

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 7:14-8:39

Lying in a hospital bed, on the eve of his open heart surgery, a patient asked his doctor, “Can you fix my heart?” Dudley Johnson is a skilled cardiologist, but a man of few words. He replied, “*Sure*” and walked away.

After the 12 hour surgery, again the patient asked his doctor, “In light of the blocked arteries you bypassed, how much more blood supply will I have now?” Again Dr. Johnson gave a terse reply, “*All you’ll ever need.*”

As the patient was being discharged, his wife questioned Dr. Johnson, “How will the surgery affect my husband’s future quality of life?” The doctor took a few seconds; then he answered, “*Mam, I fixed your husband’s heart. His quality of life is up to him.*”

And this sums up Romans 6. Jesus has fixed our rebellious hearts, (*in Christ we’re new inside*), but now our future quality of life depends on **three choices**...

First, do we **know** that in Christ our inner man is not the same - that we’re dead to sin and alive to God?

Second, have we **reckoned** these truths to be so. Has the cross changed the way we see ourselves? Have we really embraced our new identity in Christ?

And third, are we **presenting** our members - *our mind, hands, feet, eyes, and tongue* - in ways that live out and reinforce this new identity we possess?

On the cross of Jesus *our old man was crucified with Him*; thus our *rebellious heart* was replaced with a *compliant heart* - one that loves God and loves others.

We've been transformed by God's Spirit in the inner man, now the goal is to get the rest of us in tow...

Romans 6 teaches us that Christians are **free from sin!** Whereas, **Romans 7** teaches us that we're **free from the Law**. In Christ, we *died to sin*, and we *died to the Law* - and both realizations are *vital to victory*.

A believer in Jesus is fixated on God's love, and pardon, and power... *Until the Law gets interjected into his life*. Now the believer's attention invariably shifts...

Here's an example, say I impose a law: **Vanilla ice cream is prohibited**. Stay away from creamy, delicious vanilla ice cream... Yet the more I think of keeping that law, the more I want a bowl of vanilla ice cream. The more I resist it, the stronger the temptation it is to eat it.

The best way to resist *vanilla ice cream* is to cultivate a desire for *chocolate ice cream* - *to replace it with something better*. This is how to live victorious over sin.

Under the Law I'm solely focused on resisting sin. The issue I'm always dealing with is **the sin in my life**.

But **under grace** the issue is **the Son in my life**. My focus is on *all that I have in Jesus*. And it's the joy of Jesus that lessens sin's appeal, and neutralizes sin's temptation. If you want to live in victory preoccupy yourself with *following the Son*, not just *fighting the sin*.

Let's pick up where we left off last week in 7:14...

Paul writes, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Now here's a new word, but a familiar concept. Paul calls himself "*carnal*."

And whenever you hear the term "*carnal*" think *chili*.

For there are two types of chili - *plain chili* and *chili con carne* - or "*chili with meat*" - which is the good chili BTW. "Carne" or "*carnal*" is Latin for "meat" or "flesh."

Recall what we learned in Chapter 6. We all consist of two parts... **The inner man** is the part of you that lives forever. **The outer man** is the part that dies and returns to dust. "**Flesh**" is a synonym for *the outer man*.

So "*carnal*" is someone who lives according to the flesh. Rather than be influenced and empowered spiritually, by God's Spirit - he lives as if he's apart from God, and leans only on natural, physical resources.

Remember in 6:6 Paul used two more terms. He mentioned "**the old man**." That's the old sin nature - the nature we inherited from Adam. This was the rebellion inside that fueled my selfishness, and lust, and pride.

And it was this rebellion on the inside, that shaped the person I was on the outside. Evil thoughts and habits governed what I did and said. Paul referred to this as, "**the body of sin**" - or we could call it "**the flesh**."

When I came to Christ **the old man was crucified**. I'm now dead to sin. The sin nature has been eradicated.

But the **flesh** or **body of sin** that the old man had programmed to sin remains my enemy. The old man is dead,

but **the body of sin** keeps his memories alive. Old habits die hard. Sinful desires are easily conjured up. And when I fall into those sinful habits, rather than lean on my identity in Christ, I become a **carnal** person.

And *carnality* can show up in two ways.

Unrighteousness is the result of a person who's in Christ and dead to sin, but fails to reckon it so. They drift back, or never leave the life of sin they once lived.

But another form of carnality is **self-righteousness**.

Here's the Christian who wants to please God, but tries in his own efforts. It's still selfishness and pride at work. He relies on himself, his flesh, not the Holy Spirit. It's a religious carnality. This is the sin of church-folk.

And apparently this was Paul's problem...

Verse 15, **"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."** Paul's actions contradict his desires. He wants to obey God, but he lacks the follow through.

It's unfortunate that some commentators think Paul is speaking of himself as an unbeliever. *I don't think so!*

Here Paul says he wants to do good - he has godly desires... *he couldn't say that if he wasn't a Christian.*

Its obvious to me that Paul is **a bona fide believer**, but he's also **a bewildered believer!** He has godly ambitions, but lacks the will power to carry them out.

And we've all been there, haven't we? What I want, I don't. I say no, then here I go! I'm a mystery to me!

He elaborates in verse 16, “If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is good* (I agree that the Law is right in condemning me). But now, *it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*”

This is an astonishing statement. How can Paul sin and then dare say, “*It is no longer I who do it...*” unless a real transformation had actually occurred in his spirit.

Paul understood that the believer experienced a fundamental change. In the inner man - the eternal part of Paul - the real Paul - he was clean and sinless.

Recall the former bumper sticker, “**Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.**” *I get the sentiment. We’re human and still very capable of sin.* But spiritually speaking Christians ARE perfect. In the deepest part of who we are, we’ve become new creations in Christ.

The real you isn’t the problem. Paul says it’s “*no longer I who (sin), but sin that dwells in me.*” What’s that? That’s **the body of sin**, the flesh. The outer man.

That’s the thought patterns and habits I carry from my past, and allow the world to teach me now.

I still have remnants of my former life lodged in my flesh that rise and lead me astray. I’m responsible for the flesh and it’s deeds, but fundamentally it’s not me.

Verse 18, “**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...**” Remember Paul is thinking of himself as a dichotomy - an *inner man* and *outer man*.

In the **inner man** Paul is new in Christ. He says, *“It is no longer I who (sin).”* The **outer man** is the problem. There he still sins... *“in my flesh nothing good dwells...”*

Here’s every Christian’s miracle and dilemma... The old man is dead. I no longer have a sin nature - yet sin still lingers in my members, and can trip me up.

Here’s Christianity in a nutshell, **Paul is a redeemed spirit packaged in a corrupt flesh** - and so are you!

In the last half of verse 18 Paul restates his dilemma, *“For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”*

Notice how Paul frames his struggle. The inner man wants to do good, but the flesh betrays him to do evil.

He has **total confidence** in what God has done in his spirit, but **zero confidence** in his ability in the flesh.

Our problem is two-sided: **First, we fail to see ourselves in Christ**, and don’t recognize the extent of the work God has done in us... **Second, we fail to see that nothing good dwells in our flesh**. Thus we try to please God in our efforts, rather than trust in His Spirit.

So here’s our problem... *we don’t lean totally on the Spirit because we refuse to be completely weaned off the flesh.* This is why you keep falling on your face...

The victory lies within us. The work is finished. **What was done on the cross is now done in our hearts.**

But we have to live out that victory by faith. We need to trust in what God has done, and what He can do.

Verse 20, “Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

The Philadelphia Phillies have a mascot, the “Philly Phanatic.” On the outside he's a green, furry monster, with an ugly snout. He does crazy things. He rides a motorcycle - taunts opponents - incites the crowd.

But when you see him on TV remember the exterior is just a costume. There's a man inside (*making a six figure salary BTW*) - and it's the person on the inside that's the real person. The same is true with me...

At times I get green with envy, and have a monster-like temper, and do crazy things... *but that's not the real me*. The true Sandy is underneath the fuzzy exterior. The spiritual part of me is holy in God's sight.

The guy inside the Phanatic is not the monster, yet he's still responsible for the monster-like behavior. And this is Paul's frustration. *How do we tame the Monster?*

He sums it up, “I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.” I love God, but I lug around members who don't want to cooperate.

“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Paul says the Christian life is a struggle! I want to follow God, but my flesh sabotages my obedience.

Listen to our struggle set to rhyme, “Within my earthly temple there’s a fight. Part of me is love, and part is spite. There’s a part that’s broken-hearted for my sin. There’s a part of me that’s stubborn - sits and grins. Deep inside I love my neighbor as myself, at other times I prefer to sit alone upon the shelf.” But hear the conclusion, “From much care I should be free. If I could once for all determine which of these is me!”

How do you see yourself?

As a new person in Christ? Do you **know** what He’s done? Do you **reckon** it so? Do you **present** your members to act accordingly... Or do you see yourself as trying to earn your way to God by obeying the Law?

I believe that was Paul when he wrote Chapter 7. He followed Christ, yet lived as if he were under the Law.

That’s why he concludes in verse 24, “**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**” And here, Paul draws on some vivid imagery.

Rome had an extremely harsh sentence for ruthless murderers. The corpse of the person who’d been murdered was strapped to the man who murdered him.

The perpetrator carried around the rotting flesh of his victim. Wherever he went, the corpse went with him. He was never free. And this is how Paul sees himself.

He says, “**O wretched man that I am!**” He’s attached to rotting flesh, *the body of sin*. Until he dies he carries it with him. What an awful dilemma, *but there’s hope!*

In verse 25 Paul answers the question he just asked, “**Who will deliver me?**” He says, “**I thank God - through Jesus Christ**

our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Notice, Paul’s answer is not a 12-Step **Program**, or a Psychological **Principle**, or a **Pill**, or a **Procedure**.

The answer is a **Person** - His name is Jesus.

I love how J.B. Phillips renders verse 25, “I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The answer to the Christian’s dilemma is not *self-discipline and the Law*, but *self-abandonment and the Spirit*. It’s not keeping **laws**, it’s walking in the **Spirit**.

And Chapter 8 teaches us how...

Before we delve into Romans 8 let me steer your thoughts in a helpful direction... It amazing how the meanings of certain words change over time...

Forty years ago, "**Hardware**" was nails, nuts, and washers... "**Hard drive**" involved maneuvering your car up a steep mountain... "**Boot**" you wore on your foot...

"**Virus**" made you sick... "**Mouse**" carried the virus... And "**Dump**" was where the mouse lived...

"**Menu**" helped you order your food... "**Byte**" was what you did to your food... And "**Spam**" was the type of meat you hoped was not on the menu...

Before computers arrived, "**Desktop**" was the top of a desk... "**Laptop**" was the top of your lap... And "**Load**" was when a heavy person sat on your laptop...

Of course, today we recognize these terms as computer jargon. And this is how I want you to think as we move

through Romans 8. In a sense, we all are like computers in that we consist of hardware and software.

Think of your spirit, the inner man, as the hardware, but hardware is controlled by software... *by mind-sets, and beliefs, and presuppositions, and perspectives.*

Now imagine two types of software - two operating systems, *if you like* - loaded onto your hard drive. Paul calls them: **the law of the Spirit of life** and **the law of sin and death**. Now each day when you awake, you have a choice... *Which operating system will you boot up?*

Which approach to life will you let govern your thoughts and actions? Will I orientate my life around the Spirit, or will I gravitate toward things of the flesh?

With that in mind, let's jump into one of the most hopeful chapters in the Bible, Romans 8. It begins with a bang, **"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."**

Paul says if I keep God's Son the issue in my life, then even when I stumble there is **"no condemnation."**

I'm condemned only if I live under the Law.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

When an airplane takes off, two different principles are at play... The law of gravity puts a drag on the plane, and pulls it down, whereas the laws of thrust and lift supersede gravity, and propel it airborne...

Likewise, *the upward life of the Spirit overrides the downward pull of sin.* We soar in the Spirit. *Law drags us down, but faith overrides the Law and draws us up.*

But here's the question... what principle is at work in you? What's running on your hard drive... *law or faith?*

“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 walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” In other words, God's *Law* had no *flaw*. The problem was me. The sin in my flesh couldn't conform to the Law's perfection. Remember Paul's earlier conclusion, “*in my flesh nothing good dwells.*”

Thus, if it's up to my flesh to keep the Law, I fail. I love the jingle: “*To run and work the law commands, yet gives me neither feet or hands. But better news the Gospel brings. It bids me fly, and gives me wings.*”

The law sets the bar, but only the Holy Spirit gives me spring enough to jump over the bar. We fulfill the Law not by keeping it, but by walking in the Spirit.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the 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.” How do we walk in the Spirit? *Let's go back to our computer illustration...*

When you come to Jesus God installs a new hard drive inside you. God takes out the old equipment, and put His nature within you. You have top of line gear.

But the hardware's efficiency depends on the software. If old software is running on new equipment it won't perform well. It'll malfunction - *aka Chapter 7!*

That's why you've got to reboot. Stop using the operating system entitled "*things of the flesh.*" And log on to the system that's entitled "*things of the Spirit.*"

I don't know much about computers, but I've learned one truth over the years - when all else fails, **reboot!**

This also applies to our spiritual lives. When I start to struggle - *I do what I hate and not do what I want* - **I reboot!** I check my mind-set! Am I laboring on my own as if it's up to me, or am I trusting in the work God has done in my spirit? *Do I see myself as a new person in Christ, or am I logged on to an old identity?*

We need to reboot - or shift from flesh to faith - from grunt to grace - from "*carnally minded*" to "*spiritually minded.*" Are you operating spiritually or in the flesh? A carnal mind is death. A spiritual mind is life and peace.

Verse 7, "*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.*" The flesh and Spirit are like the Hatfields and McCoys - they're like Coke and Pepsi - they're like the Bulldogs and Yellow Jackets - they're bitter rivals.

The goal of your flesh is to make itself *look good or feel good*... Whereas, the Spirit wants to glorify God.

Try to run both operating systems at the same time and you end up *in Chapter 7* - stuck in frustration.

That's why Paul says in verse 9, **“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.”** Every true believer has God's Spirit inside. If you belong to Jesus you have His Spirit.

We have the power to live victoriously. We just need to learn how to operate from a spiritual mindset.

Paul says, **“And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.”** If we rely on our own resources we're in trouble - *our body is dead due to sin*. That's why we have to live and move in the Spirit. Paul is telling us to shelve our do-it-yourself attitude and have faith in God.

Verse 11, **“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.”** This is an amazing verse. Since the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us - incredible power - resurrection power - is available to every Christian.

It's been said, **“We depend on Jesus for our *eternal* life, but we depend on the Spirit for our *internal* life.”**

The next few verses teach us to **live by the Spirit... be led by the Spirit...** and **be loved by the Spirit...**

Jeannette lives in NY City. Because of the crime in her neighborhood she took Judo, and later Karate. She learned all the kicks, punches, pressure holds. She eventually became a black belt - a martial arts expert.

Finally, the day came when all her training was put to the test. She was attacked by a purse snatcher, and Jeannette defended herself admirably, *but not with her martial arts*. **She beat the guy up with an umbrella.**

Here's the point of the story, what you know theoretically may not be what you draw on in reality.

This happens in our struggle with sin. We're in Christ, but when temptation comes, do we trust in His Spirit, or cope in our own strength. We need to be "*spiritually minded*" and rely on what we have in Christ.

"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."

Paul is saying we owe nothing to the flesh. We need to shake our *do-it-yourself* attitudes. Often we think the answer to everything is more willpower and elbow grease. And we leave no room for the Holy Spirit.

At best, the changes we make are temporary. But for long-lasting transformations it takes a work of the Spirit. Galatians 5:17 should be our strategy, "*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*"

Verse 14, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*" The Greek word translated "*led*"

means "to be driven." To be "*led*" doesn't mean to be dragged around. The Law led from the **outside in**. The Spirit leads us from the **inside out**.

In basketball, one great player can go on a hot-streak and start winning games single-handedly. When this happens we like to say, "**he's carrying his team.**"

The whole team is riding on his accomplishments.

And this is what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives. *The Spirit of God is the great difference maker.*

Verse 15, "**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.'**"

Sometimes in a card game you'll throw down a trump card on a hand your partner has already won. When this happens, we like to say, "**You double won it.**"

And here we learn that the Holy Spirit has double won us! We're **born again**, but we're also **adopted**.

And an adopted child has a great advantage. He always knows he's wanted. That's what God is saying to us by giving us "***the Spirit of adoption.***" He loves us.

The Spirit enables us to cry out, "***Abba,***" or "***Daddy.***"

The term implies a closeness. It's the Holy Spirit Who puts us on intimate terms with our Father God.

Then Paul says in verse 16, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...**" I say this reverently, but the Holy Spirit is like a dial tone. He confirms

our connection to God. He provides us the inner witness of God's presence.

I could tell my kids over and over I loved them, but if I never hugged them my words would ring hollow.

Think of the Holy Spirit as **“the hug of the Godhead.”** We feel God's love through the presence of His Spirit.

“And if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” And here's the ultimate test of our heavenly sonship. *Has God written us into the will?*

To me it would be more than enough, if God adopted me to let me eat at His table and live in His house - *but at the end of the road if He left his vast treasure to his own blood relative, that would be understandable...*

If He gave me a 5% cut, or 10% of the inheritance it would blow my mind. But who would dream that God would make me **“joint heirs with Christ?”** That means I get a similar share as His only begotten Son, Jesus.

What a shocker!... God only asks one favor in return.

For a share of His glory, we should accept a share of His sufferings. We're **“joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”** *To receive a crown, you must bear a cross.*

But remember the crosses are nothing compared to the glory. That's what he tells us in the next verses...

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Always remember, *hardships on earth pale in comparison to the glories of Christ.*

Think of a marathon - all 26 miles. The runners toe the starting line, when one of them jumps the gun. It's a false start, but in light of the 26 miles it's no big deal. When the race is over the false start won't be recalled.

And that's what the sufferings of this life are like compared to the glories of heaven. Heaven is so heavy it makes all earthly hardships seem lite as a feather.

When we get to heaven the Christian will be something to see; for we'll share in the glory of Jesus.

Understand, next to the Savior Himself, we'll be the highlight of heaven. This is the amazing truth found in verse 19, **“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”**

The Phillips translation renders verse 19, **“The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.”** It's amazing!

Verse 20 is an important verse, **“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope...”** In the beginning all creation was in harmony with its Creator - but sin threw a wrench in the gears. God's perfectly ordered universe became subject to randomness. Nature went berserk.

Mother Nature came down with a bad case of PMS.

Today, every time a tree creaks, or a dog howls at the moon it is sign *all is not right...* Because of sin, the gentle rain that waters your lawn is also the source of floods that wipe out a city. The wind that lifts a kite, can knock over your house in a

tornado... Today Nature is a mix of *beauty and brutality - majesty and monstrosity*.

It's true, the sweet little old lady, Mother Nature, is the number one perpetrator of random acts of violence.

Paul continues, "Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Jesus didn't just die on the cross to save us. He died to redeem the universe - *to restore everything that sin has touched*.

Verse 22, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."

Julie Andrews sang, "The hills are alive with the sound of music." But today the hills sing in a minor key.

All creation is in "*the bondage of corruption*" - we live in a fallen world, that longs to be free. Today, creation's song is a dirge. It groans waiting on its redemption, on the day when God will restore it to its original state.

"Not only *that*, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." And we also groan. We feel the aches and pains of our fallen state. *The older I get, the more I groan...*

My spirit is like a hot air balloon. One day I'll soar to heaven - but my body is like a sandbag weighing me down. I groan not just to be free - suicide would do that. My hope is to be clothed in the glory of Jesus.

I groan for "*the redemption of (my) body.*"

Verse 24, “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.” God has a purpose for our groaning - *groaning causes growing*.

You’ve heard of “growing pains.” When we grapple with a “yet-to-be-realized hopes” it creates endurance.

The first half of Romans 8 taught us how God through His Spirit *adopts us into His family*. Now the last half, describes how He *adapts us into His family*.

He uses trials and time to build in us, character.

There’re actually three groanings here in Romans 8. We’ve discussed two - there’s *the groaning around us* and *the groaning within us*. And the third type of groaning, is *the Spirit’s groaning on behalf of us...*

Which Paul mentions next, “*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.*” When our minds are so befuddled we don’t know how to pray - or our hearts are so heavy we’re overwhelmed with emotion - the Spirit will groan for us.

Here’s how this works in my life... In desperate times I’ll just groan. I’ll sigh. I’ll just vocalize my raw emotion.

Then I trust the Spirit to translate my feelings into God’s will. The Holy Spirit is the perfect prayer partner.

Verse 27, “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 Spirit can take our groans and turn them into effective prayers. He intercedes for us before God.

I’ll bet verse 28 is familiar ground. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His purpose.*” In the lives of God’s children He takes all our circumstances - both pleasant and painful - and works them together for our good and for His glory...

Notice, each word in verse 28 is strategic...

God works not *a few things*, or *some things*, or even *most things*... but “**all things together**” for good!

And He works “**all things together.**” On their own there are events in life from which nothing good results. Yet God takes random and worthless things, puts them together, and then turns them into good.

Like the ingredients in a cake, on their own you can’t stomach them. *Flour, eggs, butter* are disgusting by themselves - but when the baker puts all the components together under fire, they turn out delicious. And the same is true with how God works in our lives.

And notice God’s overarching purpose in all that He does. “**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.” Realize, you and I were chosen before we existed to be like Jesus.

And God is not afraid to use whatever means necessary - *even suffering* - to accomplish His goal.

Verse 30 **“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”**

For 8 chapters Paul has expounded the wonders of God’s grace. *And it’s taken his breath away.* He asks in verse 31, **“What then shall we say to these things?”**

Paul is in awe. And he closes with a flurry of questions, designed not necessarily to be answered, as to stir up appreciation for God’s wisdom and grace.

He begins in verse 31, **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** God trumps all rivals. With Him on our team we’re sure to win. Here’s a great quote from Max Lucado, **“God is for you. If there's a tree in heaven, He's carved your name in the bark. We know God has a tattoo. Isaiah 49:16 tells us, ‘I have written your name on My hand.’”** Imagine this, God has a *Sandy tattoo.*

Don’t ever think God holds a grudge against you, or He’s angry at you, or He’s washed His hands of you, or written you off His books... not so! **God is for you!**

And verse 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?”** If God gave us His most precious possession, His Son, *do you really think He’s going to get*

stingy with the rent, or a good job, or a Christian spouse? Why doubt His generosity?

“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is God who justifies.*” There are folks I’ve met who might want to throw rocks at me, and condemn me.

Good thing they’re not the Judge!

God is judge, and Paul assures us that God isn’t about condemning us, or denouncing us. If Jesus died to save *us*, why would God want to *stone us*?

God justifies! He treats me just-as-if-I’d never sinned.

Verse 34, **“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.*”** Jesus traveled a long road... from *a manger*, to *a cross*, onto *heaven’s throne* to insure our salvation.

Why would He want to condemn us now?

Verse 35, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*”**

In the fourth century, a godly man, **John Chrysostom**, preached so strongly against sin he offended Rome’s Emperor and Empress. He was called to the palace, and was told to stop preaching, or he'd be banished.

Chrysostom replied, **“Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father’s house.”** The Emperor snapped back, **“Then I will slay you.”** He said again, **“No, you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God.”** **“Then your treasures will be**

confiscated." "Sire, my treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal."

The Emperor got angry, *"Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left."* "That you cannot do, either, for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'"

Chrysostom was eventually banished, and died in route. But the Emperor never forgot the lesson. You can take nothing from a child of God that's truly important! *Nothing can separate us from God's love!*

In verse 36 Paul quotes Psalm 44:22, *"As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'*" This was certainly Paul's life. He suffered much for Jesus' sake.

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." And Paul's life was Exhibit A. Name the trial and he overcame with joy and victory.

Paul was *"more than a conqueror."* Two truths were paramount in Paul's life. The evil world around us will *put you down*, but God will never *let you down*.

"For I am persuaded (Paul was utterly convinced) *that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers* (not even the goriest demon), *nor things present nor things to come* (nothing in your present or in your future), *nor height nor depth..."* A literal translation would be *"neither the zenith or horizon."*

And these are actually provocative terms. The *"zenith"* is the point in the sky directly overhead. And the *"horizon"* is where

the circle of the earth meets the sky. When astrologers cast their horoscopes they do so by studying the position of the stars and planets in relationship to the earth's “zenith” and “horizon.”

Here Paul is combating the occult and astrology.

Sadly, even in modern times folks still live in bondage to superstition. They think their destiny is tied to the stars. Paul is saying to us, that no astrologer or superstition can separate us from God's love.

I like Pastor Donald Grey Barnhouse's comment on verse 39, "A true Christian can sit down at a table with thirteen people present, spill salt, break a mirror, put an umbrella up inside a room, walk under a ladder, have a black cat walk across his path, and all this can happen to him on Friday, the thirteenth. Yet none of it, nor all of it together, can separate him from God's love."

Trust *the Lord*, not *luck*. Chance, fate, or superstition has no influence over your life if you're in Christ.

He concludes Chapter 8, “Nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In Christ Jesus not even our own sin can separate us from His love!