

A STUDY OF ROMANS
ROMANS 8 – PART 2
Taught by Bruce Bickel
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When I was growing up in my church, my mother was our choir director, so I was heavily involved because mother told me to be. {LAUGHTER} That was before the Lord applied his grace to me that gave me the desire to want to be. Going through your normal confirmation class, the pastor's son and I were good friends and we went through this together. We had a competition to see who could memorize the verses for our Sunday that we got our Bibles. My folks had me memorize the Sermon on the Mount. I memorized chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the book of Matthew. You know what my pastor's son memorized? You had to stand up and recite. I stood up and recited for 15 minutes. He stood up, "Jesus wept." {LAUGHTER} That's all he did. I was spending months memorizing, he got away with just saying, "Jesus wept." That's all he did. So James, you're off the hook. {LAUGHTER}

I just want to say thanks, folks. This has been a wonderful experience for me. I trust it's been beneficial. I trust, first of all, the Lord's been glorified. Ministry is never one way. Even though I spend many hours studying on this, the real joy is being with you and the encouragement you bring me by your faithfulness. I want to thank you and salute all of you and tell you how much it means to me that you would show up here on a Wednesday night. There are a lot of other things you could do. I do appreciate your faithfulness and regularity of coming to this, because that's what it really is, a great encouragement to me, so I thank you very kindly.

Let's open your Bibles please to the book of Romans 8. I'm going to read the latter portion where we will be tonight. There is so much for us to consider in Romans 8. I'll give you the introduction in a moment. Please follow along as I begin reading at verse 18 of Romans 8:

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. ²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things

present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is the Word of the Lord.

Audience Members: Thanks be to God.

Amen and Amen. Father, we pray that this is our last session as we delve into your truth. We pray that this would be filled with your grace as well as your truth. Father, may your Holy Spirit guide us into all truth, fulfill his job description, that we might behold you more clearly for Christ’s sake. Amen.

There’s so much to cover in this last chapter of the book of Romans 8. I wish I had time to go through it expositively. That would be verse by verse. We don’t have time for that because I have about 45-50 minutes. So I’m going to have to do this topically. There are three topics that I want us to cover in these verses that we just read, 18 to the end of the chapter. The three things I want us to see, first of all, would be the goal, and then I want you to see the purpose, and then I want you to see the confidence.

First of all, we’re going to see the goal of our salvation. What is the goal of salvation? Paul gives a wonderful illustration and instruction on the goal of our salvation. We have such a paucity of understanding about the whole concept of salvation because of the weakness of our evangelism. Paul really eliminates that possibility because he’s going to say, “Here’s the real purpose of your salvation.

We need to expand our horizons and our understanding of what is our salvation and what does it really mean. If you don’t understand that, then it’s going to have very little impact upon your life. You see, we have to think correctly before we act correctly before we feel correctly, and that includes how do you look at your salvation. So we want to take a look at that tonight, the goal of our salvation.

The second thing is the purpose or the process of our suffering. If that is the goal of our salvation, why do we suffer? I don’t like to ask the question why or how come because the Scripture tells us that, “My thoughts are not like your thoughts, and my ways are not like your ways,” so I’m not going to try to answer the question why; I’m just going to give some explanation to help us understand the confidence that we can have as God’s chosen children to persevere toward the end. We’re going to see whole purpose and the process of our suffering, what it means in our salvation.

Lastly, the confidence that you and I can have in the midst of the difficulties of life. Those are the three things we going the look at tonight topically.

The purpose of chapter 8 is to really show us, God’s chosen people, the way that you and I can have the full assurance of our salvation. That’s the whole theme of chapter 8. We have a new spirit within us, that’s working in us toward righteousness. We have a new spirit, which guarantees our finer glorification, including even our physical bodies.

This knowledge, understanding of having the spirit working in us, ought to help us understand why we are subjected to trials and tribulations and the difficulties of life. These experiences, these trials, these tribulations and difficulties of life, Paul said, really should not weaken our faith; it ought to strengthen it. One of the things that he’s going to teach us is this; that the trials and tribulations you go through because you’re associated with the person and work of Christ is a confirmation that you’re one of God’s true children. In other words—I want to be careful about this—the degree to which you and I suffer because we’re followers of Christ is an indication, sort of a backhanded compliment, a backhanded assurance of your saving faith. In other words, you would not be persecuted going through these things if you didn’t have saving faith.

Paul's going to tell us that these trials should not weaken our faith; it ought to strengthen it because it gives us the assurance that we really are owned by God and under his realm of providential care.

Not only does Paul tell us that these sufferings prove we're children of God, he also says that these sufferings are used to prepare us for glory. Understandably, we have to admit that this is a significant mystery, but we'll see this later on. As you look at verse 17, "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Notice there's a combination of suffering with him and being glorified with him. One of the things we're going to see in this presentation tonight in Romans 8 is the correlation that whenever you see glory, you always suffering. Whenever you see the word or the concept of suffering, you always see glory. Those two things cannot be separated. You see that in verse 17.

This also shows us, when you look at it, the terrible, devastating power of sin and its impact upon our lives in that suffering should be one of the things that prepares us for glory. One would think in our humanity and in our finite minds that if you just had the simple proclamation of biblical truth, that would be enough, but that's not it. It doesn't work that way. We're going to see that suffering is part of our preparation for the glory we're going to receive.

With that introduction, let's remind ourselves, as we look at these verses, that everything that happens to you and me, everything that happens to us as a follower of Christ, is because we are in Christ, and we are united with him, together with him. That should be uppermost in our mind. When you think of yourselves as a Christian, you've got to think of yourselves in terms of what the Scripture says, not what evangelism says. The evangelists say just, "Invite Jesus into your heart. Where does he live? He lives in my heart. Okay, you're a Christian." That's the only the picture we have our Christianity.

Really, you need to understand this. You're in Christ. You're no longer in Adam. You're in Christ. That's how we need to look at ourselves. That radically changes the way you look at yourself and the way you're going to express yourself in your faith, if you'll understand the full scope and glory that's a part of our salvation.

The whole end and whole glory of our salvation is not forgiveness. That's just one of the steps. That's stage one. Glorification is the ultimate end of your salvation. In other words, we are going to be resurrected into glory. That's the end of our salvation. The reason that God saves is so that we will be glorified with him. We must never fall short of thinking that about our salvation.

You see, we should never think that our Christian position is simply just being a forgiven sinner. Yes, that is true, but that is only the beginning. That's not the end of it. Even your sanctification, being set apart for holiness, is not the end result of your salvation. The end result, the goal of your salvation, is glorification. You've heard me say justification, sanctification, glorification. That's the process of the pilgrimage. The end of our salvation, the reason that Christ came to die for us and do all the things we talked about in chapter 5, is so that you will be one day eternally glorified in Christ. Everything that happens to you, after your saving faith, is because you're unified with Christ.

What do we mean when we say that glorification is the end of your salvation? What do we mean by glorification? Well, it means this. It means the full and entire deliverance from sin and evil, and all of its effects, and all respects upon your body, soul and your mind and your spirit. We will be completely and entirely delivered from every harmful effect of sin, every tarnishing of sin, all polluting effects of sin. And not only that, we shall be made to look like the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is you will become a perfect person. That's what it means. You will become a perfect person. You'll be glorified people.

He is already glorified. Christ is already glorified. He has his glorified body. You and I don't. But we shall be glorified. That is the purpose of our salvation. Our glorification and everything else happens to us as a result of our having this union with Christ because you're in Christ. That's why Paul uses 129 times the phrase "in Christ" to describe a person who has saving faith through God the Father through God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. He describes that person as being in Christ.

We need to start thinking ourselves and start using that language as opposed to saying, "I'm a Christian." You can walk down the streets of Pittsburgh and say, "Why are you a Christian?" or "Are you a Christian," and you'll get as many answers to that question as the people you ask. "Well I was born one," you might hear. "I'm a tither." "I do this." "I sing in the choir." "I teach Sunday school." You'll get as many answers as you ask people that question. But if you ask them this, "Are you in Christ?" they're either going to know what you mean because they've been taught well, or they're going to think you're some sort of a zealot. They're going to say, "What in the world are you talking about? Of course I'm a Christian. I live in the United States. Aren't we a Christian country?" You see, that's the mindset we have because we have such a shallow, shallow understanding of the goal of our salvation. The goal of our salvation is not happiness or joy. It is your glorification, that you would be returned to your pre-Adamic state of being absolutely perfect. That's why you go justification, sanctification, glorification.

He is already glorified, and we will be glorified. The process of that is God's saving faith through our salvation. We should never forget that. We were once in Adam, but now you are in Christ. You are in Christ. Chapter 8 is Paul's way of summarizing the great truth of being justified by faith alone that he told us in chapter 5. Chapter 8 is a summary of chapter 5 verse 1.

It's absolutely critical for us to understand the truth about the doctrine of glorification, for it is the ultimate end of your and my salvation. God forbid that we should ever stop at forgiveness or merely think of salvation negatively as we're just being rescued or delivered from hell. Now I would never make light of those two blessings. Being delivered from death and everlasting punishment is only the first step. It's the mere beginning. The end of that process is your glorification, your absolute perfection.

You see, when you were justified, you were given credit for what? The sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. That's what you're going to get eternally when you are glorified. The first step of your salvation is you're justification. God views you differently. Your whole life process because you're now in Christ is once you have been justified, God looks at you differently. He gives you credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. You and I accept that by faith. All of your life, from that point on, is the process of your glorification. That's the end result of your salvation. It's just not forgiveness. Absolutely I would never belittle forgiveness, but that's just the first step. It's not being saved from hell, the wrath of God. Yes, you're saved from that, but that's all part of the process. It's just the first steps to it.

The final step of your salvation is your glorification. You will be a perfect person because you'll be conformed to the image of Christ. That's how you need to look at yourself. Now that does not give us a sense of pride or ego. It ought to give us a tremendous sense of what? Humility. You see, humility is this. Humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing I can't achieve it. That's humility. It's seeing that which is absolutely perfect—I see that in the Scripture; the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ—and I can't accept that. I can't achieve that. I can't obtain that. That's what produces humility. You see, what God has done for us. He justifies us by faith. He then sanctifies us in the process of our life, and then the final step is your glorification. The goal of our salvation is glorification, and we should never forget that.

I also want to help you understand something about the system of this world and the condition of mankind when we understand that definition of our salvation. You see, this also helps us understand the condition of man and the condition of the system of this world. Mankind is always trying to return back to their original state of glory that was imparted to them at creation when God made them in his image and in his likeness. All of life and all of history is people trying to go back to that original state of perfection they had before sin entered the world. We've got to remember that at the very beginning, Adam had that kind of glory, before sin entered in. That's where Adam was in. Salvation is returning us to that pre-Adamic state of perfection in God's eyes. Such was man the way that God made him.

Audience Member: What was that word you used?

Pre-Adamic.

Audience Member: Pre-Adam.

Pre-Adam.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Such was the state of man when God made him. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve listened to the evil one and fell with the terrible consequences that he lost the original position that he originally had. Paul already stated that in 5:23, "All have fallen short of the glory of God. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." You and I understand this. You and I were never meant to fall short of the glory of God. We were never meant to do that. We were created to be perfect in God's likeness. To be created perfect in his image. We were never created to be falling short of that glory that he created us with, the original creation. That's what salvation is. Salvation is the restoration of that which we have lost.

That's why the world is really so messed up. Man has lost the original glory that we possessed, and we tend to demonstrate that, that loss, in every aspect of our life. That's the tragedy of the human race. It's the real problem with mankind.

Notice, how people strive to do what? To get the glory they think that they deserve. That's all life is all about. They're trying to get the glory that they think that they should have. But they can't find it. They can't obtain it, because it's not theirs to achieve. But that's what drives the world. That's why the world is so messed up because everybody is trying to find that glory that they think they deserve and they ought to have. But they can't find it in their own efforts. That's why people are so restless.

Here's how Isaiah says it in Isaiah 57:20, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. You see, that's what causes rest... what causes restlessness in humanity?

Audience Member: Sin.

Absolutely. No one is satisfied with what they have. That's why we're restless, because we're not satisfied with what we have. What is the thing we're looking for? We're looking for the glory that we think we deserve. We're looking for the glory that we think ought to be mine. That's why people have ambition. That's why people have rivalry. That's why there's jealousy. That's why there's pride. Why is that? It's just a matter of trying to be, deep inside yourself, what we think we were meant to be, and what we ought to be.

You see, we're looking for that glory that we think is ours that is due me because of who I am. That's why you have so many books on the purpose of life. That's why you have what is the purpose of life. What is my existence? Why am I here? You see, all of those questions bespeak of one thing—you're looking for that glory that was lost, that was there in the pre-Adamic state. You see, that's the way God made us. We were never meant to be created to fall short of the glory of God.

What is salvation? It is the restoration of that glory that you once had when we were created, free of sin. That's the beauty of salvation. It's far more than just forgiveness. It's far more than just not going to hell. It's this idea that, "You're going to be brought back to the original state in which you were created in my likeness and in my image," he says. You see, what a thrilling salvation we have.

You see, when you look at it logically, salvation is not salvation, at least at the very least, it puts us back where we were before, back into that pre-Adamic state. You see, if were..look at it logically. If we were just forgiven, but not unchanged, it would mean that the devil was victorious and God had failed. If you were just forgiven but not changed, it means Satan won. But when you are forgiven and understand that you're justified by faith alone, you do change. That's because the whole process is, "I'm going to take you to your final glorification because the purpose of my saving you is your glorification."

Consider man as God made him. How did God make man? Perfect. Made him perfect. Satan comes along and mars the work and defaces that which God made. What is salvation? Salvation is the restoration, the bringing back of what was lost. What is it we've lost? Your glorification. That's what's lost.

Here's how it works. Justification—freedom from the penalty of sin. Sanctification is freedom from the power of sin. Glorification—now get this—freedom from the presence of sin. You're brought back to your original state of perfection. Why do think he justified you and the first place? Who's perfection did he give you? He gave you the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the Savior who died for you. That's the beginning of it. You are justified by faith. When you absorb that, it radically changes the way you think about yourself. This is not self-esteem folks. This is a radical change of your spirit. It's a radical change of your whole demeanor. It's a radical change of your whole life. It's the way you think and the way you act. Your attitude. You see, it all changed radically, because you're in the process of going from God viewing you as sinlessly perfect to God ultimately making you sinlessly perfect. Do you see that? That's the purpose of salvation. It's far more than just inviting Jesus into your life. Far more than that.

Our evangelism is so weak because we think it's about what Jesus gives, rather than Jesus who he is. You see, we have such a weak view of salvation. I mean, I've been involved in this all my life. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. So what do I do? Invite Jesus. Where is he? He's in my heart. Really? It's not what the Scripture says. Where is Jesus? He's at the right hand of God the Father. He doesn't live in your heart. It's the spirit of Christ that lives in your heart.

When I was preaching at my first church in Kansas City, I was teaching about what it meant to be in Christ, describing that word, "in Christ," why Paul used that phrase. I was suggesting that Jesus was in your heart. This little girl—first grader—came up to me afterward and said, "Pastor Bruce, if Jesus is in my heart, he can't be with my brother when he goes visit my Aunt Mary in New York." {LAUGHTER} I thought, "I am supposed to teach her." {LAUGHTER} I said, "You're right." She said, "If Jesus is here, he can't be any place else." Romans 8 says he's not there. Romans 8 says, "If you have the spirit of God in you." The spirit of Christ is in you. Jesus is at the right-hand of the Father. What's he doing? He's interceding for you. Interceding for you. That's what we need to understand. We don't understand the intercessory work of Christ. (We'll get to that in a moment.)

Salvation is the restoration, the bringing back of what we lost.

Sig: Did Adam not have a sense of that before, I mean, like he could have...

You're asking me about Adam?

Sig: Well, you're the wisest guy I know.

Well, the wisest answer is I don't know. We'll discuss it together in eternity, when you ask him.

Sig: I'll look forward to that.

There's a whole bunch of questions that I want to ask Adam. {LAUGHTER} Some of them I won't tell you.

Salvation cannot stop. My point is this, friends. Salvation cannot stop at any point short of eternal perfection of the soul and the body. It can't stop any place other than there. It can't stop short of the entire perfection of your soul and your body as well. That's why the ultimate goal of salvation is what? Glorification. That's why the title of this series has been From Justification to Glorification. That's it. That's 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Let me give you a glimpse of this. Turn in your Bibles to the book of 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, “¹⁶But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

You see, that's your present condition. Your whole life is because you're now in Christ and not in Adam. Everything of your life has one thing...you're going from one stage of glory to the next. It's a process that takes care of your life. The end result is going to be your eternal, glorified perfection. That's the condition where we are right now. All the things that we go through in life are designed for one thing—to bring you to the original state of your pre-Adamic sinlessness and give you your ultimate, eternal glorification. That's our present state.

The final glorification is yet to come. You see, we are justified. We are being sanctified. We are going to be glorified. That's what Paul means when he says in Romans 5:1-2, “Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, in which we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” He's saying the end result of your justification is the glory of God. It's the hope that you're going to be glorified in God's glory. That's our present condition. We are justified, we are being sanctified through our daily life situation, and we're going to be glorified.

Now that means that life is going to be a fight. It's going to be a struggle. There's still going to be some times, there are going to be some difficulty, and the body itself is decaying, and the body is dying. But that is not glorification. That is the process of sanctification, preparatory to our entry into the final glorification when the Lord returns. That's the present position of the believer. You are justified, you are being sanctified, and you will be glorified.

You and I are in the sanctification process, which is preparatory to our entering into the final state of glorification. You see all that is? That's why there are problems in life. Because it's going from one stage of glory to the next. When you come from one struggle and go to the next, you're more glorified

now than you were then. That's called maturity. It's becoming transformed to the image of Christ. That's all life is about. It's helping us in this process of getting back that which we lost, and that is our perfect glorification. What a thrilling salvation when you look at it that way. It's far more than just being forgiven and not going to hell. That's the first step. That's the first stage. But that's not the end of it. The end of it is your glorification.

Notice this. What a thrilling salvation we have when we see it from the big picture. We're free from the penalty of sin because Christ died for us. That's chapter 5 of Romans. We are free from the power of sin because we died with Christ in the flesh. That's chapter 6 of the book of Romans. We are free from the law as the means of obtaining righteousness. That's chapter 7 of the book of Romans. Someday we shall be set free from the very presence of sin, when nature and the believers are delivered from their bondage. That's Romans 8. You see how it works? Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. Free from the penalty, free from the power, and free from the presence of sin.

Now let's talk a little bit about how the Scripture puts suffering and glory always together. You don't find one without the other very much. Go to Colossians 1:24-27. Paul writes this. Now notice, the correlation between suffering and glory. ²⁴"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." Now did Christ experience every possible suffering that could happen? No. Christ has a body, and what's happening to that body? Still suffering. You're the body of Christ if you're in Christ. I'm the body of Christ. Notice what Paul says, "I fill up the sufferings." Christ didn't suffer everything. He has a body that is still suffering. That's part of the glorification process.

Look at verse 25-27, ²⁵"of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery." What's the mystery? It's that his body is still suffering. Verse 27, "this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Now do you see that? The context of that hope of glory is suffering.

You and I don't understand that. But that's part of our eternal process of being restored back to our glorified state. I'm not talking about being inconvenienced in your life, "Oh, I had a flat tire on the way tonight." That's not suffering. I'm not talking about inconvenience of life. I'm talking about the suffering because you're associated with the person and work of Christ. It's because they know that you are in Christ and you suffer for that.

I don't know if any of you have experienced that. I'm not even sure that I've ever experienced that in my life. I've had some inconveniences that I ascribe to make myself feel better because I'm suffering, therefore I know I'm a believer. You see how your mind works. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about when somebody really ridicules you or does something that is an offense to you because of the person and work of Christ. You see, that's the persecution I'm talking about. It's when you understand that, that's where the glorification comes in because that's part of the process of our glorification.

Many people think that becoming a Christian means this; that you won't have any problems anymore, things will get easy, "Well, you told me that Jesus wanted me to have the abundant life." Do you know what the abundant life might be? Suffering. Now tell that to a non-believer and see if he wants to come to saving faith. He'll have nothing to do with it, because they don't get the benefits. You see, what we do in our evangelism is we offer the benefits, not the person, "Do you want to have eternal life?" "Yeah, only an idiot would say no." You see, we offer the benefits. We don't offer the person. We don't offer

the process. We don't talk about the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith.

Let me give you an illustration of the typical Christian life. This is what I always, when I'm sharing my faith in Christ, I always take them to this passage. Go to 2 Corinthians 4. Now here is normal Christian living. I always describe this after I've given the Gospel to somebody because I want them to see the reality. I want them to see what it's going to be, because hopefully, if I've done a good job in presenting the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith, they're going to understand this. Here is normal Christian living.

If somebody says, "What's it like to be a Christian?" read them 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, "⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." In other words, God just wants to put his life on display? How does he do it? "⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed." Want to become a Christian? Then you're going to be afflicted. It's going to be normal, but you won't be crushed. You're going to be perplexed. Want to become a Christian? Then you'll be perplexed. [UNCLEAR] ask yourself why. How come me? You're going to be perplexed. But notice, "but not driven to despair." You may not know all the answers, but you're not going to be driven to despair. Persecuted—people are going to hunt you down—but not forsaken, but not destroyed, "¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." In other words, through you and me who've been justified by faith, who are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and one day we'll be glorified, we are the living expression of the body of Christ. We're going to go through the normal hassles that everybody else does. The difference is this—we have hope in the glory of God.

Now, we need to tell people this. This is normal Christian living. Let's read on, "¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may also be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, but life in you." That's normal Christian living. The keyword there is the word "but." It's what I call the apostolic "but." Notice this word, "but God." But God. But God. But God. But God. You see, who makes the difference? But God.

My mother, before she went to be with the Lord some years ago when she was coming to church...one of the great thrills and humbling experiences of my own life...I came to saving faith through the ministry of my parents. I told you about that in Romans 5:10 with my dad. Forty years later, when I came to Pittsburgh and we moved them up here from Fairmont, West Virginia, they attended church here and sat in my Sunday school class that I taught, the Welcome Class. Remember that?

I had the chance to teach my parents theology. Now that was the most humbling experience I've ever had in my life, to see my mother and dad sitting in the back of that room taking notes. Taking notes from what their ornery little son was saying. {LAUGHTER} You talk about something that was humbling for me. And even then, when my mother experienced tremendous degrees of Alzheimer's when she was in the retirement center, I used to go down after I'd teach a class. I would give her about a 30-second or a 40-second summary of what I just taught. Her mind was gone and she didn't know who I was, but she would always say this, "A good hymn that would go that message would be this." She always put a hymn with what I said, but she didn't know who I was. I would say, "Mom, we talked about justification today." She'd say, "A great hymn would be Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken." She always knew that because music was her great love. You see, that's what happens when you're really in Christ. He changes your whole aspect of your life, just not your spirit or your soul or your body, but your mind also. That was great comfort for me. A great comfort for me.

When my mother went to be with the Lord, I got a call from the nurse at the home and she said, "Dr. Bickel, I just want to tell you that your mother stopped breathing today." This was on a Sunday. She

said, and I was just silent for a, just shocked for a moment, and she said, “But the strangest thing happened.” I said, “What was that?” She said, “You know, your mother hasn’t spoken in six months. Nobody ever talked to her because she was just, her mind was pretty much gone. But today, after the Chaplain gave the message, your mother said that we have more song to sing, and the Chaplain said, ‘What’s that, Helen?’ and she said, ‘Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken,’ and they sang the song.” She said, “Your mother sang. We listened to your mother singing. She didn’t have the hymnbook in her hands. She just sang it from her heart. Then she went back to her room and died.” The nurse said, “That was the strangest thing.” I said, “That’s not strange at all. The Lord was just preparing my mother for the heavenly choir.” You see, who needed to know that? I did. I needed to know that. That’s was a severe mercy for me. Yes, he took her home, but he also gave me the mercy of knowing this; that her soul is right. Even though her mind is gone, her soul is okay. I needed to know that.

You see, that’s the great hope of our salvation. It’s the faith that we have and the hope of the glory of God. That’s what gives us our ability to persevere and hang in there, because we realize that all of life is taking us to our final eternal glory. The Scripture always puts those two things together.

When we don’t let people know that the Christian life is going to have some experience of suffering, and the understanding of why we suffer, it’s basically defrauding people and deceiving them, just to get a response. Paul says that because you are suffering with Christ, you are certain to be glorified with Christ. In other words, it’s in order that we might be glorified that we suffer. It’s in order that we are glorified that we might suffer because we are his body and Christ has a body that is still suffering.

Notice, all of creation is also going to be redeemed. We also have a new confidence. We’ve seen the end result of the Gospel is our glorification. We’ve seen the reason that we suffer is because it’s a process of our going from one stage of glory to the next. Every time you go through some suffering or trial or tribulation, and God refines you, becoming one step closer to that glorified state where the Lord takes you back. That’s what gives us our confidence.

Why is that we persevere? One of the great themes of this particular chapter is the perseverance of the saints. Really, I like the expression that some of us has [UNCLEAR]...it’s the preservation of the saints. God preserves us so that we persevere. Why is that we persevere? It’s because God preserves us. There two ways in which we see this. We see that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our prayer life, and in verse 34, we see that Jesus intercedes for us at the throne of the right-hand of God. We have the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit, and we have the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God the Father interceding for us. They’re preserving us, so that we will persevere. Why is it we hang in there? It’s not because we have such great, wonderful character. It’s because we have the Holy Spirit and the Son of God are interceding for us. They’re doing that on our behalf.

Paul gives us three reasons why we can wait with patience and persevere in the midst of our trials. First of all is that the spirit assists us in our ignorance and our prayer life. You’ll see that and verses 26 and 27. Sometimes in this life, we really don’t know what to pray for. The spirit, we’re told, intercedes for us, preserves us, praying on our behalf the prayer that is always in perfect accordance with God’s will. That’s verse 27.

Paul is not describing here that some say the gift of speaking in tongues. That’s not what he’s talking about. He’s talking about the intercessory prayer work of the Holy Spirit on your behalf. It’s sometimes this, friends, sometimes you just don’t know what to pray for, but you know what you can trust? The Holy Spirit is taking whatever you’re thinking and says, “Father, here’s what she really means. This is what she means. Let’s deal with her on that basis rather than her confusion.”

You see, that's the wonderful preservation of the saints so that you and I persevere. We hang there knowing this. I may not know what I'm feeling. I may not know what I'm going through, but I do know this. The Holy Spirit of God which is in me is interceding and saying, "Father, this is what she's thinking about. This is what she really means. This is what he means. He may have said that differently. He may not have said anything. But Father, I know. I know her spirit, because it's my spirit. And this is what she means." And so the Father acts based upon what the Holy Spirit brings. He intercedes for us. You're being preserved from your own ignorance because sometimes we don't even know how to pray.

Sometimes I honestly think my best prayers have been "Ahhhhhh!!!" That's it. You just don't know what to say, but you know this, "Lord, take it to the throne of grace, and you'll do that on my behalf because I'm justified. I have peace with God and access, and I have hope in the glory of God. That's who I am. I know that you're interceding on my behalf. I'm not alone. I just can't figure it out."

We see that we have the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes these groans are something like words that are too deep to understand or too deep to express. Sometimes I think much of our praying is too much in the flesh. Long beautiful, pious prayers that glorify man and nauseate God. {LAUGHTER} You want to read about something that's nauseating to God, read Isaiah 1:11-18; you'll see all that things that nauseate him, which we think are so good. I think when you get into your prayer session, you notice the prayers of Paul are short. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't pray long. All I'm saying is don't make our prayers like Pharisees who do that to get the reward from earthly beings, as opposed to the Father in heaven.

I think so much of our prayer is so fleshly because we just try to outpray each other. I'm going to make sure that I use all the Christian words because that's going to make me more righteous in God's eyes and impress the other people. That may me nauseating. Hopefully, here's where the Holy Spirit says, "Father, forget all that. Here's what he really means. Just forget that pious stuff. This is what he needs, and let's act with him based upon that rather than what he just said."

Paul indicates that the most spiritual prayer can be a wordless groan that comes from the heart. A wordless groan that comes from the heart may be the most powerful prayer you and I could have. The spirit makes intercession for us. The Father searches our hearts and knows what the spirit desires, and this is what he grants to us.

The spirit always prays in the will of God. I don't. The spirit always does. What is his will? Notice verse 29, "that believers would be conformed to the image of God." Every one of his prayers, the Holy Spirit takes to the throne of grace, is based upon one thing—your and my conformity to the image of God because that's part of the perfection process of our glorification. You see that? That's what the Holy Spirit does.

We can claim the promise of verse 28, "God works in all things" because of the promise of verse 29. The second reason that we have great confidence to persevere because of God's preservation is the understanding that in all things God works for those who love him. Works for good. That means that anything that happens in our life does not lie outside the scope of God's providential care. Nothing in your life goes unnoticed about God's providential care. Indeed, this is a great cause of joy and rock solid foundation of our faith is knowing this; that I'm under God's providential care and nothing that happens to me has he not noticed.

We've got to define the word "good" as defined for what he's producing in us, not in terms of our own self. It's his definition of good, and that is what? Conform to the image of Christ, not necessarily what we want. God knows that our greatest good is to know him and to enjoy his presence forever. Therefore, he may, in pursuit of that goal, conform to the image of Christ, he may allow difficulties such as

poverty, brief illness, health to affect us. But our joy comes from knowing that we will never face such difficulties alone. Whatever the difficulty, our loving Father is at work to make us stronger images of the person and work of Christ.

The non-believer is not going to understand anything I just said, because that just does not make sense. It just doesn't make sense. But it is the grace of God. You just know this. I know I'm not alone. I'm just not...you might feel lonely, but I'm not alone, and I'm never outside God's providential care. Never outside of his care.

Summary, the last couple of verses, 29-39. Paul describes those for whom God works, from the human point of view, and that would be those who love him. From the divine point of view, and that would be those who have been called according to his purpose. God's call on our life is just not simply a Gospel call, just a presentation of the Gospel. It's really the introducing into a saving personal relationship with him. He's calling us to himself. Remember Isaiah 36:22-27. He calls us to himself, cleanses us from ourselves, creates a new heart within us, completes us with the Holy Spirit and causes us to be obedient. The first thing he does is he calls us.

You'll notice on your handout, we were foreknown by the Father. The word "foreknown" means that he chose us before the foundation of the world to come to saving faith. It doesn't mean that he knew that we were going to choose him. It means, "I chose you so that you would choose me." That's what it means. That's what the word foreknown... "I chose you before you were born, Bruce, so that one day, when the Holy Spirit applied the Gospel of Christ to your life through your dad, and when he taught you Romans 5:10, when you realized that you were God's enemy, didn't want to be that...Bingo!" What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applied. That's how it works. He says, "This is your confidence of knowing this; that if you're in Christ today, it's because God chose you before the foundation of the world so that you would choose him during your lifetime, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Notice you were predestined by the Father. You were predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. You were called by the Father. He calls you to himself. You were justified. You were glorified.

Now notice, in those verses, in verse 30, the verb tense is past tense for glorified. What does that mean? It means what God has already ordained is already happening. It's already happening. It's past tense verb. It means your glorification is sealed. Your glorification is a done deal. You've just got to hang in there and live your life, the rest of it, and be glorified. It's past tense. He's saying the process of completing your glorification, believer, is over, "I accomplished it. I called you. I justified you. I sanctified you. And I glorified you." It's something that's already happened. It's just that we haven't obtained it yet. That is the eternal glorification that we will receive when the Lord takes us home.

That's why we celebrate at the death of a loved one, of a believer. We celebrate the fact that they're free from the presence of sin. You see that? At that moment, they've reached that eternal state of glorification, the whole process and the goal of their salvation. He calls us. He justifies us. He sanctifies us. And he glorifies us.

Now notice, the last verse is, "No spiritual can ever separate us from that." Turn with me to John 10 as a cross reference; one of the great chapters on the perseverance of the saints. Well, it's in here somewhere.

Audience Member: *Is it about hearing his voice?*

It's about no one can snatch them out of my Father's hands. Here we go. Look at John 10:25, "²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear

witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice.” What’s the difference between a believer and a non-believer? One hears the voice, the other one doesn’t. The fact that they don’t hear it means they’re not in the flock. The fact that they do here it means they do reside in the flock. ²⁷“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

Notice, the great ability of you and I to persevere in the midst of troubles of life is because when you are in Christ, you are in his hands. He says, “Just to make sure that you understand the security that you have and the eternal aspect of your salvation, my Father wraps his hand around my hand. And my Father’s stronger than I am. So you’re in my hand, but my Father wraps his hand around my hand, and no one, no one, can snatch you out of my hand.” Who can separate us from the love of God? The answer is no one. No one can do that.

I want to pass out something for you. I came across a poem in my study by Robert McShane, a Scottish pastor. He wrote a wonderful poem. I’ll give you copy of this, and then I want to read it. We’ll close with this. You see, there’s no possible accusation that anybody can give you if you’re in Christ. The Father will not allow this because he once gave us his Son. He now gives us all things. The Son will not allow that. There’s no condemnation for you in Christ Jesus because he died for you. He was rescued for us. He now prays for us. That’s why no one can condemn you. It doesn’t mean that you and I are not worthy of condemnation. It means we just don’t receive it because the Father will not let that happen because you have been justified by faith alone, in Christ alone.

I’m going to read this, and those of you who have it, the rest of you will get it. I just wanted you to have this. There’s a Hebrew word for “Lord our righteousness.” It’s pronounced Tsidkenu (sick-a-new). That’s what you’ll see in this. Just listen as I’m reading this as you receive this. I just wanted you to have this because it’s a summary of everything we’ve talked about.

I ONCE WAS A STRANGER

By Robert McShane

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu (my righteousness) was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to sooth or engage,
Isaiah’s wild measure and John’s simple page;
But e’en when they pictured the blood sprinkled tree
Jehovah Our Righteousness seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Our righteousness—’twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
Jehovah Our Righteousness my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life giving and free—
Jehovah Our Righteousness is all things to me.

Jehovah Our Righteousness! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Our Righteousness! I ne'er can be lost;
In thee I shall conquer by flood and by field,
My cable, my anchor, my breast-plate and shield!

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This “watchword” shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Our Righteousness, my death song shall be.

May God give us grace to understand the Lord is Our Righteousness. Tsidkenu—it's a Hebrew word.

With that in mind, friends, the bridge of the whole series can be summed up in this—Romans 5:1 and Romans 8:1, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (5:1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (8:1).” May God give us the grace to understand the magnificence of our salvation. How glorious it is. How glorious it is. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the majesty of your grace. We thank you that your whole purpose for our existence is our glorification that will glorify you. Father, thank you for taking us through the process of our life. You have justified us, given us credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of your only Son. And now you are in the process, through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, of sanctifying us, setting us apart to be holy, from one stage of glory to the next. Father, we look with anticipation for the great hope that we have in our final glorification when you take us to be with yourself. Father, may we never dehumanize our salvation, but may we never try to make it human and just realize it is a supernatural act of your marvelous grace. Grace, grace, marvelous grace. May it be so for Jesus' sake. And all God's children said...Amen!!

Thanks folks. I appreciate your attendance very much.

Audience Members: Thank you!!! [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]