

w/b 3rd May 2020

the next step

stepping out and following where He leads

Jesus' summons is simple - 'Follow Me!'

As His disciples, those who have responded to His call, the church is, by definition, a people on the move.

As Ruth said to Naomi, so His church says to Jesus, 'Where you go, I will go.' We are bold, therefore, both as individuals and as a local fellowship of believers, to step out in faith and to follow where He leads. 'The next step' is always the most important one and it's what that 'next step' looks like for ourselves that this series of studies addresses.



You can find the background to this short series here.

*

9. Living towards the future

(Romans 8.9-30)

[w/b Sunday 3rd May 2020]

“.. in this hope we were saved ..”

Paul’s opening prayer for the Ephesian believers (Eph.1.15-23: the focus of the previous study) incorporates three petitions, each of which has in view our ‘flourishing’ within God’s family. This present study from Romans 8 picks up on the two latter requests in that prayer – our embracing the future and experiencing the fulness promised us in Christ.

God’s family is essentially both forward-looking and Spirit-powered: the two, of course, are related in that the Spirit is given to us in the here and now as a ‘deposit’ (Eph.1.14), guaranteeing and pointing to the future God has in store for us.

In each set of questions consider the implications for ourselves as a fellowship of God’s people: what does it mean to be His family?

[There are 7 questions as ever, all important - but your Community Group may well choose to concentrate on just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 2, 5 and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

Hopefully there’ll again be a video introduction to this study under ‘Resources/Live streams and videos’ on the website.

*

1. **Read Rom.8.9-30.** Reading through the whole passage will give you a sense of how the gift of God’s Spirit is closely tied in to the hope which we have in Christ.

What truths impress themselves on you as you read this passage?

In what ways does this passage help, and perhaps oblige, you to think of the church as the *family* of God?

2. Read Rom.8.9-11. Paul's starting point is the conviction that in accordance with the promise of God every Christian has, and is indwelt by, the Spirit of God.

When, as a believer, did you first recognize that truth about yourself, and how was it made clear to you?

What difference does the Spirit's living in us make, both for the present and in the future?

How should that affect the way we relate to each other?

3. Read Rom.8.12-14. The gift of the Spirit has implications for our living: Paul spells out here that our new life is lived both in the power of the Spirit and under the Lordship of Jesus.

V.13 gives a clear command to kill! What does it mean to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' and how do you do that?

Being 'led by the Spirit' has more to do with moral direction than vocational guidance: how does the Spirit's indwelling impact our living as 'sons of God'?

4. Read Rom.8.15-17. These verses provide further instruction about the gift of the Spirit to believers, underlining both the nature and the effect of His ministry in our lives as believers.

A fellowship can sometimes be characterized by a certain 'fear': how does that happen and how can it be avoided?

How does the Spirit enrich our enjoyment of the present and excite our anticipation of the future?

5. Read Rom.8.18-25. As the firstfruits pointed forward to a substantial harvest, so our present enjoyment of the Spirit points to a yet fuller and more glorious future.

What is meant by 'the revealing of the sons of God' (v.19)?

What does Paul mean by ‘the glorious freedom of the children of God’ (v.21) and ‘the redemption of our bodies’ (v.23)?

6. Read Rom.8.26-27. The gift of the Spirit is set in the context of our relationship with God, and the privilege in particular of our coming to the Father: like infants we struggle to communicate!

What has been your experience of the truth of these verses?

In what ways are these verses an encouragement and a comfort to you?

7. Read Rom.8.28-30. Paul here condenses into 3 verses the truth he’d set out at length in Eph.1.3-14: the gift of the Spirit has a glorious end in view, which is explained in terms of ‘family’.

What does Paul say lies at the heart of God’s purpose in Christ?

If the Son is to be the 'first-born among many brothers', what will it mean for us within the fellowship to view and treat each other as such?