Week 34 is scheduled for study Aug. 14-20, 2023. To overcome evil with good we must first become a true Saint. Let's look at how this is done. It is a step by step process.

Day 1

Only a few of the gospel principles in Romans 7-16 can be included in this outline, so don't limit yourself to what is addressed here. Pay attention to the inspiration you receive as you study.

Romans 7-8 - Those who follow the Spirit can be come "joint-heirs with Christ."

I have just a short, but important point to make here. To understand what it means to be a joint-heir with Christ we must first identify what it is that Christ is the heir of. True, Jesus created everything in the universe, but he did it at the command and under the instruction of our Father in Heaven. All of it belongs to God, our Father. Only after we have completed His plan of salvation for His children, and all of us have received our judgment and have been resurrected, will Christ come into his full inheritance for being the Messiah. At that time God will give full ownership of all that has been created at Christ's hands to Jesus, the Christ.

The governing of the entire universe will pass into the hands and become the sole responsibility of he who created it. Jesus is the only child of God who is worthy of a full

inheritance based on his own obedience and performance. For those who choose to submit themselves to Jesus and his commandments, who repent and live lives the best way they know how, Jesus promises to make them joint-heirs with him. He says that all that God gives him he will share with those of us who are true followers of him and his ways.

It is difficult for me to wrap my head around the notion that the God of this universe will share with me ownership of that same universe. As I progress towards godhood myself, I will be given greater and greater responsibilities in governance within this universe. The scriptures refer to them as kingdoms and principalities. What an honor and privilege! Only one of God's children deserved such an inheritance because of his own merits, but because I am willing to follow him and obey his commandments he is willing to make me a join-heir in all that he receives from God, our Father.

Do you know of any faith, Christian or otherwise that offers this as a promise to those who are faithful?

Day 2

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Romans 8:16-39 - The gift of eternal glory far outweighs my trials on earth.

Refer to yesterday's lesson. When we view the cosmos and all that is in it, we catch only the smallest of glimpses of what might be coming our way in the future. The New Testament says that Jesus suffered what he did for our sins because of his views of his rewards in the future. The secret here is to take our eyes off today and put them squarely on the future. There is nothing in today that can make what we must suffer in this life worth the effort. It is what we are promised in the future that makes our trials today worth experiencing.

Our challenge is to keep our attention on the future. This is where hope and faith come to play. Without a hope in a glorious resurrection, without a hope in a celestial glory and an exaltation with our eternal companion, what could possibly induce us to be ever

faithful in the here and now? This is why we should stop looking at our current situation and focus on our future situation. Without hope and the faith that creates, we won't have the strength we need to make it to the end goal.

Paul makes the point that if we see the goal with out eyes then there is no need for hope or faith, for the goal is sure. So God has withheld the visions of eternity from us so we can develop our ability to put our trust in Him, and exercise our faith in His causes. This is what sustains us in the difficult times in our life.

Day 3

Only a few of the gospel principles in Romans 7-16 can be included in this outline, so don't limit yourself to what is addressed here. Pay attention to the inspiration you receive as you study.

Romans 8:29-30; 9-11 - What did Paul mean by "predestinate," "election," and "foreknow"?

We don't believe in predestination, that belief that we have no choice, because something was decided for us in the past. That is false doctrine. But to predestinate as Paul talks about it means that God knew us enough to choose us for responsibilities in mortality for which we will be held responsible. There is a big difference between the two beliefs.

All of these terms paint the picture of God knowing ahead of time, and choosing us before we came here to do a work He wanted done by someone He trusted in mortality. We know that His "election" to anything is done through covenants, because that is how His plan of salvation was designed and is run. All special blessings come through covenants made and covenants kept.

We don't know how the selection was done, nor do we understand or know why some of us were chosen to be in that select family called Israel, with whom God made His earthly covenants. All we know is that with those covenants come responsibilities to bless the families of the earth in every way we can. We build and go to temples to carry on the work of salvation for those already passed on. We do ministering and missionary work in many ways to bless the lives of those currently living, offering them the same

blessings we have been offered. It is also our responsibility to listen to and follow the teachings of those leaders God has called as His prophets and apostles.

Our position as one of those who have been foreknown, elected, or predestinated to do something in this earth life comes with responsibilities to be as faithful as we can be. We must seek God's will then do it. Only then will the blessings promised us unfold in our lives and we will be able to fulfill the missions we were chosen to fulfill in this life. We don't know all that we were selected to accomplish, but with the help and guidance of the Spirit we will be led to do those things that accomplish the work of the Lord.

Our Father in Heaven knows each of us perfectly, far better than we know ourselves. All of the blessings available to any child of promise is available also to any other child who is willing to submit to the commandments Jesus gives us, make covenants then keep them. But someone has to be sent before the rest to teach, set examples, and provide the truth for others to follow. We may not be prophets or apostles, but we who have already made covenants are under great obligation by those covenants to demonstrate the blessings of living a Christlike life for others to see the way God has prepared for all of His children. If nothing else, this is a high calling and responsibility, one that should not be taken lightly. This blessing does not make us better than others, but it certainly does make us more obligated to be obedient than those who have not yet learned of our Father's ways.

Day 4

Only a few of the gospel principles in Romans 7-16 can be included in this outline, so don't limit yourself to what is addressed here. Pay attention to the inspiration you receive as you study.

Romans 12-16 - Paul invites me to become a true Saint and follower of Jesus Christ.

Let's take chapter 12 as our example of how we can read and think about the other chapters in today's lesson. Paul is talking about the qualities that make a true Saint. We know the Lord wants us to become holy before Him, and this is how it is done. As we read through the 21 verses let's pick out just a few that stand out. These are my standouts. You will probably have others that stand out to you.

> 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Ever wonder what it means to present your own body as a living sacrifice unto God? Paul even says that this living sacrifice is a "reasonable service." That sounds to me like he is saying that such a sacrifice is nothing we should feel to be extraordinary or special, but expected of us. In my mind, if I make my body a living sacrifice to God then all my physical efforts are being directed to fulfill God's work at all times and in all places, in any way that I can. I put my health and well being on the line, recognizing that the most important thing I can do in this life is the Lord's will at any time of the day or night. All personal comforts take second place in my list of priorities.

> 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When I am conformed to this world the desires and demands of this world are first and foremost in my thinking. I am more concerned with what the world expects of me than of what God expects or wants of me. Paul wants us to put God first. How do we do that? We transform ourselves by learning to think and act like Christ, so we demonstrate to all around us what is good, and acceptable, and wholesome. In other words, we show by our works, our behavior, the will of God in our lives.

> 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
>
> 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:
>
> 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Verse 5 struck me on this reading. We have talked about being all part of the body of Christ. That has come up in many lessons in the past. What I haven't seen mentioned before is Paul's closing comment here that we are each "members one of another." That means that I am a part of you, and you are a part of me, both of us serving the needs of the whole by helping one another. If you are a finger, and I a toe in the body of Christ, we help each other by being good serviceable members one to another. By my providing the balance expected of a toe, you are better able to provide the work and dexterity required of a finger, and vice versa.

In the past I only thought of myself being a part of the whole. Now I see that I serve my fellow members in fulfilling their part of the body when I do all in my power to fulfill my part in the body of Christ. We help each other make the body as a whole stronger. This is why we are all needed, no matter how small our seeming part in the body.

> 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
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> 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;
>
> 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.
>
> 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

More than once I have caught myself claiming to love another person, yet I speak unkindly about them when they aren't present. This means I am loving them with dissimulation - insincerity. This kind of behavior is not demonstrating an abhorrence of evil, but a practice of evil. It demonstrates that I am not cleaving to that which is good, but to that which is hypocritical. Repentance is clearly in order here.

> 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
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> 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
>
> 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
>
> 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Recently I have had several people act surprised when I volunteer to do something nice for someone else. This has been especially true when I offer the use of my home for someone in need. So often we are willing to step outside of our home and do something good for someone else, but we are almost viciously protective of our personal space when it comes to our home. I ask this question in all sincerity. How can I offer my all to God if I am holding back any part of my life, my time, my abilities, or my resources? How would you define what it means to be "given to hospitality"? How does this concept fit in with being member to each other in the body of Christ?

> 14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
>
> 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

> 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.
>
> 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.
>
> 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

We live in a very divisive world. It is common for people to take sides on almost every issue and topic under the sun. Yet God wants us to "live peaceably with all men." Can we take sides and fight and quarrel one with another and still live peaceably with each other? There seems to be a settlement of behavior that needs to take place before we can truly say we seek peace with our neighbors.

> 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
>
> 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
>
> 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Christ never did evil for the evil he received. He always returned good for the evil around him. There is no rule that says we can't continue to choose good when others around us seem not to understand what good is or deliberately choose some form of evil. Christ overcame all evil by choosing good in every instance. This takes practice, but it is definitely something we can learn to do if we want it enough.

Two cents worth

Now that you have my two cents worth, spend some time looking through each of the verses in these chapters and see what thoughts spring into your head, what jumps out at you, or what instances in your life come to mind. These are the kind of things the Spirit wants you to take a look at in the hope you will learn something about yourself from studying these chapters or events from your own life. Don't fight such thoughts, but accept them and consider them seriously. The Spirit will bless you for doing so.

FHE/Personal Study

Romans 14:13-21 - Personal Preferences

These are some truly important verses and counsel for every one of us. If we each understand that everything is pure, except to him who is offended by that thing, then for us to indulge in that thing is to offend our brother or sister in the gospel and cause them to stumble even more. Are they mistaken in their belief? Yes. But better to change our own behavior than to cause them to find more fault with the Saints and feel more estranged from the body of Christ.

Mind you I am not saying that everything is acceptable in the gospel of Christ, but if my neighbor is thoroughly convinced that eating any kind of meat is a vile thing to do, why would I deliberately invite that person to eat at my house knowing I am serving meat? I know that meat is not unclean before the Lord, but my neighbor is offended by me having it in my house. Fine. I will love my neighbor where he or she is at this moment and not eat meat in front of them if that is a particularly tender subject for them. We all have issues with certain practices or beliefs in our religion. We all need to be patient with one another and give everyone time to grow in the gospel.

To push someone in an area that isn't of vital importance to their salvation is to possibly push them out of the Church. The goal here is not to clean house, but to strengthen our neighbors in Christ. Remember that someone else may have performed this same courtesy for us years ago, and that may have helped to keep us in the church during a time we had our own doubts.

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