

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 34
Romans 7-16

We made it, what an important week. If we didn't have any of the other scriptures and all we had was Romans 8 which we are studying this week we would be just fine. We would have all that we need to understand the gospel and to live it in the way God wants us to. This Chapter is believed to be the most important scripture in all holy writ. Listen carefully to some of these statements:

“1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who *walk* not after the *flesh*, but after the *Spirit*.” (Romans 8:1)

To understand this single verse is to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the whole reason He came to earth in mortal flesh to save all from sin that will come onto Him. Here is another one:

“2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death.”(Romans 8:2)

We could spend hours looking at this one verse that teaches us that “to follow the Spirit”. To obey His promptings and do the will of God is to overcome every worldly or earthly law including scientific laws. Jesus proves this hundreds of times in His earthly ministry with disappearing into thin air, walking on water, healing every disease, and even raising from the dead. And not just Jesus, many of the apostles and prophets did amazing miracles while obeying the laws of the spirit and overcoming the world. But as fascinating as this is, this is not our topic for this week.

No, I feel a pull to a certain verse that rocks our world and calls us forth to do a great work. Verse 28 reads:

“And we know that all things work together for *good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” (Romans 8-28)

And if we look at the Joseph Smith translation of the next two verses we get more insight to this doctrine:

“29 For *him* whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to *his own* image, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover, *him* whom he did predestinate, *him* he also called; and *him* whom he called, *him* he also *sanctified*; and *him* whom he *sanctified*, *him* he also glorified.” (JST Romans 8:29-30)

See, here is how the world interprets this principle: If you want something you need to pursue that and go after it until you get what you want. Do what you want, be what you want. But here is the problem. Most people don't know what they really want. They see movie stars and popular influencers and they think that they want that. So, they mimic others in hopes that they can become something they presume to be good or successful or brings joy. They wear the same clothes, talk the same, act the same, but they will never be the same.

This letter from Paul under the influence of the Holy Spirit teaches a much more valuable truth. That God has a plan and a purpose for your life and if you will let Him, He will make you into what He created you to be. A glorious, happy, beautiful, successful son or daughter of God. The best way I know how to illustrate this principle is with a personal story. I hope you will indulge me as I recount some very profound events in my life.

I grew up in a small city across the river from Portland Oregon called Vancouver Washington. After returning home from my mission I planned to be a bachelor for several years and live life to its fullest. Six months after I returned home I was married. Which was fine as long as we didnt have kids for a few years. We happened to get pregnant the first month we were married. My wife's family lived in Utah and I told her I never wanted to live in Utah. One year after we got married we moved to Utah. I'm sure you can see where I am going with this. Everything that I thought I wanted I ended up with the exact opposite. But, we were young and life was good. My whole family moved to Utah after we did, and we had lots of family around us. I had a great job that was paying me more that I could have imagined and somehow we were spending more than I was making. But, we had our dream home and everything we could ever want... or so we thought.

One evening as I was driving home from work and I received a very strange prompting from the Spirit that I needed to move my family back to Vancouver. It was out of the blue. There was no forethought, or prior consideration, just a still small, in your face prompting. When I got home that night I told my wife about this crazy idea and she went stone cold. "Absolutely not," she shouted. Arguing that all of our family is in Utah now and we have nothing and no one in Washington. She was right, it was an absolutely insane idea. We owned a home in Utah, had a stable job, piles of accumulated stuff, and 3 small children. Just picking up and moving back to Washington was a horrible idea. I wasn't getting anywhere with my wife so I dropped it. For several months in fact. I didn't say a word about it to her or anyone.

Several months after I received that first prompting, my wife ended up going to an adult session of Stake conference without me, because our babysitter fell through and we had no one to watch the kids. She came home in tears like she had been balling. "What happened," I asked? "Was the conference that bad?" Through her sobs and tears she said that the Spirit told her as well, that we did need to move our family back to Washington.

Through the next week we sold what we could, rented a giant Uhaul, and left for Washington. We didn't have a place to live, a job, nothing. But, we went, trusting in the Lord, and grateful for the adventure.

We stayed with a friend for a couple of days while we found a home to rent, that was miracle number one. I obtained employment fairly quickly, making a lot less than we were used to. But we were happy. We knew there was a reason we were supposed to be there and we didn't care about anything else. I was asked to speak in our new ward a couple weeks after we moved in and the next week I was called as an early morning seminary teacher. Now, it's important to know that seminary teachers outside of Utah are very different. If you are called as a seminary teacher in most of the world it is a stake calling. It is one hundred percent volunteer work. No one gets paid and it is always before school. It was so hard, but it was also so rewarding. I remember being very swamped with work and not having any time to prepare the lesson for the next morning. I got to my office a few minutes early and opened the scriptures to the next day's chapter and almost instantly like a flash of light I knew exactly what it was I needed to teach the next morning. I quickly wrote down the outline and then went to work. I had so many amazing miracles like that during those few years. And even though we were dead broke and hardly had money for food, we always seemed to get by. We made some amazing friends and had the privilege of teaching several of them the gospel and watching them get baptized and accept Jesus into their lives. We made many fond memories while we were there. But it seems that it ended almost as soon as it started. After being there for three years almost overnight it all fell apart.

Seemingly out of nowhere the house that we were renting was being sold by the owners and we needed to find a new place to live. We probably looked at over 30 homes to rent and nothing seemed to work. It was like we were being stone walled. It didn't make any sense. Then one night after much prayer and pleading for God to give us some direction the prompting came: It was time to move back to Utah. We were devastated. We loved it there so much, and didn't want to leave. But, the direction was clear, so we packed up and moved back.

Again, we found ourselves with no place to live and no employment. But we had been in this predicament before and we knew that God would provide. Within a month of moving back we moved into a home that we would later have the opportunity to purchase and I got a job doing something I loved and worked there for over ten years. With some amazing experiences along the way. He has blessed us so much that a few years ago we were able to start a non-profit, and we get to bless the lives of so many people who are struggling or in need. Some people look at our life and just shake their heads saying: "You just got lucky." And I just laugh... luck had nothing to do with it. Luck was nowhere to be found during those long tearful nights. Luck was absent when the bills needed to be paid and there was no money left to cover them. And luck was definitely asleep at 4:30 in the morning when I would drag myself out of bed to go preach the gospel to highschool students who were also half asleep like I was. Luck was never there but God was... every step of the way. Every lonely night, every monthly miracle that somehow we were able to cover our bills, and every dark early morning God was there doing His work.

And I 'm sure when you look back on your own life you can see the truth in this scripture in Romans 8:

“We know that all things work together for **good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. “(Romans 8:28)

This means that no matter what you are going through, no matter what you are struggling with. When you love God, He will step in and do a great work in your life. He will work all things for your good. You may not see them while you're sitting in the middle of it. But you will as you look back on your life, you will see His hands and how it all worked out. It works out because of your love for Him. And I'm not talking about some acquaintance relationship, that you have some concept that God exists and that He loves His children. A belief that God somehow works miracles in some people's lives, just not yours. No, I'm talking about a strong faith filled resolution to kneel before the throne of God and being willing to give Him everything. Not just your positions, they may be the easiest things of all to give up. I'm talking about your ambitions, your pride, your stubbornness and vanity, your dreams and hopes. “We must place it all on the altar of God, kneel there in silent submission, and willingly walk away.”

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland/will-father/>

That is what God did. Why then would He not ask the same of us?

“He spared not his own **Son**, but **delivered** him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us **all** things?

Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh **intercession** for us.

Who shall separate us from the **love** of Christ? *shall tribulation*, or distress, or **persecution**, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nay, in all these things we are **more** than **conquerors** through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to **separate** us from the **love** of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- If God *be* for us, who *can be against us*?” (Romans 8:31-39)

I echo that powerful testimony of Paul. That great apostle that knew Jesus. That was willing to die for Jesus. As we ought also to be willing to do.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, Amen.