

Romans Part 28 – Chapter 8:28-30

Sunday, October 23, 2022

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Last time we studied in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good for those who love God. Perhaps this turns out to be the most consistent proof of not just God's existence to us, but His sovereignty in all creation as well.

Review: In order to fully understand Romans 8:31-39 we must take note of Romans 8:29-30. Notice who is doing all the work:

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

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

³⁴ *Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:*

*“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:28-30

³¹ *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Paul speaks from the perspective of saved Christian believers. References here to "us," or "we" are not inclusive of the entire human race, but only those who have accepted Christ in faith (Romans 3:23–26; John 3:16–18).

In light of the fact that God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and will glorify us (Romans 8:30), Paul comes to an undeniable conclusion: God must be for us. God must be for all of us who are in Christ by faith. What an amazing and life-changing thought. The one, true God, the creator of all things, is for us. With Him for us, who could ever possibly be against us?

Remember **Revelation 12:10** states:

*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, **for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night** before our God.*

Though Satan accuses us, he cannot condemn us for we are declared innocent – justified, by God.

Of course, anyone at all might be against us, in literal terms; any person or group might try to oppose us or afflict us. Paul's question is who of any consequence could ever be against us? What could anyone against us ever hope to accomplish against us, if God Himself is for us? What chance is there that someone can thwart God's intent to save those justified by faith in His son?

The question is whether we believe God is truly for us.

³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

It's possible that a believer might remain unconvinced that God is for us. This is more likely when facing hard things in life, or our own sinfulness, or just a lack of feeling connected to God. To combat this discouragement, Paul provides the ultimate evidence: God didn't spare His own Son!

God the Father sacrificed His sinless, righteous Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty price for our sin. He gave Him up for us all because of His great love for us (Romans 5:8; John 3:16). Now Paul asks us to be convinced. If God did that for us, how could we ever think He is not for us? More than that, if He would not withhold His Son, how would He not give us all things, along with His Son?

Paul uses the word "graciously" to describe God's giving. Ever and always, what God gives to us is not about what we have given to God. It is not about our sin or lack of sin. The God who is for us, who loves us, gives to us all good things based on His goodness and not on ours. They are truly gifts.

³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Paul has established decisively in the previous verses that God is for all of us who are in Christ (Romans 3:23–26; John 3:16–18). He has not even withheld His own sinless Son from us. He has graciously given to us all things.

Now Paul asks who could possibly bring a charge against us—in the context of this passage, meaning the elect (Romans 8:29–30). This is Paul's first use of the word "elect" in Romans. In the previous verses, he detailed that God predestined those He foreknew to become like Jesus. In this sense, the elect are the chosen ones of God, all those who are children of God through faith in Christ.

Paul begins to use legal language here; the vocabulary of a courtroom or trial. He seems to imagine someone attempting to manipulate God into casting us out, by bringing an accusation before God about our sin. But what is a possible purpose of Satan, described in Revelation 12:10 as the accuser, who

stands before God night and day bringing accusations against "our brothers and sisters." He might very well accuse us of sin in order to convince God of our unworthiness to be in His family.

Perhaps the greatest accusations, though, come from our own hearts. The awareness of our sin taunts us, hinting that God could never forgive such things, could never love one who does them.

Paul is clear that all such accusations will fail. Why? God is the one who justifies us. God, the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe. He declares us righteous because of our faith in Christ, giving us credit for Jesus' righteousness and accepting Jesus' death as payment for our sin.

Paul insists that God will never say, "You've made a good point; I was wrong to justify that person." His decision stands since it is based on Christ's own sacrifice and righteousness, not on our ability to do what is right ourselves.

God has justified one of His chosen ones—declared that person righteous because of his or her faith in Christ (Romans 3:23–26)—no accusation about any sin could convince God to overrule His own verdict.

If that is God's position, how could anyone condemn us? That's what Paul now asks. His answer can be read in one of two ways. Paul may be implying that nobody can condemn those of us who are in Christ, because He—Jesus—is the one who died. Or, Paul may mean that only Christ can condemn us, but instead He has already taken our condemnation on Himself.

The result is the same in either case. Paul began Romans chapter 8 by writing that, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The statement contained in this verse is why. We are in Christ by faith, so closely associated with Him in God's eyes that His death has already paid the price of our sin. He was resurrected and now stands at the Father's right-hand interceding for us. This is available to those who put their faith in Jesus, but only to those who do so (John 3:16–18).

The picture Paul paints is of Jesus standing by to advocate against anyone who would accuse us to God for our sin. He might say, "I died for that sin. The penalty is paid." Now that God has justified us in Christ, and because God is for us, no accusation or condemnation can stand against us in the throne room of God.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Paul now writes that we must never interpret the darkness of earthly life as evidence of God's lack of love for us. Nothing we do can keep Christ from loving us, and nothing that happens to us can mean that Christ no longer loves us. Paul builds a list of some of the worst things that can happen in this life, including trials, hardship, persecution for our faith in Him, hunger, lack of clothing or shelter, physical threats, or death by violence. None of this can separate us from Christ's love. None of this means Christ does not love us. Just the opposite is true. He loves us enough to bring us through these things (John 16:33).

Paul would have known this better than almost anyone. He himself experienced most, if not all, of those hardships (2 Corinthians 11:23–29) and remained convinced of Christ's love for him.

³⁶ *As it is written:*

*“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

This verse is a quote from Psalm 44:22. Paul states that nothing which can happen to us could separate us from Christ's love for us. Struggles in this life are not a sign that God has abandoned us; they are hardships He works to see us through (Hebrews 12:3–11). By quoting this from the Psalms, Paul is showing that God's people have faced persecution and hardship for generations. He will make this point again in chapter 9.

Paul wants the Christians in Rome to have the right perspective on the circumstances of their daily lives. Whether or not they experienced hard times or good times, it does not change whether God loves them or not. Paul has made it clear that God's love is absolute, and God will fulfill His purpose for them: He will succeed in bringing them to glory. Now he seems to want them to be ready for trouble on this side of eternity. They should not be surprised when it comes. In fact, they should be ready to be killed, slaughtered like sheep, for Christ's sake, if that's what it comes to (**John 16:1–2**: *“All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. 3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 4 I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them) & (John 16:33: *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*)*

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

In verse 35, Paul listed several terrible things that might happen to a person in this life. His point was that none of them could separate those of us who are in Christ from His love for us. Nothing so terrible could ever happen to us that would keep us from being in Christ, or to keep Christ from loving us, or to prove that Christ no longer loves us.

Now in verse 37 he writes that in all those things—hardship, trouble, famine, exposure, threats, or violence—we are "more than conquerors through [Christ] who loved us." This description comes from the Greek word *hypernikōmen*, which carries the idea of extraordinary, exceeding victory, in a continual state: to perpetually increase in triumph. Does this mean none of these troubles will ever happen to us, or that we can eliminate them in this life? No, clearly not, based on the context of this passage. Even more, it's important to note that many of them happened to Paul himself (2 Corinthians 11:23–29).

Rather, those who are saved by faith in Christ (Romans 3:23–26; John 3:16–18) conquer those terrible things in the sense that Christ has already won the most important victory for us. That victory, our place in God's family, our share in the inheritance of His glory, cannot be taken from us by any means. We conquer in the sense that none of these things can overcome what God's love has gained for us.

³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul doesn't want his readers to feel an ounce of insecurity about God's love for them in Christ. He has built the case for why God is for us as Christians. He has already created a list of the worst things that can happen in this life to make the point that none of them demonstrate a loss of Christ's love from us (Romans 8:31–37). Those things may happen, but as he wrote in the previous verse, they cannot conquer us in any way that matters. Those who are saved by faith in Christ (Romans 3:23–26; John 3:16–18) can continually endure, in the power of His Spirit.

Now Paul begins a new list. This covers virtually everything anyone might think of to challenge God's love for His elect (Romans 8:29–30). Paul begins with death, which for the believer in Christ can only bring us into God's glory more quickly (2 Corinthians 5:8). He continues to include life, angels, and rulers. This last concept is from the Greek word *archai*, usually used for a political leader or magistrate, and often applied to certain kinds of demons. In other words, absolutely nothing, whether natural on this earth, or supernatural from heaven or hell, could ever cause God to stop loving us.

Paul continues his list with the present and the future. Nothing that could happen now or tomorrow or a thousand years from now could change God's commitment to love us in Christ. Next he lists "powers," referring either to supernatural powers like Satan and his demons or earthly governments like Rome.

As it turned out, Paul himself was eventually killed, so far as we know, by the "powers" of the Roman government. They did not conquer him, though. Nor did they not separate him from God's love for him, in Christ.

Now, he lists height and depth, meaning anything that might come down from above or up from below. Finally, he throws in an all-inclusive mention of anything else in all creation. Paul is being an absolutist about this. Nothing will ever be able to separate those of us who are in Christ from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Those who are saved, through faith in Christ, are saved eternally and forever. Period. (**John 10:28–29**: *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*)

We are loved by God always. No matter what. Forever.

John MacArthur: We know that God the Father initiated the work of salvation, God the Son validated and demonstrated the work of salvation, and the Holy Spirit activates and completes the work of salvation in the believer.

We need to understand the work of the Holy Spirit for us as believers. He regenerates us, He participates in our justification, He sanctifies us, He confirms our adoption as sons of God, He indwells us, He baptizes us, immerses us into the union with other believers that we call the body of Christ. He gives us spiritual gifts by which we minister to one another. He strengthens us in the inner man for all righteousness. He guides us. He produces right attitudes in us. He delivers us from sin. He illuminates the Scripture to our understanding. But His greatest work and that which brings us the greatest joy is that He guarantees our future glory, He guarantees our eternal glory. And, of course, at this point the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement renders against Him one of the greatest insults of all by denying the doctrine of eternal security, perseverance of the saints, and attacking His most wondrous work by claiming that He does not necessarily keep all believers secure and safe until eternal glory.

This week I was reading the writings of Charles Finney, whose ministry attacked a lot of things in the Scripture, not the least of which was this doctrine. Finney said, “You are sealed by the Spirit but you can shatter the seal.” The testimony of the Word of God is not consistent with that error.

Listen to the words of Ephesians 1:13-14. In Him – that is, in Christ – you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. We are God’s possession; God will redeem us to the praise of His own glory. The Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of that future redemption, which is called our inheritance, and that is why He is identified as the Spirit of promise because He is the guarantee of God’s promise of heaven.

Peter similarly writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God, for a salvation to be revealed in the last time.” The Holy Spirit is the seal, the guarantee, the down payment, the first fruits, the earnest, the power, the protector of every true believer, who brings us to final glory.

That becomes the theme of Romans 8 starting in verse 17. Verse 17, you first read the word “glorified,” and from then on to verse 39, it is all focused on our future glory and the plans that God has to secure us to that end. We’ve gone through all of that in great detail.

We’ve learned in verses 26 and 27 that the Holy Spirit constantly from within every true believer is interceding for us in a communion that is not in any language. It is too deep for words. It is inter-Trinitarian groaning in which the Spirit intercedes, praying for our eternal glory consistently with God who knows what His plans are and has purposed our glory. And the Spirit, as well, knows the plans of God, the heart of God. So God has a plan. Christ provided for the fulfillment of that plan. The Spirit prays for the completion of that plan in accord with the Will of God.

As a result, verse 28 says, “Everything works together for good.” Things, as we live life, God has a good purpose in them, that is true for His glory. But this is primarily talking about ultimate, final good. All things are working together for good because we have been loved by God and love Him in return according to His purpose.