



31 Days of Joy and Freedom

“Fully Alive: 31 Days of Joy and Freedom”

© 2026 René Schlaepfer

ISBN 979-8-9907962-2-5

Published by Twin Lakes Press, Aptos California

1st printing: 2026

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

If you would like to reproduce or distribute any part of this publication, please contact:

Twin Lakes Church, 2701 Cabrillo College Drive, Aptos, CA 95003-3103, USA or email info@tlc.org.

Read This First

The theme of our 31-day journey is simple: Life. True, vibrant, abundant, exultant, brilliant life.

The resurrected Jesus as described in the Gospels is the most **fully alive** human ever. Overflowing with joy, confidence, serenity, and even playfulness, He gives us a preview of the life that all who place their trust in Him can enjoy, now and forever.

Resurrection Ripple Effect

The resurrection is not a one-day event. It is a new reality. When Jesus rose from the dead, something started. The stone that rolled from the entrance to His tomb dropped into the pool of history, and the ripples continue. They are rippling through *you*.

“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.” (Romans 8:11)

But how does that actually work? We celebrate Jesus’ resurrection on Sundays, but how do we live it on Mondays? We cheer for the empty tomb, but how do we face the full inbox? The groceries, the laundry, the grumpy boss, the nagging anxiety—they don’t go away when the calendar flips past Easter.

Treasure Map

The Apostle Paul knew about the tension between holy days and daily-grind days. That is why he wrote

Romans chapter 8. I find it to be the most vibrant, life-affirming chapter in the entire Bible. It is a chapter about being **fully alive**.

Romans 8 offers a treasure map to that life. You can think of it in four sections:

- It promises **no condemnation** for our sins (verses 1-4)
- It introduces us to the **indwelling Holy Spirit**, empowering our change (verses 5-17)
- It gives us the **certainty of hope** in suffering and our future glory (verses 18-30)
- And it guarantees the **unbreakable love** of God, no matter what (verses 31–39)

Over the next 31 days, we are going to unpack these powerful promises.

You may be tired. You may be carrying heavy luggage from the past. You may be wondering if the victory of Jesus on Sunday morning really applies to your Monday afternoon.

It does. This is your invitation to move from a “surviving” faith to a “thriving” faith.

Welcome to Romans 8. Welcome to the other side of the empty tomb. Let's get started.

Day 1

Dead or Alive Inside?

“Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.” Romans 6:4b

Jesus made an amazing promise: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 ESV). But let’s be honest. Many of us are not exactly feeling the abundance. Can you relate? Your joy is drained, your energy is low, and sometimes you think, “I just don’t feel the love of God.” The enthusiasm you once experienced in your faith is gone, replaced by a dry sense of obligation.

Roughly 1 in 2 Americans report feeling “dead inside,” also described as “emotional numbness.” Christians are not necessarily an exception.

What if I told you there was a way to be **“fully alive,”** not just breathing, but **really living** in joy, freedom, gratitude, and confidence? The theme of **life** runs all through Romans 8. In this ancient letter, written to Christians in Rome around A.D. 57, the Apostle Paul writes about how...

“...the Spirit **gives life.**” (Romans 8:2)

“...the mind governed by the Spirit is **life.**” (8:6)

“...the Spirit **gives life...**” (8:10)

“...the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, **lives in you.**” (8:11)

Notice that you don't have to try to force it. It is a gift, rooted in "Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was **raised to life...**" (Romans 8:34)

Let's get back to those people who feel "dead inside." Many experts suspect that this emotional numbness is a reaction to prolonged exposure to clickbait headlines designed to provoke anxiety or anger. Whether out of self-protection or sheer exhaustion, people have withdrawn into a shell where they feel less at risk. But one side-effect of this withdrawal from negative input is less exposure to positive input.

For the next 31 days, let's change our input together. Let's not withdraw; let's lean in. Let's lean into community, lean into the Word of God, lean into prayer, as we explore one of the most beautiful chapters of the Bible together.

Grab a Bible. Keep it next to this book, opened to Romans chapter 8. Each day we'll read a verse or two together, then look at the context, the original language, and apply its teachings to our lives today. I am confident that, as you soak in the truth of what God has done for you through the living Jesus Christ, you'll find yourself more **"fully alive."**

Father, I ask for a fresh revelation of Your love during the next 31 days. Remind me that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now living in me. Refresh me with new life. Amen.

Day 2

The Tug of War

Read Romans 8:1

Sometimes one word (or letter!) can change the meaning of an entire sentence. I scoured the internet for some real-life examples so you don't have to:

A sign in an airport lobby: "Eating Carpet Strictly Prohibited." (Missing word: on)

A sign in a shopping center parking lot: "Illegally parked cars will be fine." (Missing letter: d.)

Even a comma can change a comment: A graduating college senior wrote, "I want to thank my parents, Tiffany and God." Pretty sure she meant, "I want to thank my parents, Tiffany, and God."

As we start our journey in Romans chapter 8, I want to focus on one word (I promise we won't walk through this entire book one word at a time, but this one is crucial). Here's the word: **Therefore**. This is a callback to what Paul just wrote. So, as they say, let's look back at what the Therefore is there for.

In the chapters before this in Romans, Paul has made a case that **we are all sinners**: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

But **God graciously saves us**: "...and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

Alistair Begg once wrote, “There are two types of people who miss out on what God is offering: Those who think they are too good to need it, and those who think they are too bad to deserve it.” But these verses tell us that no one is in a special category of goodness. And no one is in a special category of badness. We are all saved completely by grace alone.

Yet in chapter 7, Paul admits with searing honesty, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15).

He calls it a war inside himself. I relate. Don’t you? You have the best intentions. But then you’re right back in the same old rut, doing the very things you swore you wouldn’t do, burning with shame and despair. But Paul doesn’t leave us there. He asks the ultimate question in verse 24: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me?” **That question is the doorway.** The answer to Paul’s question isn’t a “what,” or a “how,” it’s a “Who.” **Not something, but Someone.**

And that is where Romans 8 begins. It is the thunderous answer to that cry. Because we’re all messed up. Because we all still get lost in feelings of shame and futility. **Therefore...** we all really need to hear what comes next.

Heavenly Father, thank You that my rescue doesn’t depend on my strength, but on Your grace. As we begin this journey through Romans 8, open my eyes to the life You have waiting for me. Amen.

Day 3

The Debt of the Duck

Read Romans 8:1 again

After the darkness of chapter 7, where Paul cries out, “What a wretched man I am!”, chapter 8 breaks like a sunrise over a stormy sea.

Chuck Swindoll tells a story about a young boy spending the summer at his grandmother’s farmhouse. One afternoon, while playing in the yard with his slingshot, he let a stone fly and—to his horror—it struck and killed his grandmother’s favorite duck. Panicked, he buried the bird in the garden, hoping his secret was safe. But secrets have eyes. At dinner later that night, his sister leaned over menacingly and whispered, “Remember the duck.”

For the rest of the week, she owned him. When it was time for dishes, she’d whisper, “Remember the duck,” and he’d do them. When the wood needed hauling, a quick “Remember the duck” sent him trudging into the yard. He was a slave to his sister’s blackmail and his own guilt. Finally, broken and exhausted, he confessed to his grandmother.

She smiled and pulled him close. “I know, honey. I saw it all from the kitchen window. I forgave you the moment it happened. I was just wondering how long you were going to let your sister make a slave out of you.”

I bet you've heard that accusing voice too, the one that whispers, "Remember the failure." "Remember the addiction." "Remember that sin." It demands you pay a debt of guilt, shame, and tireless "doing" to make up for what you've tried to hide. **But that voice does not belong to God.**

Look at the Father's face. He saw it all from the window of Heaven. He saw the mistake, the stumble, and the sin. And when Jesus walked out of the tomb on Easter morning, that debt was fully paid. **His whisper is, "Remember my love for you."**

Yet how often do we still trudge to the kitchen to wash the dishes of "good works" just to quiet the voice of shame? Paul says, "Stop listening to that voice." God has forgiven. The record is wiped clean.

Today, stop acting like a convict and start living like a child of the King. Breathe in the oxygen of grace.

You are forgiven.
You are loved.
You are fully alive.

Father, I receive this truth. I confess I often listen to the voice of condemnation more than the voice of Your grace. Thank You that the cross was enough. Thank You that I am in Christ. I accept Your verdict of "no condemnation." Help me to walk in that freedom today. Amen.

Day 4

Set Free Today

Read Romans 8:1, one more time!

Let's go back to Romans 8:1 for just one more day.

Imagine a courtroom. You are on trial. Your mistakes have caught up with you. The accuser is shouting, listing your failures, pointing at your past, demanding the maximum penalty. You hold your breath, waiting for the gavel to fall.

But then, a figure steps between you and the bench. He doesn't offer a defense; He offers Himself. He takes your prison uniform and hands you His robe of righteousness. That's Jesus. He took your penalty and set you free. When the gavel falls, the Judge declares: **"There is now no condemnation."** In the original Greek, the word for "condemnation" is *katakrimi*. It's the root of our words "crime" and "criminal." You are guilty as charged. But the cross was the courtroom where your destiny changed.

Note the tense. **Now.**

Not "tomorrow," not "if you behave," but **now**. Right this second. Not when you get your act together. Not after you've read your Bible for twenty minutes today. Not when you finally conquer that temper or overcome that worry.

Now. God does not wait for you to become perfect to offer you pardon. He offers it now, in the middle

of your messes, in the middle of your failures, and in the middle of your questions.

Condemnation mutters, "You are what you did."

Grace shouts, "You are whose you are."

Condemnation murmurs, "You are done. It's over."

Grace affirms, "The best is yet to come."

Many of us are living in a self-imposed prison, still trying to make up for sins that Jesus already paid for. We may even hold on to our guilt, believing that feeling ashamed makes us holier, that punishing ourselves makes us better. It doesn't. It just keeps you paralyzed. You are not defined by your mistakes; you are defined by your Maker. You are not shackled to your past; you are freed into your future.

"No condemnation" means your sins are not just covered; they are gone. As far as the east is from the west. Forgotten by the Father. So, walk into this day with a straight back and a light heart. You are fully alive because you are fully forgiven!

Now.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word and the generosity of your grace. Help me to move from a sense of condemnation and obligation into the freedom of and joy of the "no condemnation" life. Amen.

Day 5

Defying Gravity

Read Romans 8:2-4

Have you ever tried to fight gravity? You take a heavy rock, hold it out at arm's length, and say, "Stay!" You release your grip, and what happens? Gravity wins. Every. Single. Time.

That's like the "law of sin and death" Paul talks about in Romans 8:2. It's the relentless, downward pull of our own broken nature. Paul is referring back to the struggle he described in the previous chapter: "I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway." (Romans 7:19) Paul is discovering that **you can't conquer the sinful nature in the strength of the sinful nature.**

You can try to fight it with willpower. You can make resolutions. You can try to hold the rock in the air. But eventually, your arm gets tired, and down it goes. It's a law—a stubborn, heavy force pulling us down.

If you're tired of fighting gravity, I have good news. God introduced a new, higher law— "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Like the law of aerodynamics, His grace lifts you above the downward pull of the old nature.

When you admit that you cannot conquer sin on your own and throw yourself fully on the grace of God, you find that you are not only **forgiven** by grace, you are also **changed** by grace. You stop focusing

primarily on what you **should or should not do**, and focus instead on the beauty of Christ and **what He has done** out of His love for you. This doesn't mean you'll be instantly perfect. But you will change. You'll replace guilt with gratitude. Obligation with inspiration. And you will soar.

So how do you live this out? When the old habits whisper your name, don't fight them solely with your own strength. Rely on the power of the Spirit within you. Remind yourself: **“Christ Jesus does not condemn me, he empowers me.”**

Martin Luther was a scrupulously pious priest living in medieval Germany, constantly aware of all his failings, living in a state of self-condemnation. Then one day, he read today's verses. And everything changed.

“Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning... and whereas before the ‘righteousness of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to paradise.”

Being fully alive means realizing you are free to fly.

Dear Father, I've been trying to live this life on my own strength, and I am exhausted. Rescue me from this cycle of struggle, and lead me into the life-giving power of Your Spirit. I will “put up the sails” to catch

*the breeze of your grace today. In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

Day 6

All About the Mindset

Read Romans 8:5-10

Motorcycle drivers learn about “target fixation” in driving school. That’s the tendency to steer your bike wherever your eyes are focused. If you stare at a hazard, like gravel in a turn or an oncoming car, you are more likely to steer in that direction.

In today’s verses, Paul tells us that **your whole life follows the direction of your thoughts**. You are what you think. If you are always looking at headlines expertly designed to produce fear and suspense, you will be afraid and stressed out. If you’re always dwelling on imagery calculated to produce lust or greed, you will be lustful and greedy.

“Setting our minds on the flesh” isn’t necessarily talking about obvious sin, either. It’s about the daily temptation to live as if God is on vacation. It’s the nagging thought that says, “It’s all up to me. I must try to do all this in my own strength.”

Where does it lead us? Paul says it’s a dead end. Literally. The “fleshly mind” is a cul-de-sac of anxiety, anger, and spiritual exhaustion. It is a life that is dead to the joy of grace.

But there is a different way to navigate the day. “Set your minds on the things of the Spirit.”

This is not necessarily a call to spend twelve hours a day in a monastery. It is an invitation to walk through your ordinary day with an extraordinary awareness. The spirit-governed mind is a mind that remembers: **I am forgiven.** It is a mind that knows: **The Spirit empowers me.** It is a mind that trusts: **He is using all things for good.**

And look at the outcome: “life and peace,” a deep-down, soul-level confidence, fully alive to God’s grace.

Today, when your mind wanders toward worry, or centers on the self, gently guide it back to God’s grace.

Set your mind on the life-giver, and watch what He does with your day.

Father, I confess my mind gravitates toward the heavy, the selfish, and the anxious. Today, I want to set my mind on You. Help me make wise “input” choices today. Turn my mind away from the dead ends and toward the life and peace that Jesus died to give me. I am Yours. That includes my mind. Amen.

Day 7

The Inside Job

Read Romans 8:11

On a hiking path I enjoy here in Santa Cruz, there's an old farmhouse. The windows are broken, the wood is splintered, the roof is sagging under the weight of years of neglect. But when I walk through the ramshackle ruins, I like to imagine a new owner—a loving, master architect—moving in and beginning an inside job. He installs new plumbing, brings in fresh electricity, fills every room with light and beauty. The outside still looks ancient, but on the inside? It is fully alive.

That is your story. Paul reminds us of a staggering truth: “The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.” The same Holy Spirit, the same divine power that ripped open the tomb, bypassed the Roman guards, and brought the lifeless body of Jesus back to life, now lives in you.

Some days you feel like that dusty farmhouse, don't you? **But the resurrection isn't just a historical event; it is a present reality and a future promise.** When you feel tempted to give up, remember who is living inside you. You are walking around with resident resurrection power.

Father, thank you that the same power that raised Jesus from the grave dwells within me. I ask for Your Spirit to bring life, energy, and hope into my life

today. Renovation is welcome here. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 8

God-Empowered Change

Read Romans 8:12-14

Imagine trying to hold a beach ball underwater. You push it down, but it pops up. You shove it with your right hand; it slips to the left. You use your chest, and it squirts out the back. It's exhausting, messy, and frankly, futile.

That is self-empowered change.

We call it willpower. We call it "trying harder." We make a list, grit our teeth, and promise to never, ever do that again. But by Friday, the beach ball is floating on the surface, and we are drowning in shame. Paul offers a better way in Romans 8:13: "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live." By "the flesh," Paul means the ways of the old sinful nature.

Notice the key phrase: **by the Spirit**. What is God-empowered change? It is the recognition that the flesh cannot tame the flesh. Your sinful nature cannot be scolded into holiness. True, lasting transformation happens when we stop relying on our own strength and start relying on the Holy Spirit within us.

I sometimes think of it like the first three steps of recovery:

1. **Admit:** I have a problem. I can't fix it myself.

2. **Believe:** God can.

3. **Surrender:** I am turning my life over to Him. You don't put to death the deeds of the flesh by focusing on the deeds of the flesh. You do it by focusing on the Spirit.

Let's use another beach analogy. I was at the shore yesterday and saw two types of boats: rowboats and sailboats. The rowboat crews were a study in agonizing, percussive exertion, while the sailboats slipped past with such effortless grace—their white wings catching the breeze—that they appeared to be flying.

Trying to live the Christian life on your own effort is the rowboat life, imagining that each good deed is another stroke of the oar. Living by the Spirit of life is like putting up your sails to catch the breeze God is blowing. As you see His blessings of grace through Scripture and all around you, you'll make joyful progress.

Are you tired of holding the beach ball underwater? Resentful of the rowing? Drop your hands. Put up the sails. Let the Holy Spirit take over. More on that tomorrow.

This is the way to be fully alive.

Father, I admit that I cannot fix myself. I have tried my own ways, and I am exhausted. Today, I turn over the keys of my heart to Your Holy Spirit. I ask You to put to death the habits, attitudes, and sins that

*are holding me back. Thank You that my victory is
in Your strength, not mine. Amen.*

Day 9

The Spirit of Adoption

Read Romans 8:15-16

Imagine a small boy in a hallway, shivering and small. He is an orphan. But then, the heavy oak doors at the end of the hall swing wide. A Father walks out. He doesn't offer a job application or a resume. He simply kneels, opens His arms, and says, "Come home." In that moment, the orphan becomes a son.

That is a picture of you.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:15 that when you said "Yes" to Jesus, you didn't trade one taskmaster for another. No, you received the **spirit of adoption**.

When we read the word "adoption," it's easy to miss the power of this metaphor for Paul's original readers. In the first-century Roman context, an adopted child was usually a young adult deliberately chosen by an adopting father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate.

The Roman adoption ceremony was very formal and legally binding for life. First, the adopted one had to legally relinquish all rights to their old life—no inheritance. Even their old name was erased from the records.

Second, the judge made them the primary heirs to the Father's estate. This was an irrevocable appointment.

Third, the old life was totally obliterated. The debts? Canceled on the spot. Any record of crimes or misdemeanors? Gone.

And fourth, in the eyes of the highest Law, this person became permanently, absolutely, forever the child of the Father. The adoption was irrevocable. It's as if they were born the very day they were adopted, starting with a clean slate, new clothes, and a new name. The adopted child is a son, a daughter, completely legitimate and fully treasured.

Does that sound like your relationship with God?

Or are you still tip-toeing through the Father's house like a guest who's afraid of breaking a vase? Please realize that you can now address the Creator as your "Abba." That's the Aramaic word for "Daddy" or "Papa." It's a term of total, unpolished intimacy. It's the cry of a child who knows that if they fall, the King of the Universe will still love them.

Maybe you still feel like an orphan today. Maybe the shadows of your past make you feel like you're only a guest in the Kingdom. Or a servant. Listen closely. The Holy Spirit is whispering to your spirit right now, **"You aren't a slave; you're an heir."** The Father is calling your name. Take off the rags of guilt. Put on the robe of family.

You're home.

Abba, Father, thank You for choosing me. Help me to live today not as a slave to fear, but as Your beloved child. Amen.

Day 10

The Royal Paradox

Read Romans 8:17

Have you ever looked at your life and thought, “This wasn’t in the brochure”? We love the “heir” part of today’s verse. We like the idea of the golden streets, the mansion with the many rooms. But Paul says to be a co-heir with Christ is to share in His entire portfolio—not just the dividends of heaven, but the difficulties of earth. We have a dual destiny, the glories of heaven and the trials of earth, just like Jesus. It’s all part of the package.

That includes the normal suffering that comes from living in a broken world. It also includes the hurt of rejection and costly sacrifice, just like Jesus felt. The suffering isn’t a sign that you’ve been disqualified; it’s the proof of your adoption. It’s the family resemblance.

And here is the promise that changes everything: The suffering is the **prelude**, but the glory is the **symphony**. While the grit of this life is guaranteed, the grandeur of the next is certain. We aren’t just getting by; we are getting ready. **The sufferings are temporary, but the glory is eternal.** You are traveling the same road Jesus walked—through suffering and into resurrection.

Lord, when the “sharing in Your suffering” feels like too much, remind me of the “sharing in Your glory” that is coming. Amen.

Day 11

Worth It All

Read Romans 8:18

Mother Teresa once famously remarked:
“In the light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth will seem like one night in a bad hotel.”

That’s not to discount the reality of the present suffering. If you’ve ever sat in a hospital waiting room or stared at a stack of bills that won’t stop growing, you know the weight. It’s heavy.

But Paul looks at our suffering now and our glory then and he makes a bold calculation. He uses the Greek word *logizomai*, an accounting term. He’s taking the ledger of life, putting our deepest heartaches on one side and our future on the other.

The Greek word for suffering, *pathēma*, encompasses the heavy stuff: the grief of a lost loved one, the pain of broken relationships, the exhaustion of a body that’s failing.

But then, he drops a weight on the other side of the scale. He calls it **“the glory that will be revealed.”** Suddenly, the scale doesn’t just tip; it hits the floor.

The suffering is real, yes, but compared to the glory? It’s a pebble next to Mount Everest. It’s a single drop of rain compared to the Pacific Ocean. **Paul isn’t saying your pain doesn’t matter; he’s saying it won’t have the final word.**

Notice the phrasing: glory isn't just revealed **to** us; it is revealed **in** us. You aren't just going to see the glory; you are going to wear it. Your glorified, resurrected body will be radiant with love and life.

If you are weary today, take heart.

The discomfort you feel today is not the end of the story. **If it's not good, then it's not the end.**

The end of your story is glory.

Father, help me to look past the "right now" and see the "not yet." When my heart groans, remind me of the glory You are weaving into my story. Teach me to trust Your ledger more than my feelings. Amen.

Day 12

The Tip-Toe Expectation

Read Romans 8:19-23

When I wait for overseas visitors to arrive at San Francisco International Airport, I like to glance around at the rest of the crowd, standing at the exit doors of the customs hall, eagerly waiting for family or friends to step into the lobby. Especially if there are children or grandparents in the crowd waiting for loved ones, they don't just sit in the plastic chairs. They are on their tiptoes, necks craned, eyes on every face that emerges from the tunnel.

That posture has a name. In the Greek, the word is *apokaradokia*. It's a mouthful of a word that literally means "to watch with an outstretched head." It's the image of someone so consumed by what is coming that they can't help but lean into the future. And according to Paul, the entire universe is currently standing on its tiptoes, waiting for **you**. It's the word he uses in Romans 8:19, translated into English as "eager expectation."

Why? Because when humanity fell, the earth was subjected to "frustration," tethered to the same decay that wrinkles our skin and slows our step.

But when Jesus stepped out of that garden tomb, He didn't just save souls; He ignited a countdown for the restoration of all things. The empty grave was the first note of a new song—a song the stars and the soil are desperate to sing.

Notice who the world is waiting for:

The children of God.

Creation isn't just waiting for a cosmic reset.

It's waiting for the reveal.

It's waiting for the moment the heirs—that's us—
finally step into their royal robes.

Right now, your glory is under wraps. You deal with traffic, taxes, and head colds. But a day is coming when the Resurrection that started in Jesus' veins will reach its completion in yours. And when you are finally revealed as the radiant, Christ-reflecting masterpiece you were intended to be, the earth will let out a cheer that shakes the galaxies.

So, how do we live today?

We adopt the *apokaradokia* posture. Being “fully alive” means looking at the brokenness of our world—the wildfires, the famines, the hospital wards—and saying, “This isn't the final act.” **This ache has an expiration date.**

We don't despair like those who have no hope.

We wait like family at the arrival gate.

Father, when I feel weary, remind me that even the earth is rooting for the day Your glory is revealed.

Help me live today with hope and expectation.

Amen.

Day 13

The Beauty of the Unseen

Read Romans 8:24

Russell Moore is a well-known author and pastor who often speaks at churches and conferences. He says that in almost every setting, one of the first questions people ask him is “What gives you hope?” or “Where do you see signs of hope?”

He penned a startling thought about those conversations:

“They are looking for stats and stories about church growth or revival. Those are real sources of encouragement. But probably ‘hope’ is the wrong word to define that kind of evidence. The problem is that this kind of hope disappoints. When visible institutions fall apart—and they will—those who thought hope meant upward progress feel duped and disillusioned... **We often have a hope that is really just a desire for a predictable future.**”

He argues that we need to lose our false hope—the kind that relies on our own ability to fix the world or predict the outcome—to find the hope that actually saves. As Moore puts it, **“The gospel doesn’t offer us a way to bypass the grave, but a way through it.”**

We often mistake hope for optimism. We think hope is the gut feeling that things will turn out exactly how

we planned. But Paul suggests that if you can see the finish line, you aren't running on hope; you're running on sight.

True hope begins where our vision ends.

We are people of the “not yet.”

We are living in the Saturday between the Friday of the cross and the Sunday of the empty tomb.

And sometimes, that Saturday feels very long.

You might be in a season where you're praying for the healing that hasn't come, the child who hasn't returned, or the peace that feels miles away.

Take heart. The clouds may be thick, but the sun hasn't quit.

Today, let go of the need to see the “how” and the “when.” Lean into the “Who.” We aren't hoping for a predictable future. We are hoping in a God who always keeps His promises.

We hope for what we do not yet see, and in the waiting, He is making us new.

Father, forgive me for demanding to see the map before I follow You. Today, I trade my need for certainty for Your promise of presence. I lose my hope in my own plans so I can find my hope in Your Resurrection power. Amen.

Day 14

The Strength for the Wait

Read Romans 8:25

Have you ever sat in a doctor's waiting room? You know the drill: the outdated magazines, the ticking clock, the restless tapping of your foot. We call it waiting, but let's be honest—most of us are actually just enduring. We aren't waiting with patience; we're waiting with a stopwatch, silently daring the doctor to move a little faster. Now imagine that same waiting room, but this time, you knew for sure that when the doctor saw you, his expertise would solve your problem completely. The mood of your wait would change: It would be the eager anticipation of a solution.

That is the flavor of Christian hope.

In today's verse, Paul is talking about the waiting room of the soul. Maybe you feel like you've been in the waiting room for a lifetime. You've hoped for the reconciliation, the breakthrough, or the relief. But the "not yet" persists. The Father isn't ignoring you. **The wait itself is a holy work.** You aren't just passing time; you are being formed by the One who holds all of time in His hands.

Lord, I confess I'm not very good at waiting. I want the answers now and the results yesterday. Today, I ask for the strength to stand firm, trusting that even when I can't see the stars, You are still there. Give

me the grace to wait, not with a grumble, but with grace. Amen.

Day 15

When the Words Run Dry

Read Romans 8:26

It happens to the best of us. You pull up a chair, fold your hands, and clear your throat to speak to the Creator. You want to be profound. You want to be clear. But when you open your mouth, the only thing that comes out is... nothing. Or perhaps worse, a tangled mess of “whys” and “how longs.”

You’re not alone. “We do not know what we ought to pray for,” admits the wordsmith Paul. **Suffering can exhaust our vocabulary to express our stress.** And it is right there—in that place of stuttering weakness—that the Holy Spirit pulls up a chair.

I used to think I needed to know exactly the “right way” to pray. But this verse means your prayers are never denied because of a technicality or a lack of vocabulary. When you pray, you aren’t trying to convince a reluctant King to give you something He doesn’t want to give. You are participating in a heavenly conversation with a Father who speaks the language of “wordless groan.”

Think of a mother with her infant. The baby can’t say, “I have a sharp pain in my lower abdomen, Mother, and I believe it is related to my digestion.” No, the baby just cries. And the mother? She knows. She translates the cry into action.

If an earthly parent can translate a baby's wail, how much more does your Heavenly Father understand yours?

God doesn't require a thesaurus to understand your heart. He doesn't need polished prose. **Sometimes, the most powerful prayer you can offer is a heavy sigh in the direction of heaven.**

When you are too weary to explain, the Spirit becomes your interpreter. He takes your confusion, your hurt, and your failures, and He translates them into the language of the throne room. He takes that "wordless groan" you uttered while staring at the ceiling and turns it into a perfect petition.

You don't have to be eloquent to be heard.
You just have to be present.

So today, if the words won't come, don't fret. Just lean back. Release those emotions and frustrations. Let the Spirit do the talking. He knows exactly what you need, even when you don't have a clue.

**Your weakness isn't a barrier to prayer;
it's an invitation for the Spirit.**

Sometimes, Lord, I come to You with a heavy heart and empty hands. I look at the chaos in my world—the anxiety, the weariness, the broken pieces—and I honestly don't know what to ask for. Thank You that when I am too tired to speak, the Holy Spirit speaks

for me. Today I leave the burden on Your shoulders. I trust You with the results. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 16

The Spirit is Praying for You

Read Romans 8:27

We are complicated creatures, aren't we? Half the time, we don't even know what we're feeling, or why we are feeling that way, let alone what we need. The good news is that the Spirit of God knows. Paul tells us God "searches our hearts." The original Greek word suggests a deep, penetrating gaze—the way a master jeweler examines a diamond.

But God isn't searching your heart to find a reason to condemn you. He isn't looking for a "gotcha" moment or a hidden sin to hold over your head. No, He is searching your heart **so he can help you.** God's got your back. He knows what you need before you know it. He knows why you're feeling what you're feeling, even while you're still feeling confused about it.

You may not know your own heart today. But take heart. **You are being sustained by a God who knows you better than you know yourself.**

Father, there are days when my heart is a tangled mess of fear, hopes, and questions, and I honestly don't know what to ask for or how to ask for it. But you know exactly what I am trying to say, even when

I don't. And I rest in this, Father—the Spirit prays for me according to Your perfect will. So, I'm putting my worries in Your inbox. In the name of Jesus, who makes this all possible, I pray. Amen.

Day 17

The Ultimate Promise

Read Romans 8:28

It might be the most quoted, yet most misunderstood, promise in the Bible. Notice what Paul **doesn't** say.

He doesn't say all things are good. Cancer isn't good. Betrayal isn't good. A pink slip or a funeral or a broken heart are not good. But Paul says **God works all things together for good.**

Max Lucado reminds us that God is the ultimate Chef. If you eat a spoonful of flour, you'll gag. A swallow of raw egg? No thanks. A cup of baking soda? You'll regret it. Individually, the ingredients are bitter, dry, unappetizing. But the Baker knows how to stir them together, turn up the heat, and pull a fragrant cake out of the oven. The miracle of the Resurrection is the ultimate proof of His skill. The ingredients were thorns, nails, a cross, and a tomb. But Sunday proved that **God can take the worst thing that ever happened and turn it into the best thing that ever happened.**

Are you in the middle of a “pile of raw ingredients” season? God hasn't walked out of the kitchen. You don't have to like the individual ingredients to trust the Chef. Remember this: He is taking **all things** and making them into a masterpiece.

Father, I'll be honest—I don't like some of the ingredients in my life right now. But I trust You. I believe You are working even the hard things for my good. Help me to wait for the reveal. Amen.

Day 18

What You Can Know For Sure

Read Romans 8:28 again

Paul starts this classic verse with the words, “We know.”

There's a lot we can't know.
We can't know if the economy will dip.
We can't know how our company will do.
We can't know how our kids will turn out.

But according to Paul's words in Romans 8:28, we can **know** this:

God is working.
God is working in all things.
God is working for your good.
God has a purpose behind it all.

I love how the song “Way Maker” puts it:

Even when I don't see it, You're working.
Even when I don't feel it, You're working.
You never stop; You never stop working.

Max Lucado writes about the famous lace shops of Brussels, Belgium, where there are rooms dedicated to spinning the finest, most delicate patterns in the

world. These rooms are completely dark except for a single shaft of natural light from a solitary window. One weaver sits in the room. The light falls only on the pattern, while the worker remains in the dark. What a great picture of life. We can't see the Master Weaver. We only see the work in progress.

Maybe you're staring at a thread that looks like a mistake. You look at the mess and think, "God, what could You possibly do with this?" But Paul gives us a promise. He doesn't say God works **some** things for good. He doesn't say the easy things or the religious things. He says **all things**.

Quoting Lucado: "How would Romans 8:28 read in your life? In hospital stays, God works for the good. In divorce papers, God works for the good."

Again, Paul doesn't say all things **are** good. Evil is real. Suffering is no illusion. Paul's point is that God is such a master weaver that He can take even the jagged, dark threads of our tragedies and interlace them into His design of ultimate good. His purpose is to develop all of us into the image of Jesus Christ. He can do that even through the worst of circumstances.

Your goal isn't to figure out the whole tapestry. Your goal is to trust the Weaver. **God is currently working in your life. Right now. Today. That is one thing you can know.**

Dear Father, when the fabric of my life seems tangled, I trust Your promise that all things—even the dark threads—are being woven into a beautiful

*pattern. Thank You for working behind the scenes,
turning trials into triumphs for Your glory.
I hold onto You, confident in Your loving plan.
Amen.*

Day 19

The Master's Sculpting

Read Romans 8:29

Ever feel like a work in progress? You look at the habits, the quick temper, the lingering insecurity, and you think, "I'll never get this right." You feel a thousand miles away from the person God designed you to be.

But hold on. Look at the promise in Romans 8:29. It is one of the most comforting, life-altering sentences in all of Scripture. God's goal for your life is not comfort. It is not just to get you into heaven. It is to make you **like Jesus**. And that **will** happen. This is your destiny.

Let that sink in.

God looked at you—yes, you—and He determined your destiny: To be conformed to the image of His Son. This work of the Holy Spirit is the whole point of your redemption: to make you into a beautiful, holy, Christlike person.

Think of a sculptor working on a block of marble. The sculptor doesn't look at the block and see a messy rock. He sees the masterpiece hidden inside. He picks up the hammer and chisel, not to destroy, but to beautify.

Sometimes, life feels like a hammer and chisel. Pain, delays, frustrations—yet these are some of the tools

the Creator uses. You might be saying, “Lord, this hurts! Why is this happening?” God whispers, “Even through all the waiting and the questions and the grief, I’m making you look more like my Son.”

This does not mean that every single thing that happens to you is predestined. It means **you** have a destiny. You **will** become more Christ-like.

And God can use anything that happens to you—especially the painful things—to effect this beautiful goal. This perspective can bring meaning and purpose to every circumstance. You are not just a sinner saved by grace. You are a masterpiece in the making.

This is the “fully alive” life. It isn’t a life without struggles; it is a life with purpose **in** the struggles.

So don’t despise the chisel.

When the day seems harsh and the shaping is uncomfortable, **remember what God can do, and will do, even in the tough times.**

Father, I admit that I often fight the shaping process. I want the comfort. I shrink from the chisel. Thank You for loving me enough to not leave me in my current condition. I trust Your hands. Conform me to the image of Jesus. Whatever it takes. Amen.

Day 20

In the Grip of Grace

Read Romans 8:29-30

When I lived in San Diego, my baseball hero was Tony Gwynn. One day, my wife Laurie and I went to see him play. I could not believe it when he hit a foul ball directly to the spot where we were sitting. I had literally dreamed of this moment, and now it was coming true!

I remember every nanosecond of what happened next as if it were in slow-motion replay: Here comes the white baseball, arcing toward me. There's my hand, poised to catch it. Now into my field of vision come... sixteen other hands, jostling mine as MY TONY GWYNN BALL comes soaring into the seats. For one brief instant, my fingertips graze the surface of my prize... then it bounces like a pinball off all these hands and drops out of sight! Despair! Then... joy! I see it lodged firmly in the space between the seat bottom and seatback of my wife's chair! I yell to her in slow-motion: "SIT DOOOOWN!!!!" And she does. The ball is ours! Then I freeze in disbelief as I watch someone pluck the ball from underneath my wife! He is high-fiving his seat-mates!

For the rest of the game, there was probably visible heat distortion above my head as I angrily contemplated how close I came to possessing a Tony Gwynn ball. Finally, my wife (who had far more reason to be offended than I) said, "Cheer up, hon, you'll find a way to use this as an illustration!"

And I did! Here it comes: Too often I think of myself hanging on to salvation like I tried to catch that slippery fly ball — I've got it one instant, but the next I could lose it. But really, we're the ball, and the hand is God's. We're firmly in His grip. He will never drop us.

Romans 8:29 lists all the stages in our salvation. It's a progression of promises. Breathe it in:

Predestined: Before you knew him, he knew you.

Called: He whispered your name. Invited you in.

Justified: He wiped the slate clean by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Glorified: It's written in the past tense. Why? Because in God's world, it is as good as done. Your struggle with sin, your weariness, your tears—they are temporary. A day is coming when you will be fully, completely, eternally conformed to the image of Jesus.

It is all a work of sovereign grace from start to finish.

Maybe you woke up feeling unlovable, uncertain, or undone. You feel the weight of your failures. You are losing your grip. Look again at that list. **You are in the grip of a divine grace that will never let go.**

Father, thank you that my salvation is held together by your power, not my performance. When I feel weak, remind me that you have called me. When I feel guilty, remind me that you justified me. And when I am weary, remind me that I am being glorified. I am in your hands. Forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 21

God is For Us

Read Romans 8:31

You're a high school freshman after school, facing a bully. A heckling crowd surrounds you. But then, a hand on your shoulder. You turn. It's a professional football player. Suddenly, the bully looks very small.

Something like that happened in Kern County, California. Students posted a social media video of a special-needs student being bullied by other kids at Arvin High School, with one kid seen shaving parts of the boy's head while others laughed and recorded.

Micah Parsons, a famous player for the Dallas Cowboys, saw the post, was outraged, and became an amateur detective, finding the names of the students involved and then personally contacting their families and the school to intervene on the bullied student's behalf. Micah never revealed exactly what happened next. But suffice to say, the bullying has stopped. And the bullied child? Everyone at school knows Micah Parsons has his back.

Perhaps you are facing a bully today. Maybe it's a terrifying diagnosis, a mounting pile of debt, a broken relationship, or a deep, nagging fear that you are too broken to be loved. A sneering voice whispers, "You are alone. You are doomed."

But the Apostle Paul, who has spent the first seven chapters of the Book of Romans painting a picture of human desperation and divine rescue, now asks a rhetorical question: “What shall we say to these wonderful things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

God is for us. Do you believe that? In my earlier years as a Christian, I imagined that God was against me because I was such a sinner, or at least He was in a constant state of disappointment. No, **God is for us.**

I once heard an old preacher go on a beautiful riff that went something like this: “It’s the most precious truth of the gospel: God is for us! He knows we’re weak. He knows we’re sinful. He knows we fail. He knows we stumble. He knows we fall short. We don’t love Him the way we should, we don’t serve Him the way we should, we don’t represent him the way we should. But He is for us. **God is for us!**”

When you feel ashamed and want to hide, say it: **God is for me.** When the diagnosis comes, say it: **God is for me.** When the pink slip arrives, whisper it: **God is for me.** When anxiety wakes you at 3:00 AM, declare it: **God is for me.**

That doesn’t mean God is simply cheering from the sidelines, hoping you turn things around. It means God is there with you. So who could ever stand against you?

Father, thank You for being for me. When I feel overwhelmed by the “against” in my life, remind me

*of the “for” of Your presence. You are my
champion. I stand confident in Your love today. In
Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Day 22

The Logic of Love

Read Romans 8:32

Sometimes, as we sit with the cumulative pain of life's traumas and troubles, we can doubt the goodness of God. Is he really loving? Does he actually care? Why did he let this happen?

Paul, in this towering crescendo of Romans 8, wants to settle any doubt. He offers a piece of holy logic that is as simple as it is staggering.

You and I and everyone else were lost. As good as dead. We owed a debt to God we could never repay, the cosmic cost of our sin. And God didn't just wish us well; He gave up His own Son for us. The price was paid in full, in Jesus Christ's own blood and tears.

Now, here is the logic: If God gave you the **best** of heaven when you were at your **worst**, why would He withhold what you need, now that you are His child? **If He spared no expense for your salvation, why would He abandon you in your struggle?**

If a father spends his life savings to buy his daughter a house, do you think he's going to refuse her a lightbulb for the hallway? If a mother traverses an ocean to rescue her son, will she deny him a glass of water when they get home? Of course not.

The cross is the down payment that guarantees the delivery of every other grace. If He gave the Son, He

will surely give the strength for Tuesday's difficulty, the peace for Wednesday's biopsy, the mercy for Thursday's failure.

Will God give you the strength to hang on? Will you really grow in Christlikeness? Will he abandon you in your failures and doubts? What about the mistake you can't seem to outrun?

Look at the cross. The most difficult gift has already been given. The greatest sacrifice has already been made.

He didn't spare His Son so that He could skimp on your soul. He didn't go to such great lengths to save you only to abandon you in the shadows of the journey. He will graciously provide all the strength you need for anything you ever face.

Whatever you are facing, trust God with it today. He's already proven He's all in.

Father, thank You for not sparing Jesus, so that I might be spared. When I fear, help me to look at the Cross and know that Your hand is open, not closed. I trust You with all things today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Day 23

Case Dismissed

Read Romans 8:33

Have you ever had one of those tapes playing in your head? You know the ones. They don't play music; they play memories. They whisper about the time you let your family down, the secret you're sure would make people walk away, or the potential you've let slip through your fingers like dry sand.

The Accuser loves those tapes. He's the ultimate prosecutor, and he's been building a file on you.

But then comes Romans 8:33, and it lands like a gavel: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?" It's like asking, "Who can turn off the sun?" The answer is a resounding **no one**.

God doesn't just overlook your sins; He **justifies** you. It's the greatest trade in history: your mess for His mercy.

So, when the Accuser brings up your past, point him to the bench. Tell him, **"Take it up with the Judge. My case has been dismissed."**

Lord, thank You that when I hear voices of accusation, Your voice is the only one that matters. Help me to listen to Your voice today and live like a person who has been set free. Amen.

Day 24

The Friend in High Places

Read Romans 8:34

Ever had a friend who “knows a guy”?

Your car breaks down, and he knows a mechanic. You’re looking for a job, and she knows a business owner.

There is a certain quiet confidence that comes with having friends in high places. It changes your posture. It settles your pulse.

In Romans 8:34, Paul asks, “Who then is the one who condemns?” He looks around the courtroom again. “Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

Don’t miss those last three words:

Interceding for us.

In the celestial courts, you have a Savior who is speaking for you. Right now. At this very moment.

While you’re sipping your coffee, while you’re worrying about the rent, while you’re wondering if you’re “good enough”—Jesus is whispering your name to the Father. Your name is being spoken in heaven, not in judgment, but in love.

Think about that. The One who walked the dusty roads of Galilee, the One who felt the sting of the lash and the weight of the wood, the One who conquered the grave—He is your personal representative.

I heard someone say that Jesus didn't punch a time clock at the Resurrection and say, "Good luck, kids!"

No, He took His seat at the "right hand"—the position of ultimate power—and He uses that power to advocate for *you*.

You aren't navigating this life on your own. **You have a Friend in the highest place of all.**

So breathe deep. You are represented by the best.

That thought alone can help you feel fully alive!

Lord Jesus, it humbles me to know that You are speaking for me right now. Thank You for being my Advocate. I rest in Your victory today. Amen.

Day 25

Facing the Nightmares

Read Romans 8:35–37

Paul leans in and asks the question that keeps us up at night: “Can anything separate me from the love of Christ?” He then gives us a theoretical catalog of our worst nightmares. Trouble? Hardship? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Danger? Sword? It’s a rogue’s gallery drawn from human experience.

And the answer rings out like a trumpet: “No.”

When you’re laid off, does God love you less? No. When the doctor’s office calls with the news you didn’t want, has His grip slipped? Never. When you fail—again—is He looking for the exit? Not a chance.

Many Christians have “if-then” faith: If I obey, then God loves me. If-then faith is always transactional. But “even-if” faith operates by grace: **Even if I fail, God still loves me.**

Paul is preaching “even if” faith.

Even if the storm hits hard, even if I falter, even if I doubt, the love that kept Jesus on the cross is the same love that is holding my hand right now.

Lord, thank You that Your love is stronger than any of my circumstances. When I feel like I’m slipping,

*remind me that I am held in Your scarred hands.
Amen.*

Day 26

More Than a Conqueror

Read Romans 8:37 again

We like the idea of being a conqueror. A champion. It sounds decisive. But Paul uses a word here that should stop us in our tracks. He says, “In all these things we are more than conquerors...”

In the original Greek it’s one word: *Hupernikomen*. *Nikomen* is from the root *Nike*, meaning victory. *Huper* is the root for our word “super.”

In a word, you are a **super-conqueror!**

Now, think about that for a minute. How could anyone be **more than** a conqueror? Isn’t a conqueror, by definition, is someone who has achieved the highest height. How do you go higher than the highest?

Picture it this way: A conqueror defeats an opponent. Someone who is **more than a conqueror** takes the very thing intended to defeat them and uses it to move forward. It’s not just overcoming the obstacle; it’s the obstacle becoming a catalyst.

Think of Jesus. The Romans threw the worst they had at him. And he turned the cross from an instrument of death to a symbol of hope. His enemies were not just vanquished; they became part of the story of

redemption. Now you are participating in that same amazing story.

And here's the kicker: Paul says we are more than conquerors "in all these things." What things?

If you look at the previous verse, he's talking about trouble, hardship, and danger. To those Roman Christians, this is not a theoretical list. Imperial persecution of Christians was about to intensify under Emperor Nero in 64 AD, when Christians were tortured, crucified, and thrown to wild animals to amuse the public. They were slandered. Blacklisted. Exiled. They were seen as the lowest of the low.

Paul's point is simple but life-changing:

Your circumstances do not determine your status.

We humans tend to evaluate God's love based on our current scoreboard. If we are thriving, God is for us. If we are struggling, we wonder where He went.

Following Jesus doesn't mean you won't face things. It means those things no longer have the power to define you. The debt, the diagnosis, and the disappointment are real, but they aren't final.

Because of the Resurrection, the worst thing is never the last thing.

Heavenly Father, help me to live today with the confidence of someone who has already won. Give me the wisdom to see how You are using my challenges to move me forward. Amen.

Day 27

Nor Any Powers

Read Romans 8:38

To prove his previous point that you are a “super-conqueror” in Christ, Paul starts a list of every heavyweight champion that has ever tried to knock us out of His hand.

First, he looks at the two great bookends of our earthly existence:

“Neither death nor life.”

Death is the great separator. But death is powerless against the grip of God. When you breathe your last on earth, you breathe your first in His arms. And “life”? Sometimes life is harder than death. Life has bills, biopsies, and backstabbing. But Paul says even the messy, noisy business of living cannot pry you out of God’s grip.

Then he looks into the spirit realm:

“Neither angels nor demons.”

What about some occult power, a celestial being or a dark demon? Nope. They can’t damn you, can’t block God’s love, can’t cancel your salvation. They aren’t in charge of the guest list at the King’s table.

Next, he checks the calendar:

“Neither the present nor the future.”

You might be worried about what's happening at 2:00 PM today, or terrified of what might happen in two years. God is already in both places. He's the Alpha and the Omega. **He's seen your tomorrow, and He's already decided to love you there, too.**

Finally, he mentions
“Any powers.”

Whether it's a government, a boss, a bully, or a global crisis—none of them carry enough clout to overrule God. The Resurrection was God's way of saying, “I have a plan of love for the world, and nothing—not even the strongest force on earth—is going to stop me.”

The Resurrection was the ultimate power check.
The Roman seal was “power.”
The temple guards were “power.”
The finality of the grave was “power.”

But on Sunday morning, God leaned down and showed the universe what real power looks like.

You aren't at the mercy of the “powers that be.” You are in the loving hands of the **Power that Is.**

Father, thank You for being steadfast in Your love, even when I'm not. When the world feels shaky, remind me of the things that are certain. Thank You that neither my past, my future, nor any power in this world can separate me from You. Amen.

Day 28

Not Steered by Stars

Read Romans 8:39

Can anything block God's love? Paul wants to make sure he hasn't missed a single corner of the map. He looks up: "**neither height.**" He looks down: "**nor depth.**" Then, just in case he left something out, he sweeps his hand across the entire horizon of existence: "**nor anything else in all creation.**" It's a checkmate statement.

There is a hidden layer here that would have made Paul's first readers lean in. The words for "height" and "depth" weren't just directions on a compass; they were terms from the world of Greek astrology. They referred to the highest and lowest point of a star's path. People then lived in a cold fear that their lives were scripted by the stars—that some celestial power dictated their luck and love.

Paul looks at the night sky and says, "The stars don't steer your destiny." **The One who made the stars is the One who loves you.** No alignment of planets, no unlucky season, no foretold disaster carries enough authority to cancel the affection of God. "Fully alive" living means waking up every morning and saying, "I don't know what today holds, but I know who holds today. And He isn't letting go of me."

Heavenly Father, as I step into this new day, help me to live anchored in the truth that nothing—absolutely

nothing—can separate me from Your loving purpose for me. Amen.

Day 29

The Final Word

Read Romans 8:39 again

Take a step back and see the big picture of this chapter with me. Romans chapter 8 began in verse 1 with the declaration that if we're in Christ, there will never be any condemnation. We are adopted into God's forever family. We are co-heirs with Christ. Romans 8 paints a great picture.

But could we lose all this? Could God decide to reject us? Could it be possible that somewhere along the line, God says, "You know, we've been working together a long time. Yet you're making no progress. I give up. I'm tired of teaching you the same lessons over and over again. I've had enough. My holiness demands that I not tolerate any more of this hypocrisy, so we're done. Your salvation is canceled."

I mean, I could understand that. Pastors often preach about how God's love is **unconditional**. But let's be honest—we struggle with that word. We often associate love with passion that ebbs and flows, with feelings that come and go.

But the love of God isn't a vague feeling. It's a Person.

Paul concludes this glorious chapter by anchoring God's unbreakable love in a specific person:

“Christ Jesus our Lord.” The one who took the nails so you could take the grace. The one who walked out of the tomb so you could walk out of your past.

This logic only works if the resurrection is true: The love of Jesus for you will never end **because He is still alive, still loving you, at this moment.**

There’s an old hymn by George Matheson that starts like this: “O love that will not let me go; I rest my weary soul in Thee.”

God will not reject you now, because He already loved you when you were lost in your sin.

He will not abandon you in your weakness, because He already loved you when you were spiritually dead.

He’s not going to turn against you.

He’s not going to suddenly reject you.

He proved it once for all time on the cross.

He shows it every day at the right hand of the Father.

You will falter.

You will fail.

You may fall.

But failure is not the final word.

The final word is **Jesus.**

*Lord, thank You for the blessed finality of Your love.
As I step into this new day, help me to live anchored
in the truth that I am Yours, forever. Amen.*

Day 30

A Masterpiece of Mercy

Recap of Romans 8

We've spent thirty days walking through one of the greatest chapters of the Bible—Romans chapter 8. We've seen the scenery change from the courtroom to the adoption agency, from the groaning of creation to the halls of glory. Try to read it all in one sitting today.

Let's take one last look at the four pillars that hold up this amazing chapter. If you don't remember anything else, remember these:

The Pillar of No Condemnation (Verses 1–4)

We started in the courtroom, but we didn't leave in handcuffs. We left with a pardon. Paul began by telling us that for those in Christ, the gavel has already fallen, and the verdict is "Not Guilty". Not because we are perfect, but because Jesus took our place. The record is cleared, the debt is paid, and you are free to walk out of the prison of your past.

The Pillar of New Management (Verses 5–17)

We learned that to be "fully alive" is to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit rather than the old, tired demands of the flesh. You aren't a spiritual orphan trying to earn a seat at the table. You are an adopted child of the King. You've been given the right to cry out "Abba, Father!"—the intimate "Papa" of a child who knows they are safe.

The Pillar of Future Glory (Verses 18–30)

We acknowledged that life groans. Creation groans. Even our own hearts groan under the weight of suffering. But we saw that these “momentary afflictions” are just the birth pangs of something beautiful. We found comfort in knowing that even when we don’t have the words to pray, the Spirit groans for us. And we rested in the promise that God is a Master Weaver, working every dark thread and tangled knot together for our ultimate good.

The Pillar of No Separation (Verses 31–39)

Finally, we ended where every great story should: in the arms of a Love that won’t let go. We looked at the stars and realized they don’t control our fate; the One who made them does. We checked the list—death, life, angels, demons, the present, the future, and all the powers of this world—and found that not a single one can pry us out of God’s hand.

So, as you step into tomorrow, don’t go as someone trying to get a win in your own strength. Go as someone who is already more than a conqueror. Move in God’s favor. You are loved with an everlasting love, protected by an unstoppable power, and destined for a glory that you can’t even begin to comprehend.

The tomb is still empty. The Savior is still interceding. And you are still His.

Father, thank You for these truths. Let them move from these pages and into my heart Help me to live

*“fully alive” today, knowing I am forgiven, adopted,
and eternally loved. Amen.*

Day 31

Living With Grace

Read Romans 12:10-21

Have you heard the one about the Christian who was shipwrecked alone on a desert island for many years? When he's finally rescued, he shows the Coast Guard around his island before they leave. "This hut was my house," he says. "That hut was my gym. And this one was my church."

"That's nice," says the Coast Guard captain, "But what's that other hut?" "Oh," The castaway mumbles. "That's where I used to go to church."

It's funny. Kind of. But the sad truth is, Christians are leaving churches, dividing into smaller and smaller groups of "true believers" over all sorts of non-essential issues. Politics. Non-essential doctrine. **But nothing drains life more than hatred and division.**

This is not new. We've been looking at the amazing truths of Romans 8. Now consider this: Paul was not teaching a theology class. Remember, this was an actual letter to the church in Rome. **So why did Paul write it?** Because it was being torn apart by division.

Here's what happened: The earliest Christian leaders in Rome were almost all Jewish. But around A.D. 50, the Roman Emperor Claudius kicked all the Jews out of town. Five years later, Claudius died, and the ban was lifted. But when the Jewish Christians returned, they found the churches changed, less Jewish in style

and more Roman. Sharp conflict resulted: Jewish leaders looked down on the pagan converts who did not practice the Jewish law. Roman Christians looked down on the Jews.

So how does Paul inspire these divided Christians, giving each other the suspicious side-eye, to embrace each other instead? By getting them to look up, way up, beyond all the walls that divide, to the amazing truths that unite, like the ones we've enjoyed in Romans 8.

Remember how there was a “therefore” to start chapter 8? There's another at the start of chapter 12. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy...”** Unity isn't the result of us all agreeing on the same political view or musical taste; it's the result of us realizing we have all been shown mercy by the same Savior.

I can honor others, because my own honor is already secure in Christ.

I don't have to scramble for the best seat at the table, because I've already been invited to the King's banquet.

By establishing a foundation of grace, Paul is laying the foundation for the main application point of his letter: Get along! God saves us by grace and not works. **So why are we being more picky about what constitutes a “true believer” than God is?**

Look at his emphasis in the last five chapters of Romans:

“We who are many form one body.” (12:5)

“Live in harmony with one another.” (12:16)

“Live at peace with everyone” (12:18)

“Make every effort to do what leads to peace” (14:19)

“May God give you a spirit of unity” (15:5)

“Accept one another.” (15:7)

“Watch out for those who cause divisions.” (16:17)

And that’s just a sample!

When you are filled with the truth that “nothing can separate us from the love of God,” you become a person who is hard to offend and quick to forgive.

Loved people love people. So soak it in: You are loved. You are chosen. You are secure. You didn’t deserve it, but you got it anyway. Now go spread the same grace you have received to those all around you. Even if they don’t deserve it either.

Heavenly Father, as our study concludes, my heart is full of wonder. I rest in the fact that nothing in all creation can separate me from Your love. So help me not to separate from those you love, either. Lord, let my security in Christ be the soil where my relationships grow. Give me the strength to be a bridge-builder. Help me to live “fully alive” in loving unity today. Amen.



Endnotes

Day 2: “There are two types...” Paraphrased from Alistair Begg, sermon, “God's Revelation,” (Truth For Life, May 13, 2002), truthforlife.org

Day 3: “Remember the duck...” Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, 123–124

Day 5: “Here I felt...” Martin Luther, *Preface to Latin Writings*, 337.

Day 13: “They are looking for ...” Russell Moore, “This Easter, Let’s Lose Our Hope,” *Christianity Today*, March/April 2026

Day 17: See Max Lucado’s insights on God’s providence in *You’ll Get Through This* (Thomas Nelson, 2013). Lucado describes God as the Ultimate Chef who uses the “mess” of our circumstances—not just the good parts—to “train, test, and teach” us.

Day 18: Max Lucado, “God Has a Plan,” (blog), September 26, 2017, maxlucado.com/listen/god-has-a-plan/.

Day 21: “Micah Parsons of Dallas Cowboys reaches out to bullied special needs teen from Kern County” FOX26 NEWS, Michael Tellez, Sun, October 23, 2022

Day 31: For more on the idea that *Romans* was written as a call to unity, see Scot McKnight's book *Reading Romans Backwards*