

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Session 10,

Romans 8:26-9:16

6-min. Video Overview

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Have you ever felt like you're in this constant battle, even when you've been told the victory is already yours? Well, today we are going to unpack Romans chapter 8. It's a part of the Bible that speaks right into that struggle and honestly promises something way bigger than just winning. Yeah, it's a really deep question, isn't it? To get to the bottom of it, we're going to look at this chapter through the incredible analysis of scholar Dr. Craig Keener. He shows that there's this powerful, epic story hidden right there in the text.

So let's dive in. So according to Dr. Keener, if we read Romans 8 just as a theological argument, we're kind of missing the point. He sees it as something so much bigger, so much more epic, a huge rescue story that scholars have called a new exodus.

And get this, this isn't just some clever metaphor that Paul came up with. The prophets in the Old Testament actually talked about this over and over again, this idea of a greater, future rescue that would look a lot like God freeing Israel from Egypt. Paul is tapping right into that expectation, framing the whole Christian life as a divine rescue mission.

And wow, when you put them side-by-side like this, the parallels are just stunning. Paul is basically taking that familiar story of Israel's physical slavery and their journey to the promised land, and he's applying it to our spiritual reality today. The big difference? It's not about slavery in Egypt; it's about slavery to corruption and decay.

And the destination isn't a piece of land, it's the promise of future glory. You could say it's like a cosmic upgrade to the original story. But here's the thing about this new exodus.

Just like the original, it happens in two stages. First, you have the rescue itself, right? But then there's the long journey through the wilderness before you actually get to the final destination. And this creates a tension that I think we all feel, right? We're saved, but we still have to deal with suffering.

We're technically free, but man, the struggle is real. Paul gets this. He explains that to keep us going on this journey, God gives us this powerful taste of the future right here and now.

Now, this is absolutely crucial. The first fruits he talks about aren't just a promise of what's to come. They are the actual beginning of the final harvest.

It's a real, tangible piece of the future that we get to experience today. Think of it like God's future world breaking into our present, and it's meant to completely change how we live in treaty forever right now. And that is exactly Dr. Keener's point.

The way believers live together in community is supposed to be a compelling preview, like a living, breathing trailer for the new world God is creating. It means our communities should be places with such radical forgiveness and generosity and hope that they basically look like

little outposts of heaven right here on earth, giving everyone a glimpse of what's coming. Okay, so if we're on this epic journey and we're sustained by this little taste of the future, where does it all lead? Well, this is where Paul builds his argument to this incredible, unshakable climax.

It's really one of the most powerful declarations of assurance ever written down. Paul uses this brilliant piece of logic here, what's sometimes called a *how much more* argument, and the reasoning is just devastatingly simple. He's saying, look, if God has already done the hardest thing imaginable, giving up his own son for us, why on earth would we think he'd hold back on anything less? It's an argument designed to completely crush our doubt.

Then he lays out this unbreakable chain of grace to show God's unstoppable process. It starts with God knowing and choosing, then his personal invitation to us, then his work of making things right. But you have to see that last step glorified.

Paul writes it in the past tense as if it already happened from God's eternal perspective, because he's the one who started this whole thing. Our final glorious transformation is so certain that it's already a done deal. Now, Paul does not gloss over the hard stuff.

He lists the very real danger that his readers in Rome were facing. We're talking about things like famine, which was a real issue under Emperor Claudius, and the sword, which meant the state's power to execute you. That was a threat that would become horribly real for them under Emperor Nero just a few years later.

And this is where we get the stunning reversal. The promise isn't a life without a battle. It's about an overwhelming, crushing victory right in the middle of that battle.

Paul is saying, yes, the suffering is absolutely real, but the triumph we have through the one who loves us is even more real. And he wraps it all up with this absolute ironclad guarantee. Not life, not death, not angels or demons, not our fears about today or our worries about tomorrow, not even the powers of the cosmos.

Absolutely nothing in all creation can break the bond that we have in the love of God. Now, an incredible assurance like that naturally leads to a profound question, one that Paul sees coming. If this bond is so rock solid for believers, what about everyone else? What about those who seem to be left out? As Dr. Keener points out, Paul isn't trying to solve some centuries-old philosophical debate about free will here.

His goal is way more specific. It's like he's changing the camera angle to show us salvation purely from God's point of view, just to emphasize that the entire plan was started and is secured by him from start to finish. And to make his point, he reaches right back into Israel's own family history.

He reminds them, hey, remember Abraham? He had two sons, but the divine promise went to Isaac. And then Isaac had two sons, but the promise continued through Jacob, not Esau. What's the point? God's plan was never just automatic.

It wasn't based simply on who your parents were. And this is the radical takeaway for his audience. Paul is arguing that being a part of God's family has never been about your ethnic background or about earning your way in.

It has always been, and it still is, based completely on God's sovereign purpose and his gracious choice. So in the end, Romans 8 is so much more than just abstract theology, isn't it? It's a story. It's this new Exodus narrative that completely reframes our lives.

It's an assurance that no matter what kind of wilderness we might be facing, our journey is secure. Our destination is glorious, and our core identity as a beloved child of God can never, ever be taken away from us.