

## Paul's Letter to the Romans Lesson 5

Romans Chapter 8 begins with the words "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Why does Paul make this statement? Why does he use the word "therefore?" To answer these questions we must remind ourselves of what Paul has written up to this point in the letter. It just makes sense to review quickly the first seven chapters before we begin Romans Chapter 8, insuring that we have a clear understanding of Paul's intent.

**CHAPTER 1** – Man is without excuse, created to know instinctively God's invisible attributes.

**CHAPTER 2** – The church is without excuse. The Roman church has thought lightly of the kindness of God and continues to sin openly. Every man will be judged by God according to his deeds and what the thoughts in his heart.

**CHAPTER 3** – In the church there is neither Jew nor Greek, but the Jews have an advantage since they were the first to be given the oracles of God. The Jews know God's law and are unrighteous in their actions. However, God's forbearance overlooks the sins committed by believers.

**CHAPTER 4** – God overlooked the sins of Abraham long before the Law was given to man. Abraham is justified and found righteous because of his belief in God, not by the Law.

**CHAPTER 5** – Believers share in Abraham's belief. The love of God saves them from the wrath of God. Because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross, a believer's sin is not only overlooked. It is wiped away by the grace of God at the moment of salvation.

**CHAPTER 6** – Where sin is present, grace abounds, but we should never sin in order to receive more grace. The church in Rome is known worldwide for its faith, but sin is reigning in the mortal bodies of its members. Believers must be slaves to righteousness, not slaves to sin.

**CHAPTER 7** – Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, saved by the gift of grace, leader of the church, evangelist of the lost, must deal every day with his own sin, mastering it before it masters him. As a wretched man, Paul is set free from the body of sin and death by the grace of God who looks at his heart.

**Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

**The Law of God** - As seen in the previous chapter, the Law of God brings about the knowledge of what God considers a sin. The Law is the school master for everyone, teaching the regulations of God in every area of life. The Law leads to death, but the gift of God leads to eternal life. Believers should not sin, but they will. At the moment of salvation their sins are washed away, but just a moment later they must choose not to sin again.

Paul says the same thing in chapter seven when he speaks of the evil that dwells within him. He finds himself doing exactly what he does not want to do and he knows his actions are sinful. Yet, the believer is in a different position with God from the non-believer. The believer is set free from the Law by the finished work of Jesus Christ who sent the Holy Spirit to seal and protect the believer from eternal death. A believer does not have to worry about condemnation because his salvation has activated the Holy Spirit who frees him from all condemnation, which comes when all the evidence is considered and a verdict of guilty is pronounced. Believers, even when they sin, are never found guilty in the eyes of God the Father because the blood of Jesus has washed away every sin. No one can change his eternal destination once he has put his belief in the Lord Jesus. His deeds here on earth may affect his crowns and rewards in heaven, but his deeds cannot change the place of his eternal home.

<sup>3</sup>For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

**The Law of God** – God sent the Law to reveal His desire for everyman, but the Law could not save a single person; it could only reveal his sinfulness. Jesus is the only one who can save a person and He did that by pronouncing the guilty verdict on sin and fulfilling all the requirements of the Law. Believers are to set their minds on the spiritual things of God. The lost person continues to focus his mind on the things of the flesh.

<sup>6</sup>For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup>because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the **law of God**, for it is not even able *to do so*; <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**Law of God** – All of the laws found in the oracles of God fall into ten main areas of thought, grouped into two areas of relationships.

*Relationship with God*

1. Have no other gods
2. Have no idols/graven images
3. Do not take God's name upon you in vain/emptiness
4. Keep Sabbath holy

*Relationship with others*

5. Honor father and mother
6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not give false testimony / lie
10. Do not covet

Although some of the list above is acceptable to all mankind, the entire list is, at times, a tall order even for the faithful believer. Having no other gods seems like a simple issue; nevertheless, many believers fail to recognize that their attitudes about money (and other material things) clearly indicate that they have other gods in their lives besides the one true God. Likewise, having idols seems easy enough to avoid; however, many believers worship more at the television, the track, the car show, the mall, or the beach than they do at the family altar. Spiritual believers should not reject the law of God like the unbeliever does. The believer who rejects the law of God does not please God. Rejecting the law will not cause a person to lose his salvation, but it will affect his rewards for work done while on earth. Believers should not live as if they are in the flesh.

<sup>9</sup>However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the **Spirit of God** dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

**Spirit of God** - We cannot help but notice Paul's use of the conditional clause in this passage, "... if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you". This clause is the key element that means the difference between the believer and the non-believer. The believer has the Spirit of God and the non-believer does not. The non-believer lives totally in the flesh without hope of eternal life. The believer lives in the Spirit, struggling in the war between the desires of the flesh and a life in the Spirit.

<sup>10</sup>And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

**Spirit of God** – The war rages within the believer because his mortal body will one day die a physical death because of sin that engulfs this world through the sin of one man, Adam. Through the one man Jesus, the spirit of every man who believes in Him moves into eternity because of the righteousness of God. Just as the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead in 30 AD, so too, will the Holy Spirit give eternal life to our mortal bodies one day, changing the mortal into immortal and the corruptible into the incorruptible.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- <sup>13</sup>for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are being led by the **Spirit of God**, these are **sons of God**.

**Sons of God** – The Spirit of God does not lead the lives of those who fail to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who live this life without Him dwell every day in the desires of this world with its lusts and allurements. For those who live this life with the Spirit of God within them, each day is spent shunning the desires of this world's lusts and striving to present their bodies, souls, and spirits in holiness before the Lord. When people place their belief in the Lord Jesus and allow His Holy Spirit to lead them, God calls them His

sons. In the New Testament the sons of God represent those persons who are continually striving to do the will of God.

<sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

**Sons of God** – How do you become one of the sons of God? To become one of the sons of God, you must enter into the covenant by the adoption process. The adoption process is an act of God's grace, bringing individuals into the family of the redeemed and making them partakers of all the blessings that He provides. Adoption creates a new relationship between a believer and God's great love. It is a relationship resembling the child with his father.

<sup>16</sup>The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**,

<sup>17</sup>and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God** and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

**Children of God** – In Romans 2:14-16 Paul says,

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

In this passage a person's conscience bears witness of God in his heart even without the knowledge of the Law. Here in Romans 8, Paul says that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our consciences proclaiming that the sons of God are the children of God. To be a child of God the Holy Spirit must bear witness along with our spirit. A person's spirit can not adequately claim to be part of God's family without the second witness of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit's dwelling within a person is the sure sign that a person belongs to the family of God. Each child of God is also an heir of God.

**Heirs of God** - Once again Paul uses a conditional clause when referring to the children of God and their living as heirs of God. In order to be part of the children of God and also heirs of God, they must share as a fellow heir with Christ in His suffering. In the Old Testament and in the Law, the division of property from parent to child is a matter of right and not according to a parent's favoritism as seen in many families today. Hebrews 1:2 says, "In these last days has spoken to us in *His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." Christ is the heir of all things. As believers we are joint-heirs with Christ partaking in His promise, righteousness, and kingdom. As heirs of Christ we have the promise of being glorified with Him as He is glorified.

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the **sons of God**.

**Sons of God** – It is difficult to conceive, much less explain, the glory that awaits each child of God in eternity with the Lord. In this world we still must deal with food, clothing, childbearing, child rearing, work, and death. The

suffering of this world is meaningless when compared to the promise awaiting us in the by and by. One day all of creation will see the grand band comprised of the sons of God, everyone of them adopted because of their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the **children of God**. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

**Children of God** - All of God's creation is subject to slavery and corruption because of sin which is revealed by God. Only mankind can sin. Plants, animals, and minerals cannot sin, yet all of creation suffers greatly because of man's sin. Sin will continue to enslave creation and all its elements until the children of God are redeemed in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>24</sup>For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

**Children of God** – For English-speaking people, the use of the word “hope” in this passage confuses the intent. A better translation would read as follows:

For in **confidence** we have been saved, but **confidence** that is seen is not **trust**; for why does one also **trust** for what he sees? But if we **trust** for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

To be a child of God a person must put his trust in the unseen Savior of the world. One day all the promises in His Word will come to pass. We must put our confidence in that which is unseen and eagerly wait for its reality to come to pass in due time. If we were able to see into the future during the walk of this life, it wouldn't be a matter of trust at all. It is God's plan that a person must put his trust in the unseen in order to acquire that which awaits the child of God.

<sup>26</sup>And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; <sup>27</sup>and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

**Will of God** – Creation groans in the process of waiting for the sons of God to be revealed, but the Holy Spirit groans too on our behalf as believers. Creation is weak because of the injection of sin in the world. Believers groan in their weakness, awaiting the blessings of God's promises to be joint-heirs with Christ, but the Spirit also groans to the Godhead in tones far beyond our earthly comprehension. God the Father looks at the heart and He understands the groans of the Spirit on our behalf, resulting in the Spirit's

praying for the divine will of God in the believer's life. When a believer does not know what to pray, he should moan before the Lord and let the Holy Spirit groan before God the Father. Praying in this way just might be the best way to pray for the divine will of God.

<sup>28</sup>And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup>For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

**Will of God** – Verses 28 – 30 represent the three most misinterpreted, misunderstood, misquoted, and mistranslated verses in the entire Bible. The text of the New American Standard Bible is the closest to the original Greek available in a standard translation today. A literal translation of the Greek would read as seen below:

And we know that to the ones loving God all things He works together for good, to the ones being called according to purpose.

Because whom He foreknew, also He predestined conformed to the image of the Son of Him for Him to be first-born among many brothers;

And whom He predestined, these also He called, and whom He called, these also He justified, and whom He justified, these also He glorified.

For clarity and understanding, let's look at this passage in three parts. Part 1 reads, "**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**" It is God doing the work for the believer who loves Him with all his heart. Here we might ask the question, "How does God do this?"

In part 2 of the passage Paul says, "**For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.**" It is a common misunderstanding and misinterpretation to read into this passage that God is conforming those who love Him into the image of His Son. Paul is not stating that the believer is changed into the image of His Son. He is addressing the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the physical Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, here on earth, as the visible image of the invisible God the way Paul speaks of in Colossians 1:15.

**Col. 1:15** And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

In addition, it is Jesus that God foreknew and predestined to take on the incarnation of earthly flesh as the Son of God. Peter confirms Paul's understanding of this part of the passage.

**1 Peter 1:17-21** And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *upon earth*; <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup>but **with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.** <sup>20</sup>**For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you** <sup>21</sup>**who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory**, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The same elements are in Peter's passage as in verse 29 of Paul's letter to the Romans. It is Jesus who was foreknown, it is Jesus who appeared in the visible image of the invisible God, and it is Jesus who was raised from the dead as the firstborn among the brethren. According to Peter, Jesus is the one who is predestined to be the Savior of the world long before the world was created. With all of this in mind we might ask the questions, "For whose benefit did Jesus take on the carnality of earthly flesh? Who benefits from Jesus' resurrection?" The answer is found in part 3 of the passage.

Part 3 reads, **"And whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."** A difficult transition is present in the English which is not present in the Greek. The "whom He predestined" refers to the predestination by God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only person in this passage who is predestined. Jesus took on earthly flesh and died on the cross to pay the penalty of sin against the Law of God once and for all time. Never again will a sacrifice be needed to wash away the sins committed by anyone under the Law. Jesus was then resurrected from the grave to give confidence to those who love God and are called according to God's purpose. Notice the first part of the phrase again, **"And whom He predestined, these He also called."** The word "these" does not refer to those who were predestined; only Jesus is predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God and the first born of the brethren. The word "these" refers to the first part of the passage that says, **"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."** The passage returns to Paul's first premise. The "these He also called" in verse 30 refers to "those who are called according to His purpose" in verse 28. God sent His Son into the world in order for Jesus to call mankind to come to Him so He may justify them and ultimately glorify them. Remember that in lesson 3, (Romans 4:22-25) we defined the words righteousness and justification. The righteousness of God overlooks the sins previously committed by man when he puts his faith in God. The sins of Abraham and all the other Old Testament saints are covered by the righteousness of God. At Calvary, Jesus paid the penalty for all the sins of mankind, washing away the sins of all those who believe in Him. With Jesus, sin is not just overlooked; the record of sin is wiped clean. It is Jesus who calls the sinner and justifies him by wiping away his sins. Then, as Paul has already addressed in Romans 5: 1-2, Jesus will one day glorify the ones He calls and justifies.

**Romans 5:1-2 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,** <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; **and we exult in hope of the glory of God.**

In review, the proper understanding and interpretation of Romans 8:28-30 is as follows:

God is working in the lives of those who love Him to provide good for them as He calls them according to His purpose.

For the good of those who love God, God predestined Jesus to take on the carnality of earthly flesh, die on the cross, and be resurrected as the firstborn of all the brethren to be resurrected after Calvary.

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection provide salvation to anyone who believes in Him. Jesus is tenderly calling all mankind to come unto Him. He justifies those who accept the call of the Lord by wiping their sinful records clean in the book of remembrance which lies before the throne of God. Jesus gives those who put their belief in Him confidence in the fact that He will glorify them when this life is over, presenting them with the promised gift of spending all eternity with Him. This promise is all part of the will of God as He works in the daily lives of all mankind.

If there is any doubt that this is the proper interpretation, just read on in context because Paul confirms this understanding in the following verses.

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

**The Will of God** – It is God who is working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. God the Father worked out the incarnation of Jesus as well as His death, burial, and resurrection for our good; surely God will continue with His promise to provide eternity and glory for those who love Him.

<sup>33</sup>Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup>who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the **right hand of God**, who also intercedes for us.

**Right Hand of God** – We must not forget that Paul is writing to the Roman church because problems exist within the body there. At the beginning of this lesson we reviewed the first seven chapters, presenting the major tenets of each section. The purpose of the review will now become clear with Paul's reference to the elect in verse 33 of this chapter.

In the first seven chapters Paul pointedly addresses the Jewish believers in the church. The Jews are without excuse because God instinctively places

within every man the knowledge of His invisible attributes. In addition, the Jews are without excuse because they are given the oracles of God. With the arrival of the Savior, they are without excuse because they no longer must live under the curse of the Law which leads to death. They can live in the grace of God. However, the Jews in the church at Rome can not let go of the letter of the Law and they misunderstand the intent of God causing Paul's to rehash the story of Abraham who was justified apart from the Law. Paul finally covers how even he has a problem with sin, just as the Jewish believers in Rome are having a problem with sin. In today's lesson, chapter 8 teaches the Jews how there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus and further presents how God interjects His will into this world by sending Jesus to call, justify, and glorify those who will accept the call, Jew or Greek. But now Paul uses the term "elect."

In the Bible, the term "elect" applies only to those of Jewish descent. It never applies to Gentiles, Greeks, or barbarians. The term "elect" carries the meaning of God's choosing or selecting without any choice on the part of the person being chosen by God. Such is the case with the Jews. God chose the Jews to be His chosen race. They had no choice in the decision. God elected them as His chosen people. He did not call them to be His people, He chose them. Paul has already explained that, although there are many who have Jewish blood in their veins, not all Jews are true Jews in their hearts; God is looking at their hearts to see if they love and honor Him.

**"Who will bring a charge against God's elect?"** Paul wants the Jews to clearly understand that only God can bring a charge against the Jews that will stick. He is the one who justifies them as true Jews, the truly elect, because they have put their faith in the Lord Jesus as their Savior and their sins have been justified, washed away from the record books. **"Who can condemn them"** once they have accepted Jesus as their Savior? Not one single creature in all of creation can condemn them because Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for everyone who loves God and is called according to His purpose. Even the elect Jews must accept the call of the Lord for salvation since His death at Calvary. Jews cannot be justified in God's eyes without putting their trust in Jesus. Once a Jew is in the grace of God, no one can ever remove him from that place of honor.

<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." <sup>37</sup>But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

**Love of God** – Paul quotes a familiar verse that every Jew knows.

**Psalm 44:22** But for Thy sake we are killed all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

In the Psalm 44 context, Israel has suffered a great defeat in spite of her faith and perceived obedience to God. The writer of the Psalm does not understand why God would allow the Jews to be defeated. However, he does understand that the real reason for all the tribulation and defeat is to prove his commitment to the Lord. Paul quotes this same Psalm passage as he writes to the Jews in the Roman church to remind the Jews that they must always be ready to face tribulation and defeat for the cause of Christ. In God's perspective, our suffering is not always for our punishment; at times our suffering produces the battle scars of our loyalty to Him. Nothing that comes can separate the child of God, an heir of God, from the love of God, for "... there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."