

## HEIR MAIL: PAUL'S LETTER TO ROME

### Ch. 8

**S**aul is a trending Pharisee, a Turkish Jew, Roman citizen by birthright, an intellectual genius, law-schooled by Gamaliel, Israel's top rabbi. Convinced he has Jehovah's mandate, Saul launches a genocide to wipe out Jesus Christ's retinue.

**But GOD** interrupts, "Your name's now Paul, and you'll take My secret to the Gentiles." (Galatians 1:11-24) Referring to it as *my gospel*, the *secret* and the *mystery*, Paul's message supplants its works-oriented forerunners, asserting, "God saves us because we *trust* Him, not due to our *performance!*" (Romans 1:17)

About age 60 Paul arrives in Rome, is put under house arrest for preaching, is released, resumes preaching, rearrested, then beheaded by Nero. Alec Rowlands calls Paul "one of the most important intellectuals of all time ... a central figure at the confluence of Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian traditions and revelations."

Religious rituals are a minefield of guilt or pride. Since the cross, salvation is open to all by going direct to God. Unconcerned about offending, Paul asserts, "There's one God and only one, and one Priest/Mediator between God and us – Jesus Christ! (1 Timothy 2:5) Spiritual busywork and hierarchy pale beside free grace.

For 1,500 years Israel had tried to keep "the Law" but went pagan. **Victory over sin is impossible without being "born again."** We need what only God's Spirit can do, i.e., take us from being **spiritually dead in our sins** to being **alive in Christ**. (Romans 3:10-12) So God's Son became a man, lived a sinless life, fulfilled the law's every "jot and tittle" (*jot* is the Hebrew alphabet's smallest letter; *tittle* is a simple pen stroke) and took our place on the cross so that He might offer **forgiveness to all**. (Philippians 2:6-11; Titus 3:3-7)

Sure, our old nature still sins, yet God calls us forgiven, crediting Christ's perfection to our spiritual account. We may not always *feel* forgiven, **BUT GOD** says we *are*. (Galatians 5:16, 22-26)

**DISCUSS: Do God's adopted sons' sins have consequences?**

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**Romans 8:1-4**

**“ ... believers in Christ Jesus can no longer be condemned. ... 3 It's impossible to do what God's standards demand because of the weakness of our human nature. BUT GOD sent His Son to pay for sin. That way God condemned sin in our corrupt nature. 4 Therefore, we ... are able to meet God's standards.”**

In his *Gentle and Lowly*, Dana Ortlund writes, “... through the Spirit, **Christ Himself not only touches us but lives within us.** ... *Jesus Christ is closer to you today than He was to the sinners and sufferers He spoke with and touched in His earthly ministry.* Through His Spirit, Christ's own heart envelops His people with an embrace nearer and tighter than any physical embrace could ever achieve. His actions on earth in a body reflected His heart; **we are now His body.**”

**DISCUSS: what does it mean to be “in Christ?”**

**We want to hear Jesus say:**

**“I Paid Your Sin Debt, Trust Me.”**

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*Condemn* connotes utter *disapproval*. It's used for *sentencing* or to prove *guilt*. Hanging on that cross, He pleads with His Father for you and me, **“Forgive them!”** Did God answer His prayer?! **God forgave ALL sin** as your Advocate/Protector, **not your accuser/condemner.** Paul celebrates, shouting, “Blessed are they whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man **whose sin the Lord will never count against him.**” Or “Fortunate the person against whom **the Lord does not keep score.**” (Romans 4:7-8)

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**We also want to hear God say:**

**“I'm 'Always On' For You!”**

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**Romans 8:5-7**

**“<sup>5</sup> Those who live by the corrupt nature have the corrupt nature’s attitude. But those who live by the spiritual nature have the spiritual nature’s attitude. <sup>6</sup> The corrupt nature’s attitude leads to death. But the spiritual nature’s attitude leads to life and peace. <sup>7</sup> This is so because the corrupt nature has a hostile attitude toward God. It refuses to place itself under the authority of God’s standards because it can’t. <sup>8</sup> Those who are under the control of the corrupt nature can’t please God.”**

“Always on” is *infospeak* for a system that’s continuously available, plugged in to its power source. Even when you’re at a loss for words, God the Holy Spirit is in constant touch on your behalf with God the Father and God the Son. They’re speaking to us and through us.

**DISCUSS: What’s God saying to you? And through you?**

### **Romans 8:8-13**

**“<sup>8</sup> Those controlled by their corrupt nature can't please God. <sup>9</sup> But if God's Spirit lives in you, you’re controlled by your spiritual nature . . . <sup>11</sup> Does the Spirit of the One who brought Jesus back to life live in you? The One who brought Christ back to life will also make your mortal bodies alive by His Spirit who lives in you.” (2 Corinthians 15:12-19)**

### **Romans 8:14-17**

**“<sup>14</sup> All who are guided by God's Spirit are God's children. <sup>15</sup> You haven't received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead you’ve received the spirit of God's adopted children by which we call out, ‘Abba, Father!’ <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> ... God's heirs ... heirs together with Him.”**

In first century Rome a boy was adopted to perpetuate his adoptive father’s name and inherit the family estate. He was not inferior to his new siblings. Any rights he

had in his old family were replaced by rights in his new family. All previous debts, canceled. His past had no claims on him. Being *in Christ*, we now relate to the Father as Jesus does, i.e., as **heirs of God** and **joint heirs with Christ**. Our new state is not a product of **doing** but of **being accepted** into God's beloved family, **seated** at the Father's right hand with **free access** to all of His riches (2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 3:1-6).

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### **Romans 8:18-27**

**"18 I consider our present sufferings insignificant compared to the glory that will soon be revealed to us. 19 All creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal who His children are. ... 22... groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. 23 However, not only creation groans. We who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan inwardly. We groan as we eagerly wait for our adoption, the freeing of our bodies [from sin].**

The universe moans in a minor key: a howling wind, a loon's cry, longing for a conductor to create concerts out of chaos, *groaning* under sin that polluted a flawless Creation. These travails end when we swap our mortal bodies for new, immortal bodies like Christ's. (2 Corinthians 5:1-4) And God will restore our planet in a divine do-over! (Revelation 21:1-8).

### **DISCUSS: How do you get/stay atop your circumstances?**

**"24 We were saved with this hope. If we hope for something we already see, it's not hope. ... 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. 26 At the same time the Spirit also helps us in our weakness because we don't know how to pray for what we need. But the Spirit intercedes with our groans that cannot be expressed in words. 27 The One who searches hearts knows what the Spirit has in mind. The Spirit intercedes for God's people the way God wants Him to."**

### **DISCUSS: What's special about the Holy Spirit's prayers?**

We crave hearing ...

## “IT’S ALL GOOD”

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### Romans 8:28-29

“28 We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God -- those whom He has called according to His plan. 29 This is true because He already knew His people and had already appointed them to have the same form as the image of His Son.”

**God is not angry at you!** He loves you, wants only the best for you and, if your trust is in Him, uses everything for your benefit. Instead of terminal guilt, you can have unshakable confidence that your "Daddy" is *causing EVERYTHING* to work for good (Proverbs 20:24; Romans 11:36; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Genesis 50:20). He leaves nothing to chance in a believer's life.

Insisting that “It’s all good,” Paul draws from deep trust in God who’s seen him through beatings, imprisonment, stonings, shipwreck, calamities -- harrowing encounters that assure him that **God’s grace is all he needs**. (2 Corinthians 4:7-15)

God is the Potter; we’re His clay. His grip can cause pain or relief. We live in the intersection where our spirit (where God lives) clashes with our soul (where our mind, emotions and will are). We have hope and patience, knowing by experience that **God has everything under control**. (Psalm 16:5)

Ortlund returns: “...we don’t take Scripture seriously when it speaks of us as Christ’s body. Christ is the head; we are His own body parts. How does a head feel about His own flesh? Paul tells us: “He nourishes and cherishes it,” just as Christ does the church because we are members of His body.” (Ephesians 5:29-30) How do we care for a wounded body part? We nurse it, bandage it, protect it, give it time to heal. For that body part isn’t just a close friend; it’s part of us. So with Christ and believers, we are part of Him. This is why the risen Christ asks, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (*Acts 9:4*) Jesus is comforted when you draw from the riches of His atoning work because His own body is getting healed.

**DISCUSS: Because God lives IN you, what can you expect?**

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In the end we want to hear God say, “Let’s be ...

**TOGETHER! FOREVER!”**

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**Romans 8:31-39**

“31 If God is for us, who can be against us? ... 38 I’m convinced **nothing can ever separate us from God's love** which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces 39 or powers in the world above or in the world below or by anything else in creation.”

Now a word from our “Sponsor.” There's no "I **think** I’m a Christian.” You can be **certain**. (1 John 5:11-13) Are you? There’s no guarantee of a tomorrow to say “yes” to God. He forgave **all** your sin at the cross. Now you must **choose**. **God never condemns anyone to hell**. (John 3:36) Your VIP ticket for the Owner’s suite has been paid for. It’s waiting for you at Will Call. “All who *will call* on the name of the Lord will be saved!” (Romans 10:13)

**God is saying, “I paid your sin debt, trust Me. I’m ‘always on’ for you. It’s all good. Let’s be together forever!”**

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Let’s take 30 seconds of silence while you tell Him that as a sinner you need His saving grace, that you’re grateful for His supreme sacrifice, and that you’re inviting Him to be your Savior. Do that, then we’ll all add a hearty Amen!

**His Deal**

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[www.HisDeal.org](http://www.HisDeal.org)

[George@HisDeal.org](mailto:George@HisDeal.org)

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## **Romans 8:1-39**

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*“1 So those who are **believers in Christ Jesus can no longer be condemned.** 2 The standards of the Spirit, who gives life through Christ Jesus, have set you free from the standards of sin and death. 3 It’s impossible to do what God’s standards demand because of the weakness our human nature has. But God sent His Son to have a human nature as sinners have and to pay for sin. That way God condemned sin in our corrupt nature. 4 Therefore, we who do not live by our corrupt nature but **by our spiritual nature are able to meet God’s standards.***

*“5 Those who **live by the corrupt nature** have the corrupt nature’s attitude. But those who **live by the spiritual nature** have the spiritual nature’s attitude. 6 The corrupt nature’s attitude leads to death. But the spiritual nature’s attitude leads to life and peace. 7 This is because the corrupt nature has a hostile attitude toward God. It refuses to place itself under the authority of God’s standards because it can’t.*

*“8 Those who are under the control of the corrupt nature can’t please God. 9 But if God’s Spirit lives in you, you’re under the control of your **spiritual** nature, not your **corrupt** nature. Whoever doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ doesn’t belong to him. 10 However, if Christ lives in you, your body is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because you have God’s approval. 11 Does the Spirit of the One who brought Jesus back to life live in you? Then the One who brought Christ back to life will also make your mortal bodies alive by His Spirit who lives in you.*

*“12 So, brothers and sisters, **we have no obligation to live the way our corrupt nature wants us to live.** 13 If you live by your corrupt nature, you’ll die. But if you use your spiritual nature to put to death the evil activities of the body, you’ll live. 14 Certainly, **all who are guided by God’s Spirit are God’s children.** 15 You haven’t received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead, you’ve received the Spirit of **God’s adopted children** by which we call out, “Abba! Daddy!” 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that **we are God’s children.** 17 If we’re His children, **we’re also God’s heirs.** If we share in Christ’s suffering in order to share His glory, **we’re heirs together with Him.** 18 **I consider our present sufferings insignificant** compared to the glory that’ll soon be revealed to us. 19 **All creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal who His children are.** 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, but not by its own choice. The one who subjected it to frustration did so in the hope 21 that it would also be set free from slavery to decay in order to share the glorious freedom that the children of God will have. 22 All creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. 23 However, not only creation groans. We who have the Spirit as the first of God’s gifts also groan inwardly. **We groan and eagerly wait for our adoption, the freeing of our bodies [from***

sin]. 24 We were saved with this hope in mind. If we hope for something we already see, it's not really hope. Who hopes for what can be seen? 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. 26 At the same time the Spirit also helps us in our weakness because we don't know how to pray for what we need. But the Spirit intercedes along with our groans that cannot be expressed in words. 27 The One who searches our hearts knows what the Spirit has in mind. The Spirit intercedes for God's people the way God wants Him to. 28 We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God -- those whom He has called according to His plan. 29 This is true because He already knew His people and had already appointed them to have the same form as the image of His Son. Therefore, His Son is the firstborn among many children. 30 He also called those He had already appointed. He approved of those whom He had called, and He gave glory to those whom He had approved. 31 What can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 God didn't spare His own Son but handed Him over [to death] for all of us. So He will also give us everything along with Him. 33 Who will accuse those God has chosen? God approved of them. 34 Who will condemn them? Christ has died. More importantly, He was brought back to life. Christ has the highest position in heaven. Christ also intercedes for us. 35 What will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger or violent death separate us from His love? 36 Scripture says: 'We're being killed all day long because of you. We're thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.' The One who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties. 38 I'm convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can't be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces 39 or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation."