

CONCERNING THE WAY

November 16, 2010

LESSON 115: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Chapter 8

“The Eighth Chapter of Romans is the instinctive goal of the Christian. Whether or not he can tell why—whether or not he can give the great doctrinal facts that give him comfort here, he is, nevertheless, like a storm-tossed mariner who has arrived at his home port, and has cast anchor, when he comes into Romans Eight! The reasons are:

- 1. He finds himself in the hands of the blessed Comforter, the indwelling Spirit, in whose almighty and loving ministry he finds “life and peace.”*
- 2. He finds himself, without cause in himself, called “God’s elect,”—involved in a great Divine purpose, that will end in his being conformed to Christ’s image, Christ being “the First-born among many brethren.”*
- 3. He finds himself beloved in Christ; and therefore never to be “separated” from that love.”* William Newell

Once we have been justified by faith, the process of sanctification begins. The old man we were in Adam is gone; the new man we are in Christ is here to stay. But now the old nature, that tendency to sin, hangs around and pesters us through our flesh. If we allow this old nature to dominate us, it is impossible to live a life of victory over sin.

Paul in chapter 7 talked about the conflict that still exists within all believers between the new nature in Christ and the old nature that keeps rearing its ugly head even though it has, in fact, been crucified with Christ. There is still a war going on inside us between what we want to do – please God – and what our flesh is tempted to do. Paul, this great saint, considered himself to be wretched. Let’s read those last verses again:

Romans 7:15-25 For I don't understand what I am doing. For I do not do what I want – instead, I do what I hate. (16) But if I do what I don't want, I agree that the law is good. (17) But now it is no longer me doing it, but sin that lives in me. (18) For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do the good, but I cannot do it. (19) For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want! (20) Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me. (21) So, I find the law that when I want to do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. (23) But I see a different law in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

In chapter 8 Paul is going to give us the solution to this continued struggle. The solution is walking in the Holy Spirit, who indwelled us when we accepted Christ as our Savior. If we allow the Spirit to

control us instead of the flesh, we can live a victorious Christian life. We'll talk more about this as we go through the lesson but the main way that happens is through the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 tells us that it is the Holy Spirit that reveals God to us, and He does that through illuminating the scriptures to us.

Walking in the Spirit involves both listening to good Bible teaching and studying the Bible yourself, and then applying what you learn to your life. If you're not constantly getting soaked with good Bible teaching you will always have trouble walking in the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-2 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.**

“Condemnation” is the same as the word judgment. Remember that salvation is assured for those in Christ. God has banged the gavel and legally declared us righteous, once and for all. There is no judgment waiting for us after this life. Both guilt for our sin and the penalty of sin has been removed at the cross. This is our positional heavenly truth. Christ died for all of our sins – that is taken care of forever.

The King James Bible adds the phrase “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” to the end of verse 1. The best and earliest manuscripts do not include this phrase, and it is accepted that scribes must have added that because they thought they needed to add some stipulations to what Paul said. Verse 1 here is the correct reading of what the Holy Spirit said through Paul – **There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** - Period.

The “law” in verse 2 is not the Mosaic Law but the principle, or the working of the Spirit through Christ Jesus has set us free from the principle of sin and death (separation). Remember that Paul is speaking positionally here. The Holy Spirit is the Member of the Godhead who regenerates every believing individual (Titus 3:5) and gives new life (John 3:5-8), the resurrection life of Christ (Romans 6:4, 8, 11). The Spirit has barely been mentioned so far in Romans, but in this chapter He is the main focus, being mentioned 19 times.

Verse 2 sets up the rest of the chapter. Without the Spirit of God in our lives, we will be defeated. Walking in the Spirit doesn't mean the believer is free from all sin or will not die physically, but that the principle of sin and death will not rule over him.

How wonderful, how limitless, the patience of the blessed Spirit of God! Moment by moment, day by day, month by month, year by year, through all the conscious and unconscious processes of tens of thousands of believers, the Spirit acts with a uniformity that is called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” In the newest convert, in the oldest saint, He gives freedom from the law of sin and of death! “Sin in the flesh, which was my torment, is already judged, but in Another; so that there is for me no condemnation on account of the flesh. . . . We lose communion with God, and dishonor the Lord by our behavior, in not walking, according to the Spirit of life, worthy of the Lord. But we are no longer under the law of sin, but, having died with Christ, and become partakers of a new life in Him and of the Holy Spirit, we are delivered from this law.” William Newell

Romans 8:3-4 **For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

We see four things here:

1. God did a thing that the Law could not do.
2. The thing that God did was to make possible living a holy life for those walking by His indwelling Spirit.
3. The reason that the Law was unable to bring about this holy life is because of the flesh, the “mind” of which (verse 7) is hostile against God, and not subject to His Law or Will. So, though the Law was holy, just, and good, in itself, it only irritated our sinful flesh by its commands.
4. God’s purpose, as revealed in this passage, was to get at sin as connected with human flesh, and deal with it at the cross, which condemned it, so that sin would no longer have rights in human bodies.

The law (Mosaic Law) itself is not weak, but it is made weak in our flesh. Since our flesh is weak and sinful, we cannot keep the law. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh (in other words, he was human but never sinned – 2 Corinthians 5:21), and He fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17). We cannot keep the Law, but He did. **Christ’s death on the cross condemned my sinful flesh and now God sees us as law-keepers because Christ kept the law and we are in Him.** “Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” is those who are saved, those who have trusted Christ for salvation. We are delivered from the power of sin through the death of Jesus Christ, but experiencing it in our daily behavior comes through the controlling power of the Holy Spirit.

So, to make sure you get what Paul is saying, let’s sum up: We already know that when Christ died for us, he took the condemnation for our sin that we deserved. Not only that, but we died with Him, and that severed our connection with the old Adam, the old rebellious human race. Now Christ is our Adam – we belong to a new family. But in chapter 7 we saw that the believer still can struggle with sin because of the flesh. Here in chapter 8 Paul is telling us something new. Christ’s death also condemned sin in our flesh – it is dealt with, even though it has not yet been removed. The redemption of our body is in the future.

This is what gives God a righteous right to transform and catch up in an instant the bodies of His saints. It also gives the Risen Christ the right to live in these bodies of ours while they are on earth; and to walk in us, daily, in resurrection victory! The only condition of that victorious life is that we ourselves walk by that indwelling Spirit which has been given to us. Christ is our atonement for sin and our guilt for sin, but our flesh, our old nature is not atoned for. It has been permanently judged. God has legally dealt with it, and sin no longer has any rights in us ever again. In other words, in the eyes of God, it’s as if we already have our perfect resurrection bodies. He does not see us in our flesh at all! Jesus has done it all – we have everything in Him!

Again, sin has not yet been removed from us. When Christ comes, thank God, we shall be freed from the very presence of sin. But it has already been condemned in the flesh, and should be considered that way by us. Just as surely as our sins were put away by the blood of Christ, so was sin in the flesh condemned, judgment executed on it.

“Throughout the Psalms, and all the Old Testament Saints’ experiences, we find that there is under the Law, an almost constant striving and groaning after a righteous state,—seen, but not experienced, because the Law consisted of outer enactments, to be fulfilled by man. The Law furnished no power.

Now in Romans 8:4 we have three things: first, this righteous state or result; second, the fact that it was not fulfilled by us—we have no more power in ourselves than had the Old Testament saints: but it is fulfilled in us—it is the passive voice: be fulfilled. Third, it is fulfilled in us as we consent to reject the flesh and choose to walk according to the Spirit. In the Spirit lies all the power. With us, the responsibility of choice—a blessed, solemn one!” Newell

Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook shaped by the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their outlook shaped by the things of the Spirit.

Paul explains what he means by walking according to the flesh and by the spirit in the next few verses. Again, keep things in context. Paul is not speaking of two types of Christians here – one spiritual and one unspiritual. Paul is speaking about our position in Christ. People who are not saved (those who live according to the flesh) have no spiritual understanding at all. These are persons not cleansed by the blood of Christ, not new creatures in Him. Their outlook, their mindset is totally shaped by the world and the needs and wants of their sinful nature. That’s all they have. A born again person has an outlook shaped by the Spirit. Many believers still fall very short in this area (and they know it), but they pursue the things of God to some degree. The sinful nature and the indwelling Spirit are in conflict (Galatians 5:17).

Romans 8:6-7 For the outlook of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is life and peace, (7) because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so.

The last part of verse 7 is total depravity. Unsaved people are not able to submit to God. They do not have the power to do so. When we have the Spirit, we have life and peace and have the ability to please God. Verse 7 is as clear as any scripture describing the state of a lost person. You couldn’t say anything worse about them.

Romans 8:8-9 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him.

So unsaved people cannot please God. Their only hope is to believe in Christ. But we who have believed have the Holy Spirit. A believer who gives in to his sin nature is acting like the unsaved (see 1 Corinthians 3:3). We can do fleshly things, but our orientation is to the Spirit. When we do fleshly things the Spirit is grieved, but He will not leave.

Verse 9 makes it clear that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the identifying mark of a believer in Jesus Christ (also 1 John 3:24; 4:13). If a person does not have the Spirit, that person does not have Christ and does not belong to Him. They are not saved. This verse destroys the irrational belief that there are Christians who have not fully received the blessing of the Spirit of God. There is no scriptural basis for a “second work of grace” or a “baptism of the Holy Spirit” after salvation. At salvation we have all of the Spirit.

There may be a time after salvation (even several points in time) where the Spirit gets control of more of us, but there is never a time we get more of Him! We have all of Christ and the Holy Spirit when we are saved. He “makes His home with us” – that’s what “lives in you” means. The only thing keeping us apart is our old nature. We should not pray, “Give me more of you”, but “Lord, take all of me!”

Verse 9 is an important verse about the Trinity. We see that the Spirit comes forth both from God the Father and from Christ, that's what the meaning of the Greek here is.

This verse split the church in history. The Greek orthodox believes that the Holy Spirit only comes from God the Father. The Eastern Catholic Church, which became today's Greek Orthodox, and the western Roman Catholic Church split over this issue. The Western church, which included the Roman Catholic church and eventually all of the Protestant denominations, believe that the Spirit comes from the Father and the Son.

Romans 8:10-11 (ISV) But if the Messiah is in you, your bodies are dead due to sin, but the spirit is alive due to righteousness. (11) And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive by his Spirit who lives in you.

These are two very important verses! Our bodies are dead but our spirits are alive in Christ. Notice God sees a contrast between our bodies and our spirits. This tells us why we get sick and die and God doesn't stop it. Our bodies are already dead because of sin! They are condemned, and they will physically die. But our spirits are alive and will not die – they will go on after our bodies die. And God will raise those dead bodies just as He raised Christ from the dead. That is our great hope! So why do we try so hard to live forever in these condemned bodies? What a comfort for us to know for sure that God will raise our bodies from the dead just as He raised Jesus.

But this is so important to understand. When we trust Christ, we are a new creation, which has two parts. Right now we have the spiritual part. When Christ comes back we will receive the new body. This goes hand in hand with what we've been talking about, that Christ's death condemned our flesh and He now sees us as righteous. He sees us in our present spiritual state and our future redeemed body, not in our current sinful flesh.

If Christ is in us, the Spirit is our life because of whose righteousness? Christ's righteousness, not ours. Notice that it is true that we are in Christ, but He is also in us (2 Corinthians 13:5). Also, notice the Trinity clearly stated again in verse 11.

Romans 8:12-13 Consequently, brothers, we have an obligation — not with respect to human nature — to live according to it. (13) For if you live according to human nature, you are going to die, but if by the Spirit you continually put to death the activities of the body, you will live.

Paul makes his point here. Since we have the Spirit we are not obligated to live according to our old nature, but we live according to the Spirit. That is our orientation. Our responsibility is a positive one—to live each day in the control and power of the Holy Spirit. That will bring life, an abundant life. An unsaved person always lives according to human nature, and they will die. There should be a sharp contrast between the believer and the unbeliever just because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We should be living a “resurrection” life.

What does Paul mean, “put to death the activities of the body”? Unlike other religions, we are not under an obligation to the flesh, to work for our salvation. Instead, we enjoy the benefits of what Jesus Christ already did for us at the cross. But it also means to control our body's desires.

The activities of the body are naturally selfish because it is not redeemed. The body would have its every desire fulfilled if it could. It has no regulator in itself but the sin – it is still dead to God and all

holiness. Even the lawful needs and desires of the body become sinful and lead to death if the body is allowed to rule.

God has left us in these unredeemed bodies, so we may learn—(1) the badness of our old self-life, as we see that in our flesh there is no good thing; (2) the sinfulness of sin,—and learn to hate and abhor it; (3) the sweet and blessed path of relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit. Self-control is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. We cannot live a holy life without controlling our bodies, and we cannot do that without walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. What does “walking in the Spirit” mean?

1. It doesn't mean losing control of our mental and spiritual faculties and acting like we've lost our minds. In fact if you see a believer losing control of their bodies, that contradicts what Paul says about self-control being one of the fruits of the Spirit, and would seem to not be a working of the Holy Spirit. A believer may experience overwhelming joy and love from the Holy Spirit, and be very aware of the incredible power He gives, and this is a very real and precious manifestation. But He would never cause us to lose control morally in any way.
2. It does mean surrendering our will to God. But God does not crush the abilities He has given us, but enhances them. He then works in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Even though God works in us, it is always our choice whether to walk in the Spirit or not. God leads us – He doesn't compel us. This is that great tension between God's sovereignty and our responsibility. God works in us to accomplish His will, but we have the freedom to choose His will, minute by minute, day by day. Both are taught in the Bible, and both are true.

Romans 8:14-15 For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's children. (15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

The news for us believers in this chapter just keeps getting better and better! We are adopted into God's family! First let's talk about what it means to be “led by God's Spirit.” The Greek verb “ago” means to guide, direct, impel, or lead away. You can see the word used in Luke 4:1, 9, and 22:54, and 23:1. All these verses are about Jesus, and only the first use is about the Spirit leading Him. But the same Greek word is used in all of them.

1. To be led does not just mean to be influenced. Jesus was not “influenced” as a sheep to the slaughter. Led is to be moved by an external force. It is not just by suggestion.
2. The leading of the Spirit is not harsh but gentle. He is kind in his leading (Isaiah 30:21). He doesn't lead as a tyrant but as a teacher (John 14:26).
3. The leading of the Spirit is not sporadic or haphazard but steady and sustained. The tense of the verb “ago” shows continuous action.
4. The leading of the Spirit is authenticating. By His leading He assures us that we are the children of God, born again and on our way to heaven.

Again I remind you Paul is speaking about all who have trusted in Christ and are saved, not a subset of believers who walk perfectly in the spirit – no one does that. Our sonship is not based on our perfect obedience to the Spirit. Nothing is based on us. All who are saved are God's children. I always shake my head when I hear an unsaved person say, “Oh, we're all God's children!” No – unsaved people are children of Satan, because of their connection to Adam. Saved people have been severed from Adam because of our identification with Christ's death, and have now been adopted by

God.

I believe we have mentioned this before, but in the context of the culture Paul was writing in, the days of the Roman Empire, it's useful to understand how serious adoption was to the Romans.

1. The adopted person lost all rights in his old family, and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. In a literal and legal sense, he got a new father.
2. He became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were born afterwards that were blood relatives, it did not affect his rights.
3. Legally, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out. For example, all debts were cancelled, wiped out like they had never been. The adopted person was considered a new person entering a new life that had nothing to do with the old.
4. In the eyes of the law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of his new father.

This is the kind of adoption Paul is talking about that happens to us when we become a Christian. God does not treat us as slaves, but as His children. This kind of relationship, God as our father, was completely unknown to the Jews in the Old Testament. It is completely new and unique to the Church.

That's why we do not have a spirit of fear. "Abba" means "Daddy" or "Papa", not in an irreverent sense, but of a close relationship. It's the same word Jesus used to call His heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). We can now call God our Father, because He really is! We love and serve Him as a child loves their father. Only in this case, He is a perfect heavenly Father that loves us far more than an earthly father ever could. So we can call God "Daddy", and that's something special. Only children can do that.

Think about it! If verse 15 is true, then we can address God the Father the same way the Son does! What amazing grace! What an incredible privilege! We should practice addressing Him that way. It is worth mentioning that Jesus never told us to address the Father as Jehovah, or Almighty God, or even Father God. No, He told us to address Him as "Father" (Luke 11:2 the Lord's Prayer).

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (17) Now if we are children, we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with the Messiah — if, in fact, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The method of communication between the Holy Spirit and our spirit is a profound mystery that we will never fully understand in this life. Human philosophy and science know absolutely nothing about the quality or nature of spirit. It is like a child recognizing their parents. When we trust Christ, we know we have become part of His family – we recognize that God is our Father.

Every day the Holy Spirit Himself tells us that we are a child of God. That's the sense of the Greek here. Why does He have to tell us every day? Because we don't always feel like a child of God, do we? We tend to forget this fact. We're thick-headed. You can't always trust feelings. These verses tell us through the Holy Spirit that we really are, and forever will be. There can be nothing more certain than God Himself communicating through our spirit that we belong to Him.

"The operations of a man's mind either in philosophy or in science constitute an eternal quest for certainty. The conclusions of philosophy are based upon theories and hypotheses and are always being challenged and perpetually overthrown by succeeding new schemes of philosophy. And even the dearest discoveries of science await new explanations—of the very constitution of the universe they are invented in.

But with the child of God—the born-again family, there is no such uncertainty! A child of God knows. And the blessed Holy Spirit, by whose inscrutable power he was born again, keeps forever witnessing with his consciousness,—and that through no processes of his mind, but directly, that he is a born-one of God.” Newell

We have been appointed heirs of God, and heirs together with Christ. Now what’s that about? It basically means we have an eternal home in heaven with God. It is this inheritance that guarantees that we’ll be going there. Think about it. Everything belongs to God (Psalm 50:10-12). Since everything belongs to God, that means we will inherit everything. This is so incredible that we can’t really even grasp it. None of the classes of angels are ever said to be “heirs” of God.

It’s not really a surprise to us that Jesus would inherit everything, after everything He went through for us (Matthew 3:17, Psalm 2:7-8, John 16:15). But the amazing truth of these verses is that the children of God will share equally with the Son all that belongs to the Father. It’s amazing! If you will meditate on these truths, you will find that earthly things will shrink to nothing.

Just a few of the things we will receive as heirs are golden crowns (Revelation 4:4), a new name (Revelation 3:12), a “well done” from our Master (Matthew 25:21,23), and a position of responsibility in God’s kingdom (2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 20:6). Knowing fully what it means to be a child and heir of God should cause us to live our lives differently. It should play a major role in our sanctification process, and help us take it seriously.

As thrilling as this is to us, there are consequences of our position in God’s family that we may not be so thrilled about. Suffering must happen before we can be glorified (John 15:20; Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12). We suffer now; the glory is in the future. We share in Christ’s sufferings so we can also share in His glory (2 Timothy 2:12; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:10). Some believe that those who suffer more for Christ will receive a greater share in the inheritance, maybe a greater position of responsibility in the Kingdom. That’s a valid interpretation of verse 17, and makes sense.

So Paul is basically speaking about what we must go through in this life so we can share in Christ’s glory in the future. And we can be sure that whatever happens to us in our lives, Christ is with us. No matter what we go through He is there and will go through it with us. He understands and gives us the strength to stand and to grow through it. And as we have already learned in Romans, we learn and grow through the sufferings in our lives. It serves a good purpose.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.

What a fantastic verse of promise this is for us. No matter what suffering we go through in this life, it’s not even worth speaking of compared to what we will receive in heaven. We know we will have trouble and suffering in this life. But whenever you are in the middle of it, remember that from the perspective of heaven, you will consider it to be nothing.

Before we think about our own experiences with suffering, we should probably read Hebrews 11:35-38. And we know that Paul suffered greatly (2 Corinthians 11:22-28), and eventually was executed by the Romans for his faith. Most of us won’t have to face martyrdom. Think about all the things that believers have faced down through the centuries. The days of Nero, Diocletian, and all the other tyrants who even up to this day have tried to stamp out Christianity by persecuting Christ’s followers. Think about the Spanish Inquisition, when true believers were tortured and killed because they dared to go against the apostate Catholic Church. All of these things will be as nothing compared to the

glory those believers will receive.

Not everyone suffers equally in this life, do they? We don't suffer as much as those who are persecuted in some countries and even die for the faith. But suffering can mean bearing with grace the final days of your life, or enduring physical ailments and diseases. It can mean keeping your cool when a university professor ridicules you for your Christian beliefs. It can mean not getting a deserved promotion because of your faith. It can mean enduring the persecution of abusive husbands. There are all kinds of suffering.

Romans 8:19-21 For the creation is eagerly awaiting the revelation of God's children, (20) because the creation has become subject to futility, though not by anything it did. The one who subjected it did so in the certainty (21) that the creation itself would also be set free from corrupting bondage in order to share the glorious freedom of God's children.

“The creation” means all of nature. Remember that creation was cursed when Adam sinned. The ground was cursed in Genesis 3:17, and we see that animals were cursed in Genesis 3:14. Notice it says not through anything it (creation) did. It was man that sinned, not the animals or the trees. The Greek word for “futility” could also be translated “powerlessness”, “uselessness”, and “worthlessness”. It was brought on by the sin of mankind.

The verb for “eagerly awaiting” (apekdechomai) is used seven times in the New Testament, each time to refer to Christ's return (Romans 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philemon 3:20; Hebrews 9:28). The revealing of the sons of God (that is all believers) will occur when Christ returns for His own. The Greek word translated “revealing” is like an unveiling, like a covering removed to reveal a beautiful work of art. We will share His glory (Romans 8:18; Colossians 1:27; 3:4; Hebrews 2:10), and will be transformed (Romans 8:23).

Because of sin, the creation was made to operate under a law which specifies a universal process of decay and death. This law of morpholysis is recognized by science as a basic principle pervading the whole universe. It is also called the law of increasing entropy (meaning turning inward) or the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Every system in the physical and biological worlds has a tendency to turn inward and “feed” on itself to maintain its structure and activity, but this simply causes it to run down, disintegrate and die, unless it somehow becomes opened to outside sources of energy, information, food, etc. Even if it does remain an open system, this internal tendency continues to act in opposition to the incoming energy. Since even the latter will eventually be exhausted, the whole creation is thus in bondage to this principle of futility, or “in-vainness.” But since this law has been imposed by God, He also can remove it, and so there still is “hope.” Henry Morris

So nature is also looking forward to the day when the called-out humans are glorified, when our bodies are redeemed and we enter eternal heaven. When will this day be? It will happen when Christ comes back and sets up His Millennial Kingdom here on earth (Revelation 20). At that point the curse will be lifted on both humanity and nature. You can get a hint of what it will be like in Isaiah 11:5-9; 35:1-2, 5-7; 65:20, 25; and Amos 9:13. And as wonderful as the messianic age will be, it's just a prelude to eternity (Revelation 21-22).

When that happens creation itself will be set free. The universe will be perfected. It won't run down. It won't tend from order to chaos. There will be no more decay and death. Verse 21 tells us that creation itself will share in the same glory that we will receive.

Romans 8:22-23 For we know that all the rest of creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. (23) However, not only the creation, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The reference to “the whole creation” indicates that the divine curse extends through the entire created cosmos, not just to the earth. Scientific observation has apparently confirmed this. That is, the law of entropy operates throughout the cosmos. Since it was man’s sin that brought God’s curse on the ground—that is, the very elements of the created earth, the “dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7) out of which all things were made by God—it may be that his sin had universal repercussions. On the other hand, it may be that Satan’s sin, which took place in the angels’ domain in the heavens, brought on the curse there. Henry Morris

Did you know that all of creation groans to be released from the curse of sin? That’s what Paul is saying. Like our bodies, all of creation is condemned. It is dying, and like our bodies, it is corrupted and will die. But notice Paul uses the metaphor of childbirth. Creation itself will be born again, it will be redeemed.

“We who have the first fruits of the Spirit” means that the Holy Spirit is “the firstfruits” of God’s work of salvation and re-creation in believers. In Ephesians 1:14 the Holy Spirit is called “a deposit (down payment) guaranteeing our inheritance” (also 2 Corinthians 1:22), a similar idea. A farmer’s “firstfruits” were the first harvesting of his earliest-ripened crops. This first harvest was a foretaste and promise that more harvest was to come. In the same way God the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, is a foretaste that they will enjoy many more blessings, including living in God’s presence forever.

Even though we have the Spirit and we have all these assurances of redemption of our bodies, we still groan to be released from these condemned ones. We still have sickness and disease and the aging of our bodies so we still suffer and groan.

So this is our state as believers: (1) new creatures in Christ, whose citizenship is in heaven; (2) the presence of the Spirit within them as “firstfruits” of their coming inheritance—witnessing of it, giving them a taste of its glory; (3) a state of groaning despite all this; (4) a waiting for bodily redemption.

Romans 8:24-25 For we were saved with this hope in mind. Now a hope that can be observed is not really hope, for who hopes for what can be seen? (25) But if we hope for what we do not yet observe, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

We were saved. That’s a done deal. But we still groan and anticipate the redemption of our bodies. This is not something we can see or feel right now – it hasn’t happened yet. But we wait for it with patience! Sometimes it’s hard to be patient, though, isn’t it? The blessed “hope” of the Christian is always “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). That’s when the redemption of our bodies will happen.

Romans 8:26-27 In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, since we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words, (27) and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God’s will.

It is not that the Spirit helps in those occasional times when Christians are weak; we are always weak

in this area and the Spirit continually helps them. However, the Greek word for weakness (astheneia) may also include physical, emotional, and spiritual disability. The Greek word translated “groans” here is not how we normally think of groaning. It also is not speaking in tongues, as some Charismatic folks believe. It could also be translated “sighs”, or “quietness”.

Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit quietly pleads (intercedes) for us, because we’re too stupid to truly know how to pray. Boy, I can relate to that! There are many times in prayer that we don’t know how to pray, or what to pray for. We sometimes struggle in prayer. But we can always rest in the assurance that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us. And God, who knows the mind of the Spirit, and searches our hearts, hears our prayers. This is an interesting statement about the Father’s omniscience and the intimacy within the Trinity. The Lord Jesus continually intercedes for believers in God’s presence (v. 34; Hebrews 7:25) and the Holy Spirit also intercedes on our behalf!

Don’t get down on yourselves too much about this. Even the strongest Christians have trouble with this now and then. Even many of the prophets had trouble praying for God’s will – Jeremiah comes to mind. Notice the key is, at the end of verse 27, “according to God’s will”. You see, most of the time we pray for what we want. We either aren’t concerned or don’t really understand what God wants.

Many times when we pray we use a “bailout” prayer. We want God to bail us out of something we’ve gotten ourselves into. Or we pray for something we want for ourselves. So we pray that prayer and the Holy Spirit passes it on to the Father, the Spirit says, in a sigh, “Your servant Dusty – give him not what he wants, but what is needed according to your will.” The Holy Spirit knows what each of us truly need.

If you pray for someone and it is in agreement with God’s will, the Holy Spirit will plead your case. If your world is falling apart and you are overwhelmed and can’t pray, the Holy Spirit grieves with you and prays for you to the Father. If you’re praying for someone else and you don’t know what to ask for, the Spirit does and He will ask for the exact right thing from the Father, but always perfectly in line with the Father’s will.

Romans 8:28 **And we know that for those who love God, that is, for those who are called according to his purpose, all things are working together for good.**

The first part of this chapter has been about our will and our choice to walk by the Spirit. But from verse 28 on, the rest of this chapter is all about God and what He has done, what He is doing and what He will do.

This is not meant to be just a feel good sentiment, but it is an iron-clad promise. But notice it is not for everyone. It is not for the world, but only for those who are in Christ (those who love God and are called). It is important to recognize, though, that what God considers good may not be what we call good. Maybe it’s more clear to say that sometimes something we would consider bad God may consider good. No matter what happens to us in our lives, we can always be certain that God is working everything for good. This promise is something we see happen in our lives as the years go by, you don’t have to just take it on faith, you can experience it.

That doesn’t mean that when bad things happen we will always see the good. We may not see that something is good until many years have gone by. Some things we may never recognize as good until we get to heaven. So, this is a promise that is sometimes hard to see, but we can count on it. And accepting this will bring immeasurable peace no matter what is happening to you.

“Called according to His purpose” – what is God’s ultimate purpose for believers? To bring them to perfection in His presence (Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; Colossians 1:22; Jude 24).

Paul uses a phrase in this verse that introduces a big concept – predestination. God is working all things together for good. He is working in everything, even the bad stuff. It all has a place in His plan. I know that is hard to accept. Many people refuse to believe in God because they can’t accept that God is (temporarily) allowing evil in this world. But, for believers, all things are working together for good. That includes the good days and the bad days. The times of health and the times of sickness. The times of joy and the times of sorrow.

Romans 8:29-30 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Now Paul explains why he can say what he said in verse 28. Because God is sovereign. Paul uses five theological words to describe five works of grace that God performs for us to make sure that our future is what He intended it to be before the world began. The words are foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. All are in the past tense, but their effect is timeless. The first two occurred in eternity past, the next two occur in the present, and the last will occur in the future.

Read what Jesus said in John 6:37-44. There are three clear doctrines presented in these verses. The sovereignty of God, predestination, and the eternal security of the believer. God knows all of history beforehand. We can’t understand this, but it’s true. This is why He knows each one of us before we’ve even been born (He foreknew us). From all people throughout history God chose (predestined) some to be saved, using a criteria ONLY GOD KNOWS. He has not chosen to reveal that criteria to us.

Some make the assumption that He looked into the future to see who would respond to the gospel, but that is not taught in scripture, and this verse does not say that. It says those whom He foreknew, not something He foresaw. If God looked into the future and acted in response to how I will act, that makes the creature sovereign over the Creator. God wouldn’t be God if that were the case.

The Greek sense of that verse is “those whom He knew beforehand in an intimate way, He put a fence around”. The meaning of “foreknew” is like a knowledge a father has of his child. That knowledge results in a deep abiding love that draws us to Him in salvation. Why did God call me? I don’t know. We can’t know. We shouldn’t assume God did things for a certain reason when He didn’t say so. But just knowing that He chose me from eternity past because He knew me as my father is so astounding, so humbling – it makes me want to serve Him even more. See Ephesians 1:4, Jeremiah 1:4-5; and Amos 3:2 for more on this foreknowing.

Verse 30 is a timeless verse. Paul speaks in past tense – it is already done! Nothing can change it! Those whom He put fence around in eternity past, He called to trust Him in this life. Those whom He called, He legally acquitted of all of their sins. And of all those He legally acquitted, He made a citizen of heaven. That’s what “glorified” means. God saw us as already being in heaven with Him before we were even born!

So, of the ones that God has chosen, He calls them all to be saved, and all who are called come and are made righteous. No more and no less. As both Paul and Jesus say, no one who is called is lost.

The justification and glorification is a done deal. It is all a sovereign work of God, otherwise we would be able to boast in something we had done. God is the author of our salvation, from beginning to end. Verse 30 clearly points out that who God starts with, He finishes with.

Does that mean God is keeping some people from being saved? Absolutely not! Does that mean we don't have free will? Well, I wouldn't call it "free will", because if we truly had free will God wouldn't truly be sovereign. Free will is not taught in the Bible. What is taught clearly is that all of mankind is lost, and we all have the freedom of choice to choose God or not.

Many people hate the idea of predestination because they equate it with fatalism. They think that it means that no one has a choice in their destiny. But God has given everyone the volition to make choices. God is sovereign, but humans can make choices and are responsible for them. To our human minds this sounds like a conflict. But it's not. God somehow makes it all work out. I don't understand it, but I accept it, because that's what the Bible teaches.

But we are responsible for our choices, and for our sins. We have the responsibility to believe God and submit to Him or not. That's all it comes down to. But all those who make that choice to believe God have been called by God. And everyone who is called makes the right choice, according to Jesus and Paul. They said it, and that's good enough for me.

This doesn't mean we're puppets. We have true freedom when we accept Christ. But it is only freedom under the umbrella of God's will. God moved me to the point where I listened to His call and responded. He touched my soul, as someone who already knew me intimately. I couldn't touch my own soul. Only God could do that. I don't know why He called me. I don't deserve this incredible blessing, this amazing grace. With some people it takes longer than others, and some fight and struggle before they give in to that call. But God's call will not be denied.

The debate between those who believe in predestination and those who believe in the free will of mankind usually come down to one thing: Who is in charge? Is God sovereign or is man sovereign? You can't have it both ways.

So the foreknowing and the predestination happened in eternity past. The calling and the justification happens to us in our present life experience. For a believer, only one thing has yet to be completed. Although we have been glorified positionally when we accept Christ, we will not experience that completely until the future when Christ returns for us. Then we will be completely conformed to the image of Christ (Colossians 3:4, 1 John 3:2).

"That the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers" – God's plan was always to have a remnant of human beings to live forever with Him, starting with His son, Jesus. Jesus was the firstborn, and all of us who have trusted Him are His brothers and sisters.

This a good place to stop and review. It seems that Paul wants us to take a breath, and think about all the things that he has covered. For all of us who are believers:

1. We are no longer under the threat of God's condemnation (vs. 1-8)
2. Living a sanctified life is possible because we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (vs. 9-10)
3. Someday God will raise up our bodies just as Jesus was raised (vs. 11-13)
4. We are guided by the Holy Spirit (vs. 14)
5. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (vs. 15-17)

6. We will receive all the benefits of being God's heirs in heaven (vs. 18)
7. A day is coming where the curse will be lifted from creation (vs. 19-22)
8. In that time we will also experience a completely renewed and redeemed body (vs. 23-25)
9. Until then the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we pray (26-27)
10. God is working all things for us for good according to His purpose for us (28)
11. God chose us from eternity past because He knew us then intimately (29-30)

Romans 8:31-32 **What, then, can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) The one who did not spare his own Son, but offered him as a sacrifice for all of us, surely will give us all things, along with his son, won't he?**

"All of this" is referring to everything Paul has told us about salvation in Christ from chapter 3 on. But it definitely includes his last subject – predestination, a fact many Christians don't want to accept. You can't leave predestination out of the "all of this" truths about salvation. The Holy Spirit through Paul declared it – why would we ever want to deny it?

So, knowing all of this, that God is working in our lives in everything that happens to us, that He has predestined us to heaven, then how can anything defeat us? Who can be against us? The answer is obviously no one. And since God gave us Jesus Christ as a sacrifice to save us, He will also give us "all things". Wow, and my puny little mind can't comprehend a fraction of what "all things" is in the mind of God. It is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly.

We are expected to have heard, understood, and believed all the previous marvels of our salvation written in this epistle. The conclusion is: GOD IS FOR US. The Creator of the universe, the Upholder of all things, the Redeemer God Himself, for us! The only response to Paul's question in verse 31 would be to say "Hallelujah," or to stand amazed with my mouth hanging open and say nothing at all.

Romans 8:33-34 **Who shall accuse God's Elect? It is God who justifies! (34) Who is the one to condemn? It is the Messiah Jesus who is interceding on our behalf. He died, and more importantly, has been raised and is seated at the right hand of God.**

No one can ever accuse us again, because God has justified us, once and for all. Jesus Himself is interceding for us, and remember from John 6 that He will not lose anyone. If anyone who has been called and justified could lose their salvation, that means Jesus would have failed, and God would be a liar. It could never be.

So if God has done all that, why should we be worried about anything? Why should we be down if someone doesn't like us or mistreats us? Sometimes someone may condemn us and be right in doing so. But so what? No one can bring a charge against us that God hasn't already dealt with. God is the highest court in the universe. The only one that can truly condemn me has justified me. God has the last word.

Think about it. Only God could come up with this. No one else could ever condemn us because everyone else are also sinners. We're all in the same boat. No one will be able to complain on the Day of Judgment that it wasn't fair that God should justify someone who wasn't righteous and condemn someone who was. The only person who could do that would be someone who was truly righteous. And guess who that is? Jesus is the only one who could legitimately condemn us, and He has justified us. It's brilliant! No human being could have come up with that!

“Note (1) It is God’s elect whom this passage concerns. (2) God’s elect not only believe, but are confident! For there can be no charge laid against them. (3) They boldly challenge any and every foe, concerning any possible charge against them before God! It is not that those triumphing are without fault in themselves—they know that! But God is for them! They are His “elect,” and we know from the next chapter that the purpose of God according to election is not of works”: but on the contrary, “of Him that calleth” (Romans 9:11).” Newell

Romans 8:35-37 **Who shall separate us from the Messiah's love? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or a violent death do this? (36) As it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long. We are thought of as sheep headed for slaughter." (37) In all these things we are triumphantly victorious due to the one who loved us.**

Paul’s list is not something he just imagined, but he had already experienced the first six of these seven things personally (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). And not too long after this was written, he experienced the seventh. So when he says that none of these things can separate us from Christ, he knows what he is talking about. In verse 36 he quotes Psalm 44:22. He quotes this to let us New Testament believers know that we will experience affliction just as the faithful in the Old Testament did.

In every believer’s life we have times that we feel like maybe God doesn’t love us any more, everyone is against us, and we feel defeated. This is why Paul is giving us these wonderful promises. He gives us a list of things that we might think could separate us from the love of Christ. But Paul then says that even if all these things happened to you, it wouldn’t matter. In all these things we are still victorious. And notice that we are victorious now, not some time in the future, when (we hope) we make it to heaven. We are, right now, at the current time, victorious because God has won the victory for us.

Does this mean everything will work out for us in this life? What about all those who have been martyred for their faith. Were they victorious? Yes, because the victory is in Christ, and we will receive the benefits of it, like He did, after our work on earth is finished. But we count on that victory here and now because it is assured. It has already happened. Spiritually we have the victory now.

The word translated “triumphantly victorious” here basically means “super-conquerors”. We are super-conquerors because we don’t just hold our own when we are afflicted with these things, but through suffering we are drawn closer to Christ and become more conformed to His image. And this is not because of our own inner strength or courage. It is through Christ that we are victorious (vs. 37).

“Let the saints rouse quickly from these false dreams of “peace.” The saints are sheep for slaughter! Name yourself among them, and cease contending for your “rights” in a world that has cast out Christ! Persecution is shaping itself up again throughout Christendom—yea, even in the United States. Intolerance unto death for any who will not bow to a totalitarian state is ready, as in the days of the Roman emperors (who demanded worship) to assert itself,—is asserting itself, throughout the world. This “totalitarian” movement is setting the stage for Antichrist more rapidly than you dream! Therefore get ready. Put up over your mirror the motto: “I am Christ’s: a sheep for slaughter.” Newell

Romans 8:38-39 **For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor anything above, nor anything below, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God**

that is ours in the Messiah Jesus, our Lord.

Paul wraps up this discussion with this great praise to God expressing his assurance of salvation. This is our anthem, the theme for our lives. Death can't hurt us because Jesus defeated death at the cross. Nothing we do in life can separate us from God – again, all of that was dealt with at the cross. Angels (these would be fallen angels) can't keep us away from God, and neither can any rulers on earth or in the angelic realm. Nothing in the present or future, heaven or hell, or in the entire universe can keep us from the destiny God has planned for us. I'd say that's a pretty sure thing, wouldn't you? That's security, folks.

“Paul here arrives at the mountain-height of Christian position! Our weak hearts, prone to legality and unbelief, with great difficulty receive these mighty words: God is for us. Place the emphasis here where God places it—on this great word “for.” God is for His elect. They have failed, but He is for them. They are ignorant, but He is for them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit, but He is for them. If our hearts once surrender to the stupendous fact that there are those whom God will eternally be for, that there is an electing act and attitude of God, in which He eternally commits Himself to His elect,—without conditions, without requirements; whose lives do not at all affect the fact that God is for them—then we shall be ready to magnify the God of all grace!” Newell

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God,

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”