

# LifeGroup Study

Date: July 30, 2023

Text: Psalm 65:1-8; Romans 8:1-11

Theme: id—A Closer Look at Romans 6-8  
Liberated...for God's agenda

## Belong

Summertime, what a wonderful time to enjoy the beauty of God's miraculous world, when we receive God's beautiful gift of life found in the wonder and delight of sweet summer fruits. Today's Old Testament reading focuses us on the beautiful gifts God provides us every day. The gift of life sustained by God's awesome wonders that provide for us and protect us, removing our fears, providing us hope. In today's New Testament reading the Apostle Paul teaches us of the greatest gift of all: the gift of liberation from death through the Spirit who gives eternal life. God gives life full of abundance; Christ gives freedom from sin and death. We are liberated through the glory of God, the glory of Jesus Christ who by God's love suffered so that we may live, so that we may fulfill God's agenda with the power of the Spirit within us. As you soak in the amazing summer sun, stop for a moment to praise God and give thanks for the splendor of the harvest that fuels your body and the joy that fills your heart and soul with the wonder of God's inspired Word. Grow this summer! Grow your relationship with God!

**Prayer...** Dear God, we wonder in the amazement of the glory of all that you give to us. The beauty of the seasons that we so often take for granted as we forget to stop to thank you for all that you give us as we live in the moment of our busy lives. Open our hearts so that we can see your glory. Allow the Holy Spirit to enter us and guide us so that we live our lives for you. You sacrificed Jesus Christ to remove our sins. You gave us the gift of liberation, of freedom from death through eternal life. We are your disciples ready to do good works in your name. Liberate us so that we can work your agenda; becoming one of your glorious gifts to others, meeting the purpose of your divine design. Spirit, show us the way; strengthen us, guide us, and bring us into a loving relationship with you. Be with us now as we read your Word; guide us as we learn, share, and grow together in our faith. In your name we pray. Amen.

## Believe

We begin our reading with a Psalm, a Song of David, where David praises and thanks God for the wonder of the summer harvest and for God's forgiving nature.

Read Psalm 65:1-8. During King David's time, Israel moved away from sinful living to become a strong nation under the grace of God.

• *What are some of the wonders of the world that cause you to stop to praise God?*

• *Thank God and share some of the most amazing creations you have recently encountered.*

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans to the Roman Church as a systematic explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In total, Romans provides a wonderful understanding of righteousness and salvation given through God's love and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. We enter the letter of Romans when Paul writes about the gift of life through Jesus Christ and the Spirit that sets us free from sin and death.

**Read Romans 8:1-11.** The Holy Spirit gives us life! God liberated us from death through our sinful nature and the weaknesses of the flesh. The Spirit is within each of us. We are liberated with the Spirit within us so that we can work God's agenda.

- *What does God require of us to ensure we are living by God's grace, under the law, and by righteousness?*
- *How can you open yourself to allow the Holy Spirit to guide you?*
- *Share about your gifts. How can you use them for God's agenda?*

## Become

Praise God for the beauty of the summer season. Stop in the farmer's market and smell, see, touch, and taste the fresh harvests of God's bountiful crops. Walk through a garden and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. Thank God as you live in the moment of God's glory. Take time out of your busy day to stop everything to thank God for life, liberation, and the people that you love. Change your routine to follow the Spirit to fulfill God's agenda. We transition throughout our lives from the safety of our mother's arms to caring for our own children. Change, movement, and growth happen. We strive to become the best that we can be, yet we often lose track of what we are striving to become. Commit to taking control of your life. Accept the wonder of liberation for God's agenda! Allow the Spirit to guide you to learn more about God through God's Word; share in the community of Christ at your church; go out and fulfill God's agenda.

**Prayer...** Father God, we are open to the guidance of your Spirit. We ask you to speak loudly as we have allowed the day to day stresses of this world to overpower our senses. Help us take time away from moving forward to ensure we are on the right path. Let us stop, see, smell, touch, and taste the beauty you place before us each and every day. Through Jesus Christ we are liberated! We have the opportunity to do great works through you. We are free from the burden of death and sin. Take us from where we are to where we need to be. Give us the strength to spend quiet moments reading your Word, meditating on your message, sharing with others in our church and community, and growing as we give of ourselves to others. Show us the way so that we use this most precious gift of life and liberation for your good purposes. In your name we pray. Amen.

# Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

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**Day 1: Monday—An Amazing Vista** We will spend three weeks in Romans 8, where Paul takes us to the mountaintop spiritually and gives us an amazing view of the riches of God's majesty, love, and grace. Slowly, prayerfully, read the chapter in its entirety; delight in the fresh breeze of the freedom we have in Christ; feel the exhilaration of our hope; bask in the warmth of God's immeasurable love, and ponder the treasure of our identity and our inheritance in Christ. Meditate on God's majesty; worship God; thank God that all the promises are true in Christ Jesus (*2 Corinthians 1:20*).

**Day 2: Tuesday—No Condemnation!** Romans 8 begins with the word, "therefore," so we must glance back and see what has come before. In Romans 1-7, Paul says that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance; all have sinned; none are declared righteous through the law; redemption is in Christ alone; and in him, we are freed from sin and become slaves of God (*Romans 2:4; 3:20-26; 6:11,14,22-23*). Then Paul makes an emphatic and bold statement in Romans 8:1. Read it aloud; insert your own name into the statement. What does this mean to you and for you? Sin does have consequences, but there is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! Express your gratitude to God.

### Day 3: Wednesday—The Penalty Was Paid!

Read Romans 8:1 again. Now read Romans 6:23a and Hebrews 9:22b. What is the verdict, God's judgment on sin? And yet, Paul declares that we are not under condemnation for our sin; why? Read John 1:29; Romans 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 8:9; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; and Revelation 5:9. God's divine justice was satisfied; the penalty for our sin was paid by Jesus; and for us, there is no condemnation! What judge, in a court of law, would have his own beloved son take the death sentence for the condemned and guilty criminal? Let John 3:16 guide your prayer. Since God loves us so lavishly and sacrificially, how ought we to love God and each other?

### Day 4: Thursday—Freed from and Freed for!

Our theme this week is "Liberated for God's agenda." It reminds us that our freedom in Christ is not only gift but also responsibility. Read Romans 8:1-11, noting from what and for what we are set free (notice the implied as well as stated truths). What additional insights does Paul share in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and Galatians

5:13-14? What does Christian freedom mean to and for you today? Certainly, it has eternal relevance (*see 1 Corinthians 15:54-57*), but it's also life transforming for today. Take these thoughts to the Lord in prayer. Listen to God's heart and obey.

### Day 5: Friday—Controlled by the Spirit

What promise does Jesus give his disciples in John 14:16-18? Notice that Peter reaffirms this promise in Acts 2:38. Now read Romans 8:1-11 and note (consider marking) each reference to the Spirit. When the Spirit dwells in us, we still have free will, but we also have a strong advocate and helper; we do not have to live the Christian life in our own strength; in fact, we cannot. And we certainly don't live as followers of Jesus for our own glory! Read John 7:37-39; Romans 8:26-27; 11:36; 15:5-6,13; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 5:16-25; and Philippians 2:13. Pray about what it means to be controlled by or yielded to the Spirit. This is the door to a life of joy and purpose.

### Day 6: Saturday—A Heart Intent on God's Agenda

Read Romans 8:1-11 and ponder what it means to have a heart that desires God's will and glory above all else. What are some of the characteristics of such a heart? As you read Mark 12:29-31; Luke 12:32-34 and John 13:34-35, notice what Jesus says about the person who realizes God is his/her greatest treasure and reward (*see also Genesis 15:1; Micah 6:8; Romans 13:8-10; and Colossians 3:12-15*). The Spirit empowers us to live with hearts intent on God's agenda, but Paul tells us that we can grieve or quench the Spirit (*Ephesians 4:30-5:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*). How might this happen? Ponder God's love for you; pray you will yield to God's love.

### Day 7: Sunday—Surrender

Read Romans 8:1 again and ponder the cost of this declaration. Now read again Romans 8:1-11, and pray about what it means to be liberated for God's agenda. How important is it to you that you know and live God's agenda? Can you sing/pray, with sincerity, Jeremy Riddle's lyrics: "At the cross, You beckon me; You draw me gently to my knees, and I am lost for words, so lost in love, I'm sweetly broken, wholly surrendered"? Now consider Paul's words in Romans 12:1-2. Paul's exhortation and Riddle's lyrics call us to surrender to God's love, God's agenda, God's truth, and God's indwelling Spirit, who teaches us what it means to be controlled by the Spirit. Pray.



St. Paul Lutheran Church

"Your Refuge from the Storm"