**God’s Children June 20, 2021**

**Romans 8:12-19**

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh

13 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. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Suffering, and hope in God’s promise 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (NRSV).

As we continue with letters from the Apostle Paul I want to point out that there are some themes in the letters. There is the theme of joy where he is consistently full of joy even during hardship. There are two reasons for this. One reason is that the gospel continues to advance in spite of his imprisonment. So, he teaches us to be joyous and without worry. This is because he considers the suffering that he has endured nothing compared to the glory. Another theme is about the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. The believer is dead to the flesh and lives by the Spirit. This means a person has completely surrendered to Christ. Therefore, there is no sin, only virtues, as you fully live by the spirit.

In Romans there is yet another lesson on the same basic fundamental premise that you are in God’s domain and you are to live your life accordingly. The Apostle Paul lives his life by the Spirit and he teaches us to live by the Spirit. You are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in you. The Apostle Paul is very serious about this. If you do not have the Spirit of Christ in you, then you do not belong to him. That is a very powerful lesson. The Apostle Paul contradicts a popular thought that is believed and taught within our contemporary society that all you need is faith. For the Apostle Paul it is a matter of belief and a changed life. It is a matter of your whole lifestyle and worldview to actual live by the Spirit of Christ.

In this Scripture the Apostle Paul makes a family connection. It is a very important concept that we are God’s children. The Bible is about relationship. Faith is about relationship. The covenant is about relationship. It is all a matter of a very special kind of relationship - the relationship between God and humanity. It is a relationship that is based on love and it is very much like a parent and child relationship. The all powerful and almighty God chose to take action based on love. We are in a relationship with God. During Old Testament times God used law and commitment to the covenant relationship. It was based on a mutual agreement and understanding. However, the people turned out to be less committed than God even though they had everything to gain and everything to lose. In the New Testament, for the redemption of mankind, God uses love. This is a tremendous gift. Therefore, the Apostle Paul is tremendously happy. No matter what happens to him he is overwhelmed with joy in what God has done. God takes the initiative in enhancing the relationship. God changes everything because God highly values the relationship. The covenant gets broken over and over again causing separation between God and humanity. But love is a binding agent that brings us together. It is offered to everyone. But you have to be willing to accept God’s gift. If you truly do accept God’s gift of love then the Spirit of God is in you.

So the Scripture is about living by the Spirit. It is not that you are supposed to live by the Spirit. You either do or you don’t. If you are a believer, then you live your life by the Spirit of the Lord. All vices are gone; they are completely dead and have no influence on you. All sin, temptation, greed, selfishness, are gone. You are a different person. You are a child of God. For the Apostle Paul it is important to get this world view. This is your identity, your self-image; it is a re-orientation of your life within society. It is who you are. God’s children – that’s who we are. That is packed full of meaning. We are not regular people that say we believe and come to church then go about our daily lives like nothing has changed. We are one with Christ. That is a complete changeover of us from individualism. It is a holistic concept, where all of your being is intimately interconnected with the Spirit.

We have all heard the words “I love you.” Since today is Father’s Day, I am sure that many of us will hear these words again. God giving us Jesus is God saying “I love you” and it is God showing it. I am reminded of a young woman that married against the wishes of her family. Her parents knew that she deserved better. But love trumped their advice. While they were still newlyweds they were poor and he was unemployed and made no effort to secure a job. She kept telling him that he needs to get job. He would laugh, take her in his arms and say “I love you. That’s the only thing that matters as long as we are together.” Well, that’s a cop out. He was just making excuses for shirking his responsibility. Many of us treat Jesus the same way when we tell Jesus we love him but fail to obey his words. We need to show Jesus how much we love him by our actions not just our words. God’s love takes action. It took action on God’s part to give us Jesus and allowing Jesus to take the punishment of our sin. God’s love is given to us due to our relationship and every relationship requires putting love into practice.