

## LIVING IN THE VESTIBULE OF HEAVEN

### Romans 8

Most Bible students agree that Romans 8 is the greatest of the 1,189 chapters in the entire Bible. D. L. Moody said that he would rather have lived in the middle of Romans 8 than in the Garden of Eden. The devil got to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but he cannot get to the Christian who lives in the middle of Romans 8. There is nothing so exciting to me in all Scripture as Romans 8. It begins on the note of no condemnation and ends on the note of no separation. In between, all things are working for good to them who love the Lord. All the truth of Romans 8 can never be exhausted.

There are 8 great assurances in Romans 8:

1. No Condemnation - verse 1
2. No domination - verses 2-13.
3. No alienation - verses 14-17
4. No annihilation - verses 18-25
5. No isolation - verses 26-27
6. No mis-calculation - verses 28-30
7. No accusation - verses 30-34
8. No separation - verses 35-39

Let us look at these assurances individually as they are set forth in the 8th chapter of Romans.

1. The assurance of NO CONDEMNATION. Verse 1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We need to understand that if there is one word in scripture which describes the lost man, the man outside of Christ, it is this word "condemned." The Bible teaches that. A lost man is condemned. He is condemned by Satan, he is condemned by sin, he is condemned by his flesh, by the law; he is under the wrath of God. Jesus says in John 3:18, "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." You see, Christ took the condemnation that was ours. When we are in Christ we are no

longer condemned, we are absolutely free -- free from the power of sin, free from the penalty of sin, free from the claims of the law. So, there is therefore now no condemnation.

Some have come along to say: "This means a temporary no condemnation because of the adverb NOW." That is not what Paul teaches. He is not teaching a temporary "no" condemnation. He is teaching that condemnation is not possible now or forever. No child of God shall ever be condemned in this world or in the world to come according to Holy Scripture. The believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but not for sin - only for rewards done in the body, and this takes place after he has been snatched out of a scene of judgment and raptured with the saints in heaven.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:24, "He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me has eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation." Condemnation is the word judgment. "But is passed from death unto life." So this is the first great, glorious assurance in Romans 8, "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Are you in Christ? If so, no condemnation, but if you are OUT of Christ today you are condemned. You need a Savior.

2. The assurance of NO DOMINATION. No domination by sin, no domination by the flesh, no domination by the law. Paul does not teach here that a Christian man is perfect. The Christian man is tempted and he may fall into isolated acts of sin, but the Christian man is not dominated by sin. The Christian man cannot habitually practice sin (I John 3:9, Romans 6:1). John and Paul teach this truth, and it is clearly stated throughout the eighth chapter of Romans. In Christ, the Christian has found a new freedom. In Christ, the Christian has come under the sway of a new law which Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." He says in verse 2, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me once and for all (aorist verb) from the law of sin and death." When did that happen? It occurred when you were born again and received the merits of the cross and of the resurrection in your life and in your heart.

Paul says a liberating law is operative in the Christian. It is not a law written on stone or in the books. It is a law that has been written in the heart of every Christian by the Holy Spirit. It is far more powerful than any rule or regulation. The latter can never change life and character. This law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is far more powerful than the law of Moses. It is more powerful than the law of sin and death because Paul says that it is a life principle that freed him from the law of sin and death. Why is it called a law? Because it is a definite, regulated principle in the life of the believer. It is a real force - something that gets the believer in its grip. The power of the Holy Spirit working in redeemed humanity is the greatest power on the earth. It is a definite principle in the heart of the believer which operates like a law, creating in the believer the consistent desire and the power to please and to serve God. In Romans 7 the man speaking is absolutely dominated by sin and the law, but Paul says the believer was freed once and for all from the law of sin and death in the resurrection and in the crucifixion of our Lord, which became his when he received Christ and he was born again.

I can illustrate it like this: When we fly on an airplane there are two laws in operation - the law of gravity and the law of aero-dynamics. As long as the plane is sitting on the runway, the law of gravity overcomes the law of aero-dynamics. But the moment the big engines lift the plane from the runway and it soars into the heavens, then the law of aero-dynamics overcomes the law of gravity. It does not mean that the law of gravity is repealed. It is not. But it does mean that another law, greater than the law of gravity, has come into operation to suppress and dominate it, therefore being triumphant over it. This is precisely the life of a Christian. The law of sin and death works. The flesh is a present reality, but there is something greater than the law of sin and death. There is something greater than our flesh, and that is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which has been made a reality through his death, burial, and resurrection, and has come into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Please believe Romans 8:2. It is your Magna Carta in Christ. There is no domination to those who are in Christ Jesus.

3. There is NO ALIENATION. This is stated in verses 14 through 17. He says, "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." How wonderful is this scripture which says that the redeemed child of God is not simply redeemed, but he is a son of God. He is a child of the most high King. As a child of God and as a son of God, he is heir with Christ to all that God has. He is no longer an alien as scripture describes him in Ephesians, but he is a full-fledged son of God. No wonder the apostle in I John 3 says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." There is nothing to compare with this reality.

A preacher who had more zeal than knowledge read this text, and when he came to this word "heirs" which, as you know, is spelled h-e-i-r, he thought that it should be pronounced, "hier." (I think it should too - that is the way it looks to me.) When he read his text he read it like this: "We are hiers of God and a joint-hier than Jesus Christ." He proceeded after reading his text to preach a powerful sermon showing that the believer is a joint hier than Jesus. Paul is not saying that, but he is ALMOST saying it! He is saying that we are heirs - not through Christ, but WITH Him. If you are not excited about that, something is wrong with you. He is talking about the fact that we are heirs to everything in Christ. That is indeed the birthright of every child of God. He spelled it out in I Corinthians 3:21-23, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." So many of us walk around like paupers when we are millionaires. We should live that way. No alienation, but full-fledged <sup>sons</sup> <sub>n</sub> of the most high God.

4. There is NO ANNIHILATION. We, of course, all believe that the spirit of man will live on. The Greek philosophers believed in the immortality of the soul, but Paul is teaching something more than the immortality of the soul in Romans 8:19-24. He is actually saying that the whole created order is going to be resurrected -- even the natural order. This world in which we live is going to be born again. It will be resurrected by the power of God. As far as the annihilation of persons or bodies, that is absolutely unknown. Paul not only says that the lower creation will be redeemed, but he says that in this process the believer is going to receive a new body by the power of Christ. He says in verse 22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." He is talking about all the creation in pain, waiting for its deliverance. Everything you see is longing to be delivered and it will be by the power of God. In verse 23 he says, "Not only they but ourselves who are the firstfruits of the Spirit, (speaking of the Christian), we groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." He is saying that the believer is waiting and groaning for that time of complete deliverance when the body itself will be redeemed and reunited with the perfected spirit, fitting us to serve the Lord for all eternity.

Do you ever groan? Of course! All of us groan somewhere along the way. I have consistently jogged for ten years, but I still groan. In the summertime I make it a policy to get up at 6 a.m. and run two miles. When I get up I groan and my wife says, "What are you groaning about?" I said, "Do not reprimand me for groaning, it is scriptural to groan." Here is my <sup>5</sup>scripture! "We groan in ourselves but not forever," thank God. We, by the grace of God, have not only been redeemed in our spirits, but one day we will have a new body. I shall jog all I want to and never groan. You can too! There will be no annihilation but a renewal and resurrection of the body. This is every Christian's hope.

5. There is NO ISOLATION. The believer is never left alone. He has an all-sufficient helper in the person of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 states that one of our greatest needs is help in prayer. Where you and I need help today is in being able to pray effectively.

Therefore, Paul says that our great prayer helper is none other than the Holy Spirit. In verse 26 he says, "The spirit also helpeth our infirmity." Infirmity is in the singular. What is he talking about? The word infirmity means "weakness" or "failure" in prayer. This word "help" which he uses in verse 26 is one of the greatest words in the scripture. It is a little word in English, but do you realize there are 17 letters in its Greek equivalent? It is the word sunantilambenetai. This little word "help" describes the Holy Spirit taking hold and helping us with a burden that we cannot carry alone -- specifically, the great burden of prayer. Paul says, "You cannot pray without the help of the Holy Spirit." We are not left alone in our prayer life, the Holy Spirit is present -- present to intercede for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. This word "help" means to lay hold upon the burden of prayer and to help us lift it clear to the throne of grace.

We used to move a lot of things at our house, and when my father could not move something by himself he would say to us, "Boys, grab ahold and help." I like this expression. This is exactly what Paul says the Holy Spirit does when we pray, depending on Him. He grabs ahold of the burden of our prayer life and bears it into the presence of God. He gets through to God for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. There can never be any effective prayer except in the Holy Spirit. We are dependent upon Him, but in Him we have someone who will come to our aid. He will lift those burdens to the throne of Grace. He will interpret our needs to God -- needs that we cannot even express in language. The Holy Spirit will make them known in heaven that we might have an effective prayer life. So there is no isolation, Paul says.



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6. There is ~~no###~~ NO MIS-CALCULATION. "And we know that all things work together <sup>(v.28)</sup> for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Literally this text says that God makes all things work together for good to them who love God - to them who are the called according to His purpose. This, therefore, means that there are no miscalculations with God - no mistakes. There are no accidents in the life of any Christian. God may allow suffering; Romans 8 teaches suffering for the Christian. God may allow disappointments and hardships. He may even allow tragedy to come into the life of His people. However, if I know God loves me and I know that I love God, my question is never "why?" but "to what purpose?" Romans 8 does not teach the absence of trouble, suffering, and tragedy, but it does teach divine sovereignty over all of <sup>these</sup> ~~it~~. It teaches ~~###~~ divine purpose and the fact that nothing ever happens accidentally in the Christian's life. The Christian who speaks of being lucky is using the language of the pagan, not of the Christian. A Christian is never lucky - the Christian is blessed of God. Paul said that God makes everything work together for the good of them who love the Lord.

What we must NOT do in our interpretation of Romans 8:28 is to mis-interpret the verse. We must not hang up on one or two little events in our life and say "this disproves Romans 8:28." Romans 8:28 says that "ALL things are working together for good." God is making all things work together for good to them who love the Lord, to them who are the called according to His purpose. <sup>the latter phrase is a part of the promise</sup> ~~Now that is in it -~~ to them who are the called according to His purpose. <sup>n</sup>

~~What is God's purpose? This is stated in verse 29. What is God's purpose for you today if you are His child?~~ <sup>21</sup> It is that you might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The way God <sup>accomplishes</sup> ~~does~~ this in our lives is much ~~##~~ like the work of a sculptor - chipping away the jealousy, <sup>the evil</sup> ~~trimming~~ away the deceit, cutting, trimming. <sup>n</sup> God has not said He would not do this. In making us like Jesus, we may have to go through some dark valleys

of life. This does not disprove Romans 8:28. Remember, God does not love you less when the going is tough. The real test of whether or not you love God and trust God is how you react in time of trial and times of suffering. Anybody can trust God when everything is going right. Paul is not saying everything will go right; he is not saying that the process will be easy. It may be very painful and it may call for great suffering in your life in order for God to make <sup>you</sup> ~~out of you someone~~ to conform to the image of His Son. That is what He is doing with His children all the time.

Then, we must not lose our perspective because everything is working together for good to them who love the Lord. Did you ever watch your wife bake a cake? You cannot eat the individual ingredients in a cake. You cannot eat shortening. You cannot eat flour, you cannot eat the chocolate. But let the wife get all of that together and it becomes a wonderful delicacy. You and I are lost in time so often. We cannot even see tomorrow, but the hand of God is upon His children. <sup>He</sup> ~~The~~ sovereign purpose is above them, the love of God is <sup>upon</sup> ~~above~~ them. Everything that happens fits into a pattern. No miscalculations with God. He is in control. All things He makes to work together for good to them who love God.

7. There is the assurance of NO ACCUSATION. This is <sup>section depicts</sup> ~~really~~ a great court scene. Paul actually asks the question, "Who condemneth?" <sup>(Rom. 8:34)</sup> There are many people <sup>and situations that</sup> ~~who~~ will condemn the Christian. You have to be prepared for this. This is why we need to know our Bibles. Our past sins will rise up to condemn us if we do not understand the Bible. Our neighbors will condemn us. The devil will ALWAYS accuse you. But what Paul is really asking is not this human question at all; ~~he knew this~~. He is actually asking, "Will Christ, the great Judge, condemn us for our past guilt and sin?" He answers in the most terrific way: "Who is he that condemneth?" Then he answers: "It is Christ who died, it is Christ who was raised from the dead, it is Christ who sitteth at the right hand of God, it is Christ who liveth to make intercession for us." (8:34)

In these statements you have the answer to every charge against man. Is the prisoner a sinner? Yes he is, but Christ died for his sins. Is the prisoner guilty?



Yes he is, but Christ arose for his justification. Is the prisoner without any influence in the court? Yes he is, but Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father. Is the prisoner unable to answer the charge? Yes, but Christ ever liveth to make intercession for him. The most amazing court scene in history is recorded in Romans 8. The Judge becomes the Advocate for the defense in Romans 8. So the verdict is "not guilty." Trial is over. Case dismissed. All because of the death, burial, the presence of Christ in heaven and His intercessory work. No accusation.

8. There is the assurance of NO SEPARATION. Paul looks <sup>into</sup> to all worlds <sup>into</sup> - all times and all space and then declares that there is absolutely nothing in the universe that can separate God's child from the incomparable love of Jesus Christ. When we read these verses we say they are the greatest Scriptures on eternal security. They certainly do teach that, but they also teach a great deal more. Paul is saying that there is no experience in this life that can sever a child of God from his relationship with Jesus Christ - in this life or in the life to come. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or nakedness or famine or peril or sword? As it is written for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (8:35-39) ~~There is nothing in your horoscope and the word used there in the Greek indicates that Paul was answering people who were reading their horoscopes.~~ We have a tremendous revival of belief in the horoscope today, and books are coming off the press on black magic and the value of the horoscope. The word Paul uses here when he says "height" seems to refer to the fear that there is something in the heavens which can separate us. "No other creature," he says, "shall be able to separate us." But notice, "We are more than conquerors." How can a man more than conquer? You conquer the enemy when you overcome him. But you are more than conquerors when you turn the enemy to your advantage.

*this includes all things*  
*specifically*  
*enumerated*

The Christian does not simply fight the enemy and ~~put him off~~ <sup>Defeat him</sup>, but he uses everything in his experience <sup>with the enemy</sup> ~~to produce a victory.~~ <sup>to sanctify his life.</sup>

Life is yours today - not to give in to or be <sup>defeated by</sup> ~~subjected to~~, but to lay hold upon. That bad circumstance you are in <sup>can</sup> ~~is to~~ be laid hold upon by you and through the love of God <sup>can be turned</sup> ~~to turn it~~ into a mighty witness for Christ. The suffering which you face today is not something simply to be borne, but it is something to be used as a testimony <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ God's grace. God calls on His people to realize that ALL things are ours, including suffering. Death, life, everything is ours - ours to use for His glory and to be turned into victory. <sup>this</sup> ~~That~~ is what it means to be more than a conqueror. No separation -- but in the midst of <sup>every</sup> ~~this~~ experience, <sup>in Christ</sup> ~~a~~ victory. <sup>Such experience</sup> ~~This~~ has been the history of the saints through all the ages.

Many of you have read the books of Watchman Nee. He is the shining example of a man in our day who has been more than a conqueror for Christ. We do not know where he is today. He may be dead, but we have the news of his ministry and his witness from the refugees coming out of Red China. In Red China he began to write the Gospel down any way he could - including on little sheets of paper. The Communists realized that he was a tremendous threat and they placed him in a dungeon for six months, believing that he would lose his eyesight and be unable to write anymore. By actual medical tests, after six months, he could see better than he could when they put him in the prison. The Communists still had the problem on their hands, <sup>trying</sup> ~~so~~ they took Watchman Nee and put him between two iron posts <sup>and tied</sup> ~~and~~ the right hand to the right post and the left hand to the left post. They put a guard on his right and a guard on his left. Then they thought they had solved their problem, but he won those guards to Jesus Christ. They took the message of the Gospel out into China. Then the Communists said, "We will rotate the guards so there will be no guard there more than six hours." But this did not solve the problem because he won them to Christ too - in six hours! They went out into China and shared the message. The Communists still could not do anything with this man who was more than a conqueror - using the circumstances of his life to testify for Christ and to witness for Christ. In desperation, the Communists cut off both of his arms just below his elbows. When you read



his books, think of this. When you hear a sermon on sacrifice, think of Watchman Nee. They cut off both of his arms with an axe. They gave him no medical attention - not even anything to stop the blood, but Watchman Nee healed. Right after they cut off his right arm he raised the nub of that arm and said, "Praise God." More than a conqueror - not a conqueror - but more than a conqueror through the love of Christ. The message kept coming out of his cell into China because he gave people who visited him a note or a word and they would take it out into China. The last word we have about Watchman Nee is that they finally cut out his tongue so he could not speak the <sup>of</sup> Gospel. We do not know where he is today. He may be dead. ~~Many have died,~~ <sup>if so</sup> but he did not die defeated. He <sup>has been</sup> ~~was~~ more than a conqueror through the love of God in Christ Jesus. ~~You and I are facing a day that unless we have this kind of faith, we will "fold up."~~

What is your circumstance today? It may look bad, it may seem hopeless. You are never to say, "This is the way life is and I cannot change it - I will just grin and bear it." That is not the Christian attitude at all. The Christian attitude is to take everything that has been placed in our paths and in our lives and to use it for Christ and for His glory. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the love of Christ we are not <sup>only not</sup> conquered. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Are you a Christian? Do you really know Christ? Romans 8 is <sup>but a word picture</sup> ~~a~~ photograph of the normal Christian life. It is the birthright of every child of God. Do you have the new life of Christ? It is a life of victory and joy right here. If you are a Christian today, act like a Christian, talk like a Christian, live like a Christian, witness like a Christian, sing like a Christian. Be a Christian if you are a Christian. All things are ours in Him and He does not want us to be defeated and downhearted. He wants us to have a song in our hearts, joy in our souls, and to be a winning witness in this world.