

**Sermon Notes of
Assistant Pastor Manuel Hamme's Sermon on April 7, 2019:**

**"Believe, Respond, and ... Belong
(Romans 8)"**

[In today's sermon, Assistant Pastor Manuel Hamme shows what it's like to belong to God's family and how it will impact our lives.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Now, out on the front table is a glossy card that's basically a synopsis of our church welcoming people to worship here with us,
- On the front side, it says "Belong, Believe, and Become."
- And the most recent sermons given by pastor Craig, he's been emphasizing the "believe" and "respond" aspect of it.
- Today, we're going to emphasize the "belong" aspect of it – being part of God's family. What does that look like? And how does that affect us in our lives?

What does it mean to belong?

- The word "belong" can mean so many different things.
- So here are things we can belong to or be a part of:
 - Groups including church
 - Teams of various sports
 - Workplace/Trade
 - City
 - Nation
 - Political party
 - School
 - Family
- There's another aspect to the meaning of the word "belong". It can also show:
 - Possessiveness
 - Ownership
 - Value or Necessary
 - Involvement
 - Interaction
- What's interesting is that today, membership in various organizations has dropped drastically over the last 30-40 years.
- One of the reasons why is that people are asking, "What can this organization do for me?"
- Manny likes to add a little humor to his sermon via cartoons. So here are some.

Cartoon #1:

- At high school recess time, two student leaders are picking team members out of the rest of the students.
- And the one kid said, "There's just me and the manatee (a large plant eating aquatic mammal) left. Just once don't let me be placed last."
- And wouldn't you know it; they picked the manatee over the kid.
- As a kid, we don't like to be picked last because it was disheartening.
- Of course, when we were picked first, we always felt some pride and joy in that.

Cartoon #2:

- Various animals are standing around waiting to be picked for the basketball team.
- Caption: Truth be told, Stanley (the giraffe) doesn't even like basketball, despite always being picked first.

Cartoon #3:

- A high school student is talking to his coach.
- "But if you never put me in the game coach, how will my father ever live his own sports dreams vicariously through me?"
- We know that we belong on a team, not necessarily that we want to be a part of a team, but that we have been urged very vigorously by our father to do so.

Cartoon #4:

- This cartoon shows what it feels like when we don't want to belong to some team or organization.
- There are two penguins sitting on a limb up in a tree and one says to the other, "You're right, we don't belong here."
- We know that penguins don't fly or climb trees, so if we seem them in a tree, we know that there's something odd going on.
- The second illustration is a cat sitting in a cage and saying, "I don't believe I belong here."
- These cartoons reflect how we may feel after being in an organization for a while that we no longer want to belong there anymore.

Cartoon #5:

- This cartoon applies to all of us.
- A man is talking to a woman at restaurant table, "I always felt different as a child – I come from a functional family."
- Most of feel that we have come from a functional family.
- But that's not always the case.
- Manny and his wife have recently watched a documentary called "Three Identical strangers."

3 identical strangers – Eddie, Bobby, David:

- The documentary is about Eddie, Bobby and David, who are not only brothers but triplets.
- They were separated from their mother and each other when they were 6 months old and adopted by different families in the early 1960's.
- And none of them were aware they had any siblings when they were growing up.
- Now, Eddie decided to go to college and during the first day there, several students came up to him and said, "David, it so good to see you back here again." "How was your summer?"
- A friend of David was so impressed how much Eddie looked like David, that he took him to David's house so they could meet each other.
- And when they came together, they realized that were identical.
- It was so unusual, that it became a story printed in the local town newspaper.
- And Bobby's parent read the article and felt that the picture of these two boys looks exactly like their son.
- After the three brothers got together, they did some research into their past and discovered that there was an experiment set up to differentiate between "nature" and "nurture."
- Researchers were interested how the brothers, who were genetically identical, would become different when they grew up in different backgrounds and situations.
- The organization didn't tell the parents that their adopted son had two other brothers, because they felt that would ruin the experiment.
- Periodically, the researchers would come to the three homes to see how the brothers answered various questions.
- The three infants were intentionally placed with families having different parenting styles and economic levels.
- One was a successful doctor, another was a typical blue-collar person, and the other one was middle class.
- One father really loved his son a lot, another was so busy that he wasn't that affectionate, and the third father was a strict disciplinarian.
- Now once the three brothers got together, they got involved in business adventures together, including owning a restaurant.
- Manny will come back with more of the story about these triplets later on in his message.

Belonging to God's family:

- God has done so much for us and He also wants us to be a part of His family.

John 1:12, Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – 13) children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

A few examples of belonging in the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:26, Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.

Genesis 2:18, The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

- So in essence, God has created a family with Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:8, And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool, the afternoon breeze of the day.

- So we can see that right from the very beginning, God was also involved in the human family.

Belong to God's Family – Romans 8:

- In this chapter, we'll see how God is involved in our lives.

Trinity – Justification & Sanctification (Verses 1-4):

Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

- A lot of commentaries are saying we need to reflect upon our former life before we had a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We lived a life of sin which brings a lot of misery to this world, which television programming shows us.
- So, God has saved us from a lot of misery.

3) For what the law could not do, which is to save us or help us, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- Now, if you look at the first 4 verses, you'll see the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all involved in our relationship as part of God's family.
- We understand that the Son came on our behalf, and we understand that the Father sent Him, and we understand that the Holy Spirit dwells in us to keep that relationship alive.
- These verses show that the nature or desire of sin in our lives is what's sinful, because obviously when Jesus lived here in the flesh, He was sinless.

Life in the Spirit (Verse 5-13):

5) For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, which is hopelessness, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

- Think about what all our sinful thoughts and desires lead to and all the sorrow and misery it brings if we act upon them.

6) To be carnally minded is death, which is failure and separation, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, which is victory and enjoyment,

- We know that having a relationship with God means victory over sin.
- We know that we will have a future life with Jesus, who gave us victory over death and this future life will have endless and indescribable enjoyment.

7) for the carnal mind is hostile toward God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be, 8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God because we were in a hostile, rebellious, failure to please kind of situation that results in death.

- God is not focusing on our sin because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

9) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

- Now this verse begins to show us how the Spirit is involved in our lives.

10) And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that lives in you.

- Now, we know that God has done everything to get us to the place of redemption through Jesus, yet He continues to work with us through the Holy Spirit to ensure our relationship with Him.

12) Therefore, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13) For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

- We understand that we are sinless and righteous before God because of Jesus' sacrifice – however this does not mean that we will never sin again, because we still have our sinful nature.
- It's also true that this relationship we have with God doesn't mean that we will live a complete blissful, peaceful and prosperous life.
- In fact, we might have more things tempting us, like old friends or old bad habits – to draw us back into our former lifestyle.
- But that's why God has given us the Holy Spirit – to help us resist these promptings or urges.

The Holy Spirit's Ministry (Verses 14-17):

14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

- Now, when God does things in our lives, He doesn't come as a strict, vengeful God but He comes with gentleness.

- God doesn't hit us over the head, but rather He gently leads us.

15) For you have not received the spirit of slavery again to fear. But you have received the Spirit of adoption, not bondage, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father."

- Now the Romans, at that time, viewed adoption as a very important aspect in their society.
- Under Roman rule adoption involved more than just children being adopted.
- Adults were also adopted into a Roman family, which the movie "Ben-Hur" shows that Ben-Hur was adopted by a Roman general.
- Now, of course, when we become adopted in God's family, He considers us His dear children not servants.

16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, 17) and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.

- As children of God, we have full rights and benefits that Jesus has given to us.

The future (Verses 18-21):

18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that has lasting values which shall be revealed to us. 19) The eager expectation of the creation waits for the appearance of the sons of God.

20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but by the will of Him who subjected it, in hope 21) that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

- As the children of God, we will be blessed with certain things as we participate in God's everlasting family.

The Spirit's Final Ministry (Verses 26-29):

26) Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words.

- God knows us better than we know ourselves and the Holy Spirit, within us, gives us guidance as to how we should pray and how we should talk to our heavenly Father.
- Now the word "groaning" is an interesting word.
- If you have children and one of them is sick and groaning, you know that something is wrong with them.
- A wife, in the middle of childbirth, is groaning and her husband knows what she wants – she doesn't have to verbalize her thoughts to get a response from him.
- It's the same with our groaning in our relationship with God which may be caused by the pains we're experiencing in our life.
- God understands what we need even though we haven't verbalized it.
- And often times, the Holy Spirit does the prayer intercession for us.

27) He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God, who knows our needs and our will. 28) We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29) For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- God continues to make us in His image (Genesis 1:26) as we are made into the image of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Belonging to God's family – the future (Verses 31-34):

31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? This is a priceless action.

- Think about God's great love for us – first, he gave us His only Son.
- And Jesus, out of His love for all humanity, gave His life for us.

33) Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

- When we sin, we sin against God and what He has intended for us.
- So, it's only God who can wipe away and forgives our sins and say that there's no debt to be paid.

34) Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, who is risen, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

- It's through Jesus Christ, God's Son, that our sins have been completely and totally wiped away.

The love of God – it's unstoppable (Verses 35,-38):

35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...

- Nothing that happens in our life can separate us from the love of God, not even perilous things.
- Now, let's go back to the story of Eddie, Bobby and David.
- Once they got to know each other, they became a family.
- But this didn't make their lives happy because they felt betrayed being separated the way they were.
- When they were interviewed for news stories, people assumed that they were all identical in their thoughts and no one asked them, "How are you different?"
- People just assumed that if one of the brothers believed something, then they all believed it.
- Now, the brothers found out that the reason their mother had given them up for adoption was because she had psychological problems, which they also had to deal with.

- Unfortunately, one of the brothers became distant from the others and eventually took his own life.
- Now, we know that there can be various trials and tribulations that we can go through in our lives, which can affect us.
- And, so, Paul is addressing these issues by asking can these perilous trials separate us from the love of God.
- These next two verses are very powerful and encouraging.

38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, 39) neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Nothing we can do today or will do in the future can separate us from the love of God.
- Often times, when we do sinful things, we think, “How can God possibly love me?”
- But Paul assures us that God’s love is deep and so great that nothing we do will separate His love for us.
- So, we need to believe Scripture and we need to respond to Scripture and we need to understand that God wants us to belong to Him as part of His family.
- So, in conclusion, let’s read this verse all together as part of God’s family:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- We need to understand and believe that we truly belong in God’s family

Communion: Welcome to God’s family:

- One of the great things that we’re allowed to participate in is the communion service.
- Jesus wanted us to participate in the Last Supper where He freely gave His body and His blood for us.
- Prayer over the elements:

Dear almighty wonderful heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Savior, and Holy Spirit, we come before You, so thankful for everything You have done for us. And we know that You continue to work with us and want us to be reminded that You do love us all the time and that Your love has no limits, no bounds.

And that you want the best for us and still desire for us to have a relationship with You – all because of Your great love. We thank You for Your words and ask that they be sewn in our lives. And we thank You for allowing us to participate in this Communion. Amen.

- So now we take the bread as part of being in God’s family.
- And now we take the wine or juice which represents the blood of Jesus, who died on the cross for us.