

Romans #17 - Life in the Spirit New Future

- It's gonna be fun. We're in Romans chapter eight. If you've got your Bible go to Romans chapter eight. Here's the big idea, our planet's broken, amen. Anybody agree with me? Have you seen the planet? There's nowhere you can go that's not broken. There's no one you can meet that's not broken. Everything's a total disaster. All right, I'm gonna close in prayer and send you home. Thanks for coming. There's no hope. No, actually, the Bible is the only thing that tells us what's wrong and who's gonna make it right. And the Bible says that when God was done with our world, it was good. When He was done making our first parents, Adam and Eve, everything was very good. Now something has gone wrong and very wrong, because, well, you've done some things that are bad and very bad. And sin alone, it explains the problem that we have as a planet. It's the reason why there is death. It's the reason why there are what we would call natural disasters. It's the reason why there is suffering and grief and conflict and poverty and hatred and animosity. And, ultimately, apart from the Bible, there is no understanding of the problem. And there is no hope for a solution. So before we jump into Romans 8, let me give you the summary of options for what is wrong and how we should respond with our broken planet. So let me summarize a lot of philosophy here. And this is called the problem of evil or the question is why is there evil and suffering? Some would say, "Well, the reason that the world is so broken is that there is no God." So there's nobody gonna help us, there's nobody who's gonna come to rescue us. We're just left to ourselves. Atheism leads to, ultimately, suicide. There are actually two steps to atheism. The first is punk rock. You start as an atheist and then you become punk rock. You get Converse sneakers, cigarettes, tattoos and you write terrible songs about your father while you're drunk, okay? So that's step one of atheism. Step two is suicide. Eventually, if there is no God, there is no hope, help and healing. When life gets too hard, you just end it. So the logical conclusion of atheism, in many atheists, is suicide. Not hopeful or helpful. The second option is that God is not all-powerful. This is called finite godism. It is God does exist and He is good, and He looks at the world and He's like, "I wish I could do something but I just lack the authority or the power to act." That's not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is powerful, He's not powerless. That ultimately we worship a God who is bigger than all of our pains, problems and perils. And He's bigger than our planet. The third option is that God is not all-knowing. This is called evolutionary godism, and some churches will teach this heresy called open theism. And that's that God is like us. He doesn't know what's gonna happen, and He's just as shocked as we are. And He's trying to figure it out and respond. He's in it with us, but He's not over it for us. If this were true, prophecy would make no sense. At the point of its writing, 25% of the Bible is prophetic in nature because God knows and rules the future. God is not shocked by anything that happened. God knows everyone in totality and knows everything totally. The other option is that God is not all-good. This is the view of pantheism or panentheism, where all that is creation is God or God is in all of creation. This is the philosophy that is under "Star Wars" and "Hakuna Matata," the circle of life. This is also the yin and the yang. God is dark and light, good and evil. This is the philosophy of "Avatar." Did you watch that movie? I hated it because I was rooting for the marine, so I'm always rooting for the marines. In addition, some would say that there is no suffering and evil.

What you would perceive as injustice or evil is just your cultural bias and perspective. And then there is Christianity that God is good, God is powerful, God is above and over history and creation, but He's not done yet, so patiently live by faith, not by sight. It's kind of like a sporting event. In the middle of the competition, people will start to try and anticipate or predict the end. But the truth is the game ain't over till it's over. There could always be a shocking comeback, a surprising ending, and that is the story of human history. That all looks as if it is lost until the Lord Jesus returns, and then all that is wrong is made right. And ultimately, this is the hope of the believer, that the problem is down here and the hope is up there. And until our King arrives, our problem continues. And so this then establishes for us the heart of Romans 8. And we look at, first, the source of the problem, the pain that we then experience in the present, and the hope for the future. But we will begin with the fact that yesterday we ruined the world. Romans 8:18 through 21. And if you're new, we're going through the book of Romans. We're gonna finish it up sometime, maybe before Jesus comes back. It depends on what His date is. He says this, "For I consider that the sufferings." Now, here's what he's saying, "Life is hard and painful. You don't need to say I'm doing fine and everything's fine, 'cause it's not fine, there's real suffering." Some of you, it's emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, relational, financial. We've all got something in which we are suffering. "Of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." It's bad now, but when God is done, you will see that it is all worth it. "For the creation, all that God made, waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." That is you raised from the dead when God is done with you. "For the creation was subjected to futility." This is our cursed, fallen, broken planet. Imagine how amazing it's gonna be when God's actually fixed it. I mean the Grand Canyon, the Rocks of Sedona, the great sunsets. You're seeing the broken, flawed, frustrated, futile version of their glory. "And hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." And what he says is yesterday, yesterday, in the past, we ruined the world. So let me just make a few observations. Number one, God is better than we think and we are worse than we think. Before you can make sense of anything, the first two things that you need to understand rightly is who God is and who you are. God is good, we are bad. God is right, we are wrong. God is better than we think and we are worse than we think. We tend to think that God's not that good. So we judge Him or we have an opinion regarding Him or a critique of Him. And we think that we're better than we are. I'm pretty good person, I'm not that bad, I've not done anything too bad. Human sin is so pernicious that it has caused all of creation to be under a curse and every human being to taste death. That must mean that what we have done is a far bigger deal than we think it is, and God is a far more holy God, than we would conceive of Him to be. That if everyone has to die and everything needs to be cursed, then what we have done must be cosmic treason. So the problem behind all of our problems is the sin problem. And until we deal with the sin problem, we are incapable of dealing with any other problem. And many of us wish God would just get rid of all the sin. Well, the problem is it's in us. God could get rid of all the sin and to do that, He would get rid of all the sinners. But He loves us. So He is patiently working throughout history to remove the sin from us so that He could destroy the sin but He could save the sinner. This is the complex job that God has assigned Himself in love out of grace. Number two, everything flows down from leadership. Here's his echoing in Romans 8, of Romans 5:12 through 21, where it says that

everyone is either under Adam or under Jesus Christ, and that everything flows down from leadership. We are born into Adam, we're born again in Jesus Christ. If you are born in Adam, you are under the curse. And if you're born again in Jesus Christ, He has conquered the curse. And the point is this, that we're not independent, autonomous individuals. This is one of the most powerful and pernicious myths that has invaded all of Western thinking. I'm an independent, autonomous person. I make my own choices and my choices don't affect anyone. We know that's not true. That's the decisions that we make affect generations and legacies. CEOs of companies, they make decisions that determine the wellbeing of their employees and their customers. The political leaders make decisions that absolutely implicate citizens. And that as a spiritual leader and the human head of this church family, the decisions I make are either gonna help you or hurt you. That all of us are making decisions. And those decisions that we make, particularly those of us who are in leadership, it affects everyone, it affects everything. Number three, suffering is the path to glory. He tells us, and he will continue this theme that we were made in glory and will be remade in glory, and in the middle there is suffering. That we're in the time between the times. And he says that we are suffering. And what he is telling us is that glory is behind us and glory is in front of us. And that suffering is in the middle between the times. So you need to know that this is as close to hell, if you are a Christian, this is as close to hell as you will ever be. And what Winston Churchill once famously said was, "When you're going through hell, keep going. The glory is behind you, the glory is before you. And that suffering is the path to glory." In addition, point number four, Jesus' first coming was for us, Jesus' second coming is for everything else. Here, it's talking about all of creation is groaning. Creation is waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ. He came the first time in humility, He's coming the second time in glory. He came the first time to save us, He's coming the second time to save everything, because all belongs to Him as Creator. Number five, the agenda of radical environmentalists is fatally and fundamentally flawed because it lacks faith.

- [Congregant] Amen, brother.

- Okay? One guy doesn't recycle, okay, let me unpack this. What happens is it says here that creation was subjected to futility, decay and the curse. What that means is it's winding down and dying. We call this the second law of thermodynamics. Those who look at our planet and see it in peril will conclude we are running out of resources, just like our body is in a death cycle, our planet that also houses us is in a death cycle. They will look at these facts and say, "Oh my goodness, we're going to run out of resources." That's true, but not before Jesus returns. That ultimately the check engine light is on for planet earth. And that ultimately the Lord Jesus will return. And the Bible says that heaven and earth will come together. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth. And that the former things will pass away. What that means is just like your resurrected body, you will get a resurrected planet that will be made entirely new with fresh resources provided solely by God Himself. Now, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't care for creation, we should. It doesn't mean we shouldn't be good stewards of the planet that God has given us, because it is a gift for us to be stewarded. But it does mean that human life is over plant life, that human life is over animal life, and that human flourishing is the highest value because Jesus came as a man. He didn't come as an animal or a plant. He has particular

dignity and value and worth for those of us who bear His image and likeness. Lastly, futility is promised for every human effort to fix the sin problem that plagues the planet. He says, "It's all subjected to futility." And here's what we have learned. That's true. How many of us right now, we look at the whole planet and it seems like total futility. Wars didn't work, taxes didn't work, elections don't work, amen? Ultimately, nothing works. And the evolutionists will tell us we're good and it's getting better. We need to drug test everyone who still believes that. We're not good and it's not getting better. We're bad and it's getting worse. And if you don't believe that, you are not paying attention. It is futility, philosophy is futility, religion is futility, politics is futility. It does not matter how many checks we write, how many stimulus packages we vote for. It doesn't matter how many masks we wear or how many vaccines we take, we're all gonna die. We're gonna die with debt, a needle in our arm, a bonus check in our wallet, and a mask on our face. And I'm not saying those things don't matter. But if your hope is in those things, you should be hopeless. That we have a problem that is bigger than any potential human solution. It's futility to think that we, who are the problem, can architect the solution. All right, now I'm gonna close in prayer and you go home. Today, it's a little rough being on planet earth. The Bible is the most honest book ever written. It actually makes sense of reality. He goes on then to tell us that today we rue, or we hate, we're frustrated with, the world. Romans 8:22 through 27, "For we know." There's some things that God wants us to know, and to bank on those promises. That the whole creation... Is it true that there's nowhere you can go on planet earth today to escape the curse? How many of you have been on vacation, looking for that corner of the planet that the curse has not reached? So you sit on the beach and you get stung by a bee and you get a sunburn. It doesn't matter where you go, the curse is still there. "The whole creation has been groaning," that's gonna be our keyword for this segment, "together in the pains of childbirth until now, and not only the creation but we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit," that's the Holy Spirit, "groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Boy, I tell you, once you know the Lord Jesus and you get a glimpse of resurrection and eternal life, you're just like, "Man, I wanna get there soon." I woke up this morning, I'm not gonna lie. The alarm went off, I prayed for Jesus to come back and I hit snooze. It's like, Jesus, if you don't come back, I'll get up, but if you wanna come back, that's fine. "For in this hope we were saved." We're gonna talk about being saved. You may not know this, you're saved from God. Not just a low self-image, that's the least of your worries. "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? For if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." How many of you on planet earth right now are struggling a little bit with patience? This last year was a long millennium. That's what I'm saying, it felt like it went forever. "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses because we have them. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints." That's you, the holy ones, the children of God. "According to the will of God." He's talking here about groaning. So we're all feeling it. So on the count of three, I'll just give you a moment to just agree with the scriptures and groan. And I know when I'm preaching you wanna do this anyway, so let's just do this, okay? On the count of three. One, two, three. I win, okay. We've all had that day, right? We've all had those moments. You don't even know what to say. We groan when we're in pain. Some of you, you struggle with chronic pain, and you just groan.

When the kids were little and they were sick and they'd have the flu, I'd go in and check on them and what would particularly break my heart is when they would be groaning in their sleep because of the pain. They were sick, ah, ah. You could hear them whimper. Sometimes we groan because we're just exhausted. Have you ever been so tired, you're just like, "Ah, I can't even go anymore. I can't do anymore, I can't handle anymore. I can't endure anymore. I just can't, I can't, I just can't." And sometimes we groan because we're just so frustrated. Just so frustrated. Groaning is something that the whole of creation is doing. That the Creator made the creation and somehow He has this supernatural and special relationship where creation is groaning. It's like, "Lord, You made us in glory and now we're subjected to futility because of human sin. And Lord, we know that Jesus is coming back. And when do we get deliverance? When do we get to shine forth in full glory?" He says, "Not only is creation groaning, we ourselves are groaning inwardly." Sometimes we groan with our mouths, but oftentimes we groan with our soul. And others can hear the groaning of our mouth, but God hears the groaning of your soul. Your soul is so sick of being in a broken world. Your soul is so sick of being in a decaying body. Your soul is so sick of being surrounded with demonic deception. Your soul just gets wary. Some of you are tired and you don't know why, it's because you're tired at the level of the soul. It's a weariness. And there are times when the feelings are deeper than the words could possibly articulate. As a pastor, you get to be there for the most sacred moments of people's lives, right? Your mom died, your dad died. How are you feeling? Oh, I don't even know what to say. We miscarried. How are you feeling? I don't even have words. They filed for divorce. How are you feeling? I can't even express to you what I'm feeling. There are times that the soul is in a burdensome, grieving process that is so profound and deep that the Spirit of God needs to come in and interpret the feelings and the longings and then articulate those in prayer by interceding for us. That's the good news, He does that. The Holy Spirit knows what you're feeling. He knows what you're thinking. He knows what burdens you carry, and He comes to lift them for you. And the truth is, friend, there are going to be seasons, times and circumstances in this life that the burdens are gonna be too much for you to carry. They just are. And it doesn't matter how strong you are, we've all got a limit. Just like a, just like a truck, every human being has got a load capacity, and eventually we all find it. And what he's saying here is that the Holy Spirit comes to lift those burdens. And we now live in a day when if people don't know how to transfer those burdens to God, the Holy Spirit in prayer, to have Him carry the weight that would crush them, what oftentimes happens is that people then will take their burdens and they dump them on everyone else. I can't handle this, so you figure it out. We dump our burdens on others, or we self-medicate and we self-destruct. We can't handle anymore. So rather than going to the Holy Spirit, we go to the bottle, we go to the pornography, we go to the marijuana. This is why we keep legalizing things. It's like, you know what? People are breaking and they need to, they need some help. They do, His name is the Holy Spirit. They need His help. They need God's help. And so, what you and I need to do is as we walk through the brokenness of this world and we carry the burdens of this life, it is a great gift that God gives the child of God that the unbeliever does not have access to, and that is the internal power of the Holy Spirit. Because in addition to what is going on out there, there is the Spirit of God at work in here. And he can keep us healthy, even if everything else is unhealthy. And he can help us to unburden, even if everything seems to be burdening us. Here's what I want you to know, you can be healthy. You,

you can make it through this world in a way that no one else can, if they do not have the Spirit of God. That He who is in you is greater than he who is in this world. And he's talking here about connecting with the Holy Spirit in prayer to unburden. He says that creation groans. He says that we groan with pains and weakness and patience, and that the spirit intercedes for us. Let me say what this verse is, this verse is a sniper shot to cheerful Christians. How many of you have been told that if you're Christian, you should be happy. You should be cheerful. You should be joyful. Come on, when God closes a door, He opens a window. It's in first and second nonsense. It's right there. And then they'll miss misquote verses. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Thank you, Ned Flanders, for all of the out-of-context Bible verses. I got a few myself. Ecclesiastes, a sad face is good for the heart. I got a whole book called Lamentations. That's a really sad guy. The Bible says that we need to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Jesus sometimes rejoiced and sometimes wept. You have the right to a full expression of human emotion in the Spirit. And here it's talking about groaning. It's okay to have a bad day because some days are bad. It's okay to not know what to say, 'cause some days you don't know what to say. And what he's using here is this analogy of childbirth. Now let me tell you, I've never had a baby. I've had symptoms, weight gain, water retention, moodiness, heartburn, but no baby. So I'm gonna need the moms in the room to help us here, okay? So let's talk about the first trimester. Ladies, tell us what that is like. I heard yuck. Vomiting, tired, exhausted, okay? Emotional, nauseous. These are all the symptoms, before the conception, just living with the husband, okay? So these just start before the pregnancy. And then when the pregnancy happens, they go next level. First trimester, you're a little moody, a little emotional, little weight gain, little awkward, things are a little different. What's going on? I feel uncomfortable. Second trimester, ladies, what happens? Energy levels plummet. They go up. See, I don't know. I don't know. They go up.

- [Congregant] You feel much better.

- You feel much better. Sometimes We just found the woman who got medication and the woman who did not, we just found those two women. I felt great. Okay, the other woman did not, okay. What else happens in the second trimester, ladies? Glowing skin. The baby kicks and you wet yourself. I'm not saying I've seen it. I'm not saying I haven't seen it. Third trimester.

- The whole room just changed. I was like , no, that's not good, it's not good. Third trimester. First trimester, the beast. Second trimester, the false prophet. The third trimester, the anti-Christ. That's what it feels like. So, third trimester, explain to us, ladies, third trimester. Emotional pain. Pants don't fit. Can't sleep. Water retention, you're good. It hurts, backache, heartburn. And then what do you start getting? Contractions. Okay, tell me about contractions. Can't handle it. Very exhausted. I ask you one more time, so what's it like having contractions? She's like, "Take your bottom lip, pull it over your head. It's twice as bad as that." I'll just take your word for it, sister. That sounds terrible. The contractions start and it hurts like-

- [Congregant] Hell.

- I didn't say that, potty mouth mama. Potty mouth mamas. So, you know what? You birthed the kid, you've earned it. You get to mull again, you get to say that, okay. And then the contractions, they get more painful and more intense and more frequent and close together. This is the point where we tap in the legal drug dealer. This is what we do. Off to the side, is it a person with a needle and a waiver. And they're just, they're like, "Are you ready?" All of a sudden mama's like, "Mama needs an epidural. We're there." I was there watching all five kids get born. I was like, "Hey, daddy needs an epidural too. I can't even watch this." Like I brought a Groupon. Like she gets one, I get one free. We both, we both need the drug dealer to make it through this. Does it hurt to birth a child? Here's my question, how did we get so many people, if this process is so bad? You push it hurts and then there's new life, new life. One woman said, "Then you forget." Just, if you're a new husband, not immediately, you need to wait. If she just had the baby, you're like, "You wanna have another one?" She's gonna stab you and it's your fault. You gotta wait. At some point, months later, she'll be so excited about this birth of new life that the pain of the birth will be superseded by the pleasure of the new life, true or false?

- [Congregation] True.

- It's true, it's true. This is Paul's analogy for human history. Guess what we're in right now? He says the pains of childbirth. It really hurts, it's very frustrating. The closer we get to the second coming of Jesus, the deeper and greater the contractions and the more intense and frequent and close together they are. And it feels like we're all going to die, and then new life is birthed. And what he promised us was this, that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. It's like a woman who says, "Yeah, it was very painful but it was worth it because there's new life." The story of your birth is the story of our planet and all of human history. Okay, so I know it hurts and I know it's painful, but it is purposeful and one day it will be profitable. So then he transitions for us to the future. Tomorrow we rule the world. Romans 8:28 through 30. "And we know," he's gonna keep using this language, confidence, certainty, assurance, bedrock, "that for those who love God," what things work together? All. God wastes nothing, He invests everything, "For good for those who are called according to His purpose." And then he's gonna get into what is called the order of salvation for those whom he foreknew. We'll talk about all these words. "He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." God's goal is to make you and I more like Jesus. We don't need to be true to ourselves, we need to be true to our Savior. "In order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." He adopts us into the family of God. "And those whom he predestined He also called, those whom He called he also justified, those whom He justified He also glorified." Let me deal with Romans 8:28 first and then the order of salvation. This is one of the most famous verses in the whole Bible. God works out all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. And the word here, originally, not to get too nerdy on ya, is the same word from which we get synergy. In this life, do we get synergy? No. How many of you keep trying to make everything come together and work together and it never does? You're like, "Okay, I fixed this at the house and then this broke. I worked on this in the relationship and then this cratered." I'll just, I'll tell you, I am on my fourth vehicle this week. I

broke my Jeep. It's been in the shop for three months. I broke it that bad. I get calling them, is it done yet? No, we don't have the parts. Why? Because of COVID. I was like, "I did not know Jeep's got COVID." I would've put a mask on my Jeep, especially when it's near a Prius. We all know the Prius is a super spreader. The Prius has a weak immune system, is compromised. So then I started driving this old truck I got, blew up the motor, had the motor rebuilt, blew the motor again. No synergy. So I drove my son's truck. Last night on the way home, it broke. So now I rented another guy's truck. Pray for that guy, he's about to get a broken truck, okay? There's no nothing, how many of you are frustrated? Nothing works, nothing works. And as soon as it works, something else stops working. It's because we're cursed. There's no synergy. It never all comes together. But it will. And ultimately God works out all things for His glory and our good. Now what it doesn't say is that this happens in this life. So let me unweaponize Romans 8:28. It's been a weaponized verse of the Bible. As soon as somebody is going through a hardship, we just quote Romans 8:28. Oh, it's all gonna be great. Well, it says any eternity it'll all be great. But you know what? We're not there today. Today, it's still rough. So what this is, this is hope for us to persevere, but this is not an excuse for us to lack compassion, empathy and presence for people who are not yet in eternity, seeing it all worked out. Paul says elsewhere that we see in part and we know in part, and one day we will see and know fully and completely, but we're not there yet. So it's okay to come and tell someone, "God's gonna work this all out in the future, but I'm gonna walk with you into the future, because we're not there yet." The other thing that this does not say is that everything that happens is the will of God. We need to be very careful with this. And some people will read Romans 8:28 and they'll think, "Okay, so everything that happens is God's will." Question, is everything that happens God's will? No, sin is not God's will. It says in Genesis six, if memory serves me correct, that God looked at humanity and He saw that the inclination of man's heart was only evil continually and it grieved God. Do you know why God was grieved? Things were happening that were against His will. Jesus shows up in weeps over Jerusalem because things are happening that are against God's will. God works out everything, but not everything is working according to God's will. I'll give you an example. Some years ago, I was a young pastor, Grace and I, and we had a couple kids at the time. We were on vacation and there was this couple of ours that were friends. We loved them, they're really great people, beautiful family, brand new Christians. I mean, just met the Lord Jesus, figuring it all out. And she was really distraught. So she called Grace and Grace handed me the phone and I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "Pastor Mark, I just miscarried my 22nd child." 22 miscarriages. She's crying, she's emotional. I was just devastated. I mean, I loved this family. I'm like, "I'm so sorry." I'm literally looking at my kids while I'm having the conversation. She said, "I just, I called because I need to ask you one question." I said, "Okay, what's that?" She said, "Why does God keep killing my babies?" I said, I just start crying. I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, isn't everything that happens God's will?" I said, "No, we live in a cursed, fallen, broken planet. That everything is in a death and decay cycle because of our rebellion and folly." I said, "I am so sorry." I said, "In addition, there's Satan and demons." I said, I said, "The Bible asked this question, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord?' And the truth is, only the Lord knows the mind of the Lord. And one day the Lord will help us to understand. In the meantime, we need to know that He is good and not bad. And that not everything that happens is His will. Because when God was done creating the world, we didn't have funerals, we didn't have miscarriages, we

didn't have pandemics, and we didn't have hospitals. We had life. And when sin entered the world, all of that was infected and affected. God doesn't work out everything in this life, but He will in the life to come. And not everything that happens is God's will, but God will use everything for His will. What that means is even the most devastating parts of your life are going to become, at some point, things that you praise God for because of the way that He took that which was evil and He used it for good, because God is so good. He can turn evil toward good. How do I know this? What comes to mind is the murder of Jesus. The worst evil in the history of the planet was the murder of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And God worked it out for His glory and our good. That Jesus' death was for our life, that the worst thing that happened was the best thing for us. And so if we learn anything from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is that when you see evil, just wait, because ultimately God will bend it for glory and good. And what he says is God will work out all things for the good of those who love Him. So here's my question to you, do you love God? You can't control the future, but you can determine that you will live in loving relationship with God. And if you love God, He promises to work out everything for you. And what He's gonna tell us here is how He has loved you. He loved you by saving you and choosing you and pursuing you. He's there gonna get into this process called the order of salvation. And most Christians agree on what God does to save us. We disagree on the order in which these things happen. And it's very, the order is very important, okay? If you're in the military, here's what they tell you, Ready, aim, fire. You better get that sequence right. Like when I was cleaning the gun and I fired it and I wasn't ready, and then I aimed too late. Okay, so if you're a single guy, lemme give you another example, 'cause at some point we always pick on single guys. It's now that time. Okay, so in Genesis single guy, it says that a man shall leave his mother and father, move out of their house and then marry a woman. All of this is crazy, I know. And then live with her and sleep with her. The order is very important. If you're sleeping with your girlfriend and living with your mother, you're out of order. You need to get a job, a house, a belt. You need to get things in order. God's order is very important. When we get out of order, we have great disorder. Here's the order of salvation, and it starts in eternity past and it goes to eternity future. First, he says that God foreknew us. What this means is not. So this is the misperception of this conception. It is, God looked down the corridor of time and He saw that you were going to choose Him. And so He chose you because you were gonna choose Him. This word is never used in that way. God is eternal, He's outside of time. He's not stuck in time, though He can act in time. God is not waiting for you to make a decision because He doesn't know what the decision will be. He is all-knowing. So He knows everything in totality. But for no means is that God knew you before you knew Him. The God knew that sin was gonna come into the world, that God knew that He was gonna send His Son to save sinners, and He knew that He was gonna save you. He foreknew you. This is His complete and total knowledge. Now, the reason why we struggle with this concept of foreknowledge is because we are brainwashed with two four-letter words, free will. There is no such thing. I would go so far as to say it's a demonic deception. Our will is not free. And, see, because we're in a Western democracy and we like to vote, we're like, "Well, everybody should vote." My question is how's that going? I'd be fine if only Jesus got to vote from here on out, that would be totally fine with me. Let me give you just sort of five perspectives on this myth of free will. Number one, we are responsible for the choices we make. We do make choices and we are responsible for them. Number two, our

choices reflect our heart or nature. Jesus says out of the overflow of the heart comes lust or words or spending, that the decisions we make are a reflection of the heart or nature that we have. So he says a good tree bears good fruit, bad tree bears bad fruit. Ezekiel says that before the Holy Spirit enters, we have a heart of stone and it is God, not us, who takes out this heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh. And so, ultimately, until you get a new nature, you cannot make God-glorifying decisions. And some people say, "Well, I chose Jesus." Your old nature can't, won't choose Jesus. Number three, Adam and Eve alone had free will. They didn't have a sin nature, and had a perfect relationship with God and they were in a perfect environment. Things that we don't have. We're not perfect people in a perfect place in a perfect relationship. God is perfect, but everything else, because of us, is not. Adam and Eve were free because they didn't have a sin nature to choose God or not choose God. We, however, have inherited a sin nature. He articulated this in Romans 5:12 through 21. As a result, our will is not free, it's bound by sin and nature. Number four, our choices are limited by God. You're not free. You're not free to determine the day of your birth. You're not free to cure your sickness. You're not free to ultimately rule over your life. And you're not free to decide whether you go to heaven or hell. Your choices are within a menu of options that are limited by the Sovereign God. You're not sovereign, He is. And He gives us a limited menu of options. So I can't choose to be tall. Now I've tried. I've tried to predestine myself to height and bangs. You're laughing because I've proven my inability to predestine my height and bangs. My will is not totally free. It's limited and bound by the choices that God makes available to me. Number five, when we do choose, we choose sin and death. He already told us in Romans 1. We get the truth, we suppress the truth. He tells us that we have futile thinking, that we are fools and we have a debased mind. What he's saying is apart from a miracle of the Holy Spirit, you don't know God and you can't know God. That's exactly what he's saying. Your will is not free. And I have people all the time ask me, "Well, what part do you play in your salvation?" Oh, I played a part. I did the sinning. That was my contribution. He did the saving. See how this works? I did my part, I did the sinning. He did His part, He did the saving. This is a great historical debate. In 1524, Erasmus of Rotterdam, a humanist scholar, he wrote a book called "The Freedom of the Will." The next year, Martin Luther, one of my favorites, a Protestant Bible teacher, wrote another book called "The Bondage of the Will." I read that as a freshman or sophomore in college. And in there, Luther's working through Romans to show that we don't have free will. That, let me say this, this'll blow your mind, only God has free will. God has all-knowledge, we don't. God has all-power, we don't. God can do anything He wants, we can't, and no one can thwart the will of God. So when it comes to salvation, someone did make a freewill choice and it was God, not you or me. That's what foreknow means. Then he goes on to talk about predestine. So let me just say, from this point forward, we're gonna talk about predestination, Romans 9:10, and all the nerds love it. Like, you're gonna see guys with clipboards and Dockers and shirts tucked in and bifocals taking notes. They love this stuff. And we're gonna get through Romans 12 through 16 about loving people and having relationships. And they're not so excited about that. So pray for them, we're gonna go through the whole book. When it comes to predestination and studying Romans, I just want to let you know, you go to realfaith.com, free study guide for Romans. Go set up your life group. And I wrote a free ebook on predestination called "Duck Duck Doom." It is Romans 8, 9, 10. It's all free, just wanna help. And I can't get into all the details, but let me give you a brief

introduction to predestination. When the Bible talks about predestination, not shockingly, it means that your destiny is predetermined, it's closed not open. The Bible use other words like chosen or choosing or elect or appointed. It'll use these words. What this means is that God predetermined your destiny. Some of you really struggle with this. What about my free will? What about God's free will? How could God choose some people? That's not loving. Ephesians 1 says in love, He predestined us. God's love is demonstrated with His predestinating us to salvation. Furthermore, it's not a decision that you make in time, it's a decision that God makes before time. Ephesians 1 says He predestined us in Him before the foundations of the world. That, ultimately, God knew, after He created the planet, that we would sin against Him and bring death. And He knew that He was gonna send His Son to live and die and rise to forgive sin. And He knew that you were going to be born. And He knew that He was gonna cause you to be born again. Nothing has surprised God. Let me just say it in this way, there are really only three options. This is how I used to break it down for my kids. My kids, when we were little, we'd sit at the dining room table and they would just ask every potential question they could think of. It was really fun. It's like they grew up on a set of Bible jeopardy. That's just kind of how we did it. And I explained this concept of predestination to my kids in this way. There's only three options. Let me make it as simple as I can. Number one, Satan and demons choose who goes to heaven. How are we feeling about that? We fired up, we excited? If Satan and demons choose who goes to heaven, how many people would go to heaven? Zero, okay? Option number two, we choose whether or not we go to heaven, we're saved. If we choose, how many people go to heaven? Zero, zero. He told us this already in Romans 3. I'll just bring it up again. None is righteous. I mean, like I know a guy. No, you don't. None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, here is the, here is the close of the deal, no one seeks God. Some people would be like, "We believe in seeker Christianity." So do I, God seeks us. We don't seek Him. Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sin, God comes looking for them. He's the seeker. You could just read the whole Bible. God comes to Isaiah, God comes to Abraham, God comes to Moses, Jesus comes. And He says, "I came to seek and save the lost." Who's the seeker? Jesus is. It's, here's the deal, it's not like God's lost. Can I let you in on a little secret? People are like, "I found God." Really? Did He get lost? Did you have breakfast cereal and on the back of the milk carton, they're like, "We can't find God. If you find Him, please call us." You know, like, "I found Him." And God's like, "Thank you so much. I had no idea where I was. I got lost." God's not lost, we are. We're not looking for God, God's looking for us. Who's writing this in Romans? Paul. Was he seeking God? No, he hated Christ and he hated Christians. You can read his story in the Book of Acts. He's going from house to house abusing, harassing, arresting Christians, ultimately murdering a Christian leader. He is literally anti-Christ. Jesus is up in heaven after His resurrection and such and looks down and's like, "I'm done with that guy." I'm sure the angels were like, "Who wants to go down and take care of that?" He's like, "I got this." When Jesus comes down, you've crossed some lines. Jesus comes down. Saul, Paul, is riding a horse. Literally, Jesus knocks him off his high horse, literally. And blinds him, 'cause he was spiritually blind, now he's physically blind, he's totally blind. Saul doesn't even know who it is. He's like, "Who are you?" He's like, "I'm Jesus." Not only was Saul not seeking Jesus, when Jesus showed up, he didn't even know who it was. And Jesus saved Saul, named him Paul. And he becomes the one who tells us that it is God who foreknew us and predestined us. And that's exactly his story and testimony. When you and

I tell our testimony, we need to make sure that we tell our testimony in the way that Paul does. Not I found God, God found me. Not I was looking for God, God was looking for me. And let me say this, before you were looking for God, God was looking for you. Before you loved God, God loved you. How do we know? The Bible says, I'll just quote it to you. It says it in 1 John, "We love because He first loved us." He loved me before I loved Him. He sought me before I sought Him. He called out to me before I called out to Him. He saved me before I served Him. When we look at the options, it's Satan and demons, it's sinners or it's God who chooses. If God chooses, let me just say, that's the best. Anybody who says, "Well, I'm not sure God should make the choice, I think I should." Well, then you don't know my God. My God is far more capable of making the right decision than I am or we are. Now, what happens in this, some people will immediately protest. That's not loving, that's not fair. You know what's fair? Hell. Everyone who dies and goes to hell, gets what's fair or just. Everyone who goes to heaven gets a miracle called grace. You and I made our choice for hell and Jesus made a choice to override some of our choices and take us to heaven. Lemme use an analogy. We've got five kids. Our oldest daughter, when she was little, she's still fast, she was a really fast runner. She became an Allstate sprinter in high school. And when we first did ministry, we had this kind of old college rental house. I was doing college ministry. Stadium on one side, hospital on the other. Heliport, university, highway. Crazy. It's the only thing we could afford on a crazy deal. Bedrooms upstairs, offices for the ministry on the main floor, interns in the basement. Worst idea ever, okay? Once you open the front door, it's just a few short steps to a four-lane road where cars are flying by at 50 miles an hour, okay? So we got the kids and I shut the door of the house and you feel like a Sherpa. You're like, I got the bag, I got the car seat, I got the baby, I got the fishy crackers. I got the diapers, I got the clothes. I turn around. My little girl looks at me and then runs toward the street. I drop everything. Not the baby, I set the baby down. And I'm chasing my daughter. She now thinks that we're playing a game and that I'm chasing her, so it's fun. She's looking back, not forward. I am seeking her. In front of our house, there's a car parked. She's running in front of the parked car. She can't see that there is a box truck about 50 miles an hour in the lane closest to our home. The box truck cannot see her because she's so short, she's in front of the car. My daughter has now made a freewill choice. She has chosen to run from her father and run into danger. At that moment, what I did not do was quote philosophers. Well, everyone makes their choice and I would hate to override her free will. The father's will overrode her will because I do love her. And more important than her choice is my choice to make sure that she's loved. So I chase her and I'm crying, I'm calling out to her. And, literally, my little girl steps into traffic, box truck coming. Thankfully, her coat was buttoned up. I grabbed her by the back of her coat and literally I pulled her out of death. That's predestination. That's the foolish child saying, "I'm running from my father. And I made my choice." And the father is saying, "I actually am the only one here that has total free will and I have chosen to override your choice and save you because I love you." I get really frustrated when people are like, "How could a loving God override our choice?" My answer is always, have you never been a parent? How many of you parents know that occasionally your child makes a choice and you need to override it because you love them? Right? Otherwise we don't have two-year old boys with hand guns and knives and whiskey and fireworks. Theologically, this is called monergism. It's in the book. The language of Isaiah is that the arm of the Lord has reached down to save us. Some will call,

instead, for something called synergism. We reach up to God and He reaches down to us. No, no, God just reaches down to us. We do the sinning, He does the saving. We do the running, He does the rescuing. And ultimately he says that all of this happens and it is experienced by us personally when we are called. Now, there are two types of calling. One is external, one is internal. So you need to know that there is one God, His name is Jesus Christ. He has entered into human history. He has lived the life you have not lived without any sin. He has died the death that you should have died, the death for sin. And He is risen to save you from Satan, sin, death, hell and the wrath of God. You need to know that you're not just saved from sin, you're saved also from the wrath of God. Now, if you believe that, it's because in addition to that external calling, which I just explained Jesus to you, there was an internal calling. Some will call this an effectual calling where, literally, God flips the switch in your soul. How many of you, you've heard about Jesus, and then one day you're like, "I love Him, I'm in." You got called. I talked to a person recently, literally, they said, "I never really been to church, never heard about Jesus. I came in and halfway through the sermon, I was like, "I belong to Jesus, I love Jesus. I wanna be with Jesus." I said, "What happened, you were predestined. And you got called." The Holy Spirit came, He took the off switch, flipped it to on, you belong to Jesus now. How many of you, that's been your story? You're like, "I'm trying to figure out what God even did to me. He just totally re-hardwired me from the inside out. I'm trying to figure out who this new me is." Welcome to being called. And calling is something that God does in us through the Spirit. The example that I would give you is Lazarus. So Jesus had a buddy named Lazarus. Lazarus died. Jesus was away, came to the graveside to visit. He was so dead, the King James Bible says he stinketh, stinketh. He's funky, it's been a while. Lazarus is dead. What decisions do dead people make? No decisions. The Bible says we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Lazarus did not poke his hand up from the grave and say, "Jesus, I choose You, now You choose me." He was dead. Jesus called Lazarus by name. "Lazarus, come forth." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, said it's a good thing He used his name, otherwise he would have emptied the graveyard. Lazarus, come forth, and the dead man was alive. What happened to him physically is what happens to you spiritually if you are a Christian. That God called you by name and He brought you from death to life. He then says that we are justified. And this we looked at in Romans two, three, four, five. We unpacked this for many months. And that is that Jesus took your place, put you in His place. He took the condemnation, you received the salvation. He took the death, you get the life. He got the separation, you got the reconciliation with God. And as a result, He took your unrighteousness and He gave you His righteousness. Now you are a son of God and you have inherited the righteousness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And what he says is that this started in eternity past. God foreknew you, He predestined you at a moment in time. His calling awakened you, He has justified you, and one day He will glorify you. You will be glorified. What this means, friends, is that God is not done with you but God sees you as you will be when He is done with you. He who began a good work in you will see it through to completion. The God who never fails will never fail you. When God is done with you, you will be physically healed. You will be emotionally whole. You will be relationally reconciled. You'll be spiritually mature. You will radiate the fullness of the grandeur and the greatness and the glory of God. That you will be who God predetermined you to be. That you will be more like Jesus and less like you. And all of this is awaiting the second coming of Jesus,

where our King, my King returns to His planet. Everything and everyone belongs to my King and He calls you by name and you will exit the grave and you will enter into the kingdom and you will radiate the glory with Him together forever. So let me tell you a little bit about my King. Let me just end with one of my favorite scriptures. This is what we are waiting for, this is who we are hoping for, this is what we are longing for, is the second coming of Jesus Christ. Let me tell you a little bit about my King from revelation 19, "Then I saw heaven opened." Right now, my King is seated on a throne. My King is ruling and reigning over the nations. My King is being worshiped in glory. My King is in all power and glory. My King came the first time in humility. My King is coming the second time in glory. My King came the first time to save sinners. My King is coming again to judge everyone and to reclaim everything that belongs to my King. And one day, heaven's gonna open. One day, the realms are gonna reunite. One day, my King is coming back and my King is bringing a kingdom with Him. And my King's kingdom is going to crush and obliterate all other kingdoms. I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. The old guys will tell you, the good guy always rides the white horse. My King rides a white horse. The one sitting on him is called Faithful and True. My King is faithful. My King makes promises. My King keeps promises. My King loses no one. My King fails no one. My King is true. Let God be true and every man a liar. My King is true. He goes on, and in righteousness He judges. My King judges. My King is Holy. My King has standards. My King has consequences. My King has justice. My King judges and makes war. My King is an alpha, not a beta. My King does victory, not surrender. My King backs down from no one. My King takes orders from no one. My King fears no one. My King is defeated by no one. My King is conquered by no one. My King makes war. Yes, He is the Prince of peace. After He has made war, there will be peace. His eyes are like a flame of fire. He is not in a good mood. And on His head are many crowns, because my King takes the crown from every King, and He wears all the crowns as the King of kings. That is my King. It goes on to say, "And He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dripped in blood." Either He shed His blood for you or you will shed your blood for you. And the name by which He is called is the Word of God. My King has some things to say. My King has some commands to obey. My King speaks and reveals. My King does not edit His Word because He gets it right the first time. My King does not need editors, my King is calling for messengers. That when all is said and done, everyone and everything will be no more, but the word of my King endures forever. It goes on to say, "And the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses." When my King comes, He will bring the divine family, He will bring departed saints, He will bring angels and other divine beings. When my King lands back on His planet, He is going to call you by name. You are going to exit your grave. You will be glorified in your resurrected body. You are going to be wearing white, and you will be joining the army of my King. And we will not be fighting because He will do all the fighting, and we will do all the worshiping and celebrating as He crushes enemies, and He brings His kingdom of peace and justice to our broken and flawed world. And when all is said and done, as the sons and daughters of God, He is going to appoint you dominion to rule over all creation. And in your glorified state, you who were made a little lower than the angels, you will be promoted and elevated as glorified saints to judge the angels. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, the Word of God, with which to strike down the nations and He'll rule them with a rod of iron. The first time that my King came, He came as a lamb. The

second time He comes, He comes as a lion. The first time He came in humility, the second time He comes in glory.

- [Congregant] Amen.

- He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. A winepress is where grapes would be thrown, trampled under foot so the juice would burst forth. When my King returns, all people will be thrown into the winepress of his fury. And it is told here that their blood will flow in the streets as high as the bridle bit on a horse. No one is getting away with anything. My King will deal with everyone for everything. Either my King died in your place, or my King is going to punish you in the place that you justly deserve for yourself. Let no man be deceived. God will not be mocked. You will reap what you sow, unless you believe in my King. On His robe and on His thigh, this is tattooed thug Jesus. He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. We're gonna worship my King, I need a band. Lord Jesus, this world is a mess, we need a Messiah. This world is filled with problems, we need a solution. This planet is broken, it needs a healer. Satan and demons are ruling and reigning and they need to be dethroned and decommissioned. Lord Jesus, we believe that right now, by faith, You are seated, that You're going to receive our worship, You're gonna hear our prayers, that You're gonna send the Spirit. And, Jesus, we just say thank You. We thank You that when all is said and done, we're just gonna be with our King, that He's gonna make all things new. That the dead will be raised, that the tears will be wiped, that the graves will be empty, that the sickness will be gone, and all there will be is glory and dominion for the children of God in the presence of God who sing the praises of God together forever. Lord Jesus, we claim that this is Your house. We ask for a supernatural anointing in the Spirit to preach good news to a world filled with bad news, and to bring love to a world that is filled with fear, and to bring truth to a world that is filled with lies. And so we ask that Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, starting right here right now in Jesus' name, amen.