

Romans 8:19-23

Part 5

Romans chapters 1 through 5 teaches us of our *justification*, how we are “saved,” in other words, and how *justification* is a free gift of grace that we obtain when we trust and believe that the work that Jesus Christ performed in His death, burial, and resurrection is *enough*, that it alone is sufficient to save us, to the exclusion of our own efforts and abilities. And we know that *justification* has three basic components: propitiation (how God forgives our sins), imputation (God crediting His righteousness to us), and the end result, our *atonement*, or, our “at-onement” with the Father, and a *standing* in grace—a permanent position in other words. Thus we have our standing in Christ being a direct result of our justification. These are the aspects of the gospel which deal with our *legal debt* and *standing before God*. Justification in this context means to be declared righteous; and so, we were not just forgiven, but were also credited the very righteousness of God Himself through Jesus Christ. When you trust the gospel, you possess the perfect and eternal righteousness of God Himself.

And then from chapters 6 through 8 we learned that, not only did God provide us with a perfect *justification* when we trust the gospel, but He also provided a perfect *sanctification* as well. *Sanctification* means to be *set apart for God’s purposes*. Well, how did God accomplish this? It was by putting to death *the identity* we inherited from Adam, that resided *within* us, and then uniting us spiritually instead to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are “baptized” into Christ. We are united to Christ, and we receive a new spiritual identity and nature in Him, one that is free from sin. And so, the issue of sanctification is one of *identity*. Identity *was* and *is* always the problem. A bad tree always produces bad fruit.

Our sanctification, we learned, is *also* composed of *three parts*: we are made *dead to sin*, we are made *alive unto God*, and we are now *sons of God*. Being *dead to sin* and *alive unto God* is, in essence, what qualifies you *to be* a *son of God*, similar to how being forgiven of all sins and receiving God’s righteousness is what produces *the atonement*. You have peace with God because of those things; you are at one with God and in harmony with God *forever*, because of those things. With sanctification, your new identity, which is not that of a sinner, but is the life and righteousness of Christ Himself, allows you to function in a certain capacity. It allows you to be a *son of God*. Sanctification is about identity and functionality. God provided those elements of our sanctification so that we could *function*.

All of these things contained in your *justification* and *sanctification* are the elements needed to make you *spiritually fit* to be able to be a part of *the family of God* and to *labor with God*. All believers receive all of these things the very moment they trust the gospel, but *to walk as a son*,

to live in accordance with your new identity in other words, requires minding the things of the Spirit, as we have learned. Thus, you have a permanent standing in your justification, but you also have your *present state*. We have a standing, and we have a state. Your state is your currently lived reality. Many saints never come to understand their new identity in Christ and suffer under the motions and patterns of sins in their lives—that is their *state*, but it is not their *standing*. Their legal standing is still *at one with the Father*, they forever have peace with God. And so we have *standing* and *state*, or what some might call *position* and then *practice*.

All believers have *the status* as sons of God because of the things they freely received as a part of their justification and sanctification, but not all believers actually live that reality out practically. We have to begin living out of what the doctrine has revealed to us about those spiritual things that God did, which we cannot physically see, but which the word of God reveals to us, and when we do this, we are *minding the things of the Spirit*, and our carnal minds begin to be renewed by the word of God, and we begin living a spiritual life, we begin to *walk after the Spirit*.

God deals with all of our outstanding legal debt, credits the righteousness of His son to our account, and we are simultaneously set free from the power of sin by the death of our old man and given a new identity in Christ and the power to live for God, *and then* we are introduced to the concept of how we received the *Spirit of adoption*.

That *adoption* has to do with *our placement as sons* alongside God the Father *in his business*. God made us *spiritually fit* to actually be a part of what He's doing, both *now* and *in eternity*. And so you would expect Him to begin to reveal some things related to His business, and related to those things that He's going to accomplish in eternity *with us*, and that is exactly what we have in Romans 8, beginning with the subject of *the Creature*.

Being a *son* in this context is not just being a child of God, but being *an heir* who is going to inherit some type of *responsibility*. Adam was a son of God, and was actually going to be educated by God to work alongside Him in what He was going to accomplish in the earth. An *heir* is one who *inherits* something, and Adam inherited the garden and was given charge over it. Adam was not created as a son *to do nothing*, he was created to work alongside God in His purposes. God gave Adam responsibilities—he was told to name the animals, he was told to dress and keep the garden, he was supposed to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth, and ultimately, to have dominion and subdue it. See, God created Adam to work with Him to fulfill His purposes. As a son, Adam had a job to do, and it was to be a part of what the Father was doing.

Jesus of course was *the Son of God*, but as a man, He also lived as a son of God and engaged in the purpose God had for Him. In Luke 2:49, when He is found in the temple at the age of 12, He says, *wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* God the Father has a business—He

has a *purpose*, in other words, and there are some very specific things He needs to accomplish in order to see that this purpose is fulfilled.

To be a *son* therefore has to do with being an *heir* with *responsibility*. We understand that being a *son* has to do with a position of *authority*, but it is more than that, it is being an adult who has been educated and prepared for a position to actually engage in the Father's business. You can be an adult and yet not be prepared for the position at all. Thus, *practically, functionally* speaking, you are no different than a child in this regard. And that is exactly what Paul told the Galatians; though they were *sons*, they were *living* as *children*. They were not living Spiritual lives, they were not living in accordance with their new identity in Christ, but were living *carnally*—they were trying to be made functionally perfect by their observance of the Law of Moses. But God gave us everything we need *to function* in our sanctification. With all of those components of our justification and sanctification in place, we now have the *legal right and the practical ability* to *function* as sons of God, to labor with God in what He is doing. And as Paul will write in 1 Corinthians 3:9, *We are laborers together with God...* and what God is currently undertaking is building up *sons* to fulfill a future purpose He has for the heavenly places.

And so, this is why Paul uses the Roman custom of *adoption* here in Romans chapter 8 to illustrate what he is talking about. I cannot stress this enough—this is *not* speaking about bringing an orphan into a new family, but is a reference to *the Roman custom of adoption*, which was when, after years of training and education, the adult son would be placed into a position to take on the responsibilities of the father. They were “adopted” into that position. We have been given *the Spirit* of that adoption; the Holy Spirit wants to work something within us *spiritually*, right now, to prepare us for that future event. We have not yet received our future placement as sons. We are meant to be preparing for that placement *now*.

And so, with all of that in view, God here in Romans 8, beginning in verse 18, then begins to give us a glimpse of the future purpose He has for us, how *the creature*, the *heavenly hosts*, the angelic realm who is currently under the bondage of satanic corruption, is *waiting* for our future manifestation in glory with an *earnest expectation*. Isn't it fitting that after God introduces us to the concept of our future *adoption* that He would begin telling us what His business—what His *will*—would actually entail? God is giving us a glimpse into what He has for us to do as adult heirs who are meant to labor alongside Him to see His purposes are accomplished.

And so we learned that *the creature*, or *the heavenly host*, up there in the second heaven, who have *not* joined Satan in his rebellion, are actually under the bondage of Satan's corruptive influence. This is because that “creature” was meant to function as a *unit*. Those beings were meant to function together in harmony, and through which heaven and earth itself would function together also in one harmonious unit. God Himself however allowed the rebellion in heaven, by which He subjected that creature to *vanity*. We will discuss exactly what this vanity is later in this lesson.

That *creature* however is awaiting a people who have *received* and *learned to live out* of a righteous identity *in Christ*, and as we will see, who also received an education as *sons* which has edified them unto *godliness*, that is *built them up* and conformed them to the image and character of Christ Himself—saints who have been *prepared* to labor with God in His purposes. When this occurs, we will be able to bring the life and righteousness of God back into His creation through the legal structures which He has ordained, so that all of heaven functions as it was intended, as if a single being, as if a single *body*, as if a single *creature*.

I want us to briefly consider a passage from Ephesians chapter 1:

Ephesians 1:7-10

⁷ *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

⁸ *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

⁹ *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

¹⁰ *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him...*

The Father's will, His purpose, the thing He's ultimately going to accomplish, is to gather together *in one* all things in Christ, both the things in heaven, and on the earth. *All things in Christ*, that is, all of the human agencies redeemed by Christ—the redeemed Jews and Gentiles, *and* the Body of Christ which is *neither* Jew nor gentile—are going to be brought together in one unified, harmonious creation in which God will reign and be glorified.

If you make *the creature* of Romans 8 *anything other* than the *heavenly hosts* then you effectively remove *the only reference* to our heavenly calling in the entire book of Romans, which contains all of the essential doctrinal principles for our establishment. Romans is an *establishment epistle*; Paul opens and closes the book with the truth of this in mind (Rom. 1:11-12, Rom. 16:25-26), and here in Romans 8, we are being established as *sons of God*, as heirs of God who are meant to be educated and built up in the knowledge of God's will. Part of this establishment must therefore be our *purpose*. How can we be truly established if we don't know our purpose?

Everything that came before the book of Romans, and historically before Acts chapter 9, speaks of *Israel* inheriting a kingdom *on the earth*. It is all about God's plan to redeem and have dominion *on the earth*. Why wouldn't an epistle meant for *our* establishment contain doctrine relating to our *heavenly* calling and purpose? How would Paul come along and say to us in 1

Corinthians 6:3 “*Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*” if he hadn’t already explained that very issue?

“*Well no Paul, we didn’t know that, because the doctrine hasn’t said anything about it yet.*”

Except it *did*. 1 Corinthians is a letter of *reproof* and *correction*—they should have known these things already. It is an essential part of our establishment as sons. There is absolutely nothing in all of the Bible prior to Romans chapter 8 from which you could deduce that redeemed men would gain positions in the heavens and that they would be given charge over the angelic realm. That is entirely foreign the prophetic, Hebrew scriptures. That is a part of the mystery information revealed specifically to the apostle Paul for us today, and is reflected in the grace-age epistles God inspired him to write for us in the Body of Christ.

For many people, the statement that we shall judge angels just mysteriously appears out of nowhere, but it didn’t just “come out of nowhere.” They just didn’t properly define what was being spoken about in Romans chapter 8.

God is showing us a glimpse of our future purpose and calling as sons to have that *Spirit of adoption* begin to properly work *within us*, so that we can honestly make that cry of *Abba Father*. So that we can say *I see the Father’s purpose in all of this and I want to be a part of it*. We have already learned we are free from the spirit of bondage, and are free from the fear-motivation of a works-based system of performance. The Father is not going to make you engage in this, but what He wants to do is encourage us by showing us what this entails.

Now, in our last lesson, we discussed how the phrase *bondage of corruption* here in relation to *the creature* is more appropriately understood to refer to a bondage of spiritual and moral corruption. That is not to say that all of the heavenly hosts are in rebellion, but that all are however dealing with *the effects* of that rebellion.

The sufferings of this present time, we know, relate specifically to the natural world, and how there are things that we all suffer in this world, believers and unbelievers alike, and that those things are the result of *sin*—of spiritual corruption. And so *the bondage of corruption* naturally is linked to the *bondage of corruption* which occurred first spiritually. Death came by sin.

Of course one could argue that the planetary system and the stars and their life cycles are something that are currently under a system of futility due to sin, but of course, all the material consequences first had their generation from *moral corruption*, and are therefore under the bondage of that corruption. That is even true for our natural world here on earth.

And so we know that *all of creation groans in pain together* even up to this present time. Now again, we tend to poeticize this passage and say that all of creation groans together figuratively,

and of course, the animal kingdom has feelings and emotions and experiences pain, but that can't be said of all of the natural world—*rocks* and *grass* do not have *emotions* or *nerve endings*. *Planets* do not have *nervous systems* or a *consciousness*.

And so what has been in view here with the sufferings of this present time are the living beings on the earth in verse 18; and then in the heavenly realm, *the creature* suffering under the *bondage of corruption*, which is Satan's cruel oppression and wickedness, in verses 19-21. Thus *the whole creation* is groaning and travailing in pain *together*, as verse 22 says, and even we ourselves *also* who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, that is, those who are saved, are groaning within ourselves, as seen in verse 23.

Verse 18 - Earthly suffering

Verses-19-21 - Heavenly suffering

Verse 22 - The whole creation (heaven and earth) is suffering

Verse 23 - Redeemed saints also suffering within their mortal bodies

Thus this passage takes us from the ongoing pain and suffering on the earth which was a consequence of sin, and then explains that even things in the spiritual realm in the heavens are not as they should be, and that they are in fact under the *bondage* of satan's corruptive influences; and then the passage in some sense concludes with *For we know the whole creation*—both heaven and earth—is *groaning*, and I don't believe we need to make this some poetic, figurative expression, as if the planets and mountains and seas are groaning, but that the actual beings which God created in heaven and earth are actually groaning because of the effects of sin and rebellion.

We have not received *the spirit of bondage*, but *the Spirit of adoption*, and with that is implied a *status*, and that status guarantees *liberty*. And that liberty is going to be brought to the creature *by us* to in turn deliver it from the bondage of satan's corruption.

What was *our* bondage? We received not the spirit of bondage again to fear, meaning, we are no longer under the performance based system of the law and of the flesh. What was wrong with our flesh? It was corrupt. With what? With *sin*. See, we've been set free from a specific form of *corruption*, to which we were in *bondage*, and the creature itself *also* shall be delivered from a specific form of bondage as well, and they're going to be given over to the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Why does verse 21 say *children* and not *sons*? It is because all members of the Body of Christ are going to be a part of the Father's business in the heavens—it's just a matter of what role you will assume; but we will *all* have a role and we will *all* function up there, and we will all function

out of our *liberty* specifically. In the next lesson we will define exactly what liberty here means and entails.

Now, with all of that being said, let's turn our attention to Romans 8, verse 20, to consider two points: (1) How was the creature made subject to vanity, and (2) what does the creature's subject to *bondage* look like, practically speaking.

Romans 8:20

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

We know that this *vanity* must have something to do with the ongoing rebellion in the heavens, since the *bondage of corruption* seems to be a phrase relating to their corruption and wickedness. The phrase *bondage* necessitates that these angelic beings who have not rebelled are somehow *bound*, or are in *bonds*, as you see the word *bond* itself forms the basis of the word *bondage*. This means that they are somehow under the oppression of these beings. If you are *bound* by something you cannot function as you are meant to. If your hands are tied and bound you cannot use your hands. These good angelic beings have their hands tied, so to speak. They cannot function as they should. They are living under satanic oppressive forces who occupy seats of legal authority. These satanic forces would like these good angels to rebel along with them, but if they did so, they'd no longer be "good angels." Neither will these satanic forces allow them to operate freely in righteousness. Thus, they are, in some sense, *disabled*.

In order to demonstrate this, I would like us to consider something in Daniel chapter 10:

Daniel 10:5-13

⁵ *Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:*

⁶ *His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.*

⁷ *And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.*

⁸ *Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.*

⁹ Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

¹⁰ And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

¹¹ And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

¹² Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Daniel is of course in captivity in Babylon due to the continued sin of his nation, the nation of Israel, against God, and he is by the river *Hiddekel*, which we would refer to as *the Tigris River* today, and a heavenly being comes to reveal prophetic truths to him regarding the succession of gentile kingdoms that Israel would be subjected to as a part of their judgment under the Law of Moses, until their promised Messiah came to finally set up *His* kingdom.

Who this heavenly being is is not actually pertinent to our discussion, but some believe it's an angelic messenger, due to the fact that he is withstood by the prince of Persia for 21 days, and requires help from Michael. Others believe this is a preincarnate Jesus Christ, due to his physical description being identical to the glorified Christ in Revelation chapter 1. I believe it is most likely a preincarnate Jesus Christ, and the reason why He needs assistance from Michael is not due to a lack of power, but rather to legalities. As we have discussed before, God, though He is all powerful, must perform all aspects of His work *legally*, meaning, He must even operate within the delegated authority structures that He Himself created *legally* without violating them. In any case, I digress. Whether an angel or a pre-incarnate Christ, the principle here remains the same. There are legal structures and jurisdictions in the heavenly realm, and most of these are currently occupied by beings who are in rebellion against God.

Notice what this being says to Daniel in verse 13 however: the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him for 21 days, and Michael, a chief prince, came to help him. This is a spiritual being of some kind who is struggling against another angelic being, and he even required help from the archangel Michael himself in order to finally get to Daniel. What is being illustrated for us here is that there are oppressive forces in the spiritual realm which are actively working

against God and against the spiritual beings who are in obedience to God... *and God Himself is allowing this.*

He is allowing it because of the hope He has to raise up *sons of God*, something that required the unwitting participation of Satan. Remember, the world to come will not be made subject to angels (Heb. 2:5), but to *the sons of men*; specifically to *the Son of God*, that is, to *Christ*, and to *His brethren*, other *sons of God*—saints who have been conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

All of creation, heaven and earth, will be reigned over by beings who have not only been educated *in sin* and in *the consequences of sin*, but who have died a spiritual death in Christ, and who have received new, functional life in Christ, and through these things, will be able to live out of their free will for eternity and serve God without ever having the notion that rebellion is somehow a viable option... *and Satan was instrumental in all of this.* Satan tempted Eve. Satan conspired to kill Christ. And as we will see later in this chapter, *Satan* will be used to further perfect us as *sons of God* as we continue in our edification, through what Paul refers to as *the sufferings of Christ*.

This end goal of raising up *sons of God* to reign with Him and labor with Him in eternity, out of their own free will, is something that God is going to accomplish by using the free will choices of the creatures who rebelled. God is going to use Satan's rebellion to fulfill His purposes in relation to mankind and to heaven and earth. And so, the heavenly realm was and *is* temporarily subjected to *vanity*, as it suffers under the bondage of the corruption of this rebellion, and as it awaits the manifestation of the sons of God.

Now, why is it said to be subjected to vanity? *Vanity* here means something *empty*, something *futile*; and it is *empty* for the exact reason I've just communicated—that God is not going to subject *the world to come* to *angels*. Angels cannot *die*. They cannot be *redeemed*. They will not have the chance to have a first-hand, experiential education in *sin and rebellion*, they will not ever know what it is to die a spiritual death, and experience a spiritual resurrection, or to war against the sin in their own members; they will never know the excellency of God's power in His word to produce in them everlasting righteousness. There are all kinds of things angels will never personally know.

In other words, God is not using the Satanic rebellion to perfect the good angelic beings, they are simply suffering under the consequences of that rebellion until the future time when God's plan is fulfilled through mankind. Thus, they are in waiting. And isn't that exactly what verse 19 says? That the creature itself *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God? Again, is this just figurative language, or is there some aspect of creation, with a *will of its own*, with an *eager expectation*, who is *waiting* for our future manifestation as sons?

You can't say that God subjected *mankind* to *vanity*, because God is fulfilling a very specific purpose through the things which man is suffering. And yet God is not fulfilling this purpose in

the angelic beings through this rebellion *at all*—they have simply been made subject to vanity by God in hope of something yet to come. Why doesn't scripture say here in Romans 8 that God subjected *the whole creation* to vanity? Because not all of creation was subjected to vanity, or futility, in the sense in which the creature was. God is not fulfilling His eternal purposes in and through the angelic realm, they are simply awaiting Him to do so through us. Thus, what they are currently enduring is *vanity*—it is *empty waiting*.

And so there is an ongoing struggle in the heavenly places, one where wickedness seems to be prevailing for the time being, and this contention is depicted for us in some small measure in Daniel chapter 10:

Daniel 10:16-21

¹⁶ *And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.*

¹⁷ *For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.*

¹⁸ *Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,*

¹⁹ *And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.*

²⁰ *Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.*

²¹ *But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.*

This spiritual entity must then go to fight with the prince of Persia, and this no doubt has to do with this being somehow restraining the satanic principality who was behind the gentile kingdom of Persia itself, and only then, after this principality has somehow been put into check, would another principality come to raise up Alexander the Great and give rise to the power of the kingdom of Greece. This succession of historical gentile kingdoms was not by chance—it was inspired by unseen forces who are in direct rebellion against God. Again, I would refer you to Psalm 82, where God indicts these “gods” who walk on in darkness, and because of whom the foundations of the earth itself are out of course:

Psalm 82

¹ *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.*

² *How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.*

³ *Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.*

⁴ *Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.*

⁵ *They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.*

⁶ *I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.*

⁷ *But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*

⁸ *Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.*

The course of this world is currently according to the prince of the power of the air, our apostle tells us in Ephesians 2:2, referring of course to Satan.

And so, the heavenly hosts which are under the *oppression* or *bondage* of these satanic principalities are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, that is, those believers who have learned to *walk after the Spirit* and live out of their new identity in Christ, and who have been educated as sons, who have been equipped in other words to bring the life and love of Christ Himself back into creation.

These heavenly hosts were made subject to *vanity*, meaning they were made subject to *emptiness* or *purposelessness*, and they were made subject to this vanity against their will by God because God Himself has a hope for them. That hope is that they will one day be delivered from the *bondage of corruption* into the glorious liberty of the *sons of God*—they will be given over to saints who are the reproduced image, nature and character of Jesus Christ Himself.

God's hope is in us through Jesus Christ.

We know all of creation—whether *heavenly* things or *earthly* things, whether *spiritual* things or *natural* things, whether *humans* and *animals* or *angels* and *cherubim*, are groaning and travailing in pain together even up to this present time in history, because *they are all* under the bondage of Satanic corruption. Only the creature however was specifically subjected to vanity, as they are currently waiting for us. And even we ourselves, our very souls within these fallen bodies, eagerly await the time of our future placement as sons, where we will then be able to begin ministering the righteousness and life of God to His creation.