize is a fact that Paul has made clear throughout this whole section:

- A. This is a truth which applies only to those who know the Lord.

It is impossible for one who is not a true Christian to mortify the deeds of his flesh.

And the reason that it is impossible for a non-Christian is seen in the second point which I want to make, a point already stated:

- B. Mortification can only be accomplished "through the Spirit."

A non-Christian does not have the Holy Spirit, and so he cannot possibly obey the latter part of verse 13.

But the Christian does! However, the tragedy in so many Christian's lives is that they are either ignorant of this, or they strive against the flesh in their own way and in their own strength -- and so they fail!

Now, if it is only "through the Spirit," it follows that I must know how the Spirit works.

Two things are primarily important when we think of

- C. The working of the Holy Spirit.

1. He works through the Word.
2. He works by prayer -- in answer to prayer.

In prayer we call upon God for help. Owen shows especially from the Psalms that this means the bringing of our complaints to God, as well as our petitions. True prayer can only be "in the Spirit." Cf. Eph. 6:18; Jude 20.

But what about the Word? What have we learned from our study of Romans?

We have learned several things.

The first is that there are certain things that we need to know. This is the whole point in the early part of the Epistle where very little is said about what we are to do! E.g., look at Rom. 6:3, 6, 9 -- and there are many more examples. Inseparably linked with our ability

to mortify sin is our need to know certain things, in particular, about Christ, and especially in connection with His work on the Cross!

Have you spent much time, or any time at all, during this past week, meditating on Christ and His work on Calvary? What do you know about His sacrifice for you? Do you plead with God to give you greater understanding?

If not, then this is where you need to start! Knowledge always must precede the doing. As, e.g., in driving a car.

But then we do come to the practical aspect of holiness. And this takes me also to the Word.

What do I find over and over again in the Scriptures? I find that there are both positive and negative aspects to true obedience; that is, there are things that I must not do, and there are other things that I must do.

Cf. Rom. 6:13. Also remember Rom. 8:2. Cf. Peter's words in 1 Pet. 2:11, 12.

But, how is this possible? I am not strong enough to do either!

Here is the answer: I find that as I seek to know the Word, and to know the Lord, that the Holy Spirit is making some changes in me. I am growing. I am becoming stronger. My desires are being changed. He is working "in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). So that I am increasing not only in my desire to do the will of God, but in my ability to do His will. My life is being changed. I am staying away from tempting circumstances and people, and I find my greatest joy in doing the will of God.

And all of this brings me to my last point:

III. THE RESULT.

What is it? A holy life. While I know that I can sin, I realize also that I do not need to sin! I experience victory over sin, and I look forward with greater and greater anticipation to the day when I will be glorified.

— Concl: What, then, needs to be said by way of conclusion?

First, if you are not a Christian, but God has made you weary of your sin, and of its effects, then your first need is to believe in Christ for salvation. Deliverance is impossible unless

Christ is your Saviour.

But what about those of you who are saved? You do know the Lord, but your life is a life of defeat. You say, Is it possible for a Christian to be like I am?

Yes, it is -- or we would not have these instructions. If you do not desire a holy life, then you do have need to be concerned. But if you do, it is only because of what the Lord has done for you.

What do you need?

You need the Word, and you need prayer. But you need the Word and prayer under the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit. To use Paul's words -- "through the Spirit."

You read the Word, but are you learning anything? Are you increasing in the knowledge of Christ. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18. You pray, but is it really praying? Are you asking the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word, and to teach you how to pray?

If the mortification of our sins comes "through the Spirit," then we must not only know what the Holy Spirit uses, but we must use what He uses. Then the blessing will come. God stands by His Word.

May He make these truths a wonderful reality in our lives that we may enjoy our present deliverance in Christ.

SONS OF GOD
Romans 8:14-17

Intro: With these 4 verses of our text for today Paul was concluding what he had been saying about sanctification, and he was beginning to think about glorification. Remember the three aspects of our salvation which are taught in Romans:

- 1) Justification.
- 2) Sanctification.
- 3) Glorification. Cf. Rom. 8:17.

Justification is taught in Rom. 3:21-5:21. Sanctification is taught in Romans 6:1-8:17. Glorification is taught in Rom. 8:18-39. Justification is sometimes referred to as salvation in the past tense: "I was saved." Sanctification is salvation in the present tense: "I am being saved." Glorification is salvation in the future tense: "I shall be saved."

So we are still concerned with sanctification.

But remember, also, that the theme throughout Romans 8 as Paul concluded what he wanted to say about sanctification and then went on to speak of glorification, is the security of the believer in Christ.

Paul really joins together that which is taught today as the security of the believer in Christ and the perseverance of the saints. There are people who believe in the first, but reject the second. (Explain.)

There is a difference, however, between our text for this service and the earlier verses in Romans 8. Up to this point Paul has contrasted a believer with one who is not a believer, one, e.g., who is "after the Spirit," with one who is "after the flesh." But now in these 4 verses, 14-17, Paul was discussing only those who know the Lord, those who are true believers in Christ.

Before I seek to expound these verses, let me point out what Paul taught in them about us as believers.

He used four terms to describe a true Christian:

- 1) He is a son of God. Cf. vv. 14, 15. "Adoption" means sonship, or a son-placing. We are not adopted children, but true sons!
- 2) He is also a child of God. Cf. vv. 16, 17. This emphasizes the fact that we are born ones, that we have gotten into the family of God by birth, the new birth.

The writers of the NT uses these two terms to distinguish between our rights and privileges in the family of God as compared with how we got into the family.

Illustrate it with Prince Charles and the access he has to Buckingham Palace. He enters with great ceremony because he is a son; he became a son by birth. He was born of the Queen!

But, because the Christian is a son because he is a child, there are two other things that Paul said about him:

- 3) He is an heir of God. Cf. v. 17.
- 4) He is a joint-heir with Christ. Also in v. 17.

Then there is another thing that we need to notice that Paul emphasized again about one who truly believes in Christ. It is this: He has the Holy Spirit; he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Cf. v. 15.

Much insecurity among believers is due to their ignorance of this blessed truth. Knowledge of this truth contributes immensely to a believer's stability as a Christian. Those who are ignorant of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit are going to be unstable. To know it does not mean that we are always properly related to the Holy Spirit, but it does mean that we understand that He lives in us, and that he will never depart IF we are really saved.

(Review again John 14:16, 17; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.)

Having seen these truths about the child of God, let me now proceed to an examination of the text more in detail.

The subject of these 4 verses continues to be the work of the Holy Spirit in identifying a believer in Christ. This gives us further evidence as to how we can know that we are saved. It has to do with two works of the Spirit:

- 1) The leading of the Spirit (vv. 14, 15).
- 2) The witness of the Spirit (vv. 16, 17).

In other words, you can tell that you are a child of God because you are (1) led by the Spirit, and (2) because you have the witness of the Spirit.

Now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, let us seek to learn what the Apostle Paul meant by these two expressions.

I. THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT (Rom. 8:14, 15).

Do you want to know if you are really a Christian? You are if you are led by the Spirit. What does this mean?

Note first the tense of the verb. It is a present passive verb. This means that this leading is not something that you are doing for yourself; it is something that is being done for you -- in this case, by the Holy Spirit. And, being in the present tense, it means that this is something that is going on all of the time!

But now we need to ask: Just what does it mean that a child of God is "led" by the Spirit of God?

Godet (p. 265) has explained it like this: He wrote that it

"refers to the constant and effectual influence of the Holy Spirit in regulating the thoughts, feelings, and conduct of believers."

In other words, the Holy Spirit is going to be working in the life of every child of God constantly and effectually to affect

- (1) the way we think about things;
- (2) the way we feel about things;
- (3) the way we live.

This what it means to be "led" by the Holy Spirit.

Christians are just different from other people. They think differently. They feel differently. They live differently. This the reason that the world does not understand us. Cf. what John wrote in 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner . . ."

Let me illustrate:

- 1) Take Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Why were they willing to be thrown into the fiery furnace rather than to fall down and worship the image of King Nebuchadnezzar?

Because of the work of the Spirit in their hearts. He led them to think differently, to feel differently, to live differently.

- 2) Take Daniel. Why was he willing to be cast into a den of hungry lions rather than to give up praying to the God of heaven?

It is evidence that the Lord by His Spirit was leading him to do what he did. In a sense, Daniel could not help himself.

- 3) Take Peter and John in the NT. Why did they risk death rather than to stop their witnessing as they were commanded to do. Do you remember what they said? "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). They were impelled to speak. They could not stop. The Holy Spirit was at work in them.
- 4) Take Paul. Why did he say what he did to the Ephesian elders about going to Jerusalem when he knew that imprisonment and suffering awaited him there? "But none of these things move me . . ." (Acts 20:24).

It was because the Holy Spirit was leading him, and so he thought differently; he felt differently; he acted differently!

Even from his Roman prison he wrote to the Philippian church, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

What about you? Are there times when you feel especially like a square peg in a round hole? Do you feel as far as this world is concerned that you don't fit? Did you ever ask yourself, "Why do I want to please the Lord? Why is it that I don't want to live like I used to live, and like the

world lives? It is because, as a Christian, you are being led by the Spirit. Oh, there may be times that you will fail, and go back to the old ways, but if you are truly saved, the Holy Spirit will not let you be comfortable until you get back where you belong. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit.

Wherever you find such a person, you are in the presence of a child of God! Cf. Rom. 8:14.

But now let me cite two examples from Romans 8 to show you what it means to be led by the Spirit.

- A. To be "led by the Spirit of God" means that we have a different attitude toward sin.

See verses 12 and 13, Paul's statements which led up to our text.

If a person is a Christian, sin is going to bother him more than it ever did before! He is going to want to know how he can mortify sin! He is going to be grieved about the things in his life which are not pleasing to God. He is going to want to do the will of God as he finds it in the Scriptures.

But there is another thing in our text. Cf. v. 15.

- B. To be "led by the Spirit of God" means that we have a new relationship to God, and a new attitude toward Him.

Contrast verse 7 with verse 15. The old enmity and bondage and fear are gone; now that we are sons, "we cry, Abba, Father." This means that "we cry" out both in recognition and in dependence upon Him.

"Abba" is the Aramaic equivalent of our words, Dada, or Papa -- words which a child can speak before he has his teeth! It is a word expressing recognition and dependence.

Why does a Christian think and feel and live like he does in connection both with sin and with God? Because he is being irresistibly led by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit Who makes him think and feel and live like he does!

But let us move on to the other point that I want to make from our text. It has to do with

II. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT (Rom. 8:16, 17).

A true child of God is one who has the witness of the Spirit.

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A witness to what? "That we are the children of God." That is, that we have been born of God.

Now this is not something that we try to produce; it is a work of the Holy Spirit which will be there. And it is "with our spirit," meaning that it is internal and real.

This is assurance of our salvation.

Being a child of God means that we are "heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" -- which means that we are to receive what He has received: glorification. The path to glory for Him was suffering in the will of God, and it is the same for us!

How does the Holy Spirit bear witness "with our spirit, that we are the children of God"?

- A. Through our sufferings for Christ's sake. Cf. Phil. 1:29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf . . ."
- B. Through our hope of glory.

This also is in our text in verse 17.

Why do we talk of heaven, and look forward to being in heaven? Why do we want the Lord to come? It is the work of the Spirit by which He gives added witness that we are the Lord's!

But I must add one more thing, not mentioned here specifically in our text, but nevertheless a vital part of the teaching of Scripture. We know about the witness of the Spirit

- C. Through the Word of God.

There are many things that I could say here, but let me mention just **two** which are related to our text. One is specifically stated, however, in 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.
He that love not his brother abideth in death.

Did you notice that Paul wrote in the plural in our text, and not in the singular? He did not say just "I" and "me" and "mine," but "ye" and "our" and "we."

You see, our joy is not just that we are going to be with the Lord individually, but that we are going to be with the Lord together! We love each other now. We love to be with each other now. And we are going to love each other even more, yes, perfectly, when we are all in heaven.

This is one of the ways the Spirit bears witness "with our spirit, that we are the child of God." If you are a child of God, this will delight you. If you are not, nothing could be more distasteful to you.

A good test for the reality of your faith is to ask yourself, "Who are the people that I want to be with the most? Do I love the fellowship of the saints, or do I feel more comfortable with the people of the world?"

The other witness has to do with Christ! Note: " . . . "joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together," i.e., with Christ.

If you love Christ, if you look forward to being with Him, if you long to share His glory, then you have the Spirit's witness with your spirit that you are a child of God!

Concl: The Lord is getting us ready for heaven. We may have trials now because of our faith in Christ, but we are headed for glory, for heaven, to be with God and with Christ.

Lloyd-Jones quoted this paraphrase in dealing with verse 17:

High is the rank we now possess,
But higher we shall rise;
Though what we shall hereafter be
Is hid from mortal eyes.

Our souls, we know, when He appears
Shall bear His image bright;
For all His glory, full disclosed,
Shall open in our sight.

A hope so great and so divine
May trials well endure,
And purge the soul from sense and sin,
As Christ Himself is pure.

(Quoted in The Sons of God, p. 438,
from Scottish Paraphrases, 1781.)

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT
Romans 8:16, 17

Intro: Last week I did not get as far in Romans 8 as I had intended to get, and so I would like today to complete what I left unfinished last Lord's Day.

My text is Romans 8:16, 17. (Read.)

Let us make sure that we understand what Paul has said.

"The Spirit itself" -- (Comment on the personality of the Holy Spirit, and why the KJV reads "itself" instead of Himself.)

"Itself," or Himself, emphasizes the fact that this is a work which the Holy Spirit Himself does for every child of God. He does not delegate it to angels. He does not use one believer to do it for another. "The Spirit" Himself "beareth witness . . ."

Note the verb, "beareth witness" (one word in the Greek). It indicates that this witness of the Spirit is not something that the Holy Spirit does once, and never repeats, but it indicates that this is a witness that is going on continuously! Day after day He bears witness that we are God's children.

N. B.: Here is a most important statement. Anything that any member of the Godhead does has to be important. None of them would waste His time. Take time to contemplate the works of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Think of the works that each One has done once-for-all. And then think of the works that They do constantly. Every single one of them, i.e., the works of the Godhead, has to be extremely important!

So give special thought to this. Day after day, with every true child of God, the Holy Spirit is bearing witness that we are the children of God! Paul has indicated something for us here which is of infinite importance. It is not only important to be a child of God, but it is important to know it!

Note another thing about this witness: It is twofold. Note the words, "with our spirit." This not only means to our spirit, or to us, but along with my spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit bears witness, and so do I!

Relate this to Deut. 19:15, and to Paul's quotation of it in 2 Cor. 13:1b, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

So, if the Holy Spirit bears witness to this, I will too! And this confirms it. If the Holy Spirit is not bearing witness to this in my life, then I need to question it. I will surely know.

Please do not jump to conclusions that you are not a child of God

until I get through with my message because it is important for us to know how the Spirit bears this testimony. Let me say here that I am not talking about some unusual, spectacular experience. I am talking about a work of the Spirit that is going on constantly, not spectacular, but still very obvious and very convincing. But we will come to that in a few minutes.

What does the Holy Spirit bear witness to?

" . . . that we are the children of God."

Let these words dwell in your thoughts: "We are the children of God." This is true of all of us equally. One believer is not any more or less a child of God than any other member of God's family. And this is what we "are" NOW! I do not wait until I get to heaven before I am a child of God, or before I know; I am right now!

A child of God! How did I become a child of God?

One time Spurgeon preached a sermon in which he took up Eph. 2:3 and these verses which we are considering today. The former passage speaks of the fact that once we were "by nature the children of wrath." Now we are "the children of God." How did we change?

Every true Christian knows the answer to that question: John 1: 11-13. (Quote.) We were born into God's family, "born . . . of God." I am not His adopted child; I am His child by birth, by the new birth!

This means that I have His life.

This means that I am going to be like He is.

This means that right now, as His child, I am the object of His love, His care, His teaching, His protection, His provision, His guiding, His chastening. See Spurgeon, Vol. 56, p. 247.

But this is not all -- " . . . if children, then heirs"!

That is the only condition: "if children." He does not say that you have to be a child of God so long to be an heir. He does not even say that you always have to be an obedient child, or a faithful child, or a devout child, or a zealous child. Paul just said, "And if children, then heirs."

But look!

"Heirs of God"! Who among us would claim to have fully understood these words? This is what we are because we are His children. "Heirs of God"!

And just as we are "children" equally, so we are "heirs" equally. This is something which is never true about inheritances in this life. If one heir gets something, the others do not get it. But, in the family of God, all get all! Your inheritance does not deprive me of anything; neither does my inheritance deprive you of anything. I have what you have, and you have what I have" We all have all!

There are many NT passages which speak of our inheritance, but let me just refer to two: Eph. 1:11, 12; 1 Peter 1:3, 4. (See also Gal. 3:29; 4:7; Col. 3:23, 24; Tit. 3:7; Heb. 1:14; 6:17; 9:15; Jas. 2:5.)

Our inheritance is certain. This is not always true about human wills. Things can happen so that an heir will not receive anything! But that is not the case with God's heirs.

But there is another thing I want you to see in this expression, "heirs of God." It means that I am not only an heir of what God has, but of what God is! God Himself is my inheritance! His righteousness, His love, His power, His faithfulness, His grace -- all that is God's, is mine, and it is yours, too!

Spurgeon commented on this with these words:

The words are simple enough for even a child to utter, but only God fully understands what they mean, and we shall go on learning throughout eternity all that is included in those three short syllables. To have God himself as our inheritance, to be able to say, 'The Lord is my portion,' is a thousand heavens in one (Vol. 56, p. 249).

Even David in OT times knew this truth. See Psalms 16:5, 6,
The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in
pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.
See also Psalm 119:57a, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: . . ."

But the crowning glory of our inheritance is that we share it "with Christ." We are not only "heirs of God," but also "joint-heirs with Christ." We share it now; we will share it even more fully when ~~we are~~ with Him in heaven.

Now how the Scriptures speak of our being "with Christ": Col. 3:1, 3, 4; 2:12; Eph. 2:5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:17; (John 14:3;) Luke 23:43.

It is no wonder that the Apostle John said what he did in 1 John 3:1, 2, "Behold, what manner of love . . ."

Now I have told you what the witness of the Spirit is, but I want also to tell you how that witness comes to us. There are

six things to be said, all coming from our text. Note them carefully, and come back to them often.

I. BY THE WORD OF GOD.

And I mean this in two ways:

A. By our attitude toward the Word.

A person who is not a Christian may respect the Word of God, but it is not his delight. He does not have to have it daily. It does not settle anything for him. But a Christian loves it. He has to have it. And its statements are his final authority.

B. By the truths of the Word.

After all, isn't this what we have been doing **just now**? We have been learning some things from the Scriptures, and the Spirit of God has been witnessing to us while we have been learning that this is really the truth!

But, along with the Word, we have the Spirit's witness in other ways.

II. BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD.

In our natural state we were at enmity with God; now we love Him. Romans 5:5 says that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." And so "we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). We delight in this relationship. We love to call Him, "Father."

Closely related to this is another feature of the Spirit's witness that we are the children of God.

III. BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRIST.

We love Him, too. We love to hear His Name. We love to be told that we are "joint-heirs with Christ." We know that we would never have become what we are except for Christ. We glorify Him for His death and for His resurrection which is our salvation. Once we, too, would have said, "Away with Him, crucify Him," but now we say, "Lord, to whom shall we go. Thou hast the words of eternal life." We are overjoyed with the last two verses of Romans 8. (Read.)

But notice also a fourth aspect of the Spirit's witness in our text:

IV. BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Have you noticed that the Apostle has written of "ye" and

"we" in vv. 15-17? That doesn't bother you, does it -- that we are all going to share the same inheritance?. No! There is a special bond between those of us who are "the children of God," and we want other believers to have what we have! Cf. 1 John 3:14.

There is so much that could be said about these points that I am making, but we will save that for another time. Let me point out two more aspects of the Spirit's witness that we are God's children.

V. BY OUR SUFFERINGS.

Notice: "if so be that we suffer with Him."

Have you suffered for Christ? Has it cost you anything to be a Christian? Have you lost any friends because you are a child of God? Do you get left out of things because of your faith? Have you ever been ridiculed because you love the Lord? Do some people consider you foolish because you seek to please God?

Did you notice what Paul said? "We suffer with Him," that is, with Christ! The world is not going to be any better to us than it was to Him! We will never suffer like He did, but we will suffer. Some of you are separated from other members of your families because of Christ.

By far, the majority of Scriptures which speak of suffering (and there lots of them), speak of suffering because of our faith in Christ Jesus -- not because of sicknesses and troubles which come upon all people, saved or not! Our Lord said,

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you (John 15:18).

Finally,

VI. BY OUR HOPE.

What is your hope for the future? Is it linked with the politicians who are seeking office now, or some of the issues that are coming before us? Do you feel that if some people are elected, all will be lost, or that if others are not elected, all will be lost? What is your hope?

We Christians are criticized for this, but let me say it in spite of the criticism. We have no real hope except in Christ, and in His coming, and in the glory that will follow. Notice what Paul wrote: " . . . if so be that we suffer with Him (Christ), that we may be also glorified together."

Do not be mistaken about what I am saying. We should be con-

cerned about our government and the issues that are brought before us. And we should vote and seek to know God's will about these issues. BUT we must not set our hopes upon these things. This world is passing away. It is under the judgment of God. We are here, not to save the world, but to witness to the world, knowing that God is going to save His elect. Our hope is in heaven.

We are coming to that passage in Hebrews where the writer said of the Hebrew Christians to whom he was writing,

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward (Heb. 12:34, 35).

Note: "in yourselves" -- the witness of the Spirit!

Concl: If you are a Christian, you have this sixfold witness, and you need to rejoice in God.

If you do not delight in the Word, in God, in Christ; if you do not love the Lord's people; if you are not suffering in some way because of your faith; and if your hope is set on this world, then you need to turn to Christ for salvation. Turn to Him now. There is no other way to God, no other hope that will endure throughout the endless ages of eternity.

THE GLORY TO COME
Romans 8:18-25

Text: Romans 8:18.

Intro: We come now in our consideration of the book of Romans to the final, grand objective of our salvation. It is all summed up in one word: glorification. Remember that our salvation consists of three great works of God:

- 1) The work of justification.
- 2) The work of sanctification.
- 3) The work of glorification.

Justification means that God declares the person righteous who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of the work that Christ did when He died on the Cross, and then rose again.

Sanctification is that work of God through the Holy Spirit whereby the child of God is progressively set apart from sin unto God to be holy and so to live in a holy manner. The means which the Holy Spirit employs in this work are the Word of God and prayer. Glorification is the completion of the work of sanctification. It is yet future for every child of God. That is the reason that Paul wrote in our text that it is "the glory which shall be revealed in us."

It will help us to understand glorification is we think, first of all, of the word, glory. This is the Bible word which speaks of the perfect, holy nature of God. But it also speaks of God manifested, God revealed. When the Tabernacle was completed and set up in the days of Moses, we read that this is what happened:

And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:35).

In the verse just before this we read:

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

This is the equivalent of saying that the Lord filled the holy of holies!

The Apostle John, in writing the Gospel which bears his name, said in chapter 1, verse 14,

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John was undoubtedly referring to the way he and James and Peter saw the Lord in the mount of transfiguration! They saw the glorious manifestation of His Deity. This is what "glory" is: God revealed. When Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," he meant to teach us that because of sin we fall short of God, of being like God.

Now, if we know these things, then when we talk about glorification, we know that it has something to do with being like God!

And it does! Glorification does not just mean that we are going to be in heaven, but glorification points to what we will be when we are in heaven. We will be like Christ, and, being like Christ, we will be like God. We will be glorified! And being like Christ means not only as Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said, that "the whole man will be completely and entirely delivered from every harmful effect of sin, every tarnishing, polluting effect of sin" (The Final Perseverance of the Saints, p. 2), but it means that we will never be able to sin again! This is glorification--complete likeness to Christ. It does not mean that we will be Deity. There will always be a difference between Christ and His sheep. But we will be as much like Christ as we can be, by the grace of God, short of Deity itself!

Cf. Rom. 8:28-30.

Many NT passages speak of this glory. Let me give you just a couple of them:

- 1) 2 Thess. 2:13, 14,
But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) 2 Tim. 2:10,
Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

So the goal of our salvation is our glorification.

But now let us turn to our text.

Paul actually spoke of three things in this verse. One has to do with the present. Another has to do with the future. And then we have his evaluation of the two when he had compared them with each other.

- 1) The present: "the sufferings of this present time."
- 2) The future: "the glory which shall be revealed in us."
- 3) The evaluation, or conclusion, that Paul had made: they "are not worthy to be compared" because of the fact that the glory will more than compensate for the sufferings.

Let us look at each of these.

I. THE SUFFERINGS.

These are not unrelated to the glory. They precede the glory and prepare us for the glory.

What kind of sufferings is the Apostle referring to? They

are sufferings we have because we are the children of God. They are sufferings which prove that we are the children of God. See Rom. 8:17b. They can range all of the way from people avoiding us to the extreme of physical death. It includes everything from verbal abuse and ridicule to bodily harm. It is the experience of what the Lord meant when He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

Note Paul's words in Rom. 8:35, 36.

Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians in Phil. 1:29. Cf. also his words to Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:10-12. Note also what he said about his own death in 2 Tim. 4:6.

Much, much more could be said, but just read your Bible carefully and you will see how much it has to say about the sufferings of a believer--"the sufferings of this present time."

II. THE GLORY.

We know what the glory will be, but we do not know, we cannot now fully comprehend what it will be like, and so Paul wrote that it "shall be revealed in us." The Apostle John said that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). It is too wonderful to be explained in words. But it is coming, and it is absolutely certain.

Note these passages:

- 1) 1 Pet. 4:12, 13; 5:1, 10.
- 2) 2 Cor. 4:17, 18; 5:1.

Even now we can see the foreshadowings of this glory. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18.

"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Thus we are confronted with these two great truths which seem so opposed to each other, and yet which are intimately related--the first leading to the second.

From this we now must note

III. PAUL'S EVALUATION.

We see this in the verb which stands emphatically as the first word in the verse in the Greek text: "I reckon . . .".

This is a word which means that Paul had arrived at this conclusion after a long and deep and thorough consideration

of both "the sufferings of this present time" and "the glory which shall be revealed in us," noting the relationship between the two.

We see from Paul's use of this verb that we will never really enjoy the truth nor profit from the truth if we do not give much time to thinking about the truth! This is meditation.

Why did he feel that it was impossible to compare these two? As he weighed one against the other, as he did so in the light of his own experience seeking to understand the one as well as the other, why did he feel that the glory was well-worth the sufferings.

Let me suggest four answers which come to us from the Word of God.

A. Because of the way he had grown through his sufferings.

In his sufferings he had learned not only about his own frailty, but about his own sinfulness. He had learned in his sufferings to pray. He had learned not to trust in himself, nor in others, but in God! Cf. 2 Cor. 1:9.

B. Because of the way in which he had experienced the goodness, the faithfulness, the sufficiency of God, in his trials.

Cf. 2 Cor. 1:3, 4; 12:7-10.

C. Because the first is so temporary; the latter is so permanent.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

Finally,

D. Because of the alternative.

Paul had faced this question: Would you rather have pleasure now and suffering forever, or would you rather suffer now and have glory forever? Do you want your heaven now, and hell hereafter, or do you want these sufferings now and the glory of heaven throughout all eternity?

Notice the choice that Moses made. Cf. Heb. 11:24-26.

Would you choose to escape trouble in this world if it cost you heaven? Remember our Lord's question, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Concl: Are you suffering reproach because you are a Christian?

Then Peter would say as he did in 1 Pet. 4:14, "Happy are ye."

Has it cost you something in your family relationships to be a Christian and to hold to the doctrines of grace? Are there people who think that you are foolish because you believe in the total depravity of man, or in the eternal, unconditional election of some sinners by God unto salvation? Is it worth going through what we have gone through just for the sake of a few doctrines?

Oh, yes, it is well worth it all! Why? Because whatever we may have to experience by way of suffering for the sake of our Lord will be more than made up by THE GLORY TO COME.

Let this encourage us. Let this cause us to press on toward the goal. There is glory ahead--certain, surpassing, unrevealed glory, a glory that is far too wonderful for us to be able to comprehend until we get there. We accept it by faith now, but then we shall know what Paul understood better than we do, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

SAVED BY HOPE
Romans 8:18-25

Intro: In our Scripture reading the Apostle Paul has linked together two very important Bible words: "glory" and "hope."

You see the first word in Rom. 8:18.

In verse 21 we have the expression, "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

"Hope" is mentioned in verse 20.

And then we have it 5 times in the last two verses of our text: vv. 24, 25.

Let me distinguish between the two words.

"Glory," or glorification, describes what our condition will be after Christ comes. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote vv. 28-30 of this chapter, Romans 8.

It is also what John had in mind when he wrote 1 John 3:2,
Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and . . .

Glorification is salvation completed. Glorification is the goal of our sanctification. One writer has expressed it this way:

Sanctification is glory working in embryo; glory is sanctification come to the birth and manifested (Alford, IV, p. 45).

"Hope," on the other hand, expresses our anticipation of "glory." It means that we look upon our future glorification as a most certain prospect. We are "SAVED BY HOPE" because we know that our eventual glorification was provided for us and guaranteed to us by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! We anticipate it with full assurance because we also have God's unfailing and unchanging promise that this is to be!

We are not now glorified, but, in the words of our text, in v. 19, we have this "earnest expectation," and so we wait for it.

See the verb, to wait for (the same word in each case), not only in v. 19, but also in vv. 23, and v. 25.

Add to this the word "groan" which means a great longing for deliverance from that which gives present misery to what will eventually be complete happiness. See the word "groan" in vv. 22, 23, and then in the verse which follows our text, v. 26.

Paul had previously mentioned "hope" in Rom. 4:18 and in Rom. 5:2, 4, 5. This word expressed Abraham's attitude toward the promise of God; we are to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

See also Tit. 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, . . .," and 1 Thess. 2:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, . . ."

Now, with these definitions of "glory" and "hope" in mind, let us turn to an examination of the whole text of verses 18 through 25.

I. THE TEXT EXAMINED.

There are clearly three parts to these verses, 18 through 25:

- 1) The statement of a truth, in v. 18.
- 2) What glory will mean to all of creation, in vv. 19-22.
- 3) What glory will mean to the child of God, in vv. 23-25.

A. The statement of a truth (Rom. 8:18).

Here you have the greatest possible contrast that there could be--the contrast between "the sufferings of this present time" and "the glory that shall be revealed in us."

The first has to do with the present; the second, with the future.

This "glory" is a "glory which shall be revealed in us." There is going to be an unveiling of what a Christian really is, and it is going to be "in us" because it is going to have to do with "what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2).

When Paul spoke of "sufferings" he undoubtedly was thinking of the special troubles that believers have in this world, but he was also including all things that come upon us because we are in a world like this: all of the sufferings,

the trials,
the afflictions,
the sins,
the foolish mistakes,
the trials,
the temptation,
the failures,
the disappointments,
the sorrows,
the death--

all of these are to be laid aside, and they will never be our again.

"Glory," on the other hand, will mean absolute perfection, uninterrupted peace, complete satisfaction and joy.

To state it another way, it will mean

no more sin,
no more disease,
no more death,
no more sorrow,
no more tears,
no more failures,
no more loss,

no more enemies,
 no more war,
 no more hatred,
 no more injuries,
 no more pain,
 no more hunger,
 no more danger,
 no more fear,
 no more persecution,
 no more alienation,
 no more criticism,
 no more disappointments,
 no more handicaps,
 no more loneliness,
 no more weariness,
 no more ignorance,
 no more dissatisfaction,
 no more crime,
 no more of anything that can be included in the
 expression, "the sufferings of this present time."
 They will all be gone forever! "Glory" will have come.

From this great statement of verse 18, the Apostle Paul went on to show how this glory will mean to creation--in verses 19 through 22.

B. The expectation of creation (Rom. 8:19-22).

Paul has mentioned the following 4 things in these 4 verses:

1. What creation awaits (v. 19).
2. What it is now (v. 20). It is "vanity."

See the book of Ecclesiastes. Creation always is striving after that which it cannot achieve. Dreams vanish into thin air. We never achieve what we want to, but we are always trying, only to be disappointed again and again.

3. The certainty of its hope (v. 21).
4. The present situation (v. 22).

There is a groaning and a travailing like a woman seeking to give birth to a child, but unable to deliver. This is the utmost of agony.

We see illustrations of this every day that we live--in the world, even among the unregenerate. Let me illustrate:

- 1) The hope for world peace--the United nations--the death of Breshnev with its hope of improved east-west relations.
- 2) Hope for the economy--business--jobs--a better life.
- 3) War--the memorial for Vietnam veterans--the war to end wars.
- 4) Sickness--hope of recovery--prospect of conquering disease.
- 5) Sports--expectation of winning--if defeated, the anticipation of future victories, whether of a team or of an individual.
- 6) Products: automobiles (economy, safety, years of service)--an electric mixer advertized as better-than-ever--Tylenol.
- 7) Even in weather.
- 8) Space exploration.

Everywhere you turn you see all of creation groaning and and travailing "in pain together until now."

Why is it never realized?

What if I were to make a trip to Washington, D. C. to see the President to explain to him why we do not have world peace, what we do not have peace at home, why we have crime, broken homes, why our goals are never reached, and I were to say to him because none of these things can ever be until the sons of God are manifested, are GLORIFIED--what would he think of me?

He would probably call for the secret service to show me out! But this is exactly what the Word of God teaches. Men may not know it, but verses 19-22 tell us why men and all of creation continue to hope, and yet why that hope has never been realized, and never will be realized until God's people are glorified!

But this brings us to the third part of our text:

- C. The expectation of believers--of the people of God (Rom. 8:23-25).

This is what glory will mean to us!

Note **three** things in these 3 verses:

1. What we have: "the firstfruits of the Spirit."
(Explain, relating this to what we now have because of the Spirit.)
2. What we await: "the adoption . . . the redemption of the body."

3. How we await it: in hope--confidently, expectantly, patiently, continuously, but in present misery.

Even we are never what we want to be, and strive to be. But we know that the time is coming when our hopes will be fully realized--and more!

The 3x that Paul used the verb, to wait for, he pictured the person who lives in keen anticipation that he is about to see something that he has been waiting to see. This is especially the idea in the words, "the earnest expectation," used in verse 19.

This is the meaning of this wonderful passage. Nothing could possibly be more relevant to the whole world scene today. Creation longs for this. Believers long for this. The Holy Spirit longs for this.

What, then, are some of the lessons of this passage?

II. THE LESSONS.

There are two many for us to consider.

- A. The far-reaching and dreadful effects of sin.
- B. The vanity, or futility, of life as it is now.
- C. The key to world blessing, the solution of all problems.
- D. The evidence of the sovereignty of God, and the grace of God. See verse 20. God Himself has placed this hope in every human heart. He could have done otherwise when sin was committed, but He gave hope instead!
- E. The certainty of a glorious outcome for creation and for those who know the Lord.

But this is the main lesson:

- F. Are we true to our hope--waiting expectantly each day with patience for the coming of the Lord and the glory that will follow?

Or have we been deceived into believing that men's hopes will be realized through men, through the Democrats or through the Republicans, through science or education, through social reform or through a rising standard of living?

Concl: There is only one hope--it is in the Lord. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). All else will fail; In Christ alone is the true hope. (Appeal to those who are without Christ.)

A GREAT CAUSE FOR THANKSGIVING
Romans 8:26, 27

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:26-39.

Intro: The custom in the United States of setting aside a day to give thanks to God goes back to the early 1600's when the Plymouth colonists paused to give thanks to God that some of them were still alive after their first dreadful winter in the New World. About half of them were killed by the severe weather during that first year.

This custom spread gradually throughout the New England colonies. On November 26, 1789 President George Washington issued a general proclamation that the nation set aside a day to give thanks to God.

For many years there was no specific Thanksgiving Day, but New York in 1830 took the lead in setting aside a particular day. Other states followed. Virginia was the first southern state to proclaim an annual Thanksgiving Day--in 1855.

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November as a day to give thanksgiving and praise to God. He did the same thing the following year. Except for a brief time during Franklin Roosevelt's administration when he tried to move it ahead one week, the last Thursday of Thanksgiving has been our national Thanksgiving Day. It was officially set by Congress in the early 1940's that the last Thursday of November would be a national holiday in which the nation would pause to give God thanks for His blessings.

Today it has largely become just a national holiday. From the general character of our national life it would seem that most Americans do not even pause long enough on Thanksgiving Day even to go through the formality of prayer before they have their Thanksgiving Day meal!

For those of us who are Christians, every day should be Thanksgiving Day! Cf. 1 Thess. 5:18, "In everything give thanks . . ." Also, Phil. 4:6, "Be careful for nothing . . ."

And, while we need to thank the Lord for our families, for our homes, for our food, for our health, for God's protection over our lives, and for many other temporal blessings, we who know the Lord have other reasons for which to give our praise to the Lord! We need to praise the Lord on Thanksgiving Day and on every other day for the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ! Cf. Eph. 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual . . ." Add to that, 2 Cor. 1:3, 4 and 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

This brings me to my text for this service.

Among the most precious blessings that God has given to His people is the ministry of the Holy Spirit!

From the beginning of Romans 8 Paul wrote many things about the Holy Spirit. We have been considering them as we have been going through the chapter, but let me review them for you and let them become the subjects of our thanksgiving to God!

In verse 9 Paul taught that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (He did this also in Rom. 5:5.)

In verse 2 he mentioned that it has been through the Holy Spirit that we are set free "from the law of sin and death."

In verse 4 he pointed out that we live, or "walk," "after the Spirit."

Consequently it is not surprising that in verse 10 we learn that for us "the Spirit is life." Paul followed in verse 11 by saying that the Holy Spirit would have part in our resurrection!

In verse 14, we are "led by the Spirit of God." In verse 15 we see that the Spirit of God has brought us into the family of God. In verse 16 we are told that "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

And then in verse 23 we learn that all that we have now by and in the Holy Spirit are only "the firstfruits of the Spirit"--and that there is much more to come.

Our text for today tells us another great fact about the ministry of the Holy Spirit (perhaps the most amazing of all): that the Holy Spirit prays for us! Most of us know that the Lord Jesus prays for us (as we will see in verse 34), but this is not something that is generally talked about concerning the Holy Spirit. In fact, this is the only place in the Bible that this truth is mentioned!

I do not agree with many commentators who would link this passage with Eph. 6:18 and Jude 20. There is no doubt but that the Holy Spirit helps us and teaches us that we may pray more effectively. But that is another truth altogether. Here, as verse 27 makes very clear, "He maketh intercession for the saints," He prays for us just as the Lord Jesus prays for us! To understand this gives us an entirely different interpretation of verse 26.

If we think that this passage teaches that the Holy Spirit prays through us, then we make these groanings our groanings, and that is one thing that has led to all of the fanaticism which often results from what some people teach from this verse.

So it is important that we understand what Paul was teaching in these two verses.

First we have

I. THE INTERCESSORY WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is simply stated as a truth of Scripture: " . . . the Spirit itself (Himself) maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." This is in the latter part of verse 26.

The same truth is stated in the latter part of verse 27: " . . . he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The Greek text says simply, "according . . . to God"!

In both verses Paul used the present tense of the verbs to indicate that this is something that is continually going on.

But what are these "groanings which cannot be uttered"?

Some very sincere people take this as meaning that we should groan--and so they do, in a most ridiculous manner. Paul was not saying here that we groan; he was saying that the Spirit groans. And he was saying that these groans cannot be uttered, which means that they cannot be uttered by us even as groans! I hope you will understand this!

What does this groaning by the Spirit mean?

It has to be understood in harmony with the two times before this that groanings have been mentioned. See vv. 22 and 23.

Groaning speaks of a longing for something that has not yet been realized, but which is most certainly coming!

What does the Spirit long for which leads Him to pray for us?

This question can be answered if we look at a second point arising out of our text:

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PURPOSE--in praying for us: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."

The Greek says, "our infirmity" (singular)--speaking of the general state of believers NOW! We are weakness personified.

This is the reason that we are not what we ought to be, and this is the reason that we never seem to be able to do in a spiritual way all that we know we need to do.

This is what sin has done to us--made us weak!

This is the reason that we could not save ourselves. See

Rom. 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength . . ." See also Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do . . ."

This is the reason that we are not more faithful in reading our Bibles. This is the reason that we do not pray as we should. This is why we fail in our obedience to the Word of God, the reason that we are not as holy as we should be. We are weak!

The Holy Spirit knows all of this. He knows what we are destined to be. He longs to see that work of glorification fully accomplished--and so He helps us in our infirmity by praying for us!

None of us would be what we are today spiritually without the prayers of the Holy Spirit.

Some in the past history of the Church have taken this to mean that the Holy Spirit is not God. But that is foolish. By the same reasoning we could say that the Lord Jesus is not God because He prays to His Father for us! But it would be foolish to say that, too! What this does mean is that the work of our glorification is so far beyond us that both the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are continuously engaged in prayer for us that we will be glorified. Nothing could possibly give greater emphasis to the absolute importance of prayer!

But now let me move on to a third point.

III. THE NEED FOR THE SPIRIT'S PRAYERS.

It is stated very clearly in the words, " . . . for we know not what we should pray for as we ought . . ."

Our weaknesses cause us to pray, but the problem is that we often pray the wrong way and for the wrong things when we do pray. Our basic weakness is our ignorance.

Instead of seeing that our weakness remains in order to make us realize our dependence upon God, we pray to be delivered from our weakness! And that is not God's will at all!

Let me cite an outstanding example of this from Scripture, and from one of the greatest men in the Bible: the Apostle Paul. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10.

All of this does not mean that we should not pray regarding our sicknesses and our needs. Our Lord certainly did in the Garden of Gethsemane! Certainly we can and should pray about every need that we have. But do not expect to be delivered from all weaknesses here and now; they are designed

to contribute to our glorification! And so Paul gloried in those which the Lord did not take away!

But there is one more point I want to make from the text.

IV. THE CERTAINTY OF THE ANSWER.

That is, the certainty that the prayers of the Holy Spirit for us will be answered.

The fulness and burden of His prayers could never be expressed by us because they go beyond human wisdom and human language--so great is the glory that is to come.

But the important thing is that God knows exactly what is on the heart of the Holy Spirit because "he maketh intercession for the saints," for you and for me, lit., "according . . . to God"--that is, according to the will of God, according to the eternal purpose of God.

Thomas Manton once said,

" . . . all our mistakes come by reckoning by time, and not by eternity; but looking to eternity sets us right again" (Complete Works, Vol. 12, p. 140).

Concl: And it is through the prayers of the Holy Spirit that our praying undergoes a change. We begin to thank God for our infirmities, not because we like them, but because of what God is accomplishing for our glorification through them.

So, what should we conclude from these two wonderful verses?

Two things:

- 1) Assurance--assurance concerning our salvation and its ultimate completion.

Just as it is impossible to think that the prayers of the Lord Jesus would not be answered, so we affirm the same regarding the prayers of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would never pray for anything that was not according to the eternal plan and purpose of God. We may, but He never will! So we have assurance that God will answer His prayers.

- 2) Thanksgiving.

As you praise the Lord this week, and from now until you get to heaven, never fail to be thankful for the Holy Spirit--that He prays for you with a burden that you and I can not now understand, but which is being answered every day as we learn to be more dependent upon the Lord, and as we anticipate with great joy that time when we will be glorified in the likeness of our beloved Saviour.

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD
Romans 8:28

#39

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:28-39.

Intro: This is one of the great verses of Scripture. It is a favorite of most Christians. It is one of those verses which you commit to memory just by hearing it over and over again.

It is a favorite because it has given comfort to the Lord's people again and again in times of trial and in times of perplexity.

But it is a verse which many of the Lord's people have not looked at in detail. If they did, they might not like it as well as they have in the past. The reason: It is one of the strong verses in Scripture to declare the sovereignty of God in salvation. Somehow we like to know that God is sovereign in our circumstances, in our trials, but we do not want Him to be so sovereign in our salvation.

Notice how the verse ends: " . . . to them who are the called according to his purpose."

This verse brings in the subject of the divine election of those who are to be saved. If you have any question about that, read verses 29 and 30. It speaks of God's sovereign, efficacious grace--His call, His effectual call. We have learned in our study of Romans that sinners will not come to God of their own will. Their wills are in bondage to their sinful natures. The only way that men will come is because they are "called" by God to come, and then He changes their hearts and enables them to come.

It is amazing how many expositors of the Scripture will recognize that there is an elect people, that they are called of God, and that this is according to God's eternal plan in salvation, "according to his purpose," and then they will turn around and speak of "free will," as though ultimately man has the say-so about his salvation. This is usually followed by some statement to the effect that we cannot harmonize these two truths, but that they are both in Scripture.

Now the problem with that is that they are not both in Scripture. Election is, to be sure. But "free will" is not! "Free will" does not just mean that people must believe in order to be saved. Obviously the Word of God teaches the necessity of faith for salvation. But "free will" is the doctrine that man has the capacity in himself to receive Christ, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that salvation is all of God. See Eph. 2:8, 9.

Salvation is entirely by the grace of God. The Bible teaches that even our faith comes from God. See Romans 10:17 and Hebrews 12:2.

It is true that no one will be saved who does not believe in Christ, but men believe in Christ because "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

We "love God" because He has "called" us "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (See 1 Cor. 1:9.)

The next time you hear someone quote this verse, or the next time you see it on the wall of someone's home, ask them if they really believe what it says! And then point out to them what it means that we are "the called according to his purpose."

But let us look at this verse more in detail. The more you know about this verse, the greater it becomes.

I do not always use alliteration in giving you the various points I am making in my message. To do that all of the time obviously leads to stretching a point now and then. But I want to use it today because it is suggested by the text itself. And so there are five words I want to give you, all beginning with the letter "c," to describe what the Lord has given us in this verse. Here they are:

- 1) The Connection--speaking of the connection between this verse and the rest of the chapter. I could also use the word, context.
- 2) The Certainty expressed in the verse: "And we know . . ."
- 3) The Comprehensiveness of what the verse says. It speaks of "all things."
- 4) The Consequence, or the result: that God works all things "together for good." I say that God does it because some MSS read, "And we know that God worketh all things . . ." But even in the way it is stated here, there is no doubt but that Paul was talking about what God does! See the context.
- 5) The Confines, or limits. Paul was not talking about everybody. He was talking about "them that love God, . . . them who are the called according to his purpose."

First, then, let us consider

I. THE CONNECTION.

Obviously it is a part of its context. Every verse in Scripture is. It belongs to what precedes it, and to what follows it.

What was Paul doing in this chapter?

He was teaching both sanctification and glorification, and

giving us every encouragement to believe that we are being sanctified, and that we will be glorified! He has mentioned one thing after another for our encouragement.

I will not point out all that he has had to say by way of encouragement. But just notice that he has been writing about "sufferings" and "infirmities," and in the verses just before our text he had been speaking about the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Now, and for a few of the following verses, he wrote about what God has done and is doing, and then he completed the chapter by talking about the intercession and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So verse 28 is to be used the way most Christians use it--as a means of encouragement and comfort. It is a part of many things that the Apostle Paul wrote out in this chapter to strengthen our faith as we face God's purpose in salvation, but have to consider them in the light of our "sufferings" and "infirmities." But more about these later.

II. THE CERTAINTY.

Paul wrote, "And we know" It is not something that we just think. Nor is it something that we just hope will be the case. "We know" so!

How do "we know"?

A. Because Paul said so.

He was not speaking here on his own, but by the Holy Spirit. This is a revelation from God.

B. Because of all of the other things that Paul said in this chapter.

Romans 8:28 does not stand alone. It is a part of a great revelation from God which has many parts to it.

C. Because of all of the promises which God has given to His people, promises which we find throughout the Word of God.

E.g., Isa. 46:10b, 11b,

. . . My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. . . yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

D. Because of the experience of the saints both in and out of Scripture.

The biographies in Scripture of the men and women of God

all prove this. Think of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, John, and a host of others too numerous to mention!

There are many things that we do not know. Cf. Prov. 23:1. Also Jas. 4:14, 15,

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

We do not know when the Lord will come. Cf. Matt. 24:42. In fact, Paul taught that we do not know anything the way we ought to. See 1 Cor. 8:2.

But "we know" this, along with a lot of other things that are revealed for us in Scripture. We know that the Son of God has come. We know whom we have believed. We know that, if our earthly house be dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We know that we shall be like Christ, for we shall see Him as He is. "And we know . . ."

But let us go on.

III. THE COMPREHENSIVENESS.

"And we know that all things work together for good . . ."

But what is included in the words, "all things"?

Many say that it includes everything but sin!

If what they say is true, then much of the comfort of this verse is removed.

But let me ask some questions here:

- 1) Did Joseph's brothers sin when they sold Joseph as a slave? Years later they believed that they did. And Joseph believed that they did. He told them, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it for good . . ."
- 2) Did men sin against our Lord when they crucified Him? How could anyone deny that they did? Was the outcome "good"? Cf. Peter's preaching in Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15, 26.

Other examples could be cited, but these certainly prove that sins are not an exception. "All" of our circumstances, including our sins and other people's sins, our sufferings, our infirmities--God takes them all and works them "together for good."

Please note that Paul does not say that sin is good. Neither does he say that suffering is good. Nor does he say that our infirmities are good. But he does say that God takes things that are bad in themselves and He works them together with everything else in our lives so that the result is "good"!

But this leads to my fourth point:

IV. THE CONSEQUENCE.

What is the result? What is the "good" to which Paul was referring?

It certainly does not mean that I always get what I wanted, or even what I expected. Nor does it mean that for you. It is very important that we know what this "good" is!

What is it?

Well, the way to answer that is by looking at the verse and at its context. What has the Apostle Paul been teaching?

He has been teaching God's "purpose" in salvation. He has been teaching sanctification and glorification. So things are "good" when they contribute to those purposes--present and future! They would be bad if they could hinder them.

But, you see, God works in "all things" to guarantee that everything in our lives is made to serve this divine "purpose." Things are "good" when they contribute to my sanctification. Things are "good" when they make me more holy. Things are "good" when they are used to move me in the direction of my ultimate glorification.

What precious truth this is!

But there is one more point:

V. THE CONFINES.

To whom and about whom did the Apostle write these things? Are there any limitations?

Yes! It applies only "to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

A. "To them that love God."

Do you "love God"? If you do, a miracle has taken place in our life because Romans 8:7 taught us that all of us were enemies of God. Romans 5:10 said the same thing.

If you "love God," do you know how you have come to love Him?

The Apostle John has told us. Cf. 1 John 4:19,

We love him, because he first loved us.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:5 that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

This is a term which describes one who is a true Christian. He loves God because God loved him, God chose him, God called him, and God saved him. If you and I love God, it is all to God's glory that we do because He has caused us to love Him; we have not decided to do this on our own.

But the other expression is this:

B. "To them who are the called according to his purpose."

Remember: We have not come to Christ on our own. We came to Him because He called us. And when Christ calls a sinner, that sinner comes!

And He has called us "according to his purpose." It is His purpose for us to be with Him in heaven, to be also with the Lord Jesus. But more than that, it is His purpose that we become like the Lord Jesus, even to having a body like the glorious resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And God's purpose cannot fail! It cannot fail to include all whom He has chosen and called, nor can it fail to produce the results which He has planned for those whom He has chosen and called and saved!

Concl: Oh, how wonderful it is to know that God is sovereign, that He has a plan and a purpose in saving men, a plan that is so specific that it even includes the choice of the very people who are to be saved, as well as what their eternal condition will be!

And, because God is God, because He is sovereign, because He never begins to do anything which He cannot carry out completely, we know that all of His purposes for His people will ultimately be carried out.

But should we not hesitate to talk to everyone about election? Why should we be? The Lord did. The doctrine of election will never keep the elect from Christ. In fact, this is the truth that the Holy Spirit will use to encourage the elect to believe in order that they may be saved.

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN OF SALVATION
Romans 8:28-30

Intro: Usually when we hear about God's plan of salvation, we are told only what man must do in order to be saved! We are told that man must repent, that he must believe, and that he must publicly confess Christ. This is all true except for the fact that the public confession is often limited to a way that man has devised of asking people to go forward in a service to confess Christ. And many times that is all of the confession there is. The confession that is spoken of in the Word of God is a life-long confession, not a confession limited to a single act of responding to a public invitation. Such an act is not known in Scripture.

But what we fail to realize in many, many instances is that God's plan of salvation primarily has to do with an eternal plan which God laid out in detail before the foundation of the world! It is not a plan that He is deciding upon as time goes on, nor is it a plan that is determined by the willingness of men to "accept Christ." It is a great, eternal plan, decided upon and laid out by God in eternity past, so that what we see in time that has to do with the true work of salvation is actually the carrying out, by God's grace, of that plan!

There has always been that which is called God's work which is not God's work, but man, often very sincerely, seeking to do as much as he can for God, but which has little or nothing to do with what God has revealed about His work in the Word of God.

If you talk to the majority of professing Christians today and ask them what they believe is the work of the Church in the world they will tell you that God has sent us out into the world to reach as many people as we can, to see as many people saved as we can possibly reach, and that God will help us accomplish that task. But their idea is that not even God has any ordained plan as to who is going to be saved, and who is not going to be saved, but that this is going to be the result of our work. If we do our work well, lots of people will be saved. If we do not do our work well, then many people who could have been saved will not be saved, and it will be all our fault.

May I say very plainly today, This is not God's plan of salvation! And I want to prove this statement from the Word of God in this service today, if the Lord will enable me to do so. Many of you already understand this. I have prayed in preparing for this service that many more of you will be brought by the Lord to understand it.

So let us turn to Romans 8:28-30.

The first point that I want to make from this passage is this:

I. THE PLAN ORIGINATED WITH GOD -- IN ETERNITY PAST!

Verse 28 tells us that God does have a purpose. He has a plan.

That plan is not that He wants to save as many as will let Him save them, or as many as we can help Him save. We are not even the main workers in the carrying out of this plan; HE IS! He obviously intends to use us, but the "success" of the plan is not dependent upon us!

Notice carefully the reading of these three verses, remembering that it is GOD who works all things together for good! (Read the verses and point out that no less than 8x do we have the pronoun, "he," used in verses 29 and 30!)

So if we really want to know what the work of salvation is, it is the work of God. As I have said, He may and does use His people, but the work is really His work and He ordained it before creation itself.

See also Ephesians 1:3, 4 and 2 Timothy 1:8, 9.

It is very, very important to understand this.

This was even true in OT times. Cf. Isaiah 55:8-11.

But there is a second truth that we need to see in our text. It is this:

II. GOD'S PLAN HAS TO DO WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE.

You cannot get any other idea from these verses.

In other words, God has not left it to chance as to who is going to be saved. He has not left it up to us to see how many we can reach and convince that they ought to become Christians. No, God's plan includes even the choice of the very people who are going to be saved!

Again -- let me read these verses to you, and notice for yourself that what I am saying is true. (Read.)

There are some who are "the called according to his purpose"; there are others who are not. There are some whom God has foreknown; there are others who are not. There are some whom He has justified, and whom He will justify; there are others who will never be justified. There are some who will be glorified; there are others who will not be.

All of the terms which Paul has used here apply to the same people, but the point is that God has included in His eternal

the fact that certain ones of His choosing are going to be saved, and that there are others who will not be saved.

I realize that this raises a lot of questions, but the important thing for us in seeking to understand salvation is to learn what God has revealed for us in Scripture. Paul did not have to say this unless it were true, but he said it because it is true. He was speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

So we can say that men choose Christ only because in eternity past they were chosen personally by Christ, and appointed for salvation.

This is the meaning of the expression, "For whom he did foreknow . . ."

Foreknowledge does not mean just that God knows ahead of time who is going to be saved, and who is not! Of course He knows that. It does not mean that He knew who would accept Christ, and so He chose them on that basis. In the first place, this would mean that ultimately the decision as to those who are going to be saved would rest with man, not with God. But this would mean that no one would be saved since Paul has taught us in Romans 3:11 what David originally said in two different Psalms--that "there is none that seeketh after God."

No, foreknowledge means that there was a decision made by God in eternity past as to the very people who would be saved. He made some specific choices. He elected many to be saved. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:2, God's people are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God."

Now, in spite of what the Word teaches, there are many today who deny that election has anything to do with salvation. Or, they might say that we are the elect after we are saved, but not before. Some manifest that they do not believe in the teaching of Scripture regarding the depravity of man by saying that God chose on the basis of what He knew we would do.

But none of these ideas do justice to the Word of God. We must believe that God has chosen His elect ones to be saved, not because of what they are, nor even on the basis of what God knew they would become. It is a sovereign choice of God not based upon any special qualifications which He saw in them, but solely by His grace.

But let us go on to a third truth which we find in our text.

III. GOD'S PLAN HAS A DISTINCTIVE PURPOSE.

This is stated in verse 29.

The chosen ones are predestinated "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he (the Son) might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Here is another word that does not sit well with many people: PREDESTINATION.

But it is a good Bible word. You cannot reject predestination without rejecting a part of Scripture.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:11 that we are "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and then he tells us what that "will" is in verse 12: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

To predestine means to determine something beforehand, ahead of time, to decree, to ordain that something will most certainly be!

Foreknowledge and predestination take all of the doubt or uncertainty out of what God is doing. When the Word of God says that believers are predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son," it means that we will be "conformed to the image of his Son," the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be "like him" (1 John 3:2). "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:49). "But we all, with open face beholding . . ." (2 Cor. 3:18). We shall even have a body "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

There is no doubt about all of this. Christ is the "first-born," and we are going to be like He is. This is just as certain as was the death of Christ Who was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"--the same words that we have in Romans 8. (For the quotation, cf. Acts 2:23.)

One other thing from our text before I point out two or three practical uses of this wonderful truth regarding our salvation:

IV. GOD'S PLAN IS BEING CARRIED OUT BY GOD HIMSELF.

Those whom He foreknew, whom He elected to be saved, those whom He predestinated "to be conformed to the image of his Son," are the very ones He is calling, justifying, and whom He is glorifying!

All five of the major verbs in verses 29 and 30 are aurists, showing completed action to bring out the certainty of what

God has determined to do regarding the salvation of sinners. God is doing what He planned to do. No one stands in His way. His purposes are certain. God has not left the outcome to rebellious sinners, nor even to His people who more often than not, fail in the task of evangelism, but He is working through His people to accomplish in every detail all that He planned to do from eternity past.

Concl: What is God's purpose in the revelation of these truths --truths which we would never know if they were not in the Word of God?

Let me suggest four.

First, they are here because God expects us to know them and to believe them.

Ask God to open your heart to His truth. Ask Him to enable you to set aside your own thoughts and to receive His thoughts, to recognize His ways.

Second, for our assurance.

Never think that God will fail in anything that He has determined shall be done! He will do in time what He planned to do from all eternity.

Third, that we may recognize the greatness of our God -- and then give Him the praise, the worship, which rightfully and only belongs to HIM!

Finally, to encourage and guide us in the work of evangelism and of world missions (which are actually one and the same).

Are we to go into all the world preaching the Gospel to every creature? Absolutely. That is what the Word says.

Is it necessary for people to believe in Christ in order to be saved? Without any doubt whatsoever. Don't be deceived by the teaching of some that God will let some into heaven even if they have never heard of Christ. The Word is very clear on this point. It is Christ, or hell.

But, you see, when we know GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN OF SALVATION, we know that He is the One Who ~~determines~~ when and where and how His Word is going to be used. We are to preach it, and we do so knowing that He will use it to bring His chosen ones to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Solomon said long ago, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecc. 11:6).

WHAT SHALL WE THEN SAY?
Romans 8:31-34

Intro: Paul loved to use questions in his teaching. This was one result of his training under the Rabbis. He wanted to make people think. He wanted them to see the consequences of his teaching. Sometimes he would use it to bring out the wrong idea which he wanted to oppose, as in Romans 6:1. At other times, as here in Romans 8:31, he would use it to bring out some point which he did not want his readers to miss!

"What shall we say then . . . ?" is used 7 times in Romans. Cf. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30.

One man has said that this is "'a debater's phrase'" (quoted of Morison by Robertson, IV, 361). It means that Paul was not afraid for his teaching to be examined by anyone. It also means that all doctrine is interrelated with other doctrines, and that doctrine holds both practical implications as well as comfort and encouragement. Here, in Romans 8:31, it is the latter--encouragement and assurance. Because he goes on to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We need to understand this question also.

The English translation seems to leave some question about this. But that is not the case from what we can see as a result of Paul's teaching, nor was it his intention for us to get this idea from the grammar.

Paul uses this expression having declared that it is true that God is "for us." We will see this from Romans 8 in just a moment, and it can be proved from the rest of the Bible as well. There is no doubt but that God is "for us," and so, in a case like this, the word "if" can and should be translated, since! Therefore, it is perfectly proper to translate this question, Since God be for us, or on our side, who can be against us?

Spurgeon once said (Vol. 10, p. 410),

There is not a single line in the great book which is against the Christian. . . Jehovah has not a gingle thought, nor wish, nor word, nor look, against any of the blood-bought ones; they are all safe in him. God the Father cannot be against us.

Thus we come to our first point:

I. THE PRIMARY ANSWER.

It is this: God is "for us"; He is on our side.

Satan, our adversary, who is also the Devil, our accuser, is

against us. But what does it matter? God is "for us." There are times when circumstances are against us. But what does that matter? God is "for us." People often turn against us. But what does that matter if the Lord is "for us"? The world is certainly against us, but that is cancelled by the fact that God is "for us"!

If God is your Friend, it matters little who your enemies are!

There are even times when we by our behavior work against ourselves! But even this is overruled by the wonderful truth that God is "for us."

Oh, that this truth could get into our hearts! Pray that the Lord will show you in your own life what it means.

The emphasis here is on "God"--"If God be for us, who can be against us?" It may seem that all that I have mentioned (and more) is against us, but that is simply not true. To impress this upon your heart, read the rest of our text noting particularly what Paul has to say about "God"! (Read vv. 31-34.)

~~Cf. also Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.~~

At times it might even seem that God is against us--he doesn't appear to be doing anything! Prayer is not being answered (as far as we can see). But the Word still stands!

Now let us notice secondly,

II. THE PROOF.

We should be able to prove this from the text and context as well as from the rest of Scripture.

A. From the text and context.

1. Because God chose us--with all that goes with that wonderful truth.

Cf. Rom. 8:28-30. See also v. 33.

2. Because God gave His Son for us.

See Rom. 8:32, 34.

There can be no greater proof than this. Cf. Rom. 5:8. Note the particular force to these statement. Christ was "delivered . . . up for us all."

3. Because God has declared us justified.

See Rom. 8:33, 34.

Remember that we have a courtroom scene in Romans.

God is the Judge. Our case is before Him. He has justified us! Who can possibly reverse His decision?

But there is another great point:

4. Because God has accepted the intercession of Christ.

Cf. Rom. 8:34.

In vv. 26, 27 Paul mentioned the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit; now he speaks of the intercessory work of Christ!

But the proof that God is "for us" is not limited to Romans 8. It can be found throughout the Word of God--in both the NT and the OT.

B. From other Scripture passages.

The whole Bible actually stands as a united testimony of the fact that God is "for us," so we can only select a few.

1. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.
2. Hebrews 13:5, 6, where Psalm 118:6 is quoted.
3. 2 Timothy 4:17, 18.
4. A Christmas text: Matt. 1:23, which is a quotation of Isa. 7:14,
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear
a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel.
5. God's promise to Jacob in Gen. 28:15.

Cf. also His word to Moses in Ex. 33:14-16; His Word to Joshua in Joshua 1:5.

6. Samuel's words in 1 Sam. 12:20-22.
7. Psalm 46.
8. Isaiah 41:10.
9. Psalm 56:9-11.

The evidence is endless. It runs throughout all of the Word of God.

But let us go back to Paul's question again: "What shall we then say to these things?" What practical effects should this truth, that God is "for us," have upon our lives?

III. THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS.

Again, there seems to be no limit as to what could be said on this point. But let me point out three things which seems to be involved in what Paul is teaching in this chapter.

A. It gives assurance of our salvation.

God has never promised that our lives would be free from adversity. In fact, this is one of the great proofs of salvation--even the chastening of the Lord.

Cf. Heb. 12:7, 8,

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

What is the meaning of the word, bastard? It means that you are not a real son, not genuine, illegitimate. The person who can cause trouble without getting into trouble, the person who seems to get away with causing all kinds of difficulty in the church, is a person who needs to be fearful about the genuineness of his relationship with God. He may not be what he thinks he is: a child of God!

But the true child of God can take great comfort from the truth which is supported by all of Scripture--that God is "for" him!

B. It gives peace in present circumstances.

Whatever else, or whoever else, may seem to be against us, we can be sure that it does not include God! He is always on our side.

Cf. Phil. 4:6, 7.

C. It gives comfort as to the outcome of all things.

Cf. Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Jude 24, 25. Our believing does not make these true. They are true whether we believe them or not. But our faith makes it possible for us to enter into the truths, and to enjoy them.

Concl: All I have been saying is only for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He your Saviour? If not, then this is the reason that you have no peace--no peace about God, nor about your circumstances, nor about the outcome. These belong only to those who are the Lord's. Cf. Rom. 8:1 and 6.

GOD'S GREAT LOVE IN CHRIST
Romans 8:35-39

Intro: Last Easter, which fell on the 11th of April, I spoke to you on the subject, The Resurrection of Christ in the Book of Romans. But there are so many references to the resurrection of Christ in Romans that I was not able to include all of them.

As Christmas approached, I began thinking that I might do the same concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. Have you ever looked for the passages in Romans which refer to the incarnation? There are not as many as we found referring to the resurrection of Christ.

Let me point out 4 of them:

- 1) Romans 1:3. Romans 9:5
- 2) Romans 10:6.
- 3) Romans 11:26.
- 4) Romans 15:12.

Clearly it was not Paul's purpose to teach the birth of Christ in the book of Romans, but the birth of Christ was basic to all that he taught, as we can see from his reference to it right at the beginning of the Epistle.

As I sought the leading of the Lord for this service, it occurred to me that there could hardly be a more appropriate passage than the 5 verses which we have come to at the end of Romans 8 -- verses which have to do with the love of God and the love of Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ would never have taken place if it were not for the love of God and the love of Christ! We could never say that Christ was born because men deserved for Him to come, nor even because they had asked for a Redeemer. No, the only possible explanation is for the coming, and for the death and resurrection of Christ, is the love of God. Cf. Rom. 5:8.

So this morning I want us to think of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and all that followed that advent, in the light of the love of God. Cf. Rom. 8:35 and 39.

First of all, from the verses which precede verse 35, let us look at

I. THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S LOVE.

A. God gave His Son. Cf. vv. 31, 32.

B. Christ came. All that He did after He came would have been impossible if He had not come, born of the virgin Mary.

And then look at all that is stated about Christ in v. 34:

- C. Christ died.
- D. Christ arose from the dead.
- E. Christ has been exalted to the Father's right hand, and there He intercedes for us.

So that, when Paul mentioned "the love of Christ" in v. 35, he had all of this in mind.

Refer again back to Romans 5:7, 8,

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us . . .

Now, having seen what Paul had in mind, let us look into the meaning of our text -- from v. 35 to v. 39.

II. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT.

We have three things here:

- 1) A question, in vv. 35, 36.
- 2) The answer, in v. 37.
- 3) A grand declaration, in vv. 38 and 39.

A. The question (Rom. 8:35, 36).

The problem here is separation from the love of God. Paul referred to it in v. 35; he came back to it in v. 39 (using the same word, "separate").

How can we reconcile the experiences of a believer with what the Word of God teaches about the love of Christ and of God? And especially when the OT seems to predict such experiences, as we see in v. 36 from Psa. 44:22.

Paul included 7 things in his question -- and all of them are things which we would do anything to avoid, if we could!

"Tribulation" is basically pressure of any kind.

Year ago I read a poem which was based upon Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 1:8 where he said that he and his co-workers were "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." This is what tribulation is. Here is the poem:

Pressed out of measure and pressed to all length,
Pressed so intensely it seems beyond strength;
Pressed in the body and pressed in the soul,
Pressed in the mind till the dark surges roll;

Pressure by foes and pressure by friends,
 Pressure on pressure till life nearly ends;
 Pressed into love the staff and the rod,
 Pressed into knowing no helper but God;
 Pressed into liberty where nothing clings,
 Pressed into faith for impossible things;
 Pressed into living a life in the Lord,
 Pressed into living a Christ-life outpoured.

Any pressure that is on us because we are Christians is "tribulation."

"Distress" is actually to be confined. It has been described as being in a place, like a cell, where you can "neither stand, walk, sit, nor lie" down (Trench, 204).

Both of these words are used in Rom. 2:9 of God's judgment upon those who do not know Him.

"Persecution" means that you are being pursued by your enemies; they will not leave you alone. It may be any kind of persecution--physical, or verbal, etc.

"Famine" means that you are hungry; you do not have enough to eat.

"Nakedness" is to be without proper clothing.

"Peril" is to be in danger because your life is in jeopardy. It speaks of the risks that a Christian faces because he is a Christian.

"Sword" speaks not only of death, but of violent death (A & G, 497). Cf. John the Baptist (Mark 6:21-28) and James (Acts 12:2).

Paul had faced all of these.

NOW THE QUESTION IS THIS: DID THESE THINGS MEAN THAT THEY (OR WE) HAD BEEN SO FAR REMOVED FROM GOD AND HIS LOVE THAT IT WAS JUST LIKE GOD DID NOT LOVE US AT ALL?

B. The answer (Rom. 8:37).

"Nay" = No; not at all!

Without excluding one of the seven things that he had mentioned (or anything else like them), Paul declared that "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

What does this mean?

Rom. 8:37 is another way of saying what Paul had already said in Rom. 8:28!

A & G (p. 849) translate it, "We are winning a most glorious victory.

In speaking of the seven things in v. 35, Charles Hodge wrote in his commentary on Romans,

. . . they are not only deprived of all power to do us harm, they minister to our good, they swell the glory of our victory (p. 291).

Cf. Phil. 4:13; 1:12 ff.; 2 Cor. 2:14.

We see this truth illustrated in the life of Joseph.

We see it preeminently illustrated in the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instead of being defeated by our troubles, we see that they are made to serve God's purpose for us! And, therefore, they become special occasions in which God again shows His love for us!

This is true for us today at this very moment!

— All of this leads in verses 38 and 39 to

III. A GRAND DECLARATION (Rom. 8:38, 39).

Paul now speaks in the singular whereas he had been speaking in the plural: "For I . . .

Here Paul mentioned 10 things with "powers" coming at the end of v. 38 in many MSS.

"Persuaded" = to stand convinced (Robertson, IV, 379).

Paul did not have the slightest doubt about what he was going to say. Cf. 2 Tim. 1:12, " . . . and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which . . ." This certainty was with him to his death!

"Death" -- the worst that can happen.

"Life," which is sometimes worse than "death."

"Nor angels" -- who often administer God's judgments.

"Nor principalities, nor powers" -- the first word being the same as that which Paul used in Eph. 6:12, the second one different, but both in both cases referring to demons.

"Nor things present, nor things to come" -- thus encompassing all of time present and future, anything that is going on now, or anything that can possibly happen in the future!

"Nor height, nor depth," which seems to point to the heavens and the earth. It is interesting to link this with our present space exploration and all of the speculations that we hear about what is going on out there!

And then, lest Paul had left anything out, he added, "nor any other creature" -- so as to include

- all of life and death,
- good angels and demons, and every creature of God, men and animals,
- all of time, present and future,
- all of creation.

Look where you will, and experience whatever may come, NOTHING AND NO ONE "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the same thing could be said about our love for God and for Christ?

What a declaration!

Bishop Moule has a delightful statement about the end of Romans 8:

So once more the divine music rolls itself out into the blessed Name (p. 241).

And then he refers to Rom. 4:24, 25; 5:21; 6:23; 7:25 -- the last verse, or verses, in each of the 4 preceding chapters. They all "roll out into the blessed Name."

But before we leave this passage, let me point out from it

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S LOVE (which are mentioned here).

A. Remember: It is God's love, a divine love.

It is not our love for Him, but His love for us, that Paul has been writing about.

Cf. 1 John 3:1.

B. It is a distinguishing love.

Paul has not been talking about everyone; he has been speaking of "us." Notice this esp. from v. 26 to the end of the chapter. It is God's special love for His elect, His chosen ones.

C. It is a binding love. Nothing is powerful enough to

"separate us" from Him. No one can pluck us out of His hand! Cf. John 10:28, 29.

D. It is a love which defies all.

Note the challenging question in v. 35, and then the grand declaration of faith in vv. 38, 39. God will take on all comers, anything that seems to be a threat to His love for His people.

E. It is a more-than-conquering love.

Anything that is opposed is made to be a friend, to help serve the purposes of God.

F. It is an assuring love: "For I am persuaded . . ."

G. It is a continuing love" -- "which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It had no beginning; it will never have an end. Cf. Jer. 33:3,

The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

— Concl: There is no greater height to which man can go than this.
To climb Mt. Everest in the Himalayas to almost 30,000
feet is nothing compared with the end of Romans 8!

Are you there? Is this the truth that has conquered your soul?

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,
O what a foretaste of glory divine . . .

Such joy and such confidence could never have been ours without Christ, and it would have been impossible if Christ had not come!

May this Christmas season be one in which we will be praying that God will enable us to worship Him as never before because of His love to us in Christ -- past, present, and future!

If you do not know the Lord, how can you stay away? Come to Him today. Believe on Him, and let Him teach you of His great, immeasurable, unfailing love.