Peace and joy to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we continue in this time of uncertainty, remember that we can always be certain of our God and of our Salvation in Jesus Christ. God is still on the throne; nothing happens that He doesn’t allow. This is security for those of us that He loves; we who are believers in His only begotten Son. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells us that the world will suffer birth pangs. These began immediately and continue to intensify. But we need not be surprised because we have been warned. Additionally, this is a time of joy for the Christian. In Luke 21:28, Jesus tells us, “*But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*.” Jesus is coming back to establish His Kingdom, and we, His followers, will be a part of it.

I hope and pray that you and your families are doing well. Please let me know if there is anything I can do or pray for you.

Some folks have asked about getting their tithes to the church. If this is something you would like to do, you can mail it to:

Capon Bridge Christian Church

P.O. Box 187

Capon Bridge, WV 26711

Darlene picks up the mail weekly.

Although we can’t worship together, we can still worship; and we are all part of the body of Christ. Please remember each other in prayer and praise God with joyful hearts.

In Christ’s love

John

P.O. Box 315

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 4-26-20

Romans 8:15-18

As I think about our congregation, I know that many are dealing with hard problems in their lives. Certainly, everyone has difficulties and disappointments that are taxing our bodies, minds, and emotions. There are no easy solutions to these things; we must just keep going on and taking the next step. Added to these things is, of course, the virus. All of us have had to make significant changes in our lives, not to mention the constant concern of ourselves or loved ones catching it. Perhaps the most difficult thing is the uncertainty. We’ve never dealt with anything like this; we receive conflicting information, and much of that from questionable sources. We can’t get answers.

And really, this is the case for the whole world right now. These things are all the result of the fall which brought about the rulership of satan. There are several ways of dealing with these things. Some are in the grip of fear and are paralyzed into doing nothing but worry. Some chose to ignore what’s going on. These will continue to do as they always have and downplay the virus as not that bad or even a hoax. Others who deny it will try to take advantage of the situation for their own gain, preying on those who live in fear.

Now then, what about us; what about we who are Christians? Obviously, all the problems are still there. But we have hope; a sure hope. It is hope simply because we don’t have the actual results yet, but we know that what we hope in is coming to pass. We know that this world is not all there is. We know that God is real and that His promises are true and that He loves us. We know that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and that His work on the cross was perfect. By accepting Him our sins are forgiven, our guilt is removed, and all the promises of the Bible are ours. We know that the Holy Spirit is here in the world, and more importantly, indwelling we who are believers. He is our constant guide and help; He is our constant reminder that we are God’s children and that the pain of this life is temporary and fleeting.

In Jesus, we have received so much; so much that we don’t deserve. We are saved. Saved from the wrath of God and from receiving our just punishment of eternity in hell. We are justified before God; He declares us “not guilty”, and therefore, we are innocent. We are sanctified. We are changed to be like Jesus. This takes place the moment we accept Him but it also is a process that takes all of our lives. We also have the promise that once our sanctification is complete, we will be glorified. This will take place when we see Jesus.

These verses in Romans are encouraging verses; they remind us why we can go through all that we do without losing hope, without giving up. They show us the light at the end of the tunnel; they give us the reason that light is there; they show us why we keep going with stronger faith, hope, love, and conviction. That is how Christians deal with all these things in life: we have Christ.

Upon accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, each of us receives the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit would work through a person or leave a person, depending on need or how that person behaved toward God. But for us, once we truly receive the Holy Spirit, He will not leave us. This is why it is so important to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit; once He commits to us, He will not leave. He is holy and hates sin. It is hard on our relationship with Him if we continue in sin. Our own spirit comes back to life and the Holy Spirit lives in us. He works with our spirit to bring us closer to Christ.

In our first verse, Paul reminds us that we don’t receive a spirit of slavery leading to fear again. Slavery indicates something or someone has complete control over you. None of us likes the idea of slavery. However, all of us were slaves to sin and satan until we received Christ. This is why there are so many people who are living in fear at this time. We don’t need to be afraid; because we belong to Christ, it ultimately doesn’t matter what happens to us. The end of this life is our doorway into eternal life in the presence of God.

Additionally, we are not under the law; the law of God. There was always a certain amount of fear for those who lived under the law. They knew that if they failed in keeping the law, they could be subject to God’s punishment or withholding of blessing. God’s laws were good and just, but they led to fear. They were also applied very much to the physical world. Blessings had to do with material well-being and wealth.

In Christ, we are freed from all that. Christianity is not about keeping a bunch of rules. Christianity is a relationship with Jesus, a relationship with God. It is based on love and “*perfect love casts out all fear*”. The love is love of and for God. The Holy Spirit is who builds the proper love within us. First, we come to some understanding that God loves us; He loves us so much that He was willing to have His Son suffer in our place even though we don’t deserve it. Next, we develop a love for God. We show this love by our obedience to Him. Our obedience isn’t a way for us to earn salvation, it is the way to express our love and appreciation to God and Jesus. Thirdly, we love other people with the type of love God has for them. This is not an emotional love, but a love of strength and self-sacrifice.

This comes about through the spirit of adoption we receive; by the Holy Spirit, we know that we have been adopted by God and are now His children. He has brought our spirits back to life; we are now claimed by God as His children. Our earthly fathers would do all in their power to protect us. We know that their power was limited and that they made mistakes, but we could look to them and love them just the same. Now, we have the perfect Father; He is unlimited in what He is able to do and He doesn’t make any mistakes. When we pray; when we cry out to Him “Abba! Father!”, we know that He will do what is perfect for us. Our all-powerful Father is the One who cares for us in these times and we can put our absolute faith in Him. There is no fear.

“*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.*” In the Old Testament, and it is reaffirmed in the New, a testimony must have two or three witnesses. Here we have our two witnesses: the Holy Spirit and our own spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, He will let us know that He is there, He will let us know that we are a child of God. This will probably not be some great miraculous occurrence, but instead, little things that let you know He is there. An unusual feeling of love and sympathy for someone who doesn’t deserve it; a verse of Scripture that comes to mind at the perfect time; a strong urge to do the right thing even when it will be costly to you. This is a short list of what the Holy Spirit might do to testify to your adoption by God.

Our own spirit testifies also. Our Spirit testifies by its willing acceptance of promptings by the Holy Spirit. Our spirit testifies by our growth in producing the fruits of the Spirits. We must be careful in listening to the testimony of our own spirits and make sure we are also receiving of the Holy Spirit. Our own spirits can mislead us. Perhaps we say we are Christian and do some Christian things, but we actually resist the Holy Spirit, or perhaps we see no true fruit of the Spirit in our lives. It is common for someone to have very strong feelings that God is telling them to do something, but that something is against Scripture. This is a misleading by a person’s own spirit. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to do anything that is contrary to Scripture.

Because we are children of God, we become His heirs, just as Jesus is. Greco-Roman adoption laws made the person adopted a full son or daughter in the eyes of the law. They could not be treated any different than a natural born child. This was true even if the one adopted had been a slave. And so it is with us; we were slaves to sin, but in Christ we are adopted by God, and have become heirs just as God’s only begotten Son, Jesus. We know that when Jesus ascended to heaven, He was seated at the right hand of the Father in glory; He received glory. We will inherit this also. Somehow, we will be in the presence of, and be part of, the glory of Christ: His radiance, His majesty, His being with God. This is what we have coming.

But we also participate in this now, just in a limited way. This is not all something future; it’s not as if we must have absolutely miserable lives and put all good off until we reach heaven. God is pleased when His people prosper; God is a very present help in time of trouble. We can ask for good things; we can seek His help for our problems; we can cry to Him “Abba! Father!” Our perfect Father will work out what is best for His glory and for our good. If we go through bad times, we have the comfort of knowing that God is allowing it and we will come closer to Christ for having gone through it.

We need to also consider the earthly life of Jesus. He was indeed the suffering servant, but He had good things too. His earthly parents were good people who cared for and loved Him. He had friends and people who loved Him. He was provided with food and, although He had no place to call home, He was always provided for. If we are to be like our Saviour, we must expect these things also. We will have good things, sometimes God will get us out of trouble; but we must also suffer.

Jesus suffered heartbreak when friends betrayed Him; when those He loved would not accept the Salvation He offered; when someone He loved died. He suffered ridicule and torture and death. As Christians, we will experience what our Saviour experienced. But He went through these things knowing that glory awaited Him; and that is what awaits us.

In verse 18, Paul uses the word “suffering”. This word takes in all kinds of suffering. Jesus told us that special blessings are in store for any who suffer on account of Him. These are special sufferings that only a Christians can experience. Remember how the apostles rejoiced when they suffered for Jesus; they were joyful that they were counted worthy of this honor. The word also includes all the other suffering that is the fate of mankind. For the unbeliever, pain and suffering serve no purpose, although God will use it to lead people to Himself. The problems of life simply lead to fear and frustration. But for the Christian, we know these sufferings will lead to glory. In fact, Paul tells us that what we suffer now will be of no comparison to what we receive later.

This does not mean that our suffering isn’t real. It doesn’t mean that we are to ignore suffering as if it isn’t there. It doesn’t mean that we sit idly while bad things happen to us. The pain we experience is real, our hearts can be broken by the things that happen to us. Sickness and injury can change our lives. There is no sin in grieving; it is not wrong to be weary and tired or even to feel frustration. We need to keep our focus on Jesus and on the beautiful promises we have in the Bible. In John 16:33 Jesus tells us, “*In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*.”

Christian: Take these things to heart; You believe in Jesus Christ and in the Bible, apply these things to your life; truly and earnestly know that your life is in the hands of God. He loves you more than you know, He cares for you above all His creation, and what He has waiting for you is beyond anything you can imagine in wonder and beauty and joy.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You lived on this earth as a man and suffered all things as we do. Because of this, You are now our perfect High Priest. You minister on our behalf to almighty God, knowing full well what it is like to be a human-being. You offered once for all the perfect sacrifice and now You minister with perfect intercession for we who are Your brothers and sisters.

Jesus, You harbor no ill-will toward us in sharing Your inheritance. Even though we have no merit with which to claim it. It is given to us by grace; may that bring You much glory and honor and praise. We do praise You with grateful hearts for the love and mercy You and the Father have shown us.

You know very well our lot in life because of the sin that is prevalent in the world, and even in our very hearts. Thank You for Your longsuffering and kindness. Please help us in the suffering we endure. We ask You for relief from these effects of the fall; but we ask in submission to Your will. If we must endure, give us strength, allow it to build our trust and faith in You, have it make us more like Christ, and give us grateful hearts knowing that all things work to the good of those who love You.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen