

Studies in Romans



Workbook Two

Chapters 6-8

This material has been created by Lynton Brocklehurst of the Navigators of NZ and is available to be used freely by you for personal use. However, if you wish to use any part of it in another publication we would ask that you seek permission. For this, contact Glen Morris: glen@navigator.org.nz

The Navigators of NZ is a non-profit (and non-denominational) organisation that aims to help people find Good News for their life through the story and life of Jesus. We try to help people connect their life and faith in practical ways, and in the process help them to live well and make a difference in their worlds.

The Navigators of NZ is also part of an international organisation - The Navigators – which is involved in over 100 countries around the world. If you'd like any more info on this, just make contact with us: info@navigator.org.nz.



How to use this workbook

This is the second workbook in this series. These studies are designed not only to help you come to grips with the amazing book of Romans but also to gradually introduce you to basic approaches and disciplines of bible study that will serve you for many years to come.

By now you will have discovered that the more you put into these studies the more you get out. You will also have discovered that the quality of your group discussion improves markedly when group members prepare well. Discussion can degenerate into a frustrating “share-your-ignorance” (or worse still, “share-your-confusion”) session when little preparation has been done. A bit of prior work brings a lot of clarity. As someone has said, “Inspiration is 95% perspiration”. So we encourage you to keep plugging away at preparation trusting God to give you real moments of insight and inspiration.

“Open my eyes, so that I may behold wonderful things out of Your Law.”

Psalm 119:18

We will continue to build our approach around the four basic components: -

- **Observation** – when we read a passage, we need to observe what it is saying, what the context is and what stands out to us.
- **Interpretation** –once we have observed, we need to try to discover what the passage means. We need to be able to understand accurately what the Bible is really saying, not what we think it is saying (or even worse, what we would like it to say!).
- **Devotional link** – as we engage with the Scriptures inspired by the God who made us, it will lead us to praise and worship Him. We will talk to Him about what we are reading.
- **Your response** – after all the above three steps, we need to respond – what is God saying to me through this? Is there anything I need to do, say or change in response? Studying the Bible with an open heart and mind will change us.....for the better! These studies are designed to help you first to understand the Bible then to worship God and apply the truth to your life.

A New Layout

You will see we have a new layout for the second workbook. Essentially this gives you the opportunity to keep the whole study open before you, without having to flip backwards and forwards through the pages. In particular it enables you to do the observation, interpretation and response steps simultaneously, verse by verse, which is a bit more logical. One possible downside to this is that you may run out of room. Because of this we have included a blank page at the end of each study.

Our prayer is that you will continue to enjoy and be helped by these studies.

Study Method Ideas

We have been developing our approach throughout the series. Here are some additional study method ideas.

Observations

- Ask the “**Detective**” **Questions** - Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Take note of the **emotional tone** of the chapter. What do you think Paul was feeling as he wrote these words? Underline words and phrases that seem to express strong emotion and identify the emotions involved.
- Read the passage from **different perspectives**. Read it from Paul’s perspective. Read it from a Roman’s/Jew’s/Greek’s perspective. You could even read it as a complete stranger who found the letter on the street. What do you notice?
- Take note of the **words** being used. Repeated words point to themes – find key verbs, nouns, adjectives (and their synonyms); Linking words reveal the logic of the chapter – if, but, because, therefore, then, so, also, etc.

Interpretation

- Come up with questions. For each question find at least one **cross-reference**. Find cross-references by recalling similar passages you have read before. Check your Bible’s cross-reference column and footnotes. Look up key words in the concordance at the back of your Bible or at www.Biblegateway.com, or use a bible software program like E-Sword. You may also find some good cross-references by skim reading the rest of Romans.
- **Summarize** the main thrust of the passage in one short paragraph. It may help to first write a single sentence capturing the content of each paragraph in the chapter.
- Develop an **Outline** for the passage. Break it into sections with a title for each section. Write sub points under each section title. Give the chapter an overall title. Try to keep the titles and sub points as succinct as possible. Outlining helps you identify the main ideas and see how they are connected.
- Find key passages that give important **background** information. It might be good to compare this letter with a letter that addresses similar themes, e.g. *Galatians*. What differences do you notice? How might the circumstances have been different? Check *Acts* for any background information.

Your Response

- Write out phrases, sentences or verses that seem particularly meaningful. Below write down any feelings, memories, relationships, issues or situations that come to mind.
- Ask these **questions**: Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? An error to avoid? An example to follow? A principle to apply?
- **Pray** your way through the passage. Read a sentence or two then stop and pray about whatever comes to mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to direct your heart and mind as you pray
- Having identified the truth that seems to be speaking to you, run through the following questions to help you locate a specific sphere of application:
- How should this truth affect my attitudes, behaviour, relationships, motives, values, priorities, character?
- How does it apply at home, at uni, in my social life, in my faith community, with my family, with my non-Christian friends?

Romans Chapter 6 (5:20 – 6:23)

The New Relationship to Sin

Paul has shown that all of us are guilty before God. All of us – even Abraham - are acquitted of guilt and reconciled to God only by the gracious gift of Jesus. We were united with Adam in his sin and death, but we can choose to become united with Christ in his righteousness and life. This free gift of grace, received only by faith, unearned by any obedience to God's Law, raises a serious problem for many people. It certainly doesn't seem right to ignore God's commands, do what we please, and claim righteousness before God based merely on faith in Jesus. But if sin doesn't subject us again to God's judgment, and if our sin serves to highlight how amazing God's grace is, then is sin basically a non-issue? Something we don't need to worry too much about in our daily experience? After all it's all covered, isn't it?

And what of the Law? Has it also become a non-issue? Does our freedom from the Law's penalties mean that we can ignore all moral standards?

Paul answer to these questions is a resounding "no!" He shows, on the contrary, a real understanding and experience of Jesus leads to **increased motivation and ability** to substantially overcome sin in our lives. Paul shows us what it really looks like to be "not under law, but under grace".

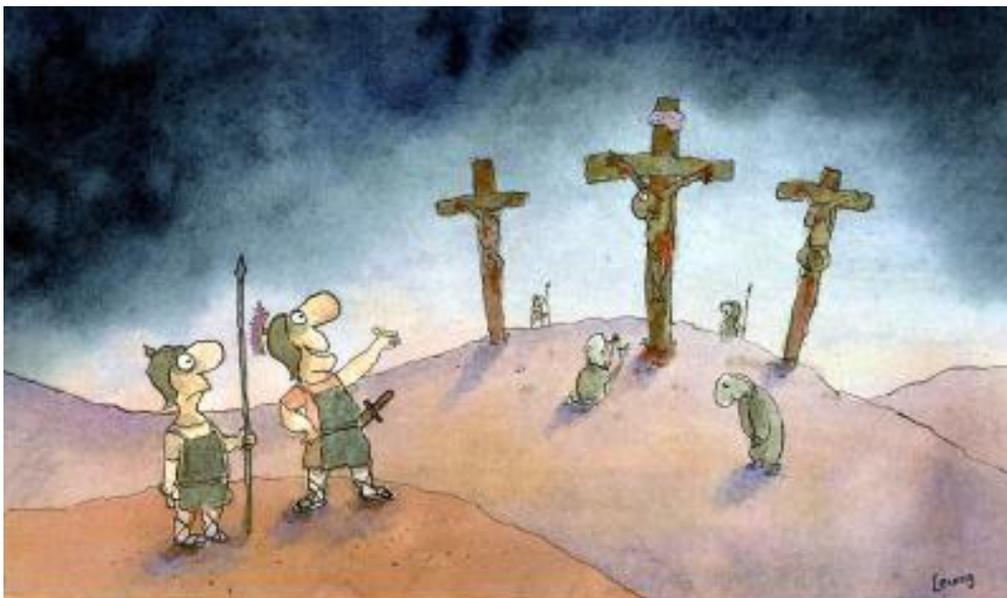
What to look for in this chapter

Now that we have been justified by faith and have a wonderful new relationship with God what changes can we expect with regard to sin? How should we think about sin? What is now possible in our daily experience with respect to freedom from sin?

The two big concepts to unpack are:

1. Death and Resurrection
2. Slavery and Freedom

God wants these two ideas to shape the way we **think about sin** in our heads and the way we **deal to sin** in our daily lives.



"Look at that! Brilliant! You kill the leader and you nip the whole movement in the bud."

Verse	Observation (What does it say) Note key words, key ideas, progressions of thought, etc. Note important facts about people, relationships, places, etc. What emotions are expressed? What action is urged?	Interpretation (What needs explanation) Note down any questions and problems, things that puzzle or bother you. Find cross-references that help, possible answers. What conclusions can be drawn?	Response (What does it say to me?) What does this passage stir in you -longings and desires? What issues, experiences, memories, situations, people come to mind? How could you respond? Is there an example to follow, error to avoid, action to take, attitude to change?

Background and other Useful thoughts	Outline and Conclusions
<p>An historical illustration “Take the case of the Negro slaves in America before emancipation. They were in a condition of slavery. Then there was the American Civil War and after that, the slaves were set free throughout the United States. But what actually happened? All slaves, young and old, were given their freedom, but many of the older ones who had endured long years of servitude found it very difficult to understand their new status. They heard the announcement that slavery was abolished and that they were free: but hundreds, not to say thousands of times in their lives and experiences many of them did not realize it, and when they saw their old master coming near them they began to quake and to tremble, and to wonder whether they were going to be sold. They were free, they were no longer slaves; the law had been changed, and their status and their position was entirely different; but it took them a very long time to realize it. You can still be a slave experientially, even when you are no longer one legally. You can be a slave in your feelings when actually in respect of your position you have been emancipated completely. So it is with the Christian.” From exposition of Romans Chapter 6 by Dr D.M. Lloyd-Jones.</p> <p>Meditating on the word means prayerfully thinking through what a verse means – a bit like chewing on some food! One way of meditating on a verse is to repeat the verse while emphasising different words. For example in Romans 6:12 you might say, “Therefore do not let sin reign”, “Therefore do not let sin reign”, “Therefore do not let sin reign”, “Therefore do not let sin reign”, “Therefore do not let sin reign” etc.. Each time, a different shade of meaning is suggested and can be really helpful in suggesting ways to respond to the passage.</p>	<p>Start off by dividing up the passage into paragraphs and giving each paragraph a title that sums up the content.</p> <p>As you do this, leave enough space under each title to write a short summary of the key thoughts in each paragraph.</p>
Devotional Link	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Counting yourself dead to sin means that our thinking about who we are and what we do is to be in line with the fact that we are no longer under the dominion or reign of sin. Most of us have areas in our lives where we find it hard to believe that we are dead to sin because sin feels very much alive to us. So we go on habitually sinning in these areas. However, the Scripture here teaches us clearly that this is not the case. Take some time to think about those areas in your life. Write some of them down. Pray over each of these areas and thank God that the reality is that you are dead to the dominion of that sin in your life. What are some ways you can actively reject the reign of sin in your life this week? What are some ways you can offer the parts of your body to righteousness this week? 	<p>Choose a section of verses that impact you most from this passage. Write them down.</p> <p>What is the context of these verses? What do the surrounding verses add to your understanding of your chosen passage? What are one or two key cross-references?</p> <p>Summarise in your own words what it is that this verse or group of verses is saying.</p> <p>Read over the verses again prayerfully and as you do so, ask God to clarify to you what He is saying through them. Write down the thoughts that come to mind as you dwell upon these verses</p>

Useful questions for the group

1. If someone said, "I don't want to be a Christian because I want to be free to do what I want", how would Paul respond?
2. All Christians know they should not sin. Why then do we find it so hard to obey God?
3. Can you think of a modern image (in music, sports, art, etc) that illustrates Paul's point that submission to a good "master" leads to freedom?
4. What can we do when we hear voices from our former life (in sin) and feel more alive to sin than to God?
5. What will it look like practically for your group to be slaves to righteousness?

A Personal question

What is the one thing you most want to consider buried with Christ for ever?

Romans Chapter 7

The New Relationship to the Law

In this chapter Paul outlines the believer's radically altered relationship to the Law, and then unpacks the way the Law functions in the life of an individual on an experiential level. In particular he describes how we get into a right mess if we try to live up to the law by relying on personal will-power and human effort.

One of the fascinating sections in this chapter is verses 14-25. There has been an extended debate amongst scholars regarding the excruciating struggle Paul describes here. Does it belong to Paul's previous experience as a religious Jew? Or is he describing his current experience as a Christian?

Whatever we conclude about this, one thing is sure – when we become Believers we do not lose our susceptibility, even propensity, to sin. We have a choice. A daily choice. It is as though we have two modes of operating or spheres of living open to us. We can choose either to live under the old arrangement of self-effort and selfishness and give into sin, or we can choose to operate out of our new identity and resources as a child of God and “bear fruit for God” (7:4)

Our sinful nature is definitely not removed by conversion. Thankfully we will be wonderfully free of the old nature in heaven but, for now, it's an all-too-present reality. The good news is that we have been given a wonderful new nature that is alive to God. So a tension is set up between the residual old nature and the new nature. Between the old arrangement and the new arrangement. A battle is going on.

Prior to conversion we were in a different battle. Essentially we were in rebellion against God (Romans 1:18-32). Now our inner battle is against sin.

One of the key ideas developed in this chapter is the utter futility of trying to get free from sin by means of Law-keeping. It simply doesn't work. It didn't work when Paul was a religious Jew and it didn't work for Paul as a believer in Christ, and it won't work for us as followers of Jesus in the 21st Century. In developing this idea Paul is laying the foundation for understanding what **does work** in Chapter 8.

As you study this chapter keep in mind that to **struggle** with sin is a normal part of Christian experience, to be **controlled** and defeated by sin is not.



Verse	Observation (What does it say) Note key words, key ideas, progressions of thought, etc. Note important facts about people, relationships, places, etc. What emotions are expressed? What action is urged?	Interpretation (What needs explanation) Note down any questions and problems, things that puzzle or bother you. Find cross-references that help, possible answers. What conclusions can be drawn?	Response (What does it say to me?) What does this passage stir in you -longings and desires? What issues, experiences, memories, situations, people come to mind? How could you respond? Is there an example to follow, error to avoid, action to take, attitude to change?

Background and other Useful thoughts	Outline and Conclusions
<p>Many commentators have thought that 7:14-25 describes Paul's struggle with sin at the time he was writing the passage, because he uses present-tense verbs. However, diatribe style, which Paul uses in much of Romans, was graphic in its images, and Paul in the context has been describing his past life under Law (7:7-13). Thus it is more likely that Paul contrasts the spiritual worthlessness of religious introspection and self-centeredness (count the "I's" and "me's") in Rom 7 with the life of the Spirit by grace in Rom 6 and 8.</p> <p>7:15-22. Philosophers spoke of an internal conflict between the reason and the passions; Jewish teachers spoke of a conflict between good and evil impulses. Either could identify with Paul's contrast between his mind or reason — knowing what was right — and his members in which passions or evil impulses worked.</p> <p>Jewish teachers said that repentance and learning the Law were the only present cures for evil impulses; here Paul replies that knowing moral truth had not freed him from sin. But Judaism also believed that in the day of judgment evil impulses would be eradicated. As some rabbis later put it, "God will take the evil impulse out in the sight of the nations and slay it"; or as Paul put it, Christians are dead to sin and freed from its power (chap. 6). Paul's point in the context is that one must receive righteousness (including the power to live rightly) as a gift of God's grace, not as an achievement by human effort (cf. 1:17; 8:4). (This reading of the passage accords with most Greek, as against most Latin, church fathers.)</p>	<p>Start off by dividing up the passage into paragraphs and giving each paragraph a title that sums up the content.</p> <p>As you do this, leave enough space under each title to write a short summary of the key thoughts in each paragraph.</p>
Devotional Link	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you feel more married to the living Christ, or to some religious code? Explain the difference? 2. In your life what would "fruit to God" look like? Fruit for death? (verse 4) 3. Think of a recent time when you had to struggle against temptation to sin. What was the experience like? 4. What light does Romans 7 throw on how to think about and approach these battles? How have you experienced Christ rescuing you from sin? 	<p>Choose a section of verses that impact you most from this passage. Write them down.</p> <p>What is the context of these verses? What do the surrounding verses add to your understanding of your chosen passage? What are one or two key cross-references?</p> <p>Summarise in your own words what it is that this verse or group of verses is saying.</p> <p>Read over the verses again prayerfully and as you do so, ask God to clarify to you what He is saying through them. Write down the thoughts that come to mind as you dwell upon these verses</p>

Useful questions for the group

1. What should our expectations be regarding sin in our Christian lives?
2. A young Christian writes to you in distress: "I thought I was a Christian, but I'm not sure any more. Over the weekend I saw some old friends and before I knew it, I was back into all my old habits'. Someone has told me that my faith was obviously not real. I don't know what to think. Please Help!" How would you reply?
3. What would be the differences between taking a "law" approach to sin and taking a "grace" approach to sin?
4. How can you help each other in your group as you battle with the reality of Romans 7?

A Personal Question

Think of examples of ways in which you have experienced the Law revealing your sin to you.

Romans Chapter 8, Verses 1-17

The New relationship with the Spirit

In the first half of chapter 8 Paul contrasts the two fundamentally different ways people live. People either live for God and in dependence on God; or they live their lives relying on their own resources, with God out of the picture.

The good news is that the believer has now entered into the God-centred life where there is no condemnation!

This chapter shouts out loud and clear that it is the **Holy Spirit** that makes this God-centred life a reality. He is the crucial presence in our lives enabling us to live as justified people, fully aware of our new identity and relationship with God. In particular, his presence and influence enables us to win the battle against sin described in Chapter 7. With the Holy Spirit's help the believer can now confidently go to war against sin knowing he has the power to overcome. But the Holy Spirit does much more than deal to the negative, he renews us from the inside out. He gives us a whole new set of desires and motivations. Increasingly we can confidently and powerfully enter into the life of love, hope and faith

What to look for in this chapter

It is a study in **contrasts**, two fundamentally different ways to live. Find out as many points of difference as you can.

It is also a study of the **Holy Spirit**. How much can you learn about the Holy Spirit? Who is he? What is he like? What does he do?



Verse	Observation (What does it say) Note key words, key ideas, progressions of thought, etc. Note important facts about people, relationships, places, etc. What emotions are expressed? What action is urged?	Interpretation (What needs explanation) Note down any questions and problems, things that puzzle or bother you. Find cross-references that help, possible answers. What conclusions can be drawn?	Response (What does it say to me?) What does this passage stir in you -longings and desires? What issues, experiences, memories, situations, people come to mind? How could you respond? Is there an example to follow, error to avoid, action to take, attitude to change?

Background and other Useful thoughts	Outline and Conclusions
<p>“Cross-referencing” is a way of understanding a passage more deeply by seeing what other areas of the Bible have to say on the same subject. Although the Bible is actually 66 different books, there is a unity in the whole. It is all “God-breathed and useful” (2 Tim 3:16). Thus, the best way to interpret Scripture is with other Scriptures, gaining a more complete picture of the issue raised. It may shed new light on a difficult passage. It may correct any wrong interpretations you may make.</p> <p>So, how do you find out where these cross references are? Firstly, it really helps to read the whole of the Bible. Secondly, try using a concordance. This is a book that alphabetically lists the occurrence of words in the Bible and where they can be found. Many Bibles now have cross references printed in the centre margin – a great investment if you want to go deeper. Finally, there are Bible study tools available online at www.biblegateway.com or www.e-sword.com.</p> <p>An exercise In the interpretation column on the left how many helpful cross references can you find?</p> <p>Sinful Nature – translation of “Flesh” (Greek “<i>sarc</i>”) The NIV translation “sinful nature” can be misleading, because some people today think of spirit and flesh as two natures within a person, whereas “Spirit” here is God’s Spirit — it is not a special part of a person but the power of God’s presence. A life ruled by the flesh is a life dependent on finite human effort and resources, a selfish life as opposed to one directed by God’s Spirit. Paul’s use of “flesh” and “Spirit” refers to two spheres of existence — in Adam or in Christ — not to two natures in a person.</p> <p>Heirs In Roman society, adopted children enjoyed exactly the same privileges as the natural children of the family. Paul here gives us the remarkable assurance that the same will be true in God’s family.</p>	<p>Start off by dividing up the passage into paragraphs and giving each paragraph a title that sums up the content.</p> <p>As you do this, leave enough space under each title to write a short summary of the key thoughts in each paragraph.</p>
Devotional Link	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take some time to think of all the things for which you have felt condemned and guilty in your life. Perhaps you have done things you regret. Perhaps there are things you ought to have done but have not. Maybe you just feel that you aren’t good enough – how could anyone really love you? Romans 8:1 assures you that there is now no condemnation if you are in Christ Jesus. Take some time to pray over the areas where you feel guilt or condemnation and praise and thank God for taking that guilt and condemnation away. 2. Can you right now identify some things that the Spirit within you desires? 3. Can you right now identify some things that your sinful nature desires? 4. How do you feel about the fact that you can call God “Father” or “Daddy”? Think about the best example of human parenthood you know. Think of what it is like for the children of that parent to approach him or her. How does this make you feel about approaching God who is your perfect father? 	<p>Choose a section of verses that impact you most from this passage. Write them down.</p> <p>What is the context of these verses? What do the surrounding verses add to your understanding of your chosen passage? What are one or two key cross-references?</p> <p>Summarise in your own words what it is that this verse or group of verses is saying.</p> <p>Read over the verses again prayerfully and as you do so, ask God to clarify to you what He is saying through them. Write down the thoughts that come to mind as you dwell upon these verses</p>

Useful questions for the group

1. What are the hallmarks of those who 'live according to the sinful nature'? What is their mindset? What is their relationship to God?
2. What are the hallmarks of those who 'live according to the Spirit'? What is their mindset? What is their relationship to God?
3. How is "putting to death the misdeeds of the body" different to trying to keep the Law by force of effort alone? (7:6; 8:2-4, 6, 13)
4. What does it look like in real life to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" by the Spirit (13)?
5. Discuss the implications of having your mind set on what the Spirit desires.
6. What are the implications of verse 9?

A personal Question

How would your life look different if you were free from fear and condemnation?

Romans Chapter 8, Verses 18-38

Study 4

A New Future

Having looked at the wonderful things the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the lives of the individual believer Paul now turns to the 'big picture'. He locates us in God's great plan for creation and talks about the present implications for us.

As we have discovered in the last few chapters our situation has radically changed since we became believers in Jesus. Because we died and have been raised again spiritually in Christ, the Law cannot condemn us any more. The Holy Spirit has come into our lives and we have become fully fledged members of God's family. Within us, the Holy Spirit fires us up to ruthlessly cut out sin from our lives, and he constantly pours the Father's love into the very core of our being. (These two things go together. It is because of the new love we have for our Father that we are motivated to kill the sin which is contrary to his nature). So we begin to live in the new way of the Spirit with wonderful new inner resources at our disposal and new possibilities open to us. What then can we expect?

Well, in this chapter, Paul doesn't go on to paint a picture of a care-free, easy Christian life of pleasure and contentment. He talks about suffering! Now, we already know that in some respects our new lives become harder and we can expect to suffer physically and emotionally because of our faith, but here Paul begins to talk about a more general kind of suffering. Suffering that is a consequence of living in a fallen world. The point is, that having tasted the new life of the Spirit, we will realise even more acutely that this world is not our home. We will have a longing for heaven and a growing desire to be completely free from all the effects of sin.

This is the "now-not-yet" idea. Believers feel a tension between what they experience "now" in the present and what they are looking forward to in the "not yet", and the whole of creation shares in this phenomenon. Is this as good as it gets? No. The best is yet to be. It will happen, but we have to wait. In the meantime Paul gives us the great assurance that, even though we suffer, no trials in the present can hinder God's purposes for us.



Some thoughts on our approach to Bible study.

We are beginning to develop a pattern for approaching the interpretation of a passage (i.e. understanding accurately what it is saying). Firstly, we are dividing the passage up into **paragraphs** and giving those paragraphs a **title and summary**. This helps us to get an overview of the passage and a grasp of the "big picture".

Then we are focusing in more narrowly on one verse or a group of verses that really speak to us. We are seeking to think over the meaning of these verses and write down some of our thoughts about them. This "written meditation" or **prayerful reflection** helps us to dig deeper into the passage. Of course, you don't just have to do that for a few verses in every passage – ideally you will do it for the whole passage! However, we all must learn to walk before we run!!

In addition to all this, you are beginning to learn ways of taking your study deeper by looking more carefully at the immediate **context** of key verses and by looking at **cross references** in other parts of the Bible.

Also, in the "Background and Useful Thoughts Column: we have also introduced you to another way of enriching your Bible study, for example, by looking at specific **key words** to understand better their original meaning.

Verse	Observation (What does it say) Note key words, key ideas, progressions of thought, etc. Note important facts about people, relationships, places, etc. What emotions are expressed? What action is urged?	Interpretation (What needs explanation) Note down any questions and problems, things that puzzle or bother you. Find cross-references that help, possible answers. What conclusions can be drawn?	Response (What does it say to me?) What does this passage stir in you -longings and desires? What issues, experiences, memories, situations, people come to mind? How could you respond? Is there an example to follow, error to avoid, action to take, attitude to change?

Background and other Useful thoughts	Outline and Conclusions
<p>Predestined, called, justified?..... God has already predestined, called and justified us. There is only one piece missing - we have to patiently wait for that perfect relationship with God in Heaven – when He glorifies us. We have to put our faith in the hope that he will do this, and thus fulfil the last intense yearning of our hearts. Meantime we live in expectation with the assurance that God will do what He has promised. Romans 8 hammers this point home.</p> <p>First Fruits 8:23-25. "First fruits" was the actual beginning, the first installment, of the Palestinian harvest (Lev 23:10); the presence of the *Spirit in believers is thus the actual beginning of the future world. Believers had experienced redemption (Ro 3:24) and adoption (8:15), but still awaited the fullness of that experience at the *resurrection of their bodies by the Spirit (8:11).</p> <p>Spirit himself 8:26. Judaism usually viewed the *Spirit as an expression of God's power rather than as a personal being; like John (chaps. John :14-16), Paul views the Spirit as a personal being (cf. 2Co 13:14).</p>	<p>Start off by dividing up the passage into paragraphs and giving each paragraph a title that sums up the content.</p> <p>As you do this, leave enough space under each title to write a short summary of the key thoughts in each paragraph.</p>
Devotional Link	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think much about heaven? Can you imagine what it will be like to be where everything is as it should be? Think about it for a while and ask God to give you more of a longing for heaven – after all, we are already citizens there (Phil 3:20). Read Revelation 21:1-6 for a description of what we are looking forward to. You may want to spend some time praising God for the day when He will take away all pain, tears or death. 2. Can you think of a recent situation when you were aware of the Spirit doing in you what 8:26-27 describes? 3. What things are there in your life that seem to threaten to separate you from the love of Christ (or at least your experience of it)? The end of Romans 8 shows us clearly the reality that, if we recognise our need for Christ, and have asked Him to rescue us from our own rebellion, then there is nothing that can separate us from the Lord's love. Read over these verses as you get up and as you lie down each day this week. Praise and thank God for the truth they contain. 	<p>Choose a section of verses that impact you most from this passage. Write them down.</p> <p>What is the context of these verses? What do the surrounding verses add to your understanding of your chosen passage? What are one or two key cross-references?</p> <p>Summarise in your own words what it is that this verse or group of verses is saying.</p> <p>Read over the verses again prayerfully and as you do so, ask God to clarify to you what He is saying through them. Write down the thoughts that come to mind as you dwell upon these verses.</p>

Useful questions for the group

1. What do we learn about our environment? Its present and future state?
2. How does Paul picture our present experience as we await for our ultimate liberation?
3. What suffering is common to all human beings, and what suffering is unique to believers?
4. What help do believers receive from the Holy Spirit with all this, and what are some of the tell-tale signs of the Holy Spirit's inner presence?
5. What difference do you think our future hope should make to the way we live in the present?

A Personal question

How does God really work all things together for good? What evidence do you see of this in your life?

