

Freedom

FREEDOM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Focal Verses • ROMANS 8:18–30

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: EXPLORE the role of the Holy Spirit in our relationships with God and Jesus; feel EMPOWERED by the Holy Spirit even in the midst of suffering, weakness, or loss of direction; and DECIDE to live with hope as we seek God's purpose and calling.

In Focus

Bryce would always arrive 20 minutes late for work. His attitude was, "I can always stay late and finish what I need to do." He would lie and tell his boss he had car trouble. The truth of the matter was that Bryce had trouble getting out of bed in the morning. The thought of facing the multitude of tasks on his to-do list was mentally stressful. He was so overwhelmed that it delayed him from going to bed, and when he finally laid down to sleep, he tossed and turned through the night. With little to no sleep at night, it made his morning alarm even harder to obey. Bryce was even considering talking to his doctor about the problem. In the meantime, he felt getting to work 20 minutes late should not matter as long as he got his work done before he left the office.

One day in the cafeteria, Bryce overheard a coworker telling someone how his lateness hinders others in the office from meeting their deadlines. The team had to wait for him to do his part. Bryce realized his actions had a negative impact on his team members who depended on him. His behavior had to change, but he didn't think he had the strength.

That night, Bryce forced himself into bed a full eight hours before his morning alarm. He didn't have an entire plan or even know the root of the problem, but Bryce knew he should pray about it. God would understand what he meant. God would grant him the miracle he needed. God helps us in our struggles to do what is right and empowers us to overcome sin through our faith in Jesus Christ. As Bryce prepared to sleep, he started praying, "Father God, I need help. I'm asking for the freedom you gave me in Christ to be made manifest in my life. Set me free from this struggle."

How has the Spirit helped you to pray and seek freedom in your struggles?

Keep in Mind

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18, KJV)



Focal Verses

KJV **Romans 8:18** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The People, Places, and Times

The Suffering of the Righteous. The Bible provides numerous examples of godly people who experienced a significant amount of suffering for various reasons—Joseph, Naomi, David, Job, Jeremiah, and Paul, to name a few. Historically, many of African descent suffered for the sake of the Gospel.

The Bible gives various reasons believers suffer, including: (1) an ongoing consequence of the Fall. When sin entered the world, pain, sorrow, conflict, and eventual death invaded the lives of all human beings (see Genesis 3:16–19). In fact, the entire created universe groans under the effects of sin and yearns for the time of the new heaven and new earth when God will abolish the curse (see Romans 8:20–23; 2 Peter

3:10–13); (2) the same reason that unbelievers suffer—as a consequence for their own actions (see Galatians 6:7); (3) because we live in a sinful and corrupt world. All around us are the effects of sin, and we experience distress and anguish as we see the power that evil holds over so many people’s lives (see Ezekiel 9:4; Acts 17:16); and (4) the devil has been given power to afflict us in a variety of ways (1 Peter 5:8–9). The story of Job is an example of this kind of suffering (see Job 1–2).

Background

In Romans 7, Paul writes about the grace of Christ. He shows us that without grace, a believer would live a defeated and miserable

life, in bondage to their sinful nature. However, in Romans 8, Paul changes his focus and begins sharing about the supernatural life that has been made available to all believers in Jesus Christ.

Through our union with Christ by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, believers are now able to live a life free from condemnation, and they no longer have to be enslaved by sin. The Spirit gives believers victory over sin and allows them to experience true fellowship with God. Paul lets us know that the only way we can be delivered from the power of sin is by receiving—and being controlled by—the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit, working in the life of a believer, will lead them to victory.

The apostle affirms there are two kinds of people: those who live according to the flesh, and those who live according to the Spirit. People who choose to live “after the flesh” take pleasure in the corrupt desires of sinful human nature, including fornication, adultery, strife, and uncleanness (see Galatians 5:19–21). Those who live by the Holy Spirit will submit to His leading and exhibit love, peace, goodness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22–23).

Every true believer receives the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit the moment they accept Jesus Christ. Thus, it is only through the Spirit that we are able to put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13). The mark of a true believer is the ability to be led by the Spirit. Paul also reminds us that living in the Spirit and being victorious are not always easy. We are to prepare ourselves through the Spirit to suffer even as Jesus suffered. We identify with Christ through our suffering with Him that we may be also glorified together.

If we have been glorified with Christ, why must the Christian still suffer?

At-A-Glance

1. Freedom for Creature and Creation (Romans 8:18–25)
2. The Spirit’s Freeing Intercession (vv. 26–27)
3. Free to Hope (vv. 28–30)

In Depth

1. Freedom for Creature and Creation (Romans 8:18–25)

All the sufferings, injustices, hurt, pain, disappointment, rejection, financial woes, health problems, heartaches, and other trials that a believer may now experience will seem so insignificant when God’s glory is revealed in us in the age to come. Believers have a future hope—the manifestation of God’s glory will be fully revealed in us one day.

Ever since Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, creation has also been subjected to suffering, catastrophes, groanings, and travailings. Not only will faithful believers be glorified in the new age, but nature itself will be recreated. There will be a restoration of all things, including a new heaven and earth.

Believers desire full redemption, even though we possess the Spirit and experience God’s blessings today. Believers groan for the full manifestation of God’s glory to be revealed and for the honor and privileges of full adoption (see 2 Corinthians 5:4), which includes the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23). That resurrected body will be our heavenly house (see 2 Corinthians 5:2), not subject to the harshness of this present world. The Christian’s faith in Jesus Christ, His Word, and the Spirit enables us to patiently wait for the fulfillment of God’s manifested glory.

In what ways have you seen creation itself suffering from the effects of sin?

2. The Spirit's Freeing Intercession (vv. 26–27)

Paul says that the Spirit also helps our infirmities (v. 26)—our weakness in praying effectively. Paul affirms that God will not listen to prayers based on our selfish desires (v. 26). Often we pray based on the right now instead of basing our prayers on God's eternal purpose for our lives and our family and friends. Either we pray our own will or we pray amiss (James 4:3). As a result, many of our prayers go unanswered. The Holy Spirit helps us express prayers that will glorify the Father.

Paul reminds us that God searches our hearts. He knows our motives, and the reason for our prayers. Thus, the Holy Spirit's ministry is to make intercession for the saints according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit working effectively in the life of a believer will line up the believer's will with the Lord's and will cause us to pray prayers that will glorify God. It is encouraging to know that we have two divine intercessors assisting us in our walk with the Lord: the Holy Spirit (vv. 26–27) and Jesus Christ (v. 34).

What does the Spirit do when our prayers do not align with God's will? Does the Spirit still intercede for us then?

3. Free to Hope (vv. 28–30)

Despite all the trials we will face in this life, with the help of the Spirit making intercession for us, we can have the confident hope that it will all work together for good. Not that everything will be good for everyone. This promise is for "those who love God and are called" to His purpose. Those devoted to God, who are doing His work, will see that the overall arch of history is working toward the good will of the Lord.

Many theologians have long debated the tension between predestination and free will. When interacting with these verses, however, it is enough to know that the omniscient God has always known who would be His. He calls these people, has provided Jesus for their

justification, and provides the Spirit as the seal for a promised glorification.

How has God called you throughout your life?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why should the sufferings of this present age be considered insignificant (Romans 8:18)?

2. Why does the Spirit make intercession for the believer (vv. 26–27)?

3. What does the Christian ultimately hope for (vv. 23, 30)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Is it necessary for a believer to suffer? Why or why not?

2. What is the Holy Spirit's main responsibility? Why do we need the Holy Spirit?

3. If the Spirit is our intercessor, does that mean we can live any way we want and just ask Him to go to God on our behalf? Why or why not?

Liberating Lesson

To tell new believers (and sinners) that they will never experience pain, sorrow, or sufferings once they have come to Christ contradicts biblical texts such as Philippians 2:26, 27; John 16:33; Romans 8:18. This unfounded teaching has caused many new converts to fall away from the church, or become hostile and indifferent to the Gospel. Similarly, some people believe and teach that suffering is a sign of God's disfavor because of sin. However, Scripture declares that people who desire to live godly lives will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). When people choose godly lives, persecution and suffering are inevitable. A believer who refuses to compromise their faith to conform to the world will often be rejected, mistreated, and ridiculed. A lack of suffering could be a sign that the believer has not taken a stand for righteousness. How does this knowledge reflect on your life today?

Application for Activation

Create a song or poem to praise and thank God for the hope He gives in times of trouble. Review it daily this week and look for how you feel the Holy Spirit working in you. Maybe you can add another stanza to your piece based on the week's experiences with the Spirit.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition*. Vols. 1-6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2009.

Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

Thayer, Joseph Henry. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: American Book Company, 1889.

Say It Correctly

Travaileth. tra-VALE-eth.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 253

Mark 16:1-20

Psalms 104:19-26

DAY 254

Luke 1-2

Psalms 104:27-30

DAY 255

Luke 3-4

Psalms 104:31-35

DAY 256

Luke 5-7

Psalms 105:1-11

DAY 257

Luke 8-10

Psalms 105:12-22

DAY 258

Luke 11-12

Psalms 105:23-38

DAY 259

Luke 12:13-59

Psalms 105:39-45