

Overview of Paul's letter to the Romans - Part 2

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[0 : 00] It was put to me, friends, while we were drinking our coffee, that it would be good for you to hear firsthand the words of the people that David referred to early on, for whom the letter to the Romans had meant so very much. And I am happy to fall in with that and give you a brief quote from one or two of them.

Here, for instance, is Augustine, who is in a state spiritually. He knows that he ought to commit himself to Christ, but he loves his sin. He is pretty deeply enmeshed in it. He's 32 years old. He doesn't change quickly.

And this is what he says. I was twisting and turning in my chains. I threw myself down somehow under a fig tree and let my tears flow freely. Suddenly I heard a voice from a nearby house chanting, saying and repeating over and over, pick up and read, pick up and read. I interpret it as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I might find.

So I hurried back to the place where I put down the book of the apostle and I got up. I opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eye lit.

Here's the quote. I did not need to read further.

[2 : 13] And so he goes on. Well, that's Augustine. Romans 13, which is what he was reading, brought him to the point of commitment, which was the watershed in his life.

And out of which came Augustine, the Christian thinker, Augustine, the Christian pastor, who became such a massive influence in the West from the day that he made his commitment.

And then Luther. I greatly long to understand Paul's letter to the Romans. Nothing stood in the way but that one expression, the righteousness of God.

Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God acts righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith.

Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of scripture took on a new meaning. And so forth.

[3 : 34] The passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven. And here's John Wesley in his own words. He's at a society meeting, that is, a small group Christian meeting, we would call it, in Aldersgate Street, London.

And somebody was reading Luther's preface to the letter to the Romans. It was Luther that Wesley was hearing. And he wrote in his journal, quote Wesley now, about a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.

I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation. And an assurance was given me that he'd taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

And so Wesley came into evangelical assurance and moved on from what he called, I don't comment on the theology here, what he called the faith of a servant to the faith of a son.

And we're going to hear a good deal about assurance, actually, in this final presentation of mine. But this word from Wesley introduces it very well.

[5 : 14] And I wanted at some stage to share with you a lyric from the pen of John Newton. This one isn't a very well-known lyric.

It isn't sung in hymn as a hymn in church. And I think when you hear it, you will feel that, well, it's not really adapted to that. But, again, you'll have to react to it in your own way.

I'll tell you, it gets right to my heart. Even though it's not classic poetry, but I do think it's classic Christianity.

And I was going to give you this at the end of the first block of teaching in Romans, chapters 1 through 4, that we were looking at.

Because this, I think, really does crystallize the state of mind and heart in which hunk 1 of Paul's teaching should leave us.

[6 : 23] And in which we should be found as we move into hunk 2, as we're now going to do. But just listen. You remember, John Newton did have a colorful career as a slave trader before ever he became a believer.

And that's reflected in what's written here. In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear, till a new object struck my sight and stopped my wild career.

I saw one hanging on a tree in agonism blood. He fixed his languid eye on me as near his cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath can I forget that look. It seemed to charge me with his death, though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt and plunged me in despair. I saw my sins his blood had spilt and helped to nail him there.

[7 : 37] A second look he gave which said, I freely all forgive. This blood is for thy ransom paid.

I die that thou mayest live. Thus, while his death my sin displays in all its blackest hue, such is the mystery of grace, it seals my pardon too.

With pleasing grief and mournful joy, my spirit now is filled. That I should such a life destroy, yet live by him I killed.

I won't ask you what that does for you. I simply tell you what it does for me. It hits the spiritual spot, if I may put it that way.

Now, chapters 5 through 8 of Romans, where assurance actually is the big thing that's being presented.

[8 : 55] It comes stated summarily in the first half of Romans chapter 5, and it returns, stated on the grand scale, in Romans 8.

Paul is highlighting the fact that those who know their sins forgiven, because of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus as a propitiation, they live before God, reconciled to him, that is, in peace, and in, how can I say it, in full-scale response, to him, from their heart, and they know the joy and confidence of Christian assurance, as they do so.

The Holy Spirit comes into this section of the teaching, and actually comes out big. It's through the ministry of the Spirit, who is introduced in chapter 5, verse 5, where Paul says, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

It's through the Holy Spirit, as I said, that this new experience of life in assurance, life in conscious peace with God, life in confident hope in God, life in which one's new relation to God is just the most wonderful thing, and is central in all the living that one does, and all the decisions one takes, this is, as I said, what the Holy Spirit introduces.

And we're going to see that, the thought, the thought grows out of the statement that in the hearts of believers, the Holy Spirit, God's love has been poured through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

[11 : 20] And we go on from there. Well, I said that the theme of assurance is spelled out in very summary form in the first half of Romans chapter 5.

Yes, indeed it is. In the first few verses, the content of assurance is proclaimed. Paul says, verse 1, Therefore, since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. In other words, we are now in full fellowship with God, and we are experiencing His loving care and goodness.

We have access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. I'm going to hear more about that as we go along.

More than that, he says, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that, shall I put it this way, suffering is good for us in terms of the purpose God has for us.

[12 : 42] See how Paul says it. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

And then comes a bit of reasoning to confirm all of that. Paul amplifies his thought. For when we were still weak, at the right time, the planned time, in God's economy, Christ died for the ungodly. Just think of it, says Paul, we were ungodly, and Christ died for us. We were worthless. And Christ died for us to give us hope, sorry, to give us worth, I should say, in God's sight when previously we had none.

Scarcely for a righteous person will anyone die, perhaps for a good man someone might have the nerve to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And now comes the future aspect of assurance. We are sure that Christ died for us, and so we are in a new relationship with God in the present.

[14:12] And we are sure also that since we have been justified by his blood, verse 9, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God on the coming day of judgment.

Here, the thought we have to grasp, it's been outlined, actually, by David already, the thought we have to grasp is that the verdict of acquittal, not penally liable, forgiven, and with the slate, as it were, wiped clean, that verdict is the last judgment, quite literally the last judgment, that God will ever pass on us with regard to our destiny.

Oh, he will repeat and confirm that judgment. Yes, he will. At the last day, he'll do that. But he won't change it. He won't review it.

He won't query it. This is the, I say it again, the final judgment that he's already passed on where believers will spend eternity.

Now, there's assurance, if you like. What a tremendous thing it is to realize that. And I hope your hearts are as thrilled hearing me say it as I am putting it into words.

[15:53] That's terrific. We shall be saved from the wrath of God. We are safe already for all eternity. And Paul confirms that.

With the next verse or two, we jump over them. And verse 11, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reconciliation, the peace declaration, was achieved for us by the Saviour dying in our place. And there it is, so to speak, waiting for us to lay hold of it, to collect it, to make it our own, and to enjoy the assurance that comes from knowing that reconciliation has been made, we are now the possessors of it, we are in a new relation with God, and that will last forever, forever and ever.

Well, Paul, having said that much, to the effect that Christ died for us as our rescuer from the penalty of our sin, he now goes on to express the thought that Christ died for us as our representative in just the same way that Adam represented the race when he transgressed.

The fall of Adam resulted in the fall of all Adam's descendants. that's us. And Paul dwells on that from chapter 5 verse 12 down to the end of the chapter, highlighting the contrast between the bad consequences of the fall, Adam's transgression, for us who come after, and the good consequences of the cross, the achievement of the Lord Jesus.

[18:11] Condemnation for us is rooted in the one transgression and acceptance for us, the gift of righteousness as it's called, that's what's in store for us as a result of the other action, Christ's action, dying on the cross in our place.

So understand, says Paul, because of what Christ did for us on the cross, grace reigns in our lives. you see that phrase in verse 31, as sin reigned in death, now grace also might reign through righteousness, Christ's righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That's Christian assurance. And as I say, we come back to it, because whereas that's a summary way of stating it, Paul really goes to town on the dimensions of assurance when he gets to chapter 8.

He knows that the theme needs fuller treatment, and there he gives it fuller treatment. But meantime, there are chapters 6 and 7, where the theme is newness.

[19:41] Assurance is, shall we say, subjective, that is to say it's a matter of knowledge and feeling. Newness, however, is a matter of real change of heart.

And I mean real change. God brought the creation into being out of nothing in the first place, God and God changes the hearts of believers to impart to them in their inner being, in the heart, that's using the word heart, of course, the way that the Bible regularly does.

God imparts to our inner being desires which we never had before, purposes and perceptions that we never had before.

You say, where do they come from? Well, in the order of creation, of course, everything has a cause, and you can always answer the question, where does it come from, by describing what was the case before, before it arrived.

But here, what Paul is going to illustrate for us and talk about is something that isn't explicable in terms of anything that was true of us before.

[21 : 13] In other words, the same creative power that brought the world into being, out of nothing, now operates to change our hearts in the way I've described, give us new ideas and new purposes and new insights and new perceptions, and none of that can be explained in terms of what we were before.

It's all, quite literally, what Paul calls it, actually, in 2 Corinthians 5, new creation. And that word creation means creation.

The power that brought the world into being, out of nothing, now changes our inner being, so that we have desires, purposes, and so on, that we never had before and that can't be explained in terms of what was there before.

God changes hearts. It's marvelous. It's terrific. And it's the experience of every real believer and I hope that every single one of us knows it.

Knows it, I mean, in our own experience and our own walk with the Lord. We are different people from what we were before we became believers.

[22 : 32] Actually, in other places, Paul goes on to amplify this thought in terms of our being reconstructed in the image of the Lord Jesus and his human perfection.

We are, so to speak, a building site in which God is at work all the time, renewing us, remaking us, reshaping us in the image of our Savior.

He doesn't go all the way in Romans on that. He's sticking very precisely to the argument that he set himself to lay out. People who have believed in Jesus as their sin bearer and who now have assurance that their title to glory is secure, they need now to be instructed in the newness of life that is theirs at very basic level.

So, at the beginning of chapter 6 he raises the question, as we saw at the beginning, he does a lot of his teaching in Romans by question and answer.

He raises the question, should we then continue sinning that grace may abound? should we continue sinning because our title to glory is secure?

[24 : 00] Should we continue sinning just because we are not under the law anymore? That is, the law isn't determining our destiny, isn't declaring, in other words, the penalty due to us for transgressions?

Paul's answer is a resounding no. God forbid, he says. That's an awful thought. And then he goes on to explain at the beginning of chapter 6, don't you realize that you have been united with the Lord Jesus in his death and in his resurrection?

Again, David has already reminded us in his introduction to Romans that this is part of the big deal about the new life that Paul is expanding.

We who were baptized into Christ, says Paul, speaking of baptism the way that scripture regularly does as a sign of what happens to believers.

You go underwater, signifying the end of the life you were living before, and you come up from under or out from under as a sign that you're entering into a new life.

[25 : 26] As you know, Baptists do it on the grand scale with total immersion. We Anglicans discreetly do it by pouring water over the candidate's head.

But the symbolism is the same, you see. The candidate then goes underwater water and comes out from under. And so the symbolism of the new creation through union with Christ, sharing in his resurrection after sharing in his death, that symbolism is achieved.

well, that's the picture, says Paul, of the Christian life that you now are to live. You've finished with the old life in Christ, with Christ, you've got to be living the new life, the life modeled on Christ's life, and lived in the power of the Spirit who, yes, yes, realize it, now indwells you.

He is part of your personal being now. You and I, who believe, have the Holy Spirit of God resident in our hearts.

It's an awesome thought, but Paul insists on it. If you want to see that insistence, just look at chapter 8, verses 9 through 11.

[26 : 59] We're going out of order, but let me go to those verses just to make this point and show you how strongly Paul makes it. You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of Christ doesn't belong to him. Well, of course, but if Christ is in you, although the body, that's this thing, although the body is dead because of sin, that is, it's mortal, it's going to die, and we all knew that before we started studying Romans, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit in you is life because of righteousness, that's the righteousness of Christ as our sin-bearer, bearing away our guilt.

The Spirit is life because of his righteousness, so that if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, as he does, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

there will be a divine power animating you physically even while you live out the rest of this earthly life and that power will always be in you as you move on into eternity and it will be the Holy Spirit within you transforming you into the image of the Savior.

you. Well, you can see Paul is saying that fully and emphatically because he thinks it's very important and yes, indeed it is very important.

[29 : 00] So, Paul hammers away at the thought, united with Christ, you must live the new life in Christ and that means, go back now to the middle of chapter 6, look at verses 13 and following for the moment.

Don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey its passions, their passions I should say. Yes, the body you see has been twisted, same as the conscience has been twisted as a result of sin.

There's sin operative in our fallen system at every point. But now, don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies to obey their passions.

Don't present your members to sin as instruments to unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who've been brought from death to life, and present your members, that's your body parts, your desires, all the specific realities that make you up.

Present your members to God as instruments for righteousness. You report for duty. I learned once a little ditty that ran like this.

[30 : 26] It was a ditty that one was invited to use as a prayer every morning when one wakes up. Good morning, Lord.

This is your day. I am your child. Show me your way. See? Show me your way. And that's reporting for duty to live a life of responsive obedience to the Lord who loves you, rather than living a life of self-centered, self-indulgence, the way you were living before you came to Christ.

Present your members to God as instruments for righteousness. righteousness. And you'll find, says Paul, that sin will have no dominion over you since you're not under law but under grace.

Oh, sin is still there in your system and it will fight your purpose of going God's way and pleasing God rather than self by the things that you do.

And in the middle of chapter 7, actually, Paul dwells for quite a time on the fact that this is a struggle that we just have to live with.

[31 : 44] We don't find in this world that we get beyond the point at which sin is trying to regain control of us and we are tempted therefore again and again and again to behave in a way that isn't right and duck duty, if I can put it that way, duck out of doing the things that we know are right.

Well, all right, Paul says at the end of his analysis of that aspect of our personal lives, wretched man that I am.

This conflict is a burden. I don't enjoy it. I look forward to the day when it will be over. Well, it will be over one day, says Paul.

I, well, better read it, I better read it, verse 24 of chapter 7, wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death.

That's Paul focusing his feelings. He would like the battle to be over. Then he says, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[33 : 03] I don't believe, though some expositors would challenge me here, but I don't believe that Paul is talking about a state of perfection in this world where somehow the battle is over and you swan your way along and have no trouble anymore in obeying the Lord.

No, I think that what Paul is talking about is how it will be in glory when we have our transformed bodies, sin and sin simply isn't with us any longer.

And then he comes back to the present and the second half of verse 35. So then, I myself, the self-same person, serve the law of God with my mind, that is, I want to be perfect in obedience, but with the flesh I serve the law of sin, sin, that is, sin in my system always manages to keep me from that perfection.

I achieve less than I want to achieve, my reach exceeds my grasp. That I think is what he's saying there. But that is all part of the life of newness because if your heart hadn't been changed by the spirit, and if the spirit weren't active within you, energizing you every moment, well, you wouldn't want to be obeying God.

You'd be back in chapter one where people live self-centered lives of sin. No, no, no.

[34 : 48] The very fact that you're in the struggle means that already you're a new creature in Christ, the reconstruction job is going on in the site, S-I-T-E, of your life, and actually progress is being made as you fight the good fight against sin and temptation, even if for the moment you can't see it or feel it.

The battle with sin is often like that. You're making progress of which at the time you're not aware. Well, there is a rather subtle theology of the law embedded in all of this.

The law is both good because it's God's standard, and, well, Paul doesn't say it's bad, but he does say that the law stimulates sin, and, well, just because sin is sin, it gets stimulated to fight against the law, and so the very fact that you're trying to keep the righteousness of the law to please your Lord who saved you, that in itself stirs up sin in your system to fight against what you're doing, so the conflict continues.

But we haven't time to go fully into that. I haven't gone fully into it in what I've just said. I have to watch the time, and we need to move on.

Move on into chapter 8, which is rightly regarded, brothers and sisters, as the Mount Everest of the New Testament, or, if you like, the Mount Robson of the New Testament, standing alone and higher than anything around it.

[36 : 52] Paul returns to the theme of assurance in this chapter, and really goes to town in projecting it and expounding it.

Four thoughts. Eternal acceptance in Christ. That, you know, that's a reality. That's something that will never change.

Look at the first four verses of Romans 8. Paul starts with the declaration, there is therefore now no condemnation, never will be, for those who are in Christ Jesus.

God has saved us from the guilt of sin, and now His Spirit in our hearts sustains us in the practice of righteousness, and though we aren't perfect, though we fall short despite our best endeavors, the fact that remains is that there's no condemnation for us.

We are in Christ Jesus, united to Him for life eternally, and what a terrific thing it is to know that. Okay, that gets you as far as verse four, and then Paul brings in a second thought to go with that first thought.

[38 : 19] With our knowledge of eternal acceptance in Christ, comes knowledge of eternal life, life in the ordinary basic sense of awareness, response, vitality, energy, eternal life in the Spirit, by the power of the Spirit.

You see that thought beginning to open up in verse five. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

And to set your mind on the Spirit, second half of verse six, is life and peace. Well, you're not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, Paul continues in verse nine, if in fact the Spirit dwells in you as he does, you then for all eternity, and I with you of course, we shall be the subjects of the work of the Spirit constantly energizing us and rebuilding, shaping our characters so that we become more and more like our Savior, bearing his image ever more fully, and enjoying the real life that we were made for, the life of fellowship with God in love and peace.

We shall be, I repeat, enjoying that forever. And so, this is the second eternal thing that Paul celebrates in this chapter.

Eternal acceptance with Christ, eternal life in the Spirit. And that leads on to a third eternal thing, eternal hope in God's plan.

[40 : 29] And that thought takes you from verse 12 to verse 25. Verse 12 opens up the thought of the Christian life in this way.

So, brothers, we are debtors, not to live according to the flesh. If, by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

That phrase, deeds of the body means all the bad habits that self-centered sin generates in our hearts. How do we put them to death?

It's a matter of saying no. It's a matter of avoiding circumstances where they can get on top of us. You know the word attributed to Luther, I'm sure.

You can't stop the birds flying over your head, but you can't stop them nesting in your hair. You don't, in other words, expose yourself to influences and circumstances that stir up the desire to sin in your heart.

[41 : 42] Instead, you watch, keep alert, that is, you watch against circumstances of that kind coming upon you while you weren't noticing, and you pray.

You are constantly asking the Lord to keep you alert at this point where experience has shown that you have a weakness and the bad habit isn't completely finished with yet.

You watch then against temptation and you pray for strength to recognize when the sinful desire is beginning to take hold in your heart and you pray against it and what happens?

By the power of the Spirit, it is kept at bay and indeed made to retreat. there is such a thing as conquering temptation in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

And that isn't all, says Paul. Those who are led by the Spirit of God in putting sinful desire to death as far as best we can, they are thereby showing that they are led by the Spirit of God, verse 14, and that shows that they are sons of God.

[43 : 17] The very experience of successfully battling sin increases your assurance that that indeed is what you are. And if you are a son of God, Paul now says, well, you are an heir, an heir with Christ.

Look at the way he expresses it in verse 17. If you are God's children, then you are heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Suffering with him is simply a matter of being faithful in fighting sin and practicing righteousness, even if it lands us in situations that hurt, as sometimes it does.

Situations of unpopularity and even hostility from other people, situations in which folk resent the fact that you aren't in sin the way that they are, and they sort of blackball you from the company because they think of you as some kind of prude.

well, Christ had a certain amount of that to deal with, and Paul says we have to suffer with him, but we shall also be glorified with him.

[44 : 45] That's the certainty. So, now Paul elaborates the thought that the sufferings of this present time, whatever they are, this is verse 18, the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

Keep your eyes on the goal. The goal is the glory. The Spirit of God is leading us to that glory. Jesus Christ, our Savior, sends the Spirit and is with the Spirit in leading us along this path.

One day, says Paul, there will be an entirely new world. Again, David made reference to this in his opening statement. And we shall be part of that new world.

In that new world, sin will have no place, and in us, the perfected new creatures, sin will have no place either. This is our hope, says Paul, and if we hope for what we do not see, and indeed we don't see it at the moment, verse 35, well, we wait for it with patience.

And in the meantime, we rejoice in the fact of our eternal security. This is the fourth eternal reality that Paul celebrates in this chapter.

[46 : 25] Eternal acceptance in Christ, eternal life, vitality in the spirit, eternal hope, according to God's plan, we shall enter into the fullness of glory one day, and eternal security for time and for eternity because God keeps us and never lets us go.

Why is that? Well, Paul works up to saying in a wonderfully rich passage, it's because he loves us. Do you realize that?

I said that I would make a comment on election when Paul gets to election. Well, the place where he gets to election is verse 38.

We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. precious words which I'm sure we all of us memorized long since.

Yes, all things work together for good to those who love God. They're the ones who are called according to his purpose. And what's that purpose?

[47 : 41] Well, verses 29 and 30 tell you. those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that the son might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those who be predestined, he also called. Now, this is a key thought with Paul. that word call signifies, first of all, God bringing the word of the gospel into the ears, or the minds, shall I say, into the minds of folk who need to know God.

The call of the gospel is an invitation, as you know, to get to know God through receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And the calling of God is not only a matter of bringing that word of invitation to the minds and the hearts of people who need to hear it, but it's also a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, opening the eyes of the mind, as Paul puts it in another place, bringing conviction about the truth of the Christian message, making us aware that as God is for real, so the Lord Jesus Christ is for real, and actually moving us to go to Christ, to receive Christ, to embrace Christ, to give ourselves to Christ.

This is faith, as we've already seen, and faith is the gift of God. God, and behind every instance of a person becoming a believer, you, me, all of us in this room, and all believers elsewhere also, stands the purpose of God that it should be so, the purpose of election.

That's what Paul wants us to know about election, that it is the guarantee that God's will will be done in our lives, that those whom God is calling to faith will come to faith, that all the instances of believing, you believing, I believing, so on, every single instance of real faith in a person's life is the fruit of God's action by the Spirit, which is described as God calling, and he wants us to understand that those who are being called may know themselves to be in this unchanging divine purpose which brings them a joyful eternity, eternal acceptance, eternal life, eternal hope, and eternal security, and all the power of God is behind that, so that they're safe, we are safe, you and I are safe, and there is no possibility of our slipping out of God's hands and being lost, so, back to verse 39, sorry, verse 30, those whom he predestined he also called, we understand that now, and whom he called, that is, whom he brought to faith, you see, he also justified, no one is justified until they've been brought to faith, well, we've seen that also, and those whom he justified, he also glorified, hey, wait a minute, we might say,

[51 : 43] Paul is using a past tense there, and it hasn't happened yet, but what's that past tense doing? Well, I'll tell you what it's doing, it is, it's a, it's following a Hebrew idiom, actually, it is telling us that our glorification, the glorification of all those who are justified, is as good as done, do you see?

Because God has decreed it, and nothing can stop it happening. which again is a terrific thought to live with. My glorification in the future is as certain as my justification in the past.

I know I'm justified, and I know I will be glorified. It's the fulfillment of a single plan of God for my life. It's all grace, I didn't deserve any of it, but thank you, Lord, you've done it, and it's mine, it's my new life, and it's my present hope, and it's my joy as I look forward to what's going to be.

Having got thus far, you can't wonder that Paul launches into a kind of rhetorical peroration. You've got that from verse 31 down to verse 39.

what shall we say to these things? And having asked the question, Paul now provides us in effect with the answers.

[53 : 25] If God's for us, who can be against us? Answer, nobody. He who didn't spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

That means all good things. Does it mean all the good things we can think of? No, it means more than that. It means all the good things that God can think of.

How shall he not with him also freely give us all things? There will be an eternity of joy and delight as God gives and gives and gives.

that will be our experience and that's what we are entitled right now to expect and rejoice in.

Who will bring any charge against God's elect? Well, now Paul says explicitly, you can't do it. It's God who justifies and he's justified.

[54 : 31] Who's going to condemn us? Christ died for us and he's at the right hand of God actually interceding for us right now that is making sure that we receive all that he died to secure for us.

That's the point of the intercession. Who is going to separate us from his love, the love of Christ? Of course, the words now are very, very familiar.

I expect you could recite them from memory. They end with verse 39 where Paul is saying nothing, nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God. So, the second hunk of Paul's teaching in Romans goes out on a high, very high, wonderfully high.

This is the temper, shall I say, of those who enjoy the fullness of assurance from God.

[55 : 48] They rejoice in the love of God which they know will never be withdrawn from them. They rejoice in the security that they have with God who is going to keep them safe forever.

They're walking on air, even though in human terms they may be walking through some pretty rough places, but they walk on air. Well, that's brought us to the end of our second section.

It's brought us to the point at which it's my business to close. Close I will. I think now we have a few more minutes for questions and comments or reactions, anything that you want to say to me.

And then, am I right, I think that at 12.35, is that it? At 12.35, having rejoiced in what the Bible calls the inner man, with all this wonderful truth about the grace of God, we shall be privileged to feed what we call the inner man with a lunch that some dear friends have kindly prepared for us.

So, we've got ten minutes for questions. Yes? No? Oh, yes, sorry, right at the back there.

[57 : 16] Mm-hmm. Sorry, say that last sentence again.

What? Well, virtue, I'm asked about virtue and duty.

I hope you all heard it. Virtue is a matter of doing what the Lord says we should do, and what the Lord Jesus in his early life, earthly life, actually showed us we should do, by way of example.

Love God and love our neighbor, and everything in the realm of virtue branches out from those two thoughts. As for duty, well, virtue is what's required of us, so virtue is a duty, at least we should attempt to achieve virtue because it's a duty, duty, and obedience at every point is a Christian duty. We shan't achieve perfection in this world. Paul knows that. He knows that we are part of the created order which is groaning, groaning because of the tension under which day by day it lives and we live.

[59 : 12] groan and we groan with it, we groan as part of it, says Paul in the middle of Romans 8. We are waiting for the adoption, that is to say the gift that our adoption into God's family entitles us to, namely the redemption of our body.

We're waiting for that. moment. And, well, if the Lord comes before we leave this world, it will be a matter of sudden transformation and a moment and the twinkling of an eye, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15.

And if, as perhaps is more likely, though we don't know, we leave this world before the Lord comes back, well, when resurrection day finally comes, we shall be, as Paul says it, I'm echoing his words, we shall be clothed upon.

We shall be given a new body. And it will have some relation, of course, to the body that we have now, but it will certainly be the body of someone who is, how can I say, at the peak of their powers. It will be a body in which we shall be recognizable, it will be a body in which, just because sin is no longer in our system, we shall be able to love and serve the Lord perfectly.

[60 : 49] And that means that in heaven we shall be performing our duty perfectly. And it won't feel like duty, it will feel like love in its natural expression.

We do what we do because we love our Lord. And this is the way that we please him and show our love. Does it help for me to say it that way?

That's part of what we have to look forward to, I think. mean time, in matters both of virtue and duty, we do the best we can and keep asking the Lord to enable us to do even better tomorrow than we did yesterday.

Okay? Any more from any more? wait a minute. Well, in broad terms, I think you're right on, but in specific terms, I think that it really is important that we should recognize that we are born as descendants of Adam and the whole of our inner life is out of shape, so all the desires that we have from babyhood are more self-centered than they ought to be, and that will have to be changed. People talk about babies as little innocence, but experience, I think, shows that babies are very self-centered and they are inclined to stay that way, and you have to work very hard in bringing up children to get them to behave, even outwardly, in an unselfish manner.

[62 : 53] They don't do it naturally. They're not good at it. We have to encourage them to act unselfish every way we can, and it isn't always, indeed, it isn't usually that their heart desires to do that.

It's that they know that that's how they ought to behave, because dad and mom and other people also have told them so. But with that small adjustment, yes, there are, how can I say, as you said, latent capacities within.

It takes the new birth and the indwelling of the spirit to start bringing those latent capacities to life. When God breaks into our lives, we simply haven't got the desires that he imparts through new creation.

But he does impart them, and then more and more we learn to recognize them, to identify with them, and to express them in action as our Christian lives go along.

Does that make sense? That's a very different question.

[64 : 14] I agree. So you'll get a brief answer. I agree with the point that he's making. That is, that God is most glorified when we are most directly and fully enjoying him.

But I don't think that using the word hedonism to express that point of view was a very good use of language, and I wish he'd used other words, but the idea is right, I think.

And so it's a book that despite its title, I recommend to all who have ears to hear. I could, and I will. Our Father, we have been looking at a wonderful piece of writing, this letter from Paul to the Romans, and we feel to us as well.

and we pray now that the glorious things that we've seen as we've gone through the first eight chapters may become a permanent part of our life of thinking and desiring and doing so that we may in the fullest sense fulfill our calling to be disciples, imitators, and followers in every way of Jesus, our Savior and our Lord.

[66 : 06] We shall never get to the end of gratitude to him for his saving work on our behalf, and indeed we don't want to, for it will be an eternal joy to be in his presence praising him and telling him how much we appreciate his love and all that he's done for us.

We pray, Lord, that this may not be the end of our acquaintance with the first eight chapters of Romans. We pray again for the study groups that are going to grow out of this gathering this morning, and we pray that the whole of the congregation of which we're part, the St.

John's congregation, may be transformed by the wonderful things that Romans teaches us and the wonderful divine powers that Romans discloses to us.

So we thank you for the teaching that you've given us. We commit ourselves to you afresh to be your servants.

We ask you to go with us and enable us to glorify your name in every situation and every relationship in which we find ourselves. May we ever be found growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus as we prayed earlier on.

[67 : 44] And now we thank you, Father, for the food that we're going to share and the fellowship that we're going to share with it. Bind us together, Lord, in love to each other and in helpfulness to each other.

Make us encouragers of each other. May we provoke each other to love and good works, as scripture says.

Give us zeal for your glory. Give us longing to see your word spread through our witness in the community.

Give us the passion that will not rest content while we are surrounded by folk who don't yet know you and who need to know you.

Make us wise and effective as witnesses and give us the joy of seeing folk who are present don't know you, coming to you and entering into the new life into which we have entered and which we so prize and rejoice in.

[69 : 02] so Lord be with us and thank you for what's past. Bless us in the future. Keep us under your wings and grant us the fullness of joy with you and with each other as life goes on.

We ask it in the Savior's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.