



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Rom 8: 9-11

"Exultant Joy"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth, and good morning.

Christ is risen!... *(congregation)* "He is risen indeed!"

I thought I'd hear that from you. Well, because it is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day, I've decided to take a break from the Book of Galatians, which we recently began, and chose a passage from the Book of Romans—Romans 8, verses 9 through 11 which is broad in its scope. It covers the whole of the Christian experience, really. It's written, of course, with a context, and the apostle, earlier in the passage, in verses 5 through 7, describes the life outside of Christ—prior to grace, prior to salvation. He describes it as 'a life that is set on the flesh, a mind set on the flesh'. Then he begins verse 9,

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. *(Now in the lesson itself I'm going to say something about that briefly, but I there is some division among interpreters and in translations with this word 'spirit'. "The spirit is alive." Literally it's 'the spirit is life'. And so here the translators take this as the human spirit is alive. Others take it as the Holy Spirit is in us and He is life, and the giver of life, the giver of Christ's life to us. And that's how I take it, so that's how I'm going to deal with this*

text. I'll give you a good translation of it that expresses my position. It's from the English Standard Version:),

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit (*the Holy Spirit*) is life because of righteousness.

Now verse 11,

¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8: 9-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for the blessings You give us. We thank You for this day, this Resurrection Sunday. LORD, every day for a believer in Jesus Christ is resurrection day. We live in the light of that great victory over death, that victory over the grave, but we historically celebrate it on this day in a special way. And so, LORD, as we consider that, consider this great event in which Your Son, through the power of the Spirit, at Your will, was raised from the dead—conquered death. And we, as Your people, who have joined ourselves to Him through faith have His life, and have that hope, too.

So LORD, as we consider this text from the apostle Paul in Romans 8, we pray that You would bless us, give us a good understanding of it, and good reason to rejoice. Salvation is of the LORD and life is from You. You are the giver of life. You give life to the dead and You give existence to that which does not exist. And so Father, we praise You and pray that our time together would bring great honor to You and encouragement to us. So bless us spiritually, build us up in the faith.

And we pray LORD for our material needs as well. We pray that You would bless us materially according to Your will, which is always best for us, not according to our desires, but what You desire for us. We pray for those of our congregation that are

especially vulnerable. And we thank You that it's, perhaps, passing a bit, and we're able to see more and more friends here. We pray that You would protect—protect all of us for that matter; we pray for health.

LORD, what a blessing it is to know, as we consider this morning from our text that this life is not all there is, that the grave is not the end, that we have hope beyond that—we have the hope of the resurrection. So LORD, may we think deeply on that, may we be encouraged deeply by it. So we look to You to bless. May everything we do this morning be to our encouragement and may it be to Your glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

There is an expression that is sometimes used to describe certain Christians. It is, 'miserable sinner Christianity', which might seem to suggest Christianity is a dreary religion. But for the Christian to understand who he or she is they must realize that they are miserable sinners. And yet, when we read the apostle Paul, we're not told to be miserable, but to be joyful. "Rejoice always," he wrote. "Again I say rejoice." (Phil 4:4). Now how can a miserable sinner do that?

Well, Paul could, and did. He wrote those words to the Philippians while he was in a miserable Roman jail. In fact, we, of all people and only we, can rejoice—not in ourselves, not in our circumstances—but in Christ alone. He alone is the reason for our hope and joy. And that reason is given by the apostle in our passage this morning, Romans 8, verses 9 through 11. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones described this passage as, "Three remarkable and most important verses. In them Paul recounts the great blessing God has given every Christian, from our past to our present and ultimately our future."

Well, I'm especially interested in our future this Easter morning, the hope of the resurrection. Christ, our Savior, is alive. He is risen from the grave, and we too, will rise someday. That is the hope every Christian has and the reason for joy. But each of the three parts passage are remarkable and important and cause for joy.

Our past is recalled in verse 9, where Paul reminds Christians that they are changed people. We're different from what we used to be. Paul's description of our past is a life "in the flesh". He described that, as I pointed out in the reading of the text in the previous verses, verses 5 through 7. We were hostile toward God, didn't obey His Law, weren't even able to do so.

The New International Version translates the word 'flesh' as "sinful nature", which is simple, and helpful, and true. But Paul literally used the Greek word *sarx*—"flesh". Why'd he do that? It's because the sinful nature operates through the natural desires of the mind and body to powerfully, effectively distort them and use them—use the flesh—use the body to act contrary to the will of God.

The rabbis spoke of 'the evil inclination', the term that they got from the Book of Genesis, (Gen 6:5. 8:21). Because of Adam's sin and the fall of the human race, we are all born that way. We are born with this 'inclination', this 'sinful nature', that rules our desires, and it influences our behavior to produce lust, greed, pride, other vices.

Samuel Rutherford, the old Scott, called these sins "tyrants". They are. Sin kills. And those in the flesh are under its authority, under its power. And it is a cruel dictator, it is a tyrant. But the believer in Christ is no longer in the flesh. God's grace has brought about a great change. Through God's grace we've been born again. We are new creatures in Christ. Paul describes us now as 'in the Spirit', in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. And, in Ephesians chapter 1, in verse 13 he describes the Spirit as being in us. In fact, we've been sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment of faith and He is in us until the day of redemption.

So think about that! —When we were lost, when we were in the flesh, when we were in rebellion against God we had no peace. Isaiah says that, "There is no peace for the wicked." (Isa 48:22, 57:21). Now that's truly miserable. No peace. But we've been delivered. Do you realize that is who you are as a Christian? You have been freed. You have been liberated. You are under the guidance and the enablement of the Holy Spirit—not the enslaving passions of the flesh. By the grace of God we have been born again; with a new nature, a new heart, where the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity

lives in us to enable us to experience, and enjoy, and exercise our freedom, and live holy lives. So rejoice!—"Again I say rejoice".

That doesn't mean that life is easy. It's not. In fact in many ways, when we are born again, the struggles really begin. We become aware of our condition. We become aware of our sin, and the struggle that we have with it. But we're not alone. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and the Holy Spirit is in us. That is our present condition. And that's the encouragement that Paul gives in the next verse, verse 10, "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is alive because of righteousness."

As I said, there's a question here on the word 'Spirit', the word *pneuma*. And I take it to be not the human spirit, but the Holy Spirit. And that's consistent with all of chapter 8, where that word *pneuma* is translated of the Holy Spirit. This is the great passage on the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. So the idea of this is, Christ is present in the believer, in the Christian, through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives Christ's life to us.

Now they're described as being 'in us' who have mortal bodies, bodies Paul said, that are dead because of sin. And yet they occupy us. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, lives within us. And that is necessary because though we are forgiven, (and every believer in Jesus Christ, every believer in the Son of God, is completely forgiven, forever, at the moment of faith), nevertheless, we're still sinners. We still fail—miserably. And the body is presently suffering the consequences of that.

So while our soul is saved, sin remains in the body, resulting in decay and death. As a result, the Christian life is a battle. Paul described it earlier in chapter 7, verse 15, where he wrote, "For what I am doing, I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate." You sense his frustration—that's our frustration.

But then in addition, there is the body's decline and decay. We get old and fragile. It creeps up on us. 40 years ago I used to run up the stairs. Now I walk, and it's not easy, still. Also, part of the struggle we face is this, it's that very fact. That's the life we now live, this creeping age that we have, this decline of our health and our physical

condition. That's life in a broken and fallen world and it can be very discouraging—it is. But for many, it's despairing; they're losing everything they will ever have.

But not the Christian. Not Paul. He wrote of this in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16, "...we do not lose heart..." And the reason is, "...though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

Now that's the work of the Holy Spirit, renewing our inner person in increasing its vitality and purity. So as the outer-self shrinks the inner-self grows. And grows in its sense of eternity and of its immortality. That caused Paul to rejoice, and put life's trials for him, in proper perspective. He could then call them, "momentary, light affliction." (2 Cor 4:17). And if you read 2 Corinthians 11, where he gives a kind of a catalog of the things that he suffered as an apostle, you would say those aren't momentary light afflictions. But he considered them that—stonings and beatings and shipwrecks—he considered them 'momentary and light' because they are producing, as he said, "an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." (2 Cor 4:17).

Whatever you may suffer in this life, and some of you have suffered a great deal in this life, whether you suffer from physical hardship, like sickness, or the trials that come with opposition for your faith, persecution for it, or just to the personal struggle that we all have with sin—the fight, fought well, will result in reward—great, eternal glory. So Paul later wrote, in Romans 8, verse 37, that "...we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Through Christ who died for us and lives within us.

In the present, though, the Christian is a warrior. We're in the arena, fighting the good fight of faith. Most of what we do is unseen by others. It goes on within ourselves and our mind. That's where so much of the battle is fought. So you don't see what I'm going through, I don't see what you're going through, but God sees it all. And He gives strength, and He'll give victory—and glory to come. So today we wage war, spiritual war. But the fight will come to an end. It will end victoriously. So, rejoice always! "Again I say, rejoice!"

Now that "eternal weight of glory" that Paul spoke of is what verse 11 is all about. And here is why we don't despair, even though we are presently dying, death is

not our ultimate destiny. —Life is. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. That's our hope. The struggle will end, the body will be redeemed—resurrected. We are bound for glory. And the assurance of that is the Holy Spirit. He's within us.

As I said in Ephesians 1, verse 13, we're described as being 'sealed with the Spirit', He is the pledge of our future glory. It was by the Spirit's agency that the Father, God the Father, raised God the Son from the dead. And by the Holy Spirit, He will raise us. Not resuscitate us, not restore us to our old life, but transform us into Christ's likeness in glory. Then our salvation will be complete. We'll be saved body and soul. And we will be fit for the world to come, the regenerated world. That's how the LORD describes it in Matthew 19, verse 28, a regenerated world, the kingdom to come, And then beyond that, for all eternity, the 'new heavens and the new earth'.

That's our future, for all eternity, world without end. Think of that! —We will be fully liberated from all weakness, pain, and sorrow. And then we will be truly free. Free from the penalty of sin, (of which the believer is free now). Free from the power of sin, (that's our condition today. The power of sin has been broken; we still sin but we're not under the rule of it). And free from the presence of sin and its effects. —That's our future. No more indwelling sin. We will be raised to perfection.

Bodies buried millennia ago, that have long since dissolved into the ground, those lost at sea whose bodies disappeared on the bottom of the deep, God will raise them all, whole and complete. That's what Christ gained for us through His resurrection. Through faith we joined ourselves to Him. And in joining ourselves to Him we joined ourselves to His death, which obtained atonement, salvation, for us. And we joined ourselves to His life. He is alive. We have a living Savior. So we too, will be raised to life forever.

Now that should occupy our thoughts daily. It's what gave Paul confidence and joy during the hardships of life. It frames our outlook. It gives us perspective, and it gives

us, with that perspective, the desire and the courage to live well, to live boldly in this world.

It's our hope, as I said. But it's a hope that seems absolutely impossible to people. How can God raise bodies that no longer exist? The Romans thought that was impossible. Ancient historian, Eusebius, gave an account of their persecution of the Christians in Lyon, France. The Romans would burn the bodies of the martyrs, and then they would take the ashes and they'd scatter them on the Rhone River in order to destroy the Christian's hope of rising again and with the thought of frustrating God's power.

Now that's the thinking of the world. That's the foolishness of unbelief. And it is thinking of God as though He were a man, like us. As though God Almighty cannot account for all of the atoms of His saints, of His loved ones. Now think, for a moment, in the opposite direction, from the smallest to the greatest. Think of the vast universe. There's nothing bigger than the universe. Billions of galaxies, and trillions of stars, scientists haven't found the end of it. The more they search it the bigger it gets.

J. I. Packer wrote in his book, *Knowing God*, "Our minds reel, our imaginations cannot grasp it. When we try to conceive of the unfathomable depths of outer space, we are left mentally numb and dizzy. But what is this to God?" he asked. Well, of course, it's nothing to Him, who is infinite. As great and vast as the cosmos is, it's limited. God is not. And so this vast universe is like a speck, just a speck to the infinite God.

The prophet Isaiah knew that and spoke of the LORD in these very terms in chapter 40, one of the great chapters of the Bible, one of my favorite chapters. If you want to get a sense of the greatness of God, read Isaiah chapter 40. And in verse 26 of that prophesy, he described the LORD as the one who created the stars. And He is "The One who leads forth their host by number. He calls them all by name." And it's the significance in that idea of calling them by name, (in the Bible you see this), that in the ancient world it was believed that to know the name of something is to control that person or that thing. And "...He calls them all by name."

Isaiah was using a military metaphor. The stars are like a great army, a host, that God brings out at night onto the plain of heaven, just as a general would lead out his army onto the field of battle. He directs the course of every one of them. Trillions upon trillions. Numbers that are beyond our calculation. And Isaiah said, "Not one *of them* is missing." (Isa 40:26).

Now how can that be? Well, it can be because God is not small. The problem that the world has, the problem that even Christians have, is their God is too small. We're limited in our thinking, but God is unlimited. He is infinite. That's how He can do that. And inversely, not one atom, one molecule of one of His saints, of one of His people is missing. He can account for every one of them, and bring them out of the dust, up from the sea, out of the ashes at the resurrection. He's all knowing, He's all powerful. He's unlimited. He's unhindered; nothing is too difficult for Him.

That statement, 'nothing is too difficult for Him', comes out of the Book of Genesis. It's when, in chapter 18 in verse 14, He's told Abraham that he will have a son. And Abraham has longed for a son for a long time. At this time he's 99, and Sarah is 90 and well past the age of bearing children. And she's hiding in the tent, and she laughs when she hears that. She laughs with unbelief. And the LORD said, 'Is anything too difficult for Me?' "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" That can also be translated, 'Is anything too wonderful for Him'? In other words, no, there's not.

In fact, Paul draws upon that incident in Romans 4, in verse 17, and he describes God in this way: The One "...who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." That's how great God is. He overcomes death. He gives life to the dead and He calls into being that which doesn't exist. Non-existence is not even a problem for the LORD God. Nothing's too difficult for Him. The resurrection and glorification of His children, every believer in every age, is an absolute certainty. And we know that because God's Word promises it. And we have the Holy Spirit within us as the guarantee of that and as the One who gives us the confirmation, internally, that that is true. We will be raised whole and glorious like Christ.

But will we be recognizable? Will we recognize one another? That's a question that's often asked. You'll wonder, is this going to be like my 50th high school reunion, where I didn't recognize anybody, and they didn't recognize me? Fortunately, we had little name tags with pictures. That's what I used to look like. Well, will it be like that? No. No, it will be glorious, not difficult because of age. We will be glorious, and yes, we will recognize one another.

One of the reasons I say that, biblically, is from the Transfiguration. You will remember, when Jesus was on the mountain with His disciples, Peter, James, and John, He was transformed into glory. It was as though the veil of His flesh was removed, and they got a peek into who was really there. And this glory shined like the sunlight. In fact, like the sun at noon—brighter than that. And they recognized Him. They knew who He was. But then He's joined by Moses and Elijah, who were talking to the LORD. And the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah. Christ and those prophets kept their identity. So will we.

There'll be no confusion because of the resurrection. In fact, just the opposite. There'll only be clarity. The difference will be that we will all be healthy, we'll be whole and glorious. It will be our bodies, only glorified, without any defect. Or, as Paul put it in Philippians, chapter 3, verse 21, 'This body will be transformed from its humble state into conformity with the body of Christ's glory.' That's our destiny. The hope of that made the trials of life for the apostle Paul seem small—just 'momentary light afflictions.' And they should do that for us as well. That should cause us to rejoice.

Princeton theologian, B. B. Warfield wrote an article, over 100 years ago, about "miserable sinner Christianity". And he said, "There is this attitude, a continued sense of sinfulness." We have that, a sense of sinfulness in fact, and in act. We still fail. And it's humbling and discouraging. It's what Paul expressed in Romans, chapter 7, verse 24. As he comes to the end of that conflict that he speaks of in the chapter he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death?"

Our sin and failure are the source of continued sadness and repentance. But that is not all. That's not even the main thing. In fact, Warfield said that, "The main attitude

of the Christian is not even one of hope. It's more than that." He said, "It's an attitude of exultant joy." We're sinners, lost and helpless in and of ourselves, but we are saved sinners. And it's our salvation that gives what Warfield called "tone to our life". As we think about it, we have reason for exultant joy. In the past we were freed from the tyranny of sin. In the present we have the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit with us, through all of life's struggles. And in the future our mortal bodies will be resurrected—glorified. We are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loved us. So, "Rejoice always! Again I say, rejoice!"

But again, as I said at the beginning, you can rejoice only as a believer in Jesus Christ, as you put your faith in Him. It's all one must do. Recognize your guilt and trust in Him. He has done everything for us. He declared it on the cross. He said, "It is finished." He bore our sins, and God is absolutely satisfied with what His Son accomplished. In fact, that's the reason for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the reason for the Easter celebration.

Paul explained that earlier in Romans, chapter 4, verse 25, where he stated that God delivered over His Son to the cross "because of our transgressions". And He raised Him up "because of our justification". That is because our justification was accomplished and secured for us; and so He raised Him up. Christ took our place in judgment, the judgment we deserved. He bore our sins. He died on the cross as our substitute. And His sacrifice was accepted by God. God's justice has been fully satisfied, and His righteous wrath completely exhausted in Christ for all who believe in Him.

Everything necessary for our justification, everything necessary for our salvation occurred at the cross. The cross is the victory. The resurrection is the confirmation of that. God raised His Son from the dead as proof that He accepted His sacrifice for us. The resurrection, as it's often said, is "God's amen to Christ's, "It is finished." "

That means there's nothing for us to do but realize, one, that we're sinners, miserable sinners for sure, and then receive God's forgiveness—receive the life that He gives, and the hope of the resurrection. And receive that through faith alone in Christ

alone. There's nothing more we can do than that. And that's all He invites us to do. Receive Him through faith.

If you have not believed in Christ as God's eternal Son and our only Savior, may God help you to see your need and bring you to faith in Him. And may help He all of us who have put our faith in Him to rejoice. We have every reason to do that. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for the hope we have as believers in Christ, that this life, (that is passing so quickly and that is so full of difficulty—it's this body of death that we have that is in decline constantly), that this isn't the end—that we have hope beyond the grave for we have hope for all eternity. —And it's what Christ obtained for us on the cross. And You accepted His sacrifice for us and demonstrated that through the resurrection which we ourselves will experience some day. We give You thanks for that—we rejoice in that.

So Father, we pray that You would now bless us as we continue our service and pray that we would worship You well in this time of remembering the LORD at the LORD's Supper. We look to You to bless, and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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