



CHAPTERS 7 – 8 A SUMMARY

Paul's letter to the church in Rome is a letter about good news. In the opening chapters he told us what that good news is:

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

Romans 3:21 – 22

Before that Paul explained at length why everyone needs this righteousness that God gives to those who trust Him and in the following chapters he went on to explain what it means — the practical outcome — if you have it. Then in chapter 6 Paul began to answer some questions his good news is bound to provoke.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound Certainly not!"

Romans 6:1 – 2

His answer is clear: it's just not possible. God has changed us. We have died to sin, we are not slaves to it anymore, now we love God and we are His willing slaves.¹ But that is not the only question Paul's good news raises. In chapter 7 he moves on to address another.

CHAPTER 7 — WHAT ABOUT THE LAW?

What about the law? If receiving God's gift of righteousness has nothing to do with keeping the law, does it not matter any more?

Paul's answer is that just in the same way we died to sin, we have died to the law too. Our relationship to the it is ended and we are no longer obliged to keep it.

"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."

Romans 7:4

Now we are free to be joined to Jesus, live that new life we have in Him and bear fruit to God. We had to be set free from the law because not only could it never make us righteous, it was actually making us less righteous because it stirred up the sinful desires of our flesh.

"For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."

Romans 7:5

Does this mean the law is a bad thing? Absolutely not, says Paul, the law is a good thing, it's our old sinful nature — the flesh — that's the problem.

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

Romans 7:12

We love God's law and we keep it because we love it, not because we have to.

PAUL'S DILEMMA AND OURS

That now raises the matter of a dilemma we all struggle with. We do love God's law but we still have a battle with sin every day of our lives. Paul put it like this:

"With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

Romans 7:25

¹ See study number 18: A Summary of Romans 1 – 6.

My spirit, the inner man, the born-again man, my mind, loves God's law and wants more than anything to live by it but the flesh — that old sinful nature I'm stuck with until I die — wants to sin. It's a given, a law, the flesh always wants to sin and its influence is very strong and that is very frustrating.

“The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice...O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Romans 7:19 and 24

Chapter 7 ends with Paul telling us where to look for the answer to our dilemma.

“I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Romans 7:25

CHAPTER 8 — JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Chapter 8 begins with Paul telling us in what way Jesus is the answer to the problem of our sinful flesh.

“[God sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.”

Romans 8:3 – 4

And he told us about five things that Jesus' life and death made possible:

1. We are in the spirit. We have been born again with a new spiritual nature that loves God, loves His law, hates sin and resists its influence, and our spirit has the upper hand over the flesh.
2. God's Holy Spirit dwells in us to lead and empower us to overcome the flesh's influence.
3. We belong to Jesus. He has bought and claimed us for His own and nothing can undo that.
4. The flesh will die one day but the spirit will live on for ever. Then the battle will be over.
5. One day our spirits will be clothed in a new, perfect, sin-free bodies: old flesh gone, new flesh replacing it, problem solved.

BUT WHAT ABOUT NOW?

But we still have a problem with the flesh now. What's to be done about that? Paul answers that one in chapter 8:12 – 14

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Romans 8:12 – 14

Realise that because of those five amazing things Jesus made possible you are under no obligation to the flesh — you do not have to go along with it. There is no such thing as a sin you have to do. So put to death those deeds of the flesh. Get serious. Identify the sins that trouble you most, get to understand their tricks and their ways, deprive them of every possible opportunity for exercise, stop making excuses for them, don't feed them, don't encourage them in any way, get help if you need it and persevere — don't give up until you overcome them. And do it, Paul says, “by the spirit.” So pray, stay strong spiritually, walk in the spirit, don't quench the spirit, don't grieve the spirit, instead be filled with the spirit. That's what's to be done about those sins you still do.

CHILDREN AND HEIRS

In verse 14 Paul introduces a new idea to his letter

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God... We are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Romans 8:14 – 17

We are children of God and we have an inheritance coming to us. One day we will be with God forever to see and enjoy His glory, the world — a new, perfect world that's full of His glory — and everything in it will be ours and we will have new perfect bodies to enjoy it all with, if we suffer with Him. If we remain faithful to Him through whatever hardship we have to face before we come into our inheritance.

HELP TO SUFFER WITH JESUS

In the remainder of chapter 8 Paul tells us what God has done and is doing to make sure we remain faithful. He has already told us:

“You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Romans 8:15 – 16

In verses 18 – 22 Paul puts our suffering into context: we all suffer because we live in a broken world and it's like that because God subjected the world to futility. It's God's righteous judgement for Adam's sin and there's no escaping it as long as we live. We ought to expect to suffer.

In verses 23 – 25 Paul reminds us to keep looking past our present suffering to our inheritance. Look up, look forward press on eagerly and persevere.

Next Paul points out that the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts causing them to ache and grieve and groan within us, longing for that inheritance. The Spirit makes us look up and look forward and what is more, when the suffering is so bad we don't know what to do or even how to pray, even through our groans, the Holy Spirit Himself prays for us. He is praying for our greatest good: praying for God's perfect will to be done, and the Father hears and understands those prayers perfectly.

Next, in verse 28, Paul declares that everything that happens is working to bring us to heaven..

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28

GOD'S PURPOSE

“All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For [because] whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:28 – 30

We have each been called by God. He picked you out. He made up His mind to call you before time began. He brought you to hear the gospel. He did an amazing miracle in you when He gave you a new, born-again heart so you could respond to what you heard with faith. He chose you and called you because He foreknew you. He Set His love upon you, began and committed Himself to a relationship with you way back before the beginning of time. And His purpose was to make you like Jesus so you could be family so you could have the inheritance. That was God's purpose in saving you and it's the purpose behind Paul's good news.

GUARANTEED

Left speechless in amazement at that Paul asks, if God is for us, can anyone be against us? If He did all this for us — didn't even spare His only Son — will He not see to it that we have everything we need? Who can say anything against we if God says we're forgiven? Who can condemn us if Jesus has died and risen for us and is praying to the Father for us? What can separate us from God's eternal love?

PAUL'S CONCLUSION

And that leads Paul to his grand conclusion. His conclusion drawn from the second half of chapter 8. His conclusion drawn from the section of his letter that spans chapters 5 to 8. His conclusion drawn from everything he has written so far.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, or height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:38 – 39