

PSALMS: BEING AUTHENTIC WITH GOD

THE TRINITY Romans 8:12-17

Background: I don't know if you have climbed a high mountain recently. It's hard work, especially at the beginning where there's only one way & that's UP! Assuming there's no cloud cover, we accept the hard work because we know what's in store - a beautiful view. Once on top, we can see the whole landscape and everything comes into perspective. This illustration has been used many times to consider Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. The first few chapters are hard work, but chapter 8 is often seen as the summit where everything comes into perspective.

Chapter 8 is known as the "Holy Spirit" chapter, given that He is mentioned over 20 times in different ways, yet only mentioned 3-4 times in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 8 brings together the **Trinity** (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). We've seen already in earlier chapters what God has done through Christ and now we're about to see perhaps the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit for believers.

The structure of our Life Group study will be:

1. Life - Our nature and flesh (Condition)
2. Life - In Christ (Position)
3. Life - In the Spirit (Adoption)

1. Life - Our nature and flesh OPTIONAL

These first two sections are optional because it simply sets the scene for Chapter 8. If some of your Life Group are less familiar with some of the core teaching in Romans 1-7, then understanding Chapter 8 will be more tricky.

Spend a few minutes seeing if the group can help you build up the picture of the first few chapters of Romans because this helps us understand the context for Romans 8 and our position. You could even flick through the first few chapters and read some of the headings for each section to remind yourselves, or read some of the well-known verses.

Q1(a) (Chapter 1) What's our human nature which we inherited from Adam and Eve in the Garden? *All of humanity is trapped in our nature of sin and sinfulness.* **(b)** What is needed for mankind? *We all need rescuing from our sinful nature or saved from the wrath of God.*

Q2 (Chapter 2). What did the Jewish nation obsess about as their route to forgiveness & justification with God? [A clue, they had over 600 of them?] *Paul stressed to the Romans that following their laws (248 dos and 365 don'ts) is not their route to a rescue plan. There's a change coming.*

See if you can remember some of the 613 laws that we would not follow today and equally which ones do we follow?

Q3 (Chapter 3) God's goal is that we are 'right' with Him as this would mean we can have a full relationship with Him. The word used in the Bible is 'righteousness' or 'being in the right relationship with God.'

Q3a So, if we're born into sin, what is our default position with God as unbelievers? (Romans 3:9-20). There's a link here to Psalm 14 & 53.

How have people over the centuries tried to become 'right' with God. How does the Jewish community do this today?

Do you know people who try their own ways to get right with God?

Do you think God actually wants a relationship with everyone and if so, why?

Summary

So, this first section is to help us to understand our nature and our condition.

- We are by nature sinful (our flesh).
- God cannot tolerate sin
- Unbelievers are unable to be in a full relationship with God
- A just punishment for our sins is death or due to our sin, we should be condemned. This is what we deserve but we know believers are pardoned.

It's hard to read, but there is hope to come (keep reading) and that's why Paul writes this letter to make sure we understand what our standing with God could be.

2. Life - In Christ (Position) OPTIONAL

We've now seen our true condition with God, but we know the story does not end here because God sent His Son as part of the rescue plan.

Let's piece together the picture so far in Romans:

- God created us for a relationship with Him & desires communion with us.....
- but our sinful nature is a barrier to establishing that relationship
- Christ died to take the penalty we deserve for our sins. He opens up the possibility of a relationship with God through Him.
- Obeying the laws will not make us right but rather believing in God and putting our faith & trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Redeemer.
- Our belief in God means we are a new creation. The old nature has died and we will no longer want to live a life of sin but instead we want to please God.
- The work of Jesus means we are free from condemnation, free from the penalty of our sin (death) and we're now channels or vessels for God's Spirit.

Q4. How does all of this make you feel? Q1-3 helped us understand our **condition**, yet these points above help us understand our **position**.

Q5. Does this confuse you? Is it simply too much to comprehend?

Q6. Do you ever feel unworthy? Why do I deserve to be called 'righteous' in God's eyes? Why should my sins be placed on Jesus?

3. Life - In the Spirit (Adoption)

So here in Chapter 8:12-17 we are on top of the mountain and about to see and read some of the greatest scenery in the Bible where we see God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all at work for our benefit and theirs.

Q7. Let's think for a moment of the goal or purpose of being a Christian. If God were to write you a letter, what do you think He would hope you'd be **doing** or **become**. Ask for very short answers so that you can build a list and it will be a long list hopefully.

Maybe this is oversimplifying it but here's a summary;

1. God wants us to glorify Him by the lives we live. Our lives will be a signpost to Jesus.
2. God wants us to become more like Jesus Christ each day.

God has chosen you

Jesus Christ has redeemed you

The Holy Spirit transforms you to be like Jesus.

Q8. From these verses below, build a list of what the Holy Spirit does (Answers in brackets). That's quite an impressive CV He has!

John 16:14 (Glorify Jesus)

John 16:8 (Conviction of sin)

John 3:5-6 (Regeneration)

Rom. 8:16 (His presence is our assurance of salvation)

Rom. 8:26 (Intercedes)

John 16:13 (Guide to truth)

2 Cor. 3:18 (Transformation)

Gal. 5:22-23 (Fruitfulness)

1 Cor. 12:7 (Gifting)

Acts 1:8 (Power)

Q9. When does the Holy Spirit entered a person?

A person receives the Holy Spirit at the moment they believe in Christ. In fact, a more accurate statement is that at the moment of saving faith, a number of things happens instantaneously. At the moment a repentant person believes in Jesus Christ:

- The Holy Spirit begins to dwell within (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22; 2 Timothy 1:14; James 4:5)
- Believers are also justified (Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:24)
- Adopted (John 1:12; Romans 8:9, 15; Ephesians 1:13)
- Sealed (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)
- Sanctified (Romans 6:22; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11).

In the book of Acts reveals that on three occasions people were not immediately filled with the Holy Spirit after they believed, but afterward. The three occasions were when some Samaritans believed in Christ (Acts 8:12-17), when Paul believed in Christ (Acts 9:3-9, 13-18), and when John's disciples finally believed in Christ (Acts 19:4-7).

Q10. In what ways does your 'nature' battle with you? Do you know the areas where you are weaker? How does the devil try and trip you up?

A lot is written in Romans regarding our nature, sin and grace. A life in Christ means we're under new leadership, however, as we all know, we still sin and we need to repent and seek His forgiveness.

We have an 'obligation' (v.12) to live according to the Spirit and not the flesh (old nature) but as we know it's not easy. Some writers have argued that the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to help us deal with our 'flesh' or 'old-self' or 'nature.' We can cry to Him in times of difficulty where the battle between our flesh and our new spirit rages on.

Q11. How do you know the Holy Spirit is dwelling within you? (v9)

Q12. Share your stories of how the Holy Spirit helps you with this battle?

Q13. Our 'flesh' can easily lead us down the wrong path, but share a story where/how the Holy Spirit has led you (See v.14). How did you know it's Him? Was it obvious? Did you involve others? Some of your examples will be more obvious (e.g. falsifying an expense report where the Holy Spirit nudges you) but others will be harder to discern. Both are valid, so share both.

Q14. What does it mean in v16 that the "Spirit himself bears witness...."

So, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit. If you go to Galatians 5, being led by the Spirit — walking by the Spirit, living by the Spirit — is the same as bearing the fruit of the Spirit. So, we look for love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness (see Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, as we look at our lives and ask the question - is there evidence that the Spirit is producing things that are contrary to a fallen, unbelieving, selfish human nature?

Wrapping Up

Let's finish with a beautiful picture of God the father because we are his children (v17).

If you're old enough to remember Frank Bruno then most of us would be petrified of entering a boxing ring with him. Most of us would last just a few seconds. He has ruthless power, he is tall, a unique technique and enormous ability to cause us harm. Nobody in their right mind would choose to pick a fight with him. But do you think his daughters would be petrified of him? Probably not, but why? The reason is they are his daughters, loved by him, made by him and he will always want to best for them.

God is the same. He's an angry, jealous God who exercises His wrath, however, we are His children, we are chosen, loved by Him and He always wants the best for us. He has given us Christ and His Spirit to dwell in us, to help us and to grow us to be more like Jesus Christ.

Reflection & Prayer

Some prompts for prayer (choose what's appropriate)

- Start by playing the song "We've fallen short, we've wandered far from your ways," as a song of **repentance**.
- Thank God for rescuing us from our condition of sinfulness
- Thank God for Jesus Christ who bore our sin on the Cross to open the door for a relationship with God.
- Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to be our guide, helper and transformer.
- Pray that our lives would 'bear witness' (v.16) to the fact the Holy Spirit is changing us to be like Jesus.
- We often doubt - are we really a Christian? Pray that God would give us that assurance we are His because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for the permanent battle between our 'flesh' and our 'spirit.' We need to recognise that some of us are weaker or the battle is more fierce and we need prayer.
- Paul reminds us (Ephesians 6:18) that 'praying in the Spirit' is part of our armour of God. Pray for each other that we'd pick up these items of armour.
- Ask God to protect our 'minds' and set our mind on the Spirit because it's life (Romans 8:6). (This is God's part)
- Pray for each other that we'd protect our 'minds' by the choices we make. (This is our part)

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