

Romans 08 - The Believer's Relationship with the Holy Spirit; Our Obligation to the Spirit, not the Flesh; Suffering in Hope of Future Glory; Eternal Security

IV. Sanctification (Rom 6:1—8:39)

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Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the regenerated life of a believer, delivering the believer from the power of sin and performing all of God's will in the life of the believer.

First four verses are a continuation from Rom 7. These opening verses are a summing up of the truths unfolded from Rom 5:12—7:25.

Just as Rom 5 climaxed Paul's revelation concerning *justification* of the sinner, Rom 8 culminates the truth concerning *sanctification* of the believer. Both chapters end by affirming the eternal security of

the believer. In Rom 5 our security depends on the Son's life; in Rom 8 on the Spirit's power. Both rest on the Father's love.

This chapter explains the benefits of sanctification made available through the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer.

Romans 8

(3) The believer's relationship to the Spirit (Rom 8:1-39)

(A) Spirit transferred us from death to life (8:1-11)

(a) Life in the Spirit frees the believer from condemnation (8:1-4)

(i) No condemnation for the believer (8:1)

1 Therefore there is **nownocondemnation** at all for those who are **in Christ Jesus**.

1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in union with the Messiah Jesus.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

- "Therefore...now" - *ara nun*, the combination of *ara* ("Therefore") and *nun* ("now") marks an interpretive conclusion. In light of what Paul said earlier, believers are no longer under the sentence of condemnation.

— After learning that the Law does not have the power to provide sanctification, Paul's readers were likely wondering if there was anything that could deliver them from the power of the sin nature.

— Paul begins answering this question by stating up front, even if you are struggling with the sin nature, there is no condemnation "at all" for those who are justified in Christ.

- "...no" - *ouden*, a simple negative in English; however in Greek, it's a compound negative, stronger than simply "no" (*ou*). A more accurate translation in English is: Not only are Christians not condemned now, they will never be. It is impossible.

- "...condemnation" - *katakrima*, penal servitude; it means that God will never condemn believers to an eternity separate from Himself because of our sins. The reason for this is not because our sins have been forgiven (even though they have), the reason is because we are "in Christ Jesus," who suffered the penalty for our sins as our Substitute.

— Jesus will not experience any condemnation, as believers, being "in Him," will not either.

— If a person is in Christ, the wrath of God against sin has been satisfied by the death of His Son. God's justice against sin has been pacified, thus the only attribute left that God has to express toward believers is love.

— One of the greatest benefits of being a Christian is that we will never experience the wrath of God. The only thing left for a believer to experience is God's love, mercy and grace.

— The verdict rendered here is not *less* condemnation. Our standard has not just improved in Christ, it has been completely transformed.

— Consequently, everything that God brings into our lives as believers is not meant to punish or scold, but it is designed as an act of love. Everything that happens to us, whether good or bad, is designed

by God to bring us to a higher level of sanctification.

— "no condemnation" is different from freedom from judgment (2 Cor 5:10); we will still stand in judgment for our actions, attitudes, and behavior.

— *This is one of the greatest assurances a Christian can receive:* No condemnation from any source, for any reason, at any time (John 3:18). And there is no qualifying clause: it does *not* depend upon our walk! *It is not how I feel, but what God says.*

- "...in Christ Jesus" - a person "in Christ" is a believer. Every single time this phrase is used in the NT, it describes a justified (saved) person. It is sometimes expressed by Christ being in them or by them being in Christ. Christ is in believers by His Spirit, and believers are in Christ by faith.

Romans 8 begins with no condemnation; it ends with no separation, and in between there is no defeat.

(ii) Spirit frees the believer from condemnation and death (8:2)

2 **For the law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has **set you free** from the law of sin and of death.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

2 For the Spirit's law of life in the Messiah Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

- "For" - *gar*, Paul now explains why there is no condemnation for believers: because the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set them free from the law of sin and death.

— The predicament that Paul described in Rom 7...trying to keep the law but failing over and over again. Sinning, then experiencing the consequences of his sin, over and over again. Paul has realized that now he has been set free from that terrible situation, that terrible internal competition (war) between his sin nature and his new nature.

- "...the law" - a principle; Paul is not referring to the Mosaic Law. Both the "law of the Spirit" and the "law of sin" are called "law" because of the constancy of their influence and action.

- "...the Spirit of life" - *Pneumatōs tes zōēs*, the Holy Spirit possesses "life" thus He can share His gift of life with His creation. He bestows eternal life in Christ and makes man a partaker in the divine life.

— The Spirit's work that comes to us because of faith in Christ leads to fullness of "life" but sin leads to "death." The ultimate ends of both forms of life are in view.

— The subject is no longer Christ's work *for* us, but the Spirit's work *in* us. Without the Spirit's work in us as a law of life, there would be nothing but condemnation because even with our new nature, we have no power within us apart from Him to overcome the sin nature. Without the Spirit's work, the believer is condemned to a life of perpetual bondage to the flesh.

- "...set you free" - *eleutheroō*, aorist tense, indicating we were set free by a one-time event in the past that continues on to this day and beyond.

— This transition is just as radical as the transition from being unsaved to becoming saved. The most profound experience one can have is going from an unbeliever to becoming a Christian.

— But there is another profound change that happens once you are a Christian...it's when Jesus takes the frustrated Christian and tells them to not try so hard on your own, let Me empower you. This is

when you begin to live life through the Spirit. This is the transition that happens between Rom 7 and Rom 8.

— Example: The law of gravity is upon all of us. However, with a proper air foil, and sufficient velocity through the air, we can enjoy dominion over gravity. We can take advantage of the greater power over the law of gravity.

— The "law of sin" is like the law of gravity; it pulls us down. But the "law of the Spirit" is like the law of aerodynamics; it overcomes the law of sin, lifts us up, and enables us to fly victoriously over the flesh.

Verse 1 tells us that we're free from the condemnation of sin. Verse 2 tells us we're free from the power of sin.

(iii) God condemned sin through Christ (8:3-4)

3 For **what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,**

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

3 For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did. By sending his own Son in the form of humanity, he condemned sin by being incarnate,

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

- Paul summarizes the conclusion from Rom 7 in the first sentence of this verse.

- "...what the Law could not do" - the Law cannot not save/justify anyone, and it cannot empower anyone to live the Christian life; in these scenarios, it was "weak."

— The Law was never designed to either save or sanctify anyone, so when someone takes the Law of God and uses it as an instrument of salvation or sanctification, they are using the Law for a purpose for which it was never designed.

— The Law cannot free us from sin and death because its only appeal is to the basic nature of man. It has to act through the flesh. It urges us to intellectually obey God, but it does not provide sufficient power to do so.

- "...weak as it was through the flesh" - the problem was not the law itself, but what the law had to work with: us. The law wasn't weak, our flesh was weak. So God solve this problem by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

- "...God *did*" - what the Law could not do (save anyone or sanctify anyone), God did. The Law did not save you, Jesus did; the Law cannot empower you, Jesus does. Fortunately, God sent His Son, out of the depths of His love, to deal effectively with sin.

- "...in the likeness of sinful flesh" - not "in sinful flesh" or "in the likeness of flesh"; He was both sinless and a real person.

— "likeness" - *homoioōma*, "that which is made like something else"; it refers to a form or similitude, a resemblance. Jesus did not have sinful flesh, but He looked like any other man because He came in the *homoioōma* (resemblance) of sinful flesh.

- "...for sin" - *peri hamartias*, has a wider meaning in Greek: "as an offering for sin" or "a sin offering." In the LXX, this is the technical word for a "sin offering" (Cf. Num 7:16; Ps 40:6). The Law could not deal with sin...it could not condemn it, it could only identify it. So God sent His Son to condemn sin.

- "...He condemned sin in the flesh" - when Christ died for our sins, our sins were placed upon Him, and when He was condemned on the part of sin, it was our sin that was condemned with Him.

— Sin was not simply removed in connection with the flesh, it was also condemned in the flesh. The result is that believers can now succeed in Christ where they had previously failed in the law. If we try to be sanctified by the power of the law, we will fail. But if we try to be sanctified by the power of the Spirit, we will succeed.

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

4 so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to human nature but according to the Spirit.

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- "so that" - *hina*, the purpose for Christ condemning sin in the flesh. All that has been said now converges to this fact: all requirements of the law might be fulfilled *in* [not *by*] us, who walk according to the Spirit, not according to flesh (that is, not trying by our own efforts).

— This is a statement of fact, not an imperative. Gal 5:16 *is* an imperative.

Gal 5:16: But I say, walk [*peripateō*, imperative mood meaning a command; present tense, meaning continuous action] by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

- "...the requirement of the Law" - the requirement of the Law is obedience to God's commands. However, this obedience is not automatic in the believer simply because the Holy Spirit indwells us...

- "...might be fulfilled" - *plēroō*, passive voice, subjunctive mood, indicating that *if* believers choose to walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh, the righteous requirement of the Law will be fulfilled.

— The subjunctive mood is the mood of possibility; the believer may choose to walk according to the Spirit, but they also might not. The Spirit enables us to fulfill this requirement (obedience) *if* and *as* we walk according to the Spirit. This option is spelled out further in v5.

— Thus, the law's requirements will be fulfilled by the determination of the direction of our lives by the Spirit, by our being enabled over and over to decide for the Spirit against the flesh, to turn our backs more and more on our insatiable egotism and to turn our faces more and more toward the freedom that the Spirit has given us.

- "...walk according to the flesh" - *kata sarka*, the principle that governs or characterizes our conduct and thinking. It is behaving as our sinful nature dictates and allowing it to govern our lives; to have our life determined and directed by the values of the world, which is in rebellion against God. It means that whatever a person does, both good and bad, is done in disregard to God. It is a lifestyle that is purely "human" in its orientation.

— An important distinction must be made between when Paul says "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*, v4-5) and "in the flesh" (*en sarki*, v8-9).

- "according to the flesh" - *kata sarka*, v4-5: describes what governs or characterizes a person's conduct and thinking. The principle by which a person lives.
 - All unbelievers are "in the flesh" and also walk "according to the flesh" because they have no other option.
 - Believers, however, are no longer "in the flesh" (that term only describes an unbeliever), but they can, at times, walk "according to the flesh."
- "in the flesh" - *en sarki*, v8-9: describes a person's realm or sphere of existence.
 - When Paul uses *en sarki* ("in the flesh"), he is describing someone whose entire life is characterized by the old Adamic realm, outside the controlling presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - A person who is indwelt by the Spirit (a believer) is no longer "in the flesh" even though he can certainly sometimes walk according to the flesh.

— There is also an interesting grammatical reason Paul uses "in" [*en*] in one place and "according to" [*kata*] in the other. The prepositions reinforce the distinction: *en* tends to express sphere/location, while *kata* in this construction expresses conformity or correspondence to a standard/principle.

— To flush out the distinction between these two phrases a little further, Paul describes an unbeliever as someone who walks "in the flesh" and therefore characteristically lives "according to the flesh" (because they have no other choice). But a believer is no longer "in the flesh" yet they can still choose to live "according to the flesh."

— In other words, being "in the flesh" describes an unregenerate person's realm and identity; walking "according to the flesh" describes living according to the dictates and orientation of the flesh, something a believer can still do even though he is no longer "in the flesh" but "in the Spirit."

- "...[walk] according to the Spirit" - living in moment-by-moment submission to and dependence upon the Spirit; living under the control and according to the values of the Spirit. It is living under the control, and according to the values, of God.

- In summary, v3-4 make the following five points:

1. God did something that the law could not do.
2. The thing God did that the law could not do was this: He made it possible for those who walk in accordance with the indwelling Spirit to live a holy life.
3. The reason that the law could not bring about a holy life lay in the weakness of the flesh.
4. God therefore sent His Son in the likeness of a human being, meaning that Christ had a human body; but unlike the rest of humanity, He was not under the bondage of sin.
5. Christ died for the sin of others and on behalf of others. He died for the purpose of dealing with the sin issue, which required that type of punishment. By means of the substitutionary death of Christ, believers are now given the power to live a holy life.

(b) Indwelling ministry of the Spirit will empower believers (8:5-11)

(i) Spirit and flesh pursue opposite agendas (8:5-8)

5 For those who **are in accord** with the **flesh** **set their minds on the things of the flesh**, but **those who are in accord with the Spirit**, the things of the Spirit.

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

- The option of the believer in how they will live, raised by the subjunctive mood verb *plēroō* in v4, is spelled out here...the believer can either walk according to the flesh and live defeated by sin, or they can walk according to the Spirit with the power of victory over sin.

— The believer has the option to live according to either lifestyle because both the inherent sin nature and their new nature are living inside of them. The new nature (Spirit) and old nature (flesh) are both inside of us, and they have opposite goals and agendas.

— Whether or not we tap into the right agenda is totally dependent on whether we are willing as Christians to admit our insufficiency and rely instead upon the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life.

— Which is controlling you? The "human" viewpoint [your capability] or God's viewpoint [His ability through you]? Sincerity, or the lack thereof, is not the issue, the *basis* is. Is your mind on the things of the Spirit or on the things of the world?

- "...in accord" [2x] - *kata*, to live according to; to live under the power of. It describes the controlling orientation of one's mind, what occupies one's thinking, priorities, desires, and orientation.

- "...flesh" - *sarx*, human resources. The contrast between two *believers*: the impossibility of trying to live for God by human effort vs. those that are truly walking by the Spirit.

- Paul gives us an easy way to determine if we're walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit—we simply need to see where our mind is set. The mind is the battleground where the flesh and Spirit fight.

- "...set their minds on the things of the flesh" - a believer setting his or her mind on the things of the flesh means that their sinful nature is dictating their moment-by-moment decisions and the direction of their lives.

— They are making decisions and directing their lives according to the values of the world, which is in rebellion against God. It means that whatever they do, either good and bad, they do it while disregarding God. Their lifestyle is purely "human" in its orientation.

— But we shouldn't think that those who set their minds on the things of the flesh are only notorious sinners. They may be good people with good intentions. Peter meant well when he told Jesus to avoid the cross, but Jesus responded to Peter by saying, Get behind me Satan! ...you are not setting your mind on God's purposes, but men's" (Matt 16:23).

- "...those who are in accord with the Spirit" - in contrast to believers who choose to live with their minds on the things of the flesh, living in accord with the Spirit means living in moment-by-moment submission to and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

— It means that every word we speak, every decision we make, it in obedience to the Lord. It is living under the control and according to the values of the Spirit.

6 For **the mind set** on the flesh is **death**, but **the mind set** on the Spirit is life and peace,

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

6 To focus our minds on the human nature leads to death, but to focus our minds on the Spirit leads to life and peace.

6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

- A description of what both the flesh and the Spirit both want. Setting our minds on the flesh concentrates on and desires the things of the flesh (Cf. Phil 2:5; Col 3:2). The end of that attitude is ultimately "death."

- "...the mind set" [2x] - *phronēma*, means "thought," "purpose," or "aspiration" and includes both willing and thinking.

- Setting our mind on the flesh leads to death (separation); setting our mind on the Spirit leads to life and peace.

- "...death" - *thanatos*, out of fellowship; separated. Death in the Bible never means *inability*, it always means *separation*. When a believer walks in the flesh continually, day after day, they break fellowship with God. Their life is "separated" from the life of Christ.

— This obviously can't refer to physical death except under the most extenuating circumstances (maximum divine discipline). The "death" described here refers to the death of my fellowship with God, and has nothing to do with any kind of lost salvation. See extensive notes on Eph 2:1 on how "death" is used throughout Scripture.

7 **because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,

7 That is why the mind that focuses on human nature is hostile toward God. It refuses to submit to the authority of God's Law because it is powerless to do so.

7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is no subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

- "because" - *dioti*, the reason why a mind set on the flesh leads to death is because our old nature is "hostile toward God" and has no desire to subject itself to the law of God. And it couldn't do so even if it wanted to because it's not *able* to subject itself to God.

- "...the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God" - the flesh battles against God because it doesn't want to be crucified and surrendered to Christ. It does not want to live out Gal 5:24.

Gal 5:24: Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

— Our old nature is so corrupted and depraved that God doesn't even attempt to rehabilitate it. He makes no attempt to prop it up or to slap a coat of fresh paint on it, He just let's it to its own way.

— The flesh will never be improved. We are powerless to change our nature; therefore, we cannot—in our own efforts—really please God. He alone is the source of power for holiness.

— Believers need to ask themselves: if these are the characteristics of our old nature, why would we ever go back to it? If I do go back to it, I'm outside of the life of the Spirit and the only thing that awaits me is (temporal) death.

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

8 Indeed, those who are under the control of human nature cannot please God.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

- The mind of the flesh is characterized by futility. Believers who walk in the flesh can never please God.

— If a believer does not appropriate the divine resources (baptism into Christ [Rom 6] or the power of the Holy Spirit [Rom 8]) and they go back into the realm of the flesh, I am living a life that is displeasing to God and I cannot bear any fruit for the God who made me.

— Since unbelievers have not received a new nature, they are single-natured. Their only nature is their inherent sin nature. Unbelievers cannot live in accord with the Spirit, they cannot set their mind on the Spirit, thus it is impossible for them to do anything pleasing to God.

(ii) Empowerment by the Spirit (8:9-11)

9 However, you are not **in the flesh** but **in the Spirit**, if **indeed** the Spirit of God **dwells** in you. But if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him.

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

9 You, however, are not under the control of the human nature but under the control of the Spirit, since God's Spirit lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of the Messiah, he does not belong to him.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

- "However" - marks a contrast. Paul's readers not only had a sinful human nature, they also had the indwelling Holy Spirit.

- "...in the flesh...in the Spirit" - this language is *positional*. Paul is describing a person's *position* as either "in the flesh" or "in the Spirit." See note on v4 regarding the distinction in Paul's language regarding "according to the flesh" or "in the flesh."

- "...if indeed" - "since" (first class condition in Greek); Paul assumed the Spirit of God dwelt in his readers.

- At the moment someone trusts in Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit took up permanent residence in them (Cf. John 14:16). Our bodies at that moment become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).

— In the OT, the temple is where God lived; in the NT, God lives within every believer in the form of the Holy Spirit.

— If a person has no relationship with the Holy Spirit at all, they are not a Christian. There is no scenario where a person becomes a Christian then receives the Holy Spirit later. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer at the very instance they place their faith in Christ.

— There is also no scenario where someone receives the Holy Spirit, then becomes a Christian at a later time. There is also no scenario where someone becomes a Christian, then receives the Holy Spirit at a later time. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not a Christian; if you do have the Holy Spirit, you are a Christian. Simple as that.

- "...dwells" - *oikeō*, present tense, describing a perpetual or habitual state. If the *RuachHaKodesh* (God the Holy Spirit) habitually and perpetually dwells in a person, it means that person is a believer. On the other hand, absence of the Spirit is proof of an unsaved state.

— Because the believer has the Holy Spirit indwelling them, they have within them a principle higher and more powerful than the flesh. However, many Christians miss out on living the Christian life in the constant fullness of the Spirit because they are not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit as Paul commanded in Eph 5:18. They have no experience of what Jesus spoke about when He described rivers of living water flowing from the believer (John 7:37-39).

Rom 8:9 is one of the clearest statements in Scripture that corrects the false notion that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a clearer indication that the Holy Spirit enters a person's life at the moment of conversion than in this verse (Cf. 1 Cor 12:13). If the Spirit needed to wait for some subsequent commitment or request from the believer, it follows that He would be absent between conversion and that later point in time. But that cannot be because Paul clearly indicated that a person without the Spirit does not belong to Christ.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

10 But if the Messiah is in you, your bodies are dead due to sin, but the spirit is alive due to righteousness.

10 And if Christ *be* in you, [though] the body *is* dead because of sin; but [yet] the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

- Paul now provides the results of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You can summarize this verse by saying: The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life for the redeemed person who now possesses Jesus Christ's imputed righteousness.

- "If" - first class condition in Greek; better translated here as "since."

- "...Christ is in you" - In v9, Paul said it was the Spirit of God who indwells the believer; here Paul says it is Christ who is indwelling the believer. This shows that while these two Persons of the Godhead are distinct, they are also inseparable.

- "...the body is dead because of sin" - as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit (and Christ), the believer's bodies that were once in subjection to the sin nature are now dead to sin.

— At the same time our bodies are dead to sin, our spirit is alive because of Christ's indwelling us and His imputed righteousness to us.

- As a believer moves from simply being indwelt by the Spirit to walking by the Spirit, they are moving out of Rom 7 (with its legalism and frustration) into the abundant life that God has for all believers.

— Putting your flesh back under another set of rules is not going to help anyone live the Christian life; you have to walk by the Holy Spirit who indwells you.

— Walking in the Spirit is like an elderly person who can only get around by use of the walker. The Holy Spirit is the walker. That old person depends upon that walker to do anything...to get out of bed, get to the bathroom, go outside, etc.

— Every problem or issue that comes your way on a daily basis, walking in the Spirit says I cannot handle this on my own, I need Your help to handle it.

- "...righteousness" - Christ's imputed righteousness, given to the believer at the point of faith (Cf. Phil 3:9).

11 But **if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He** who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who **dwells** in you.

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

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.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead [continuously] dwells in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that *indwells* in you.

- This verse is often interpreted that it was the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. And while the NT attributes Jesus' resurrection to the Father, to Jesus Himself, and to the Holy Spirit, that is not what this verse is stating.

— It's not wrong to believe that the Holy Spirit was involved and responsible for raising Jesus from the dead. A couple of verses allude to this fact, Rom 8:11 is just not one of them. Here are the verses attributing the resurrection of Jesus to all three Members of the Godhead:

- The Father: Acts 2:24; 3:15; Rom 4:24; 6:4; 8:11; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:19-20; 1 Peter 1:21
- The Son: John 2:19; 10:17-18
- The Holy Spirit: there is no *unambiguous* verse that states that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. Ambiguous verses include Rom 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18, neither of which are explicit, but the implication is that Christ was "quicken" (made alive) by the Holy Spirit.

- "...if" - first class condition in Greek; better translated here as "since."

- "...the Spirit" - the Holy Spirit, also called the Spirit of God (the Father).

- "...of Him...He" - refers to God the Father. God the Father was responsible for raising Jesus from the dead; this phrase refers to "the Spirit" of the Father, which is the Holy Spirit.

— So "Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit in this verse, "Him" refers to the Father. The Holy Spirit is also the "Spirit of the Father."

— "of Him" - a genitive participial construction referring to the One who raised Jesus from the dead. This is clearly God the Father in this context.

- "...who raised" - *egeirō*, masculine singular genitive, agreeing with the implied personal subject "Him." This verse states that the Father raised Jesus from the dead.

- "...dwells" [2x] - inhabit or co-habitate; to take up residence in. Both times the verb is used it is in the present tense, meaning it's a continuous co-habitation.

— The indwelling of the Holy Spirit guarantees our future resurrection if the believer dies in his body. See note: **Indwelling of the Holy Spirit** in John 7:39; also see [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete explanation of the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

— The link that connects the believer with Christ, and makes them participate in Christ's resurrection, is the possession of His (the Father's) Spirit, or the Holy Spirit.

— As you study the Bible, you learn pretty quickly that God is pretty good at taking useless, dead things and bringing them back to life and productivity: Sarah's womb was dead, but God brought it back to life and she begat Isaac; Jesus Christ went into the tomb dead, and the Father brought Him back to life.

— The Holy Spirit has the same power as the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, He also has the ability to raise me above living life in the flesh, and certainly He can give life to my body so that I will not continually go back to the flesh.

- The application of Paul's teaching here is that believers should display a certain mental attitude. Instead of expecting to sin, they should expect not to sin. The Holy Spirit indwelling us will keep us from sinning. The new nature inside of believers cannot sin, so if believers operate on the basis of this nature, they are incapable of sinning.

— This is a principle brought up by John in 1 John 3:19:

1 John 3:19: No one who has been born of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin *continually*, because he has been born of God.

— This verse refers to the believer's new nature. But if the believer can and does sin if they operate on the basis of the sin nature within them. Thus, if a believer sins, they are operating out of the old nature, not walking according to their new nature.

Sometimes Christians are described as having received a new nature. The idea is that unbelievers have an old (unregenerate) nature, and that Christians now have two natures: the old nature and a new nature. Sometimes these two natures are seen warring against each other within the believer.

However, there's a more Biblical explanation: Rather than getting a new nature, the NT says that believers receive the Holy Spirit (v9). God's nature now becomes a part of our total makeup, which already includes our old sinful human nature. The NT speaks of our "old man" (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), which refers to who we were before we trusted Christ. That "old man" contained the sinful human nature. But now we are to "put on the new man" (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), which means that we are to live

like the new people that we are, having received the Holy Spirit (though still possessing a sinful nature).

(B) We are not obligated to the flesh but to the Spirit (8:12-17)

(a) Our obligation to the Spirit, not the flesh (8:12)

12 So then, brothers *and sisters*, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

12 Consequently, brothers, we are not—with respect to human nature, that is—under an obligation to live according to human nature.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors [under obligation], not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

- "So then" - *ara oun*, draws a conclusion from v1-11; this should cause us to consider what God has done for every believer. He has:

- Joined us to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit
- Delivered us from His just wrath against us for our sin
- Brought us into a new realm, where Christ rules in grace
- Given us a new nature—no longer dead but alive to spiritual things
- Assured us of a new destiny—life with Him forever in resurrected and renewed physical bodies

— Because of what God has done for us, believers have an obligation to respond appropriately. However, we can only do so with the Spirit's help.

— The proper response is that since believers have been delivered from the sin nature, they are no longer to live as if they were still in bondage to this old nature. We are "under obligation" (debtors to) the Holy Spirit indwelling us, therefore we are to walk according to the Spirit.

- This verse clearly teaches that the believer still has a sinful human nature within, even though we have died with Christ. God does not eliminate the believer's "flesh" at conversion, therefore we must consciously not live (walk) according to it.

— The flesh is still present, but it's been disabled; as Christians, we are no longer *obligated* to live in the flesh as when we were unbelievers, and experience the subsequent death.

— Before we were saved, we had all kinds of obligations to the sin nature. When I walked in legalism, I had all sorts of obligations to the sin nature. But now that I have access to the Holy Spirit, the obligation to the sin nature has been disabled, nullified, removed.

— Sanctification is not something the Christian can take or leave; God commanded us to pursue it (Cf. Titus 2:12; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 3:18).

(b) Flesh = death; Spirit = life (8:13)

13 for if **you are living** in accord with the flesh, **you are going to die**; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

13 For if you live according to human nature, you are going to die, but if by the Spirit you continuously put to death the activities of the body, you will live.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

- Paul is telling NT believers the same thing Moses told the children of Israel just before they entered the Promised Land...I have set before you life and death...choose life.

— The life in God is available to you through divine resources...live according to those things. But if we choose to not spend enough time in the Bible to understand what those divine resources are and how to use them, then we will continue to live in the flesh and we will experience temporal death.

- "...you are living" - *zaō*, present tense, emphasizing habitual practice. If believers habitually live after the flesh, they will physically die due to divine discipline.

- "...you are going to die" - a law of consequence. If you live in accord with the flesh, you are going to die. Christians who consistently follow the dictates of the flesh can look forward to death as the consequence. However, this is certainly not eternal death (separation from God forever), likely not physical death (although sometimes it is), but temporal death. Some possible examples include:

- Social relationships - following the flesh can separate us from others...friends, family, spouses, children, groups.
- Financial death - foregoing God's blessings financially (gambling, overspending, mismanagement).
- Death of self - the separation of a person from themselves, through psychological alienation or disorders.
- Physical death - death may come prematurely for those who follow the flesh (i.e. Maximum Divine Discipline, Cf. Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

— This passage refers to the reality of a death-like existence of being temporarily separated from the joys and blessings of walking in fellowship with the Lord (Cf. James 1:15, 5:20; 1 Tim 5:6; Luke 15:24 for other examples of the child of God's temporal death as a result of being separated from God's fellowship.

- Alternatively, believers who follow God's will with the enablement of the Spirit, and put "the deeds of the body" (works of the flesh, Cf. 6:6; Col 3:5) to death will experience abundant life.

— The present tense of the verbs in this verse is significant. The tense stresses the necessity of continually putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

— Paul viewed the presentation of ourselves to God as an initial act of commitment (6:13; 12:1), but also that we must daily and hourly chose to put our flesh to death (Cf. 13:14).

(c) Life in the Spirit described (8:14-17)

In v14-17, Paul explains the Spirit's ministry of confirming the reality of the believer's position as a son or daughter of God. Paul believed that the believer who is aware of their secure position in Christ will be more effective in controlling their flesh (Cf. 6:1-11).

(i) We are now led by the Spirit (8:14a)

(ii) Consequences (8:14b-17)

(a) Leading indicates sonship (8:14b)

14 For all who are being **led by the Spirit** of God, these are **sons and daughters of God**.

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

14 For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's children.

14 For as many as are [being continually] led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

- "...led by the Spirit" - walking by the Spirit is allowing the Holy Spirit to direct every area of your life. Even Jesus Christ, Himself God, was completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit (Cf. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Matt 4:1).

— However, we need to understand the nuance here: the distinction Paul is making is not between spiritual and non-spiritual believers. Those who are believers are led by the Holy Spirit, which proves their sonship. Their sonship does not depend on their obedience but rather on God's faithfulness. God *always* leads, but believers may not always follow.

— The distinction Paul is making here is between believers and unbelievers, not between spiritual and unspiritual believers. "All" who are led by the Spirit of God are sons *and daughters* of God. If someone is not led by God, they are not a believer.

- The Holy Spirit leads people to Christ (John 16:8-11). After believers come to Christ, the Holy Spirit continues to lead them in the will of God (Cf. Gal 5:16-18). However, we can choose to follow or not follow, to walk according to the Spirit or according to the flesh.

— The Spirit will lead us objectively through the Scriptures, and subjectively by His internal promptings (Cf. John 20:31; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 5:13).

— This leading or guiding is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to believers; see [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete list of ministries of the Holy Spirit.

- Philip was led by the Spirit to leave a revival in Samaria and stand on a road in the desert. On that road, an Ethiopian eunuch was returning home from Jerusalem, sitting in his chariot and reading Isaiah. Philip assisted the eunuch's understanding of that passage, led him to Christ, and baptized him. That man went back to Ethiopia and started a church, and spread the gospel in Africa, further and faster than the apostles had ever dreamed of the gospel spreading (Cf. Acts 8:26-38).

— This is how the Holy Spirit works...when we submit to Him and allow Him to direct the course of our lives, He does supernatural things through us.

— What if Philip would've said no to God? God would've used someone else (He's not short of resources), and Philip would've missed a huge blessing. God could do everything Himself, but He wants to give us the privilege to be used as His hands and feet to those around us, as we're in submission to the guidance of the Spirit.

— Instead, because Philip decided to walk according to the desires of the the Holy Spirit, so the Spirit supernaturally used Philip to spread the gospel from Samaria to Ethiopia at the same time.

— This is the type of thing God will do in our life if we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. If I refuse to do it, God will just get someone else, and that person will be blessed. God's program will not

be thwarted.

- "...sons *and daughters* of God" - since we are led by the Spirit, it indicates that we are sons of God. And if we're sons, we are also His children (v15-16); and if we're His children, we are heirs with Christ (v17).

(b) Sonship indicates childship (8:15-16)

15 For you have not received a **spirit of slavery** leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption** as sons *and daughters* by which we **cry out**, "**Abba! Father!**"

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

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!"

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

- "...a spirit of slavery" - unlike sin, the Spirit does not enslave us. Because we are in a relationship in Christ, we are not in a master-slave relationship with God where we are fearful of God. Instead, He appeals to us to submit voluntarily, as "sons of God."

— We have such intimacy with God that we can cry out to Him as if he were our earthly father and we are a small child.

- "...adoption" - *huiōthesia*, a powerful compound word in Greek: *hyiōs* = son; *tithēmi* = to place. It could be translated as "son-placing." It refers to a Greco-Roman legal institution in which an adopted child receives all of the legal rights and privileges of a natural child.

— Having been adopted (placed) into God's family, believers have the legal right and privilege to approach God the Father on the same basis that Jesus approached Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Mark 14:36: And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You *will*."

— Both adoption and justification result in a permanent condition, and both rest on the love and grace of God. God has adopted us, and conferred upon us all the legal rights and privileges that would ordinarily accrue to a natural child.

- "...cry out" - *krazō*, a deep, emotional scream. Believers can approach God the Father with the same deep emotion that Jesus did.

- "...Abba! Father!" - both "Abba" and "Father" are equivalent terms. "Abba" is a transliteration of the Aramaic word *Abba*. "Father" is a translation from the Greek word *pater* (Cf. Gal 4:6).

16 The Spirit Himself **testifies with** our spirit that we are **children** of God,

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

- There are two interpretations of v16:

1. The Holy Spirit testifies "to" my spirit that I'm a child of God; so I know that I'm a child of God because I have some type of subjective experience with the Spirit.

- This isn't to downgrade subjective experiences with the Holy Spirit; many believers have subjective, personal experiences with the Spirit. But a subjective experience with the Spirit is not the primary proof that God has given us that we belong to Him...His promises to us are.

2. The Holy Spirit testifies (cooperates) "with" my spirit in reminding God that I'm His child.

— Obviously #2 above is the correct interpretation. God will use subjective experiences in the lives of believers, but these subjective experiences are not our evidence for and proof of salvation. This also utilizes the proper interpretation of *symmartyreō* ("with") instead of "to." See note below.

- "...testifies" - *summartureō*, present tense, meaning continuous action. The Holy Spirit is *continually* testifying with our spirit that we are God's children.

- "...with" - *symmartyreō*, incorrectly translated as "to" in many translations, but translated correctly as "with" in the NASB20, NASB95, ISV and KJV.

— What is happening here is that I am crying out to God "Abba! Father!" and my spirit is testifying to God that I am belong to Him, and (v26) the Holy Spirit is praying for me.

— So my spirit is testifying, the Holy Spirit is testifying (v26)...from the mouths of two witnesses let all things be established...we are both testifying to God, we are both reminding God that we belong to Him.

— Why do I need to remind God? Does He forget? If you study the prayers throughout the Bible, it's not that God needs a reminder, but it's a matter of stating to God who we are based on His promises (Cf. Ex 33:13). Reminding God is asserting confidence in His promises.

- "...children" - *teknon*, in this chapter, "children" identifies our family relationship based on regeneration; the term "sons" emphasizes our legal standing based on adoption. Believers are both God's children, by new birth, and His sons, by adoption (Cf. v14).

(c) Childship indicates heirship (8:17)

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we **suffer with Him** so that we may also be glorified with Him.

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

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.

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

- "...if" [2x] - first class condition in Greek, better translated "since."

- "...heirs" [3x] - being adopted into God's family, as His children, makes us heirs. Just like an legally adopted child would have all of the inheritance rights as a naturally born biological child, the same holds true for believers, who were adopted into God's family.

— So believers will inherit everything that Jesus, God's Son, inherits. Prophetically speaking, Jesus will inherit all the kingdoms of this world. Thus, as members of the body of Christ and co-heirs with Christ, believers will reign with Him during the millennial kingdom (Cf. Rev 20:4-6).

- "...suffer" - *sumpaschō*, present tense, active voice, indicative mood. The present tense emphasizes that their suffering is happening presently and will continue on until their glorification.

— The pattern of Jesus is one of temporary suffering followed by eternal glory...Jesus suffered horribly, but today He lives in eternal glory; such is the pattern for us...we suffer temporarily on this earth, but we will live forever in glory in heaven.

— In this world, we have sufferings, setbacks, problems, but in the next world, which is eternal, we experience glory.

— It's the opposite for the unbeliever...the best that will ever happen to them is this life, then they'll stand in judgment and spend eternity separated from God in the lake of fire.

— For the believer, we go through light and momentary afflictions (2 Cor 4:17), but these afflictions are small compared to the eternal weight of glory.

— Just as surely as we share in His sufferings now, we will also share His glory in the future. Our glory will be somewhat proportionate to our suffering for His sake as His disciples now (Cf. 1 Peter 4:12-19).

- "...so that we may also" - this verse does not teach that glorification, the final stage of our salvation, depends on our suffering for Jesus' sake. It does not teach that if we don't suffer, we will not be glorified someday. God will eventually glorify every believer, those who take a stand for the Lord as well as those who do not (v29-39).

- "...be glorified with *Him*" - *syndoxazō*, aorist tense, passive voice, subjunctive mood; means that the intended action, their glorification, has not yet happened. The subjunctive voice even with the aorist tense is an indication that there is no past time indicated by the aorist tense of the verb but anticipates some hypothetical event in the future. So Paul is indicating here that the present suffering the Roman Christians are going through will culminate in glory someday.

Inheritance

The NT teaches that the amount of inheritance children of God receive will vary depending on our faithfulness to God (Luke 19:11-27). However, there is no doubt that all Christians are the heirs of God, and will inherit glorification as well as many other blessings (Cf. 1 Peter 1:3-12).

All believers have God as their inheritance. This inheritance is received on the basis of belief. But there is another inheritance which, like that of the Israelites, is merited. They are also heirs of the kingdom and joint-heirs with the Messiah (2 Tim 2:12; Rom 8:17).

(C) We endure suffering now in the hope of future glory (8:18-30)

One thing Christians need to develop in our lives, especially new Christians, is a philosophy or theology of suffering. If we don't have a divine perspective on suffering, our faith will be unsettled at the first trial or tribulation that comes our way. This passage will teach the divine perspective on human suffering.

At some point, we enter into some kind of difficulty in our lives and think oh no, I missed the plan of God. I shouldn't be suffering the way I am if I am in God's plan. The fact of the matter is your suffering might put you directly *in* God's plan.

Since we are heirs with Christ (v17), we can expect our lives to follow the pattern of His life: temporary suffering followed by eternal glory. Since we can expect suffering in this world, the question becomes how do we as children of God endure suffering?

Paul tells us in v18-30 that we can endure suffering if we understand three things:

1. Our future glory far exceeds our present suffering (v18-25)
2. Because of the assistance of the Holy Spirit (v26-27)
3. Because all things work together for good (v28-30)

In v17, Paul ended his teaching on the theme of sanctification and introduces the next major theme: glorification, the final stage and future aspect of our salvation.

(a) Because future glory exceeds present suffering (8:18-25)

(i) Proposition stated (8:18)

18 For I **consider** that the **sufferings** of **this present time** are not worthy *to be* compared with the **glory that is to be revealed to us**.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

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

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

- Paul compares current sufferings (of which he experienced many) on this earth as not even worth comparison to the future glory that we will someday experience. When we compare current suffering to eternal glory, it puts into perspective that whatever we're going through is minor.

— In light of eternity, we should view the cost of suffering with (for) Jesus now as insignificant ("not worthy to be compared"), in view of the glory that lies ahead for us. Paul calls our earthly suffering "momentary and light" (Cf. 2 Cor 4:17), and compares it against the "eternal weight" of glory.

— Paul doesn't give one comparison between the two for our understanding, because the two (suffering and glory) are not even worth comparison! Paul doesn't want to waste ink even comparing the two because our suffering is so minuscule and glory is so overwhelming and incomprehensible that comparisons don't do it justice.

- When we encounter suffering, we will typically do two things: focus on ourselves, and believe that the suffering we're facing will go on forever, with no end. However, whatever suffering or pit you find yourself in, from God's perspective you are only in that pit temporarily.

— If you want to see someone who suffered, take a look at Paul (2 Cor 11:23f). He literally went through hell to get the gospel out...he was misunderstood, he was slandered, he was shipwrecked, he was

flogged closed to death multiple times. When we read this passage on suffering, we shouldn't for a minute think that Paul is writing this from some ivory tower. Paul understood and enduring tremendous suffering for the cause of Christ.

- "...consider" - *logizomai*, "to compute," "to take into account," "deliberate," "weigh," "conclude." It refers to the process of careful reasoning that results in arriving at a logical conclusion. The present tense indicates that Paul continually pondered and thought about what was on his mind.

— He concluded the following: the present suffering of the believer, whatever you are going through right now in your life, is so insignificant that it is not even worthy to be compared with the glory to come. This future glory will far outweigh your present suffering.

— The comparison between our present suffering and the eternal glory we will enjoy is adequate proof that the Christian life is worth any sacrifice or suffering.

- "...sufferings" - *pathemata*, sufferings for any reason and in any form.

- "...this present time" - *kairos*, can refer to a moment in time or it can refer to a season or age. Paul contrasted this present age with the future time when the awaited glory will be realized, and the statement implies the inevitableness of that glory.

- "...glory that is to be revealed to us" - the believer's promised future glory includes:

- Honor or reward for good works done in and for Jesus (Rom 2:7)
- A complete experience of God's unimaginable glory (Rom 5:2)
- Resurrection and renewal of our bodies to be like Jesus' glorious body (Phil 3:21)
- Eternally joyous worship and service to God (Rev 22:3)
- Privileged confidence of Christ, our brother (Heb 2:10-14)
- Deeper intimacy within God's unlimited presence (Matt 25:21)

Why Do Christians Have Trials?

1. To glorify God (Dan 3:16-18,24-25; John 9:1-3)
2. Discipline for known sin (Heb 12:5-11; James 4:17; Rom 14:23; 1 John 1:9)
3. To prevent us from falling into sin (1 Peter 4:1-2)
4. To keep us from pride—Paul kept from pride by his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10)
5. To build faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)
6. To cause growth (Rom 5:3-5)
7. To teach obedience and discipline (Acts 9:15-16; Phil 4:11-13)
8. To equip us to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4)
9. To prove the reality of Christ in us (2 Cor 4:7-11)
10. For testimony to the angels (Job 1:8; Eph 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:12)

(ii) Proposition proved (8:19-25)

(a) Proof #1 - from nature (8:19-22)

(1) Creation's expectation (8:19)

19 For the **eagerly awaiting** creation waits for the **revealing** of the **sons and daughters of God**.

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

19 For the creation is eagerly awaiting the revelation of God's children,

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

- "...eagerly awaiting" - *apokaradokia*, Paul personifies creation as leaning forward, intensely straining, longing for, and looking in anticipation of the great day when God will redeem it to (Cf. Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28). That day is the day of Christ's Second Coming.

— Paul is assigning human attributes to an inanimate object, in this case the earth and universe, to make a point: the statement of nature's expectation. In this personification, nature itself cannot wait for something to happen.

- "...creation" - *ktisis*, all of God's creation, excluding human beings (Cf. v23); nature.

- "...waits" - *apekdechomai*, refers to an eager awaiting; an expectation. Creation is pictured as a person who expects to receive something from the hands of the One who created it.

— The verb is in the present tense, meaning this expectation and waiting is ongoing and continuous.

- "...revealing" - *apokalupsis*, a removal of a covering. It's like a statue has a veil over it, and people assemble for the "unveiling" of this work of art. Believers today are pictured as having a veil over them, but creation itself is waiting for their unveiling at Christ's coming.

- "...sons and daughters of God" - believers, who will return with Christ at His Second Coming. At that time, creation will be renewed (renovated) and its suffering will be removed.

(2) Creation's subjugation (8:20)

20 For the creation was **subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him** who **subjected it, in hope**

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

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

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,

- "...subjected" [2x] - *hypotassō*, same word used for a wife's submission to her husband (Cf. Eph 5:24; Col 3:18). It means to "put in subjection." Passive voice, meaning that nature's subjection to futility was done to it by a third party.

- "...futility" - *mataiotēs*, frustration [NIV], frailty, purposelessness, failure, decay, perishable (Cf. Eph 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18). God's judgment on humanity extended to the perfect world He had created for people. Adam, not creation, sinned, but nature was subjected to judgment because of human sin (Cf. Gen 3:17-18a).

— Creation, after being forcefully subjected to purposelessness, is unable to attain the purpose for which God created it in the first place. The Fall of man was the greatest ecological disaster in the

history of mankind.

— Verses 20-23 describes the curse issued by God in Gen 3:17-18a from creation's point of view.

- "...not willingly" - creation didn't ask to be put under a curse of futility, and it did nothing to warrant it. It was an innocent third party to Adam's sin.

- "...because of Him" - two views on who "Him" refers to in this passage:

1. "Him" refers to God (Cf. NASB20 & NASB95 translations). God is the One who subjected creation to purposeless because of Adam's sin. A number of other translations follow this: NKJV, NLT, LSB, YLT, NET, AMP.
2. "Him" is not a pronoun referring to God, but rather to Adam. Adam is the one who subjected creation to futility. A number of translations follow this: KJV, NIV, ESV, CSB, RSV, ASB.

— I lean toward #1 because of the last two words of the verse, "in hope." Both Adam and God subjected creation to futility: Adam was responsible because of his sin. His sin is the trigger that brought upon the curse that God issued, which included putting creation into a state of futility. Satan and Adam were instrumental causes of the action of the curse, but it was God who issued the curse.

- "...in hope" - *elpis*, the Greek word has no relationship at all to the English word "hope," where we say, "I hope I get the new job." It doesn't hold an "I hope so" mentality, but rather an "I know so" mentality.

— The biblical definition of hope is assured, not something that is in doubt. It is not anxiously wishing for something to happen or uncertainty (like in English), but rather confident assurance or expectation of something yet future.

— This phrase should be part of v21. The hope is that one day, creation will one day be set free.

(3) Creation's liberation (8:21)

21 that the creation itself also **will be set free** from its **slavery to corruption** into the **freedom of the glory of the children of God**.

21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

21 that the creation itself would also be set free from corrupting bondage in order to share the glorious freedom of God's children.

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

- This verse is a preview of what will happen to creation when the earth is renovated after the Second Coming and during the millennial kingdom (Cf. Jer 31:12-14; 33; Is 65:17).

Is 65:17: "For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

— The "new heavens and a new earth" described in this verse should not be confused with those described in Rev 21:1—22:5 (Cf. 2 Peter 3:11-13), at the end of the millennial kingdom, after Satan's final defeat, and after the Great White Throne judgment.

— Isaiah, and Paul in this passage, is referring to the renovation of the present heavens and earth. This is clear in the context of the Isaiah passage, which talks about death (Cf. Is 65:20), of which there will be none in the Eternal State (Cf. Rev 21:4), and that the moon will shine (Is 66:22-23), but there will be no moon in the Eternal State (Cf. Rev 21:23).

— Dan 12:7-12 reveals that there will be a 75-day interval between the Second Coming and the inauguration of the millennial kingdom. During this time period, a number of prophetic events will take place, including the renovation of the heavens and earth according to Is 65:17.

— This renovation immediately after the Second Coming, which Paul is referring to here, includes other profound geographical and topographical changes to the earth:

- The light of the moon will be as bright as the light of the sun, and the sun will be 7x brighter than it is today (Is 30:26).
- The wilderness and the desert will be glad and the wilderness will rejoice and blossom; waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (Is 35:1-2,6).
- Environmental crimes will be righted, and beauty will reign in nature (Is 30:23-25; 35:1-10).
- The deserts will flower as new streams of water appear, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the lame will leap for joy (Is 35).
- The lion will lie down with a lamb (Is 11:6), and all nature will be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder.
- All of nature and all mankind will look to God, lean on God, and delight in God (Is 42:1-12; 60; 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29).

- "...will be set free" - *eleutheroō*, future tense, creation will be freed or released from bondage. It will begin with the removal of nature's curse (Cf. Is 11:1-13; 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-5; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 14:1-21, etc.). For a thousand years there will be people living on the earth *without the curse!*

- "...slavery to corruption" - "bondage of decay"; the 2nd law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy. It's all winding down.

— "slavery" - speaks of nature's enslaved condition. Frustration has to do with the feelings that the condition causes.

— "corruption" - decay; all that is physical eventually decays. Physical death comes to everything with physical life.

- "...into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" - I don't know exactly what this means, but it sounds like something I should look forward to with a hopefully expectation.

(4) Creation's groaning (8:22)

22 For **weknow** that **the whole creationgroans** and suffers **the pains of childbirth** together until now.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

22 For we know that all the rest of creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

- "...we" - a pronoun that includes all believers, including Paul himself.

- "...know" - *eidō*, to be aware; a knowing that is beyond any doubt.
- "...the whole creation" - all of creation excluding mankind (Cf. v23).
- "...groans" - *systemazō*, groans together; all of creation groans as one. Present tense, meaning continuous and ongoing groaning. Only usage in the NT.
- "...suffers the pains of childbirth" - *synōdinō*, the illustration of birthpangs leading to childbirth points beyond the cause of grief to its joyful fulfillment. Labor pains normally are full of hope. This "hope" will take place with the renovation of the present cosmos in conjunction with the return to earth of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of the messianic kingdom on earth (Cf. Is 11:5-9; 35:1-2,5-7; 65:20,25; Amos 9:13).

— Stage two of this is the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Cf. Rev 21:1; Cf. 2 Peter 3:7-13).

(b) Proof #2 - from awaiting a new body (8:23-25)

(1) Redemption for our bodies (8:23)

23 And not only *that*, but also we ourselves, having the **first fruitsof the Spirit**, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves**, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons *and daughters*, the **redemption** of our body.

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

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.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

— Believers today share in the same sense of groaning and anticipation that Paul described the rest of creation feeling. God will redeem both is and us.

- "...first fruits of the Spirit" - the Holy Spirit indwelling believers is a "first fruit"; Eph 1:14 calls it a "pledge" or down payment. A down payment on a car or house is a pledge to the seller that the rest of the money will arrive. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is God's down payment to believers that something greater will arrive: a glorified body (Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50).

— This is an appositional use of the genitive and means that the Holy Spirit *is* "the first fruits" of God's work of salvation and re-creation in believers. Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is called "a deposit (down payment or earnest) *guaranteeing our inheritance*" (Eph 1:14; Cf. 2 Cor 1:22), a similar idea.

— Believers today have a "sample" of the Holy Spirit. The idea of "first fruits" carries the idea of a small percentage paid upfront, as a guarantee that the remaining funds will come at a later date. The promise is that the future holds a greater manifestation of the Spirit for us than we have today.

— In the OT, God commanded the Israelites to present a portion of their harvest that ripened first ("first fruits") as an offering to Him (Ex 23:19; Neh 10:35). This offering acknowledged that the entire harvest was from Him and was really His. It was an offering made in faith, confident that the rest of the harvest would follow.

- "...we ourselves groan within ourselves" - believers share in the same sense of groaning and anticipation that creation is feeling. However, only believers have the "first fruits of the Spirit."

— Our bodies experience weakness, illness, and frailty. They grow old, slower, more weak, and eventually die. Yet we have within us the Holy Spirit, which guarantees believers that their bodies will be renewed by resurrection.

- "...adoption" - earlier our adoption was treated as already accomplished. God took us out of the family of Adam (5:12-21) and brought us into His family as His own dear children (v14-17). This referred to *positional* adoption. Yet v23 treats our adoption as something for which "we wait eagerly"—as something still future. This is experiential/practical adoption, which will prove that we have indeed been His children since the moment we were saved.

— At the same time, v23 states that believers still anticipate their adoption in its completeness in the future, which is said to be "the redemption" etymologically. The Greek word describes a release or deliverance achieved by a ransom payment.

- "...redemption" - *apolytrōsis*, future tense, speaks to the redeeming of our body (glorification). This final, full redemption will be achieved at the resurrection of our body, which will be the Rapture.

— This is called the revelation of the sons of God (v19) and "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (v21). It will occur at the Rapture when believers will be raised and transformed with glorious bodies (Cf. 1 Cor 15:42-54; 2 Cor 5:1-5; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Thess 4:13-18). Paul called that day "the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30).

The adoption here is the full manifestation of the status of believers when they are invested as sons and daughters of God (v14-17) and enter on the inheritance which is their by virtue of that status. The redemption of our bodies is the resurrection, a theme on which Paul had recently enlarged in 2 Cor 4:7—5:10. [F.F. Bruce]

(2) Hope defined (8:24)

24 For in **hope** we have been **saved**, but **hope that is seen is not hope**; for who **hopes** for what he *already* sees?

24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?

24 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?

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

- In the meantime, while we're waiting for the redemption of our bodies (v23), we should look forward with hope (confident expectation) to what God has promised and patiently endure our present sufferings (Cf. 5:4).

- "...hope" [4x] - *elpis*, believing that I will receive something that I don't already have. If you already had it, or if you could see it or feel it, it wouldn't be hope. While we wait for our glorification, we should look forward with "hope" to what God promised and patiently endure our present sufferings (v25).

— The Greek word for "hope" [*elpis*] has no relationship to the English word, where we say, "I hope I get the new job." The word doesn't hold an "I hope so" mentality, but rather an "I know so" mentality. It is confident assurance of something yet future.

— The idea of hope is that we have an attitude that there is more in store for us than anything that we have already.

— The Christian knows that glorification is coming because God has made a promise to us, and we receive it by hope and faith even though we have not yet entered into the promise.

- "...saved" - *sōzō*, in this verse, believers are being saved/delivered from the corruption of the Fall. This refers to our future glorification.

- "...hope that is seen is not hope" - hope is not something you can have if you already see the outcome. If you record a football game to watch later, see the final score online that your team lost, you cannot "hope" that your team wins when you watch the game because the outcome is already set.

— Heb 11:1 tells us that faith is believing in what cannot be seen as though we can see it, and hoping for what we do not yet have as though we already possess it.

In Rom 8, Paul gives nothing less than the 100% iron-clad assurance of our salvation. If a believer cannot stand on the doctrine of eternal security AND the assurance of their salvation, how can they live the Christian life? They are effectively neutralized, hapless, and powerless.

It is the privilege, not of some, but of all believers by the Spirit through faith who are born again in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word. [Lewis Sperry Chafer]

(3) Hope requires perseverance (8:25)

25 But if we **hope** for what we do not see, through **perseverance** we **wait eagerly** for it.

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

25 But if we hope for what we do not yet observe, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

- "...hope" - *elpis*, see note on v24.

- "...perseverance" - *hypomonē*, hope is not something you have if you've already realized the outcome. I don't hope to go to sleep last night...I already did it. But we have not realized our glorification yet, our deliverance from the presence of sin. Because of this, we are to "wait eagerly" with perseverance for Jesus' return.

- "...wait eagerly" - *apekdechomai*, he who has the strongest "hope" will have the greatest stability under stress (2 Cor 4:16-18). The Greek word is used 7x in the NT...always in regards to the return of Christ!

- Blessed is the believer who looks at their circumstances in life, their suffering, as bad as it may be, as temporary, and does not become despondent thinking their situation and circumstances will last

forever. That person is blessed because they are operating by faith...they believe God is going to make good on a promise one day.

— One of the hardest things to go through in life is delayed gratification; this is what God is telling us as we look at suffering through the lens of eternity. The Christian life is one of delayed gratification, but one day, based on the promises of God, it will materialize. And from eternity, we'll look backward and have a hard time remembering our "light and momentary afflictions."

(b) Because of the assistance of the Holy Spirit (8:26-27)

(i) General help (8:26a)

(ii) Specific help (8:26b-27)

26 Now in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know **whattoprayer** for as we should, but the Spirit Himself **intercedes** for *us* with **groaningstoo deep for words**;

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

26 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,

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

- "...in the same way" - connects the "groanings of the Spirit" (here) with the believer's groaning (v23).

- "...helps" - *synantilambanomai*, "to lay hold along with" or "help in obtaining"; literally means that "the Holy Spirit puts His hands to the work in cooperation with the believer." It's in the present tense, meaning the Spirit is continuously "putting His hands to the work" of helping the believer in prayer.

— It does not describe the Helper as carrying the entire load, but as coming alongside the person who is in need. The indwelling Spirit lends a helping hand, but does not take over the entire burden or responsibility.

— The only other time this verb is used in the NT (Luke 10:40), is when Martha complained to Jesus that Mary was not "helping" her, or "putting her hands to work in cooperation" with Mary in serving.

— Jesus taught the same truth when He called the Holy Spirit a *parakletos* (Cf. John 14:16-17,25-26).

- "...weakness" - *astheneia*, "without strength"; it refers to the inability to do something that one would like to accomplish. In context, our "weakness" is our lack of patience. Because of our sin nature and unredeemed bodies, believers lose sight of the hope that is set before them. Thus, the Holy Spirit joins to help us in this weakness.

- "...what to pray" - the NASB20, KJV & NIV understood Paul to be saying that we do not know "what" to pray for, which implies ignorance of the content and subject of our prayers. The NASB95 & ISV understood Paul to be saying that we do now know "how" to pray as we should, implying ignorance of the proper method and procedure of prayer.

— The Greek text permits either interpretation, so we can interpret as saying that the Spirit helps the believer in both how to pray and what to pray for. I personally lean to the "what" interpretation (*tis* is translated as "what" 260x in the NT, never translated as "how").

— The basic principle of effective prayer is that our requests must be in harmony with the will of God (Cf. 1 John 5:14-15). However, the precise will of God is not known in many cases, which is when the Holy Spirit comes to our aid.

— Jesus gave instruction to His disciples about both the content and method of our prayers (Cf. Matt 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4).

- "...intercedes" - *huperentunchanō*, to pray on behalf of someone else; only usage in the NT. When a believer needs assistance in either what to pray for or how to pray, the help that the Holy Spirit brings to us is to pray (intercede) for us.

— When a believer encounters a problem or situation that is confusing or chaotic and we don't know how to pray or what to pray for, the Holy Spirit steps in and prays on our behalf. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to believers is praying and interceding (see [Holy Spirit](#)).

— The reason the Holy Spirit needs to pray for believers is because of the weakness in our prayer life. Being finite, we don't always know what our real needs are. We pray about what we *think* we need, but we don't always know exactly what our needs are. But, the Holy Spirit does.

- "...groanings" - *stenagmos*, expresses feelings of compassion for our weak condition (Cf. Acts 7:34).

— This is the 3rd reference to groaning in this passage: creation is groaning (v22), our bodies are groaning (v23), and now the Holy Spirit is groaning. These "groanings" are *not* uttered audibly; this has nothing to do with praying in tongues, as some believe. The groaning is done by the Holy Spirit, not believers, and is not stated in words.

I take it that Paul is saying, then, that our failure to know God's will and consequent inability to petition God specifically and assuredly is met by God's Spirit, who Himself expresses to God those intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God. When we do not know what to pray for—yes, even when we pray for things that are not best for us—we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit's ministry of perfect intercession on our behalf. [Moo]

— The intercession of the Holy Spirit is a ministry for all believers. The context of Rom 8 is speaking of things which are true of all believers. Therefore, this cannot be referring to a believer speaking in tongues because first of all, the gift of tongues has closed with the completion of the biblical canon. The gift of tongues is only given by God today as a one-off, to certain believers, at specific times, and for a specific purpose. It is no longer bestowed upon the body of Christ like the other spiritual gifts.

— 1 Cor 14:2 says that when a person does speak in tongues, it is not the Holy Spirit who is praying, but it is the human spirit who is doing the speaking. This is why the gift can be misused, as it was in the Corinthian church (Cf. 1 Cor 12; 14). If the Holy Spirit was doing the actual speaking in tongues through a person, there is no chance that this gift could've been misused because the Holy Spirit cannot sin.

- "...too deep for words" - *alalētos*, not expressed in words. The Holy Spirit's intercession for believers is not in human language. It's beyond a verbal capacity that we can recognize.

— This is because God's desire for our lives is so powerful that it is even beyond human vernacular. If God were to explain to me what He wants for me, what my future holds, and how He intends to use me and bless me, He couldn't do it with words because His calling on my life and His ambition for me is beyond human expression and understanding.

— In 2 Cor 12:4 Paul was caught up to the third heaven, and he heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak. In that verse, the Greek word for "inexpressible" [*arrētos*] means "unspeakable on account of its sacredness." What Paul heard was so profound, so lofty, that he had no words to describe it nor was he permitted to describe it. This is how the Holy Spirit prays for us.

We should not confuse "groanings" with praying in tongues or a private prayer language. This passage promises God's help in prayer to all believers, not only those with the gift of tongues. Further, *Scripture never connects the gift of tongues with intercessory prayer*. This verse says that the Holy Spirit prays *for* us, not that He prays *through* us to the Father. The believer doesn't do anything at all...it's the Spirit Himself who intercedes when we don't know how to pray, with "groanings" we don't hear nor could we understand...not the believer babbling some kind of unintelligible prayer language.

27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints **according to the will of God**.

27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

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.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

- Don't worry that you can't hear and don't know what the Spirit is "groaning" because the Father understands the Spirit perfectly.

— The reason the Father knows exactly what the Spirit is "groaning" is because the Spirit's intercession revolves around the will of God, and the Father knows His will perfectly. This is an interesting statement about the Father's omniscience and the intimacy within the Trinity.

- "...according to *the will of God*" - the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers according to the will of God.

— The Holy Spirit is not specifically praying for my financial prosperity, my health, or for a vocation that will fulfill me...none of those things are mentioned here. He *could* be praying those things for me, but the bottom line is that He is praying that God's will be executed in my life.

— The interesting thing here is that besides the Holy Spirit interceding for the believer, Jesus also continually intercedes for believers while sitting in God's presence (v34; Heb 7:25). This is one of the works of Christ during His Present Session. See [Present Ministry of Christ](#) for details on what Jesus is doing from heaven today.

(c) Because all things work together for good (8:28-30)

(i) Proposition stated (8:28)

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

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.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

- Since v18, Paul has been giving believers grounds for encouragement for the sufferings they undergo in this life. In v18-25, the encouragement was based on the "hope of glory" (our glorification at the Rapture); in v26-27 it was based upon the help of the Holy Spirit. Now in v28-30, it is the glory that will be revealed in believers.

- Rom 8:28 is an often quoted, but it is also often misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misused. The problem is that this verse is often removed from its context and used to say something (usually in a positive manner) that Paul never intended. A parallel passage in the OT is Gen 50:20.

— The purpose of God is that His children understand the love He has for them. This love provides the necessary condition for believers to continue in divine providence. All people live in an unreckoned world. However, those who love God can rest in the knowledge and faith that regardless of their circumstances, God is always in control.

— Regardless of how negative the world is or how dire one's personal situation may be, God will work all things, not just good things, for the good of the believer.

- "And" - the connector to God's promise here to the previous context of present suffering and future glory.

— The "And" here is also a progression of the ministries of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit helps "we" (believers) (v26); Jesus, who "searches hearts" and "knows the mind of the Spirit" (v27) intercedes for the saints; then v28-30 focuses on the purpose of God the Father.

- "...we know" - *oida*, perfect tense, active voice, indicative mood of the verb *eidō*. something we can be certain of in an uncertain world; something you can "take to the bank." It is knowledge gained by observance or remembrance of the past (Cf. v22). This is not so much an intuitive knowledge of Paul's readers, but to that which comes from observation of the past.

— How do these Roman Christians know that God works "all things out for good for those who love the Lord?" Because they had been taught the OT and they knew that God had worked in the lives of those OT saints as He brought them through untold difficulties to glory!

— Paul means that believers know, from observation of God's past dealings with those who love Him, that he has a mysterious way of working things out for the greatest good (Cf. Gen 50:20). By observing the stories of the saints of old—those called to accomplish His redemptive purposes—believers can rest in knowledge of this truth. Believers today can know this because God has a track record of doing this very same thing for generations.

— Paul does not say that believers should intuitively know how God works all things out for good for those who love Him in the present. He is saying believers know what is true of God by observing what He has done in the past for those who loved Him. The NT saints have "a great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before them (Heb 12:1), giving evidence of God's trustworthiness toward all who have faith in Him.

— Notice that Paul doesn't say, *We understand* how all things work together for good (because we rarely understand how God works until after He's done). He said we *know* from experience and observation that all things work together for good. We know many things that we do not understand.

— We may feel weak, discouraged or defeated; we may not see any good God is doing through some hardship at the time or in our lifetimes. Thus, we can't rely on what we see (finite) or what we feel, we need to faithfully "know" and trust that God is working things out for His (and our) good because that's what God has done since the beginning.

— This is a promise that the Christian must build their life on...if you don't build your life on this promise, you will become angry at God because you will feel that life has been unfair to you...and guess what, life *is* unfair. Yet God, in His sovereignty, will take even the most unfair things in our lives, and collectively (all the unfair things) will work them out for good.

- "...causes all things to work together" - *synergeō pas synergeō*, present tense, active voice, indicative mood. The present tense emphasizes that this is a *continuing* activity of God. It takes *continual* external inputs to coordinate the process. Active voice means that it is God who is the performer of the action. Indicative mood means this is a simple statement of fact.

— "all things" - everything, every event or circumstance in our life, but in context these things include the suffering and adversities experienced by a believer. God doesn't always use good things to bring about good in our lives: sin, sickness, suffering and other evils are not good, but yet God is sovereign enough to turn those things into our good.

— We know from v32 that "all things" include the Cross and the grave. God did not spare His own Son; the Father and Son worked through the worst evil to accomplish the greatest good (Acts 2:23-24; 4:10-12).

- What "all things" *does not* include is sin or evil. This verse does not say that God causes all things (omni-causality, or through meticulous divine determinism), period. Calvinism holds to this belief because of their over-emphasis on God's sovereignty. They take God's sovereignty to such an unbiblical level that they believe that if God doesn't ordain/decreedictate every thought, word, or action of every human being, He is somehow sacrificing His sovereignty.

— The point is not that God *causes* everything for a good purpose, but that God *redeems* occurrences of evil for a good purpose in the lives of those who love Him. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to use this passage to support the concept of meticulous divine determinism. God does not cause occurrences of evil for His purposes; instead, He redeems moral evil for a good purpose.

— What Calvinism confuses is that God doesn't ordain or decree every thought, word, or action in order to be sovereign. He doesn't need to, and if He did, it would violate how He created us (in His image).

— In reality, God's sovereignty is magnified high above the Calvinist belief by the fact that God can and does take the free will sinful actions of men and works them together for good for those who love Him. This takes sovereignty to a whole new level compared to the Calvinist, deterministic view.

— God is so sovereign that He doesn't need to be the Puppet Master over every human thought, word, or action. He can take mankind's sinful free will choices and work them together not only for our (and His) good, but also to carry out His prophetic program and plan.

But God's role with regard to evil is never as its author. He simply permits evil agents to work, then overrules evil for His own wise and holy ends. Ultimately He is able to make all things—including all the fruits of all the evil of all time—work together for a greater good. [John MacArthur, Is God Responsible for Evil?, www.gty.org]

— For additional details on Omni-Causality/Meticulous Divine Determinism, see notes on Gen 3:6; [Calvinism: Total Depravity](#); [Calvinism: Unconditional Election](#).

- "...good" - *agathos*, what is "good" referring to here? Generally speaking, it refers to our spiritual good and the ultimate glory of Jesus Christ.

— In other words, God's promise is that God, without violating our volition or negating consequences for wrong choices, has promised to work all things together for the believer's spiritual good and for God's glory in the outworking of His plan for you.

— If "good" meant health, wealth, popularity, promotion, and comfortable living, this promise is provably not true. God's working of all things for good cannot mean so little as worldly success, admiration or happiness.

— It refers to what is good from God's perspective, not man's perspective. This is evidenced by the next verse (v29): the greatest good is for God to make believers conformed to the life of Christ (Cf. Gal 5:22-23; Phil 2:1-8; Col 3:12-17) and fully accomplished in glory (Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3).

- "...those who love God" - placed in apposition to the phrase "called according to His purpose" meaning that those who love God are also those who have been called according to His purpose—thus, this promise is for all believers.

— This promise applies only to believers. How can all things work for the good of those who reject the Giver of all things? 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.

— For believers, suffering is an opportunity to glorify God as we find He is all we need (Cf. Ps 73; 119:71-72; John 9:1-3,35-38; 2 Cor 12:7-10)

- "...those who are called according to *His* purpose" - placed in apposition to "those who love God" so both phrases refer to the same group. Thus, this promise cannot be claimed by the unbeliever; it has no jurisdiction over the life of an unbeliever.

— Paul is offering this assurance specifically to believers who have responded to God's invitation by faith. This does not imply a predetermined or restricted group chosen from all eternity to be in Christ, but rather identifies those who are in Christ through faith (Cf. 5:1; 8:1).

— "called" - *klētos*, refers to an invitation, not an irresistible summons. Scripture consistently shows that God's invitation goes out to all (Luke 14:16-24; 1 Tim 2:4; Titus 2:11), though not all will respond positively. Paul's focus here is on those who have responded to God's call and now walk in love for Him. These are the ones for whom "all things work together for good," not because God causes all things, but because He is able to redeem and bring good even out of suffering, especially for those who are walking according to His purpose.

— "according to His purpose" - *kata prothesin*, typically rendered "according to purpose." The word *prothesis* literally means "a setting forth" or "a presentation," and is used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to the Showbread placed continually before God in the sanctuary (Cf. Ex 25:30; Heb 9:2). This

does not mean the translation "purpose" is incorrect. Far from it. But it suggests that Paul may be drawing from a word rich with covenant and temple associations that are not easily captured in a single English equivalent.

— When understood in light of that background, *prothesis* points not only to God's redemptive plan but also to a deeper truth. Those who love God and respond to His call are consecrated and set forth before Him, just as the Showbread represented the 12 tribes of Israel in continual fellowship before God. This imagery flows naturally into v29, where Paul says that God's purpose is to conform believers to the image of His Son. Jesus, who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35), was Himself "set forth" by God (3:25), and believers are now being shaped into His image, ultimately to be glorified in Him (v30).

— Thus, while the idea of being "called according to His purpose" certainly involves God's redemptive plan, it may also carry deeper covenant and priestly significance. It could be pointing to the very purpose God has planned for His people, both the faithful remnant of Israel and those now in Christ: to present a holy people before Him, invited into His presence through Christ, the true Bread, and ultimately conformed to His image in glory.

(ii) Proposition explained (8:29)

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters;

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

29 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.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- The "good" from v28 is this: God has a goal/purpose for every believer...He wants my life, in thought, character, conduct, word and deed to imitate the thought, character, conduct, word, and deed of Jesus Christ.

-- God's purpose for every believer is...

- Sovereignly directed for our good (v28)
- Graciously intended with a definite purpose/plan in mind--"according to His purpose" (v28).
- Predetermined (predestined) - in light of having all the facts in hand (through foreknowledge), God determined (predestined) a direction for your life.

-- Ultimately, the "direction" (or "plan") that God has for my life is for me to be "conformed to the image of His Son."

— This is the sanctification process...God's will for our lives is to take our daily walk, our daily life, and allow our practice to catch up with our position. We never become perfect, but what begins to happen is that our progressive sanctification makes us more Christ-like in moral character in our daily life.

— Everything that happens, even bad things from the human perspective, if we give God a chance, He will use them like sandpaper to smooth out our rough edges.

— This isn't popular teaching today because what people want is "instant" spirituality, instant success, instant glorification, but often in reality this is a slow, arduous process of progressive sanctification.

- "For" - *gar*, ties what is about to be said with what has just been said.

- "...those whom" - refers to "those who love God" and "are called according to *His* purpose" (v28). Notice that Paul defines those who were "foreknown" by their love for God before he says a word about foreknowing or predestination.

— Paul identifies those whom He foreknew and predestined by what they do (love God), not some decree of God that He made before the foundation of the world.

— Interestingly but not surprisingly, the Reformed confessions (Canons of Dort & Westminster Confession) cite Rom 8:30 in their articles that define election, God's decree, and effectual calling. Neither cite v29. So both use the verse that names no destination and both skip the verse that does (v29).

- "...He foreknew" - *proginōskō*, means simply to *know* something beforehand; it *never* means to *determine* something beforehand. Foreknowledge means nothing more or less than to know something beforehand is clear in the other places where the same Greek word is used in the NT (Cf. Acts 26:4-5; 2 Peter 3:17). The OT often speaks of God's foreknowledge in an intensely personal, loving way (Cf. Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2).

— The term "foreknew" does not mean to have knowledge of someone before they were conceived. Of course omniscient God knows everything, including us before we were conceived, but that's not the meaning of this particular word. The verb *proginōskō* is the word for "know" in an intimate sense [*ginōskō*] with the preposition [*pro*] "before" prefixed to it: *pro* = before; *ginōskō* = to know intimately, thus the compound word means to have *anintimate relationship* with someone in the past, not just "knowing of" or being "aware of" them.

— Paul was not referring to some prior knowledge in the mind of God before creation. Nor was He speaking about predetermining their fate. He was referring to those whom God knew personally and intimately, men like Abraham and David. The individual saints of old, with whom God had a personal relationship, were predestined by Him to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is, God predetermined to bring their salvation to completion through the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf.

— Paul is not saying that God predestined certain individuals to be foreknown. Foreknowledge is not causation. Rather, he is describing what God planned for a particular group that He already knew intimately. The object of predestination here is not who would believe, but what would happen to those who do: they would be conformed to the image of His Son.

— So a literal interpretation of this verse would read: ***Those whom God formerly knew intimately—such as Abraham, Moses, David, and others—He also predetermined to conform to the image of His Son, the One who would ultimately accomplish and bring their salvation to completion through His sacrificial death on their behalf.***

- Many have reduced the interpretive options of *proginōskō* to the concept of "foreseen" (Arminians), "foreordained" (Calvinism), or "formerly known." Calvinism only recognizes the first two, completely discounting (ignoring) the third as a possibility for the interpretation:

- Foreseen: God saw through the corridors of time who would believe and chose those individuals based on this "foreseen" faith. This is classical Arminianism.
- Foreordain: God set His love on certain unconditionally preselected individuals before the world began and effectually works to change their hearts so that they want to come to Him for salvation. This is Calvinism.
- Formerly Known: As in 11:2, Paul is simply referring to saints in former times who loved God and were known by Him. Paul said, "The man who loves God is known by God" (1 Cor 8:3). And men like Elijah and those who refused to bow a knee to false gods did love God and thus were known by Him in the past. They were foreknown (previously known) by God, as in they had an intimate personal relationship with God in the past.
There is no justification based on the word definitions or the text to add all the esoteric theological baggage of God looking through corridors of time or making arbitrary "sovereign" choices about who He will and will not love before the world began.

— Dr. William Lane Craig, today's leading Christian apologist, in his book *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*, he says: *God 'foreknew them' or 'knew them of old' thus it does not mean that God entered in some former time into a relationship with the Israelites of today, it means that He entered into a two-way relationship with Israel that existed in early OT times, and he regards the present Israelites as integral with it.*

— The only two interpretive options that Calvinism recognizes are:

- Option #1: God foresaw our self-determined faith. We remain the decisive cause of our salvation. God responds to our decision to believe.
- Option #2: God chose us—not on the basis of foreseen faith, but on the basis of nothing in us. He called us, and the call itself creates the faith for which it calls.

— But both of these interpretations ignore the basic meaning of the word, which is "to know beforehand" or to have known in the past. This is how the word is used elsewhere in the NT, so there is no need to import a systematic definition here.

Acts 26:4-5:

4 "So then, all Jews know my way of life since *my* youth, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and in Jerusalem,

5 **since they have known about me for a long time** [*proginōskontes me anōthen*] , if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

- *proginōskontes me anōthen* literally means "having previously known me from the beginning." Here Paul is referring to the Pharisees' long-standing personal acquaintance with him, familiarity rooted in shared life and experience.
- What Paul is clearly NOT saying here is that the Pharisees had foreknowledge of his future choices or possessed divine insight into his destiny. If we were to read *proginōskō* here as Calvinists do in Rom 8:29, as God's eternal choosing of individuals, or as a reference to foreseen faith, it would make nonsense of Acts 26:5. The Pharisees neither predetermined Paul's future nor selected him based on foreseen qualities. The term clearly reflects a past, relational knowledge.

2 Peter 3:17: You therefore, beloved, **knowing this beforehand** [*proginōskō*], be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unscrupulous people and lose your own firm commitment,

— So clearly *proginōskō* means knowing someone or something in the past, as in those known previously (referring to the saints of old).

- Calvinism contends that *proginōskō* is equivalent to "fore-loved." And yes, the use of the word generally fits this interpretation since the Israelites of the past who loved God certainly would have been loved by God before (i.e. "foreloved").

— But the Calvinist interpretation insists that "fore-loved" is God unconditionally setting His "effectual" salvific love upon certain individuals (the "elect") before the foundation of the world. They go to great lengths to show that God did not merely foresee/foreknow the behavior and choices of the elect by looking down the corridors of time. Rather, God knew them intimately and set His effectual love on them before the foundation of the world.

— By his use of *proginōskō* in this verse, was Paul intending to introduce, for the first time in this epistle, a particular group of people out of the mass of humanity who were unconditionally elected to be effectually saved before the world began? Or, was he simply referencing those from the past whom God had known and faithfully cared for throughout the generations? A group of people that, when you study what the OT has to say about their lives, would give Paul's readers a fantastic example of how God "worked all things for good."

- "...also" - *kai*, denotes a differentiation, making it clear that foreknowledge could not be the same as predestination (also see note on v30).

- "...predestined" - *proorizō*, to predetermine from eternity past; to foreordain or be "marked out for favor." The verb is in the aorist tense, indicative mood. The aorist tense means a completed action in the past. The indicative mood means that this is a statement of fact.

— Who exactly was "predestined" and to what was God's goal for predestining them? These are the key questions that need to be answered to properly interpret this verse.

— Remember the context and Paul's point leading up to this verse. He began speaking about the futility and suffering that has come into this world due to the fall of humanity into sin (v20-22). In v28-29a, Paul provides comfort to lovers of God in his audience by reminding them of God's trustworthiness to work all things for good for those who have loved Him throughout the generations.

— **Who exactly was predestined?** Paul reminds his readers that God will redeem the suffering and evil for a good purpose in their lives (v28) just as he has done in the lives of those known before [*proginōskō*] and loved throughout the previous generations. It is these whom God "foreknew" (previously knew), which are Israelites in the OT who loved God in the past. So the "who" of predestination is the same group who God foreknew: OT saints.

— Grammatically, the object of "predestined" is "those whom" and the indirect object (the goal) is "to be conformed to the image of His Son." For coherence, the verse must be understood as stating that God predestined the conformity to Christ's image for a group who He "foreknew" (or knew from old) and was characterized by belief.

— **What was God's goal for predestining them?** So that they would be conformed into the image of Christ so as to make the way for His coming. God planned to accomplish salvation for those who were previously known (i.e. Abraham, Moses, David, et al) by conforming them into the image of the One who would come to purchase redemption. THIS is the ultimate example of God causing "all things to work together for the good" for those saints of old who loved God.

— The emphasis lies not on God choosing the individuals in advance, but on God's predetermined plan for those who belonged to Christ whom He foreknew (or, previously known in the OT).

— Predestination and election are biblical teachings—but they are *never* unto salvation. To the Calvinist, however, predestination/election is *always and only* unto salvation—a view that is imposed wrongly upon Scripture. The reality is that throughout the Bible, election/predestination is always unto specific blessings that accompany salvation, not to salvation itself.

- Those who object to the suggestion that Paul's use of the term *proginōskō* is limited to the beloved of Israel should consider the apostle's use of the same word just three chapters later:

Rom 10:21–11:2a:

21 But as for Israel, He says, "I HAVE SPREAD OUT MY HANDS ALL DAY LONG TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? Far from it! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2a God has not rejected His people whom He **foreknew** [*proginōskō*]....

- "...foreknew" clearly refers to Israel ("His people"), not all ethnic Israelites, but the faithful remnant who remained loyal to God.

— Notice that Paul uses the term *proginōskō* in reference to God's intimate relationship with the faithful Israelites of old. Paul continues to make his case by appealing to the example of Elijah, when God preserved 7000 faithful ones as a remnant. This remnant was not merely foreseen but was relationally known:

Rom 11:2b-4:

2b Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

4 But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

— Elijah and those who refused to bow a knee to Baal were among the ones who were previously known (foreknown/fore-loved) by God. To foreknow (or even fore-love) refers to God's intimate relationship with people who loved Him in the past (like Abraham, Cf. 4:22–5:5).

— This usage harmonizes with how Scripture often speaks of God's "knowing" people. In Amos 3:2, God says to Israel:

Amos 3:2: "You only have I known among all the families of the earth;"

— This cannot mean God lacked awareness of other nations. Rather, it indicates a unique covenant relationship with Israel. Similarly, in Matt 7:23, Jesus tells those who performed religious works in His name:

Matt 7:23: **'I never knew you; LEAVE ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**

— Clearly, the issue isn't about whether God intellectually knew of their existence, but that He never had a relationship with them. Even marital language in Scripture reflects this relational sense of "knowing." Matt 1:25 says Joseph "did not know" Mary until after Jesus was born. The Greek word *ginōskō* conveys the intimacy of a marital relationship. This deeply personal use of "knowing" fits perfectly with the relational nature of *proginōskō* in 8:29 and 11:2.

— Further confirmation comes in 9:27 where Paul quotes Is 10:22:

Is 10:22: For though your people, Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, **Only a remnant within them will return;**

— This introduces Paul's unfolding argument: not all who are descended from Israel are true Israel (Cf. 9:6-8). God's redemptive plan has always focused on a faithful core, those who truly love and trust Him. Paul introduces the remnant argument in Rom 9 specifically to defend the integrity of God's promises, especially in light of widespread Jewish unbelief. He begins with the crucial claim in Rom 9:6: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."

— Despite the fact that many Israelites rejected the Messiah, Paul insists that God's Word has not failed because the promises were always meant for the remnant, not for every ethnic descendant of Abraham.

— Also key to understanding Paul's logic is how the remnant concept changes in the New Covenant. In the OT, Gentiles could become part of God's people by aligning themselves with Israel, participating in the Law, and becoming part of the covenant community (Cf. Ex 12:48; Ruth 1:16). But now, inclusion comes not by Law-keeping, but through faith in Jesus Christ:

Rom 3:28-30:

28 For we maintain that **a person is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**

29 Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

30 since indeed **God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith** is one.

Gal 3:7-9:

7 Therefore, recognize that it is **those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.**

8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

— This means that God's covenant people now include *all who believe*, whether Jew or Gentile, apart from the works of the Law. The remnant has expanded, not through ethnicity or legal observance, but through faith.

— In this context, then, “those whom He foreknew” is best understood as this covenantal remnant, not a secret group of eternally chosen individuals. These are the people God had known in relationship and preserved by grace, now including believing Gentiles who are grafted in (Cf. 11:17-24) and become part of the same people of God.

— Nothing in these or any other passages support the concept of God in eternity past pre-selecting certain individuals out of the mass of humanity in order to bestow on them effectual salvation.

- “...conformed to the image of His Son” - as noted above, this is what God predestined...not salvation for a select few from before the foundation of the world, but that He would accomplish salvation for those who were previously known (i.e. Abraham, Moses, David, et al) by conforming them into the image of the One who would come to purchase their redemption.

— This is about God's predetermined purpose for those who are "in Christ": those He foreknew, as well as believers today—to make them like Jesus. It's not about God selecting who will believe, but about what happens to those who believe. This has been Paul's emphasis in v17-25 where the focus is on the hope of resurrection glory for God's children.

— This is the ultimate example of God causing "all things to work for good" of those saints of old who loved God. Paul is saying that God works the redemption of their souls and He will do the same thing for whoever loves Him.

- "...so that He would be" - is Paul really saying that Jesus *might be* the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (a reference to the Messiah)? You mean there was some doubt? No, not doubt, but to the OT saints who were looking forward to the coming Messiah, Jesus had not yet been given a place of pre-eminence in their eyes yet because the Incarnation had not happened yet. This is further proof that Paul still has the saints of old in focus here.

— It comes as a shock to Christians today to even think of speaking of Jesus as “becoming” or “fulfilling” His role as our Messiah. But for OT saints, the firstborn Savior was the expected One that was yet to come. From their view, the long-awaited Messiah was a future hope, not a past and completed reality.

— Why would Paul speak of future generations being conformed to the image of Christ so that He “*might be* the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” if He were already the firstborn prior to this discourse?

— In contrast to OT saints, today we would not teach that we are being conformed to Christ's image so that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brethren. Our being conformed to Christ's image today has nothing to do with the future advent of the Messiah (because He already came), but the OT saints were part of this lineage. It is through saints like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and many other saints of old “that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” because Him being revealed as the Messiah, the firstborn (pre-eminent), had not yet taken place.

- "...the firstborn" - *prōtotokos*, first in priority, first in preeminence, and therefore the heir. It refers to being first in position or rank, not first in time.

-- This is the entire ballgame for why God has a purpose for every believer, which Paul begins to articulate in v28: so that Jesus Christ would receive the honor and the glory due His name.

Eph 2:7: so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

— The term "firstborn" also speaks of Christ's pre-existence as the eternal Creator. God created the world through Christ and redeemed the world through Christ (John 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:2–4). The former speaks of His eternal nature and the latter of His temporal role as the Redeemer of the world.

— David was the last son born biologically, but God says that He will make David His firstborn, meaning David was given a place of pre-eminence:

Ps 89:27: "I will also make him [David] My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

- As an example to his readers about how God works together all things for good to those who love Him, Paul is reflecting on God's redemptive purpose being accomplished through those who loved God in former generations. That redemptive purpose included bringing the Messiah into this world through Israel (Cf. 9:4–5), or those Israelites set apart for that noble purpose (9:21). This was God's predestined plan of redemption, which was brought to pass through those who loved God and were called according to His purpose.

— Though this interpretation may seem foreign to some readers because of the philosophical and theological baggage that has been attached to the concept of divine foreknowledge and predestination over the centuries, to the first century reader the simple term *proginōskō* (as previously known) would have been far less complex. In fact, if one can objectively back away from their presuppositions and approach this passage with fresh eyes they will discover the utter simplicity and clarity of this perspective.

— Instead of introducing a complex concept of divine prescience of those unconditionally elected to effectual salvation, could it be that Paul may intend to simply communicate that those who previously loved God and were known by God were predestined to be conformed to the image of the One to come through them, "so that He would be the firstborn of many brothers"? Paul seems to be giving a brief history lesson of what God had done in former generations as a reference for God's trustworthiness for all who come to Him in faith.

— This interpretation is further supported by Heb 11:39–40, where the author reflects on the faithful Old Covenant saints:

Heb 11:39–40:

39 And all these [OT saints], having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

— This reinforces the idea that the faithful remnant God foreknew, those who trusted Him under the Old Covenant, will not be glorified apart from New Covenant believers. The final fulfillment of God's redemptive plan awaits the full gathering of His people, both those who believed before Christ and those who are now in Him.

— This beautifully fits with what Paul says in v29 and God's predetermined plan to glorify all of His people together, not about selecting certain individuals from all eternity for salvation, but about uniting the faithful remnant in Christ for a shared future glory.

(iii) Salvation enumerated (8:30)

30 and **these whom** He predestined, He also **called**; and **these whom He called, He also justified**; and **these whom** He justified, He also **glorified**.

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

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.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

- Oftentimes people will get into arguments about predestination vs. free will when they come to these verses and completely miss the point that Paul is making. Notice the past tense of all of the verbs in this verse: predestined, called, justified, glorified. Each of these four verbs are in the aorist tense, indicative mood, meaning they are past events that already occurred and each are statements of fact.

— If Paul intended to speak about the future salvation of every elect individual, why does he use past tense verbs? When Paul wrote this verse, inspired by the Holy Spirit, neither he or his original audience were glorified, so why use the past tense of the word? There is no reason in the text to assume that Paul has in mind the future glorification of all believers.

— Instead, the past tense suggests that Paul is referring to former generations of those who loved God and were called to fulfill His redemptive purpose. They were known in the past generations and predestined by God to be "conformed to the image of His Son" so that He would be "the firstborn among many brothers *and sisters*." This was something that was already completed in the past through the working of God in former generations. These are the individuals whom God called, justified, and who now, even as Paul was writing these words, were already glorified in the presence of God.

— If Paul had any intention whatsoever of speaking of the Roman Christians, he would have used the same tense he used in v17, ("be glorified with *Him*," the aorist tense, passive voice, subjunctive mood. The aorist passive subjunctive means that the intended action, their glorification, had not yet occurred. But he didn't do that because he is referring to the OT saints who had already died but God had provided hope for.

— To presume that the group of people Paul is describing here, all in the past tense, is not a reference to people of the past is a linguistic stretch. It is simply not reading the text. It is making the text say something that it is not saying in order to conform to a pre-existent theological system. If you have to change the tense of verbs to get the Bible to agree with your preconceived theological framework, you need a new theological framework.

- Calvinism must explain away the use of past tense verbs in order to maintain their preconceived interpretation of Paul's intent. To do this, they will say that "glorified" is in the past tense because the final tense of our salvation is so certain that in God's eyes it is as good as done. Then they go on to say that in God's eyes, it is as good as done because it was predestined by Him.

— This is a very rare usage in the original language (the 'prophetic-past tense'), and the immediate context does not support the Calvinist interpretation. Paul referenced the believer's glorification earlier

in this chapter (v17) by saying, "...if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*." Here, Paul does not speak of glorification as a past and completed action in reference to believers in his day.

— In v23b, in reference to glorification, he says, "...waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons *and daughters*, the redemption of our body." Again, he references glorification as a future event that we are "waiting eagerly" for.

— So are we to believe that Paul shifts from speaking of glorification as a future hope for those who persevere to speaking of it as a past and already-completed act for those who have not yet been glorified? Or could it be that Paul has OT saints in view as he makes his case for the trustworthiness of God throughout all generations? The correct answer is the latter.

— Once we understand the context and the verb tenses in v28-29, it's much easier to understand what Paul is saying, and who he is talking to and about. He clearly is not outlining a rigid, deterministic chain of salvation applied to arbitrarily chosen individuals. He is referring to specific individuals, namely those who are part of the believing remnant that God foreknew. This passage describes what God has always purposed to do for those who belong to His covenant family through faith, not how one becomes part of that family through some sort of pre-selection process.

- "...these whom He called, He also justified" - when Paul says, "those whom He called, He also justified" he does not mean that everyone who is called is justified. That would be a Negative Inference Fallacy (see note: **Negative Inference Fallacy** below).

— "called" - *klētos*, refers to God's gracious invitation to participate in His redemptive purpose. As seen in v28, Scripture teaches that this call goes out to all (Cf. Luke 14:16–24; 1 Tim 2:4; Titus 2:11), though not all respond.

— The point is that everyone who is justified was first called. Not everyone who was called was also justified. Only those who responded in faith to God's invitation.

- "...glorified" - *doxazō*, so the question may arise: If these OT saints were foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified, it's easy to understand the first four, but what about glorification? Are not all believers "glorified" when they are resurrected and receive their new glorified bodies? And isn't that glorification in the future for all believers, OT and NT?

— Noting what was mentioned above, that each of the four verbs in this verse are aorist indicatives meaning they are past events that already occurred (statements of fact), then there are two possible interpretive options:

1. "Glorified" here is in the "prophetic past tense" meaning that a believer's glorification is so certain that God can speak of it in the past tense. This is a Calvinist interpretation, but other verses do use the prophetic past tense in this way, although it is very rare.
2. The second option is that we're not thinking about glorification [*doxazō*] in the right way. Does glorification have only one meaning in the Bible (a technical word), or can it have more than one. Consider Heb 3:3:

Heb 3:3: For He has been counted **worthy of more glory than Moses**, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

Jesus was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. If it is the case that Jesus was counted to be worthy of more glory than Moses, is it not the case that Moses was counted worthy of some degree of glory? And if he was counted to be worthy of some degree of glory, is it a stretch to say he was "glorified"? And that he was glorified by God?

In another passage, Paul talks about the "glory" of the Old Covenant with the "glory" of the New Covenant (Cf. 2 Cor 3:7-11). So we find verses in which the term "glory" refers to honor, esteem, and divine significance, which are different usages of the word *doxa*.

Moses is an OT saint who was glorified, but his glorification has nothing to do with the final resurrection, or a glorified body. Paul is talking about OT saints who are types of Christ, who were conformed to His image. Those are the ones who were called, justified, and glorified. The reason those words called, justified, and glorified are in the past tense is because those things already happened with people like Moses, David, Joseph, and Joshua, just to name a few.

Negative Inference Fallacy

A negative inference fallacy occurs when someone argues that because something is not explicitly stated, it therefore must not be true or did not happen. In simple terms, "The text doesn't say X, therefore X is false or didn't happen." That conclusion does not necessarily follow. The absence of a statement is not automatically evidence against the statement.

A good biblical example of a negative inference fallacy is the Calvinist belief in Limited Atonement—that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for sin was only effectual for "the elect." They argue that since the Bible says that Jesus died for His sheep (John 10:11,15) or His friends (John 15:13-15), He didn't die for anyone else. That is a negative inference fallacy because in fact Scripture teaches in many passages that He died for all (Cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Tim 2:4,6; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

(D) We are secure in Christ (8:31-39)

(a) Because of the believer's relationship to the Father (8:31-33)

(i) The Father is the protector (8:31)

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

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

31 What, then, can we say about all of this? If God *is* for us, who can be against us?

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

- To underscore the means and magnitude of God's provision for our eternal security and future glorification, Paul asks seven questions. Five are mentioned in v31-34 and two are mentioned in v35-39. Some of these questions are rhetorical in nature, where the answer is obvious. Other questions are not rhetorical, and Paul gives us the answer.

-- These questions continue the train of thought began in v28-30.

- "What then shall we say to these things?" - Paul uses this same question multiple times in Romans (Cf. 3:4; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:17,30).

-- The Gentiles who were being grafted into covenant with the God of Israel for the first time would be thrilled to learn of God's faithfulness to those He formerly knew and loved (i.e. men like Abraham and David, etc.). What can the readers say in response to these teachings of Paul about God's faithfulness toward the saints of old? This is the question Paul asks as he transitions to the application of His message.

-- "these things" - everything Paul discussed in v18-30: that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed, and that glory we (as believers) will be part of because God will glorify us. The expected answer to this question is: Yes and Amen! Bring it on!

- "...If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?" - a rhetorical question, with an anticipated answer of "no one!" This assurance comes because of what God has said in His Word and what Christ has accomplished. If God took care of these OT saints, will He not do the same for us?

— This question is consistent with the view that present-day saints who love God and are called according to His purposes (v28) have nothing to fear because God has always been faithful to work all things together for their good (v28).

— And if you need evidence of this, Paul just gave it to you in v29-30. Look at how God did this with the OT saints...by previously determining that He would accomplish salvation for them by conforming them into the image of His Son who would come to purchase redemption for all mankind.

-- "If" - first class condition, assumed to be true because it is true, or for the sake of argument. In this case, it is true.

-- "God" - refers to God the Father

-- "us" - believers, unqualified; if you're a mature believer or a carnal believer, an ignorant believer or intelligent believer, a new believer or an old believer...God is for you! He's in your corner, He's on your side, He's on your team.

(ii) The Father is the provider (8:32)

32 **He** who did not **spare** His own Son, but **delivered Him over for us all**, how will He not also with Him **freely give** us all things?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

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?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

- Paul makes an argument from the greater to the lesser...if God already gave us the greatest gift, then why wouldn't He also give us the lesser gifts?

- "He" [2x] - God the Father (Cf. v31)

- "...spare" - *epheisato*, from *pheidomai*, means to abstain, to forego, to refrain from doing something. It is the same word used in the LXX in Gen 22:12, translated "withheld." God said to Abraham, "You have not *withheld* your son." Then God directed Abraham to spare Isaac and to offer a ram as a

substitute (Gen 22:2-14), whereas God offered His own Son, on that very spot, as the Sacrifice for sin (John 1:29).

-- The wages of sin is death (Cf. 3:23), yet God did not refrain from sending His Son to take on the punishment for sin, even though He was completely innocent and didn't deserve any of it.

— Since God gave the greatest sacrifice of all, His own Son, He will certainly not hesitate to give believers all other things pertaining to and leading to their ultimate sanctification (2 Peter 1:3).

— This verse, along with 5:8-10, are unanswerable verses for those who deny the scriptural teaching of Christ's substitutionary atonement.

— God's plan for our salvation cost Him dearly. Having made the greatest possible sacrifice for us already, we can be assured that He will also do whatever else may be necessary to conform us to the image of His Son. If He didn't, the sacrifice of His Son was all for naught.

- "...delivered Him over" - *paredoken*, gave Him up; the same Greek word is used in 1:24,26,28 ("gave them over") to describe the compounding effect of sin. It's in the aorist tense referring to something that transpired and was completed prior to Paul's writing this epistle. Active voice, meaning God willingly chose to do this.

- "...for us all" - if I took God's place and looked down on mankind, would I be motivated by attraction to do great things for them? Does the state of mankind described in 3:9-18 sound attractive, so as to willingly offer up Your perfect Son to take on the sins of these people? Hardly.

-- The context here is all believers ("us all"), which includes Paul and his readers. This is another of dozens, if not hundreds, of verses that deny Calvinism's belief in Limited Atonement (Cf. notes on 5:6).

- "...freely give" - *charizomai*, the verb form of *charis*, which means "grace." It's translated as "freely give" because God gave us something (His Son) that we do not deserve.

-- There are no strings attached to what God has done on our behalf. There are no strings attached to be saved by God's grace apart from receiving it as a gift by faith in Christ alone.

-- God didn't do anything because we deserved it or we somehow warranted it or earned it. He did it completely out of His amazing grace. God's grace is not leniency, as some people believe. God's grace is His willingness to bless the undeserving, knowing full well they don't deserve it.

-- The anticipated answer to this question is: "Yes He will, or Yes He has!"

(iii) The Father is the justifier (8:33)

33 Who **will bring charges** against God's elect? **God is the one who justifies;**

33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

33 Who will accuse God's elect? It is God who justifies!

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

- Paul now goes back to judicial language, which he used often in Rom 1-5 to describe justification because justification is a judicial (legal) declaration of the innocence of the believer.

-- Because a believer has been justified, that is, declared righteous by God Himself because of the imputed righteousness of Christ to our account...who can bring a charge/accusation/indictment

against believers for our sin? The implied answer is: No one!

- "...will bring charges" - *enkalesei*, future tense; an accusation, word of condemnation; a negative spoken against you (Cf. Acts 19:40; 23:29; 26:2).

-- Why can't anyone bring a charge/accusation/indictment against us? Because God is the one just declared us righteous/innocent. Who can condemn the believer when a perfectly righteous God has declared us righteous?

-- Satan is our accuser who brings accusations against believers (Rev 12:10; Cf. Job 2:3-5; Zech 3:1-5; Luke 22:31).

— Jesus Christ transferred/imputed His righteousness to us at the point of faith, consequently God the Father looks at us as if we're as pure and spotless as Jesus Himself. If this is true theologically, if it's true legally, if it's true positionally, then what grounds does Satan have to bring any accusation against me?

— What about sins we commit after we are saved? Is there a sin that can undo our salvation? Might someone accuse us and cause God to condemn us?

— Believers asking these questions need to more fully understand the doctrine of justification: God has *declared us* righteous in Jesus Christ once and for all in response to Jesus' payment for our sin on the Cross. We do not stand before God on our own imperfect and changeable righteousness; we stand before Him as new creations in Christ, clothed in His Son's perfect righteousness, which never fails, fades, or changes.

— Satan is identified as "the accuser" of God's people (Rev 12:10; Cf. Zech 3:1). His accusations are valid because they are based on the believer's sinfulness and defilement. But Satan's accusations will be thrown out of court because it is God who justifies.

— Satan gets nowhere with his accusations against believers because all sin is ultimately against God, who has already acquitted the elect. Thus, God is the only one in the position to charge the believer with guilt. But, He will not do so because He has declared us righteous (not guilty).

— The Judge Himself declares the accused person righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ (Cf. 3:24; 5:1). As a result all accusations are dismissed and no one can bring an accusation that will stand (Cf. Rom 8:1!).

— "...elect" - *eklektos*, does not introduce a new category of people apart from those previously mentioned. Rather, it refers to the same group, those who love God, are called, justified, and will be glorified. In the OT, "the elect" often referred to Israel as God's chosen people (Cf. Is 45:4), and Paul is now applying this title to the faithful remnant, which includes both believing Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ.

— This fits naturally with Paul's unfolding argument in Rom 9-11, where he redefines Israel and election not in terms of ethnicity, but in terms of faith. God's elect are those who respond to His call, not a list of individuals unconditionally chosen before time. In this context, this serves to reassure believers of their standing before God, not to teach unconditional election.

- "...God is the one who justifies" - if God the Judge has already declared us not guilty, who can bring an additional charge?

-- The provision that God Himself made to reconcile mankind to Himself was accepted as sufficient by Him. This is the importance of the resurrection. Belief in the resurrection doesn't save us, it simply means that God accepted as sufficient the sacrifice of His Son on the cross.

-- If for some reason Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient to cover the past, present, and future sins of all mankind, then the Father would've left Christ in the grave.

-- But because God has judged Christ's sacrifice was sufficient, who could dare impeach the Judge who has cleared us/declared us innocent of every charge against us. If someone has a problem with this, they have a problem with the Judge.

Zechariah saw a vision that shows what it means to stand justified before God (Zech 3:1-7). In the vision, Joshua, the high priest, stood before the angel of the Lord. Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes, a picture of his sinfulness. Satan was eager to accuse Joshua, but the Lord rebuked him. The Lord ordered Joshua's filthy clothes to be removed and said, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you." [NIV] Who will accuse Joshua now? The answer is: no one, because God had already clothed him in righteousness to securely cover his past, present and future.

Joshua's story becomes my story through faith in Christ. Apart from the work of God in Christ, many could condemn us successfully—Satan, and countless others, even our own hearts (1 John 3:20). But "it is God who justifies." No one can seek our condemnation now since the highest court of all has already declared us righteous in Christ.

(b) Because of the believer's relationship to adversity (8:34-39)

(i) Charges cannot separate the believer from Christ (8:34)

34 **who is the one who condemns?** Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, **who is at the right hand of God**, who also **intercedes for us**.

34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

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.

34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

- Paul now lists three things that cannot unravel our salvation (glorification, v30):

1. Charges/accusations from Satan (v34)
2. Trials (v35-37)
3. Numerous miscellaneous categories (v38-39)

- "who is the one who condemns?" - he implied answer, based on the declaration of the Judge, is "No one!"

-- If God has *already justified* the man who believes in Jesus, how can He lay anything to the charge of His justified one? His justification comes from the imputed righteousness of Christ and *is legally ours!* It is not a subject of merit, and its loss cannot be the subject of demerit.

— Like a father, God can and does correct His earthly sons, but *they always remain sons* (Cf. the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:24). God, having justified the ungodly (Rom 4:5), will not and cannot contradict Himself by charging them with evil.

-- "condemns" - *atakrinō*, to judge against or judge one worthy of punishment. Paul is anticipating both the problem of future accusations, but he also anticipates the problem of present condemnation.

-- These charges/accusations (v33), from Satan, are designed to condemn us, to come against our minds, they cause me to think that Christianity works for everyone else but doesn't work for me. But these condemning accusations that come against me constantly have zero effect on my salvation, based on the authority of God's Word.

-- The fact is, no person can condemn us, no angel can condemn us, and no demon can condemn us. And maybe most importantly, Satan himself cannot condemn us. The reason is because...

- Jesus Christ, God Himself, is the One who died.
- He was raised (indicating that God accepted His sacrifice on behalf of all sinners).
- He is presently at the right hand of God in heaven, a place of honor; the command post of the entire universe.
- While seated at the right hand of the Father, He is interceding to the Father on our behalf.

-- Notice that Paul doesn't say that his readers are not condemned because their fellowship with the Lord is outstanding or because they are living such a godly life.

-- It's not that we shouldn't be these things, it's not that they are unnecessary, it's because of Jesus Christ. It's all on Him! We are the beneficiaries, but He is the Provider. We are not condemned because Christ died and paid the full penalty for our sin.

- "...who is at the right hand of God" - Jesus current position in His Present Session (Cf. Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). His current office is that of the believer's High Priest. See [Present Ministry of Christ](#). His previous office (during His earthly ministry, was that of a Prophet; His future office, after His return at the Second Coming, will be King.

— We hear a lot of sermons on what Christ did in the past, during His earthly ministry, and what Christ will do in the future, but we don't ever hear anything about what Jesus is doing right now. Yet Paul's whole argument on how we can stand up to satanic accusations and condemnation are rooted in Christ's current High Priestly ministry.

- "...intercedes for us" - it is so important for believers to understand, then accept this verse as truth. Jesus intercedes for us, meaning He pleads our case as our defense attorney, thwarting every accusation of the past, present, and future against us.

-- Why would there be accusations of believers? Someone will say, "That person was saved, but do you know what he did?" And Jesus says, "Yeah, I know, but I died for that sin. I paid for it completely. He was in My courtroom and I have declared him righteous. And if you have a problem with that, you have a problem with Me."

- "What if a person is unfaithful?" The question shouldn't be "if" but "when." God will not condemn you for your unfaithfulness because it is God who justifies.
- "What if I commit a terrible sin, or have a pattern of sin in the future?" God will not condemn you because it is God who justifies.

- "What if I do not persevere to the end?" God will not condemn you because it is God who justifies.

-- None of this is based on our innocence or guilt, but based solely and completely on what God has done for us. God saved me and God keeps me because if any part of my salvation was left up to me, I wouldn't be saved. I am simply the recipient, not the Provider.

- Intercession is one of at least 11 things Jesus is doing *right now* during His Present Session:

1. Sustains creation (Col 1:16-17)
2. Head over the Church (Eph 1:22-23)
3. Groom of the Church (Eph 5:22-33)
4. Building the Church (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:41; 4:4)
5. Bestowing Spiritual Gifts (Eph 4:7-12)
6. Melchizedekian High Priestly Role (Heb 6:20)
7. Keeps the Saints (John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:5)
- 8. Intercedes for the Saints (Rom 8:24; Heb 7:25)**
9. Advocate for the Saints (Heb 9:24; 1 John 2:1)
10. Restores broken fellowship (1 John 1:9)
11. Disciplines His children (Heb 12:5-13)

— The condemning charges and accusations of Satan bounce right off of believers and have zero effect on our position in Christ or our justification because Jesus is praying for us, to the Father, around the clock.

— These charges can have a huge emotional and mental effect on us if we do not understand who we are in Christ and what Christ is doing for us. Legally, positionally and theologically, accusation after accusation can be thrown at us, and they just bounce right off with no effect because Christ is interceding for us.

— We learned in v26 that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers; here we learn that Jesus Christ Himself also intercedes for us. The Judge is also our defense attorney, so nothing can rise up to cause God to condemn us.

If God is for us (and He is), and if Christ died for all of our sins (and He did), and God raised Him from the dead as proof of His acceptance of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf (and He did), and if God has declared us righteous in Christ (and He has), and if no one can properly bring an accusation against us in the future, or rightly condemn us in the meantime (and they can't)...how can you ever lose your salvation?

If you have trusted Jesus Christ alone to save you, you are eternally secure and guaranteed future glory because of the purpose of the Father to save and secure you, and to glorify you because of the provision of the Father, which includes the past death, the past resurrection, the past ascension, and the present intercession of Jesus Christ.

We are eternally secure not because we're so good at holding on, you're secure because He's so good to holding you. We are not only saved by grace, we're kept saved by grace.

(ii) Trials cannot separate the believer from Christ (8:35-37)

35 **Who will separate us** from the **love** of Christ? *Will* **tribulation**, or **trouble**, or **persecution**, or **famine**, or **nakedness**, or **danger**, or **sword**?

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

35 Who will separate us from the Messiah's love? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or a violent death do this?

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

- Paul now moves the subject away from accusations and condemnation from Satan, to the common and ordinary trials of life...

- "Who" - means "who" or "what," encompassing any opponent or obstacle, whether personal or impersonal.

- "...will separate" - *chōrizō*, future tense, active voice, indicative mood. It means to separate or break a relationship that was designed to be permanent, like in divorce (Cf. Matt 19:6; 1 Cor 7:10,12,15). It also means to locationally distance a person from one place to another (Cf. Acts 1:4; 18:1-2).

-- The question is: Who will separate us, either relationally or locationally, from the love of Christ?

-- "...us" - believers, including Paul along with his original audience, the believers in Rome.

- "...love" - *agapē*, theologically, in this context, it refers to God's special love for His children in which He seeks to always do what is best for them in light of eternity, no matter what it costs Him.

-- If He died for us when we were His enemies (Cf. 5:10), how much more does His *agapē* love for us mean when we are His children?

-- "God so loved [*agapē*] the world..." (John 3:16). Jesus loved [*agapē*] the world too, but He has a special, intimate love for His children (believers). You may love your neighbor, or your uncle, but you don't love them in the same way you love your kids.

- Now, the apostle suggests seven things a believer might experience (Paul experienced six of the seven: 2 Cor 11:23-28) that someone may think could cause a believer to break their positional relationship with God and lose their salvation:

- "...tribulation" - *thlipsis*, pressure, distress. The word is used literally to describe the squashing of grapes in a winepress to make wine. It refers to crushing tribulation or intense circumstantial pressure, oftentimes rendered due to standing for the gospel.

-- It does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to serious challenges and problems. It refers to external circumstances and hardships that can afflict the saints because of the gospel. It is mentioned frequently by Paul in 2 Corinthians.

— Even though the Father allowed His Son to suffer, He did not stop loving Him. The Father deals with His adopted sons in the same way He dealt with His unique Son (Cf. John 16:33).

-- Does tribulation in your life reflect the removal or distancing of God's love in our life? Not at all, it just reminds us that we're living in a world still under the curse of sin. We live in a world full of spiritual warfare, that still believes that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Therefore, if you experience tribulation, you must have done something bad.

-- Why do believers suffer? Most will say because they have done something wrong, they have some sort of "secret sin" in their life, so God is punishing them for it through suffering. Garbage! Most Christians don't know or understand the doctrine of suffering in the Bible. There are seven reasons given in Scripture for why believers suffer. Some suffering is deserved, other suffering is undeserved, but all suffering "works together for good." Believers suffer because of:

1. Adam's sin and the curse; because we live in a fallen world. This is undeserved suffering (Cf. Rom 5:12; Gen 3; John 9:1-2).
2. The sin of others. This is also undeserved suffering (Cf. Job 14:1; Rom 1:28-32).
3. Our own sin (as a natural consequence). This is deserved suffering (Gal 6:7; 1 Peter 4:15).
4. Satan. This is undeserved suffering (Job 1-2; 1 Peter 5:8-9).
5. Suffering for the Savior. This is undeserved suffering (John 15:18--16:4).
6. God's sovereign purposes for His glory. This is undeserved suffering (Cf. Gen 45:5-9; 50:20; John 9:1-3).
7. God's loving discipline of His children. This can be deserved or undeserved (Heb 12:5-11).

- "...trouble" - *stenochōria*, anguish or distress, it literally means "narrowness of space"; it describes an internal effect that could result from the believer's hardships. It describes when a believers find themselves in "tight spaces." Metaphorically, it is experiencing a dire calamity; extreme affliction with anguish and hardship.

-- You ever notice how trials and sufferings happen in clusters? Everything is fine for awhile, then it seems like everything goes downhill very quickly. This describes *stenochōria* perfectly.

- "...persecution" - *diōgmos*, literally means to be hunted down like an animal; violently chased (Cf. 2 Cor 4:9; 1 Peter 4:12-14). It is used 10x in NT, the context is always true persecution for the sake of the gospel.

- "...famine" - *limos*, 12x in NT; means to be destitute of sufficient food. Used in reference to famine in Egypt (Acts 7:11) as well as the famine predicted by Agabus (Acts 11:28), along with Paul's trials (2 Cor 11:27).

- "...nakedness" - *gymnotēs*, destitute of sufficient clothing to keep the body warm; a trial that Paul endured in his ministry (2 Cor 11:27).

-- Strange how none of these things are ever mentioned by the so-called Prosperity Gospel false teachers. Prosperity cannot be a proof of God's favor since it is what the devil promises to those who worship him (Cf. Matt 4:8-10).

- "...danger" - *kindynos*, peril, danger of death, risky; also used of Paul's ministry (2 Cor 11:26).

-- When you're convinced of the love of Christ, the Holy Spirit may move you outside of your comfort zone to share the gospel with someone that you otherwise may not do. And as a result, from a human

standpoint, doing this may be risky. There may be danger involved (Cf. 2 Cor 1:8-9). But would you rather die with your boots on serving Christ, or die of gout in the hospital?

-- One of the things that I guarantee you God is teaching you in the trial you are going through right now is that you are not sufficient of yourself. Your sufficiency comes completely from God. You have to trust in Him, ask Him for wisdom

- "...sword" - *machaira*, a metonymy for violence or possible death by execution, which Paul would experience in Rome by way of martyrdom through legal execution (Rom 13:4; 2 Tim 4:7-8).

-- Martyrdom is not a sign of God's displeasure with us; rather, it's an opportunity to die for Christ and receive a crown.

- None of these things—ordered in increasing intensity—can separate Christians from the love of Christ or our position. Instead they are part of the "all things" (8:28) that God uses to bring us into conformity with His Son.

Four Observations & Applications for v35

1. These seven adverse circumstances are all undeserved sufferings connected to suffering for Christ (Cf. v17-18).
 - a. These are not deserved sufferings due to reaping the consequences of our sinful choices. Deserved suffering should be avoided by the child of God (1 Peter 4:15-16).
 - b. Even in sinful decisions, the believer is not separated from God's love, for whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives (Heb 12:5-11).
 - c. Even out of His great love for us, God sometimes will take us to the woodshed. Sometimes God takes the "board of education" to the "seat of learning."
2. Paul did not write about these hardships hypothetically, he had experienced them personally due to his faithfulness and service to Christ (2 Cor 11:22-29).
 - a. This was in opposition to the carnal Corinthian believers, who designed a way of living that was not true to God's will, but was conformed to the world (Cf. 1 Cor 4:7-14).
 - b. What would compel Paul to endure these hardships? The love of Christ (Cf. 2 Cor 5:14-15).
3. We are not promised as believers that we won't experience intense pressure and persecution, or that we won't lose loved ones in death.
 - a. Believers are not exempt from dying to Covid, or cancer, or car accidents.
 - b. Sometimes believers get disappointed with God because they have wrong expectations regarding the trials and sufferings of this life (Cf. Rom 5:1-5).
 - c. We need to remember that the outcome isn't always pleasant from our human point of view. We tend to think that if we trust the Lord, the outcome is going to be good.
 - d. It is true that it is ultimately good (Cf. Rom 8:28), and it may be good eternally, but circumstantially it may not always be good as far as we are concerned, yet God is pleased when we are trusting Him. Look at the contrast in Heb 11:32-40 between v32-35a and 35b-40:

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

35a Women received *back* their dead by resurrection;

35b and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

36 and others experienced mocking and flogging, and further, chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented

38 (*people* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, *on* mountains, and *sheltering in* caves and holes in the ground.

39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

4. To reinforce his point, Paul (in v36) quotes from Ps 44:22 showing that God's people have suffered in the past at the hands of wicked men, as they do in the present, and will certainly in the future.
 - a. The comparison made in that verse (a simile) is made with sheep set aside to be sacrificed in the sanctuary in doing God's service.

36 **Just as** it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE REGARDED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

36 Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

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."

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

- Paul quotes Ps 44:22 to argue that trials and tribulations for the believer are nothing new...David experienced severe trials during his life, and he lived around 1000 BC.

- "Just as" - *kathōs*, implies that the negative things listed in the previous verse are characteristic of the suffering of God's people throughout Scripture. These experiences (v35) in the lives of believers are not abnormal...it's the way it has always been, even back 3000 years.

— The sufferings in view are the consequence of our identification with Christ (Cf. Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 4:14-19).

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

37 In all these things we are triumphantly victorious due to the one who loved us.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

- The divine viewpoint response to these hardships when walking by faith is...

- "But" - *alla*, the strongest adversative conjunction in the Greek language

- "...all these things" - tribulation, trouble, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword (v35).

— "all" - includes but not limited to Paul's list (v35); includes any problem or trial that life can throw your way, any problem fallen people can throw your way, any problem the world system can throw your way, or any problem Satan can throw your way.

— None of these things can derail our glorification, and it's not even close...

- "...we" - believers, Paul included

- "...overwhelmingly conquer" - *hypernikomen*, suggests "hyper-conquerors"; we are exceedingly, completely, and overwhelmingly victorious. Our victory is sure, a done deal. Believer's don't conquer these various trials by a last second half court shot in triple OT...the game is not even close. It's a skunking, a blowout, not even a game.

-- Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33), now He calls us "super-overcomers" because we are identified with Jesus Christ (Cf. 1 John 5:4-5; Rev 3:5). He won the victory over death, thus because of our identification with Him, we won as well.

— Paul is speaking to the believer's ultimate victory, it's already been designed that way, it just doesn't feel like it to us sometimes.

- "...through Him who loved us" - to ensure we're not mistaken into thinking that we can do this in and through the power of ourselves, Paul reminds us that we can't. We can only conquer these things through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

— He is a super-conqueror not only *out of* these things, but *in/through* them. Not only shall none of the trials separate the believer from the love of God, but they are also sources of gain and benefit because He works "all things" together for good to those who love Him (v28).

— In all these adversities (Cf. "all things" in v28 and "all things" in v32 with "all these things" in v37), rather than being separated from Christ's love, believers "keep on being conquerors to a greater degree" or "keep on winning a glorious victory" through Him who loved us.

— In the end, I am going to win because I'm connected to the Winner (Cf. Phil 4:13; 1 John 4:4).

-- "loved" - *agapaō*, aorist tense, active voice; the aorist tense points back to Calvary; the active voice means that God willingly chose to love us. It is a participle of *agapē*, literally meaning the One having loved by choice.

(iii) Miscellaneous categories cannot separate the believer from Christ (8:38-39)

(a) Earthly

- (b) Angelic
- (c) Temporal
- (d) Government
- (e) Spatial
- (f) Catch all

38 For I am convinced that neither **death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,**

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

- Paul may have thought that he left some things out of his list in v35, so he now adds a series of circumstances that could cause the believer some grief. The list includes six realms: earthly, angelic, temporal, government, spatial, and a "catch-all."

- "...I am convinced" - *peithō*, perfect tense, passive voice, indicative mood, meaning "I have been and I remain completely convinced."

-- Romans was the 6th epistle he wrote; the previous one was 2 Corinthians. If you go to 2 Cor 11:23-28 you can read about the horrific sufferings that Paul had already experienced.

— Paul was a man who suffered for the cause of Christ, yet he says that he is "convinced" with 100% clarity that the sufferings and trials he had experienced, which were extensive, could not derail his future glorification or separate him from the love of God.

- "...death, nor life" - a figure of speech called a merism: a list that includes two polar opposites and is meant to communicate these two extremes plus everything in between. For example, God created the "heaven and the earth." He didn't just create heaven and earth, but it encompasses everything in between...man, animals, water, air, trees, etc. It refers to both spheres of existence.

— Paul is saying that death cannot separate us from the love of God, and life cannot separate us from the love of God, and everything between those two events cannot separate us from the love of God.

-- "death" - *thanatos*, not qualified as to include or exclude a certain type or means of death. This speaks to the question of suicide.

-- In the Bible, there are seven people who died by suicide, and at least three of them were believers: Samson (Judges 16:26-31), King Saul (1 Sam 31:3-6), and Ahithophel (2 Sam 17).

-- Four people died by suicide whose faith we are uncertain, except for Judas Iscariot (Matt 27:4-5) who was never saved (John 13:10-11). They were Abimelech (Judges 9:54), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and Saul's armor bearer (1 Sam 31:5).

-- Instead of death separating us from the love of God, it is actually the door into God's presence (Cf. 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21,23) and the fear of death is gone (Heb 2:14).

-- "life" - *zoe*, this covers the gamut of human existence

- "...nor angels, nor principalities" - refers to fallen angels (demons) because the good angels do not oppose believers, they help believers (Heb 1:14). The same Greek words used here are used elsewhere of angelic beings, which includes Satan and his demons.

— There are twice as many good angels as fallen angels (Rev 12:4), but these fallen angels wage war on believers (Eph 6:12), but the spiritual warfare we endure as believers cannot derail our future glorification.

-- The devil nor his angels can take salvation away from us because we're not the one holding on to it...the Godhead is.

- "...nor things present, nor things to come" - this covers all present or future possibilities or realities. What might this include?

-- Nothing in the present, such as my sin, my unbelief, my carnality, nor anything in the future including the future judgment of God can create a chasm between the believer and God's *agapē* love.

-- The things that are harassing you today, and the things that will harass you tomorrow. Neither the things I can see in front of me, or the things lined up to come against me, can separate me from the love of God.

-- If nothing in your past can separate you from God's love, and nothing in your present or your future can separate you from God's love, how can a person possibly lose their salvation?

- "...nor powers" - a reference to government out of control.

— Paul wrote Romans during a time when the Roman government was out of control. An insane man named Nero was emperor and was preparing to launch the first imperial wave of persecution against Christianity, something Christians had never experienced before at this scale.

— A formal wave of persecution, launched by Rome, against God's church. Nero burned down Rome, then blamed it on Christians. He would light Christians on fire while they were alive, to illuminate his garden parties. He imposed taxes to build the Roman Colosseum in order to throw Christians to lions, who would tear them apart limb from limb to packed crowds.

— Not even a government gone as wild as Nero's can separate us from the love of God...

No guilt in life, no fear in death, This is the power of Christ in me; From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of heaven, no scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand: Till He returns or calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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 union with the Messiah Jesus, our Lord.

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature [created thing], Shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- "...nor height, nor depth" - no extremes of location or space. You can't go anywhere where God isn't present (omnipresent).

- "...nor any other created thing" - no created being or thing. This includes ME! I'm a created being, so I cannot separate myself from God's love.

-- This is a catch-all phrase, just in case some lunatic comes along at some point in the future and points out something that is missing from Paul's list. Since God is alone Creator, *nothing* is omitted in "any other created thing."

-- This kills the objection that nothing can separate myself from God's love except me. Oh really? If you're a created being, which you are, this verse says that you cannot separate yourself from God's love.

— Thus, this list has to include the behavior and belief of His own children as well (John 10:28-29). Not even the redeemed can remove themselves from God's love, which Jesus has secured for them (Cf. 2 Tim 2:13).

— This should *really* re-prioritize our entire outlook on *everything!*

-- It's strange that people think they are stronger and more powerful than God's hands to keep them saved. God determines salvation because salvation is all from Him. You don't determine salvation. If you were saved at some point in the past, and decided to completely abandoned your faith, you still cannot lose your salvation (Cf. 2 Tim 2:13).

Paul exulted confidence that nothing, including any other created being (which has to include yourself), can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. [Ryrie]

- "...will be able" - under any conditions or circumstances

- "...us" - as believers in Christ

When we fail utterly, and are overwhelmed, then is the time to say: We have been accepted in Christ--only in Christ, wholly in Christ. Our place is unchanged by our failure. We are ashamed before God, but not confounded. Just now His eyes are on us in Christ, as they ever have been. His love is as deep and wonderful as ever, being 'the love wherewith He loved Christ!' We do not resolve to 'do better,' for we are weak. We trust the grace of God in Christ and cast ourselves anew, and all the more wholly, upon His grace alone. We trust Him never to forsake or fail us: for He hath loved us in His beloved Son; and God will never forsake Christ! For His sake will He deal with us now and ever. [William R. Newell]

Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, tho' stretched from sky to sky. [The Love of God, stanza 3, by Frederick M Lehman]

The Basis of our Eternal Security

1. Upon His Sovereign Purpose

- Eternal purpose declared (Eph 1:11-12). This eternal purpose is anchored within the veil, confirmed by an oath (Heb 6:17-20).

2. Upon His Solemn Promise

- Our salvation depends upon His promise, not our faithfulness (Rom 4:16) Therefore it is of faith [nothing on man's part], that it might be by grace [everything on God's part] ; to the end the promise might be sure...
- If it depended at any point upon human ability to continue to believe, then the promise could not be secure. The promise that those who believe will be saved is confirmed everywhere (Gen 15:6; John 3:16; Acts 16:33; Rom 4:23-24).

3. Upon His Infinite Power

- He is free to save us. Christ's death has rendered God free to save us in spite of moral imperfection. Our eternal security does not depend upon our moral worthiness. Christ is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2).
- To assume that there is some sin sufficiently serious to cause us to forfeit our salvation is to assume that we were less worthy of salvation after having committed this sin than before, which reduces salvation down to human ability to merit it.
- He has purposed to keep us saved (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29)

4. Upon His "Much More" Love

- His intent is love based (Cf. Rom 5:6-10)
- God knew when He saved us that we were totally depraved, and therefore any new manifestation of sin in our lives after our conversion cannot be any motivation to God to change His mind and withdraw His grace and His salvation (Rom 8:32,38-39; 11:29).
- He saved us for reasons *independent of us* and outside of us (Eph 2:7). He was motivated by His *electing* love, not by observation of good in the sinner.

5. Upon His Answer to the Prayer of His Son

- We, as believers, are called many things in Scripture: saints, believers, elect, sheep, partakers, etc. But the title most dear to the heart of Christ is repeated *seven* times in His high priestly prayer in John 17: "those whom thou hast given me" (Cf. John 17:11-12).
- Jesus prays that we will be kept from hell (John 17:15); and will be with Him in heaven (John 17:20,24). [This keeping is from *perishing*, not necessarily all forms of inheritance]
- The Father always answers the prayers of the Son (John 11:42)

Application

- Even when our plans seem good to us, God often has something better in mind that wins out in the end (Prov 19:21).
- God orders and controls absolutely all things, at all times, in all places and in all people for the good of those who love Him.
- God may call me to exchange what is good now for something hard but ultimately better.

- If personal happiness keeps me from coming alongside those for whom times are tough, then I have forgotten God's purposes for my current pleasures include His glory and the good of others (James 2:16; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:17).
- Have I pointed someone to God's glorious promise in Rom 8:28, only to hesitate or lack faith in it when I am suffering?
- Have I spent more time in prayer trying to get "good" in my way and timing than to give God my heart and mind to trust His perfect purposes?