

Romans Chapter 8 Part 1 – John Karmelich

1. This lesson gets into the question of, “How do you know if we are saved?”
 - a) We have assurance as Christians we are saved. As long as we trust in Jesus, our salvation is assured no matter what we do. That should bring us a sense of peace.
 - b) The only question that should remain is, “How do you know you are a Christian?”
 - c) God wants us to have a sense of peace about our salvation. What visible signs are there to assure us of that salvation? It might be a good thing to verify if we are in the club. ☺
 - d) That is what the first half of Chapter 8 focuses upon: assurance of salvation. Paul gives us a “checklist” through most of the verses of this lesson. If we fit Paul’s description (it’s not about being perfect, more on this later), then we are enjoy the promises God made to us. This “checklist” is designed to give the assurance of our salvation.
2. This leads to the key word for all of Chapter 8: Hope.
 - a) We’ve discussed that word in previous lessons. It is not hope with doubt, as in “I hope it doesn’t rain.” Biblical hope is about trust. It is a sense of optimism that comes from knowledge of a fact that is true.
 - b) For example, let’s say a boat dropped you off alone on a deserted island. You knew the owner of that boat very well and that boat owner promised that some time soon He promised to return and get you. You now live for that hope. There are moments where you have your doubts, and that’s normal. Nevertheless, you know that boat captain well and in his entire lifetime, he has never failed to keep a promise.
 - c) God is like that boat captain. We can have assurance that things will be better because it’s 100% up to God and not up to us. I know myself and it’s not good. ☺ If I’m trusting in God’s promises, there is that assurance of hope. I’ve yet to read of a bible promise that has not come true. I’ve yet to see a bible prediction that is not accurate. I trust in that, and not myself. That assurance gives me hope.
3. With that said, welcome to the greatest chapter in the letter of Romans.
 - a) This chapter is also a welcome relief to the difficult, heavy earlier chapters. We’ve spent the last couple of chapters focusing on our sin disease and how hopelessly sinful we are, no matter how hard we try. Now comes the happy part: The burden chapters are over.
 - b) There are many benefits to studying the bible. One of them is it gives us hope, especially during the rough moments of life. One reason to study one’s bible is that it gets our perspective off our problems and helps us see the world through God’s perspective.
4. If I were stuck on a desert island, and I could only have one chapter of the bible with me, my first draft choice would be Romans 8. If I could pick three chapters, it would be Romans 8, 1st Corinthians 15 and John 17.
 - a) When I think of being stuck alone on a desert island, I want hope. I need something positive to cling to in order to get through the difficult moments of this life.
 - b) Romans 8 is my favorite chapter on “hope” in the bible. It is the best single reminder of God’s love to us and His unconditional promises to believers in everlasting life.
 - c) Chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians is my second draft pick. ☺ It is the best chapter in the bible on the topic of the resurrection. Without the fact of the resurrection, we’re wasting our time in these bible studies. Our life here on earth has many wonderful moments, but also a lot of rotten ones. I want a world without sin. Without the hope of a better life, i.e., a hope of resurrection, I’m wasting my time. (See also 1st Corinthians 15:19 on this point.)
 - d) My final pick is the Gospel of John Chapter 17. It is an intimate prayer between God the Father and God the Son. It is the only detailed prayer of its sort in the bible. It shows the intimate love relationship between the two entities. If there is that much love between God the Father and God the Son, and we as Christians abide in God the son, it reflects the love that God has for us. That love would also give me hope.

5. Chapter 8, Verse 1. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
 - a) Let's start with the most important word in Verse 1. The word is "no".
 - i) That means if we are trusting in Jesus for our salvation, there is no condemnation. That means you can't go to hell no matter how hard you try.
 - ii) Again, that means if we accept that Jesus did pay the price for our sins, past, present and future, then the payment is complete. There is no future suffering for us. There is no hell. There is no purgatory. The price has been paid.
 - iii) So why is there suffering in this life? We'll get to that in Verse 18. The word "no" is about the lack of eternal condemnation for Christians.
 - b) Here's the thought of the day: If God does not condemn us, as promised in Verse 1, why do we condemn ourselves? Let's suppose Verse 1 is true. After all, it's in the bible. ☺ If God does not condemn us, period, period, period, why do we condemn ourselves?
 - i) Why do we say to ourselves, "I can't believe I did that?" or "I should have done better?" If that's the case, we need to re-read the last few chapters of Romans. The focus of those chapters is how incurable is the sin disease of our human nature.
 - ii) The problem is our ego. We are convinced we are better than we think. We give ourselves expectations that are not realistic. That does not mean I'm against setting goals. I'm very pro goal-setting. This is about self-inflicted punishment when we do fail. My point is, if the God of the Universe is not condemning us, why are we condemning ourselves?
 - c) Now let's discuss Satan's strategy and motivation to attack Christians:
 - i) What Satan wants is for you and me to be ineffective witnesses for Jesus. He can't take away our salvation. That word "no" is still there in Verse 1. What he can do is make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus.
 - ii) In heaven, the number of people is not infinite, but finite. There will only be "x" number of people in heaven, whatever that number is. Therefore, every new Christian is one person closer to number "x". When "x" comes, Satan is sent to hell. He is not in charge of hell, but will be a prisoner there himself (Reference Revelation 20:10, 20:14). Satan knows this and is delaying it as long as possible.
 - a) Given that, Satan focuses a lot of time and trouble on making Christians ineffective witnesses so others will not become Christians. He is doing his best to prevent "Christian number 'x'" from getting saved.
 - iii) One of his methods is to put us down when we sin. He will whisper in our head, "Just look at how you sinned today. Boy is God disappointed in you! You're such a hypocrite for calling yourself a Christian. You might as well stay in bed this Sunday instead of having to face all those people."
 - iv) In moments where we feel we have disappointed God, go back to Romans Chapter 8, Verse 1. Check the word "no" and make sure it's still there. ☺ After that, confess the sin, and know that God has forgiven us. If God has forgiven us, why should we bother condemning ourselves or let others condemn us?
 - v) When Satan or whoever makes us feel guilty, the correct answer is, "You're right. I did mess up. I'm sorry and I prayed for God to work through me to change me for the better. Still, God has forgiven me. There is no other opinion that matters.
 - vi) Gee, what do you say, we actually discuss the rest of Verse 1? ☺
6. Verse 1 (again): "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".
 - a) As good trained bible students, you now know that when you see the word "therefore", you look around to see what the "therefore" is "there for".
 - b) If you recall, Chapter 7 is all about how "hopeless" we are without God. We're stuck with this sin-disease. No matter how hard we try as people to please God based on our own efforts, we will eventually fail because we are imperfect beings.
 - c) The main point of Chapter 7 is that we can't please God based on self-discipline.

- d) The problem is “Chapter 7” does not directly lead to the “therefore” of Chapter 8.
- e) What the “therefore” is there-for, is to tie all of Romans so-far to Chapter 8.
 - i) The Book of Romans spent the early chapters stating the fact that we are all sinful people. It discussed people who never heard of God, immoral people, moral people, and religious people.
 - ii) A key point of Romans so far is “we have no excuse before God”. We are born with this sinful nature. It is “Adam’s fault” that we have inherited this sin disease. If we were in Adam and Eve’s place, we would not have done any better.
 - iii) Romans Chapter 1 through 7 are designed to condemn us. As I stated in some of the early lessons, it is like going through an army boot camp. To train a soldier, the instructor has to “break” the soldier-to-be of bad habits to get one to obedient to their commanding officer. That is Romans 1-7. It is about breaking us of our old way of thinking. Our old (wrong) way is to think, “It’s ok for me to rule over this or that aspect of my life. I need God’s help over here, but not over there”.
 - iv) Romans Chapter 8 is graduation from boot camp. Paul is finished laying out all the possible excuses we can have before God. Paul is finished telling us how inadequate we are as people.
- f) The “therefore” of Verse 1 of Chapter 8 is about the fact that God loves us despite our faults. The “therefore” deals with the fact that God wants to spend eternity with us despite our faults and shortcomings. It is God saying, “I love you more than you realize. I know all of your faults. I already know of the sin you’re going to commit a week from Tuesday. Despite that, I still want to spend eternity with You. I sent My son to die for you prior to all of the sins you ever have committed or will commit in the future.
 - i) The point of the “therefore” is we are saved, despite all of the negative stuff Paul said about all people, Christians included, over the past seven chapters. Again, Chapter 8 is about God’s unconditional promises to us as believers. It is about our assurance of salvation and the benefits that come with that salvation.
- g) Let’s wrap up Verse 1 with some final thoughts:
 - i) Verse 1 says no one is condemned who is “in” Christ Jesus. That also means that someone who is say, aware of Jesus and refuses to be “in” is condemned. The bible does teach there is a dividing point between those who are “in” and not.
 - a) Much of this lesson focuses upon how one can tell if they are “in”.
 - ii) Can one lose their salvation? Do I have the free-will to no longer commit my life to Jesus once I have done so? That is a classical Christian debate question. I’ll let theologians worry about that. ☺ Personally, I would rather not take the risk to find out. The safe answer is “As long as I’m trusting in Jesus for my salvation, I know I’m saved.” It’s not a matter of sinning too little or too much, but in what fact and I am trusting for my salvation.
- h) I should also add a technical point. In the King James Version or the New King James Version® of the bible, there is another sentence to Verse 1. It is not posted in this lesson.
 - i) The staunch pro-King James commentator’s I read agree that second sentence is a copyist error. It is essentially part of Verse 4 and someone copied it to Verse 1. The oldest manuscripts we have don’t have this second sentence in Verse 1. None of the early Christian writers ever quote this second sentence.
 - ii) Which reminds me: there are many scholars out there who believe the King James Version is the best English translation. My problem is when people claim it’s a “perfect” translation. Verse 1 is one of many places where it lacks “perfection”.
 - iii) A positive point of the King James Version is that it is now almost 400 years old and the errors are now well documented. The problem is the English language has changed in the last 400 years and some of the language is now hard to follow.
- i) Hey look, there actually is a Verse 2 in this chapter! ☺

7. Verse 1 and 2: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.
- a) The NIV® translation used here does do something no other “literal or semi-literal” English translation does: It combines Verses 1 and 2 in one sentence. If you read other “literal” English translations, Verse 2 is a separate sentence.
 - i) In other words, the word “because” in Verse 2 is not in the original Greek.
 - ii) Which leads us back to the word “therefore”: Verse 1 says Christians are not condemned no matter what they do. Many believe that the reason for the “therefore” is the next set of verses of Chapter 8. The NIV translators take that argument one-step-further by adding a “because” in Verse 2.
 - iii) Now that I’m done with disclaimers, I can talk about Verse 2. ☺
 - b) The next thing to talk about here is the term “the law”.
 - i) In the context of Verse 2, Paul is not talking about the Old Testament laws.
 - ii) Paul is talking about physical realities, like say, gravity. The law of gravity is a law we are “stuck with”. We can fly in an airplane for a period of time, but the law of gravity is greater than the size of the fuel tank. ☹ Gravity eventually wins.
 - c) With that understood, Paul speaks of two laws we are “stuck with” like gravity:
 - i) 1) The law of the Spirit and 2) the law of life and death.
 - ii) Let’s talk about the second one first. This “law” deals with our death. Everyone dies one day. It is a physical law we are all stuck with.
 - iii) The second law that is equally an “unavoidable reality” is the law of the Spirit.
 - a) It is about the fact that all people get resurrected one day. It is as unavoidable as death.
 - b) I like the “computer software” illustration: A blank computer compact disk (CD) weighs a few ounces. A CD with computer full of software or music weighs exactly the same. The “real you” is like software and has no weight. When the CD is wearing out. We “transfer the data” elsewhere. That is a little like our resurrection. We are “transferred” to another place.
 - c) God exists whether a person accepts it or not. You may say, “I don’t believe gravity exists and I’ll jump off this cliff to prove it”. You’ll lose no matter how strong your “faith”. The same applies to God’s existence. Just because a person is an atheist does not deny the reality of God’s existence.
 - d) If we accept that God exists, then there must be some sort of “power” that comes forth from that God. Atheists believe, “In the beginning there was nothing, then it exploded.” ☺ Well, somebody had to light the fuse. My point is there is a physical law (“Law of the Spirit”) of the power of God.
 - iv) Know that the terms “Holy Spirit” and the “Spirit of God” are synonyms. The bible teaches us that there is a separate “Spirit” entity that is fully God, yet fully “one” with God the Father.
 - d) Now that we have our words defined, we can actually talk about Verse 2.
 - i) Paul’s point is the “law of death” means we are going to physically die one day.
 - ii) Paul’s other point is the “law of the spirit” is the power of resurrection. Just as everyone dies one day, everyone will be resurrected one day.
 - iii) This leads back to the resurrection of Jesus. It is the single most important fact in human history. That is also why I consider 1st Corinthians Chapter 15 as great a chapter as Romans 8. That chapter, also written by Paul, is nicknamed the “resurrection chapter”. The resurrection is the focal point of 1st Corinthians Chapter 15. Without the resurrection, we are wasting our time following Jesus.
 - iv) Paul’s point is the fact we are resurrected to eternal life because of our faith in Jesus is just as much a fact as gravity or death itself. It is unavoidable.

- e) Paul is making another point in Verse 2: The law of the spirit (i.e., our resurrection) is a greater power than the law of death (i.e., the fact we die one day). Let's face it, if the power to resurrect us is not a greater power than death, then we can't be resurrected. It must be a greater power, or there is no resurrection.
 - i) My biggest problem with atheists is I can't see how anybody would want to live without the concept of a resurrection. Let's say you believe that "when you die, you die". What do you tell a young child dying of cancer, "better luck next time?" I can't imagine going through life without any hope of something better. I can somehow see how an atheist believes that one should enjoy this life as much as possible as "this is it", but I can't imagine living without hope.
 - a) Also, what about justice? What about those who get away with stuff in this lifetime? If there is no resurrection and justice, then life is truly unfair.
 - ii) Christianity keys upon accepting the fact of Jesus' resurrection. I consider it the most well documented fact in human history. The New Testament was written by lots of different writers who were willing to be tortured and killed as opposed to deny the fact of the resurrection.
 - iii) My favorite story on this topic is that of Simon Greenleaf. He was a 19th Century professor at Harvard law school. He is considered the "American father of court admissible evidence". He was an agnostic at one time. One of his students challenged him to study Jesus' resurrection in terms of court-admissible evidence. He came to the conclusion that there was more evidence for the resurrection of Jesus than any other fact in human history. (Reference An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice, by Simon Greenleaf; Kregel Publications; ISBN# 0-8254-2749-9)
- 8. Verse 3: For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.
 - a) In Verse 3, Paul talks about "the law". Paul is back to talking about the Old Testament laws. If this is confusing, note that in Verse 3, Paul just uses the term "the law". In Verse 2, Paul says "the law of the Spirit" and the "law of sin and death". If Paul just uses the term "the law" without any other words, know that Paul is then focusing on God's laws, such as the 10 Commandments and other biblical laws.
 - b) Let me give you Paul's point of Verse 3: The Old Testament laws have the power to show us where we are guilty before God. We can agree those laws are the right thing to do. The problem with those laws is that they don't have power within themselves to obey them.
 - i) Those bible laws are very good at making us feel guilty for disobedience.
 - ii) Those same laws do not have any power in themselves to obey those laws. There is no "power" in God's laws to make us obedient to God. It doesn't make those laws bad; they just lack the power within themselves for our obedience.
 - c) Next, let's talk about the penalty for disobedience to the laws: Death. That's not good. ☹
 - i) God set up a principal for forgiveness: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Leviticus 17:11 NIV). What does that mean? It means that in order to have forgiveness of sins, blood must be shed.
 - ii) The word "atonement" is "at-one-ment". It means we are "at one" with God as he forgave that individual sin through a blood sacrifice. (Ref.: Easton's Dictionary)
 - iii) When you study the Old Testament, especially Leviticus, you learn that in order for God to forgive any individual sin, an animal must be slaughtered. (An exception was made for a Jewish person who was too poor to afford an animal See: Leviticus 5:11). The exception shows us how much God cares for all people.

- iv) So why was this necessary? The point is all sins, if left unchecked lead to death. God instituted the idea of killing innocent animals to show us how “expensive” sin is. When we sin, we hurt innocent people. By killing innocent animals, God is showing us that innocent people get hurt by our sinful actions.
 - a) These animal sacrifices did take care of individual sins, but never cured our inherit sin nature.
 - b) This is all leading to the point that Jesus’ sin “blood” offering on the cross was the final payment for all of our sins, including our sin nature. A “perfect” sacrifice was needed to pay the “perfect” price for sins.
- d) This leads us back to Verses 3 and 4. Let me sum them up with a classic illustration:
 - i) There is a courtroom judge who has a reputation for being very strict. He had a great ability to know when people are really guilty and really innocent. This judge had a gift of discernment to look at the evidence and know when someone is really guilty of a crime. When that person was guilty, the judge never gave mercy. He always sentenced the guilty person to the punishment he or she deserved.
 - ii) One day, the judge’s son was put on trial. After the trial was over, the judge decided that his son was guilty and sentenced the son to go to jail for the maximum period allowed by the law. The judge, in his love for his son, then took off his robe and agreed to go to jail himself. That is the “gospel message”.
 - iii) Let’s suppose the judge said, “Son, you are guilty, however, I’m sending your younger brother to jail for you in your place.” That’s not fair to the younger brother. This is why the only perfect demonstration of being “fair” is for God himself to pay the punishment for our sins. This is why it is so essential that Jesus be understood as God and nothing short of God. If Jesus was just some created being willing to be punished for us, then God the Father is not being “perfect” and “fair” to Jesus. If God himself is paying the price for our sins, then God is being “fair” and showing perfect love and perfect justice at the same time.
 - a) If God punishes us for our sins without offering a way out to avoid the penalty, He is not being “perfect” in His love to us.
 - b) If God forgives us of our sins out of His love, He is not being “perfect in justice”. My point is the “cross” is the only solution to the problem of how God be perfect in love and perfect in justice at the same time.
- e) This leads me back to Verses 3-4. Jesus didn’t just die for our sins. He “became” sin for us. (See 2nd Corinthians 5:21). I am convinced that you and I will never fully comprehend that. There were animal sacrifices designed to forgive one of individual sins. We as Christians can confess individual sins to God. The punishment for our “sin nature” is only taken away through the cross itself.
- f) This then gets us back to the “power of the spirit” being a greater power than the “power of death”. God the Father had to “accept” Jesus payment for sins. We know God the Father accepted that payment because of Jesus’ resurrection. That fact, like the “law of gravity”, gets us resurrected as well.
- g) OK, let’s get practical: Most Christians know and accept this stuff. What does this have to do with the fact my kids are sick, I’m behind on the rent and my back is killing me? ☺
 - i) First of all, remember the eternal perspective: Whatever problems we have, are real, and are painful. They are also temporary. Chapter 8 is about hope and assurance. This lifetime is “nothing” in compared to eternity. When those dark moments come, we can have internal joy knowing that all of this is temporary.
 - ii) Second, keep this in mind when we are condemning ourselves. When we mess up, we spend way too much time condemning ourselves when God is more than ready to forgive us. Our resurrection is going to happen despite our actions. It is not our faithfulness that is the issue here, but God’s. I can rest easy with that fact.

- iii) Remember that we are under “the law of the Spirit” in the same way we are “under” the law of gravity in this lifetime. That is all people get resurrected. It is a “fact” like gravity and unavoidable. If we are trusting in Jesus for our salvation, God is always there, ready to listen, ready to help, and ready to forgive.
- 9. Verse 5: Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.
 - a) Beginning in Verse 5 and running through Verse 11, we have a new topic. I call it, “Just how does one know one if one is a Christian in the first place?”
 - i) To put it another way, “If Romans 8 says everyone who believes in Jesus is going to heaven, how do I know I fit into this group?”
 - ii) This question is also important as the second half of Chapter 8 deals with the issue of the maturity of the Christian believer. Before we can discuss how God works through Christians for our benefit, we need to establish who is “in” and not.
 - b) I heard an illustration to help tell if one is saved. It has to do with “prodigal son” story as told in Luke 15. That is the story of the father who gives half of his stuff to one of his two sons while the father is still alive. The prodigal son then wastes the money. When the son hits rock bottom, he then goes home to father, asking to be a servant. The father rejoices that his son returns home. The point of the story is “the father calls his son “son” again and not a servant”. He wasted his “inheritance”, but his salvation as a “son” is still there.
 - i) Now my illustration: When the son hit rock bottom, he was feeding pigs (Luke 15:15). Suppose you were to take one of those pigs living in the mud. Let’s clean up the pig and wash off the mud. Two days later, that sweet smelling pig spots some mud. Where do you think he’s going to go? (Source: Jon Curson)
 - ii) The point of the illustration is that if someone has a heart for God, they will want to seek God. The “prodigal son” sinned and it cost him his wealth. Still, that same son had the wisdom to seek his father’s help when all other options have run out. The “prodigal son” is one who, at some point in their life will seek out the Father. That’s what a Christian is: A Christian will sin and at times, walk away from God. But deep down, there is an urge to want to please God and understand the idea of accountability. The Christian is separated from the “pig” because if you clean up the pig, their inevitable desire is just to go back to the mud.
 - c) With the prodigal son and the “cleaned pig” illustration in mind, look at Verse 5 again:
 - i) “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”
 - ii) In other words, the way to tell if someone is a Christian or not is that their behavior follows their mind sets. A Christian is someone whose desire is to please God and live a life knowing one is accountable to God. You rescue a nonbeliever out of the mud pit, and all they care about is finding more mud. ☺
 - iii) What about the religious non-Christian? Aren’t they seeking God? This leads us back to some of the early chapters of Romans. To recap, the “problem” is God is perfect and God requires perfection. Just because someone leads a good morale life does not mean they are perfect. God requires a perfect punishment for our sins. The Christian is one who accepts Jesus punishment as that perfect price.
- 10. Verse 6: The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;
 - a) Here is the second verse on the topic of “How do I know I am a Christian?”
 - b) The first phrase of Verse 6 states, “The mind of sinful man is death.”

- c) Does that mean a non-Christian is thinking about death? No. It means such a person doesn't think about the fact they are accountable to God. They are interested in "whatever pops into their head". Sin, left unaccounted, leads to death. I usually find most nonbelievers fear death greatly. They fear it because they live for pleasure in this life and fear any sense of accountability in the next life. Death is "fear of the unknown", since they don't know what will happen to them in the next life.
 - d) The second phrase is, "but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."
 - i) Let's get back to the issue of, "How do I know I am a Christian?" One way is to have a sense of peace about our life here on earth. This is not about being happy all the time. This is about an internal joy no matter what the circumstances. This is the realization of "I am saved" no matter what I do, because I believe Jesus died for all my sins, past, present and future.
 - ii) The phrase also includes the idea that it is God himself, through the Holy Spirit, giving us that peace. Remember, God does not share credit for any good thing with anyone else, including us. Even the peace we have through the knowledge of our salvation comes from the peace of God living within us.
 - iii) So, how do you know you are a Christian? Do you have a sense of peace about the next life? Do you believe Jesus died for your sins, past, present and future? If you accept that, you are assured of salvation. If you accept that, you're in the club. ☺
11. Verse 7: the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.
- a) We're still on the topic of, "How do know if you are a Christian?"
 - b) Paul makes a strong statement here in Verse 7: "The sinful mind is hostile to God."
 - i) Let's start with the unbeliever: If one does not care about pleasing God, then whether one realizes it or not, that person is "hostile" to God. I seriously doubt that when most non-Christians are sinning, they are thinking about the fact they are hostile to God. The point is they "are" whether they realize it or not.
 - ii) This gets back to my "prodigal son versus the pig" comparison: The "prodigal son" is one who sooner or later realizes they are living the life displeasing to God. The "pig" is one who never gives it a thought. Even if a non-believer thinks about God once in awhile, they never take action to change their lifestyle.
 - c) Now look at the last phrase of Verse 7: nor can it do so. Verse 8 in effect repeats the same idea with the statement of, "Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."
 - i) Many years ago, I figured out God is not impressed by my accomplishments. I can't be pleasing to God based on how I live my life.
 - ii) That is the idea of Paul's statement of, "Nor can it do so". It is about someone who thinks they can get into heaven "because they are a good person".
 - iii) Back to the question of how do you know you are a Christian? The answer is one's behavior follows one's belief. If we comprehend the fact that we are accountable to God, if we comprehend that all of our sins are forgiven and we are now "married" to God in gratitude for the forgiveness, our behavior follows.
 - a) This is also about understanding that those are not saved cannot please God by trying harder or letting their good deeds outweigh the bad.
 - iv) Remember that we as humans cannot read minds. We cannot tell if a person has mentally committed their lives to Jesus. All we can do is judge behavior. The next issue is to look at our own behavior and see if that follows.
 - d) This leads back to the "good news" of Chapter 8: Chapter 8 is all about the great unconditional promises given to believers. Paul spends the second half of chapter 8 saying there is "more to it" than the fact we are just-saved. Before Paul can get into all of that, it is essential to define just who "is" saved. That is the point of these verses.

12. Verse 9: You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.
- a) The question of “who is a Christian?” is still in focus, but the emphasis is now on the believer as opposed to the non-believer.
 - b) Verse 9 is good news for a Christian. Let’s say we are tempted to commit some sort of sin. What it takes to overcome that temptation is to think, “Hey, wait a minute, Verse 9 says we are “controlled” by the Spirit of God and not by our sinful nature. All I have to do is pray and realize that God’s power is in me, which is greater than that sin power.” Does that mean we can be perfect and never sin? No. It does mean God does provide us with the knowledge and the power to overcome sinful desires.
 - i) That is a sign one is a believer. One is willing to “ride” the power of the Holy Spirit residing within us to overcome one’s sin. A sign of an unbeliever is that temptation is right in front of them and they can care less if it displeases God or not. The believer is one who understands accountability. Christians understand that God, through the Holy Spirit, gives us the power to overcome temptation.
 - c) The last sentence says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he (or she) does not belong to Christ”. This is a harsh statement. How do you tell if someone is going to heaven? The answer is they have the Spirit of Christ (i.e., another name for the Holy Spirit) within them. If they don’t have the Spirit, they are not saved.
 - i) So how do I know I have this spirit within me? Ask yourself, do you have internal joy about one’s salvation? Do you desire to seek God and praise Jesus? Do you desire to live a life pleasing to God and think about him? Those are all good “signs” that the Holy Spirit is residing within you whether you realize it or not.
 - d) This is a good time to talk about the term “trinity”. In Verse 9, Paul uses the term “Spirit of God” and the “Spirit of Christ” in the same sentence. The word “trinity” is not in the bible. It is a term coined by the early church to describe the “Three in One” aspect of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit”. They are each separate, but each “one”. It is the idea of a “plural-one” like the term “one group” is a plural-one. The Hebrew word for God, “El-o-him”, is a “plural-one” compound. (E.g., When God said, “Let us make man in our image”. Genesis 1:26 KJV).
 - i) Paul is talking about the same “Spirit” in both the “Spirit of God” and the “Spirit of Christ”. It is Paul’s way of uniting the three entities into one. The power of the Spirit stems from both the Father and the Son because they are all united as one.
13. Verse 10: But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.
- a) The focus of these two verses is on the resurrection of the human body itself. Verse 11 says, “Christ...will also give life to your mortal bodies”. That means somehow, someway, our physical bodies will be resurrected into the next life.
 - b) Scholars debate over this issue. Does it just mean our internal “spirit” lives forever with some sort of new body? Does our DNA get resurrected? Does it mean our physical body gets resurrected just as it is? Is it our physical body as it was when we’re 25 or when it’s 90? I hate to think my bad back will be with me for eternity. ☺
 - c) My view is that heaven is a place of joy. I can’t see God giving say, a handicapped person a bad body in heaven. My view on we have some sort of physical body in heaven, but it is one “designed” for heaven. The bodies we have now are “designed” for earth. Our “heavenly bodies” will be designed for the conditions of heaven, whatever that is.
 - d) The only clues we have is what we read of Jesus after He was resurrected. The disciples could recognize Him, but Jesus could also enter locked rooms. (See John 20:19) My view is that however we are resurrected, we “somehow” will be like Jesus. (See 1st John 3:2.)

- e) Now let's get back to the verses. Verse 10 says, "Your body is dead of sin".
 - i) We can't take our physical body into the next life. First of all, it can't handle the "atmosphere conditions" of heaven. Second, it is corrupt due to sin. God cannot have an "imperfect" physical body in heaven.
 - ii) Now let's be a little less literal. Paul is also referring to our human nature. Our nature, without God's help, cannot be pleasing to God. It is back to my expression of "Without God, we can't". Paul and other bible writers teach that our human nature is corrupt beyond repair. Whether we realize it or not, we cannot be pleasing to God through our efforts.
 - iii) In a sense, God allows us to die on earth as a "mercy killing". People kill injured horses because the pain of their injuries is so great, they would be better dead than suffering through that pain. God does not allow us to live forever in these bodies for the same reason. We can't go on forever with the ups and downs of life. Eventually, it wears us out. Our physical bodies can't handle it.
 - a) Don't get me wrong, I'm not encouraging suicide. To live on this earth is to live for God, and that means He is in charge of our bodies, and not us.
 - b) My point is that sin corrupts our physical beings. God in His mercy on mankind, lets our bodies decay as opposed to making us live forever in this human state.
 - c) The good news is the fact of our resurrection. Everything we do here on earth keys on that fact. If we don't get resurrected, we are wasting our time trying to please God. If we don't get resurrected, and then our entire existence dies at death, then there is no purpose in life, period.
- 14. Verse 12: Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
 - a) Paul is now done talking about "who's in and who's not". The focus is now on what Christians should do about the fact that Jesus died for our sins.
 - b) The first sentence above says, "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation".
 - i) The word "brothers" refers to all Christians, male and female.
 - ii) "Therefore" is about the fact we are Christians. Paul wanted us to read the last set of verses and think, "OK, that's me. I have that joy thing. ☺ I believe Jesus died for my sins. Now what do I do?"
 - c) The next key word is "obligation". If you recall from Chapter 7, if we are "dead to sin" like a widow who is no longer obligated to serve her husband. We are not "single" but obligated to be "married" to Christ. In other words, if someone saves our life, we are obligated to be grateful to them for the rest of our lives.
 - i) God did not "save" us so we can go live an immoral lifestyle for the rest of our lives. We are "obligated" to live for God. That is the idea.
 - ii) We desire to be led by the Spirit of God. That is the point of Verse 14. We desire to tell God in effect, "OK God, you are in charge of my life. What can I do to please You? How can I live my life to glorify You? Show me today what I can do to please You. Help me as I study your word, the lessons and word-patterns that can teach me how to be pleasing to You. Help me to remember that the Holy Spirit is living inside of me to give me the power to do Your will, Amen".
 - iii) If you desire to please God and take the right steps to do so (as laid out in the bible), your behavior will follow. This leads back to the famous quote of "Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength (i.e., give it all you've got) and then go do whatever you want." (Augustine) If we truly desire to please God in all that we do, our actions do follow.

- d) Notice the last phrase of Verse 14: "Sons of God".
 - i) Paul is saying that if we are Christians, if we are being lead by the Holy Spirit, then we are "Sons of God".
 - ii) The term "Sons of God" refers to a direct creation of God. For example, Adam was a "Son of God" as he was a direct creation of God. We are all "sons of Adam" and not "sons of God" because we are not direction creations.
 - iii) When we give our lives to Jesus, we become a "new creation" (See 2nd Corinthians 5:7). The idea is that a Christian now consists of our new nature (The Holy Spirit living within us) mixed with our old human nature. We are now a "new creature" and a direct creation of God. We are now "Sons of God".
 - iv) We'll get more into this in the next set of verses. Speaking of which...
- 15. Verse 15: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."
 - a) One word not used in this paragraph which would help is the word "adoption". When we think of adoption, we think of a baby or child that doesn't know who his or her parents are. Another set of parents come along and make that child part of their family.
 - i) In the culture of Paul's time, when a child is adopted, not only is that child part of the new family, but legally, any previous connection to the old family is officially dead. The old parents have no right to claim that child as theirs once the new family legally adopts the child.
 - a) Further, the adopted child has same legal rights and standing as a natural-produced child. From a legal standpoint, both types of children are one in the same and all share equally in family privileges and inheritance.
 - ii) That is the idea of the Christian. We are adopted into God's family. We are now one of God's children. We are "Sons of God" to use the term of Verse 14.
 - iii) By the way, that doesn't mean we ignore our human parents. One of the 10 Commandments is still to "Honor your mother and father". (Exodus 20:12). It just means that from God's perspective, we as Christians are "His children".
 - b) We as Christians are given the Holy Spirit to reside within us. In earlier verses, Paul called the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ". Here Paul calls the Holy Spirit "The Spirit of sonship". That does not mean we are now part-god. It means that God is saying in effect, "This person (fill in your name) is now one of Mine. He or she is part of My family. They are just as much my child as if I created them directly myself. Just to put my "stamp of approval" on this transaction, the Holy Spirit will now reside in this person. This Spirit is a "nonrefundable deposit" to certify this person will be resurrected and live with me forever."
 - i) Remember the question, "How do we know we are Christians?" A big part of the answer is that we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. God gives us the Spirit as assurance that we are saved.
 - c) This leads us to the second sentence of Verse 15: "And by him we cry, "Abba" Father."
 - i) The word "Abba" is an untranslated Hebrew word. It is best-translated "daddy". It refers to a warm, intimate relationship between a father and a child.
 - ii) The word "Abba" is followed by the Greek word for "Father".
 - iii) As a Christian, one needs a good balance in approaching God the Father. On one hand, we need to understand the fact that a perfect God can stand no sin whatsoever. There has to be humility when approaching God the Father. On the other hand, God wants that intimate relationship between Him and ourselves in the same way of a healthy relationship between a father and a child. We can approach God like an all-loving, all-caring father who wants the best for us.

- iv) Remember a good father does not give us everything we want. That will just make us spoiled and never mature us. A good father gives us everything we need. He also gives us our desires if it is His will.
16. Verse 16: The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
- a) If you have a desire to call God the Father “daddy”, and mean it sincerely, than that is the Holy Spirit living inside of you.
 - b) The apostle John wrote, “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1st John 4:2 NIV)
 - i) What does that mean? It means that if you seriously and sincerely acknowledge Jesus as coming in the flesh (i.e., Jesus was God; Jesus became fully human but still “fully God”; Jesus paid the price for all of your sins; Jesus was resurrected) then you do have the Holy Spirit living within you.
 - c) This gets back to the earlier verses about the fact that a non-Christian can care less about what God thinks of their behavior. It isn't so much nonbelievers are “anti-God”; it is more as if they suppress the fact that God is watching their behavior. We do the same thing when we sin as well.
 - d) The point here is that we know we are saved if we care about what God thinks of our behavior. That is the Holy Spirit working within us to draw us closer to God. Do you want to know if you are saved? Ask yourself, “Do I desire to seek God? Am I living in gratitude for Jesus’ payment for my sins?” If you answer yes, then the Holy Spirit is living inside of you. Also, remember that it is not about being perfect. This is about our desire to please God and modifying our behavior accordingly.
17. Verse 17: Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
- a) The key word in this verse is the word “heirs”. It gets back to the idea that we are “adopted” by God the Father as one of His children. It does not mean that only Christians are in heaven (e.g., Old Testament believers, others who are naïve about the Gospel), but somehow, Christians are a special “subset” of those who are in heaven. We understand more about God and His plan for our life and we benefit from that.
 - b) Verse 17 is God saying in effect, “You as Christians are adopted as my children. Since you accept Jesus’ perfect payment for sin, I can now see you as perfectly forgiven. Wait, it gets better than that! ☺ You are now adopted as my children. You now get to share in all the benefits that Jesus got. That is, you get to be in heaven with Me and all the wonders and riches that I have planned for you for eternity.” (Also see Ephesians 2:7 on this topic.)
 - c) There is a buzz term in real estate called an “undivided interest”. That means, for example, if a couple with three children own a house, after the couple dies they decide to give the house to all three children as an “undivided interest”. That does not mean one child owns the one-third on the left side, one child owns the middle section and one owns the one-third on the right side. It means that each child gets 100% use of the entire property. They each own a “thing” that cannot be physically cut up into pieces.
 - d) The same applies to the term “co-heirs with Christ.” We as Christians get an undivided interest in all that God has. I’m not exactly sure what that means, but I can guarantee it’s a lot better than our parent’s house. ☺ The idea is we are adopted as sons, and we all get an undivided interest in everything that God has. Those “inherited riches” are far better than anything and everything we can live for here on earth.
 - e) Now comes the bad news: Just like the fact we get to share with the riches of God’s inheritance in the next life, we have to suffer like Jesus did in this life.
 - i) Does that mean we have to be literally crucified? No, the price was paid for sins and we don’t have to pay it again.
 - ii) What it does mean is that this lifetime has suffering whether we like it or not.

- iii) The best illustration is that of surgery. In order to make us better, a surgeon has to cut us open. That cutting is going to hurt. There is a recovery process necessary from the surgery. However, not having the surgery is worse than the pain of the surgery itself. The “pain of the surgery” is needed to make us better.
 - iv) That is the idea of the suffering in this life. God allows it in order to make us better. God allows suffering, ultimately for His glory. We may not understand everything that we go through, but God does.
- 18. The next set of verses get more into this issue. The good news is I’m going to leave the rest of Chapter 8 for the next lesson.
 - a) The remainder of Chapter 8 deals with our maturity as Christians.
 - b) The first half is mainly about how we know we are Christians and the benefits that coming with that knowledge.
 - c) The second half of Chapter 8 deals with the maturity of Christians.
 - d) The good new of the second half of the chapter is that “it is up to God, not us”.
 - e) If God is like a loving father, then a father wants to mature us. That means He wants us to trust Him no matter what the circumstance. It is like teaching a child how to walk or ride a bicycle. You have to “let go and let them fall” in order to learn.
 - f) In the second half of this chapter, we’ll get into more into the purpose of “Why does God allow suffering?” The chapter then reaches a climatic point with the issue of “God loves so much, He can’t stand to leave us just the way we are. Wait and see the great things that God wants to do with your life.”
- 19. Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the assurance of our salvation. Thank you for having the Holy Spirit living inside of us so that we can know we are one of your children. Thank you for the peace and joy that comes from the assurance of knowing we are saved. In turn, help us to live a life of gratitude to You for this assurance. Guide us in our life that it may be pleasing to You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.