Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Book of Romans Chapter 8

 In Chapter 7 we dealt with the works of the Law in regard to how law tells us what is wrong and what is proper in God's eyes. That the old sin nature still dwells in us, and presents a real conflict because of our new relationship with Christ and how we should comport ourselves in light of this new relationship. Paul explains that he, himself, struggles with the old sin nature even though he knows what he should be doing in his life with Christ. This is a reality we all seem to face, right?

 We are delivered from the effects of the Law through the Atoning death of Christ on the Cross, but all the Law can do is point out our sin, and our deliverance then comes by His atoning action. Now this means when we accept Christ we, in effect, are making that atoning sacrifice of the Lamb, saying we are guilty of sin and this is the required sacrifice by the Law. To atone means to say, "I am sorry and I will not do it again." How many times did I, as a child, tell my mom or dad, that I was sorry for some infraction and promised not to do it again, yet, by golly, I did do it again.

 Are we catching on to this letter Paul is writing? And for that matter why he is writing it? It becomes more of a treatise on this new Christian doctrine, helping both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers come to an understanding what the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah truly means to them in light of what they had believed.

 A] Romans 8: 1 through 11; (read)

 1] "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

 When I have taken Jesus Christ on as Lord and Savior, and in doing so He lives in me as the Holy Spirit, and I heed the Spirit's call, by that previously discussed 'justification', I no longer live condemned because of my sin. NOTE: the phrase, "Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." That is what makes the difference.

 Friends, please see the continuation of thought as we start chapter 8, from the last verses of chapter 7, this again is the problem of chapter and verse additions.

 2] "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not according to the flesh but according to the spirit."*

 That is a mouthful. The word 'for' is used many times here as is the word ‘therefore’ and simply means a progression of thought on the subject. We know that, on its own, the Law only can spell out what is sin, it cannot produce righteousness in man. The law can also spell out corrective measures. But through Jesus Christ, I am no longer bound to the promise of eternal death. The Law could not save me, only the atoning death of Jesus was able to save me. After all this are we actually getting this? Paul seems to repeat these things and frankly after reading all of this, I wonder why so many don’t have a clue yet.

 3] "*For those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace."*

 Paul here, makes distinctions between good and evil. If I live in the here and now, and lust after what the world offers and I am not convicted in my heart of the wrongs I am doing, I do NOT have the Holy Spirit in me do I? Therefore, I do not have any kind of relationship with the Living God. Think about it, Paul is telling us as well as these folks he is writing to; that living the carnal life only leads to death

 If I do have that relationship with God through Jesus Christ, I cannot have that desire to live that carnal life, and I will be spiritually convicted in my heart of my wrongs and with the power of the Holy Spirit, I strive to change through His power. When I am then spiritually minded, when I set my sights on things spiritually, then my life is truly changed into a life of peace and hope.

 4] “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God nor indeed can be, so then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

 Simply put, to live in this world and according to what the world offers literally puts me at odds with God. I cannot have any kind of relationship with God as long as I long for the things here, can I? God wants us, mind, body and soul and if we are of a divided mind, then none of the three are compatible and we stay separated.

 5] "*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, He is not His."*

 There it is, If the Spirit of God does live within you, you cannot live in the world without being convicted over the things around you. What this sounds like is, Paul is sorting out the Jewish and Gentile believers as to their claims of faith. Are you a part of this world or a part of God's realm? We cannot live with one foot in one world and one foot in another. One of the funnier things I see in these home videos is someone trying to stand with one foot on the dock and the other foot in the boat. You all know this will end badly.

 6] "*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

 So, sin convicts us and we, because of Adam, die. However, because of that death and resurrection of Christ through God's Holy Spirit Power we are made alive again because the Holy Spirit of God then, dwells in us and gives us new life in Jesus.

 Now I am willing to bet that these are concepts the Jewish and Gentile believers had no idea about. I doubt they ever thought about them. But to understand the relationship God seeks with those who believe in Him, Paul is taking the believers relationship with God back to the first grade, right to the beginning.

 B] Romans 8: 12 through 17; (read)

 1] "*Therefore brethren we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*

 If we are living according to God's will and by His Holy Spirit, we are debtors. We owe God our very existence, don't we? We are under an obligation to live according to the Spirit, and not according to the fleshly lives we have up to now lived in.

 2] "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the Sons of God."*

 Now where did this sonship come from? Remember, the Jews believe they are the children of God and treated outsiders with their purported superiority. They were special and I see Paul here and in other places showing that this special relationship with God belonged to those who believed and had the Holy Spirit in them, or being led by the Holy Spirit, thus they are becoming part of God's Family, no more just a Jewish thing.

 Now before the gals get a little upset, I personally believe 'sons' is more of a generic term. In essence, we are ‘children of God’, maybe that sounds better.

 3] "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together."*

 In looking at this set of verses, we go back to being under bondage to the Law which the Jews were. There was fear because of the Law and its ensuing consequences. But because of this new relationship with Christ, Paul tells them and for that matter we, we are not under the bondage of the law that brings fear but under the Spirit of sonship. We belong to God, lock, stock and barrel. (an old reference to the ancient flintlock rifle, which had the lock, where the flint was lodged, the stock which was the wooden part which held the barrel of the gun).

 Now how does this happen? We are adopted. We, as gentiles, were not under the covenants God started with Abraham, but because of the new relationship with Christ Jesus, we are then adopted into the family. Now adoption means a legal and binding contract which adds us into the family with all rights and privileges as a part of the family. This means we can call Him Abba which means Father or Daddy. We then are heirs, and binding contracts are not broken. We are not, part-timers, or foster children, we are actually children adopted.

 Now if we are, then, children of God, that means we are heirs and this takes us back to the inheritances of the old patriarchs upon their children, we are heirs to all that is God's and when we are heirs, well as Paul puts it, we are joint heirs with Christ. We are His brothers and sisters, as well as we are all brothers and sisters together in Christ. FAMILY!!!

 C] Romans 8: 18 through 30; (read)

 1] "*I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

 Now Paul slightly shifts gears here. Having described who we now are in Christ, that of brothers and sisters of Christ children of the Most High God, he then segues into what we shall be. When we see the suffering of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in that time under the despotic Roman rulers and the zealot Jewish leaders of Israel, and Paul tells them these sufferings are paltry compared to what glory we shall have with God later on. In other words what I see here is the sufferings we face will actually show us in a different light as we weather them in God's Strength.

 2] "*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly awaits for the revealing of the sons of God."*

 Paul, here, is relating to a future where, if you can picture it, we are standing with hands outstretched looking for who we really are in Christ, to be revealed. The word 'creation' was originally rendered 'creature' in old manuscripts, but that creature was the whole of creation.

 3] “*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Children of God."*

 That word was 'vanity' and really meant nothingness, or emptiness. Going back to the beginning when Adam sinned and the whole complexion of creation changed, didn't it? All of creation just existed and we exist in it. But there is a new time coming when God will make sense of it for His creation.

 4] "*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."*

 This does bring up philosophical questions. As mankind continually delves deeper into the world around him and the world around him reflects man's depravity, the moral decay and physical decay is evident and moreso, than it was in Paul's time. Paul sees the depravity of the world around him, the Romans and the Jewish, plus the Greek and boundary nations, all fought among one another and the land itself was becoming barren especially Jerusalem and throughout Israel which was, at one time, quite verdant.

 But things are changing as Paul puts it, and being the new children of God, we will witness this change. The time is upon us, as a pregnant mother awaits the birth of her child amid her groaning of experiencing the birthpangs. Paul is telling them focus on the coming hope not on your present trials.

 5] "*Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, eagerly awaiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*

OOOOOkay! I guess explanations are in order, aren't they? Paul and the Apostles would be the beneficiaries of the Holy Spirit and the Fruits thereof, and they too, look for the new order of things. What are the first fruits, you may ask? Well Paul and the Apostles began their missionary journeys in the power of the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit empowered them to do, would have been the 'first fruits'. Paul previously spoke of the adoption and yes, we are adopted but still have our sinful humanity. We are still in the world, and with that, all the temptations. Our physical bodies still feel pain and suffering. There is coming the time when we will be "ratified” (or approved) as spoken of by Bishop Ellicott, with our new bodies and new location.

 6] "*For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."*

 Another tricky one, friends. Many of the early scholars from Meyer, Ellicott McLaren, keep us on the 'hope' of our salvation, but my thought is we have our salvation, the hope is what comes afterward. I am assured by my belief and acceptance of Christ's atoning death on the Cross, that I am saved and my hope then lies with the idea that I have a new life and home in Christ. We hope in the promises of the Gospel. These are things we read about, but we really can't see into the future, can we? What we have are the promises from God.

 The folks in that era had little knowledge or understanding regarding life after death, only what abstracts the priests might tell them. They lived strictly in the here and now.

 7] "*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*

 Now we need notice that this whole chapter is an explanation of how the Holy Spirit works in us, and in this paragraph, the Holy Spirit even helps us in our communication with God. Especially in the time of these new believers, and in their trials under the Romans and Jewish leaders, the folks had a burden that may have been hard to explain. But because they had, and we have, the Holy Spirit within us, we do have that real personal fellowship with God and the Holy Spirit can communicate to the Father what we cannot, in our weakness, convey.

 8] "*Now, He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*

 The Holy Spirit is part of the Triune God and thus being a built in intercessory the Triune God hears and knows all that is going on. And just think, If I have the Holy Spirit in me I have The Triune God and because all those past, present and future believers have the Holy Spirit, we are then all related which helps to further explain the growing brotherhood, doesn't it?

 9] "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

 Now this is a verse so many people love to take out of context, and they will repeat it ad infinitum, never really understanding it in its full context. God, in His perfection, has all things under His control, everything is in His timing and for the moment, and everything that He does is right, so we then know, that all that he does is coordinated so that things happen just as He wills. Now as I have spoken of before, God is over all this universe, which He alone created, and that includes all time which He is God over. Are we catching on yet? God knows all things that will happen, are happening and have happened. His purpose IS being fulfilled.

 Paul is then reassuring the reader, that through our travails and trials, God is still in control, and He knows what is in our hearts and minds.

 10] "*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, those He also called, whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified , these He also glorified."*

 Remember what I said above? Here we go! There are a broad range of beliefs on the subject of predestination and foreknowledge. There are a lot of believers and denominations who cannot fathom the idea of predestination. All I can say to this is, God created the whole entire universe and He also created time. The root word in Greek 'prooriso' literally is to: for (pro) ordain(oriso) So this is exactly what Paul was saying and if folks have a problem with predestination they need to carefully read the Greek and accept what he said. Or not.

 (Ready) Now friends, Time here on earth is measured by the earth's rotation around the sun. That is how we measure time by spinning on its axis, and circling around the sun, but if I am on Mars how do I measure time? If I go to Pluto, how do I measure time? If I am out in outer space on the USS Enterprise, how do I measure time? Because God created time that means He is over time, that He sees events from the beginning of His creation on to forever. He saw us in our time period and knew what we were doing and what we will do, what decisions we will make. So, God knew who would believe in Him and He know those who would not. For God, He foreknew, what our destinies were.

 Friends, there are mysteries throughout the Bible, and mysteries about God and we will never know the answers to so many questions, and areas of the Bible until God calls us home. We are called to take this Bible and accept it as God Holy Word, and to study to find these answers. We cannot cherry-pick what we want to believe and what we want to discard. Study to show ourselves approved.

 D] Romans 8: 31 through 39; (read)

 1] "*What then shall we say to those things? If God is for us who can be against us?* So Paul winds up this section with a summation of sorts, that now knowing what and who God is, how can we have any doubt as to His love for us and His careful protection over us. How can we question anything about Him as we live through His Holy Spirit, and follow where He leads us?

 2] "*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?"*

 Going back to Genesis and to the Abraham saga of sacrificing Isaac wherein God provided, because of Abraham's faith, a substitutionary sacrifice, in this case God provided His own Son as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. So if His love is that great, and Paul is going back to the things he said of God’s promise, How would He withhold any good thing from His children? So that Hope Paul spoke of is real, isn't it?

 3] "*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."*

 We were sinners, but because of our faith and declaration, God has justified us, or declared us innocent, so who has the authority to bring up any charges against us? We are now innocent and belong to God and no one can ever accuse us. Also we have Jesus Christ who is there at the throne interceding for us in all matters, so there is no one to accuse us.

 4] "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword, as it is written, "For your sake we are killed all day long, We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."(Psalm 44:22)*

 With all that God is and all He has promised, coupled with the relationship we have with Him, God will let nothing come between Him and us. Note how close we are to our spouses, dear friends, and won't we protect them in times of trouble? Now also remember this. AS we have learned, we are HIS CHILDREN—right, and as His children, he will never forsake us, throw is out, return us to our other foster families—right? Because we are His, that adoption contract is valid and unbreakable. That grace gift is just that, if it were not, that gift would come with strings attached, or be just a loan. You understand what I am saying? God does not take back grace.

 Just how much greater will God be in our lives? And then, Paul goes on to relate something to these folks they know dearly and that is the tribulations they were facing at that time.

 We will go through all kinds of trials, we will be killed or maimed, we will face hard times, but God's loving Grace will strengthen us during these times. He will be with us through the hard times. And friends, I use an old illustration of forging steel and heat treating it for greater strength. That blade will never be strong without the heat and cold torture it will be subjected to.

 5] "*Yet in all things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."*

 It is said in many circles, that If I believe in God, He will keep me from harm. Well that is not true, is it? If hard times befall me, the Old Testament cliché is, I must have done something wrong to warrant such treatment. Nothing can be farther from the truth. We still live in an immoral, sinful world. A world that does not love God, and there are diverse and perverse people and beliefs out there. So our physical bodies will be tortured and beaten, but our spirits and souls will never be defeated, because when we have God, He will defeat sin and death. Therefore, we ARE more than Conquerors, because God has loved us with an everlasting love.

 6] "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, not things to come, nor 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."*

 So, with all things said and written, Paul concludes this part of the letter, with the Hope he has brought forward. There is a bond forged with Christ's blood, with all who believe, that can never be broken. Now there are those who do not believe in the security of the believer, but I personally believe that this verse from Paul affirms that we who believe are forever with God and that Satan with all his minions can never sever that bond. It then comes down to, do you really believe? Or are you fooling yourself and just uttering the words.