

Life as God's Child

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[0 : 00] So, we're going to go back to that passage this morning and have a look at Romans 8, from verse 12 to verse 17.

For those who are visiting with us today, we've been doing a study in Romans for quite a while before the summer, and then we took a break, and then we've come back to it.

And we're looking up to just before the end of the year at Romans, middle of chapter 5 through to chapter 11. And this is the section that we're at this week, okay?

Romans chapter 8. So, if you have Bibles, keep it open, page 944, or on your phones, or however you're choosing to look at the Bible this morning. Now, I want, in my Christian life, I want to enjoy God.

That's one of the things I really want to do. And that's actually the theme of Romans, because at the end of Romans, as we saw last week, it speaks about the whole of the purpose of what he's writing is that we have joy in the Lord, that we rejoice, that we are happy in our Christian life.

[1 : 04] So, I want to enjoy God, and I want you to enjoy God as well in your Christian lives, because that's really the best way to live your life. If you're happy, if you're enjoying life, then you know that that is a great foundation for your life.

I fear so often, and I know from my own experience, that we struggle. We struggle in our Christian lives, and we don't really enjoy God.

And you know the great thing about that is, well, it's not a great thing, but one of the great things coming out of that is that God knows that. God understands that in our lives. He understands that often in our lives, we don't understand Him.

We don't enjoy Him. He knows that we're in a battle. He knows that we face all kinds of questions and all kinds of doubts, and He knows and appreciates that.

That's why so much of the Bible, so much of His Word is spent dealing with these issues for us and helping us to see things differently. That's what He wants us to do. He wants us to see things differently in our lives.

[2 : 12] And I want you to be reminded of what's tremendously important. Verses 6 and 7, we didn't read this. We looked at it last week for to set the mind on the flesh's death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

So mindset was a really important focus from last week. Wasn't it? We looked at the mindset of the Christian, or the mindset of our lives. And that's really just what when Paul is speaking about, mindset he's speaking or setting our minds is our focus, what's our attention, what engages our energy, what we know, what becomes the governing principle that's at the very heart of our lives.

It's kind of our inner being, the very core of our, the root of our thinking. And he's saying as we set our minds in the right way, then it helps us to enjoy God better in our lives.

I think you should try and fuse, however you do, go home and do it in your own way. Use chapter 8 of Romans into your own heads, into your psyche, into your mindset, into your being, into the core of your being.

Return to it again and again. And not just this small passage, but the whole of Romans 8, because it's kind of pivotal to our understanding of the whole of the gospel, or the whole of the book and letter of Romans.

[3 : 32] Meditate on it. Look market, highlight it with a bright yellow pen in your Bibles. Pray it. Make a poster of it.

Make it your ringtone. Memorize it. Do whatever you can to focus on this chapter, because it's so important in founding and giving us the right mindset.

It helps us towards the right mindset in our lives. If we can't keep ignoring a chapter like this, the truth in a chapter like this, and expect what it means to flourish as a Christian and enjoy God, because we know we struggle with God and we know we don't enjoy Him, and so much of our lives, we're just content with that.

And we think, sugar, shoulders, that's the way it is. That's just the way it is. And yet He understands and wants our mindset to change. In many ways, I think the question is how much we allow the truth to change in our lives.

I was at a press conference a couple of weeks ago, it was actually in the hall down here. And because they didn't have anyone else to do the talk, I had to speak. And speaking about pastoral work.

[4 : 42] And one of the things that was kind of coming out from it was that the preaching of the Word on a Sunday, the sermon on a Sunday, was a great way to pastor people and to meet all their needs.

Now, I agree with that. Don't get me wrong, I agree with that. But I think there's a danger for a minister of the gospel to use that to become lazy and to make his ministry a non-contact sport.

So he says, all I need to do is just stand up from the front and preach and God will pastor everyone and the Holy Spirit will work. Now, that might be idealistic.

But I think if that is to happen, it depends a lot on our mindset, your mindset and my mindset as well, and I can't just be hiding behind here or be 12 feet above contradiction up there.

We all need to come under the sound of God's Word, whether it's preached or read or listened to, however we do it, with a mindset to being transformed by His Word, you know?

[5 : 40] Because you look back in your life. You think about it. Take a few minutes. Don't listen to me for the next minute and a half. But just think about how many sermons you've listened to. How many passages of the Bible you've read?

How many good gospel Christian books have you fed yourself on? And how much changes are in your life? With all that richness, how much change?

How much transformation? Are we battling with the same things week in and week out, day in and day out? Are we being transformed by Him?

And please don't get me wrong. These things are all utterly crucial, but our mindset is also very important as we come to these things, that we see who God is and recognize that God is able, and God can change our mindset.

You know, God's argument to the Roman church here through Paul is that He wants to highlight the reasons for a new mindset. He's speaking in that verse that I read about life and peace.

[6 : 42] That's the core of everything, isn't it? In Christ we have life and peace. And when we recognize that, and we recognize the truth that is unfolding, He wants to begin to transform how we live our lives beyond these walls, beyond the chapter we read in church, beyond our personal devotions.

He wants us to be transformed by how we take these things and how they mold and change our mindset for the other six and a half days, the hundred and sixty-six hours of our existence that is molded by our mindset, by how we think and by what we think about God.

This hour is hugely important, and ministers think it's much more important than everyone else, but it is really important, and it's God's way, one of God's ways of helping us to recalibrate.

It's intended to inspire, to remind, to renew our perspective under God and through His Word that as Christians we have an incredible partner in the living God in our lives as we come to Him for redemption, and now lives in us by His Holy Spirit as someone who's committed to you and committed to your healing and who frees you up to cooperate with Him and expects from us obedience, nothing less, out of love and out of gratitude.

So how do we transform our mindset so that we are enjoying God, which is the theme in many ways of Romans as it comes to this end of joy and life that He speaks about? What did you say?

[8 : 12] Just say two things. The first thing is we can do it with God. We can begin to enjoy God because we realize God is with us. Verse 11, which we didn't read, which was the end of the last section, says, 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 which dwells in you.

And then verse 12, which we started with, So then brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. We are debtors not to live, but we are to live according to the Spirit.

So we can have our mindset changed because that's what He's speaking about. He's got this word so then or therefore, which links us to the previous section. We can do it because we have the power of God's Spirit with us.

And He's referring back to the power of God's Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. It's the resurrection power. He who raised Jesus from the dead, that's the same power that's available to us.

The power of the eternal God who destroyed the power of death on the cross and death's grip on humanity is the power that is available to change our mindset to transform us from the inside out.

[9 : 27] So that our desire, you know, we struggle so much. Don't we have our desires? Right. I do. I'm not saying that everyone else does, but I'm just being general. I always, often, and I struggle with my desires and my mindset because I fail to recognize who is available, who loves me so much and who is powerful to change me.

It's great Creator God that we're speaking about on Wednesday night. Have you ever driven a truck? I don't drive trucks very much, but you've got to imagine driving a truck. And you've got a puncture on that truck, big truck, big wheel.

And what you have to do is you have to lift the truck in order to get the wheel changed. You've got to decide the truck. And you can't lift it. There's no way you're going to be able to lift that truck, but you get a big truck jack.

And a big truck jack just comes in, you can just pump the handle. And this truck all of a sudden lifts really easily. And you don't, it seems effortless to be able to change the tire on a big truck because you've got this power that's available to you to change things.

This house in the Highlands in Invergordon in Rostkeen where there was a minister there had a massive big garden. And I wanted to really change that garden at one point. And so I got out of my spade and started digging.

[10 : 43] And it was hugely frustrating and hugely annoying and hugely unproductive because I wanted to do so much. And it was only a tiny little bit of this massive big garden that was being changed until a friend with a digger, a JCB came along and did all the transformation in one day.

Have you ever seen these diggers scoop up the ground? More than you could dig in a whole day. Just scooped up in one go. Effortless. Power, such power in a digger.

Wonderful. I wish I could drive one of these things. But you see the difference having power makes into situations that seem helpless. And that we have this remarkable power available to us, the power of the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, who is able to transform us in our mindset and in our hearts.

And maybe we don't go to Him because we somehow pragmatically think He's powerless, or possibly because we're asking for the wrong things and He isn't giving us what we think we should have, power of the Spirit.

We can do it with God because of His power, but also because of our obligation. Our brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, but to the Spirit of God.

[12 : 00] In other words, we are obliged. Another version has it as we are obligated. So we're obliged to the living God. We're in debt to Him. You know, before we were born, He has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

He's opened up the way to God for us to hope in a future as we put our trust in Christ. And we are obliged to actively resist and give no oxygen to doing or thinking what is wrong, what He hates.

So you've got this amazing verse here which says, you have to put to death, verse 13, the deeds of the body. That's a really strong description of what we're to do, illustration of what we're to do.

We're to put it to death. We're to give no oxygen to the things that God hates in our lives. That's our responsibility. You know that same garden in Roskidon, if you have weeds in that garden and you want to weed free, what do you do?

You can leave the weeds. That's an option. It's not going to be a very good one because weeds grow quicker than plants. So they will really grow quickly.

[13 : 11] You can feed them and they're going to grow even quicker and they're going to overrun the garden before you know it. Or you actively pull them out by the roots.

You know, we need to do that. It's the principle of atrophy in the world that we live in. If you leave things on their own, they will just decay or deteriorate. And if you want a beautiful garden, it will soon be covered in weeds if we don't actively pull out these weeds by the roots.

It's not enough simply to ignore them or leave them. And that's really the image that we're given here, we're to put to death the deeds of the body. The selfishness, the greed, the arrogance, the lust, the gossiping, the anger, the frustrations, all the things that God tells us are damaging for ourselves.

He wants us to actively get rid of any heat and powers us to do so. And that introduces to us a different mindset, doesn't it? When we recognize that, because often our mindset is, I don't like being obligated.

We resist it. We don't like the thought of being obligated to anyone. And maybe until we see the value of changing our mindset, one thing to another. I don't like to be told to revise for exams until maybe I realize the value of passing exams and the benefit of that.

[14 : 32] And I can see it's worth labor, it's worth work, it's worth resisting my natural inclination not to do these things. I don't like being obligated. In fact, quite the opposite, we often think, well, God actually owes me.

I don't owe God. God owes me. You know, that sense of entitlement that we feel and that we have. You know, I've asked, I've prayed, I've demanded, I've tried, I've obeyed.

Why don't I get from God? Why doesn't God give to me? Give me, give me, give me, God. Why? He owes me. I've come to church, I've read my Bible.

I don't swear, He owes me. Is that right? Is that our mindset that God owes us? Do we find that mindset coming up again and again in our hearts when we don't find our prayers being answered the way we want?

God owes me. Why isn't He answering? Why is He allowing me to go through this? He owes me a good life. He owes me a clear run. He owes me. It's as we see who Jesus is and what He has done and our debt of love to Him that our mindset changes.

[15 : 39] That's the first thing. The second thing that this passage speaks about, it speaks about the great power of God to enable us to change, that that should change our mindset.

But the second thing it speaks about is that we have been adopted by God. Fantastic theological truth that we are God's children, we are adopted by God, verses 14 to 18, that second section, for those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God, for He didn't receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear.

You received a spirit of adoption by which sons we cry, Abba, Father. In case we were adopted by God. And that's a great truth, isn't it? It's a tremendously important truth for us.

And the first thing is it reminds us that we needn't be afraid. We needn't be afraid. You didn't receive again the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. So we're not to be afraid because we've been adopted as God's children.

Fear is a terrible thing, isn't it? Fear is an awful thing. And we need to understand when Paul, in many ways, he speaks here about slavery in a different way.

[16 : 44] He speaks about two different ways of slavery. Slavery is the concept of a willing servant, a loving debt, which we've looked at already in Romans.

What he also talks about in this sense here is enslavement from which you cannot escape, despair, doom. He says, you don't need to be afraid. Now, you just pictured an ugly father.

Pictured an ugly father. And that invokes, doesn't it? What it invokes fear and dread. You know, a father that's distant or disinterested or violent.

A father who may be abandoned you as a child, your mindset, if that's been your experience or if that is what you think, recoils from calling God father, doesn't it?

Because you're fearful when you think of a father because of the experiences you might have had. And so even you might attribute to God that ugliness of harshness and oppressiveness and abandonment and of distance.

[17 : 46] It's very difficult if you have had that kind of father to change the mindset to allow you to recognize him or recognize this truth as a great truth.

Having a good father humanly speaking will certainly help. It will help us to understand what God is saying. But we must put aside both of these things, even a good earthly father or a terrible earthly father that you have had dreadful experiences of.

And remember that in many ways that what God is telling us here is primary, is the reality of what real fatherhood is like.

And he says something, well he doesn't, but Jesus says something a bit scary in John chapter 1.

John chapter 1 and verse 11, John says it here of Jesus. He said, He came to His own and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[18 : 56] So the scary thing is that it's not universal fatherhood that's been spoken of here. Now there is a sense in which we all belong to God and His family as God all created in His image.

What God's word reminds us that we're estranged children by nature, we're estranged because of our sin and our separation and our sinful nature. This doctrine of our adoption into the family of God is firmly placed in the gift of new life through Jesus Christ and what He has done in the cross, and by our accepting Him as the only way of the estrangement being dealt with and being back in His family in a really special way.

Now if that's a huge challenge today, if you've just drifted into church and you're not a Christian, and the challenge is to not presume that, yeah, well we're all jock Tamsins, Bernes, and we all belong to God and we're all His children, but He says in a really powerful way through His word that our sin of us is estranged us from Him and that we need to come to Him through Jesus Christ, recognize the tension we feel, the sin that we feel, the hostility, the guilt, all that we feel, and come to Jesus Christ and recognize that outside of Christ all is not good.

We need to be back into His family. But what we have here is an act of adoption, and Paul's speaking to the church in Rome, and in Roman culture adoption was fairly common, much more so than in the Hebrew culture in Roman society.

It was common for a man, a man of means, a person of means who didn't have a son, who didn't have an heir, it was quite common for him to adopt someone, maybe a boy or a teenager or a young man, to adopt them, someone they trusted, someone they valued, to adopt them into their family so that they would receive the inheritance.

[20 : 50] It was always important to keep the name. They were given a new name, their debts were paid if they had any, their ongoing debts were covered, they had the responsibility to honor their new father, and this was quite a common legal practice in Rome.

This act of adoption, and he's saying that the son would be the heir who would receive the vast majority of the inheritance.

Maybe you're squirming a little bit here as a woman and you're thinking, well, this is a bit sexist language that we're adopted as sons, why can't it say we're adopted as sons and daughters? Well, I think as it's written into the context, there's something very important about what Paul says.

Paul is saying, yes, in the culture of Rome, it was the man, it was the son, and it was only a son who would receive the heir, would receive the adoption and would receive the inheritance.

But he's saying that privilege which was given only to one male who was adopted into the family, he said, it is the privilege of every believer, of men and women, everyone is given this unique special privilege who comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

[21 : 56] This radically different one from what society was offering. In a sense, it would be the same, men can't get too upset when Jesus calls the church the bride of Christ.

It's using an illustration, it's not being sexist in any way, it's using an illustration and it's important to remember that when we come to a passage like this. It's about legal standing and it's about the inheritance we receive.

It's not about privilege of being male or female in that sense. It's the act of adoption which enables us to call God Abba Father. Now this is a really well known verse, isn't it?

And it does speak about the idea of intimacy and closeness. Abba, people say that traditionally it's the name that became the name of the little children who can use daddy, we can call God daddy.

And that's true. It is that intimate name. Jesus uses it actually in Gethsemane. He says, when he prays, a very solemn way and it doesn't belittle it.

[23 : 10] Sometimes I feel saying daddy maybe doesn't quite grasp it but he said Abba Father, if this cup can pass from me, but not my will, but yours be done.

There's this great closeness. He needed that closeness, didn't he? Because everyone had abandoned him. But he also recognized the glory and authority of the God into whose presence he was coming.

For me, in terms of my own psyche, dad is the great, you know, I never really used the word daddy but dad would be the great parallel in my lingo.

It's got a great weight to it, dad for me. Dad, Christ is a great name. It just evokes so much for me.

It might be different for you. It's a recognition of both intimacy and love and goodness, but it's more than just a friend. It's loving authority too.

[24 : 06] There's that Abba Father. It's a great picture that God brings us into this loving, just intimate family setting where the Redeemer is Jesus.

The Father has sent him and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us and that we are united to the Trinity in this marvelous way. And it's in ways that you might never have dreamed of, might never have experienced in human terms, might never have had, or what you strive to offer today as a parent.

And it's great because he gives us the mindset of a child as an ACS where children were adopted into the family and he goes on to speak about as being children of God and of children in ears.

And I think that's very important in the context of joy as well because he wants us to have the mindset of a child, I think. I don't mean by being immature and by blowing raspberries and all that kind of stuff.

What I mean by having the mindset of a child is that we, you know what children are like? They enjoy laughter and fun. How often have you said it as a grown-up? I don't laugh as much as I used to as a child.

[25 : 15] What you have in your life used to be filled with laughter? A child in that secure family setting that we've been envisaging here is someone who is loving, who is learning, there's an innocence, they can make friends with anyone.

There's sometimes with children a slight naivety because of that. There's community, there's growth, there's trust, there's discipline, there's protection, security. You know, a dad or mum, they'll be there.

Dad and mum know what to do. Dad will help me. It's a tremendous thing. And you know, for us often in that situation as children, there's a fear in discipline, but not a fear of punishment so much as a fear of disappointment, isn't it?

Sometimes it may be a fear of punishment, but there's a fear of disappointment. I don't like seeing my mum and dad sad because of how I'm living.

And that picks the mindset of what God is saying here about us as children. The importance of being joyful in our Christian lives, of more laughter and more fun and more security and more recognition of who we are in Jesus.

[26 : 23] I could speak all day about that, but we don't have time. But think on that. Think on your own childhood. Think on the love and the joy and the peace.

And even think if it wasn't like that, that you longed for it to be like that and that we can take some of these illustrations and apply them to our life in Christ because we know who He is and we know we can call Him Abba Father with that intimacy of knowing Him.

That's what it speaks of. It speaks of the intimacy of knowing Him. Not knowing about Him, not having theological knowledge, but knowing Him in our lives and in our hearts. And it also speaks of assurance.

You know, the Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are children of God. It witnesses. You know, when I started my ministry, and even before that when I was growing up, but particularly after I started my ministry, many people would come up to me, oh, you're very like your father.

Because my dad was a minister as well, and he was a minister here actually some of the time. And one old lady saying, you're very like your father, but you'll never be the preacher he was.

[27 : 34] Cheers, hen. So anyway, that sometimes happens, you know, people have different opinions. But the older I get, the more I know and appreciate that I'm my father's son.

And my thinking, my looks, he was a dashing, handsome old man. And my attitudes, so I know I'm not legitimate.

Tumbleweed. Because I cross the room. No, I know that. I know. I know. There's an assurance about that I testify with my own experiences that I'm His son.

I'm His child. And that's kind of what he's God speaking about here is that the Spirit of God testifies with us as we become like Christ, as we follow Christ.

I think there's something extremely miraculous and powerful in these words. And I'm not sure sometimes how he does it, but the Spirit does testify with our Spirit that we belong to Jesus.

[28 : 35] It may be by the unhappiness we feel at our sin. It may be just at the times we can praise God and worship Him for who He is, that we want to obey Him. There's lots of different ways that we find that our mindset, that important mindset, is changing.

That sense of loving obligation that we're wrestling with, we're sad. We're disappointed. Or we're sad when we know we've disappointed Him, when we've disobeyed Him and we want to change.

The Spirit testifies. And that reminds us then as we close that we are heirs. As children we are heirs, like we mentioned earlier, we're heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

And there's another 10 or 12 sermons in that, isn't there? And we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. We share in everything that Jesus Christ has won for us.

Joint heirs with Jesus, heirs of God. I mean, it speaks for itself. I can't add anything to the significance and importance of that. You know, he's usually for an inheritance to be evoked and there needs to be a death.

[29 : 42] Well, the death has already been in Jesus, but there's also resurrection. And the story's only begun that there is righteousness and freedom and transformation and belonging and an unimaginable future in our inheritance with Jesus Christ.

The heir in Roman society got the lion's share. We get the lion's share and the lion. We get the lion of the tribe of Judah.

We get His presence. We get His nearness. He keeps nothing back for every one of His children, and as part of that, we also get His suffering.

We share in that. We share in belonging to Christ and the suffering that comes from belonging to Christ, the suffering of dealing, putting to death sin and the suffering of being associated with Jesus in a world that is hostile towards Him.

The battle, the resistance, association with Christ, it's outweighed by the glory. And I am gutted because Thomas is getting to preach on that next week.

[30 : 56] That's the next section, the future glory. That's his part. So you'll need to come back. Let's pray. I'm going to pray, intercede various things, and we're going to finish which should have been done earlier.

Sorry, my mind's been all over the place today. Mind set in the wrong place. With the Lord's Prayer. So the Lord's Prayer will come up on the screens. Just say it as we introduce it at the end of the prayer.

It's significant, isn't it? It's our Lord, our Father that it begins with. I think that's significant as we close our worship. But let's pray together. Father, God, we ask and pray that we would remain in You.

You would help us to be courageous and to be counter cultural. We pray that You would help people to take the step of putting their faith in Jesus Christ today if they have never done so before because it is amazing to be adopted into your family.

And it gives us a perspective that isn't unrealistic. It doesn't pretend that there isn't suffering and trouble and difficulty and doubts and fears.

[32 : 01] But it grounds us completely differently and it reminds us that we need to keep on remembering and living this mindset so that we are transformed. We pray for grace in our lives.

We pray for grace into the city. We pray for the lost and the lonely. We pray for those who are burdened by the inequality and by the homelessness that they face and the brutality and the misery that is so often the life of people in this city.

We pray for those who have been abused by their fathers, who have been abandoned by their fathers, who have been ignored and rejected by their fathers and all the pain and all the suffering that comes from that.

May we never have a self-righteous bone in our bodies that would question the lives of people when we consider what they have faced and what they have gone through and remind us of the grace of God who has kept us from that.

Help us to be thankful for all that we have and for all that we enjoy. Gracious God, we pray for our city. We pray for our teachers and for our nurses and for our doctors, for those in public service, for those who are struggling with the stresses of a lack of resource and funding and all these areas that are so important.

[33 : 25] We pray for our business leaders, for our employees, for our students. We pray for our mothers and fathers. We pray for the people we rub shoulders with every day and we ask and pray that we might share with them the love of Jesus and the ordinariness of our lives but yet in the supernatural grace that we have been given.

So Lord, help us to depend on You and help us to love You better because You empower us to do so. It is a great gift and a great privilege and a great freedom. And Lord, we ask as we come together to pray the prayer, the model prayer that You gave us that it would be something that is real to us and something that is important for us.

So let us conclude our time of prayer by praying this great prayer that You give us, the Lord's Prayer. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.