

Romans Chapter 8 Part 2 – John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, “What we as Christians can learn from our future.”
 - a) In the business world, people like to go to “economic forecast” seminars to help them plan their goals for the next season or next year.
 - b) Many people seek out fortune tellers to learn the future. Christians need to avoid that one with a ten-foot pole. (See Deuteronomy 18:10) That’s a topic for another day. Personally, I have more trust in the predictions of a fortune cookie than a fortune-teller. At least the fortune cookie is much cheaper as it usually comes with a good meal. ☺
 - c) As a simpler illustration, we look outside and check the weather as we can plan how to dress when we go outside.
 - d) My point of all of this is that the bible has a lot to say about the future of the Christian.
 - i) The first thing we have to do is “accept it”. If God tells us stuff about our future, that’s a pretty reliable source. ☺
2. The next issue is: If God tells us information about our future, what is it and what do we do about it? The “what is this information” question is the main topic of the verses of this lesson.
 - a) The main point is that this is about God’s plans for our future as Christians.
 - b) Understand that this is a “done deal”. God has great plans for our future in heaven and desires to mature us now in order to prepare us for those plans.
 - c) Let’s talk about the purpose of “maturing us” for the future:
 - i) Paul said, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6-7, NIV)
 - ii) What does this verse mean? It is about our future. Notice the first sentence is how God “raised us up”. Since we’re not dead yet, this is future. Paul speaks in the present tense as if it is a “done deal”.
 - iii) The other term I emphasized with underlines is “the coming ages”. God is a god-of-love. God desires someone(s) and “something(s) to express that love upon. He choose humans. That is why He created us in the first place. Then God gave us free-will so we could choose to love Him back out of our own free-will. If I stuck a gun to your head and said, “love me”, you would out of fear and not true love. That is why God gave us free will to see who would choose Him.
 - iv) The “coming ages” refers to the next life. I don’t know exactly what that means, but I’m willing to bet my eternity on Jesus to find out.
 - v) This is the “purpose of all history”: For God to draw a people to himself.
 - d) Which leads us back to Romans Chapter 8: If God “picked us” for eternity then God must love us too much to leave us alone. That means that God desires to mature us in order to prepare us for the “riches in the ages to come”.
3. With all of that said, welcome to the second half of Romans Chapter 8.
 - a) The first lesson of Romans 8 focuses on the fact that we are saved as Christians no matter what we do. As long as we are trusting in Jesus for our salvation, we can’t mess it up by “sinning too much”. We can be bad witnesses for Jesus by “over-sinching”. We can do harm to ourselves by “over-sinching”, but we can’t lose our salvation.
 - b) The remainder of the first lesson deals with the question, “Just how do I know for sure I am saved?” That lesson has a bunch of little “self-tests” to check if one is a Christian.
 - c) This lesson moves on to a new topic: Maturity. If we are saved, what do we do about it?
 - i) If I’m “so saved”, and God loves me, why do I have to suffer so much?
 - ii) Another question is, “Why is this life necessary anyway? If I’m saved for eternity, why can’t I just enjoy this life and let God worry about the next one?”

- iii) The answer to these questions is “God loves us too much to leave us alone”. Remember that being a Christian means God is in charge of our life and not us. It would be a like a 4-year old child always telling their parents that they, as a child know what is best for them and not their parents.
 - iv) Christianity is about putting God in charge and we then follow. That means accepting things we don’t like with the understanding that God has some ultimate purpose for that “thing”. More on that latter in the lesson. It’s time to get started.
- 4. Romans Chapter 8, Verse 18: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.
 - a) Paul starts out with the idea that “our present sufferings” is a given.
 - i) Remember that Paul lived in a time when Christianity, for the most part, was an illegal religion. It was a death sentence to be a Christian. Further, roughly two-thirds of the Roman Empire were slaves, which probably included most of Paul’s audience. This is a group that understood suffering.
 - ii) Later in this lesson, I’ll talk about why this suffering is a Christian “requirement”.
 - b) The main point of Verse 18 is that suffering is “worth it”.
 - i) That does not mean we are to inflict pain upon ourselves, or avoid medicine. It just means whatever we are going through now, is “nothing” compared to eternity. As best I can tell, our lifetime is a lot shorter than eternity. ☺ Try to imagine living a thousand years, or five thousand years. Keep going until you can’t think any farther in the future. What is that compared to this lifetime? That is Paul’s point about dealing with suffering.
 - ii) Yes the pain-of-the-moment is real and it hurts. Nobody, including Paul or myself is discounting how real suffering is. Paul is just trying to give us some perspective on “time”. Whatever length is our life on earth is relatively nothing in comparison to eternity.
 - c) The next set of verses deal with the issue of “our present suffering”.
 - i) In other words, Paul gets into the issue of, “How do we know life will be better after we die? How do we know all of this suffering is worth it? What evidence is there that there is a purpose for all of the suffering in this lifetime?”
 - ii) Let’s start by the knowledge that all people go through some suffering in this lifetime. We live in a sinful world, and it eventually affects everyone. The Christian understands all of this and hopefully puts it in perspective.
 - iii) It might be best at this point to move on to the next verse and come back to the issue. The issue is essentially, “What is our future? How do we know it is true? What do we do now in the “present” based on that knowledge?”
- 5. Verse 19: The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
 - a) The big issue of this lesson has to do with the fact that one day all Christians will be changed into a new being designed to live in heaven. The question then becomes what do we do in this lifetime to prepare for that moment and how do we know it is true?
 - b) From Verses 19-25, Paul is going to give an example of “how do we know it’s true?”
 - i) Paul is going to do this by focusing on the “creation”, which is the world.
 - ii) In the same way, we as humans suffer from sin, so does the world itself.
 - c) Let’s start by defining “creation”. Luckily it’s mentioned in the first verse of the bible. ☺
 - i) “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1).
 - ii) The “heavens” would include everything from stars to angelic beings.
 - iii) In the context of Romans, Paul is focusing on the earth itself. It would include plant and animal life as well. Paul is referring to the fact the earth has to suffer due to man’s sinfulness.

- d) Next, let's define "sons of God". As I stated in the last lesson, the term "Sons of God" refers to a direct creation of God. For example, Adam was a direct creation of God. We as humans are "sons of Adam", not a direct creation. As born again believers, we become a new creature, a "mixture" of a spirit filled believer with our old sinful body. We become the "Sons of God". After our death, our sinful nature is removed.
- i) "Beloved, now are we (Christians) the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1st John 3:2 KJV)
 - a) 1st John says we are now called "Sons of God". To paraphrase the apostle John: "We as Christians are a new created being and get the title "sons of God". When Jesus comes back, we will be like Him, that is, having a new resurrected body like that given to Jesus. We're not exactly sure what that means in terms of all the details, but one day, we will.
 - ii) Paul said, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2nd Corinthians 5:17 NIV)
- e) Now let's get back to Romans 8:19: The verse says "the creation" is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. That means whatever the "creation" is, it is waiting for the revealing of the Sons of God.
- i) We just learned that in 1st John 3:2, that "event" does not happen until Jesus Second Coming. Although we as Christians are "called" Sons of God now, we do not "fully" become "Sons of God" until Jesus comes back. In practical terms, that means we still have this sinful nature inside of us and we have to live with our decaying human bodies until that event occurs.
- f) This verse is saying that not only are Christians waiting for this event, but the earth itself is waiting and "groaning".
- i) What did Paul mean by groaning? Do rocks groan? Do trees groan in pain, "I wish Jesus would get back here soon, my roots are killing me!?" ☺
 - ii) The term "groan" refers to a sound one makes when one is in pain.
 - iii) I don't think Paul is being that literal. I think the point is the earth "suffers" because of the sinful nature of man. We do harm to this planet. It is as if plant and animal life are thinking, "I wish Jesus would come back and bring an end to sin so we don't have to suffer anymore".
- g) The next step is to go back to the Garden of Eden and talk about "before and after":
- i) When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, notice the curse placed on Adam:
 - a) "Cursed is the ground because of you (Adam); through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." (Genesis 3:17b NIV)
 - b) Before that curse, Adam could live off the fruit of the Garden of the Eden. Because of Adam's sin, he was kicked out and now he, and us, now have to work much harder to get food. Gee, thanks Adam! ☺
 - c) Notice God cursed the ground for Adam's sake in Genesis 3:17. It wasn't "the ground's (earth's) fault that Adam sinned. The point is God "cursed" the earth for Adam's sake. The earth had to suffer because of Adam's sin.
 - d) That is the point of Romans 8:19 - The earth "suffers" because of sin.
 - e) Why did God do this? Mainly to show us how bad sin it. It affects us physically. It harms innocent people and the earth around us.
 - ii) So why is Paul telling us all of this? Remember that Paul is trying to show us "evidence" that there is suffering in this lifetime, and everyone and everything around us is waiting for a better day when Jesus' returns.
- h) Finally, the bible tells us that one day, there will be a new heaven and a new earth.
- i) This is stated in Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2nd Peter 3:3, Revelation 21:1. Why?

- ii) The same way our old human nature is “incorruptible beyond repair”, so is this world. It is God telling us in effect, “I’m sorry, but that sin disease is so bad, I have to kill it completely like a mercy killing. I, God am better off creating a new heavens and earth without the corruption of sin than keeping this one”.
- iii) Now let’s get back to my opening theme of “What we as Christians can learn from our future”: If we know the earth as we know it will be destroyed one day, we need to have a light touch upon it. It should be a reminder that all of the materialistic things we desire will be destroyed one day.
 - a) For example, when you see a “ding” in your new car, it may help to say, “God’s going to blow it all up one day. I’ll live with the ding.” ☺

6. Verse 20: For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

- a) Verses 20 and 21 finish the thought of Verse 19. It is the idea that the earth was cursed because of man’s sin and the earth is waiting for Jesus’ Second Coming to bring an end to the suffering caused by sin.
- b) OK, why is Paul telling us all of this? The answer is it gets back to some of the questions I raised a page or two back: For example, “How do I know the suffering of this world is “worth it” compared to the next life? What evidence is there that things will be better?
 - i) Paul answers this question by saying in effect, “Hey, look around you. Look at the “turmoil” the earth is in. Let’s face it; our planet had all sorts of weather conditions that are harmful. The earth is not one big Garden of Eden. If God is perfect, why didn’t God create a perfect earth for us to live in? The answer is He did, and we, through Adam decided to rebel against God because we thought we could “do it better on our own”. God responded by saying, “OK, fine. I’ll just curse this place I built and let’s see how well you do without me”. That is why God “cursed” the earth and it is not just one big Garden of Eden.
- c) The next issue is “Well, it’s not my fault that I sin. If the world was a better place, then I wouldn’t need God’s help.” The history and future of mankind disproves this:
 - i) First, there was the 2,000 year (more or less) time era from Adam to Noah. Before the flood, there was a water canopy above the earth. (Genesis 1:20). This created a natural “green house” and I’m convinced the world was (ecologically speaking) a lot better place to live prior to the flood. God wanted to show during this time period that man is still corrupt despite very good atmospheric conditions.
 - ii) Another future time era to disprove this idea is “the millennium”. Revelation Chapter 20 speaks of a 1,000 year time period where Jesus rules from earth. Satan will be chained up during this time period. (See Revelation 20:2) After this comes the destruction of the earth. Why is this 1,000 year time era necessary? To show us how much we need God even without Satan’s influence. It is to show us how much sin affects us even if “earthly” conditions are better.
- d) Paul’s point here is that we suffer because of sin. Paul’s point is that the earth itself, including the creatures, the plant life, and human life all suffer because of sin. The “groaning” is the earth saying in effect, “OK, God you’ve proved your point about how bad sin is. Can we get on with this and bring Jesus back?” ☺
 - i) What’s the delay? If the Second Coming happened say 100 years ago, you and I wouldn’t be saved. Only “x” number of people get into heaven. We don’t know that final number, but God is patiently waiting for that final “x” believer so He can bring about the “mercy killing” to sin upon this world and end it’s “groaning”.
 - ii) “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise (of the Second Coming), as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2nd Peter 3:9 NIV, part in parenthesis added).

- e) What's the application? It means we should only expect "so much" out of this lifetime. We can have joy because we know there is a better life to come. We can enjoy this life because we understand there is a better life to come. When we live to do God's will we enjoy our life on earth far greater than any pleasure we can have to live for "ourselves."
- i) Paul is using the earth as "evidence" of the suffering sin has caused.
- ii) Speaking of suffering, let's finish up these verses on earth suffering. ☺
7. Verse 22: We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
- a) In Verses 22-23, Paul now connects the earth's "groaning" with our "groaning".
- b) Let me paraphrase Paul: "If you look around the world, you can see how it has suffered because of sin. It "groans in pain" because of God's curse. In a similar manner we also "groan in pain" having to deal with sin. Other people hurt us. The innocent suffer. Our only "hope" is waiting for something better in the next life".
- c) Let me again emphasize that I am not encouraging suicide or even "giving up" on this life on earth. Remember that as Christians we "belong" to God and therefore, He and He alone decides when our time is up and not us. God gives us a purpose of living this life on earth, and that is to glorify Him in all that we do. If anything, this life is to be enjoyed more once one has given their life to serve God. The joy comes in the perspective of understanding this is all temporary in comparison to eternity.
- d) Before I move on, let me describe what "firstfruits" means:
- i) When a full grown fruit tree starts to blossom fruit, usually in the summer, there are always a couple of pieces of fruit that are the first to appear. That is the literal word-picture of "firstfruits".
- ii) Jesus was the first "person" to be resurrected into heaven. We get clues in the New Testament that Old Testament saved people were held in this "nice holding tank" until after Jesus resurrection. (See Luke 16:19-31). Jesus was the "first-fruit" in that he was the first one resurrected.
- iii) "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits (a title for Jesus) of those who have fallen asleep." (1st Corinthians 15:20 NIV)
- e) Now let's get back to Romans. Paul says, "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit"
- i) As Christians, the Holy Spirit is inside of us. If we have the Spirit "living within us" we are guaranteed to be resurrected because we join in Jesus' resurrection as He was resurrected. We become part of Jesus' "firstfruit".
- ii) What does all this mean? It means Jesus was resurrected, so we will be resurrected as well. If we trust in the first fact (Jesus' resurrection), then we must accept the second fact as well, which is our resurrection.
- iii) That is what Paul meant by the last line, "we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons". By the way, "sons" applies to men and women. It means we all get equal standing before God as Christians. In the Roman culture a son had a greater stature and ranking than a daughter. Paul is making the point that we as Christians are all resurrected and regarded in equal stature regardless of sex.
8. Verse 24: For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
- a) Over the past few lessons, I have defined Christian "hope". It's time to do it again. ☺
- i) Christian hope is about believing in something we know is going to happen. We put trust in that fact. We have our moments of doubt, and that's natural. Once we think back on how God has worked in our lives in the past, we can then put that same trust in God will work in the future.
- b) If God were very visible in the sky, then "hope" is not necessary.

- i) Suppose God had this big “billboard” across the sky everyday saying, “Hang tight everyone. This world is coming to an end one day and Jesus is coming back”. Well, if we were convinced this “billboard” was of God, we wouldn’t need hope.
 - c) So why do we have to “hope” anyway? Why doesn’t God just make Himself visible and save us a lot of time and trouble?
 - i) The answer is that God wants people to come to Him by faith, and not by overwhelming evidence every moment of the day. When a father teaches his child how to ride a bicycle, the child can’t learn unless the father lets go of the bike. By not being visible every moment, God is “letting go” so we can learn to trust Him.
 - d) So what does all this mean? Paul’s last line in Verse 25 says, “We wait for it patiently”.
 - i) The “it” is Jesus Second Coming. The “it” is our future eternal life with God in heaven for eternity. In comparison to that time frame, our life on earth is a mere “eye-blink” of time.
 - ii) That means we accept all this future as “truth”. This gets back to my opening remarks. The future for Christians is a resurrected body. The future is we get to live forever in God’s presence. The future is the world as we know it, will be destroyed one day.
 - iii) What we should learn from all of this is perspective on how to live our lives right now. We can have joy despite the worst of circumstances knowing that all of “this” is temporary. We can have joy when we are innocently hurt. In life, bad things happen because we are all under the curse of sin. We are all victims of the sin-curse of the world. We all hurt others due to this sin curse. The only hope is a better future, not through us, but through God.
9. Verse 26: In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
- a) Let’s start with the phrase, “in the same way”: In the last set of verses, Paul is reminding us that we have a hope for a better life in the future.
 - i) The “same way” refers to the fact that if God loves us, cares for us, and wants to mature us to prepare us for this next life, then God is not going to just ignore us.
 - ii) Paul stated in the last couple of verses about a “hope” in things we cannot see. Hoping in a God we don’t see does not mean God ignores us, which is the argument Paul is getting into in these two verses.
 - b) The next phrase is “the Spirit helps us in our weakness”.
 - i) Having this sinful nature causes “weakness”. We constantly battle “our will” versus “God’s will”. The Spirit helps us pray for God’s will over and above what we desire for ourselves.
 - c) Next, let’s talk about the last phrase of Verse 27: “the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”
 - i) The term “saints” refers to all Christians. You don’t have to perform some verifiable miracles and have your image in stained glass to be a saint. ☺ If you’re a born again believer, welcome to the saint-club. (See 1 Corinthians 1:2.)
 - ii) Next, Paul is stating an unconditional bible promise: The Holy Spirit helps us pray in accordance to God’s will. That is a bible promise. Further, Verse 26 says the Spirit intercedes (i.e., helps us) with “groans that words cannot express”.
 - iii) Let’s talk about what that does not mean: “tongues”. To “speak in tongues” is to praise God in a language other than your normal spoken language. Paul covers that topic in 1st Corinthians 12 and 14. Paul says in Verse 26 that when the Holy Spirit speaks, it is “groans that words cannot express”. That means they can’t be translated. “Speaking in Tongues” is something that is translatable.

- iv) I believe Paul is simply talking about “God’s will” being done. It is similar to the way Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”. (Mathew 6:10 KJV). I think Paul is making the same point. The Holy Spirit works within us to help us do God’s will. The “problem” is the Holy Spirit has to fight our will and our sinful nature. Thus, there’s some groaning going on. ☺
 - d) This gets into the whole topic of “Praying for God’s will”.
 - i) I’m a big believer that the most common way God’s will gets done starts with us praying for His will to be done, studying our bible for guidance and then we just go live our life. If it is our desire to please God, we will live in a way that is pleasing to God. That is doing “God’s will”.
 - ii) I also believe God puts desires and interests in our hearts. Don’t underestimate the possibility that God himself may have given you a love for a certain hobby, assuming it is not a sin to commit such a hobby.
 - iii) The same way God gives people special gifts that are better than others. Using such gifts and interests to glorify God is doing “God’s will”.
 - iv) With that said, do I believe in the miraculous? Of course. I never want to put God in a box and limit what He can and cannot do. My point is we ask for guidance. We pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us. I’ve seen people ask for signs and God has given them signs. My point is God is not obligated to give any sort of miraculous sign. God often says in effect, “I’ve given you a brain, figure it out”. ☺ The danger is telling God what to do. Our job is to figure out His will and follow.
 - v) In times of big decisions, I’ll “think it out” or talk it out with a loved one or friend, and then “go” with a decision. My prayer is then, “Lord, bless it or block it.” Since only one of two possibilities can happen, the results are now God’s problem.
 - e) Getting back to putting this verse in context, Paul is comparing “the pain groans” of the earth due to sin with Holy Spirit “groaning” over prayer intercession. The connection is “battling sin”. The earth suffers because of sin. We suffer because we have to deal with sin. The Holy Spirit “groans” as we battle our will versus God’s will for our lives.
 - f) Finally, don’t hesitate to ask God, “May your will be done, or “Let the Holy Spirit guide my prayers”. Christianity is all about following God, not vice versa. We need to ask for intercession as a part of our prayer life.
10. Verse 28: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- a) This is a bible verse to check every now and then to make sure it’s still there. ☺
 - i) It is one of the most famous and memorized verses of the bible.
 - ii) The key word is “all”. Remember, “all” means “all”, and that is all “all” means.
 - a) I encourage you to reread Verse 28 with an emphasis on the word “all”.
 - iii) The idea is the every event of the Christian life somehow, somehow works together in a way “for good”.
 - iv) The term “for good” does not mean every event will be a blessing in our life. It means that every event is going to be used, ultimately for God’s glory.
 - b) Let’s talk about “messing up” and “God’s will”:
 - i) If God is perfect, then He knows all things. He even knows how and when we are going to “mess up” in the future. God even uses our sins and mistakes ultimately, for His glory, assuming we are Christians. Notice this verse is for believers only.
 - ii) That doesn’t excuse sin. We live with the double-factor of being accountable to God with the fact He knows all things and uses all things ultimately for His glory. The famous example is Judas. Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him and stated so in advance. Jesus exposed Judas betrayal as Jesus wanted the event to happen that night. Jesus “used that sin” for His glory. Still, Jesus held Judas to be accountable for his actions and stated as much. (See Matthew 26:23).

- c) My point, as it relates to Romans 8:28, is that God knows all things. Our future as Christians is that God wants to mature us and prepare us for life in heaven. To repeat a cliché I used earlier, “God loves us too much to leave us alone”. Therefore, somehow, God uses every event and aspect of our lives ultimately for His Glory.
 - d) The illustration I like to use to describe this verse is a “piece of a jigsaw puzzle.”
 - i) Think of our lives as Christians as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. We don’t have the privilege of seeing the box cover that has the picture of the complete puzzle.
 - ii) What that means is we don’t understand the purpose of everything that happens to us, but God does. He alone has the “cover of the jigsaw puzzle box with the picture”. God alone knows the purpose of every event in our life.
 - iii) What about the Christian who dies an early tragic death? What about those who die in natural disasters? What about the fact I stubbed my toe this morning? ☺ Are you telling me all of these things ultimately are for God’s glory?
 - a) The answer is yes. I can’t explain it, I just take it on faith that it does.
 - b) Remember that God does not state that we know the purpose of all of this, just that He does. Even the bad things that happen over and over again may be God trying to teach us something.
 - c) Note that this verse only applies to believers. It does not say that every event of the nonbelievers lives works for God’s glory.
 - e) Chuck Swindoll has an illustration on this principal: “When we get to heaven, the only words we’ll get out of our mouth is the word “oh”. Hey God, why did you allow this to happen? “Oh”. What about that over there? “Oh””.
 - f) The Book of Job is a classic example on this concept. Job was allowed to suffer terribly. God wanted to see if Job would still trust in Him through all of his pain. The problem is Job was never told that He was being tested. Even in the latter chapters of the book, when Job wants to question God, God responds in effect with, “Who are you to question Me?” The point is God never states He has to tell us the reason for every event in our life. We have to accept by faith that everything is used for His glory.
 - g) Let’s talk about this verse as it fits into Chapter 8:
 - i) The main point of this lesson is to talk about our future as Christians, and what we can learn about that future in the present.
 - ii) The ultimate future is that we get “glorified”. I doubt any Christian in this lifetime fully comprehends what that means. We’ll talk about that more in verses coming up. The idea is that if God decided to pick us to spend eternity with Him, then in the “meantime” God is working on us right now to prepare us for that eternity. That preparation is all about trusting Him during this lifetime.
 - iii) If we accept all of that, then we must accept that all the events of our life are ultimately for His glory. God loves us too much to leave us alone. Therefore, He uses the events of our life to mature us in some way.
11. Verse 29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers
- a) Most of us are familiar with the expression, “You are what you eat”. We physically grow in size by eating. “We are what we eat” in that we need food to make us grow.
 - i) There is a similar idea in that “You are what you worship”. Whether we realize it or not, we become “like” whatever we worship. If we become obsessed with fame or fortune, we will end up with the shallow life that it ultimately produces.
 - b) The idea of the Christian, is that we ultimately become “like” Jesus in every way, shape and form. Jesus is our model of “the finished product” that God desires for us.
 - i) Being like Jesus does not mean we have to die for our sins. Jesus paid the price so we don’t have to. Also, this is not about being perfect. What it “is” about, is the concept that our desire is to turn over every aspect of our life to do “God’s will”.

- ii) To put it another way, the Christian desires that God rules over every aspect of our lives, so we can be “like Him”, or like the image He wants us to be.
 - iii) Further, “God’s will” for one person is not the same as another person. A lot of this depends upon whatever spiritual gift and passion one has. The key is to “follow through” with whatever God’s will is for our life.
- c) With all of that in mind, we can get back to Verse 29. To paraphrase this verse, Paul is saying, “God knows all things. He knew before the world was created who would be picked among humans to spend eternity with Him. We don’t know who God picked, but He does. Whoever God picked, God then “works on” to be more and more like Jesus in every day of their lives. God works on that person to mature them as to prepare that person to spend eternity with Him.
- i) In other words, no one gets into heaven kicking and screaming that they don’t want to be there. Heaven is a place for those who desire to be there. It is for those, from our perspective, that choose to follow God. It is for those who choose to accept Jesus’ payment for our sins. It is for those who understand that there is a God and we want to be with Him for eternity.
- d) Now let’s get back to my theme of “future knowledge and present conditions”:
- i) If we know and accept that God is changing us for the better, we need to both accept it and “get involved with the game plan”. If we accept the fact that God is trying to change us for the better, it should be our motivation to do “His will”. As I stated earlier, this involves, regular prayer, regular time in His Word, regular time with other Christians as God intends us to work together, etc.
 - ii) It doesn’t mean we just “lie there” and wait for God to change us. Obviously, there is an exception if we are confined to a bed in sickness or injury. My point is we are not to be lazy and say, “God will fix me when He’s good and ready, in the meantime, I can do whatever I want”. My point is if we desire to please God in every aspect of our lives, then we want to move forward by living a life that is pleasing to Him in every aspect.
- e) The last part of the verse says, “firstborn among many brothers”
- i) The idea of “firstborn” is like “firstfruits”. It is that Jesus is the first one to be raised into heaven. We too, will be resurrected. Somehow, someday, we get “equal stature” among God the Father in that we all get to share in the full inheritance of God the Father among all believers.
12. Verse 30: And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
- a) The important thing to understand about Verse 30 is that this is an all-inclusive process.
 - i) One could read this verse and think, “Well, as of this moment, Tom over here is working the “called” phase of his life and “Jerry” over there is on the “justified” phase of his life. This verse is not a time-line flow chart.
 - ii) This verse means that all Christians are “predestined, called, justified and glorified”. In a sense, all of these are “past tense, present tense and future tense “done deals”. We are stuck in time and don’t see the future. God the Father is outside of time as we know it. Therefore, this entire process is a “done deal” with each believer. Our job as Christians is just to “accept all of this” as fact.
 - b) Let’s define each one:
 - i) “Pre-destined” is the idea that God picked us. Again, if God knows all things, then God knows who will choose Him to live with Him for eternity. We as humans don’t have all-knowledge, but God does. Therefore, we don’t fully comprehend “pre-destiny” but God does. There is a classic joke that goes, “How do I know if I have been pre-destined for heaven? The answer to accept Jesus as payment for your sins and then you will know.”

- ii) “Called” is similar to the idea as “pre-destined”. The difference is the “when”. God picked us before we were born. Therefore, we are “pre-destined”. The moment we first respond to God’s offer for salvation is when we are “called”.
 - iii) “Justified” means “just-as-if-I-never-sinned”. If we accept the fact that Jesus died for our sins, we are “sinless” in a perfected future state. It doesn’t mean we are perfect now, it means that all of our sins are forgiven, past present and future.
 - iv) “Glorified” means when we die, we are resurrected into a new “glorious” body to be with God forever.
 - v) The point is “if you get one, you get them all”. It’s a combo package that can’t be sold separately. ☺
- c) Now let’s get back to “future knowledge, present action”: If we accept all of this as true, what are we to do about it?
- i) Well, for starters, we should be pretty happy. It implies that no matter how much we mess up, as long as we’re trusting in Jesus, we’re “in”. God will glorify us in heaven despite our sinful actions here on earth.
 - ii) That should not be an encouragement to sin. If anything, our desire is to do God’s will and sin is not a part of that will.
 - iii) This knowledge of our future plan should make us grateful people. We worship God in gratitude. We serve God out of gratitude. We try to live our life in conformity to God’s will out of gratitude.
 - iv) A practice my wife and I have whenever we are feeling depressed is to make a “grateful list”. We will ask each other, “name 10 things you are grateful for right now”. Focusing on gratitude helps change our perspective. Even if one is in so much pain they can’t think of anything in this life to be grateful for, one can always thank God for picking us, forgiving us and glorifying us. That is far greater than all the “temporary” things of this lifetime.
13. Verse 31 Part 1: What, then, shall we say in response to this?
- a) From Verse 32 to the end of the chapter is Paul’s expanded commentary on Verse 31. Verse 31 asks two questions. I listed above the first question only.
 - b) In a sense, I’ve answered this question in the previous point. The answer is “gratitude”.
 - c) If God has predestined us, chosen us, forgiven all our sins (justified) and will resurrect us, what does God want in response? The answer is gratitude. That is the ultimate motivator for our actions.
 - i) To put it another way, we can be motivated to do things out of fear of pain. If someone puts a gun to our head, we can be very motivated to do lots of things. However, we don’t respect the person with the gun. We’re not doing it out of love, but doing things out of fear.
 - ii) When one is motivated by gratitude, then we are doing things out of love. We are so grateful for what that other person did for us, we just “want” to do things for them to show our appreciation. That is the type of motivation God is looking for.
 - d) I’ve once heard that a healthy marriage is one where “each partner is busy trying to outdo each other in pleasing one another”. “Well, you did that for me, watch what I’m going to do for you!” That is the kind of relationship God desires between Him and ourselves. Naturally, we cannot out give God in His love. Still, God wants you to live a life of obedience based on gratitude.
14. Verse 31, Part 2: If God is for us, who can be against us?
- a) This is the second question of Verse 31. What Paul is saying in effect is “Look, if God is going to forgive us of all our sins and resurrect us into heaven, what could anyone else do to offset that? What can Satan do to offset that? What can “life” do to offset that fact?
 - b) The remainder of Chapter 8 is “commentary” on Verse 31.

- c) Here's what you need to remember about the remainder of Chapter 8: "God is bigger..." Whatever our situation, whatever our problem, God is bigger. The next time you are feeling depressed, ask yourself, "Is God big enough that He can handle it?"
15. Verse 32: He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?
- a) Imagine God saying to us, "How much more does it take to prove that I love you? I only have one son, and I was willing to let Him die in order to prove how much I love you!"
- i) I've always pictured the creation of the world as "no big deal" to God. If "God is God", then I visualize Him "snapping his fingers" and the world is created. The hard part for me to visualize is "part of God himself dying on our behalf".
- ii) A classic illustration is to think about how much of the bible is dedicated to the story of the creation itself: It is only a few chapters in Genesis, some references in Psalms and Job, and a few miscellaneous references here and there.
- iii) Now think about how much of the bible is dedicated to our redemption. I can argue that most of the bible is word-pictures or direct references tied to our redemption as human beings. Again, the creation "didn't cost God anything", but our redemption cost God "all He has".
- iv) Imagine if you love someone so much you're willing to give up everything you've ever owned to get that person. That is how much God loves us.
- b) Which leads us back to Verse 32: If God the Father was willing to give up all He had in order to redeem us, what makes you think that God the Father will just "leave us be" since we are picked to spend eternity with Him?
- i) I heard a comment this week I loved: "If God is giving us the new car, you can guarantee He's going to tell the salesman to throw in all the available options with it." (David Guzik, paraphrased).
- ii) This is the idea of the last phrase of Verse 32, "Give us all things".
- a) That does not mean that God gives us every material thing we ask for. It means God gives us everything we ask for that is "His will" to give us.
- b) Suppose God gave us everything we ever asked for. Then people would become Christians for the "fringe benefits" and not out of gratitude for the forgiveness of sins.
- iii) Sometimes I think God is in heaven watching us and saying, "I would just love to help you out. Why aren't you praying to me? Why aren't you asking me to take over this situation? I would love to help you, but I won't violate your free will. Come, ask me, I want to help!"
- a) "You do not have, because you do not ask God." (James 4:2b, NIV)
16. Verse 33: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.
- a) Again, "justifies" means "just-as-if-we-never-sinned".
- b) Therefore, when we feel guilty because we have sinned, how come we don't forgive ourselves after we have already confessed that sin to God? The problem is not that God won't forgive us, the problem is we don't forgive ourselves. Our egos think "we should have done better". God is saying to us, "Look, I have forgiven you, let it go. Let's move on from this. It's over."
- c) Grant it, there is usually some lingering pain from our sin. I'm not discounting that fact. This is about "letting go" of the fact we made a mistake. If God forgives us, then we must also forgive ourselves.
17. Verse 34: Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.
- a) One has to remember that a "job-role" of Satan is he is the "accuser of the brethren". (See Revelation 12:10) You can think of Satan as the "prosecuting attorney" telling God why you and I shouldn't be in heaven. Last time I checked, God is bigger than Satan. ☺

- b) My point here is when some demonic angel whispers in your ear, “Look at the mess you’ve made. God is so ashamed of you. You shouldn’t even stick your head in church next week, you hypocrite”. Know that all of that is a lie. If God has forgiven us, we need to accept that and move on.
 - i) Quick side note: What about when we mess up and others around us note it? Apologize. Tell the witnesses, “I really messed up back there. That is not God’s standard for right and wrong. Please forgive me”.
 - c) The corollary of this is, “If God has forgiven them, than so should we.” If a Christian has asked God for forgiveness, we too, should also forgive as well.
18. Verse 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
- a) During the real rough times of life, it is easy to say, “God has abandoned me”, or “God must really not love me if He has allowed me to be in this situation.”
 - i) The answer is to remember, “God is bigger than our problems”. Verse 28 applies here that all situations are designed ultimately for God’s glory.
 - ii) Imagine watching a movie and thinking, “The hero of this movie is really in a mess. I wonder how he’ll get out of it”. That is how to handle life’s problems. It is to say, “Well, God, look at this mess. I don’t know what you’ve got in mind, but I’ll just accept it and keep moving.” When tragedy happens, God does not expect us to just “sit there”. He expects us to keep moving not knowing just exactly how and when God will help to resolve the situation.
 - iii) This again comes back to “God loves us too much to leave us alone”. That especially applies during the rough moments of life.
 - b) By the way, all of those “things” listed in Verse 35 (e.g., hardship, persecution, etc.) are things that Paul personally experienced.
 - i) Paul is not giving us this list “in theory”. These are hardships that actually happened in Paul’s life. The Book of Acts, written by Luke, describes all of these things that happened to Paul. Luke was a travel companion to Paul on some of his journeys. Sometimes in the Book of Acts the word “we” appears in Paul’s journeys. That refers to the times when Luke was traveling with Paul.
 - ii) My point here is that when Paul says Jesus still loves and cares for us during the rough moments, Paul is speaking from personal experience.
 - iii) This is why the last set of verses of Romans 8 is a great read during the difficult times of life. It is a reminder that God is “still there” during such moments.
19. Verse 36: As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."
- a) Paul is quoting Psalm 44:22. The point here is that God does allow suffering for Christians. It is God’s way of saying to us, “Trust me. I know this situation looks bad, but ultimately, I am using this situation for My glory. There is a purpose to it.”
 - b) So why do we suffer?
 - i) The first reason is simply due to sin in the world. People are sinful and do sinful things to hurt each other.
 - ii) The second is being a good witness for Jesus makes others feel guilty. Part of the Holy Spirit’s job is to convict people of their sins. Unfortunately, many don’t want to be accountable to God. Therefore, they “take their guilt out on you”.
 - iii) The final reason is demonic. Satan doesn’t want you to be a good witness for God. Persecution is a great motivation tool to not be an effective witness. God “allows” Satan some power as such so 1) we pray and stay close to God for protection and 2) to remember God’s power is greater than that of Satan.

20. Verse 37: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- a) These last three verses wrap up the commentary that “God is bigger” than whatever problems we have in life. Those problems could be self-inflicted, inflicted by other people or inflicted by demonic beings. In the end, it doesn’t matter who caused it because the pain is real. The point here is “God is bigger”. His love for us is greater than whatever is causing the pain.
 - b) Paul’s final point is “nothing” can separate us from the love of God.
 - i) “Nothing” means just that, “nothing”. It means again, “God is bigger”.
 - ii) You can look at Paul’s list of possible things that could separate us from God. It’s a pretty powerful list. It includes angels, demons, “anything...in creation”. Again, that list of created things is a powerful list. The point is they are all created things. The “creator” is a greater entity than the “creation”. If God is big enough to love you, care for you, save you for eternity, He is big enough to deal with any situation thrown at us.
 - c) Let’s get back to the opening topic of “What we as Christians can learn from our future.”
 - i) The “future” from our perspective is that our resurrection into heaven and eternity with God is a “done deal”. It is future from our perspective, but God is outside of time as we know it, and it is already a done deal.
 - ii) Paul’s point is to accept the fact we are “predestined, called, justified, glorified”. Once we accept that, realize that nothing else is powerful enough to stop it or prevent it from happening.
 - iii) I stated in the beginning of the last lesson, that if I was stuck on a desert island with only one chapter of the bible, I would pick Romans 8. It is the best chapter in the bible on “hope”. It is the best reminder I know that all of “this” is temporary. A chapter like this gives us reassurance during the worst situations we can face.
 - iv) Knowing that we are glorified, should give us a sense of gratitude no matter what the situation. Paul spends the last set of verses saying in effect, “Look folks, it doesn’t matter what life throws at you. It doesn’t matter how bad of a mess you’ve gotten yourself into. It doesn’t matter how bad of a spiritual attack you are having. Forget the source, look at the solution. Focus upon the fact that God’ love for you is greater than this situation. God loves you and me too much to leave us in “this jam”. Trust in the fact: “Help is on the way”.
21. Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the glorious future You have planned for us. Help us to accept that fact and live in gratitude based on that fact. May the Holy Spirit work within us to do Your will. May we live a life that is pleasing to You in all that we do. During the difficult moments of our lives, help us to remember that You are there “working”, and help us to remember that there is a glorious purpose in all that happens to us. Help us to learn from whatever lesson we are going through at this moment. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.