

3. God is Love. Read Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 together as a group.

Did you notice all of Paul's questions in these verses? You've probably asked them a time or two - yourself. Paul could have made bold, far-reaching statements about the incredible commitment of God to His children. Instead, he wants the answers to these questions on our lips. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Paul could have asked the question "Who can be against us?" and the answers would have been numerous. Every person who lives faces opposition. There is disease, disappointment, and difficult circumstances which all serve as opponents to our good pleasure. But the truth of the matter is, that is not the question Paul asked. His statement is "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" And that is a different question entirely. Paul has spent a long time explaining one fact, and by now he expects you to realize it. God is for us. If you have gotten to this point in Romans, he expects you to realize that. Just in this 8th chapter he has shown you how much God is for you. He has told you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He has pointed out that God has given you a part of Himself to walk with you every step of the way in His Holy Spirit. He's called you as sons and daughters so that you might experience His love. He has highlighted the fact that for Christians there is an overflowing abundance of hope. Paul has clearly explained it. God is for you! *What kind of assurance does God's love give you for your life? How does the assurance of God's love for you affect your everyday life?*

For the past five weeks we have focused on the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest words that describes God's action in Christ dying on the cross is love. The love of God says that you can live without condemnation. The love of God gives you hope. The love of God makes sure that you are plugged into His purpose for your life. And the love of God means that you can live without fear of ever being separated from Him. But in the end you must choose. The only thing that can keep you from experiencing the love of God is you!

Personal Application

Spend some time this week praying and asking God to show you His love for you in a substantive way, and then pass it on through serving Him by showing love to others.

Prayer

Father God, we ask that we might experience Your love flow in and through us this week. Make us sensitive to how we might serve others as an expression of Your love in us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Week 6 – The Overcoming Life

Announcements

Servolution - March 26 – April 4

Celebrate Easter: The Door – April 2 – 4

A Life Made Beautiful - May 7-8, 2010

Good Friday Communion & Prayer for the Sick – April 2

Warm-Up

What do you think about when someone says, "God is your Father"? That "God is your Deliverer"? That "God is Love"? What kind of responses does that generate in you?

Word

In this series, **What is the Gospel?**, we are spending six weeks studying the first eight chapters of the book of Romans. Last weekend we spoke about the role of the law or Ten Commandments in the life of the believer today.

In our lesson this week entitled **The Overcoming Life**, we will study Romans chapter 8:12-39. We will discover **Three Ways We Overcome in Life** through the Gospel: 1) our identity as the adopted children of **God our Father**; 2) our future hope because **God is our Strong Deliverer**; and 3) the fact that **God is love** – and His love is permanent, immovable, and eternal.

Let's dive in... Paul gives us some introduction in **Romans 8:12-13**. **Please read this together as a group.**

Verse 12 is powerful, Paul starts with “Therefore, brethren”, and he is telling us, “we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful, fleshly nature, to live according to it.” You see, for many of us - you may have grown up thinking, “Well, I can’t help it. My mom was this way, my dad was this way, I was raised in such a way that I have to be this way,” you know, “I came from a dysfunction home, or I’ve got a temper”. We live as if we are obligated to act a certain way, and respond a certain way, and overreact a certain way. The Apostle Paul says, “you *do* have an obligation, there is something that you just ought to do because of who you are, you are not under obligation to the flesh to obey its lusts.” You have, in fact, been set free. So, what Paul is telling us here is that if we are going to truly live the abundant life, we are to live *by the Spirit*. Paul goes on in the rest of chapter 8 to give us **Three Ways to Experience the Overcoming Life**:

1. God is Our Father. Read Romans 8:14-17 together as a group.

Paul makes it clear to us in this passage that God is our Father, and that we are adopted as sons and daughters! God is saying “Hey, you’re my child – you’re my son, you’re my daughter.” Yet, so many Believers walk through life as orphans “trying harder” to meet the demands they perceive the Father is placing on them, they press to earn His love. Maybe you have felt, “Oh man, God is mad at me, He is just ticked! He is just enduring me!” We all can feel that, at times, if we listen to our flesh. You see, it’s easy to base our perception of God the Father, and His love, on the kind of love we received, maybe, from a human father. Oftentimes the ability to receive what God has for you in your life is directly proportionate to your perception of the heavenly Father’s love. In these verses, Paul makes it clear how God sees us – and that’s as His adopted children. This adoption, this sonship, is really a legal treatise (systematic argument), that shows the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring us into relationship with our Father in heaven through His grace and not by our works. One of the main points of the book of Romans is the experience of the Father’s love through the Spirit of Adoption.

What does it mean that we have received a Spirit of Adoption? Are you able to relate to God as Father, and receive His love as His child?

Beyond that, let’s look back at verse 15 as Paul continues that picture of a Father with the phrase “...**by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”**” The language here is some of the most intimate. The word ‘Abba’ is a child’s word of tenderness and affection, equivalent to ‘daddy’ or ‘papa’. This is deeply emotional and personal language as a child would raise his or her arms and cry for his or her father.

Are you able to experience the love God has for you? How has God shown you that intimacy as your daddy or papa?

2. God is Our Deliverer. Get started by reading Romans 8:18-23 together as a group. The fact that God is our Deliverer, should give us hope for the future. You don’t have to be a very astute observer to notice that we live in a world that struggles against hopelessness. On a global scale, it seems that we go from crisis to crisis. In many of your lifetimes there has been many high profile conflicts. And in spite of our best efforts, we know there will be more conflicts. There have been economic crises. We are still facing financial struggles on multiple levels. But not all the struggles are on a national and global scale. In our personal lives there is pain. We have physical problems that afflict our bodies. We endure emotional turmoil that comes with losing a loved one or that comes when we are disappointed by someone we love.

As Paul talks about life, he does not want to minimize the pain and struggles that we go through. But what he wants to do is to put them into perspective. **Look at what he says in 8:18.** Paul uses language that helps us see life as an eternal proposition. What Paul wants to make sure of is, that we don’t get so discouraged with the difficulties of this life that we lose sight of the big picture of eternity. He says, “Don’t forget, there will be a time when there won’t be any more struggles, pain, death or tears. For those who are in Christ, there will be only joy and happiness forever.” **Now read what Paul says in verses 19-21.** We live in a world that is less than perfect. This world is subject to the second law of thermodynamics. That law states that everything in this universe is decaying. What seems fresh and new one day will some day be old and broken down. To use Paul’s language, this world is in “*bondage to corruption*.” Every living thing will eventually die and decay. That includes me and that includes you. Look at what Paul goes on to say next in **Romans 8:22-23. Read those verses together as a group.** You have been around people who groan outwardly because of pain. It is difficult to hear. But you have been around people who groan inwardly, too. It might not be an audible groan, but more of an internal groan. It’s a sense of longing. In Paul’s mind, the groan occurs when we recognize that there is a huge gap between what is and what ought to be. But for the Christian, there is no such thing as a hopeless situation.

That leads us down to one of the most powerful passages in Scripture – **Romans 8:28. Read that together as a group.** This passage was written as a few words of assurance to carry us through the times when the swirling torrents of life threaten to drag us down. Remember, God is able to turn every circumstance around for long range good. Those that trust in Christ learn to accept, not resent pain and persecution because God is with them. *Has God ever delivered you from a circumstance that looked hopeless? What did you learn through that experience?*