

# From Groans to Glory

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Romans 8:12–18

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## Intro

The lectionary reading for today is Romans 8:12-25, but, frankly, these verses have way too much important information to try to cover them all at the same time. So, today we will be using verses from Romans 8:12-18 and next week we will pick back up at verse 18 again and go to maybe verse 39, but possibly only through 30. So, the text for today is Romans 8:12-18 out of the NIV.

Last week, we talked about the good news that, because Jesus bore our sins on the cross, we no longer have to follow the whims of our sin nature. It doesn't control us any more. Those who live by the flesh bring death to themselves, but as Christians, our desire is to live by the Spirit and we choose life. Eternal life! As Paul told us in verse 11, the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead gives life to believers who live hand-in-hand with Him.

Paul opens our text this morning by reminding us that God, through Jesus' sacrifice and through the Holy Spirit releases us from our sin debt leaving us free to accept everything God has for us.

Listen - or read along with me as I read Romans 8:12-18 from the New International Version. Romans 8:12-18:

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the

Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The word of God for the people of God, Thanks be to God!

As far as Paul is concerned, the question of whether we - as believers - answer to our flesh or the Holy Spirit is put to rest and because we know who we answer to. We are still under obligation, but now it is an obligation to God because He is the one that brings life!

Verses 12 and thirteen have brought a lot of misunderstanding in this world. These verses are a call to what some label “the mortification of the flesh or putting the flesh to death.” If you’ve seen, I think the scene was in “The DaVinci Code” where Silas was beating himself with a spiked chain, he was mortifying his flesh. It was - and potentially is - a practice by some who feel that self-harm is the only way to kill the flesh. The desert mothers and fathers were ascetics. They removed themselves from society in an attempt to put to death natural bodily appetites.

But the truth is, the mortification of the flesh is just recognizing evil as evil and completely and totally repudiating to the point that the only way to describe what you are doing is by saying you are putting it to death.

A few weeks ago, I told you that when Paul says the word “therefore,” it’s his way of saying “if this, then that.” Here he is using it for “since this, then this.” Since we have the Spirit in us, then we have this obligation. Not to the flesh that brings death, but to the Spirit that brings life.

In Paul’s day, debt often led to slavery which may be why he chose the words he did but unlike someone we owe a debt to, we have no contractual obligation to evil, in fact, by the commitment we made when we accepted Christ, it’s the exact opposite, our obligation now lies with the Spirit that brought grace that leads to

eternal life. Jesus' death on the cross paid our debt to sin and now, we need to start living like it.

This next verse, verse 13 is the basis - well one of them - for why Methodists believe we can turn our back on salvation once we accept grace. "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." This verse is not talking about physical death. How do I know that? Because Paul has only been speaking about Spiritual life. Our body's will die. Philippians 3:21 says that Christ will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. We will leave our current bodies behind and receive new bodies.

Paul isn't talking about our current physical bodies dying, he is talking about the death of the Spirit in us if we continue living by the flesh. If we are not trying to control our desires that go against the will of God, trying to mortify our base nature, Paul says that we will put to death the Spirit in us.

Yes, there are those that think that we can't lose our salvation. That those that fall away were never really saved to start with, but before the fall, Satan belonged to God. In Ezekiel 28 God has told Ezekiel to tell the King about Satan and who Satan had been before the fall, Lucifer was an angel with a high rank, he was beautiful and full of wisdom. God had given him a position of power and influence and he was called the guardian cherub.

But Satan decided to turn his back on God and led a rebellion against God in an effort to become God himself, so God threw him out of heaven.

Loved ones, when we follow our flesh and give into temptation we are telling God "I am what's important, I chose to be God over myself." If we continue without repentance, God's Holy Spirit will leave us. If God put His most beautiful and important angel out of heaven, who are we to think we are so special that He wouldn't put us out? While listing our sins when we confess and ask for forgiveness, yes, it's important that we list the actual sins where we ourselves recognize where we were wrong, but, we also need to confess and ask forgiveness for the fact that when we committed those sins we were taking it upon ourselves to be our own God.

Paul continues in verse fourteen through seventeen by saying, For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The phrase "Those who are led by the Spirit of God," tells us how we put to death the flesh and the deeds of the flesh. Like we've been talking about, God gives us what we need to do what He asks us to do. He gives us His Spirit who, if we give over control of our lives, will direct us toward God and the things of God instead of the flesh and things of the flesh. This is victory y'all! A victorious life is a life that is led by the Spirit of God and through this annihilation of self, we become children and heirs of God and siblings and co-heirs with Christ.

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." I said before that sometimes my faith dips a bit but even when it does, I know my salvation is assured. This is why! Even when my spirit is down, it is bolstered by the Holy Spirit telling it, telling me that I am God's child. I can confidently call out Abba, Father and know that my Father hears me.

In Roman culture, the inheritance of an adopted child could depend on whether a natural child was willing to include that child in the inheritance so what Paul is saying here is that Jesus approves of our inclusion in the inheritance and also gives it to us along with the Father.

"if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." This isn't the only time that we hear that we, as believers, will suffer. I don't think that Paul is just talking about persecution here though persecution is a very real possibility. I think he is also talking about physical sufferings such as the ones he lists in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. In that text, he talks about being beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and people from all walks of life being a threat to him. He talks about being hungry, cold, and naked. All of these things he experienced and faced because of his commitment to Christ. Yes, he shared in Christ's sufferings.

Years ago, I lost two men who had been very important in my life fairly close together. One was my uncle who often stepped in to act as Dad for me when my own Dad didn't. He attended events I was in and it was Uncle Duane that took me for my driving test. After a short, intense battle with cancer, he passed away.

The second, I had known all my life. His kids were of a similar age to us and by the time we were teens, he had retired from the Marines. Master Gunnery Sergeant Wendell Stewart. Wendell was one of the few people I have ever known who was lock/stock dependable and while I looked up to him as a kid, it was the man I came to know as an adult that showed me how truly remarkable he was. When we, my husband and I, decided to start going to church as a family we went to Hickory Flat United Methodist Church. Wendell was the lay leader there and within our first month of attending, he took my husband aside and told him he had work for him to do. Now understand, Clay, at that time, didn't walk the walk, talk the talk, or have much desire to do so. He had only agreed to attend when I reminded him of the vow we had made when we christened the boys. But Wendell saw something in Clay and began mentoring him in Christianity and in leadership. But Wendell had Parkinson's and it was advancing. So, he began turning jobs that he had done over to Clay. Clay wound up being the lay leader and even singing in the choir. When Wendell became housebound, Clay would stop by on the way home from work and visit with him. Honestly, Wendell became a surrogate father to Clay. But then the evening came and we got the call that Wendell had passed away.

I remember being so angry at God. Why would He take these two men who were doing so much for Him here! Why did he let them suffer so much!

One night about two o'clock in the morning, I sat straight up from a deep sleep because as clear as I can hear someone right beside me I heard, "Look at what I let my Son go through."

Y'all, we will indeed suffer here on earth just like our Savior did.

But, and here is the Gospel folks, these groanings that we experience are nothing compared to the glory that awaits us!

Being a member of God's family brings the promise of life and joy in the future. If we keep our focus on God, the stuff that hurts us so much here is bearable.

Paul said in verse 18, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

We can focus on our groanings, or we can focus on glory.

Everyday we have a choice. we can focus on our flesh or we can focus on God.

I can focus on what is going on in the world, or I can focus on God.

I can focus on what that person said that hurt my feelings, or I can focus on God.

I can focus on that unexpected bill, or I can focus on God.

I can focus on missing my husband so badly I can't breathe, or I can focus on God.

I choose God because He chose me.

It is my sincere prayer that you too will choose God.

Bow your heads with me please.