

5-8

ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #1

5:1-11



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 5:1-11

In Romans 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity of the gospel (no one is righteous, both Jew and Gentile are under God's wrath) and the power of the gospel (we are declared righteous through faith in Christ Jesus). In Romans 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain the implications of the gospel – i.e., what it is to live as a person who is justified by faith. In this week's passage, Paul explains that one of the main implications of being justified by faith is *assurance* – because of Christ's atoning work on our behalf, we can be *confident* that we will be saved in the future. This assurance of hope underpins us, and informs our experience of suffering in the present.

5:1-2

The *therefore* at the beginning of verse 1 reminds us that Paul is now beginning to spell out the implications of everything we've just covered in Romans 1-4 - that through faith in Jesus we are declared righteous before God, we are justified. And having been justified by faith, the present implications are that we have *peace with God* and have *access by faith into his grace*. Through faith in Jesus, we are no longer under God's judgement, but *presently* have peace with him and are under his favour.

Yet as great as these implications are, the accent of this passage is on the *future* implications of our justification - *And we boast in the hope of the glory of God*. As those who had exchanged the glory of God for idols (1:23) and fallen short of God's glory (3:23), we were no longer able to fully enjoy nor reflect God's glory. Yet because of our justification by faith, we have the solid future hope that we will one day be fully restored that we might behold and reflect God's glory as were created to.

5:3-4

This future hope is so great, that verses 3-4 show that even suffering cannot detract from it, in fact suffering only serves to amplify our hope.

Though slightly obscured in the NIV, the underlying word translated as 'boast' in verse 2, is the same word used to describe our attitude to suffering in verse 3 ('glory'). In other words, just as we boast/glory/rejoice in the hope of the gospel, so too should we boast/glory/rejoice in our sufferings. Our hope is so indestructible, that not even suffering can take away our boasting in it. *In fact*, these verses tell us that our suffering only serves to strengthen our hope. It does so in two ways -

Firstly, *suffering produces perseverance* or endurance. In other words, in suffering we learn how to cope under pressure. In times of great pressure, our grip and our gaze shifts. We lean not on ourselves, but grip onto God for strength to get through. We start looking and longing not for the temporary, our gaze lifts off the temporary and onto the eternal. Suffering strengthens hope. Yet *secondly* and additionally, as we persevere, our Godly character is refined which in turn produces hope. As we see God sustain, transform, mature and grow us in Christlikeness, even through the difficult periods of life, we realise that God has started a work in us that he will finish (Philippians 1:6). When we understand this, we will learn to 'boast' or 'glory' in our sufferings.

5:5-11

Verses 5-11 explain the grounds upon which we can be *certain* of this hope.

Firstly, we can be confident of this hope because *God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us* (v 5). The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to see, know and trust God's love for us in Christ and be certain of his loving promises. There may be times when we doubt God's love, there may be times when we feel uncertain, but it is the Holy Spirit alone who enables us to have even a flicker of confidence of the love of God for us in Christ.

Secondly, verses 6-8 underscore that this subjective experience of the Holy Spirit is grounded in the objective reality of the cross – Jesus' death for sinners is proof positive, and the fountain head, of God's love for us. The Holy Spirit helps us to see, believe and receive God's love poured out for us at the cross.

Thirdly, verses 9-11, anchor our future hope in our present justification – if we as God's *enemies* received the gift of reconciliation in the *present*, how much more as God's *friends* can we expect salvation in the *future*!

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some of the best things about being a Christian?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 5:1-2

2. How does Paul recap the argument of Romans 1-4 in these verses?
3. What would most people think '*peace with God*' is? What does Paul mean by this phrase?
4. What does it mean to 'boast' in the hope of the glory of God? And why is this kind of boasting okay? (cf. 3:27-31)¹

Read Romans 5:3-4

5. How should these verses inform our response to suffering in our lives?

Read Romans 5:5-11

6. Where should we look to be confident in God's love for us?
7. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us know and understand the love of God? (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11-12 - *For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*¹² *What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*)
8. In light of these verses, what encouragement or help would you give to a Christian who felt worried or uncertain about whether they will go to heaven?

TAKEAWAY

9. How often do you allow yourself the time and opportunity to 'boast' (NIV) or 'rejoice' (ESV) in your future hope (v 2) and ultimately in God himself (v 11)? What are some practical steps you might take this week to relish our God and Saviour and the incredible blessings he has bestowed on us *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

¹ Questions 3-4 adapted from St Helen's Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn: Romans*, p 104.

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ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #2

5:12-21



OVERVIEW – ROMANS 5:12-21

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its implications – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. Last week (Rom 5:1-11), Paul spelled out one of the great implications of the gospel – the assurance of eternal salvation we have in Christ. This week, Paul explains how this could be so, how we can have confidence that we *really* have been justified through faith in Christ despite the pervasive realities of sin and death in the world around us. In so doing, he also spells out a truly cosmic implication of the gospel – that *in Christ*, God has formed a new humanity.

5:12-14

Paul does this by first outlining the universal devastation caused by sin – it came through Adam, and has resulted in physical and spiritual death for all who share Adam’s humanity (v 12, cf. Gen 2:17). The thought commenced by Paul in verse 12 is not completed until verses 18-19. Here we learn that death has come to all because all have become implicated in Adam’s sin – ‘*one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people...through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners.*’

Like a prime minister might represent us in matters of foreign policy (e.g. declaring war), so too does Adam stand as the representative head of humanity. His act of hostility toward God (Gen 3) has placed us all at enmity with God. And as those who share Adam’s humanity, we have inherited this alienation from God. And from this alienation springs our own sin. We therefore cannot simply cry victim and point the finger at Adam, we too are gravely culpable. As we earlier discovered in Romans 3:23 – *for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*. For more on what it means for Adam to be our representative head, see the appendix below.

This explains why death reigned in the world prior to God’s giving of the Law through Moses (v 13-14). Tim Keller writes of these verses, ‘[Paul] cannot be saying that the people who lived and died before the Mosaic law never had any guilt of their own. Why? Because they had the law of God in a rudimentary form, written on their heart (2:12-15). Therefore, Paul is probably pointing out that guilt and responsibility greatly increase with knowledge and awareness...In other words, though the people were less guilty, they died no less.’¹ Contrary to those who might advocate for the Law as a way to works-based righteousness, Paul is paving the way to demonstrate that the Law only serves to magnify our guilt (v 20-21).

5:15-17

In verse 14, Adam is described as a *pattern* of Jesus. In verses 15-17 however, Paul first contrasts Adam and Jesus. Whereas Adam brought death, Christ has brought life. Whereas God’s judgment *in Adam* followed one trespass and brought condemnation, God’s grace *in Christ* followed many trespasses and brought justification. If Adam’s trespass inaugurated the reign of death, how much more so will the far superior Jesus inaugurate a new reign! Because of God’s abundant provision of grace and a righteous status before God, we are now able to *reign in life*. No longer need we be ruled or dominated by sin and death, but through Christ’s rule and reign we are restored to the dominion with which we were created to once enjoy over God’s creation (Psalm 8). Death no longer enslaves us and sin no longer masters us, we belong to a new King – the risen Lord Jesus.

5:18-19

The contrasts of 5:15-17 here make way for similarities – in both instances, the *one* act and the *one* man affect the *many*. Notably, Christ’s *obedience* is mentioned in verse 19 – not only does Christ’s sacrifice remove our punishment, but his perfect obedient life and death, his righteous status, is imputed to us. As discussed above, these verses help us understand what it is for us to find redemption in Christ. His salvation is much more than a ticket to heaven. He rescues us out of the sinful realm of Adam and into the righteous realm of Jesus. *In Adam* we were rebels awaiting judgement, ruled by sin and death. Yet *in Christ*, we come under God’s grace and are ruled by a new King and a good King. We shall see in Romans 6-7 that we still live in the overlap of these two realms (we are still *in Adam* as human beings yet also are *in Christ* as those redeemed), but ultimately, we are able to reign in life now because we belong to this new realm that Christ has formed in himself.

5:20-21

In 5:9-10, Paul repeats the phrase *how much more* to underscore the certainty of our future hope. In 5:11-21 he unpacks the *how much more* by demonstrating how *super-abundant* God’s grace is. Though the Law magnified how pervasive our sin and guilt actually is, it also shows that God’s grace in Christ has gone deeper and wider still!

¹ Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You*, The Good Book Company, 2014; p 125.

GETTING STARTED

1. Whether positive or negative, share a time in your life when a past action or decision had wider implications than you might have originally imagined?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 5:12-14

2. In verse 12, Paul refers to the events of Genesis 3. How do Adam's actions still impact humanity *today*?
3. Paul's opening thought in verse 12 isn't completed until verses 18-19. From these later verses, what impact have Adam's actions had upon our standing before God?

Read Romans 5:15-17

4. Though Adam is a 'pattern' (v 14) of Jesus, how do these verses contrast Adam and Jesus?
5. What does it mean to 'reign in life' through Jesus (v 17), and why is this so significant given what we have earlier read about sin and death? (cf. 3:9)

Read Romans 5:18-19

6. According to these verses, in what ways are Adam and Jesus similar?
7. If we can say that Adam's past actions impact the world today (q 2), how much more so do Christ's past actions impact the world *today*?

Read Romans 5:20-21

8. Far from establishing works-based righteousness, what was God's purpose for bringing in the Law?

TAKEAWAY

9. Through faith in Christ, by God's superabundant grace, we who were *in Adam* (under God's judgement as well as under the power of sin and death), now find ourselves *in Christ* (under God's grace, and reigning in life). We have been brought into the realm of God's Kingdom. Knowing this, how would you respond to a friend who queried how such old news could remain relevant today?

APPENDIX: FEDERAL HEADSHIP

For those interested to learn more about the concept of Adam being our representative or 'Federal' head, the following excerpt is taken from pages 126-129 of Timothy Keller's excellent book, *Romans 1-7 For You*, published by The Good Book Company in 2014.

You can find out more about the book here –

<https://www.thegoodbook.com/romans-1-7-for-you-1>

Please note that the Good Book Company have kindly made available to us this excerpt for private use only. It is not to be shared or distributed.

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ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #3

6:1-14



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 6:1-14

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Over the next three weeks, as we move through 6:1-7:7 we'll consider a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death.

As an appendix to this week's notes is a series of diagrams that visually represent the teaching of this section of Scripture and how it is that our union with Christ has freed us from being under the reign of sin and death.

6:1-7

So radical is Paul's gospel of grace that it is readily misunderstood. His exaltation of the grace of God is thus mistaken as giving license to continuing in sin (v1). Anticipating the objection that his gospel promotes such sinful living, Paul responds emphatically – *By no means!* (v2). Paul insists that we do not go on sinning because we have *died to sin*.

We have *died to sin* through our union with Christ. Through faith in Christ, we have been joined with Jesus such that his accomplishment at the cross becomes our own. When he died, we died with him – the punishment for our sins was fully meted out on him such that no condemnation remains, and sin's greatest weapon against us (the judgement of death) has been expended. Our being joined with Christ in his death, and subsequent justification, is symbolized in the sacrament of baptism (v3). Baptism is a fitting symbol of the *new self* and the new life that comes from rising with Christ in place of the *old self* that has been crucified at the cross (v6).¹

This therefore means that sin no longer enslaves us (more on that next week) and no longer rules over our bodies (v6). This of course does not mean that we cease to desire sin (or are expected to reach some sort of sinless state this side of eternity), for clearly verses 12-13 expect some sort of ongoing tension (cf. Rom 7 & 1 John 1:8). Rather we are now under the Kingship of Jesus and freed to be able to resist sin in a way we were previously unable to. We are under new management, under Jesus' reign, and can thus commence the counter insurgency against our sinful nature.

6:8-14

And because Christ has risen again, we know that we *also will live with him* (v8) – free from any further judgement, and unable to be stung by death. One day we will rise from the dead, yet this resurrection life begins *now* as we begin to live God's way by Christ's Spirit who dwells in us (cf. Rom 8:9-11).

And note that it isn't until verse 12 that we are exhorted to *act*. Up until this point, we are simply called to *know*. At the heart of our sanctification (ongoing transformation/growth in Godliness) is knowing and living according to *who we already are* in Christ. We are able to grow in Godliness because of what Christ *has already accomplished for us*. In verse 13 therefore, according to what we know about Christ, and who we are in him, Paul exhorts us to weaponize all our faculties (both body and mind) in the counter insurgency against evil – to not let *sin reign in our bodies* (v12). Just as a previously occupied nation might use the discarded military equipment of its former occupier to its own advantage, so too are we to deploy what we had previously devoted to sinful desires to instead pursuing righteousness.

¹ The *old self* that was crucified with Christ (v6) was our self or person in its alienation from God and under his judgement. The old self was thus dead in sin. In Christ therefore, we begin a *new life* in a *new self* that is reconciled to God.

GETTING STARTED

1. In what instances or environments is it normal to claim, or identify with, the accomplishments of someone else as our own?

In this week's passage we'll see that Christians are those who have experienced, and are able to identify with, Christ's finished work at the cross as our own.

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 6:1-7

2. Paul anticipates an objection to his teaching in verse 1. What content in Paul's teaching might have given rise to such an objection?
3. As those who have been justified by faith, why *shouldn't* we go on sinning?
4. What does it actually mean for us to have 'died to sin' (v 2)?
5. From these verses is it right to expect that as Christians we will no longer sin, or no longer desire sin? Why or why not?

Read Romans 6:8-14

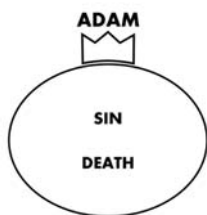
6. What impact does Jesus' resurrection have on our freedom from the mastery of sin?
7. What encouragement would you give from these verses to the Christian who feels defeated by repeated sin in their life?
8. How are these verses different from conventional self-help and self-improvement teaching which focuses on 'will-power', 'human potential' or exhorts us to 'do more'?

TAKEAWAY

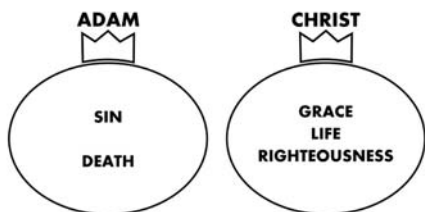
9. Not only are we to avoid deploying our faculties to serve as *instruments of wickedness*, but positively we are to divert them to serving God as *instruments of righteousness* (v12-13). Share practical ways that you might be able to 're-deploy' your energies away from indulging sin and towards serving God.

APPENDIX - THE TWO REALMS

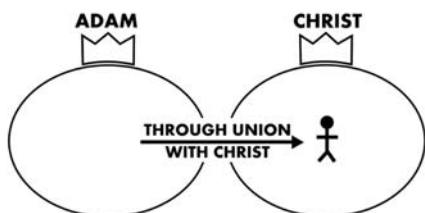
What follows features in our series overview video and has been borrowed from the excellent book *Read Mark Learn: Romans* by the team at St Helen's Bishopsgate London (Christian Focus Publications, London, 1999; p 91-94)



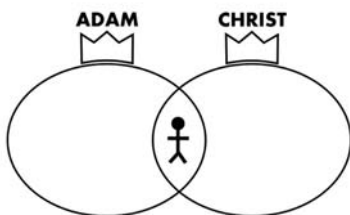
Firstly, Romans 5 teaches us that since Adam first sinned, all humanity has lived in a world, or a realm, characterized by sin and death. Because we share in Adam's humanity, we have shared in his alienation from God. Before Christ, we are all *in Adam*. And being in Adam, we were under the reign of sin.



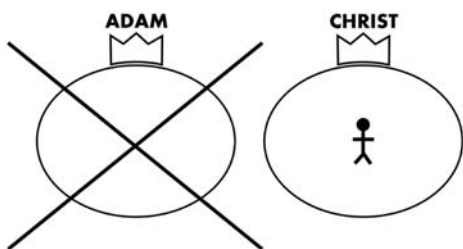
However, through his death, Jesus has established a new realm. He reigns as its head and this realm is characterized by God's grace in place of God's judgement, eternal life in place of death, and righteousness in place of guilt.



Through faith we find ourselves *in Christ*, and now a part of this realm. Jesus' death to sin becomes our death, and his life becomes our life. Jesus' now reigns over us.



Yet this side of eternity, we live between the realms. Because we are *in Christ*, there is no more condemnation. He has satisfied the requirements of the law. Yet because we are still *in Adam*, because we still share his sinful nature, we still struggle with sin. However, because we have been given the Spirit, we are able to resist the enslavement of sin, and are empowered to begin living God's new way in Christ.



Finally, one day, we will be freed from Adam's realm. Suffering will be done away with and we will be in and with Christ in his new creation forever.

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ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #4

6:15-23



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 6:15-23

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Through 6:1-7:7 we consider a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death. This week we see in particular how in Christ we are free from our enslavement to sin and liberated to live a life of obedience to God.

6:15-18

As per last week's passage (6:1-2), so radical is Paul's gospel of grace that it is prone to being misunderstood. Though he has declared us to be no longer under the supervision of the Old Testament Law (6:14), he emphatically denies that this gives the believer license to sin (v 15). Rather, as those under the reign of Christ, we are now slaves to God, no longer under the slavery of sin.

In verse 16, Paul asserts that *all* are slaves, whether it be to God or sin. Our slavery is reflected in our obedience – either we obey God, or we spend our lives obeying and gratifying the desires of our sinful nature. Though in Adam we are born into slavery to sin (v 17), it is by *obeying* the teaching of the gospel, that we are set free from our slavery to sin and *born again*. At the heart of our *obedience* to the gospel is our response of faith to it (3:22), yet such faith inevitably issues itself in a life of Spirit empowered *obedience* (1:15, 15:18; 16:26). Therefore, the one who continues in persistent and unrepentant sin demonstrates that in reality they aren't saved - that their allegiance belongs to sin. If we are those who now belong to Christ, then it will be reflected in lives of service and obedience to him.

We all worship a master, who will you worship? Jesus warns us of the folly of trying to worship two masters simultaneously (Luke 16:13).

6:19-23

As those who have been set free from our slavery to sin, though we still battle with sinful desires, we have a newfound capacity to resist, to say 'no', to these sinful urges and desires. Verse 19 acknowledges that though we used to spend our lives by serving our sin and succumbing to it, we are now empowered to offer our bodies as slaves of God. This of course is the true life of freedom.

Though sin brings *license* (v20 - being free from the control of God's righteousness), God brings true *liberty* (v 22 – free from sin).¹ Though sin leads to shame and death (v 21), living God's way leads to holiness and life (v 22). The life lived in sinful disobedience to God is on a trajectory of eternal wrath, whereas the life that has come under the reign of Jesus and lives to serve him, is on a trajectory of eternal life. Living as God's slave is thus demonstrated to be far superior to the bondage of sin. Why therefore would we return to it? Indeed, though sin gives us our just-deserts (v 23), God gives us his free gift of eternal life.

Though we live in a time which gives priority to gratifying felt-desire, this week's passage demonstrates that the gratifying of our sinful desires is not an expression of freedom, but of slavery, which only intensifies the more we pursue these desires. True freedom is found in Christ, who frees us to live the life-giving way of God.

¹ Stott, *Bible Speaks Today: Romans*, 185.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a time in your life when you, or someone you know, experienced an incredible sense of freedom?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 6:15-18

2. As those who are no longer under the Law, why *shouldn't* we go on sinning?
3. How does verse 16 challenge the commonly held notion that the life without God is the life of freedom?
4. By what means were we set free from our slavery to sin?
5. What have we been set free *for*? (cf. Romans 1:5)

Read Romans 6:19-23

6. What newfound capacity do we now have as those who have been set free from sin?
7. In what ways is life under God superior to life under sin?
8. How would this week's passage help you counsel a fellow Christian wanting to pursue desires or a lifestyle contrary to God's will?

TAKEAWAY

9. Dr Timothy Keller paraphrases Paul as saying in these verses, '*Be what you are – be controlled in your behaviour not by feelings or appearances, but by realities that the gospel tells you about.*'

Share some instances where we might be confronted with the choice to live as slaves to sin or as slaves to God? What are some practical steps we might take to walk in the latter, to be what we are?

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ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #5

7:1-6



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 7:1-6

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Through 6:1-7:7 we consider a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death. This week we see in particular how in Christ we are released from our bondage to the Old Testament law, and so freed to live for God through the Spirit.

7:1-3

When Paul mentions the law, he is referring to the Old Testament scriptures, particularly the Law of Moses (aka the Pentateuch) – the first five books of the Bible. Already in this letter, Paul has stated that far from making people right before God, the law only makes us conscious of our sin (3:20) and points us to the true way of righteousness found through faith in Christ (3:21). Because of our sin, the law only brings wrath (4:15) and increases the nature of our trespass against God (5:20). To Jewish Christians in the Roman church, Paul makes it abundantly clear that the law is not able to justify nor sanctify the believer. In fact, in Christ, we are no longer under the law (6:14-15). Paul now proceeds to explain how it is that we are no longer under the law.¹

By using the example of marriage, Paul illustrates that the law is only binding upon those who are alive. Just as a couple are to remain faithful *till death do they part*,² so too is the law only binding upon us until death. Yet, as those who have been united with Christ by faith, and so died with him at the cross (6:1-10), we have thus been freed from our obligation to the law. Having died with Christ, we are free from our bondage to the law.

7:4-6

Paul's analogy morphs in these verses, but the principle is the same, namely that our death in Christ has terminated our bondage to the law. Whereas the analogy in verses 1-3 speak of a woman who is free to re-marry once her husband has died, in verses 4-6, we are the ones who have died and risen to new life that we might be married to Christ. And he by far is the superior marriage partner! He releases us from the *condemnation* and the *powerlessness* of the law.

Firstly, our marriage to the law only brought God's wrath. There was no amount of obedience to the law that could save us, for the law condemned us as guilty. Yet in Christ we are not under the law but under *grace* (6:14-15). In Christ we are thus released from the *condemnation* of the law, because Jesus *justifies* us.

Secondly, our marriage to the law not only condemned us, but aroused sinful desires (7:5). As we'll see next week (7:7-25), our sinful nature weaponizes the law against us by craving that which the law exposes as evil. In this sense, though the law shows us God's good way, it has no power to change or transform the sinful nature in our hearts and enable us to live God's way. This only happens in Christ, who gives us his Spirit, who in turn writes God's law upon our hearts that we might live God's way (cf. Heb 10:14-16; 2 Cor 3:6; Ezek 36:26 etc). The external law is powerless to effect the internal change we need in our hearts. In Christ therefore, we are released from the *powerlessness* of the law, and receive the Spirit who *sanctifies* our hearts.

Against those who might accuse Paul's gospel of giving license to sin, we see here that far from promoting sin, it does the opposite. Indeed, we were raised with Christ for the very *purpose* we might bear fruit for God (7:4) – that is, Godly living (e.g. think the fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5:22). The way forward in Godliness therefore is to not be sought in mere will-power or religious exertion, but in dependence upon the empowering of the Spirit. Nor is our motivation for godliness to stem from fear of rejection nor seeking merit, but rather from the love and security of knowing that we have been joined to Christ, and death shall never separate us!

¹ Though Paul here points out the shortcomings of the law with regards to its ability to justify or sanctify, this is not all that he (or the Bible) has to say about the law. It is good (7:15) and worthy of delight (7:22). It brings light and life (Psalm 19 & 119). John Calvin outlines the three beneficial roles of the Law as follows – (1) it exposes our sin and points us to Christ; (2) in a civic sense restrains sinful acts; and finally, (3) it reveals to us what is pleasing to God. For more visit, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/threefold-use-law>

² Alongside desertion (1 Cor 7:15) and divorce from infidelity (Matt 19:8-9), Paul identifies death as another painful disruption to the bond of the one-flesh union between husband and wife.

GETTING STARTED

1. Has there been a time in your life when you were released from a long-standing obligation, worry, or difficult situation? What impact did it have upon you to be released from it?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 7:1-3

2. To what is Paul referring when he mentions 'the law'?
3. What has Paul said previously about our relationship to the law?
4. What is the main point of Paul's marriage illustration in these verses?

Read Romans 7:4-6

5. What does it mean to be 'released from the law'?
6. By what means have we been released from the law?
7. For what purpose have we been released from the law?
8. What, if any, ongoing role should the law have in our lives?
(cf. Hebrews 10:14-16 - *For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.* ¹⁵ *The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ¹⁶ "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."*)
9. How do these verses answer the question raised in 6:15?

TAKEAWAY

10. How might Romans 7:1-6 inform or shift your motivations or approach to growth in Godly living this week?

5-8

ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #6

7:7-25



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 7:7-25

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Through 6:1-7:7 we consider a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death. This week however, Paul clarifies that life under Christ's reign does not mean a life free from struggle and sin altogether.

7:7-13

In his argument thus far, Paul has undermined any sense of false confidence in the Law as a way of works-based righteousness. He has pointed out that the Law merely makes us conscious of sin (3:20), and has actually led to sin's increase (5:20). He has said that in Christ, the believer is no longer subject to the Law (6:22 & 7:6). Yet lest these negative statements be misunderstood to convey that God's Law is intrinsically bad or sinful, Paul clarifies his teaching about God's Law.

Paul shows us that the Law is actually, holy, righteous and good. It is particularly so in the way that it *defines* sin (e.g. coveting – v 7) and *exposes* how utterly culpable it is (v 13). Yet though God's commands are good and designed to be life-giving (v10), our sinful nature exploits the Law by arousing and provoking us to desire that which God prohibits. We do this because of the perversity of our sinful nature – we inherently desire that which God forbids because of our sinful rebellion against God and his ways. In this way, sin weaponises the Law against us by provoking behaviours and desires that lead only to death.

It's worth noting that Paul makes all of the above points by relating his own story. In these verses he speaks in the past-tense about his experience before coming to faith. But in an acknowledgement of human solidarity in sin, it would seem he does so in a way that recalls the experiences of Adam in the garden before receiving God's command, and Israel in the wilderness before receiving the Mosaic Law. Like Adam and Israel (and all of us!), when Paul came into contact with God's commandment, his sin was exposed and he was provoked to sin more, thus placing him even more firmly under the power and control of sin than he was previously.¹

7:14-25

Many Christians have struggled to read these seemingly paradoxical verses. On the one hand Paul can speak about being sold as a *slave to sin* (v 14), being a *prisoner of the law of sin* (v 23) and *doing that which is evil* (v 19). Yet on the other hand he speaks of *delighting* in God's law (v 22), rejoices in 'Jesus Christ *our* Lord' (v 25), and strongly desires to live God's way (v 15-16, 18, 19-21).

This has led some Christians to conclude that Paul is speaking here of some sort of sub-Christian experience – say of Old Testament believers who had not received the indwelling of the Spirit, or of a Christian looking back on the experience of Jews under the Law. Yet these interpretations would seem to defy the plain reading of the text in which the past tense of v 7-13, gives way to the present tense of v 14-25 whereby Paul speaks in the first person of his *present* Christian experience (v 25). Furthermore, the descriptions of the heart desire to do God's will and the various other positive descriptions of the Christian life in these verses can only be understood as the experience of the Christian, for the unbeliever does not have such heart desires for God's ways (e.g. 3:11, 18).

In these verses therefore, Paul paints a fuller picture of the Christian life. Though we have been set free from our slavery to sin (6:18, 22), this does not mean we live a life free from the struggle with sin. This side of eternity, our sinful nature remains, and it is *this part* of ourselves that remains sold under sin (v 14). Yet who we are in sin is not fundamentally we who are in Christ - we are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and a new person (Col 3:10). Our sinful failings are therefore attributable not to our true and renewed inner selves, but to the remnants of sin living in us (v 17). Christ's entry into our lives has instigated conflict with our sinful nature which will be finally conquered at his resurrection. Assured of this outcome and of his present reign, we can commence and continue the counter insurgency against sin in its power, knowing one day the struggle will end.

¹ Keller argues that Paul's being 'alive' apart from the Law is a reference to his prior faulty self-perception – he thought he was spiritually alive and pleasing to God. Yet when he came to truly understand God's law, he understood that he was not pleasing at all, but under God's condemnation, and now increasingly under sin's control. Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You*, 164.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a circumstance in which a prohibition might commonly tempt us to do that precise thing (e.g. “Don’t look down!”).

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 7:7-13

2. Why do you think Paul sees it necessary to clarify that the Law is not sinful? (v 7)
3. In what way(s) is the law *‘holy, righteous and good’*? (v 11)
4. How did/does sin weaponise the law against us?

Read Romans 7:14-25

5. In verses 14-25, Paul moves from the past tense to the present. What positive things does he say about himself as a Christian?²
6. What negative things does Paul say about the Christian experience, and how can this be possible as those who have been set free from our slavery to sin (6:18, 22)?
7. What do these verses reveal about the reality of the Christian life this side of the resurrection?
(cf. Galatians 5:17 - *For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*)
8. How do these verses provide encouragement for us in our own struggle with sin?

TAKEAWAY

9. If struggle with sin is to be an expected part of the Christian life, how might we better honestly acknowledge and respond to this reality in our life together as God’s church?

² Question taken from Christopher Ash, *Teaching Romans* (Christian Focus Publications: 2019), 271.

5-8

ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #7

8:1-17



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 8:1-17

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Through 6:1-7:6 we considered a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death. In 7:7-8:17, another implication is spelled out - in Christ we live free from the reign of sin and death *through the power of the Spirit*. Though this life is not free from struggle with sin (7:7-25), our Spirit empowered resistance against sin is evidence of our eternal salvation (8:1-17).

8:1-4

The *therefore* in 8:1 seems to recall the thrust of the entire letter so far – that through faith in Christ, we are declared righteous in God's sight. The *condemnation* we received *in Adam* has now been removed and replaced with *justification in Christ* (5:16-18). God's condemnation has been removed from us once and for all!

Tim Keller helpfully points out that when Paul speaks of the *law* in Romans, he can be variously referring to (1) the *Mosaic Law*, (2) to law as a *principle*, or (3) to law as a *force* or *power*.¹ In verse 2, it would seem that he is referring to the law in this latter sense – in Christ we have been rescued from the *power* of sin and death by the *power* of the Spirit. We needed Jesus to affect this rescue, because the Mosaic Law (v3) was powerless to do so. Far from being able to rescue us, the Law was co-opted by our sinful nature to condemn us and provoke sin.

To rescue us, Jesus offered himself as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. By sharing our human nature, our sins could be condemned in his flesh (v3). Yet though Jesus shared our *human nature*, he did not share our *sinful nature* as the perfect Son of God. As such he could offer himself as a sufficient sacrifice. Christ did this for the express purpose that the *righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*. Though it is possible Paul here speaks of Christ meeting the Law's requirement of our *condemnation* at the cross (our justification – e.g. 5:1), it's most likely he is referring to Christ's empowering of us to *live* according God's righteous ways (our sanctification – e.g. 7:6; 7:22). This seems to be in keeping with the flow of the passage and with a major theme the letter – that the gospel produces obedience to God (1:5; 16:26).

8:5-11

In verses 5-8 we are reminded of the close connection between our minds and lives. As the Holy Spirit renews our minds (Rom 12:2) we experience life and peace and are empowered to live lives of increasing obedience to God. The mind of an unbeliever however remains hostile to God (v 7) and therefore unable to please him (v 8). This is so, because in sin we remain in rebellion against God, and even the best deed, is curtailed by the reality that it has been done independent of God. Whilst Christians do not have a monopoly on good deeds, it is only deeds flowing from the faith of a reconciled heart that are pleasing to God (Heb 11:6).

In verses 9-11 we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is the key to us living lives that meet the righteous requirement of the law. Sent by both God the Father *and* God the Son he is variously described as the 'Spirit of God' and the 'Spirit of Christ.' He is the one who renews our inner being, despite our outer bodies declining. And because the Spirit dwells within us, we can have assurance that we will one day rise to new and eternal life, just as He raised Christ. Indeed, our Spirit empowered struggle against sin (see below) is evidence to us that we belong to God and will one day be raised to be with Him by His Spirit.

8:12-17

Accordingly, by the power of the Spirit we are to actively wage war against sin (v 12). We can slay that which Christ has already defeated. And our resistance against sin is another sure evidence that we are those who have received the Spirit and eternal life (v 13). The 'Spirit led' life therefore is a life of warfare against sin (v 14). It is also a life of being renewed in the knowledge that we have been lovingly adopted by God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ (v 15-16). The Spirit ongoingly reminds us and assures us that we are God's beloved children and no longer need fear him as our judge. Yet such a life is not one free from suffering, as Jesus cried out to *Abba* (the Aramaic equivalent of the intimate 'Daddy') Father in the Garden (Mk 14:36), so too will we cry out to our Heavenly Father in dependence as we seek his help to resist sin and remain faithful to God.

¹ Timothy Keller, Romans 1-7 For You (The Good Book Company: 2014), 168.

GETTING STARTED

1. Who is someone in your life who brings you much help or assistance? Share with the group and perhaps spend a moment thanking God for these people.

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 8:1-4

2. What impact does it have on you, knowing that in Christ, you are now free from God's condemnation?
3. For what *purpose* did God justify us through His Son Jesus? (cf. 1:5; 7:4)

Read Romans 8:5-11

4. Who makes it possible for us to live a life pleasing to God?
5. Why is it impossible for unbelievers to please God? (cf. Heb 11:6 - *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*)
6. How does the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within us help us to be sure of our eternal life?

Read Romans 8:12-17

7. What does the 'Spirit led' life look like according to these verses?
8. From these verses, how would you summarise the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

TAKEAWAY

9. From what we've seen of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives this week, what are you most thankful to our Heavenly Father for? Spend a moment thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and pray that you would be increasingly filled with Him.

5-8

ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #8

8:18-30



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 8:18-30

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. So far, we've considered the implication that we have assurance of our eternal salvation in Christ (5:1-11) and that this has been made possible through our union with Christ who has formed in himself a new humanity (5:12-21). Through 6:1-7:6 we consider a further implication – that through our union with Christ we no longer live under the reign of sin and death. In 7:7-8:17, another implication is spelled out - in Christ we live free from the reign of sin and death *through the power of the Spirit*. And just as our life in the Spirit is not free from struggle with sin (7:7- 8:17), nor is it free from suffering (8:18-30), yet neither struggle with sin nor suffering can shake the first implication of the gospel we considered in chapter 5 – our assurance of eternal salvation.

8:18-22

In our struggle against sin, we will inevitably share in Christ's sufferings, just as we will share in his glory (v 17). This mention of suffering returns us to a theme introduced in 5:1-5, that our present sufferings do not threaten the assurance of our future salvation. In fact, as weighty as they may be, our present sufferings are far outweighed by the future glory of our salvation (2 Cor 4:17). The weightiness of this future glory enables us to patiently endure suffering in the present (v 25).

Paul unpacks our future glory first with reference to the new creation (cf. Rev 21:1-5 & Isa 65:17-25). Through these verses we are reminded that our salvation is much larger than individual places in heaven, but is part of a cosmic redemption, whereby God's Kingdom will be established as the curse of sin is removed and creation restored. This is necessary, for not only has our sin placed us in bondage to sin and death (Rom 6:15-23), but also creation (cf. Gen 3:16-24). Creation has thus become enslaved to decay, death and futility – great toil is required to yield its fruit, and even its most beautiful aspects carry with them a sense of danger and threat.

And though humanity was placed over creation to steward it and enable it to flourish (cf. Gen 2:15 & Psalm 8), we are instead quick to exploit and degrade it in sin. Creation thus eagerly waits for the children of God to be revealed in glory, so that a redeemed and restored humanity might be reinstated to work and prosper creation as intended.¹ Yet far from being a hopeless, tragic downward spiral, the present environmental disharmony we experience are not the death throes of creation, but the birth pangs - the bondage and suffering we presently experience will soon give way to ecstasy with the arrival of the new life of the new creation (v 22).

8:23-25

Knowing this truly glorious and cosmic future glory, we too groan inwardly with creation as we wait for our adoption as God's children to be fully realised in our redeemed bodies. We have powerfully seen in Romans 7 how our fleshly bodies are beset by sin this side of glory, and so we long to be clothed with our heavenly bodies that we might be done away with sin and death once and for all (cf. 2 Cor 5:1-5). This future, and unseen, hope helps us to wait patiently through suffering in the present.

8:26-27

And beneath the groanings of creation and of the church, lie the groanings of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who enables us to know and cry out to God as Father (8:15-16) and he cries out on our behalf in accordance with God's will, which surely entails being conformed to the family likeness (8:29). What a comfort to know that the Spirit of God dwells in us and is praying for us, even when we can't pray ourselves. He is the one at work in us, and praying for us, that even through present suffering, we might be transformed to become more like our future glorious selves – more like Christ.

8:28-30

Understood in this context, these final and familiar verses now dazzle with glory. All present suffering is not wasted nor arbitrary, but is weaved together by God for the eternal good of his people. And as mentioned above, this includes being conformed to the likeness of Jesus. There will be no eternal drop outs in the face of suffering, because what God has started in us who have been *called*, he will bring to completion in *glory*. God is the initiator and in control at every step of the journey. What a comfort in our present suffering!

¹ Contrary to contemporary thought that sees human *absence* as pivotal to environmental flourishing, the Bible tells us that God created the world to flourish with our *presence* – as it is harnessed under our rule, stewardship and care.

GETTING STARTED

1. What do you most anticipate about heaven? Share with the group.

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 8:18-22

2. What are some of the sources of our 'present sufferings' as Christians?
3. Not only has sin placed humanity under the bondage of sin and death, but we have also dragged creation with us (Gen 3:16-24). How do we see this '*frustration*' and '*bondage to decay*' played out in the world around us?
4. What implications will our future redemption have for all of creation? (cf. Rev 21:1-5 & Isaiah 65:17-25)
5. How does the illustration of the agony and ecstasy of childbirth (v 22) help us to better understand the glory of the new creation? What impact does this have on our experience of *present sufferings*?

Read Romans 8:23-25

6. What is it about our present experience and future hope that causes us to groan along with creation?

Read Romans 8:26-27

7. Underneath it all, the Spirit groans with us and for us in accordance with God's will. What therefore do you think the Holy Spirit most prays for us in the midst of our suffering?

Read Romans 8:28-30

8. How do these verses bring us comfort in the face of suffering?

TAKEAWAY

9. Share some practical ways in which we might allow our future hope to fuel our patient endurance of present suffering?
10. Make some space for group members to share their own present experiences of suffering. Then as you move to pray for one another, re-read verses 28-30.

5-8

ROMANS

LIFE WITH GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #9

8:31-39



OVERVIEW - ROMANS 8:31-39

In Rom 1:18-4:25, Paul explains both the necessity and the power of the gospel. In Rom 5:1-8:39, Paul moves on to explain its *implications* – i.e., what it is to live as one justified by faith. *Firstly*, the gospel gives us assurance of our *eternal salvation* (5:1-11). *Secondly*, this assurance is made possible through our *union with Christ* who has formed in himself a new humanity and freed us from Adam's condemnation (5:21-21). *Thirdly*, in Christ, we have been *set free* from the reign of sin and death (6:1-7:6), that *fourthly* we might live a *new life in the power of the Spirit* (7:7-8:30). This new life in the Spirit is not free from suffering, nor struggle with sin, but neither of these realities can shake the first implication of the gospel we considered in chapter 5 – our assurance of eternal salvation (8:31-39).

8:31-34

Paul draws to a conclusion this magnificent section of his letter, by returning to the opening theme and initial implication spelled out in Romans 5 – the *assurance* of eternal salvation we have in Christ. He does so by triumphantly asking five questions that defy objection. Over the first four questions (v 31-34), Paul focuses our assurance on the *finished work of Jesus at the cross*.

The cross assures us that no longer is God against us, but rather is *for* us (cf. 8:28). As those who have been justified, we are no longer God's enemies. Furthermore, if God was willing to give up his most precious Son for us at the cross, it stands to reason that he will not withhold any good thing from us (v 32). We can therefore be confident that God will give us everything necessary for our good, namely, that we might be conformed to the image of God's son as those who inherit salvation (8:28-30)

Even in the face of ongoing struggle with sin, we can be confident of our salvation, because at the cross, Jesus has definitively removed our condemnation (v 34 cf. 8:1). Yet not only has Jesus *died* in our place, but he has also *risen again* so as to intercede for us at God's right hand (cf. Heb 7:23-25 & 1 John 2:1). This means that as our perfect High Priest, Jesus eternally bears witness in the courts of heaven, that our sins have been atoned for, and that we are forgiven and acceptable to God! Hallelujah!

8:35-39

In the second half of the passage, Paul grounds our assurance on Christ's *love*, which is demonstrated through the cross. Because of Jesus' eternal love for us, we can be sure of our eternal salvation, even in the face of *sin* and *suffering*. The objective reality of the cross, and subjective witness of the Spirit (5:5; 8:14-16) assure us of this love.

Paul himself had certainly faced his own share of suffering for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:25ff), and if those in the Roman church hadn't yet faced suffering, they would soon do so under Emperor Nero's rule. Yet Paul quotes Psalm 44 to show God's people that they need not be dismayed in the face of such suffering, for suffering has always been a reality faced by God's faithful people in a sinful world. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors (literally *super conquerors*), meaning that Christ's love will not abandon us in such difficult circumstances, but that he will sustain us through affliction. Accordingly, we are *overcomers* (1 John 5:4-5) through him who has already *overcome* the world (John 16:33).

Far from doubting God's love in suffering, we can have assurance that Christ loves us through it all and that neither sin nor suffering shall shake us free from His love. We can have confidence in the inseparability of his love, because it is a sovereign love (8:28-30). It is an inseparable love because God's love for us in Christ is not conditioned upon us in anyway, but is solely a function of his calling and election. Accordingly, what God has begun in us, he will finish – *those he justified, he also glorified* (v 30).

GETTING STARTED

1. As we come to the end of our time in Romans 5-8, what have been some of your highlights from these chapters?
2. What are some of the things in life that might cause us to doubt Christ's forgiveness or love?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 8:31-34

3. Spend a moment reflecting how amazing it is that God is *for* us (v 31). How can we be certain of this?
4. What sort of confidence does Christ's work on the cross give us –
 - a. In the present?
 - b. For the future?
5. What sort of confidence does it give us to know that the risen Lord Jesus intercedes for us?

cf. Hebrew 7:23-25 - Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

cf. 1 John 2:1-2 - My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Read Romans 8:35-39

6. Why do you think Paul quotes Psalm 44 in these verses?
7. What does it mean for us to be *more than conquerors through Christ*, in the face of such affliction (v 37)?
8. On what basis do we know that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ? (cf. 8:28-30)

TAKEAWAY

9. Spend a moment reflecting on how *sure* you are of Christ's forgiveness and love. Where might we point someone (or ourselves) who is feeling *unsure* of these realities?