

Romans 8:26-30

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[0:00] Please do turn back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. We're going to look at verses 26 to 30 tonight, about to kick off, the office waiting for us, the unread emails.

If it wasn't half term, the school uniform would be ironed and ready. But what is so common for us to feel on that Sunday night? It's the Sunday night dread, isn't it?

I've also heard it called the Sunday scaries. It's a common thing for teachers to feel if it wasn't half term. But that dread, it can happen any time. And why do we feel that?

What's behind that? It's the looming uncertainty ahead, isn't it? It is facing a week filled with fears and troubles and all sorts of hurdles that we have no idea how we're going to jump over.

Because we know just how weak we are. We realize how out of control we are. And so we are filled with this dread this overwhelming uncertainty.

[1:31] Uncertain about what to do when the trouble comes along. What is the right solution? What I need? What my children need? What my friend needs? Or my parents? I look ahead and I'm just scared.

How is all of this going to play out? And it could be paralyzing. Well, that weakness and uncertainty that you feel, that is exactly what Romans 8 is addressing tonight.

Paul is showing us here, yes, we are weak. Yes, this life to our eye seems so uncertain. But thankfully, when you belong to Christ, when you have his spirit, there is a great and perfect certainty in the Christian life.

This coming week, this coming year, may feel like stepping into the great unknown. But in Christ, he has guaranteed every step you take will be stepping onto certain unmovable ground.

It is a certainty that you can rest in and find peace in. And it's a certainty that's with you wherever you go. In fact, I want us to see that there are three aspects to this certainty in the Christian life.

[2:48] There is a certain help in all our needs. There is a certain purpose behind everything going on in your life. And though we do worry about the days ahead, there is a certain future in the Christian life.

So three certainties I want us to see tonight. And the first is this, the certain help in the Christian life. So far in Romans 8, we've seen the Holy Spirit is key to this chapter.

It's all about what the Spirit is doing in the Christian life. And we've seen the Spirit's work is deep, helping us fight sin, guaranteeing victory.

And the Spirit's work is wide. He's going to renew the whole creation. But now we see something else. The Spirit is in us, helping us.

Look at verse 26. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Now notice, it doesn't say weaknesses, does it?

[3:52] But weakness. This is talking about just the whole weak condition of our lives. So the Spirit doesn't only help us when weaknesses crop up now and again.

No, the Spirit helps us in the constant weakness of our sin, weakness of our anxiety, weakness handling that difficult boss, the stress at work, at school, the temptations inside, how to parent, how to keep that marriage going.

This is just the whole weakness of our lives, this side of heaven. And we don't need to think very hard to picture that, do we? But for the Christian, beneath that weakness, there is something going on.

The Spirit dwells in your heart, and He helps you. And what does He help us with? Look at the rest of verse 26. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for, because, we do not know what to pray for as we ought.

And prayer is a sign of our weakness, isn't it? We pray because we are not strong, because we aren't capable, we aren't self-sufficient.

[5:09] We pray because we have so many needs, and we need God's help, because we're weak. How many times have you just come to the end of your tether, and all you can do is just pray?

And that is exactly what we should do. Come to God with all your troubles. Prayer and weakness, they go together. But the reality is, we are often so weak, our needs are so deep and complicated, and our situations just so vastly beyond our wisdom, that we don't even know what to pray for. That's what verse 26 is saying. We do not know what to pray for as we ought. We can just be so lost, so out of our depths, we can think, I don't even know what to ask for here.

What do I even need in this situation? Your friend is just going through one tragedy after another, and you can try calling them, or making them a meal, but it's just not even scratching the surface. And the tragedy isn't even the only problem, it's how they're handling it, their heart, their mind, their health, but also their finances, their marriage, their spiritual state.

[6:33] We don't even know what should be done here. We are so weak, we do not know what to pray for as we ought. Or you're faced with that medical mystery, constant investigations and referrals, but never any progress, and it's just looking like there's no solution.

It's just something I have to now live with, a new normal. And we shut our eyes to pray, and we don't even know where to start. The doctors don't even know what I need.

How am I supposed to know what I need? Or my family situation, it's just impossible. Things are just so fragile, and entrenched, and it's like change is never going to happen, and we don't even know what to ask for.

Well, think about the life choices we have to make. Uni, jobs, moving house, marriage. On top of that, the Prime Minister is saying, we've got to gather supplies in case of war. How do I know what I need for a future I don't even know about?

I know I need something, but I don't know. What? It's the huge uncertainty of our weakness. And so we don't know what to pray for as we ought.

[7:47] And in those times, we can just cry out, Lord, help me, or your will be done. Or maybe we don't cry anything at all. Maybe you've been there.

Maybe you're there right now. Just sat in the weak silence. But beneath that silence, in the Christian life, there is something going on.

Look at the end of verse 26. The Spirit himself, the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Intercedes, it just means praying for someone else.

So when Reuben prayed earlier, that was a prayer of intercession. Well, something remarkable is happening in the Christian's heart. Not only is Christ praying for you in heaven, but the Spirit himself is in you and praying for you.

And he's groaning these prayers. Do you see that? And notice that this isn't the only groaning going on in this chapter. Remember verse 22, creation groans in its brokenness.

[9:00] And verse 23, we groan in our suffering and weakness, longing for the redemption of our bodies. Well, here, the Spirit himself joins in with our groaning.

But the Spirit doesn't groan because he suffers. No, he groans, not in agony, but in prayer. The Spirit takes our groans and lifts them up to God.

Because look, these groans are too deep for words. Can't be put into words. And what have we just seen is too deep for words?

Our weakness. Our needs. All that is going on in our lives that we struggle to even know what to pray for. It is a deep, deep need, a deep groan beyond our words.

And the Spirit right now is inside of you and he knows exactly what those groans are. He knows your deepest needs and your deepest troubles and the very depths of your weakness.

[10:13] What you struggle to express or even know. And he takes that groaning, takes it to himself and groans it himself up in prayer to God, bringing all those needs to the throne of grace, perfectly telling the Father what we need.

and the Father perfectly hears them. Look at verse 27. And he who searches hearts, our Heavenly Father, knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We have huge uncertainty to know what we need. But the Spirit knows you with absolute certainty better than you know yourself.

And the Father knows the Spirit with absolute certainty. And so the Spirit brings all of your needs to God with absolute certainty. It's such a comfort when you know someone's been praying for you, isn't it?

But when you realize someone has just been spending time at home, time at the office, thinking of you and praying for you, well, the Spirit himself does that constantly for you.

[11:31] Right now, the Spirit himself is lifting up all the details of your life and your needs to God. I remember someone years ago who in prayer meetings, he would pray just the most practically helpful prayers.

So if someone, let's say, was going through a visa situation, he might pray, Lord, we ask that they would find the right form to fill in and speak to the right person and find that phone number that they've been looking for.

And it showed such a careful insight into their problems and needs. And those prayers, when you heard them, they were just such a peace and a help amidst the worries.

Well, the Spirit does that for you, but in the deepest, most careful way possible. Groans too deep for words.

And so you might be facing the most unknown, uncertain future, just the most complicated situation, and a solution doesn't even seem possible. But in the Christian life, you need to know there is unshakable certainty that God knows exactly what you're going through.

[12:45] He knows exactly what you need. And so you are never alone. There is this constant, certain help by the Spirit.

He is telling all of that, all your needs, to the Father right this moment. And notice the Spirit, He doesn't make the problems disappear.

He doesn't make the weakness disappear, but He helps us in our weakness by praying for us, calling out for us when our voice just doesn't have the strength. But there's even more certainty than that.

Because with all those needs now known to God, God does something about it. that He works all things in your life for your good.

There is a certain purpose in the Christian life. It's my second point, the certain purpose of the Christian life. We now come to maybe the most well-known verse of Romans 8, the shiniest part of the gem, verse 28.

[13:53] And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

So with that knowledge of your needs, do you see God has a plan? He is working together all things for the good of those who love Him. And the language of working together here, it's talking about God's providence, providence, God's governing and controlling of all things in this universe.

And it really means all things. From the flow of history and the movement of the stars in the sky down to the traffic on a Monday morning and that broken tap in your bathroom.

All things God is powerfully sovereign over and God is working together, orchestrating all those things with a grand purpose for the good of those who love Him.

And so notice, it's not for the good of all people, but those who love God and who are loved by Him, those called by Him. The church lies at the center of this plan.

[15:10] He's working together everything in this universe for the sake of His children. For you, Christian, here today. A small, a very small reflection of that.

It's like when we're organizing our family calendars and booking things in. We arrange things for the sake of our family, don't we? We don't book things in the evening because, well, that's the kids' bedtime.

Well, I'll take the kids out that afternoon because my wife needs to rest. Well, I'm not going to go skiing for two weeks on my own. That wouldn't be good for the family. Well, in a far greater way, as God's family, our Heavenly Father arranges and plans and works together all things in your life for your good.

or it's like in science. Have you ever played with those iron filings? I remember doing that in year nine. A tray of iron filings and you scatter them on a tray and you drop a magnet into the middle of it and what happens?

All those pieces get pulled together around that magnet. Well, in the Christian life, things are not just randomly scattered around you. These groanings and this weakness, it's not uncertain chaos

you're surrounded by.

[16 : 27] I know there is a certain design and purpose behind it all. God is working together all things around you in your life for your good.

But we need to ask, what does he mean by good? Because as we have these groans, as we look at our lives, things seem very far from good.

And as we look at the tragedies and even our own sins and failures, we struggle to see how any good can even come from this. I remember during the 2008 Olympics a while back, I was watching, just kind of watching it at random and an interview popped up and it was live.

It was with this British athlete. I think he was a judo athlete. And he'd been training for years and it had been this gruelling journey and he was about to retire. And so this was his last shot at the Olympics.

And in this interview, he had just lost the chance to go in for a medal. And he was just broken. And I remember he was interviewed just after the loss and the interviewer was, she was trying to kind of console him, but wanted to lighten the mood a bit and said, well, I know this is hard, but what is something good you can take from this?

[17 : 49] And he just straight away said, nothing. That there is nothing good from this. And then the interview just ended. And we can often feel like that, can't we?

Well, we need to realize in the Christian life, nothing is ever pointless. There is a good purpose behind all things, but we need to see what this good means.

It does not mean God will make life easy. It's not the removal of our problems just magically. It's not working together for health and wealth and prosperity in this life.

No, it is working together for a good purpose. And that purpose, it's there in verse 29. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

in the Bible, to be known by God means to be loved by him. And so to be foreknown means to be loved and chosen before the foundation of the world, which is exactly the life of the Christian.

[19 : 06] God has foreknown us and he's also, do you see, predestined us. He set us on a path and plan and purpose in life, all heading toward a destination to be conformed to the image of his son, to be made like Jesus.

And that means ultimately in glory when we are raised with a body like his. But also, it means now in this life, God has set us on a path in life with the intention of being shaped and transformed to be more like Jesus day by day from one degree of glory to another.

This, this is the good purpose running through each of our lives. God is working all things together, everything from the stars down to the Monday morning traffic, everything, he is working it all together to make you more like Christ.

And that is actually the good that we, we need most. God hears all the groans of our life, our deepest needs and responds by taking all of that and uses it to make you more glorious.

And so it may not look like it, but all this weakness and suffering and trials, all the things that you didn't expect, they are actually what God is using in your life to make you more like Christ.

[20 : 49] It's like polishing a diamond which of course we've all done haven't we? We've all polished diamonds. But when you polish a diamond, when you polish anything, what does it take? It takes something rough, like a rough side of a sponge, right?

It causes friction, it's uncomfortable, but it has the purpose of producing something greater. Well that is what God is doing with us. The sharp edges of life are there for a reason.

He's using the friction of all this weakness and suffering to produce something glorious. When we are at the end of our tether and just driven to our knees in prayer, that is God doing something.

He is forming a dependency on Him in our life, a dependency that may not have been there otherwise. When we are just sat in the ruins of our sins and our failures, our life has not gone to waste.

No, in His grace He works all that together to rebuild us into a greater holiness. When we are just overcome with tears and we walk through that dark valley and we groan and we just long for Christ to return, that is God using those things to nurture a godly hope in your heart.

[22 : 13] when we step into that uncertain unknown future and we just lose any sense of self-sufficiency, that is God shaping an obedience and a trust in Him, polishing the diamond, producing something glorious in your heart.

And this can be a hard truth to hear. It's not easy. And there's a real mystery to this. We don't know why this thing happened and not that.

Why are they going through so much but they're not? We don't know. We need to humbly admit we don't know all the details but we do know it is for a purpose like no other.

Your trials are not accidents as God is just helplessly watching on. know. He lovingly and powerfully and with manifold wisdom uses all things to glorify His Son in your life.

Because that hope, that trust, that dependency, that is all what Jesus had in His heart as He walked that dark road to the cross. It wasn't easy for Him but it was through that suffering and mockery and pain God worked all those things to shape the glorious life of our Savior.

[23 : 42] As Hebrews put it, Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered. Even in the darkness of the cross, there was a good purpose. It brought Him to glory and incredibly, God has the same purpose for your life, conforming you into that same image, which means God's great purpose is to glorify the Son of God in the canvas of our weak lives.

Verse 29, in order that He might be the firstborn, the greatest among many brothers. As you cling to God in the darkness, as He cares for you in that uncertainty, God is displaying to the world just how great our Savior is.

Look how Christ strengthens the weak. Look how much He loves His family. Look at this hope for sinners. Look how He never ever leaves us.

It is a purpose like no other. God is exalting His Son in the weakness of our lives. And this is the mystery and comfort of God's providence.

And this is what Christ is calling everyone into. Notice, this good purpose, it is for those who are called by God. He's governing the whole world, but this good purpose, it's only for the church.

[25 : 21] And so if you hear this call now, and you respond, and you put your trust in the Lord Jesus, it will not mean your problems will disappear, but it will mean God will use it for a glorious purpose.

Your life will take on a meaning like no other. You will be cared for and be brought into this mighty plan, and you will start to be shaped into the image of the Son.

Your life will never be pointless or uncertain, but there to glorify the Son of God, and there is no greater purpose.

And not only that, you will have a certain future. And I just want to finish with this, the certain future of the Christian life. Look at verse 30, and those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified.

This is showing us from beginning to end, eternity to eternity, the Christian life, it's all in God's hands. Do you see that predestined in eternity past, to glorified, eternity ahead?

[26 : 33] It is all in God's hands. Notice all the he words, he predestined, he called, he justified, he glorified.

The whole life, past, present, and future, it is all certain with God. God, this is often called the golden chain of salvation. It's like this unbreakable chain of certainty about our future.

When you are foreknown by God, you are predestined, set to be made like Jesus. No one can take you off that path. And when you are predestined, you will be called in time, you will believe.

And when you are called, you will be justified, your forgiveness cannot be undone. And when you are justified, you will be glorified, you will reach the end. In fact, Paul says, he says it in the past tense, doesn't he?

He also glorified. Our future is so certain, he speaks of it like it's already happened. It's like when you go into a football match, and you just know victory is guaranteed, there's just no way you could lose.

[27 : 42] We might say, we've got this, it's already in the bag. Well, in the Christian life, the future is that certain. When you belong to Christ, he never, ever loses you.

Weakness will never overcome you. Your trials will never destroy you, and your future will never be taken away. Victory is certain. And so it may not look like it.

This life looks weak, and full of groans, and uncertainty, and maybe that Sunday dread right now. It may look like our life is all going downhill, or maybe just going nowhere at all, but the spirit guarantees you are going somewhere.

Your future is certain, glory awaits. All that you are longing for, all those groans, the spirit groans with you, and he's going to bring it all to an end, because glory has already begun.

You already have the spirit. He's already begun his work in you, and God always finishes what he begins. As you head into this week, you go with absolute certainty and a good purpose.
[29 : 02] You will never be lost, because Christ has won all of this for you, so victory is certain.
Let's pray.