



**W**hat have you come to believe? God reveals His glorious plan for our salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. God loves you. Jesus died for you. Life is restored for you. Come to believe in Jesus Christ.

## I'VE COME TO BELIEVE • Romans 8:1–17 • Tim McConnell • June 21, 2020

Hey, how about this 2020? Got any opinions on it? Wow. I'm enjoying taking a minute to laugh at some of these memes about 2020. The plans I had for 2020 versus what actually happened. We are just about at the halfway mark on 2020. I'm ready for a turnaround. How about you? Let me tell you, the back half is going to need to be pretty spectacular to balance out the front half. But it could happen. God's up to big things. 2020 could wind up being the best year. From worst to best. As a friend of mine said, it's not the year we wanted but it might wind up being the year we needed for God to do work in us, shaping us, preparing us, polishing us to serve Jesus in greater strength than ever before. I'm ready for a turnaround.

There is nowhere else to look for a turnaround quite like the cross. This is where it all turns around. The lynchpin, the fulcrum, the hinge of history—the cross of Christ. Where Jesus turned death into life. If that could turn around, anything can turn, with the power of the cross. What have you come to believe? I've come to believe Jesus gives life. In fact, I've come to believe Jesus won eternal life for you and for me on the cross. In John 6, the things Jesus had just said made many disciples walk away, so Jesus asked His closest friends, "What about you guys? Are you out?" Peter said no, they would stay. They had nowhere else good to go. Besides, he said, "We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:69). We have come to believe. That's faith. That's putting your faith in something. But Peter doesn't stop there. He says, "we have come to believe and to know." To know. Having taken the leap of faith, having taken the risk and putting their faith in Jesus, they found their faith well-placed. Faith leads to knowledge. Knowledge of God. Knowledge of Jesus Christ. Saving knowledge. What have you come to believe; what will you come to know in Jesus?

We're walking through the greatest story ever told. Your story with Jesus is your greatest story. It's the story of Jesus and how He saves your soul. It starts with (1) **God loves you**. You might not believe that, but it's true. (2) **Your sin separates you from God**. You might not like that, but I think you

know it. Today we look at number (3) **Jesus died for your sins**. You might find it humbling, but you need and you have a Savior. For the next two weeks we will explore the fourth point: (4) **God has a plan for your life**. Believing in Jesus Christ and asking forgiveness is only the beginning of a life knowing God. The Bible calls it eternal life. For the rest of the series we sit in one chapter, Romans 8. Today we see, Jesus brings life. Jesus died for your sins.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1–2). God loves you. But your sin separates you from God. Separated from God, you are separated from the Author of Life and your life begins to wane. You are subject to death. Eternal separation from God. What this verse names is "condemnation." But now there is no condemnation. There is no condemnation. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). No wages of sin. The sin is there, but the wages go somewhere else. They don't come in. They don't come home to you and me as sinners. There is no condemnation. How? How do we come to such a turnaround? By Jesus stepping in. It's the intervention of Jesus. "For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Jesus did what we could not do. Jesus paid what we could not pay. Jesus died what we should have died. Now we live what we didn't deserve to live. Eternal life in Jesus Christ.

**Jesus did what we could not do.** The law was powerless to save. Why? Because it was a ladder we could not climb in our flesh. But Jesus could. Jesus lived a life of righteousness. Jesus never sinned. He satisfied the law and set the spirit free. Jesus sets us free to live a life in the Spirit, not just in the flesh. "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the

Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:5–6). "Flesh" here is not just a blanket dismissal of life in the body, but it's that part of us that still rebels against God, and is subject to habit—gets habituated and patterned to live life apart from and even against God's rule. It promises freedom but delivers slavery. In Jesus, we can be free from it.

I remember that story from Native American folklore about the young man who asks his elder, "Why do I struggle so much to do what is right?" The elder said, "There are two wolves within you fighting for your soul. One is good and one is evil. Day by day they tear at each other and confuse your spirit." The young man asked, "How will it turn out for me? Which one will win?" And the elder replied, "The one who wins will be the one you feed." What are you feeding every day? Life in the flesh or life in the spirit? Jesus satisfied the law to set us free to live in the Spirit.

Jesus paid what we could not pay. The cross was not an accident. Jesus Christ died for us to pay a debt we could not pay. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is the perfect atoning sacrifice. "For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). God is just and righteous. God pours out wrath on injustice and unrighteousness. Jesus received that wrath on the cross, for our sins. It was a debt that had to be paid by a human in human flesh. So God, in Jesus, took on human flesh, became man, so that wrath could be poured out on Him, not on you and not on me. Remember two weeks ago: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). How do you get a turnaround? There is no turnaround like what Jesus did for us on the cross. Everything that was ours by way of punishment, condemnation, just desserts for our disobedience, was laid on Him. He took it. We get the freedom and life He won for us.

Now we live what we didn't deserve to live. What Jesus did on the cross was not just to wash your soul clean for heaven in the afterlife. What Jesus did

on the cross was to initiate a turnaround and a restoration of the harmony and order and beauty God intends for all His Creation. Now we can live a new life in Jesus Christ. Now you can live a free life in Jesus Christ. Not bound to the flesh. Not limited by the carnal life. There is a new way of life defined and opened up to all who believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him as Savior and Lord. What does it look like? "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you" (Romans 8:9–11). The Spirit of God is power within you. Power for life and righteousness, for justice and for peace. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is in you.

It names you a child of the living God: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:14–16). That's how the turnaround happens. Christ satisfies the law of God, living a perfect and righteous life. Then Christ lays that life down on the cross to absorb the debt we owed. Only a debtless, sinless life could pay for another's debt. Jesus did not die to pay His own debt. He had no debt. Sinless, He became sin for us so that sin could be condemned in His sinless body and we could receive "no condemnation." He took what we deserved so that we could have what He deserved. We could be called children of God. We could call God our Father. We could be counted, protected, kept and sustained in the family of God.

Father's Day is a day to give thanks for fathers and for fatherhood and for men. Men get a bad rap in our days. Give thanks for men. I'm grateful for my father, and the fathers in my life. But the great-

est turnaround of all is that I get to call God my Father, "...the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). You know, it was something when Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray and He told them to say "Our Father." "Abba." It's an intimate word. It's a sweet term. You heard kids call out to their dads, "Abba! Abba!" Jesus promised this intimacy with God. The Holy Spirit within you confirms this intimacy with God. God loves you. Your sin separates you from God. Jesus died for your sins. Now you are at home with God the Father Almighty. Abba. Father. You are His. He is yours. I've come to believe Jesus brings life. This week take time in your journal, "Your Greatest Story," and write down when you first understood what Jesus did for you on the cross to make forgiveness of sins possible, to bring you new life.

I'm looking for a turnaround. The cross of Christ is the hinge of history. It is the fulcrum point, powerful enough to leverage a turnaround of all creation. It is the place where your life can turn around right now. Out of flesh that leads to death. Into Spirit that is life and peace. Out of selfish and destructive patterns. Into life-giving patterns of righteousness and justice and blessing. Now is the time for the ultimate, eternal turnaround. In another letter, Paul wrote: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:18–20). I want to pray. I want us to pray. That the eyes of your heart would be opened. That you might not only come to believe, but come to know that Jesus is your Savior, and that your life turns around in Him because of what He did on the cross for you. Now please follow me in prayer: *Lord, Jesus, I need a turnaround, open the eyes of my heart, forgive my sins, fill me with your power, thank you for giving your life, today I give you mine, in Jesus' name, amen.*

## STUDY GUIDE

### I'VE COME TO BELIEVE • "Jesus Brings Life"

#### Romans 8:1–17

#### **UP:** Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word

Slowly, we are learning how to walk in a new atmosphere. Grace is the word. Grace. John opens his gospel saying, "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Of all the peoples of the world, the children of God must walk in the grace of God if we are to reflect this core attribute of God. This summer the word is grace. In exactly the pace at which the Lord is leading you through Covid-19, may his grace abound to you.

Begin your study in prayer. Read and reflect on Romans 8:1–17.

- 1) According to Romans 8:2, what amazing thing happens to us when we are placed in Christ?
- 2) Paul uses the word "flesh" to mean all that which is not of the righteousness of God. Throughout verses 5–13, compare and contrast life in the flesh to life in the Spirit.
- 3) Together as a group, reflect on the significance of being declared a "child of God" in verses 14–17.
- 4) Celebrating that Romans 8 is astonishingly dense, what other themes from this section of Romans 8 do you sense your group needs to process together?

#### **OUT:** Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

5) Romans 8:1 states, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The children of God are the set free people of the world. How does this change our demeanor? How does your attitude change knowing that you have been freed, but so many people you encounter in the highways and byways of life are still living under the "bondage to decay" (8:21)? Together as a group, pray for your hearts to break for the brokenness of humanity and to have the courage to share the greatest news of all, that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation!

#### **IN:** Connect with Each Other

In our current series you are invited to fill out the journal mailed to you. (If you didn't receive the "Your Greatest Story" journal, email us at [stories@firstprescos.org](mailto:stories@firstprescos.org)) Host a conversation on sharing your salvation stories with one another. Encourage, exhort and speak the truth in love to one another. Connect with your core circle and pray with and for one another.