

# **Romans: The Good News of God**

## **The Greatest Chapter in the Bible**

*Romans 8:1-39*

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September 14, 2008

# The Greatest Chapter in the Bible<sup>1</sup>

## Scripture

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said that for a preacher the greatest book of the Bible should be one that he is expounding at the moment.<sup>2</sup> I suppose that would be true for the chapter that he is expounding at the moment as well.

Today we come to a chapter that is arguably the greatest chapter in the Bible. An old German commentator named Philipp Jakob Spener said that if the Bible was a ring and the Book of Romans its precious stone, then Romans 8 would be “the sparkling point of the jewel.”<sup>3</sup> I agree with Spener.

Today, I would like to read the entire 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans. I would like to summarize the teaching of Romans 8 today before we begin to examine it in detail. So, let’s read Romans 8:1-39:

**<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the**

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<sup>1</sup> The material for this sermon is drawn from *Romans: The Reign of Grace, Romans 5:1-8:39*, vol. 2, 4 vols. by James Montgomery Boice (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 781-788.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: The Reign of Grace, Romans 5:1-8:39*, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 782.

<sup>3</sup> F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892), vol. 2, 56-57.

flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will

of God. <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

**“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:1-39)

## **Introduction**

Romans 8 is, as I have already said, arguably the greatest chapter in the entire Bible. Author Charles G. Trumbull summarized the thoughts of many in the following words:

The eighth [chapter] of Romans has become peculiarly precious to me, beginning with “no condemnation,” ending with “no separation,” and in between, “no defeat.” This wondrous chapter sets forth the gospel and plan of salvation; the life of freedom and victory; the hopelessness of the natural man and the righteousness

of the born again; the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body and blessed hope of Christ's return; the working together of all things for our good; every tense of the Christian life, past, present, and future; and the glorious, climactic song of triumph, no separation in time or eternity "from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>4</sup>

So, let us look at "The Greatest Chapter in the Bible."

## Lesson

It is not easy to outline Romans 8. The argument of the chapter is so carefully interwoven, with one thought following carefully upon another, that dividing it into sections seems inevitably to be more or less "arbitrary," as one commentator has said.<sup>5</sup> This probably explains the surprising variety of outlines that commentators give for Romans 8.

The Apostle Paul begins this great chapter saying, "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**" (8:1). Verse 1 is the theme of this entire chapter. Everything else that follows tells us why there is **now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. There are six reasons why there is **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**.

### I. No Condemnation from the Law (8:1-4)

The first reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because there is no condemnation from the law. We see this in verses 1-4.

The reason that there is no condemnation is because "**the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death**" (8:2).

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Epistle to the Romans*, part 1 of the printed radio messages (Philadelphia, PA: The Bible Study Hour, 1953), 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), footnote, 263. Original edition 1935.

Very few of us have a proper sense of what it is to be under the law's condemnation. But that is what the Scriptures teach us. We were justly under the condemnation of the law because of our guilt. We were condemned sinners, subject to God's outpoured wrath.

But then Jesus entered the world and died for us, bearing our guilt and the wrath of God in our place, so that there is now **“no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

The law could not save us. The law of God could only show us our guilt and condemn us. But what the law could not do, God did through his Son, Jesus Christ. Instead of condemning us, God condemned sin so that **“the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”** (8:4). This is the argument of verses 1-4.

## **II. Deliverance from Our Sinful Natures (8:5-14)**

The second reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because we have been delivered from our sinful natures.

The first deliverance (vv. 1-4) is from sin's *penalty*. The second deliverance (vv. 5-14) is from sin's *power* over us.

This section is extremely important if we consider them in terms of the weakness of the church of Jesus Christ today. These verses tell us that if we have been saved by Christ, then we have necessarily also been changed by him.

In other words, not only have we who have believed in Jesus Christ been justified, we have been regenerated as well. Therefore, if we are not living a new life in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, it is not simply that we are unfulfilled or defeated Christians. We are not Christians at all!

As we shall see, when we study this section in greater depth later, it is only those **“who are led by the Spirit of God”** who are in fact the **“sons of God”** (8:14). There are some people who are not living by the Spirit who need to consider the fact that they are

not truly Christians.

The flipside of this truth is that, if we are being **led by the Spirit of God**, we can be sure that it is the Spirit's work and that is another evidence that we are no longer under condemnation but have been saved forever.

### **III. Sons (and Daughters) of God (8:15-17)**

The third reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because we are now sons (and daughters) of God. We see this in verses 15-17.

The Holy Spirit does not merely change us, giving us a new nature and thus delivering us from our sinful former selves.

The Holy Spirit gives us a new standing before God! What a standing this is!

Before, we were slaves, wicked and condemned slaves at that. Now we have become God's daughters and sons, by which we cry, **"Abba! Father!"** (8:15), and confidently present our deepest questions, sharpest hurts, and most pressing needs to him.

### **IV. Hope of Future Glory (8:18-25)**

The fourth reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because there is the hope of future glory. We see this in verses 18-25.

Being a child of God means that we are also heirs of God with Jesus Christ, God's unique Son. All that he has we have, and all that he experienced we are also to experience in some measure. This includes his sufferings, as Paul said in verse 17: **"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."**

But this suggests a great comparison to Paul. Share in his sufferings? Yes. But also in his glory. **"For,"** Paul said, **"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth compar-**

**ing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (8:18).**

In these verses (8:18-25) Paul lifts the matter of our redemption to a cosmic level, asserting that the restoration of fallen men and women through the work of Christ is only one part of what God is doing in salvation. God is redeeming the creation that it experienced as a result of Adam’s fall too.

## **V. The Intercession of the Holy Spirit (8:26-27)**

The fifth reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus is because of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. We see this in verses 26-27.

Here is the marvelous truth: Paul teaches us that the Third Person of the Trinity is interceding with the First Person of the Trinity on our behalf!

This does not mean that the Father needs to be persuaded to change his mind toward us, which some imagine either Jesus or the Holy Spirit doing. It means, as Paul points out, that the Holy Spirit interprets our prayers aright so that they are presented to the Father **“according to the will of God” (8:27).**

Have you ever tried to pray about something and been confused, not knowing exactly what you should pray for? I know I have. In fact, I find that as I grow older in my Christian life I am less certain what I should pray for. When I was younger I had a more limited range of concerns and experience and saw only the limited dimensions of a situation. Now I see more, and the situations in life for which I pray seem increasingly complex.

In these situations it is good to know that, however I may pray, the Holy Spirit is constantly present to interpret my prayers correctly. Whatever I may think I desire, in the final analysis it is not my will but the will of God that I want done.

## **VI. The Purpose and Character of God (8:28-39)**

The sixth and final reason why there is no condemnation for



those who are in Christ Jesus is because of the purpose and character of God. We see this in verses 28-39.

This section is surely the greatest of all in Romans 8. Commentator John Stott has a wonderful way of handling this last section. He calls verses 28-39 “the invincible purpose of God” and divides the section into two parts, the first presenting “five undeniable affirmations” (vv. 28-30) and the second “five unanswerable questions” (vv. 31-39).

The five “undeniable affirmations” (vv. 28-30) are an unbreakable chain of five links. Each link points to something that God has done for us. They stress God’s sovereignty in our salvation. The links in this chain of God’s sovereign acts are: foreknowledge, predestination, effectual calling, justification, and glorification.

Concerning these “undeniable affirmations,” John Stott says, “This working together for good, God’s purpose in the salvation of sinners, is traced from its beginnings in his own mind to its culmination in eternal glory.”<sup>6</sup> These verses comprise one of the grandest statements in the entire Word of God.

The five “unanswerable questions” occur in verses 31-39:

1. Verse 31: **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”** Many are against us. Christians have many enemies. But the question is not, “Are they against us?” It is, “Can they be against us?” That is, can they prevail? The answer is, if God is for us, and he is, “Absolutely not!”
2. Verse 32: **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”** Without the gift of Christ, we might wonder if God will give us all things. But since he has given us Jesus, what can he possibly hold back from us? If God has given us the

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<sup>6</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5-8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 101.

greatest of all gifts, he will certainly give us lesser gifts as well.

3. Verse 33: **“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?”** Certainly there are many who could justly bring charges against us. But no charges stand against God’s own. Why? Because **it is God who justifies.**
4. Verse 34: **“Who is to condemn?”** No one, as long as Jesus has died and is even now in heaven making intercession for us.
5. Verse 35: **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”** In response to this question Paul brings out all possible separators he can think of: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or the sword. He acknowledges that Christians face trouble and death all day long. He reviews the sources from which such trouble might be imagined to come: death and life, angels and rulers, the present and the future, any powers whatever—height, depth, anything in the entire created order. But having reviewed it all and having placed it next to the eternal and invincible love of God, Paul concludes rightly that nothing will ever be able to separate us from the **“love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (8:39).

## Conclusion

Some years ago Philip Yancey wrote a book titled, *Disappointment with God*.<sup>7</sup> Yancey counsels struggling young Christians, all of whom are disappointed with God.

This is an interesting title for a book: *Disappointment with God*. But how can any Christian possibly be disappointed with God?

*Disappointment with God?* When he sent Jesus Christ to die for us so that we might escape his just wrath and condemnation?

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1988).

*Disappointment with God?* When he sent the Holy Spirit to free us from our own sinful and debilitating natures and join us to Christ?

*Disappointment with God?* When he has made us his very own sons and daughters, with all the privileges that come from that?

*Disappointment with God?* When he has drawn us into the great cosmic drama of redemption, in which all creation even has a part?

*Disappointment with God?* When the Spirit intercedes for us, conforming our ignorant and incomplete prayers to the good, pleasing, and acceptable will of God?

*Disappointment with God?* When he has set in motion an invincible chain of saving actions, beginning with his affectionate choice of us in eternity past, proceeding through his predestination of us to be saved from sin and conformed to the image of his own blessed Son, his effectual calling of us to faith in Jesus as the Savior, and justification, and ending with glorification in which all the blessed purposes of God toward us are fulfilled?

*Disappointment with God?* When he has fixed such a lasting love upon us that nothing in all creation can separate us from it?

*Disappointment with God?*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what are we thinking of? Or is it that we are not thinking? Or thinking only of ourselves? Perhaps our disappointment (if we are) means only that we are unhappy because God has not done exactly what we wanted him to do when we wanted him to do it, regardless of the fact that he has a much better plan for us and is actually working it out day by day, and will until the end of time.

The only sure cure for our improper disappointment with God is getting our eyes off ourselves and entirely onto God, who has done these great things for us.

The best way I know how to do this is by a careful study of Romans 8, which is “the greatest chapter in the Bible.” Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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**PRAAYER:**

From Ray Ortlund's, *A Passion for God*:

Almighty God and merciful Father, infinite in grace and sovereign in majesty, that you would trouble yourself to provide so fully for us, to ensure that our joy in Christ would not, could not, be jeopardized by anything at all, however evil or bizarre, that you would care that much to design our salvation so securely and infallibly, that you would pay so much in the Son to get so little in us, and that you would not only do so but also tell us that you have done so, enabling us to enjoy the security of your unchanging love—we worship you in wonder. It is all by your grace and all to your glory. We worship you now, blessed God. And we will worship you forever.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.