

Our House



Studies in Romans 8

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Study 1 · Romans 8:1-11

Moving In

Jesus said, *'Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock'* (Matthew 7:24).

In this series of Bible studies from Romans chapter 8, we'll be exploring what it means to build 'our house' – both as a church and as individuals – on the good news of Jesus.

Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome. In his letter, Paul emphasises just how important it is that his readers build their house on the good news of Jesus because, *'the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes'* (Romans 1:16).

In chapters 1-7 of his letter, Paul explains the gospel message in detail and clearly explains what it means to be a Christian. In chapter 8, he pauses and reminds the readers of all the blessings they now enjoy in Christ. What does the believer possess? What are our benefits? These are the questions Paul answers here.

British pastor, Martyn Lloyd Jones, once commented that *'in the whole of the Scriptures the brightest and most lustrous and flashing collection of stones is Paul's letter to the Romans. And of these, Chapter 8 is the brightest gem in the cluster'*.

Romans chapter 8 describes what it looks like for a Christian to build their house on the rock of the gospel – and it's glorious! It's the sort of house anyone should want to live in.

We start today by exploring how we move into and start living in our house built on the rock.



Thought Starter

1) What's the best key you've ever had or heard of? What made it so special?

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“[The book of Romans] is in truth the chief part of the New Testament and the purest Gospel. It would be quite proper for a Christian, not only to know it by heart word for word, but also to study it daily, for it is the soul's daily bread. It can never be read or meditated too much and too well. The more thoroughly it is treated, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes”.

Martin Luther – ‘Preface to the Epistle to the Romans’

“ ”



Prayer Starter

Almighty Father,

Thank you for sending your one and only Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

Help us to build our lives on the victory that he won over sin and death through his death and resurrection. Build us up to have a greater assurance of our faith as we study your Word.

Amen



Digging Deeper

2) Earlier in his letter, Paul told the Romans that there were big issues stopping them from being in God's presence, from occupying the house.

Read Romans 1:18-20, 2:5-6, 3:10-12, 6:23a.

What are the big issues?

What are the consequences of these things?

Read Romans 8:1.

What good news does Paul now announce?

3) From here, Paul goes on to talk about two different laws. Laws explain how things work under a particular ruler or government. One of the laws Paul talks about sets us free to enter the house, the other locks us out.

Read verses 1-2.

What are the two laws and how are they different?

What do our attitudes, actions, or feelings reveal about which law we're living under?

4) Read verses 3-4. What is powerless and why?

In comparison, what (or who) is powerful and why?

5) Read Romans 8:1-4 again and then Romans 5:1.

Because of sin, we're unable to keep the law and so can't enter the kingdom of God (the house). But what key has God provided that opens the door to his kingdom and his presence?

Write down all the times that this 'key' is mentioned in these verses, as well as the different ways it's described.

While the following illustration is a bit old, it helps explain what Paul is teaching...

*The guard is coming down the train checking people's tickets. Alison and Harry haven't bought tickets. Yet they look strangely calm... because **their dad has!** Alison and Harry are on their Dad's family ticket. Even though they haven't paid a cent, they have **nothing to fear**. And no one can accuse them of breaking the rules.*

Verses 1-4 say we are a bit like Harry and Alison. 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'.

Discover – Bible Notes for Young People

6) Next, Paul compares what life looks like under these two different laws, in these two different kingdoms. In one of them the 'flesh' is in control whilst, in the other, the Spirit of Christ reigns supreme.

Read Romans 8:5-11.

What does life look like in the kingdom of the flesh?

What does life look like in the kingdom of the Spirit?

7) What stops people taking the 'key' and moving from the kingdom of the flesh to the kingdom of the Spirit?

8) What life changing consequences of being '*in Christ Jesus*' does Paul highlight in verse 11?

9) Rewrite verse 1 and verse 11, inserting your name at the right places, to make it personal.



Making It Real

10) Do you ever feel like you're under condemnation or that life is without hope? If so, when?

What can you do to remind yourself that verse 1 and verse 11 (and everything in between) were written for you?

Physically pick up your set of keys (go and get them if you need to) and ask: 'How precious is Jesus compared to all the things these keys give me access to?'

What's stopping you from letting the Spirit of Christ have full reign in your life?

'Home represents our point of identity, our base of operations, our primary realm of responsibility. Home gives life its roots, its sense of purpose and direction. Even with the hammer blows of pressure, stress, and struggles, home is the anvil used by God to forge out character...'

Charles R. Swindoll – *'The Finishing Touch'*

Where is your home? To which kingdom do you belong?



Study 2 · Romans 8:12-17

Home Security

On streets in the Sydney CBD, the speed limit is 40 km/h. However, on the German Autobahn highway there's no speed limit – you can go as fast as you like!

The way we live is shaped by where we live and the laws there. Life is very different when you're living in your own home (where you make the rules), compared to when you're living on the street, or in a hotel, or in a gaol cell.

After trusting in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, Christians are given a wonderful gift - a new home in the kingdom of God. We don't deserve it: We deserve condemnation for our sins. But we receive this gift because of what Jesus did for us. He took our sin and death and, in exchange, gave us his righteousness and life.

As we live in this new home – in this new house, built on the rock – it impacts how we should live and it affects our sense of security, purpose, and hope.

Last time, we looked at two laws – the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit. In this next passage, Paul goes on to explain what's expected of Christians now that they're living under the law of the Spirit, and he looks at the everlasting security that those who have built their house upon the rock enjoy.



Thought Starter

1) Where do you feel most secure?

What freedoms and what limitations come with that feeling of security?

“ ”

“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much [they] make of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as [their] Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls [their] worship and prayers and [their] whole outlook on life, it means that [they] do not understand Christianity very well at all.”

J.I. Packer – ‘Knowing God’

“ ”



Prayer Starter

Almighty Father,

Thank you for your amazing love. You are a good, good Father.

Thank you for caring for us when we are weak and so often turn our backs on your loving care.

As we look into your Word, by the power of your Spirit, open our eyes to its truth and give us strength to live lives that are a worthy witness of your Kingdom, goodness, and grace.

Amen



Digging Deeper

2) What sort of things do you have to think about when you start living in a new place or with new people?

As we looked at last time, when we put our faith in Jesus, we move into a new place, one that's built on the good news of Jesus.

Read Romans 8:8-9.

As people who now live in the realm of the Spirit, how can we live to please God?

3) Read verses 12-13.

Death is mentioned twice in these verses. What dies if we live according to the flesh?

What should die instead if we live according to the Spirit?

Christians can actually 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' for all sorts of reasons. List as many as you can think of.

Now rank those things based on how important they are to you.

In verses 14-17, Paul emphasises how those who live in the realm of the Spirit are now adopted as children into God's family.

Read verses 14-17.

Note: *'Abba'* was an Aramaic term which is best translated *'Daddy'*. It is a term of great intimacy – expressing security, confidence, love, and submission.

4) What benefits are there to being a son or daughter of a household rather than just a resident of a household?

What obligations are there to being a son or daughter of a household rather than just a resident of a household?

5) What aspects of our adoption as children of God are highlighted in verses 15-16?

This passage focuses on the intimate relationship we have with God. But how do we balance that with the call to fear God? How is a fear of God expressed in your life?

In these verses, Paul uses the term 'sons (*huiioi*) of God' (verses 14, 15, & 19) and the term 'children (*teknon*) of God' (verses 16, 17, 21). Most modern Bible translations convert all of these to the gender-neutral term 'children of God'. That's understandable because our society minimises gender differences, however, that wasn't the case in Ancient Rome.

Timothy Keller writes: *"In Rome 'sonship' was a privilege and power given only to males. Yet Paul now has the temerity [boldness] to apply this to us – to all believers! This shows that God does not distinguish in giving honour. All Christians, male and female, are now his heirs. It was a subversive thing for Paul to take a masculine-only institution and show that, in Christ, the institution of 'empowering-through-adoption' is use on females as well as males without distinction... Christians are all sons and all the bride – God is even-handed in his use of metaphors! And each metaphor tells us something about our relationship with Christ."*

Timothy Keller – 'Romans 8-16 For You'

6) What aspects of our adoption as children of God are highlighted in verse 17?

What impact does this have on your relationship with God today and your willingness to submit to his rule?

7) Given that this is such a hopeful passage, why do you think Paul talks about sharing in Christ's sufferings?

8) What's the role of the Holy Spirit in these verses (14 – 17)?

How does being led by the Spirit impact your sense of security or confidence?

Making It Real

9) We're called to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body'. Is there a sin in your life that you're gently tolerating instead of putting to death? Do you want to put it to death?

Studying this passage should give us confidence as we continue to battle against sin. Write down the promises from this passage that give you strength so that you can put the sins you noted above to death.

'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!... Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

1 John 3:1-3

Secure in Christ, willingly obedient to the Father, pressing on in hope to be what God has made us to be.



Study 3 • Romans 8:18-27

Weathering the Storms

Jesus said, *'Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.'* (Matthew 7:24-25)

So far in Romans 8 we've been told about the wonderful privileges that believers possess in Christ:

- We're no longer under condemnation.
- We've been set free from the law of sin and death.
- We've been welcomed into the kingdom of God to live under the law of the life-giving Spirit.
- We've gained an eternal share in Jesus' resurrection.
- We've been adopted as God's children, becoming heirs to all the glory and riches of his kingdom.

Those of us who build our house on the rock – the gospel of the Lord Jesus – get to occupy a truly magnificent house. But this house still has to deal with the storms of our world: Troubles will continue to come and beat against the house.

How do we reconcile the glories Paul speaks about in Romans 8 with the troubles, struggles and pain that we all bear? That's what Paul addresses in the passage we're looking at today.

We live by faith in what God has done for us in Jesus. We press on in hope, trusting the promises of God.



Thought Starter

1) Can you think of a time when you endured suffering because you were hoping to achieve a better outcome in the future?

What kept you going through the hard times?

Looking back now, was the suffering worth it? Why or why not?

“ ”

‘God will make the feeblest and the filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though of course, on a smaller scale) his own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful: but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what he said.’

C.S. Lewis – ‘Mere Christianity’

“ ”



Prayer Starter

Open your Bible to Romans 8, scan your eyes over all the blessings outlined in verses 1-17, and spend a minute in thanksgiving and praise.

Then, take a moment to bring the storms in your life before the Lord. Ask him to strengthen your hope and to work through these storms for his glory.



Digging Deeper

2) The Bible doesn't minimise suffering, but faces it head on. Even here in Romans 8, as Paul outlines the many blessings we enjoy in Christ, he addresses the issue of suffering.

Read Romans 8:17-18.

On one end of this scale, list the suffering you're experiencing today. On the other end, list the blessings you have in Christ.



Which direction is the scale tilting? How does that compare with how you feel in your heart?

We live today between the 'now' of what Jesus has won for us through his victory on the cross, and the 'not yet' of his return and the full realisation of his kingdom and glory. To draw an analogy, it's as though the believer has been given the keys to the house of God through faith – it's now our full possession – but we haven't yet entered into the full blessing and security of our new dwelling. It's as though we're on the front doorstep, heading for full security and comfort inside but still having to weather the storms around us until we're completely in. And so we live by faith, in hope – trusting the promises of God.

3) Read Romans 8:19-23.

In these verses, Paul speaks about 'creation' – everything that we see around us; God's creation.

What does Paul say creation is waiting for?

What's creation's experience like as it waits?

How do we see this frustration playing out in the world today?

4) What does Paul say the believer is waiting for?

What's our experience like as we wait?

How do we experience this frustration in our lives today?

5) Paul compares the experience of creation and believers to that of a woman in labour. What sort of images, emotions, or experiences does this make you think of?

How could we use this image to press on in faith and live with hope when we're overwhelmed with pain and struggles?

6) Read verses 24-25.

What does Paul mean when he says, *'in this hope we were saved'*?

What's the connection between hope and waiting?

It's like living through a kitchen renovation, waiting to be picked up from the airport, or waiting for the birth of a child. We wait with expectant, hopeful frustration. Yes, there are difficulties. Yes, there's uncertainty. Yes, there are some things we don't fully understand. But we wait with expectant hope, trusting in the faithfulness of the one we're waiting for.

7) While we wait, we don't wait alone. God has given us his Spirit (verses 5-11), who comes alongside, who gives us life, and who guides us in truth.

Read verses 26-27.

How do you understand the phrase *'we do not know what we ought to pray for'*?

Has this ever been your experience?

8) Creation groans (verse 22), Christians groan (verse 23), and now we see that the Spirit groans (verse 26). What role does the Holy Spirit have in our prayer life? Is there any connection with our groaning?

How can this truth help us to pray and persevere in hope?

When we pray, we engage all three members of the Trinity. We pray to God the Father with confidence, as his beloved children, because...

“There is one in heaven, the Son of God, who intercedes on our behalf, defending us from all charges that might be brought against us (Romans 8:1), guaranteeing our salvation in the day of judgement (Romans 8:34). But there is also, Paul asserts in these verses, an intercessor ‘in the heart,’ the Spirit of God, who effectively prays to the Father on our behalf throughout the difficulties and uncertainties of our lives here on earth.”

Douglas Moo – ‘The Epistle to the Romans’



Making It Real

9) Write down the things you're 'groaning' about at the moment:

a) In your spiritual walk with God?

b) In your life circumstances?

c) As you look at our world?

In quiet prayer, bring these things to the Lord as simple groans – they don't need to be well expressed, just lay your burden before God.

Now, go back and, with a different coloured pen or in brackets, write a word or message of hope next to each thing you're groaning about.

“Those who keep speaking about the sun while walking under a cloudy sky are messengers of hope, the true saints of our day.”

Henri J. Nouwen

We are messengers of ‘new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1:3). May we be faithful even as we groan under the storms of this present age.



Study 4 • Romans 8:28-39

The House of Love

If you won \$50 million, what sort of house would you live in? Would it satisfy your every need? Or were 1960s rock band, The Beatles, closer to the truth when they sang, *'All You Need is Love'*?

The need to be loved (and, in turn, to love), is perhaps our greatest need. We were made for love.

As we come to the end of Romans 8, Paul brings all the blessings that the believer enjoys to a resounding climax. In the gospel of Jesus Christ – which is offered freely to all – the believer has won the lottery of love. We're given the keys to a house built by God, built to last, built on love; a house of faithfulness, righteousness, security and acceptance – a house of love.



Thought Starter

1) What's the most meaningful way that someone can make you feel loved?

In your opinion, what makes love 'love'?

'This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'

'We love because he first loved us.'

1 John 4:10-11, 19



Prayer Starter

Gracious Father,

Grant us a deep awareness of your love.

Equip us to share your love with others.

Strengthen us to persevere in love through every trial.

Do these things through the power of your Holy Spirit and for your glory, so that everyone may come to know the wonders of your love.

Amen



Digging Deeper

In our last study we looked at how, as we express our struggles to God in prayer, the Spirit takes up the groans that we can barely express and intercedes for us in accordance with God's will. (v26-27)

2) With all that in mind... read Romans 8:28-30.

What ultimate good is God working in a believer's life?

What does this mean when we experience suffering?

(See also Romans 5:1-5)

3) In verse 28 Paul describes the believer using two parallel terms...

Firstly, we're one '*who loves God*'. How should this impact our attitude and conduct as Christians?

Secondly, we're '*called according to God's purposes*'. How should this impact our attitude and conduct as Christians?

4) Verses 29-30 spell out a chain of things that God accomplishes to fulfil his plan of salvation in the life of every believer.

Below, write a short definition of each word as it relates to God's salvation.

Foreknew

Predestined

Called

Justified

Glorified

In this chain of things, God does all the work to bring us to glory. How does that make you feel, and why?

“Predestination is difficult to comprehend, but this is no reason to reject what the Bible teaches. God is completely sovereign over His universe and yet, at the same time, we are held responsible, both for our culpable rebellion (Romans 3:19-20) and for our willingness to believe in God’s promise of salvation (Romans 4:24). The Bible asserts both God’s sovereignty and our responsibility, and we should hold on to both concepts.”

St Helen’s Bishopgate – ‘Read, Mark, Learn – Romans’

5) Rather than be discouraged by God’s all-enabling work of salvation, Paul is filled with confidence and hope.

Read verses 31-34.

Why can Christians have absolute security in life and in their relationship with God?

How is God’s love displayed in each of those things listed above?

6) Think of someone you love, who loves you in return. What sort of things could potentially separate you from their love? (e.g. death, adultery)

What can separate the Christian from God's love?

Read verses 35-39.

7) Why does Paul confidently say that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God?

Have you ever felt separated from God's love? If so, by what?

Use these verses to write a sentence that speaks against that feeling.

8) As God's apostle, Paul knew what it was like to face *'trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword'*. (For example, see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.)

In verse 36 he quotes Psalm 44:22. Why do you think he chose to quote that verse in this context?

9) Review the entire passage from verse 28 and list the things that we contribute to being 'more than conquerors'?

Now list the things in those verses that God does to secure our victory.



Making It Real

10) Every Christian who 'builds their house on the Rock' is building on a foundation of God's unbreakable love. In what ways does the love of God shape your day-to-day experience?

What situations are you facing where you find it difficult to love as you should?

How can you better remind yourself of God's love for you in those situations?

“Paul is saying: Think! Are you afraid (8:31)? You aren’t thinking! Are you worried (v 32)? You aren’t thinking! Are you feeling guilty (v 33)? You aren’t thinking! See the logic of free grace and justification! These aren’t dry doctrines; they are life itself. And if you are not living with overwhelming assurance and power, you haven’t really fully understood them. The remedy is to read, re-read, deeply ponder and learn to live out the truths of verses 18-30!”

Timothy Keller – ‘Romans 8-16 For You’

In the midst of our messy, challenging lives, keep thinking about our eternal house, built on the solid rock of Jesus’ love and take heart. Nothing can shake us. Nothing is better!





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