

WEEK OF August 11

The New Testament Brings Hope

Romans 8

I have to admit, when I accepted the assignment to write a devotional on the topic of the New Testament, it felt daunting. I am by no means a Bible scholar, or even an academic. As I reflect on the New Testament one word comes to mind; **HOPE**.

The New Testament brings hope. When I look at the Bible in its entirety, from beginning to end, the arrival of Jesus brings hope.

The Bible is ONE Story. The Old and NEW Testaments don't stand alone without the other. Without the context of the Old Testament, we don't understand what a great gift the New Testament is.

The Bible begins with the beautiful story of God and His Creation. A perfect picture of a thriving ecosystem living in harmony. God had created the perfect relationship between himself, man, and nature. Given the gift of free will, Man chooses to put himself first, and Adam introduces the first sin. That perfect, harmonious relationship is fractured.

Throughout the Old Testament, God and Man strive to find ways to reconnect and restore their relationship. God reaches out to his people, giving them opportunity time, and time again, to turn from their selfishness. We read the stories of Godly men and women who strive to please God. Sometimes they succeed, usually they fail.

Thankfully, God is gracious.

We read stories of those that have no desire to please God and it destroys them and those around them. We see one generation follow the Lord, and the next generation fall away. It feels so hopeless, but thankfully God doesn't give up on his people.

Humanity was in a desperate situation. Without a drastic change God's people were doomed to continue the same cycle forever.

God gave the Israelites the law. They tried to fulfill the duties of the law, yet selfishness and sin dominated Man.

Paul sums it up perfectly in Romans 8:7-8 (NLT),

^{7b} For the sinful nature is always hostile to God.

It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.

⁸ That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

Humanity, WE, couldn't do it. We couldn't obey all of God's laws even if we wanted to.

We **CANNOT** will ourselves to be perfect or to please God at all times. Our natural selves are self-centered and self-preserving, downright hostile to God and His ways.

Paul continues his description of his journey with sin, Romans 7:18-20 (NLT), says:

¹⁸ *And I know that **nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.***

I want to do what is right, but I can't.

¹⁹ *I want to do what is good, but I don't.*

I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.

²⁰ *But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong;
it is sin living in me that does it.*

Even when we want to do good, we don't.

Paul is deeply aware of his absolutely broken and depraved state.

Sin living in us separates us from the God who loves us.

Remember Eden? That perfectly crafted place? A place where all works in harmony and unity with God.

How do we get back there?

Is it even possible?

Jesus breaks into this dark and broken world in the New Testament.

Jesus' teachings are radical, and life-giving.

Here is a God that loves us.

Here is a God that puts the humble and powerless first, and proud and influential last.

Jesus introduces a God that is deeply personal and relational.

Jesus gives everyone a chance to reconnect with their Creator.

It is not Eden, that only exists on the other side of heaven, but Jesus completely changes how His people could relate to God.

The New Testament brings HOPE!

FAITH, TRUST, HOPE AND BELIEF IN JESUS, AND WHO HE SAYS HE IS.

Hope that we are not doomed to live in a loveless relationship with our God.

Hope that although we are hopelessly flawed sinners, we can still have a personal relationship with God.

The New Testament brings hope for the future, and comfort for our current struggles. It reassures us that we are not alone in this life, no matter what we face.

CHALLENGE:

I'd like us to read Romans 8 for the week. Romans 8 holds so much hope for each one of us!

Romans 8 shows us how we are naturally sinful people, and if we follow our own desires and it will lead to our destruction.

We need Jesus!

We are broken, but we have access to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the father.

We are no longer alone in our struggle with sin.

We have been given New Life and help along the way.

This one chapter teaches us so much about **who we are** and **Who God Is**.

There are many beautiful promises from God in this chapter.

I encourage you to take your time with it. There is a lot to absorb in this one chapter.

Below are some study ideas to help you if you feel stuck or unsure of how to study.

Study help:

1. Before you begin ask the Holy Spirit to make the text come alive to you as you read it.
2. Discover the origins of what you're reading. Answer the following questions to gain a bit of context to Romans 8.
 - a. Who wrote it?
 - b. When was it written?
 - c. To whom was it written?
 - d. What style was it written? (ie: poem, letter)
 - e. Why was it written
3. Read in different translations, try a new one each day!
4. As you read, note the big ideas and themes.
5. Look for practical applications. Does God give us any "**to-dos**" in Romans 8?
6. Does God give us any **Promises** in the text? (ex: v 11 says "He will give life to your mortal bodies...")
7. Does the text give me any indications about **who I am in Christ?**
(ex: verse 10 "*you have been made right with God...*")
8. Are there any verses that you find confusing or don't understand?
Romans 8 can be some heavy reading!
Define any words you may not understand, and ask a friend to help you understand what you're reading.
9. **Paraphrase the chapter in your own words.** When paraphrasing, try to put each verse into your own words, keeping the same intention and direction that Paul intended. I find paraphrasing is deeply personal between God and I. He reveals himself to me when I take the time to find the heart behind what is being written.