

Sharing in his glory

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[0 : 00] Thank you. So we're going to look into Romans chapter 8 and we're looking at verses 12 to 17. The bit that begins, therefore brothers, we have an obligation.

! And while you're finding that place, let me observe that advertisements are there to make you jealous. So I've put a composite advertisement there.

So here's somebody with specs from Specsavers. So you think you wish you'd had specs from Specsavers or you might like to go to an independent trader, Specky Wren, just out in Marshalls Row outside the open market.

They've got a very nice selection of spectacles. This attractive person's hair has been done by... Who is it who says, because you're worth it?

What is it? L'Oreal. L'Oreal. Isn't it? It just shows what a failure that particular advertisement is because I don't... Anyway, that's what the hair is done by. So you think, well, I wish I had hair like that.

[1 : 04] Tooth care. Wonderful teeth. So I... What? Who do they advertise? Sensodyne, is it? That's the only one that comes to mind because this person's teeth get sensitive.

But anyway. Skin. I'm thinking Nivea. Is that right? Nivea? Do skin products? Yes. Anyway, all these advertisements are there to make you think, oh, I wish I had skin like that.

I must buy some Nivea. Or I wish I had teeth like that. I must buy some Sensodyne. Or I wish I had spectacles and I looked as intelligent and attractive as that person. I must go to Specky Wren and get my spectacles.

It's a whole lot of desirable or enviable features and the us who look on think, oh, I wish I could be like that. Advertisements are there to make you jealous.

To make you want to be what this person is or to have what this person has. And in the letter to the Romans, Paul says, I do that.

[2 : 06] I want to make people jealous. He says in Romans 11, 13, I make much of my ministry in order that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

He says, this is one of the things I do. It's not the only thing, but it's one of the things. I want people to think how brilliant it is to be a Christian so that other people would say, I'd like that.

I want to have that. I want to be that. And he's particularly saying that across the racial divide that the Gentiles, that's the non-Jews, should have the blessings that the Bible speaks about and that the Jews, whose the Bible was to begin with, might say, we want to have that.

It's so good. We want some of that. So let's think this morning about enviable and desirable features that might make us say, I want to have that.

I want to be like that. Or maybe even to say, I'm so grateful that I have that. Let me remind you of where we got to through the first part of Romans.

[3 : 24] We talked about wrath and sin. This is in chapters 1 to 7. Jew and Gentile, both under the wrath of God, both caught in sin.

He then goes and talks about the cross of Jesus Christ. And he says, isn't this the most brilliant thing, that it doesn't require you to be of a particular ethnic group.

It's all done for you. You simply trust whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. He talks about union with Christ, comparing how people belong to Adam and how that affects them and how people belong to Christ and how that totally affects them.

He says that we live, therefore, in righteousness by grace. And he goes on to talk about the way people's lives are transformed by belonging to Christ.

He says that to the Jews, well, you have the law and you have to realize that that leads people historically to Christ, but it doesn't change them.

[4 : 28] You are in a relationship, not with the law, but in a relationship with Jesus. And he talks in chapter 7 about the struggles of the Christian life and the power of the Spirit.

And where now, as we get to chapter 8, he sort of takes a breath and says, well, where does that leave us? Certainly hasn't finished the letter, but he pauses and says, well, where does that leave us?

And I'd like to give you four desirable features that he describes in verses 12 to 17. I've got life by death, a certain consciousness, a certain confidence, and something to do with the future.

So those are the four things that we'll look at, and let's look at them now. Four enviable qualities. Things that you might say, I wish I had that.

So let's look first of all at verse 12, where he says, Quite a long sentence.

[5 : 49] But he's saying, here's the first thing to think about. We live by the Spirit by whom we kill sins.

Let's look at how he says this. So he says, there's a sort of before. There's how it used to be. Before we became Christians, we were stuck in sin, in the flesh, or the sinful nature, as the NIV translates it.

He says, before somebody becomes a Christian, they are in a spiritual condition of paralysis, or death, or being stuck, or chained, all of those sorts of ideas.

He paints a very bleak picture of somebody before they become a Christian. They can't please God. They can't think the way God wants them to think.

They can't hear the Saviour as they ought to. They can't trust Him. They can't walk with Him.

They're stuck. But after coming to Christ, all that changes.

[7 : 05] And he says, Therefore, brothers, verse 12, we have an obligation. We have an obligation. But it is not to the flesh to live according to it.

You used to have an obligation to the flesh. You used to be obligated to sin. Well, what sort of obligations might that be?

Well, we could, for example, think of your homeland. So you have an obligation to your homeland. So if you were a Swiss person, even if you were living in England in August, I think it's the Swiss National Day in August.

So you would say, even though I live in England, I have an obligation to my homeland. And on Swiss National Day, I will fly a flag and cheer. And everybody will wonder why on earth I'm doing it. And Paul says, sin is not your homeland. You have no obligation to sin because it's your homeland. You don't live there anymore.

[8 : 12] So you're not obligated to sin as if it's your home. And sometimes there are obligations for gratitude. I remember once my car broke down as I was on my way from Worthing to Brighton.

And I had to pull into the side of the road. This was long, long ago. And I rang up when Pastor Les used to live in the house next door. Said, I'm stuck.

My car's broken. Please could you come and rescue me? And he very kindly came all the way and picked me up and brought me back home. I was so grateful. It's a very kind thing to do.

And you feel, you know, out of gratitude, you feel obligated to somebody, don't you? You know, if I can help you, you are so kind to me. We have no such obligation to sin.

There's nothing about sin that we can be grateful to it. That we're obligated out of gratitude. So I'm going to put a cross next to that. There are some obligations that come by legal contract.

[9 : 18] You are legally obliged. You know, if you said you will pay the sum of such and such.

You're not on eBay. You've committed to buy. You're legally obliged. You need to pay that money.

You're obligated to buy. Sin would like to tell us, you have a legal contract to serve me. Sin would say, you belong to me.

But Christ says, no, that's not true. There is all the legal obligations that Christians used to have to sin because they belong to Adam and that's where they were.

All of those ties have been broken. There's no legal contract that says you have to sin. And what about a future reward? Is it worth serving sin for its future reward?

Well, as Paul says, that's no reason to serve sin either. It says, if you live according to the sinful nature, verse 13, you will, what does it say?

[10 : 18] Die. You will die. It doesn't mean that you will, your heart will stop beating and you will be taken to mortuary and you'll be buried.

I mean, that'll happen to everybody. He's saying, if you sin, what we're talking about is total death. That means not only your body stops working, but you're separated from God and you are in total darkness.

You are expelled from the presence of God and all that is to do with wrath and punishment, that sort of thing. That if you live according to the flesh, you will die in that sense.

So, that's how things are not. He says, you are not under obligation to sin. You're not obligated it. But he says, on the contrary, if by the spirit, and I try to use the word death again because he uses the word death again, but it doesn't really. It's not a proper English word.

[11 : 25] If by the spirit you deathify the deeds of the body, you will live. The spiritual life is to do with death, but what it is, is that the Christian knows that there's sin in his or her heart and life.

And the Christian is constantly at work to try and kill it off. You might think of weeds coming up in the garden.

If you leave them, then they just get bigger and bigger. And a good gardener is always at work killing the weeds here and here and here before they grow to kill them off.

And he says, that's the way of the spirit. We live in the spirit by whom we kill sins. Or as he says here, if by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

And he's describing the Christian life. He's describing, if you like, the conflict of the Christian life. He's also describing the victory of the Christian life. It is possible to kill sins in the power of the spirit.

[12 : 39] So I notice it's not by sheer effort. He's not saying, you know, as a positive thinking. He's not saying, use your willpower.

He's not saying, I know it is just sheer human effort. He's not saying that. But he is saying, you do the killing by the power of the spirit.

So there's two things going on at once. He's not saying, let go and let God. It used to be a slogan amongst Christians, let go and let God. There might be a sense in which faith has that sort of aspect to it.

But that's certainly not what he's saying here. He's saying the Christian life is you actively killing sin by the power of the spirit.

If by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. And it's rather a, what's the word I'm looking for? Or paradoxical, rather a strange mixture, isn't it?

[13 : 48] You live by putting to death the misdeeds of the body. So there are, he's describing the Christian life as us taking responsible actions in faith.

And this motive, this direction of life, as he says, no, sorry, I got to the wrong bit there. Do that in a minute.

He says, those who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. That's what I was thinking. Jesus talked about putting sin to death.

He said, if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Do you remember him saying that? And I don't think he was speaking literally. I think he was speaking in a sort of over the top way to make a point. You know, if it was only as easy as that, if you could just cut off your hand and that would stop you sinning, I mean, that would be easy, wouldn't it? Killing sin is much more difficult than that. But it requires individual actions.

[14 : 53] So if you know that alcohol will lead you to sin, then, you know, and walking past the pub, let's put it this way, or what the off license will lead you to sin, then cut that off.

Walk home another way. Don't go past that place. If watching the TV will lead you to sin, then switch off the TV. If the internet will lead you to sin, then fight the battle of turning off the internet. If a particular relationship will lead you into sin, then face the issue of bringing that relationship to an end. Killing sin by the power of the Spirit.

And it says here in Romans, this leading is the work of the Spirit of God. I don't know whether that seems to you to be a valuable and enviable thing that you say, oh, I wish I had some of that.

But it's certainly one of the things that Paul says here is one of the wonders, one of the glories of, certainly one of the characteristics, one of the wholesome things.

[16 : 13] Let's put it that way, one of the wholesome things about the Christian life. We live in the Spirit by whom we kill sins. This leading is the work of the Spirit.

Let's look at a second thing. He goes on now to talk about a certain consciousness brought by the Spirit. Let's look at what he says in verse 15.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, Abba, Father.

So I'm thinking here there is a consciousness. I would try to think of a word for it. I think if I'd thought a bit longer I might have said a mindset. A mindset or a consciousness brought by the Spirit.

And he says the Spirit brings a mindset or a consciousness of sonship. He uses sonship for male Christians and female Christians because the position of a son is that of inheriting, which we'll see again in a moment.

[17 : 25] So it's not meant to be gender specific in any sort of wrong way. Let's do another contrast. Verse 15. He says, You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship.

So he says, What can we say about this consciousness that the Spirit brings? It's not a return to fear. So when you become a Christian, you don't now enter perhaps afresh or again into a consciousness which is mostly fear.

So what sort of fear might he be thinking of? Well, people live perhaps with a fear, a consciousness, a fear of rejection.

A fear, constant fear of disapproval. Perhaps a constant insecurity about themselves. Constantly feel bad about themselves.

Perhaps in an excessive way. Insecure about whether I belong anywhere. Whether I can rest anywhere. A constant perhaps of restlessness.

[18 : 39] A sense I don't belong. I'm linking this with fear. And perhaps the idea of guilt which makes one fearful of punishment and makes one bitter inside.

And perhaps blaming people all the time. And maybe being angry. He says, Well, there is such a thing as this sort of mindset. But that's not what the Spirit brings.

Yeah? That's not what the Spirit brings. The Spirit brings the opposite of those things. You have not received the Spirit who makes you a slave again to fear and that sort of stuff.

But rather, the Spirit of Sonship. That's what he says. By Him we cry, Abba, Father. Now, let's note again that the Spirit leads us into conflict with sin.

But let's think of this crying out, Abba, Father. So I think we could say it's an intuitive cry. Intuitive means you just don't think about it.

[19 : 44] You naturally come to that conclusion. So sometimes Maria tells me to do something. And she says, Well, I thought you would intuitively know what I meant by that.

And I completely misunderstood what she said. I thought you would intuit that I meant you to take the washing out of the...

Anyway, let's not go in down there. Here's a cry which is intuitive. You don't have to think about it. You just know that. And the Christian, in the Christian's heart, cries, Abba, Father.

And I wonder if you can identify with that experience that as you pray to God, it just seems absolutely right to say, Father.

Father in heaven. Thank you, Father. I ask you, Father, for this. I bring this to you, Father. Father, you can see what's going on in my heart, etc. It's just intuitive.

[20 : 44] And we cry in the most intimate sort of way, Father. Like we would to an earthly father.

In fact, more so because all earthly fathers are imperfect. They might be very, very imperfect. But the Father in heaven is all that a father should be and more.

And by him, by the Spirit, we can cry, Abba, Father. And he says, that's what the Christian consciousness is.

I notice that he says cry. So it's a serious cry. The word for cry is not, sorry, the word for cry is kradzo, which almost sounds like croak, doesn't it?

Sort of thing that crows do. Kradzo. It's not to whisper, Father. And it's not to coo, Father.

[21 : 44] It's to cry, Father. Perhaps in the way that would include when children cry out, you know, when they're lost, Dad!

Or when they're in pain, Daddy! It's that sort of thing that the Christian intuitively cries, Abba, Father.

And I wanted to try and spell out that consciousness. It's consciousness that God's fatherhood is a given. It isn't that as a Christian we have to then work so that God becomes our Father or achieve a certain standard.

It's just the Christian's consciousness. That's where I am. That's who God is. He's my Father. And opposite of the spirit of fear, which makes us insecure, the Christian is able to have a very, the sort of base level, foundation level, a sense of security.

If God is my Father, then I'm secure. Whatever else may be troubling me, I know at root that if God is my Father, I'm secure.

[22 : 59] And I'm valued. And you might find that a little bit as, well, different people are wired up different ways, but they might find that particularly difficult to grasp that.

One might think, I am of such low value. How can God value me? And yet, if God is our Father, fathers value their children.

And to call out to God as Father is to say, I'm valued. And it's also to say, I have a home. I have a place where I belong. Because that's what a father represents, isn't it?

Children go to snuggle up with Daddy because they feel secure. That's where they belong. And the Christian has this sense brought about by the Spirit.

The Christian has a consciousness that as a good father produces an atmosphere of kindness and forgiveness and peace.

[23 : 58] So the Heavenly Father brings us into a place of kindness, into a kind home. Not a cruel home or a chaotic home, but a kind home.

A place of forgiveness, because the whole thing is based on forgiveness. And a place of peace. And the Christian can have that consciousness by the Spirit, even in hard situations.

And you might even say, especially in hard situations. It's in hard situations that a child will cry with particular emphasis.

Father, Dad, help. Fallen over. Got my finger stuck in the door. You know, wheels falling off my bicycle. Whatever it is, it's that emergency situation where crying out to the Father is particularly appropriate.

And I think that's what Paul's talking here. Saying, by the Spirit, we cry, Abba, Father. And if you weren't particularly envious of the first situation, perhaps you're a little bit more envious of this situation.

[25 : 13] Wouldn't it be grand, don't you think? To have such a Heavenly Father, to have such a consciousness, that you had a life not surrounded by fear, but this security, this love, this forgiveness, and including in hard situations.

I think it's a very enviable situation. I think Paul would say to his Jewish listeners, that's what the Gentiles have got. You're still stuck slaughtering animals and going down to the temple and all that sort of thing.

You're never quite sure of God. Wouldn't you like some of this that the Christians have? Maybe you've come this morning and you don't have this.

Maybe you are looking for this. But isn't this a grand thing to look for? Isn't it a grand thing to desire and seriously seek? Lord God, bring me to the place where I can cry, Abba, Father.

And if you can cry, Abba, Father, what a wonderful thing to be grateful for. Better than having skin done by Nivea or teeth done by Sensodyne. This is solid good stuff.

[26 : 33] That was number two. Number three. A confidence and assurance brought about by the Spirit or brought by the Spirit.

This is verse 16. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

I've reworded it. The Spirit testifies our spirit that we are children of God. It's an assurance.

Christians sometimes use this as a technical expression, assurance, meaning, to be sure that I'm a Christian.

I think this is what Paul's talking about. He's saying the particular confidence to be able to say, I definitely am a Christian and I'm not kidding myself on this. And it's brought about, says Paul, by a double testimony.

Now, I was pondering this. I think the Abba Father does not rely on testimony. I think the Abba Father is just intuition. It just springs up. But I think what Paul is talking about here is testimony, which is not, I think, to do so much with intuition, but to do with reasoning and thinking something through, listening to something, believing something, being persuaded by something.

[27 : 58] And he seems to have two testimonies. The testimony of the Spirit and the testimony, that's to say, the Holy Spirit and the testimony of my Spirit.

And let's look at those two things together. Let's think, first of all, of the testimony of my Spirit. Now, you realize that he's saying that you, each of us, has a wonderful makeup, which includes our own spirit, as he says here.

And our own spirit might be excited. Our own spirit might be cast down. Our own spirit might be persuaded of something. But, of course, we could be wrong.

We could be excited by something that isn't worth being excited about. And we could be cast down for reasons that are mistaken. And we could be persuaded of things that are wrong.

So we mustn't base everything on my spirit, but we do have a spirit. So I'm including here how I feel, what I believe, and what my life has become.

[29 : 04] And our spirits, we might say, well, how do I feel about Christian faith? I feel positive about Christian faith. And what do I believe? Well, I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for sins.

I believe that. I do believe that. And looking at what my life has become, I have changed. I used to do such and such quite regularly, but now it's changed.

I used to think in such and such a way, I used to enjoy such and such things, but now I've changed. So my spirit can think about all of those things.

And my spirit might also think about how much I fail. And my spirit might tussle, have a bit of a struggle with these things. Well, am I a Christian?

That's what I believe. But this is how I live. But this is how I fail. I don't know. Well, you might be able to struggle through that and say, no, I do believe.

[30 : 04] And I am a child of God. So my spirit might work my way through that. And he says, well, it isn't just my spirit.

There is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And what I'd like to suggest to you is that the Holy Spirit, in a God-given and supernaturally enabled way, endorses the testimony of my spirit.

So I'd like to suggest that what the spirit says is, you are feeling positive about Christianity. That's from me, the spirit says. You're right. That's true.

And you do believe about Jesus Christ. And that's real faith. And you're not kidding yourself. And that's from me too, says the Holy Spirit.

And the spirit might enable us to survey our lives and say, yeah, you failed here and you failed here and you failed here. But that's actually not abnormal for Christians.

[31 : 12] It's not right, but it's not abnormal. But look what God has done in your life. And the spirit might enable us to see that and to say, yeah, you have changed and you are a child of God.

The spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. And this then brings us to what we call assurance, Christian assurance.

That's to be able to say, I am a Christian. Now, people can get terribly tied up about assurance. You can make it into a duty. It doesn't seem to be a duty.

Paul isn't saying, you must do this. He's just saying, this is what you do. This is how it is. This is how Christians think and feel. And this is what's going on in their lives. Sometimes assurance is made into a special privilege as if only a certain special group of Christians could be sure they were Christians.

And Paul doesn't do that. He says, every Christian, this is for everybody, every Christian.

Assurance is really the normal Christian life. The normal Christian should be able, give or take, to say, this is me.

[32 : 25] I'm crying, Abba, Father. That's by the spirit. I do believe. That's the right thing. And I'm conscious that I am believing the right thing. And my life has changed.

It's not what I want it to be, but it's not what it was. And my life has changed. And that's the work of the spirit. And even when I sin, I'm not going to be put off by that because I know that Christ's blood has the power to cleanse me from all sin.

I'm going to keep on believing. And here is the assurance of the Christian. And I think that's an enviable thing. I think that's an enviable thing. I think it, in many ways, is the root of the Christian life because only assured people can be grateful.

And the assured Christian can be tremendously grateful. You know, just think, if we weren't able to sing, thank you, Lord, for dying on the cross for me, if we could only say, thank you, Lord, it's quite possible you might have died on the cross for me, but I'm not particularly sure about it, that would

be awful, wouldn't it?

The Christian can say, you know, how great thou art. It can say, when Christ shall come, you know, I'll see him. A Christian can have assurance.

[33 : 34] A Christian can have gratitude and a motivation of gratitude. And a Christian can have praise. And a Christian can live out of gratitude every day. So I think this is an enviable thing.

And I think that if you have this, you should say, thank you, Lord, this is brilliant. And if you don't have it, you might well say, I'd like to have that. And I'm not going to give up asking and seeking until I've got that, because it's so important.

That was number three. And here's number four. A fourth admirable quality of the Christian life is the future inheritance of sonship.

And I'm looking now at verse 17. Now, if we are children, he says, now we are heirs. H-E-I-R-S. Not that, that's hair.

This is air. As in, there's Lord Grantham with his son when he was younger, saying, one day all of this will be yours.

[34 : 39] As they walk through the gardens of Downton Abbey. And Lord Grantham says, I can't remember, has he got a son? Or was that one of those? Well, whatever. Just use your imagination then.

So there's a stately home. There's the grounds. There's the deer park. There's the farms. There's the mountains. There's the lakes. There's all. And one day, all of this will be yours.

That's being an heir, isn't it? That's inheriting. And Paul says, that is the sonship thing for Christians. If we are children, then we are heirs.

And he says it three times. Heirs. Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ. And then he says, we will share in his glory. We are heirs.

We are heirs of God. We are co-heirs with Christ. We will share in his glory. And what a thought that is. If you think about inheriting Downton Abbey, you just, that would be amazing, wouldn't it?

[35 : 44] You wouldn't be inheriting an overdraft. You would be inheriting a castle and grounds and servants and lakes and woods. All yours.

You know, you wouldn't have to pay to visit it. You wouldn't only be able to get in there on Tuesdays. It would all be yours. Wouldn't that be amazing? And he says, well, raise your thoughts higher than that.

Think of what Christ has inherited. Think of what Christ, think of the glory that he's inherited. Think of the status that he's inherited. Think of the fact that worlds upon worlds upon worlds are in the hand of Jesus Christ, the risen Savior.

Think of the glory that he's inherited. Think of the Father has made it so that you will inherit with him. That you will share his glory.

It's amazing. And he says, that's what it is to be a son. And before I say, isn't this enviable, let me just finish the sentence.

[36 : 54] Because he says, sharing with Christ in his glory, well, that involves the reality of sharing in his sufferings in this present world.

Now, there's a calculation to make. Is it worth sharing his sufferings now in order that we might share his glory in the future?

That's the calculation. Actually, Paul does the calculation in the bit we didn't read, verse 18. I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. But we'll look at that another time.

Yeah, let's be fair. We have to be prepared to encounter rejection by this world. We have to be prepared to endure losses and crosses in this world.

There will be blessings as well. There are blessings for Christians here that other people can't possibly have. But this life, you will have to say no to things.

[38 : 02] And God will say no to some things for you. Well, you have to... That's part of it. Would you be prepared to walk with Jesus Christ through those losses and crosses in order that you may share with him in the glory that is yet to be revealed?

Paul says it's a no-brainer. That's right, isn't it? That's the correct use of slang. I hope it is. It's not worth comparing.

It is so much, so brilliant what is to be revealed that the trifling little momentary afflictions we now might experience are as nothing compared with that great glory.

I think that's enviable. Those are the things we looked at. Life in the Spirit and knowing a measure of victory over sin.

The mind of the Spirit. We are in a position of sonship, not slaves to fear. It is possible to be absolutely confident.

[39 : 14] I am a child of God. Not I hope I might be, but I am a child of God. And there is this future glory which is not worth comparing with the...

The present suffering is not worth comparing with the grandeur that is yet to be. And all these things are to be had in Jesus Christ. And Paul would say to his Jewish listeners, look at that.

It's brilliant, isn't it? Would you like that? Wouldn't you want that? Doesn't that make you envious? Yes. Thank you.