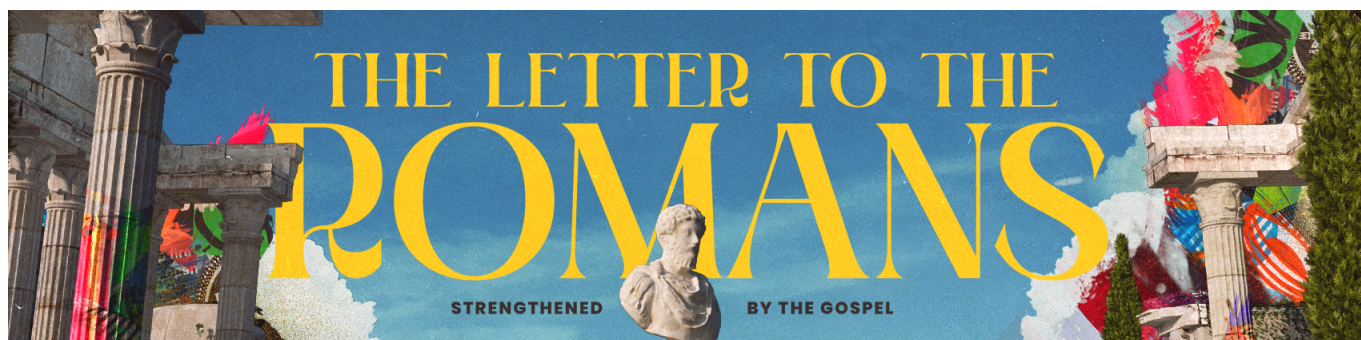




Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 12/18) Future Glory & Present Hope

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect Consider your frontlines. What freedom do you have in living out of the Spirit, rather than up to a standard of life in the Spirit?

Warm-Up

1. In everyday life, what is the best part about being a Christian? What do you find more difficult?

Read Romans 8:18-25 (A Gospel Perspective)

2. What does Paul say is not worth comparing with the “glory that will be revealed in us”?
3. What did Paul say (previously in verse 17) goes *hand-in-hand* with sharing in Christ’s glory?
4. Is Paul making light of the suffering that we experience? Why would he say it doesn’t compare?
5. What are common ways that people approach the reality of suffering in our lives and world? How does a Gospel perspective empower us to see the depth of suffering and the height of our hope?
6. How has a Gospel perspective (of the hope that we have in Christ) change how you face trouble?

Read Romans 8:26-27 (God helps us by his Spirit)

7. From v.26, what is one of the gifts that God has given us to help us? *With what weakness in particular?*
8. Why are these ‘groans’ likely not a reference to a special type of prayer discussed elsewhere?
9. How does the Holy Spirit *help us* to pray? Does this mean we don’t have a part to play in prayer?
10. In what ways do you ever find prayer difficult? How might you be encouraged in your prayer life in the knowledge that the Spirit intercedes for you *as does the Son at the Father’s right-hand* (i.e., v.34)?

Read Romans 8:28-30 (God works for the good)

11. What does God work for? What does “for the good” mean? What *doesn’t it mean*?
12. Do you ever find it difficult to trust in God’s good purposes? What helps you to press on?
13. How has our ultimate future been secured? How does that give you confidence?
14. The theology of ‘predestination’ is one of the most hotly debated topics from the Bible. What — according to Paul — are those in Christ predestined for? (Note that’s the emphasis in this passage.)

Read Romans 8:31-39 (God secures us in his love)

15. What challenges does Paul name in verse 31-36 that Christians face? Is this still true today?
16. Can anything separate us from God’s love for those who are in Christ? How does knowing the security of God’s love help you to wait patiently for Jesus’ return? What reminds you of this love?

Apply When do you find it most difficult to wait patiently for Christ’s return? Which of the three ‘gifts’ could most help you at the moment to live with patient hope?

Pray Gracious God, please help us to wait patiently for the hope that we have in you. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

GOING DEEPER

Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 12/18) Future Glory & Present Hope

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

Who is someone you can invite to the Public Lecture this Friday? You might be surprised who says yes!

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (Sermon):* “Does God Control Everything” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/does-god-control-everything/>
- *Listen (Sermon):* “Groaning in the Spirit” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/groaning-in-the-spirit/>
- *Listen (Sermon):* “Praying by the Spirit” by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/praying-by-the-spirit/#sermons>
- *Listen (Sermon):* “The Steadfast Love of God” by Rico Tice:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=216060&show_file=229393
- *Watch (Story):* Iranian Church Planter,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VELTZTMxyhI>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “Strengthened by the Gospel” by Brian Rosner. 📖
- *Read:* “The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans” by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* “Into the Heart of Romans” by N. T. Wright. 📖
- *Read:* “Epistle of Paul to the Romans” by F. F. Bruce. 📖
- *Read:* “The Message of Romans” by John Stott. 📖
- *Read:* “The Epistle to the Romans” by Leon Morris. 📖
- *Watch:* “Romans” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

📖 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

ROMANS (STRENGTHENED BY THE GOSPEL)

*Week 12/18 “Future Glory & Present Hope”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (02/08/2026, Toowoomba)*

장차 누릴 영광과 현재의 소망 | Nhuöm dē köl Ciën ku ñöth dē yëë kölë
未来的荣耀与当下的盼望 | வருங்கால மகிமை & இன்றைய நம்பிக்கை

Bible Passage: Romans 8:18-39

Heart of Sermon: *The Christian can face suffering because the Gospel gives us a new perspective,
and the Holy Spirit helps us with a Gospel-shaped patience.*

Gracious God, please help us to wait patiently for the hope that we have in you. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

When I got back from the Lausanne Conference in 2024, I shared the story of an Iranian Church Planter, Farshid Fathi. Farshid and some other ministers were arrested in 2010 by the Iranian Intelligence Service under the accusation of acting against national security through evangelism. He was imprisoned for five years. He spent 361 days in solitary confinement in a 2 by 2 metre cell. Yet without hesitation he could say: I didn’t see the sun in the sky for a year, **but the Lord was my light and my salvation.** /

- In the light of suffering we can have all sorts of approaches.
We can try to distract *ourselves and pretend it’s not real.*
We can try to diminish it *and say it’s not that bad.*
We can try to escape it and *make our joy conditional on the suffering ceasing.*
- But Farshid did something altogether different.
He never diminished nor ignored the seriousness of his reality.
BUT he had a hope and knew a joy that pervaded even in the thick of his suffering.
- He knew the reality of his situation.
But he also knew how to rest in a bigger one.
- A truer reality in which you know that suffering is not the end of the story,
and that the LORD is with you even amidst it all. / *The LORD is my light and my salvation.*

As we’ve been tracking through Paul’s letter to the Romans, last week — at the beginning of *chapter 8* — we were invited to rejoice in the most extraordinary news.

- THAT there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. / No condemnation!

- We've been given his Spirit. Adopted as his children. *Made Heirs of God. Co-heirs with Christ.*
- Formed into his church. And invited into a personal relationship with God — the God of the universe — who invites us to call him *Abba, Father.* /
- *So you could almost be forgiven at this point in thinking WOW! The Christian life is all triumph.*
- But Paul has already said — uh-uh — that's not that case.
That part of the very implication of being co-heirs with Christ,
is that sharing in Christ's *suffering* goes hand-in-hand with sharing in his *glory* (v.17).
- That doesn't mean you need enough 'persecution points' before you can share in Christ's glory. No!
- Paul is showing us that Christians *are not immune from suffering nor should we expect to be.*
- And if we are to faithfully navigate this broken world as disciples of Jesus, we need both a *Gospel Perspective* and *Gospel Patience.* //

Today, *we're going to spend most of our time working through what it means to have Gospel Patience.*

- That's really the focus of verses 31 onwards. But before we get started with that, Paul sets the context, helps us step back to see our lives and the world with a Gospel perspective.

[Verse 18] 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

- Right from the get-go Paul is affirming YES there is universal suffering in our world.

- We see and experience that at an individual level.
We see and experience that at a whole-of-creation level.
- Jesus has defeated sin and death, but sin and death have not yet been destroyed, and the effects of that spill out from us, to us, and even on to the created order.
- That's why Paul says the whole of creation groans because of what it has been subjected to. Everything's decaying — it's been subjected to the effects of sin and corruption.
- But Paul also says that, because of Jesus' resurrection, this is not where the story ends. Christ is returning. New Creation is coming.
- And that means that the groans we hear are not that of everything going down the gurgler, but like the pains of child birth anticipating something new.
- Paul is reminding the Romans and us, that we live in *in-between times*.
There is BOTH a *now* and *not yet*.
- *Our sufferings pale in comparison to the glorious hope which awaits. Not because they are insignificant, but because this hope unseen, is more secure and glorious than we can imagine.*
- So, as we hope — verse 25 — for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

We all love to be patient. *But good news! God doesn't expect us to be patient in our own strength.*

- He's equipped us with three extraordinary resources: help, confidence, and security.
- **God HELPS us by his Spirit. / God Works for the Good. / And God Secures us in his Love.**
- That's the shape of Gospel patience. *So let's work them through one-by-one.*

GOD HELPS US BY HIS SPIRIT | VERSES 26-27

도움: 하나님은 성령을 통하여 우리를 도우신다 | Kury: Nhialic ëë wuak kõny nē Jōgdit |
帮助: 神藉着圣灵帮助我们 | உதவி: தேவன் தமது ஆவியானவரின் மூலமாக உதவுகிறார்

First, as we *patiently* await new creation, **God HELPS us by his Spirit.** Verse 26...

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Paul has already made it clear that every believer has received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is the firstfruits of the new creation that awaits all who are in Christ.
The Holy Spirit *brings* life, *convicts* of sin, and *points* us to Jesus over-and-over again
- But here, we *also* learn that the Spirit actively *helps* us in our relationship with God.
- When Paul says that the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*, he's not just alluding to sin, *BUT that as humans we have many weaknesses, and one of them in particular is prayer!* /
- I desperately need help with prayer! /
- Not so that I can stock up on prayer points, *but because I want to GROW in my relationship with God, KNOW the power of God's presence, and UNDERSTAND his will and his ways.*
- The amazing news is that God isn't just aware that we need help, *but that he wants to help us.*

The word for **HELPS** evokes the image of taking hold of something from two ends.

- Imagine shifting a long dining table by yourself — pretty hard!
But with two people carrying from opposite ends, it's so much easier!
- That's the image that Paul is evoking here as the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer.
We can almost read Paul's words about the Spirit interceding for us to think, great! I don't need to do anything — *I can just kick back and be a passive passenger whilst the Spirit prays.* No!
- There's a sense of co-labouring in prayer especially **when we do not know what to pray.** /
- Paul probably isn't just referring to when we're kind of blank or confused,
but that often we're just very bad judges or what we should be praying!
- Do you ever feel like that? *Amidst suffering, difficulty, concern, confusion, anguish, or grief?*
- When I think of my own prayer life, it can be weak in all sorts of ways.
Weak because I don't know **WHAT** to pray. Weak because I'm often shallow in **HOW** I pray.
Weak because I can be inconsistent in **WHEN** I pray. / I need help!
- But the extraordinary news is that God knows that **AND** has done something about it.
- We're not alone. The Spirit **SEARCHES** our hearts **AND KNOWS** God's mind.

When Paul talks about the Spirit praying by *wordless groans here*, he is likely **NOT** talking about the spiritual gift of praying in tongues which he discusses elsewhere.

- *It's given to some, not because they're special, but because God gives different gifts as he pleases.*

- Here, Paul is clearly speaking about how the SPIRIT helps ALL believers. /
- People often get really caught up if Paul *means the Spirit is groaning or causing us to groan*, Which then might make you worry if you pray silently and never make a rumble!
- But that's of course missing the point! *Paul is not just making a point about audible noises*. Paul's just described creation groaning, *but you don't probably hear that audibly!* *And if you do hear the ground groaning under you then I suggest you move on quickly!*
- The word used for groan could be also used for a longing of lament and grief. Even the cries of war-torn soldiers lying injured on the battlefield in pain. That's the depth of love and concern that GOD expresses through his Spirit for you.
- We shouldn't get fixated with the precise WAY that the Spirit chooses to express himself, but delight in WHAT the Spirit is doing within us and for us! *Sometimes we look at others, thinking: Wow! I could never pray like them!* But you should never feel ill-equipped for prayer.
- God has given you his Spirit: Who searches our hearts AND knows the mind of God. AND *as we read in VERSE 34*, God's Son is also interceding for us at God's right hand!
- When we pray, we're joining in how the Spirit and the Son are already at work.

Over the years, I think my prayer life has slowly grown. There are different rhythms — like writing lists and praying Scripture which have been treasured daily rhythms. But more recently, I've also been thankful for times of prayers in which I simply sit with God. I don't think I'm making any audible groans. But it seems that when there is space to go to God with no agenda, it's incredible how clearly his agenda comes into focus.

GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD | VERSES 28-30

확신: 하나님의 선하신 섭리 | Lǝṣ Cōk: Nhialic ēē Lui nē Piēth | 信心: 神为我们的益处而行事
நம்பிக்கை : தேவன் நமது நன்மைக்காக செயல்படுகிறார்

God HELPS us by *his Spirit*. Second, **God WORKS for the good**. Verse 28...

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

The *notion* that 'God works for the good of those who love him' has been used and abused over the years in all sorts of ways.

- But note something really critical: Paul doesn't say that ALL THINGS *are good*. He's also not saying that we will have ALL THE GOOD things that we want. / No!
- We're being invited to have a confidence, that despite how it looks at times, God IS absolutely working things out for THE Good — for his GOOD PURPOSES.
- The end goal, *which we're told right here in verse 29*, is nothing less than that day, when we will be glorified and conformed in Jesus' likeness and have life eternal.
- That's what everything is pressing toward!
- *Jesus, having defeated the grave, is the firstborn, showing us the trajectory we're destined for.*
- In him. *When we love him, that's the purpose we get caught up in.*

He's not only with us in the power of his Spirit, but we can be confident he'll get it done.

- This is not a flakey hope. It's a confident assurance. It doesn't always make sense, but as Stephen McAlpine put it, "just because you can't see what God is doing, doesn't make it unreal, it just makes it unrevealed." At least to us.
- We know where we are going and also the one who will get us there.
- That doesn't just give confidence for tomorrow, but confidence to face today. It's the type of confidence that Farshid knew, even in his 2x2 metre cell.

Sometimes when people face difficulty, our gut response — often well-intentioned — is to say: it will be okay, or it's not as bad as you think. And of course in an ultimate sense, those who trust in Jesus will be okay. But more honestly in the frame of the moment, we don't always know how God is working out his good. It might not always include the avoidance of suffering for now. Remember what Tim Keller said: when you become a Christian, you don't go from war to peace, but from a battle you cannot win to a battle you cannot lose.

Wonderfully, the security of the good that God promises isn't dependent on us.

- God doesn't placate us. He doesn't say, it's not that bad. You're not going to suffer. God looks at the brokenness in our world and our lives and grieves. In fact, he took it all on himself.. He died so that it would be undone. And sits with us even now amidst the mess.
- That doesn't mean we can't or shouldn't pray for all sorts of suffering to be overcome now.
- *We can and should! But when we do, we can do so with the security of his presence and purposes.*

V.30. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Paul twice mentions *predestination here!*

- In broad terms, *predestination* refers to a choice that God has predetermined in advance.
- Over history, when it comes to understanding what that means, *there's been no shortage of: Sleep lost, friendships fractured, communities splintered, and blood shed.*
- It's so easy to get fixated with all sorts of interpretations or worried by questions like:
If God has chosen people in advance, *does that mean we have no free will?*
If God simply knows in advance what I'll choose, *does that mean my faith isn't really grace?*
Or if it is referring to the choosing of a people, *how can I have a personal assurance?*
- They are big questions. Important questions. But that's not what Paul is addressing here.
- *These verses are not focused on the inner workings of HOW predestination works, but WHAT those who are in Christ are predestined for: to be conformed to the image of his Son!*
- Mike Bird puts it like this: "God's before-the-ages plan was to create a Christ-shaped family, a renewed humanity modelled on the Son". / Verse 30 is often referred to as Paul's golden chain. So you've got to follow the links. Paul is saying that if you are a follower of Jesus, even amidst the suffering and difficulties that you experience, you can confidently know *the purpose that God has predestined you FOR — as one called and justified, is to be glorified.*
- As GOD works for the GOOD, it is as GOOD as done.

GOD SECURES US IN HIS LOVE | VERSES 31-39

안전: 하나님의 사랑을 통한 우리의 안전 | Gëel: Nhialic ëë wuak gëel nê Nhieër | 保障: 神以他的爱保守我们
பாதுகாப்பு: தேவன் தமது அன்பினால் நம்மைப் பாதுகாக்கிறார்

Finally, the third resource to help us wait patiently. **God SECURES us in his love.** Verse 31...

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

When Paul poses the question, of “who could be against us,”
he’s not saying we’re immune to adversity, *trouble, difficulty, or hardship.*

- When someone disagrees with you when you walk into work on Monday,
you can’t just kind of triumphantly stride around guaranteed of every victory!
- God graciously giving us all things, *doesn't mean he'll give you anything + everything you want.*
- No. He’ll graciously give us something far better: Everything that he’s promised.
- Even if it sometimes seems under threat, in jeopardy.
- When the enemy calls you to doubt your salvation?
That you're not good enough or that you have not done enough...
REMEMBER: it is God who justifies.
- When you feel like you have no hope, that you’re condemned:
REMEMBER that Jesus has been victorious: he rose, ascended, and is interceding for you now.

- When you’re not sure if you’re securely in God’s love:
*REMEMBER that nothing — no person, nor anything, seen or unseen,
can separate you from God’s love. Not even death itself.*
- It’s the greatest guarantee you could imagine.
Written in Christ’s blood. Foreshadowed in his resurrection. Sealed by his Spirit.
- Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or nakedness or danger or sword?
- *(Realities that many in the early church faced. Realities that many Christians still face today.)*
- Verse 37...

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. //

- I’ve lost count of the number of times that I’ve had the privilege of sharing these verses
with someone who is dying.
- *It’s the most amazing assurance for those who are in Christ.*
- But this is not just security in the face of imminent death. /
It’s security we can rest in as we live as we await new creation to come.

In The Lord of the Rings, by the time Frodo and Sam reach the last miles into Mordor, there is very little cause for hope. Their food is gone, the water is foul, Frodo can barely walk, and the ring feels heavier every step.

There's no plan or visible path to victory. Just two hobbits crawling toward a mountain that almost certainly kill them. Yet as Sam looks up, he spots a single star which sits above the ash and fumes of the decay and danger with which he is surrounded. He's captured by its beauty...

"For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach".

The reason that we can keep on walking,
is not just because we can see a bright star shining amidst the darkness,
but because the light of the world came into the world to defeat the darkness and did.
And when he returns that darkness will be no more.

In his dark prison cell, Farshid couldn't look up and see the sun,
but he knew the Son was enthroned, with him, and returning.

- That's the perspective that the Gospel gives us.
And as we wait patiently for that day:
God helps *us by his Spirit*,
works for the good, *and*
secures us in his love.