

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS - PART EIGHT

Having introduced us in chapter 5 to the second half of the gospel, that God not only wants to make us fit for heaven, but fit for earth, and that He does this by pouring His life into us in the person of His Spirit, Paul deals in the following 3 chapters with three vital questions. In chapter 6, the question is 'Why bother to live the Christian life when we know we are going to heaven?'. The answer is that the old life no longer suits us.

In chapter 7, the question is 'Why is it that however hard we try to live this new life we always seem to fail?' To answer this Paul uses one of his most unusual illustrations. He reminds us first of God's plan for marriage as a lifelong union from which the only escape is the death of one of the partners. Then remarriage is acceptable to God.(7:1-3) That, says Paul, was our situation with the Law of Moses in the Old Testament. We were married to a 'husband' we could never please and from whom there seemed no escape. The only answer was that we should die with Christ, thus ending the relationship. Then we were free to be 'remarried' to Jesus Christ as our new husband. The fruit, or child, of this new marriage would be His new life showing in us.(7:4-6) Was our unhappiness in the old marriage the fault of the Law? Not at all. The problem was in the sin nature we inherited from Adam, not the standard God set to show us what sin really was.(7:7,8) Before we ever knew what God wanted of us, before we met our first husband, the Law, we were fairly happy in our ignorance. Knowing the problem made us miserable but that was not God's fault. (7:9-13)

Let us try to understand just what it is like to be a slave of sin. It simply means that however good my intentions I always end up doing the very opposite. The Law tells me what I ought to do, but sin makes me fail. I am totally incapable of getting it right of myself.(7:14-21) I thoroughly agree with my first husband, the Law, as to what I should do, but I still cannot get it right.(7:22) It is like having a civil war going on inside. We are prisoners caught in the middle of that war, with no escape.(7:23) This is a miserable situation to be in from which there seems to be no way out. (7:24) But the good news is that there is a way out in Jesus Christ.(7:25) The big question remains, 'How?' The answer comes in chapter 8.

To sum up, the problem was our unhappy 'marriage' to the Law from which there seemed no escape until we died and could then be united with Jesus. If having become a Christian we should again meet our old 'husband', do not flirt with him! Do not make the mistake of trying all over again to please him. He has nothing to do with us! Be faithful to our new husband, Jesus. Whereas the Law made demands but gave us no help, Christ sets an even higher standard but it is then He in us who fulfils the standard.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER EIGHT

8:1-4 Q.1 What is the 'law of sin and death'? How has Jesus Christ set us free from this law? Why could not the Law, our first 'husband', do the same thing?

8:5-8 Q.2 In which part of us does the conflict described in chapter 7 take place? In what way will the Spirit change us first? What kind of change will we notice? What should we do if we are not experiencing these changes?

8:9-11 Q.3 What is the first test we can apply to be sure that we really are Christians?(II Cor.13:5) What different words are used here to describe the Holy Spirit? Why does Paul use such a variety of ways to explain how the Spirit lives in us? Are there different Spirits?(Eph.4:4)

8:12-17 Q.4 'Abba' was the Aramaic equivalent of the English word 'Dad'. Jesus commanded His followers, 'Follow Me'.(Matt.4:19; 9:9) In what way does this section explain how we can actually do this? What steps do we need to take in our thinking? As we take these steps, what is the Holy Spirit doing in our minds?

8:18-25 Q.5 How does our new way of thinking change our attitude to suffering, to the condition of the world we live in and our frustration at not being able to change it? What do we have to look forward to so far as our physical bodies are concerned? How does knowing this change our attitude to the bodies we have now?

8:26,27 Q.6 How do these changes inside us affect the way we pray? What wrong ideas about prayer does this section suggest we may have? Just how does the Spirit help us when we pray?

8:28 Q.7 How does the mind of the Spirit affect the way we look at circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant, and the way we regard the will of God? Does this section mean that if we pray about a problem it will always work out well?

8:29,30 Q.8 What, step by step, is the plan of God for us? What does each of these key words mean? How do these two verses sum up Romans 1-8?

8:31-34 Q.9 How in the light of this chapter will we now regard criticism? How will a conquering life change the way we respond to it? What thoughts will the Holy Spirit keep in our minds when we are under pressure?

8:35-39 Q.10 How will we now handle adversity of any kind? What will a conquering life look like in your country in 2012? Again what thought about God will be uppermost in our minds?