

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 23

I. Exposition of Chapter Eight. (Continued)

A. Verse 28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

1. In order to understand this verse, it’s imperative that we consider the context. In a nutshell, we have discovered that we are children of God and have received the “**Spirit of adoption**” (verse 15), we also discovered that we, as children, have an inheritance (verse 17) and this inheritance includes the consummation of all things including the “**redemption of our bodies**” (verse 23). Between now and then, there will be a certain amount of suffering in this world but, thankfully, not only do we have a “**hope**” for the future (verses 24-25) but we also have the Holy Spirit now to help us in our weaknesses and, in particular, in our prayer life (verses 26-27).
2. So, in light of the fact that we are children of God and, therefore, we “**love God**”, even though we go through sufferings in this world, we have both a hope for the future (“**called according to His purpose**”), which ultimately “**work(s) together for (our) good**”, and we have the Holy Spirit’s help to pray and intercede for today which, in turn, can turn everything around for our good as well.
3. In this life, God has a way of bringing good out of negative circumstances – especially when we receive help from the Holy Spirit and PRAY! We can see this in the lives of many who have gone before us such as Job, Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Joseph.

B. Verses 29-30 – Foreknowledge and Predestination.

1. Verse 29 – “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

- a. “**Foreknew**” – The Greek word used here is only found five times in the New Testament. It simply means; “**to have knowledge before hand**”.¹ Obviously, one of the eternal attributes of God is “**omniscience**” which means; “**all-knowing**”. God knows the beginning from the end because God operates in the area of timelessness. Both the Scripture and science declares that time had a beginning.

“Past, present, and future are all one eternal present to God, the I Am. Time is used to accommodate human thought and limitations.” – Kevin J. Conner, Romans Commentary.

- 1) Just because God foreknows everything, doesn’t mean He causes everything! In other words, God knowing something doesn’t determine it!
- b. “**Predestined**” – This means; “**to predetermine**”; “**to decide beforehand**” and “**to foreordain**.” It’s important to point out here that foreknowledge precedes predestination!
 - 1) Foreknowledge also precedes what is called “**Election**”.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”

I Peter 1:1-2

- 2) “**Election**” can be defined as: “**That sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him.**” **Henry Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology.**
- 2) Calvinists teach that before the world began, God predestined some individuals to salvation and the rest to eternal damnation based on nothing having to do with the individual’s choices or actions. We reject this view as being unscriptural.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

II Peter 3:9 (cf. I Timothy 2:1-4)

- c. “**Conformed**” – Means, “**having the same form as another.**” God has predestined those whom He knew ahead of time would be saved, to be conformed to Christ’s image. So, in this verse we actually see that predestination has nothing to do with anyone being predestined to be saved. It is speaking of something believers are predestined to! This Greek word is only found one other place in the New Testament – **Philippians 3:21. (cf. II Corinthians 3:18).**

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

“Then predestination/foreordination speaks of God’s purpose for those already foreknown as His: namely that – by calling, justification, and glorification – they be brought into full conformity to the image of His Son. This is therefore not predestination to be among the elect (to be a Christian) but a foreordained purpose of God for the elect,” – Dr. Robert Picirilli²

- d. **“...that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”** - In Psalm 89:27 “firstborn” is a title for the Messiah. In the Old Testament, the first born son had preeminence and privilege. This term is used in **Colossians 1:15** to show Jesus’ preeminence in creation and in **Colossians 1:18** and **Revelation 1:5** to show Jesus preeminence in His resurrection. (cf. **Hebrews 2:11**).
2. **Verse 30 – “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”**
 - a. **“Called” – “to invite”; “to give a name or title to”.** (cf. **I Corinthians 1:9; Ephesians 4:4; I Thessalonians 4:7; II Timothy 1:9**).
 - b. **“Justified” – Imputed righteousness.**
 - c. **“Glorified” – The resurrection (I Corinthians 15:40-43; Philippians 3:20-21).**

C. The Triumphant Victory!

1. **Verse 31 – “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**

This is a great key to the believer's security. God is for us!! What He has done for us through His Son in the past and what He is doing for us through the Spirit in the present should give us confidence. He will certainly complete His work of salvation by glorifying us in the future. Nobody and nothing can stand in His way. We certainly can be deceived into thinking that God is for us when He actually is not (as do cultists and those like them). Yet it cannot be denied that for those who are in Jesus Christ, God is for them!
2. **Verse 32 - Evidence that God is for us: the gift of Jesus Christ.** If the Father already gave His ultimate gift, how can we think that He won’t give us the smaller gifts?
3. **Verse 33 – “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?** We are secure from every charge against us. If we are declared **“not guilty”** by the highest Judge, who can bring an additional charge?
4. **Verse 34 – “Who is he who condemns?** Remember, condemnation came through the first man, Adam (**5:16,18**). But, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (**8:1**). As mentioned before, God never condemns. The Holy Spirit will convict us of our sin with the goal of bringing us to a place of repentance.
 - a. **“It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”** Note the major doctrines here:
 - 1) Christ died – His crucifixion.
 - 2) Christ is risen – His resurrection.
 - 3) Christ is at God’s right hand – His ascension.
 - 4) Christ is interceding – He is the Mediator between God and man.
5. **Verse 35 – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” –**
 - a. **“Tribulation”** means— **“to be squeezed.”**
 - b. **“Or distress”** — It means— **“to be caught in a narrow space ... hemmed in with no way out.”** It may include temptation. (See **I Corinthians 10:13**)
 - c. **“Or persecution”**
 - d. **“Or Famine?”**
 - e. **“Or nakedness?”**
 - f. **“Or peril?”** — This means— **“to be exposed to treachery.”**
 - g. **“Or sword?”** — The word refers to— **“an assassin’s dagger.”** Paul is talking about facing death for Christ’s sake.
6. **Verse 36 – A quote from Psalm 44:22.**
7. **Verse 37 – “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”**

This means that bad circumstances can be **CONQUERED** through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word for **“more than conquerors”** means— **“superconquerors.”**
8. **Verses 38-39 - Finally nothing in all creation can separate us from our loving God!**

²Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free will, Contrasting views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism*. (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2002), 77.