

Romans 8 Pt. 2 The Vindicated Servant

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 8, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 5; Romans 6; Romans 7; Romans 8; Galatians 3; Galatians 5; Colossians 3; 2 Peter 1; Isaiah 50; Isaiah 52; Isaiah 53; Luke 20
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:14:40 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Everything Paul claims for believers in Romans 8 — no condemnation, an unanswerable verdict, glory at the end of the chain — was first and primarily true of one person: the suffering servant of Isaiah. It becomes ours because we are in him. Not because we act like him.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ You can put to death the deeds of the flesh. You cannot crucify your own flesh — Jesus was crucified, and he lets his death be ours.
- ◆ It is all grace or all works. Start earning brownie points and you go to the back of the line and do the whole thing yourself.
- ◆ “Those who walk according to the Spirit” is not a tier of high-performing Christians. It is everyone who is in Christ.
- ◆ “Provided we suffer with him” is not a quota you fill with a stopwatch and a notepad. It describes those who do not abandon Christ when the heat comes.
- ◆ The Spirit intercedes when we are praying well and when we are eating a pickle. The text does not make his interceding depend on our attention.
- ◆ The golden chain — foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified — is a comfort because you are strapped in for the whole ride. Glory is the last stop.

- ◆ Paul takes Isaiah's vindicated servant and hands the verdict to believers, because the servant's victory, suffering and reward are ours by inclusion.
- ◆ There is no platinum package. You cannot get closer to a God who already abides in you and in whom you already abide.

► 1:15:36

Matt picked the theme back up from communion and kept it as the spine of the whole message: Jesus Christ is the perfect union of God and man, flawlessly both — and he himself *is* our covenant with God. Which means the covenant is perfect. Nothing was left out, nothing unthought of.

The recap that is actually the argument

► 1:16:49

Back to Adam, because Paul keeps going back there. Adam is walking, talking humanity — all of us neatly unified in one man, which is itself a foreshadowing of the man who unifies tribes and nations. We were not *labeled* sinners with a label maker; we really were in him. And that, Matt said, is the scandalous force of [Romans 5:19](#) running the other direction: in Christ we are not called righteous by some legal maneuver while remaining otherwise. In the same way we were made sinners, we were made righteous.

Romans is long and hard, but it is Galatians at length — you get the king and the kingdom for free, with no room anywhere for earning part or whole of a gift.

“It cannot be mostly grace and some works. It can’t be halvesies. It’s all grace or all works. You get to choose. Not a tough choice in my opinion.”

What you can put to death, and what you cannot

► 1:18:56

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

ROMANS 6:6–7 ↗

Paul does tell us to put to death what is earthly in us ([Romans 8:13](#), [Colossians 3:5](#)). He never tells us to crucify the flesh itself. “Everywhere we infer it, we’re wrong,” Matt said. “If you can mortify your actual flesh, why did Jesus have to die for us?” The crucifixion of the flesh already happened, on a real cross, and it is ours by union with him.

No condemnation is not a reprimand

► [1:20:10](#)

Which is why [Romans 8:1–2](#) opens with *therefore*. Matt was blunt about the common misreading: that “no condemnation” means you are not in *huge* trouble, but you are still in trouble and you have a lot to clean up. That is a poor and diminished reading of a sentence that says we are completely free from the law ([Romans 7:4–6](#), [Galatians 3:25](#)).

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

ROMANS 8:3–4 ↗

Note whose flesh sin was condemned in. His. No law, however perfect, could reform weak and corrupted humanity — trying again has never brought life, and we have all been there. God the Son, who by nature cannot die, took the nature that by nature dies, so that we who have no immortality could be joined to the immortal God ([2 Peter 1:4](#)). Matt reached for Lewis in *Mere Christianity*: God became man so that men could become sons of God.

Two chances to sneak legalism back in

► [1:23:13](#)

The first is verse 4 itself. “Those who walk according to the Spirit” is not top-shelf Christians as opposed to ordinary ones — read [Galatians 5](#) carefully. Anyone in Christ walks according to the Spirit. All who are led by the Spirit are sons of God; those sons are the ones hidden in Christ, who did not receive a spirit of slavery falling back into fear but the Spirit of adoption ([Romans 8:14–16](#)). Paul is not smuggling legalism in under spiritual language.

► [1:25:37](#)

The second is verse 17 — heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him*. Read that as a quota and you delete everything Paul has said so far, and Paul is not that crazy. He is describing those who stay when there is heat and opposition, because it does come. Those who abide.

“Union with him is the only program. There’s no secret alternative. So don’t leave.”

Groaning, and the glory the universe is waiting on

► 1:27:18

“The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in 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.”

ROMANS 8:19–21 ↗

This is not a passage about composting. It is massive, unhinged glory awaiting the saints. The cosmos is held captive to decay on our account, so our glorification — the natural result of Christ’s work — is what finally sets it loose. Creation groans in the pains of childbirth, and so do we, waiting for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22–25). The waiting is not a gap we supplement. If we have joined into his death we will share a resurrection like his, unable to die anymore (Luke 20:36).

Two-thirds of the Trinity on your prayer team

► 1:29:18

The Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26–27). Matt made a careful textual point: the manuscript tradition the ESV translates here does not even contain “for us.” It simply says the Spirit himself intercedes — something God sovereignly does for all believers regardless of gifting, too deep to file under tongues of men or angels. So he intercedes during our disciplined prayer times, and also while we are eating a pickle, watching TV, or walking the dog.

► 1:34:10

Later, with Christ interceding at the right hand of God as well, Matt turned it into a joke that carried the whole doctrine: ask how his prayer life is going and the answer is incredible — beyond 24/7 coverage, at least two persons of the Trinity on the team. “Oh, you meant *my* contribution. Not great.” He would

like to be a man of prayer one day; for now he writes his prayers down to keep from drifting, and awards himself bronze in distracted praying.

The golden chain

► 1:31:27

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

ROMANS 8:29–30 ↗

Foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified. “You’re strapped into this roller coaster for the whole ride, not just part,” Matt said. “You’re not going to jump out halfway. Glory is the last stop.” He set the free-will questions aside for another week and pointed out that Paul never says what God foreknew — it is enough to be satisfied with Christ himself. And the destination is not a pittance. Not alms for the poor, not a seat in the cheap seats, not sleeping on the ground in heaven. Conformity to the image of the Son.

Isaiah’s servant, and Paul’s switch

► 1:35:59

Here is the move Matt did not want to skip. Twice already in Romans, Paul has argued for abundant provision by grace through a figure — Abraham, then Adam. In chapter 8 he does it again with a figure from Isaiah: the servant who lets people strike him, tear out his beard and spit at him, and who sets his face like a flint because the Lord helps him ([Isaiah 50:6–7](#)).

“He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty?”

ISAIAH 50:8–9 ↗

That is a courtroom — the Hebrew is the language of a lawsuit — and the question-and-answer cadence is exactly what Paul mimics in [Romans 8:31–34](#): who can be against us, who shall bring a charge, who

is to condemn. The same section of Isaiah gives us the beautiful feet of those who bring good news (Isaiah 52:7) and the servant whose appearance is marred beyond human semblance — stricken by men, vindicated by God, hundreds of years before Jesus.

“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”

ISAIAH 53:11 ↗

► 1:39:54

If God declares believers righteous, who files the countercharge? The law — but who outranks whom? The enemy — same question. Your own thoughts and ideas, which rank below both? There is not even a comparison.

► 1:40:32

But the parallel has one deliberate seam in it. In Isaiah it is the servant who is vindicated. In Romans 8 it is all believers. Why would Paul take a text about the Messiah and apply every conclusion about him to Christians? Because the work of Jesus, not our response to it, is the basis of our identity and our confidence. His victory, his suffering, his death and his reward are ours — the same argument as the new Adam in Romans 5, made a third time with a new figure.

Nothing separates, and nothing is left to buy

► 1:43:38

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ROMANS 8:38–39 ↗

Tribulation, persecution, famine, sword — sheep to be slaughtered, all the day long (Romans 8:35–36) — and none of it earns anything, because all of it sits under the servant’s identity. We are more than conquerors through him, and, as Matt put it, in wild cahoots with the judge in the courtrooms of heaven.

So transactional Christianity is finished. The abundant favor we want comes through union with Jesus, not by acting like him.

“There was a guy who was very Jesusy. It’s Jesus.”

► 1:45:48

Which does not leave us with nothing to do — it changes what the doing is. We spend ourselves on the king for the love of the game, for honor, for joy, never earning anything back. Serve him with all your heart and mind and strength; you purchased nothing with it, and that is the point. A free will offering, not a sin offering.

Matt named the sales pitch he keeps hearing under all of it: you got the free package when you became a Christian, but there is a platinum tier, and the good stuff — real intimacy, real closeness — is available if you work at it. He does not know how that could even be possible. He abides in us and we abide in him. There is no closer.

► 1:47:30

He ended, by his own admission, because he does not know how to end sermons — with the line the message had been building toward, and then a prayer that the Spirit would tell each person what to do with it.

“What most of us need is a kind and gentle wakeup call on how much we scarcely believe all he’s already provided in Christ.”

One more thing, from the top of the message, worth keeping through the week: Steve had said during worship that it is a wonder we have legal standing to speak to God at all — even to bring someone else’s pain before the throne — and that he actually listens. Matt turned that into an assignment. Pick a person or a family, here at Hope or at work, and bless them. Ask the Lord who.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Romans 5:19
- Romans 6:6–7
- Romans 8:13
- Colossians 3:5
- Romans 8:1–2
- Romans 7:4–6
- Galatians 3:25
- Romans 8:3–4
- 2 Peter 1:4
- Galatians 5
- Romans 8:14–16
- Romans 8:19–21
- Romans 8:22–25
- Luke 20:36
- Romans 8:26–27
- Romans 8:29–30
- Isaiah 50:6–7
- Isaiah 50:8–9
- Romans 8:31–34
- Isaiah 52:7
- Isaiah 53:11
- Romans 8:38–39
- Romans 8:35–36

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where do you catch yourself living as though “no condemnation” means you are only in slightly less trouble than before?
2. Matt said we can put deeds to death but cannot crucify our own flesh. Where have you been trying to do the second thing, and what has it cost you?
3. Verse 17 says “provided we suffer with him.” What does staying rather than leaving look like in the particular heat you are under right now?
4. If the Spirit intercedes for you while you are walking the dog as much as while you are praying well, what does that change about how you think of your prayer life?
5. Name the platinum package you have been quietly trying to buy — the closeness you think is available if you work hard enough. What would it look like this week to spend yourself on the king for the love of the game instead?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKk1vGwLXg&t=4480s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.