

Romans – Bible Study – Chapter 8:28-39

Though we continue to suffer in this life due to the curse and sin that pervades the world, Paul gives us hope that what Christians endure now is but a temporary measure. The Holy Spirit, given to us as our Helper and Counselor, helps to intercede on our behalf as we pray to God. He prays according to God's will, helping to make sure our prayers are heard by God.

As we conclude chapter eight, we are presented with good news regarding our salvation and standing with God. Paul is bringing reassurance to believers that what we are experiencing is all to the glory of God.

God's Everlasting Love

(Verses 28-30) When Paul talks about "all things", are there any exclusions? How are we to live in light of this passage? In verses 29-30, how do we view what God is doing in our lives?

- "All things" means just that: all things. In the context these things include the adversities the believer experiences. The "good" is what is good from God's perspective, and, in view of verses 18-27, conformity to the Son of God is particularly prominent (v. 29). Those who love God could be a group of believers who love God more than others. However since Paul described them from the divine side as the elect of God, those who love God must refer to all Christians (cf. 1 John 4:19). This is the only place in Romans where Paul wrote of the believer's love for God; everywhere else he referred to God's love for the believer.
- It is important to note that God 'allows all things' and doesn't "cause all things" because the implication is that He is the source of evil and sin, which is not possible
- Therefore when tragedy touches a believer we should not conclude that this is one of the "all things" that God causes. Rather this verse says that God brings good out of all things, even tragedies, for the Christian. The causes of tragedy are Satan, the sinful choices of people, and the consequences of living in a sinful world (cf. James 1:13-14): Satan, sin, and sinners. Even though God permits or allows bad things to happen, Scripture never lays the blame for these things on God, and neither should we.
- These promises are also in context for the believer and not for everyone
- God chooses those who he wants to save
- Foreknowledge is a term that specifically describes God's decision to elect, to choose to bless someone (cf. ch. 9; 1 Pet. 1:20)
- The reason for God's choice of the elect was not human merit (Eph. 1:4), or even the faith of the elect, but God's love and purpose (v. 28; cf. Deut. 7:6-8).
- "Predestined" means that God determined the destiny of the elect previously, specifically, before Creation (Eph. 1:3-4). That destiny is conformity to Jesus Christ's image, much more than just deliverance from sin and death. God accomplished this goal partially through believers' justification. He is presently accomplishing it partially through our progressive sanctification, and He will accomplish it completely through our glorification.
- In verse 30, the acts or elements of salvation that we see are dependent upon Him
- He is the only one that can cause and complete those elements on His own without human intervention
- **NB** – It could be argued that there is some human involvement with sanctification, but everything else is dependent on the actions of God alone
- God's plans are not centered around us, but around Jesus
- God's overall plan is to provide Jesus with a family of believers who conform to His likeness, a family in which He is preeminent as the firstborn.
- Salvation is the work of God and not our own, so that no one should boast
- We recognize God's sovereignty
- We also live with joy and thanksgiving, living with the assurance that we are God's children

(Verses 28-30) What does it mean “For those whom he (God) foreknew”? To those He foreknew, what does He promise to do with them?

- It is a mistake to conclude that God knew beforehand who would believe in His Son and then predestined those individuals for salvation
- Foreknowledge is a term that specifically describes God’s decision to elect, to choose, to bless someone (ch. 9; 1 Peter 1:20)
- If God initiated such a(n intimate) relationship with us before creation, He also predestined us to gain the full extent of His promises in heaven, when we are made into Jesus’ likeness
- Upon foreknowing those he chooses to elect, he will predestine them to be his children, by calling them, justifying them, and glorifying them
- Looking at the language in this passage, Paul uses the past tense to show that it is guaranteed to happen, not that it has happened already
- This means that what God has started, He will see it to completion
- Election is also meant to give comfort to the elect

(Verses 31-34) In the following verses (v. 32, 33, 34), how does Paul convince us that God will complete His work in us?

- V.31 – Paul is not saying that Christians will never be opposed
 - Rather, he is saying that God is on our side, it doesn’t matter who opposes us
 - Nothing that they do can threaten our salvation or separate us from God’s love
- God’s commitment is seen at the cross (v.32)
 - The fact that God did not spare His own Son, but willingly gave Him up for us, can leave us in no doubt that He will give us ‘all things’
 - These things are not the worldly desires of our hearts, but the things God intends for us, namely glory (v.30) and a share in Jesus’ inheritance (v.17)
- God justifies us: who can accuse us? (v.33)
 - Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (literally, “God’s elect”)
 - Though Satan is called ‘the accuser of the brothers’ (Rev. 12:10) his accusations against us fall on deaf ears, because Christ intercedes on our behalf
 - Though we were guilty, God has declared us righteous, and so no charge can stand against us
 - Paul’s reply reminds us that it is God Himself who has given our righteous verdict
 - Once God has made His decision, it cannot be thwarted (see v.29-30)
- Jesus is interceding for us: who can condemn us? (v.34)
 - If no one can accuse us, then certainly no one can condemn us.
 - When God and His Son are both standing for us, there is no opposition that could possibly threaten us
 - How confident we can be that His intercessions are accepted, when His death and resurrection have assured our justification (4:25) and He is now at the right hand of God
- God has done everything for us so that the accusations and opposition that is leveled against us does not have any effect on our standing because of what He has already done
- An argument that it shows us from the greater (acts) to the lesser

(Verses 35-39) What assurances of salvation do we have in Christ from these passages? In what ways does this comfort us as to how we view our salvation in Christ?

- V.35 – Paul shows that we will suffer, illustrating from the least to the greatest
 - Though this happens, it doesn't mean that God does not love us nor does it mean He has withdrawn from us
 - Can this suffering (of which Christ also endured) separate us from the love of God?
- V.36-37 – Paul shows that we will suffer because of our identification with Christ and how it will be a part of our lives
 - By the term “we are more than conquerors” means that we face the trials of life with the certainty that we are not alone
 - We have a mighty Father who fights for us
 - We approach the darkest valleys with confidence, knowing that nothing can happen to us that is not permitted by our loving Father for our good.
- V.38-39 – We see the list of extremes that cannot separate us from the love of God
 - This should give comfort to all of God's children that there isn't anything in this world that can take us away from being part of the redeemed
 - Therefore, this is our assurance of our salvation, having been chosen by God and seeing our salvation brought from beginning to the end.

In the previous study, Paul shows us what God has in store for His children. We will share in Christ's inheritance (v.17), we will be freed from all suffering (v.21), and our bodies will be redeemed (v.23) as we wait to be conformed to the image of Christ (v.29). Paul is assuring the Roman Christians that God's plan to glorify them will be achieved, no matter what they may be facing in the present. For the work He is doing in them (and us) is the work that He started before the beginning of time and that He will definitely complete in eternity. This is one of the Bible's greatest passages on the sovereignty of God, reminding us that He really does rule over His world and that our lives really are in His hands. This is a particular comfort for Christians who are suffering in the present and who may find many reasons to doubt their security.

Point to Ponder: What sufferings are you facing at the moment? How can you pray for them in the light of this passage?