

Life with Victory

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[0 : 00] So, we're going to look back again this morning at Romans chapter 8. This has obviously been the most intense period that we've spent looking through the book.

We spent four weeks on Romans chapter 8, because it's probably, it is, I believe, the core, the central, the hub of the whole of the letter to the Romans.

Would it be as bold as to say it's, maybe, the hub of the whole Bible? Because of what it says, it's tremendous, hugely significant for us in our Christian lives.

So, the last section of chapter 8 where we read together where Paul introduces this section with the question, what shall we say to these things? I mean, who says these things?

Who says what Paul says in this last section? I mean, he'd be crazy to say these, right? It's unbelievable the things he says in this passage. And what we need to remember and ground ourselves in this morning is that we believe God says these things, okay?

[1 : 09] God says these things through Paul, the apostle, speaking to the church in Rome.

Remember in our gifts of the Spirit, we were looking at the apostles as being foundational.

And Paul was an apostle and the truths that he had along with the prophets are foundational. It was revealed to him, these great truths by God, not only deliberately and consciously by God, but also what he came to experience and know and realize, because these guys were real guys, they weren't just robots.

And through his own personal experience as a believer, he came to know and understand these things, I'll say a little bit more about that later. But the core of chapter eight of Romans is the whole idea of mindset, isn't it?

We've looked at that again and again. What's our mindset as Christians? Immediately, you can listen, because it's about your mindset as you come in and our mindset as Christians as we go from here.

Mindset is so important for us as Christians. It's so important to how we live and how we understand our Christianity and our lives. It may be that today you've come into church unsure of God altogether.

[2 : 22] It may be as a Christian, he seems very far away. You may be not feeling the love. It doesn't seem to, he doesn't seem to be listening to you. And the journey seems very tough.

You may be doubting yourself as a believer. Your emotions may be all over the place with regard to that. You're feeling guilty, judged, opposed, vulnerable.

Your faith is weak. You might just be feeling in a bit of a rut spiritually. I'll come to church. That's what I do. It'll be different today. At least we'll be a fire drill. But normally it's the same kind of thing every week.

And you may be suffering, physical or spiritually or in whatever way, many fears. And you may also be struggling with life experiences.

The world in which we live, craziness of that world in which we live, the insecurity of the days in which we live. Things used to be fairly stable. Anyone over 50 can say that.

[3 : 16] But for young people today, the world is very insecure. There's so much suffering. As a Christian, you may be getting slaughtered for your faith. You know, verse 36 speaks about that, for your sake, we're being killed all the day long.

We're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. We appreciate and sympathize with that today. You might be disappointed with the church and with Christians. You may have dragged your feet to St. C's today.

St. C's is the subject of your ire and as leadership, how you feel let down in one or many different ways. Well, what's the purpose of Romans chapter 8?

Is to change our mindset with the help of God's Holy Spirit. To change our mindset. And the end of Romans chapter 8, Romans, the letter ends with that great benediction marked by joy and peace. I think that's coming up on the screen, the end of Romans chapter 8. Sorry, the end of the letter, Romans chapter 15. Have we got that? And it's the great benediction.

[4 : 24] We've used quite a lot when we're doing Romans. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. So joy and peace is the reason for Romans, is the reason for the writing of the book of Romans, knowing joy and peace in our lives.

And the purpose of Romans 8 is to focus all of that. So in verse 28 it says the importance of, and we know that for those who love God all things work together.

A knowledge, a knowledge of what God says to us. And in verse 38 it speaks about being sure or being convinced of what God says. So Martin Lloyd-John speaks about that as logic on fire.

So it's conviction and knowledge. Romans 8 is about changing our mindset by knowledge and by conviction so that we can live a life of joy and peace.

You of us don't want to live a life of joy in Christ and peace in Him. So I don't know, I don't know why you've come today.

[5 : 28] I don't know in what condition you've come today. I can tell on the outside, and you can tell with me on the outside, but I don't know what's in your heart. You may need to hear this truth very, very much today, very clearly.

You praying that God will speak into your life. If you need to hear this, you may be wrestling with issues of faith and trust. You may have come today saying, this is the last time I will come to St. Columbus unless I get some kind of proof or some kind of evidence that God knows my heart and God knows what I need and that He speaks into that.

I don't know, but I'm asking that you pray that God will change your mindset and change my mindset so that we can live a life of joy and peace in Him.

So He speaks into our lives in this passage in two very important ways. He says a couple of things. He says firstly, I will not let you go.

I'm paraphrasing. I will not let you go. That's what He says. These are the two things that God is saying in this passage. I'm not going to let you go as a believer.

[6 : 36] And He says, you will never be separated from my love. Never! He says never. You'll never be separated from my love. That's what He's saying this morning. I will not let you go and you'll never be separated from my love.

Now just before you get all bristly and say, well, it's okay for you to say that. You're just a full-time minister and it's easy for you to preach these truths or maybe you say before the Bible says that because the Bible doesn't know what my life is like.

Preacher doesn't know what my life is like. How dare you say that kind of things that you'll know joy and peace and that God will never let us go and never be separated from His love. It's kind of sentimental, isn't it?

Because you say two things before we get bristly about it. First is, God knows exactly what your life is like. Knows exactly what your life is like this morning. He knows exactly what your heart is like. But also Paul in saying these things was no idealist or no monastic apostle who preached in an ivory tower.

[7 : 40] Paul knew these things. Second Corinthians 11, it's a slightly longer quote but I want to read it because it puts into context what Paul says here. He speaks to the church in confidence. He says, look, five times I received at the hands of the Jews, the 40 lashes, less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. At night and a day I was adrift at sea. On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, from the Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea, from false brothers, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst, often without food and cold and exposure.

And apart from other things, there's the daily pressure on me of my anxiety of all the churches. This was no theorist when Paul says these things and when God gives him this message.

God is committed to our good, verse 28. His purpose and determined will is to complete what he's begun in our lives, eternal life.

Thomas preached about that last week. And he does so because of his passionate love for us. So I say again, God is saying, I will not let you go.

[8 : 50] You will never be separated from my love. But the challenge of the gospel is a kind of, and a very important aside here, challenge of the gospel.

This promise isn't to everyone. This isn't a universal promise to humanity. Can you call God Father? Do you know Him as your Lord and Savior? Do you appreciate your spiritual need? Are you looking to God for the answers and for meaning and for hope in this volatile and insecure world?

Because if you're not, then you need to recognize that this truth is only to those who have committed their lives and hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because it's only safety and only security in Him. There's only joy and there's only peace in Him. There's only life in Him. That's the whole message of Romans. It's the whole message of the good news, isn't it?

[9 : 54] To remember that the importance of being able to call God Father because you've come to Him through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

So as Christians, He wants you to know and He wants you to be convinced so that your mindset changes, that He will not let us go, that we cannot be separated, never separated from His love. And He does it by asking five questions in this section, okay? So always getting us to use our minds and get us to think. And questions are the great way of doing that. So in verse 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35, each verse has a question.

And it's through the answer to these questions that He's assuring us that we will not let us go and that His love for us will never, we will never be separated from Him. But I'm going to split that five questions into three points because there are three themes really.

The first is generosity, the generosity of God. There's one and two, what shall we say to these things? If God is for us, God's on our side, who can be against us?

[11 : 04] And He says, He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for His own. Second question, how will He not along with Him graciously give us all things? So generosity is the theme of these first two questions.

And He's reminding us in a world where we're plagued by insecurity and by fear and sometimes right opposition. And maybe you've come thinking, God doesn't give me what I ask for.

He's not giving, He's not answering my prayers. Does He really care? Is He mean? Is He a killjoy? No, He's reminding us of His generosity and His being on our side.

God He says is for us. When God is for us, this is not a bit player who's for us. This is not someone who's insignificant. It's not a figment of our imagination like our invisible friend that we used to have when we were small.

God is the living God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe who is for us. He's on our side. This is a hugely significant reality.

[12 : 08] And in His generosity, He has given His Son. He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all. Now that's a really hard section, a really hard verse, because some people immediately read that and say, well, you know, He didn't give Himself, He gave His Son.

A bit of a dictator, someone who abused His power. He wasn't willing to give Himself but He gave His Son. What kind of Father would do that?

We can't possibly read that if we understand the mystery of the Trinity, when we understand that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, one God.

So in the giving of His Son, He's giving Himself. The pain of Christ's forsakenness on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

He's as painful for Christ the Son as it is for God the Father who's having to forsake at that point, His beloved Son.

[13 : 20] And He's giving in the Trinity that He's giving of Himself in the most mysterious way and in the most astonishing mind-blowing way.

He's committing Himself, He's already committed Himself to us. You know that yourself, don't you? You show your love for someone, the greatest love you can give is not really a check.

Checks are handy. But is the giving of yourself, isn't it? That's how we measure our commitment to someone. It's when we give them of ourselves, our time, our friendship, our interest, our sacrificial, you know when we spend time with someone, the giving of ourselves, that's the great act of love and commitment, isn't it?

The giving of ourselves. And that is how we know if people really love and practically show their love by the giving of themselves to others.

And God gives us His Son. God gives us Himself. He gives us what we absolutely need as His Son is atonement for our sins.

[14 : 29] And therefore having given us what we absolutely need, we can be assured He will continue to give us all that we need in our lives. He can't give more.

He will always give what's good for us. That might not be what we think is good for us, and it certainly might not be what we want, but He will always give what is good for us, and we can rejoice in His generosity.

And more so because we know what lies ahead. Anticipation is a great thing in life, isn't it? Peace and hope, and Paul speaks about hope at the end. One of the worst things in life is to be devoid of hope, isn't it?

Have no hope, no anticipation, no future. We have this great hope as Christians, you know, when people die. When Christians die, it immediately makes us think about the future hope, the end of this life, you know, which is passing so quickly, and we think we're so secure in it, but ends so quickly.

And then there's, for us as Christians, there's future hope. And in fact, it's so secure that Paul mentions it in the past tense.

[15 : 39] In verse 30, we didn't read it. Those who are predestined, they all call those who call, they justify, and those who justify, they also glorify. They glorify. We haven't been glorified yet, but it's written in the past tense, it's so sure.

This is what is going to be like for us. He can give us more. He's committed to our present, he's committed to our future and our glorification and all that we need, you know?

It's saying, I'm on your side. I'm on your side. It's generosity of the living God, he says, on our side. So there's generosity, that's the first thing. The second thing is innocence.

That's questions three and questions four. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn Jesus Christ, the one who died, more than that, who is raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us?

So these second two questions are written in the, with the idea of the courtroom.

[16 : 44] They're legal questions, really. Who will bring any charge? Who will condemn us? And he brings that into our lives, that the idea of being crushed, having a sense of failure or of guilt often happens in a community setting.

As we compare ourselves with others, we feel failed or we feel miserable or we feel that we've done things wrong or we feel we're being judged, sadly, often.

These questions in the courthouse language. Despite our greatest efforts, what I try to hear is we feel judged. We feel judged by our own conscience. We feel judged by Satan's accusations.

We feel judged by a cynical world that we go to work in every week and sometimes someone will say, well, I thought you were a Christian. Are you really, you're a Christian? Wow, that's strange. I didn't think you were a Christian.

Judged by the world and maybe also judged, as I said, by other Christians. You're sadly most often judged by other Christians, strange thing. Then we just go God on our side, we think we're God.

[17 : 51] We think we can take the place of God and make all the judgments ourselves. We're very good at that. But God is saying and reminding us and challenging to get our focus and attention.

If we're going to be joyful, if we're going to know peace in our lives, we need to remember who it is that we stand before and whether our identity is our identities in God, it's in Jesus Christ.

God has justified us. He says that for you. Who will bring any charge against God's elect? He said, no one will because God has justified us. This is the great judge of the universe.

He said, your sins are already cleared in the person of Jesus. That's why this is all related and channeled into the person of Jesus. You might not feel you need Jesus.

You might not feel you are gilly before Jesus. But he says that we are made right only by Jesus and by having our faith in Him so that God the judge justifies us because he sees as perfect and innocent Son.

[18 : 54] And Jesus is not going to condemn us. Now, you think someone who judges you, just think about it for a moment because they've got something on you. You know, that's what's happening in the press all the time just now.

Someone's abusing their parliamentary position to name someone else and someone else who's named says, you know, you shouldn't be saying anything like that. You don't have anything on me. But the reason he says it is because he has got something on him. He knows a secret. He knows about things that he's done in the past now. And sometimes that will make us feel gilly, maybe with other people. They know things about us. They know what we're like. Maybe as you look in the mirror, you see yourself and you say, I know things about myself. But the thing is here, what we're told, what we're told here is Jesus is not going to condemn us. And yet he is the one who knows our sins intimately because he died for our sins. [19 : 57] He can't be surprised by our sins and by our heart and by our guilt. He voluntarily took them, suffered them, was judged for them, was condemned on every single one of these sins on our behalf.

So Jesus doesn't condemn us because he has already been condemned in our place. To see why we can know innocence and justice at the same time. God is satisfied with that. He's at the right hand of God. God raised him to life, defeated death, the curse, and the curse of a rebellion and sin against God. That's what God had planned. He raised him from the dead. And Jesus Christ is alive, sitting at the right hand of the Father in a place of great glory and the Father listens to Jesus' prayers for you. Jesus praying for you today. He's interceding for us at the right hand of God. Isn't that great? Isn't that amazing? You've got that great reality and that great truth in our lives that Jesus Christ is interceding.

[21 : 14] Trinitarian team effort on our behalf. We recognize that we're innocent because of what God continues to do in Christ for us, and so we can know joy and peace.

Generosity, innocence. I'm struggling today because the first time in many years, the clock up there stopped. So might go on for a very long time.

But I was given a watch by some very caring parishioner who obviously didn't want me to go on too long. But I'm really missing. I'm sorry if I keep looking up there.

I am looking at the gallery, but I'm just recognizing the clock has stopped and it's confusing me. So generosity and innocence.

Generosity questions one and two. Innocence questions three and four. So when we know we are innocent before God justly because of Jesus and because we know God is generous towards us rather than mean, then that enables us to know joy and peace.

[22 : 19] It changes our mindset. So the last thing, and this is question five, which is really a summary of the other questions. It's the pinnacle of the other questions, and it's the question behind the other questions, and it's the fear that might be often behind your life as a Christian in my life.

Unbreakable love. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Is that not what brings you fear spiritually? God doesn't love me anymore.

I've done too much. I'm separated from God's love. Can it be that we fall out of a relationship with Jesus Christ as believers?

Well, we're reminded in this passage that this climactic question is to remind us that whatever we are experiencing as believers, our mindset is to take us back to that place where we know and recognize and appreciate that He will not let us go and that we will never be separated from His love.

Now, that can seem trite and it can seem like it's just kind of wishful thinking in many ways because of the suffering and the struggles and the battles we have in our lives.

[23 : 41] There's no denial of the suffering that we go through in life, and there's no denial that some people suffer a lot worse than we do. But we need to disabuse ourselves as we come to this.

Disabuse ourselves as something very misleading, which is often at the core of our thinking, which is if Jesus loves, if Jesus does love me, why does He let me suffer?

Why does He let me go through difficulties? You know, our biggest battle is the question, why?

Well, why? Why isn't He promises coming true now? Why don't I see the joy and peace? Why do I know these things?

Maybe you don't have these questions. Maybe I'm just particularly questioning, but I suspect some of you may have. And I've often heard, at least I've often heard it said, you know, if God is our Father, well, I know my Father, He would never let me suffer.

If He had the power of God, He would never let me suffer the way God lets me suffer. What kind of Father is it that would allow you to go through these things? A legitimate concern, isn't it, when we apply human kind of characteristics to the living God?

[24 : 42] Well, what do we need to remember of what the Bible always, always teaches? It's first that sin always continues to cloud everything. If we're associated with Christ as believers, we will be opposed.

Okay, we will be opposed because Christ Jesus as the perfect person was also opposed. It's anomalous, we saw that on Wednesday night. Anomalous just means doesn't make sense.

Sin doesn't make sense. That's why Jesus cried on the cross. Why? Why? In the midst of that darkness, He cried why? The living God, the Son of God cried why?

Because being under the curse of sin is just senseless. It's not logical. And the world under judgment doesn't make sense to us.

Sin doesn't make sense. It's a horrible anomaly. It's a miserable experience that we just never make sense of. But sin clouds everything, a world under God's judgment.

[25 : 38] And sin still remains in our own heart as we battle against God. As sinful nature remains, it's temporary. We're responsible.

We're not to grieve the Spirit. We're not to quench the Spirit. We're not to resist the Spirit. But sometimes we do. And sometimes, therefore, there's a struggle. But paradoxically, in His great love, He says He even will use suffering to bring us closer to Him.

The Bible doesn't only suggest that. That is the clear experience that we know and Paul knew and that Jesus taught.

And here we have a list of all the things that can happen in this life to believers, whether it's trouble or hardship or opposition or poverty or violence.

And then in the second section, He repeats another broad kind of areas of life, there's physical world, the physical world, life or death.

[26 : 38] The spiritual world, angels or demons, time, present or future, space, height and depth. And anything, He's really just giving us a list of anything that might be able to separate us from the love of God.

Can anything you list today separate us, separate you from the love of God? And He's saying, no, no, nothing can. Does your suffering that you may face or may have faced this last week, will it tell you that God doesn't love you?

No, it does not. God says no, it doesn't. We may not understand it. We certainly will not like it, but it doesn't tell us that God doesn't love us.

Nothing can separate us. And the reminder is that nothing we experience, nothing that we subjectively feel will separate us from the love of Christ as we remain in Him.

Remaining in Him is the key. His purpose for us, His love for us, His commitment to us, His elect will never lose their salvation.

[27 : 50] Nothing can separate you, He says, from my love. He says, I'm telling you that. He says, it's not about you, He says, it's about me.

It's about my love, my commitment. It's my intercession, my finished work, my declaration of you being justified.

So He says, this is what we are to know. We are to know this. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

And we are to become convinced of that. We are to be sure of that. That's what this chapter is all about. The word there is a rational, settled, unalterable foundational conviction, something that is at the forefront of our mindset that governs our life, therefore, therefore we can't spend any time on this.

We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. That's what we are. We are more than conquerors because of what God has done. God is to receive the glory in our lives.

[29 : 13] We're not the conquerors. It's not our love. It's not our abilities. It's not our knowledge. It's not our convictions. But it's what we take and recognize as the character and the person of the living God to whom is all the glory.

And if we can't give the glory to God, we misunderstand what our salvation is about. He is worthy of our worship. And He's worthy of our glory.

So may we be more than conquerors so that we can know joy. There's so little joy, isn't there, in the Christian church. That's a terrible thing to say.

But it's true, isn't it? There's an awful lack of joy in the Christian church. Probably a great lack of peace as well. Joy and peace as our mindset is fixed on these truths, I will not let you go and you will never be separated from my love.

May we know joy and peace and kindness as we think about these great truths. Let's pray together. Lord, I ask and pray that you would apply your word to my heart and to the hearts of everyone here that we would have a mindset that is being renewed, that we would remember we're not condemned, that we would remember that Jesus has taken what is justly meted out, would be justly meted out to us and has taken the cost, the punishment for us.

[30 : 47] Help us to know that we are adopted into your family as children and that you're a divine Father and that you are at every level working things out in such a way that we will be stronger and fitter and better as we do not resist you and grieve you or sin against you.

Lord, give us that awareness of the Spirit working in our hearts, God sending the Son being sent and the Holy Spirit coming into our lives at great Trinitarian partnership on our behalf.

Lord, we pray for those for whom their Christian faith is particularly sharp and focused and maybe helpful but also challenging this week, those who grieve the loss of loved ones.

We pray for Mary Mackay, John L. Mackay's wife and her great loss, her life's partner. We pray for his children.

We pray for others who we might know who might have come into our minds as I've prayed for John's family. We pray for all those who need your help, who may have come today at the end of their tether, we pray that they may find this great message of joy and peace and hope in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 15] And as we ask and remind us as we hear of so many things in the press and in the world that remind us of the shortness of life and the insecurity of all that we would find our rock in our salvation in Jesus Christ.

So help us, we pray, and bless your word to us and anoint us with the presence of your Holy Spirit as we sing praise in response to you for Jesus' sake.

Amen.