



SECURED

All who accept the gospel have a sure hope for a future as children of God.

ROMANS 8:12-25

When a buyer borrows money from an institution, he signs a contract. At that point, the buyer is under obligation to the lender. If he does not keep the terms of the contract, a penalty will be assessed. Unable to fulfill the law of sin and death, we were under its penalty. However, Jesus died on the cross as our sin offering, releasing us from the penalty of sin and death. Paul reminded us that we have no obligation to live according to the flesh. We are free to be guided by the Spirit.

How would you describe the emotions that come with signing a loan agreement? How does paying off a loan free you?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

ROMANS 8:1-39

In the first four chapters of Romans, Paul built an argument for the sinfulness of all humanity. In chapters 5–7 he underscored the merciful work of Jesus in providing salvation for sinners. He showed how Christ provides a new way of life through His death and resurrection. Those who die to sin through Him are raised to walk in a completely new—and better—way. Because of that transformation, we serve a new Master. Sin no longer calls the shots in our lives. But we don't just flip a switch and turn off all the evil in our lives. Even the strongest believers face temptation. Paul mourned how he so easily gave in to what he shouldn't do and failed to do the things he should. Christians should understand that the flesh will always be a problem on this side of eternity, but we have overcome sin through Jesus. He gives us the power to live for His honor and glory each day.

Because we are God's children, we no longer live under His condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2). We might fall at times, but we don't fear the penalty that hangs over those who have not accepted His grace. What's more, God has given us His Spirit to help us live according to His desires (8:3-4).

Paul contrasted the life of the flesh (which leads to death) and the life of the Spirit (which produces life). The former has no hope of pleasing God, but those who live in the power of the Spirit have confidence that God is actively working in their lives (8:5-11). They can be sure that God has a plan for their lives—a plan that includes a future beyond comprehension. Our relationship with our heavenly Father guarantees our hope—not just for this life, but also for the next (8:12-25). Nothing can possibly separate us from the love our Father has for us. We are secure in Him, which means we win in this life and in eternity (8:31-39).

Read Romans 8:12-25 in your Bible, underlining words and phrases that describe a believer's future. Why was it so important for Paul to remind his readers of the believer's future?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ETERNAL FUTURE (ROM. 8:12-13)

¹² **Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.** ¹³ **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**

VERSES 12-13

Therefore builds on what came before. Paul had just contrasted the condemnation of the flesh and the freedom of the Spirit. Those who live by the flesh cannot please God, while those who live in the Spirit have died to sin and rely on Christ (Rom. 8:1-11).

The apostle called his readers *brethren*, indicating the relationship they shared as children of God. He also reminded them that this relationship meant they no longer had to live according *to the •flesh*. Sin wasn't their master anymore.

Those who live according to the flesh *shall die*. Because they are trusting in their own abilities to reach God, they will inevitably fall short. As a result, they will not only die physically—like everyone does—but they will also experience spiritual and eternal death.

By contrast, those who are empowered *by the Spirit* have a much different existence now and in eternity—*you shall live*. The Greek wording of *mortify the deeds of the body* indicates a continual action, a choice made to kill sin each and every day.

What does living by the Spirit look like? How is living by the Spirit connected to living in eternity?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord (2 Thess. 1:7-12).

ETERNAL INHERITANCE (ROM. 8:14-18)

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. ¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

VERSES 14-15

Paul reminded the Romans that they were not free to live as they pleased. Believers are *led by the Spirit of God*. We follow His direction and His guidance. Following the Spirit isn't simply a matter of obedience. It's also a matter of identification. We—and the world around us—know we are *sons of God* because we walk with the Spirit. Jews saw themselves as God's children because of their history with Him. Paul redefined the term by emphasizing a relationship with God through the Spirit.

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Paul had a deep appreciation for comparisons and contrasts. He provided another example in this passage—distinguishing between two spirits. The *bondage* is marked by *fear*. Those living in slavery are accountable to the law and are subject to its judgments. By comparison, *the Spirit of adoption* does not deal in fear. The Holy Spirit is the means of our adoption into God's family. (See also Eph. 1:3-12; Gal. 4:1-7.) By the work of the Spirit, old relationships are severed and new family connections are established.

•*Abba, Father* is a tender Aramaic phrase akin to “daddy” in English. It is the language of a child running into the arms of a loving and protective father. The One we once ran away from out of fear and guilt is now the One we run to.

VERSES 16-18

The parent-child relationship believers have with God produces great benefits for this life. The guidance of the Spirit and the



peace of the Father give believers purpose and meaning. But those blessings are only the tip of the iceberg. Paul wrote that ***the Spirit itself beareth witness*** to the eternal relationship Christ followers have with God. This testimony guarantees benefits both in this life and in the next.

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At times we may struggle with doubt, wondering if our relationship with God is real. But the Spirit's testimony affirms our status as ***children of God***, so there is no reason to doubt.

Most parents want to provide a suitable inheritance for their children. Paul noted that Christians are ***heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ***. Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have full membership in God's family—including a brotherhood with Christ. As a result, believers have access to all of God's riches. Of course, these riches should not be reduced to mere financial blessings. Paul was not preaching a prosperity, name-it-claim-it gospel. Instead, he was stating that God's resources were enough to meet every need we can imagine.

But this intimate relationship with God is not an easy road. Christ suffered, and His followers will ***suffer with him***. Jesus said as much when He told His followers that students are not greater than their teachers (Luke 6:40). Hardship is a reality Christians must expect.

The Romans probably understood suffering for their faith. Some had seen it firsthand. Paul reminded them that such suffering was not in vain. Those who suffered with Him would ***be also glorified together***. The struggles of this life cannot begin to hold a candle to the blessings of eternity. The glory that will be revealed in heaven will surpass anything we can imagine in this lifetime.

If you had to describe being a child of God in one word, what would it be? What single word would you use to describe being separated from Him?

CREATION RESTORED (ROM. 8:19-22)

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, ²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

VERSE 19

God's glory (v. 18) won't change people only; God will restore all creation. Paul wrote that *the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth* for the day when God will make all things new. Prophets spoke about a new heaven and new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22), and the apostle John saw it in his revelation (Rev. 21:1-2).

When God created the world, He declared it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). But sin marred creation (Gen. 3:17). This was not the fault of nature but of humans, who turned their backs on God. Unfortunately, humans have continued to make the problems worse by failing to be good stewards of God's creation.

The created order was cursed at the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19) but will again be restored to its former state. Just as people will forget death and tears, nature will be rescued from its blights and flaws. Creation will again reflect God's glory in a way that hasn't been seen since Eden.

VERSES 20-22

While humans rebelled against God of their own volition, nature was a victim of sin. It became collateral damage in the war between good and evil. Both people and nature are trapped in bondage to decay. There is a cycle of birth, life, death, and deterioration. We have the promise that this cycle will be broken. Things will change—not just for ourselves, but also for every part of creation. God will leave no stone unturned in His work of restoring His handiwork to its original state.

In verse 22, Paul used another human image to illustrate his point about the impact of sin on nature: childbirth. Creation has long *groaneth* under the weight of sin. Natural disasters and diseases may seem commonplace, but they are not part of God's



initial plan for nature. These pains are not the result of fatal wounds that won't heal. Instead, they are more like a woman's labor pains as she draws closer to the point of delivering the baby. Such pains are incredibly intense and difficult but lead to a blessed event. Likewise, the stress and strain that marks creation right now point to an incredible new birth within creation. Once the time of groaning has passed, nature will be renewed and restored.

Where do you see the impact of sin on nature? What can you do to be a better steward of God's creation?

BIBLE SKILL: *Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.*

Focus on the phrase "redemption of our bodies" in Romans 8:23. Compare the phrase in several trusted Bible translations. Jot down the various renderings of the term that you find. Using a Bible dictionary, review articles on our future hope. Scan passages listed and make notes of any findings that help you better understand the meaning.

HUMANITY RESTORED (ROM. 8:23-25)

²³ And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

VERSE 23

Firstfruits were the initial crops taken in a harvest and were often used for offerings to God. Paul said **the Spirit** served as firstfruits—a guarantee of our future. The Greek word used has a meaning similar to a pledge or down payment.

Because we have this promise from God, we also have confidence that our groaning and waiting won't be in vain. While we currently enjoy the benefits of spiritual adoption, our relationship with God will find its ultimate fulfillment in the redemption of our bodies.

VERSES 24-25

We once lived in a state of absolute hopelessness apart from God. But through our adoption, God gives us **hope** for the future. Hope, like faith, is based on what can't be experienced through human senses. It is real but unseen. In fact, Paul noted that **hope that is seen is not hope**. We don't need faith or trust for something we can see right in front of us. But faith in Christ energizes our hope and reminds us that one day our groanings will be replaced by glory.

Hope also requires **patience**. Though it's part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), patience does not come easily for anyone—including believers. Waiting is something most of us do poorly, so we must rely on the supernatural strength of the Spirit. As Paul told the Romans earlier in the letter, endurance (an element of patience) leads to character and hope (Rom. 5:3-5).

To calm the noise of the world, we focus on the Spirit who leads us.

Such hope was an important theme for Paul. Just as creation awaits its restoration, God calls Christians to **with patience wait for** the fulfillment of our hope. As we wait, we live as His children now, but we anticipate the completion of our adoption in the life to come. To calm the noise of the world, we focus on the Spirit who leads us.

How does the groaning of creation compare to our groaning for renewal?



IN MY CONTEXT

- God provides eternal life to His children.
- God promises an eternal inheritance to His children.
- God will one day restore His creation, fully reflecting His glory.
- God will one day restore humanity so that humans can function fully as His children.

What are some things you can do daily to live by the Spirit instead of the flesh? How can you incorporate these actions into your daily routine?

How would you describe your relationship with God? What steps do you need to take to improve your relationship with Him?

Discuss as a group the connection between our hope and our witness. How can you and the members of your Bible study learn to more effectively share His hope with others?

Prayer Needs
