

**Romans 8:18-30**  
**April 19, 2015**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Today should be our final lesson in Romans Chapter 8. If you haven't been with us over the last two weeks, then what you need to know is that we are reading this chapter with a special eye toward how our Triune God actively works in every believer.

**Transition:** Accordingly, I am still proposing that every born-again believer CAN live a victorious life in Christ BY trusting all the WAYS that our Triune God works in us once we became His child. As we go through the remainder of this chapter, let's find the WAYS that our Triune God works in us. Paul starts in with the reality of suffering.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): Read Rom 8:18-30 –**  
**v.18-22: “The Creation Groans”**

V.18:

- I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [Hope allows us to live victoriously]

V.19:

- The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

V.20:

- For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope

V.21:

- that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

V.22:

- We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

**v.23-25 “Believers groan”**

V.23:

- Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

V.24:

- For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

V.25:

- But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

**v.25-30 “The Spirit Groans”**

V.26:

- In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

V.27:

- And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

V.28:

- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

V.29:

- For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

V.30:

- And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

- Q: We are looking for WAYS that a Triune God works in us as God's children. Let's just go verse by verse and see if we can identify them. What ways do you see in these verses? [Review all highlighted phrases above and process them]

**LOOK:**

Paul reminded us that our Triune God is actively at work to help us live victoriously in Christ:

- In spite of pain and suffering, we have HOPE in God's promises to us.
- The Spirit of God lives in us.
- When we don't know how we ought to pray, the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
- The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
- God works together for good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes.
- God predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 535–560). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

**Freedom from Discouragement-No Frustration (Rom. 8:18–30)**

Paul in this section dealt with the very real problem of suffering and pain. Perhaps the best way to understand this section is to note the three “groans” that are discussed.

***Creation groans (vv. 18–22).*** When God finished His Creation, it was a good Creation (Gen. 1:31); but today it is a groaning Creation. There is suffering and death; there is pain, all of which is, of course, the result of Adam’s sin. It is not the fault of creation. Note the words that Paul used to describe the plight of creation: suffering (Rom. 8:18), vanity (Rom. 8:20), bondage (Rom. 8:21), decay (Rom. 8:21), and pain (Rom. 8:22). However, this groaning is not a useless thing: Paul compared it to a woman in travail. There is pain, but the pain will end when the child is delivered. One day creation will be delivered, and the groaning creation will become a glorious creation! The believer does not focus on today’s sufferings; he looks forward to tomorrow’s glory (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:15–18). Today’s groaning bondage will be exchanged for tomorrow’s glorious liberty!

***We believers groan (vv. 23–25).*** The reason we groan is because we have experienced “the firstfruits of the Spirit,” a foretaste of the glory to come. Just as the nation of Israel tasted the firstfruits of Canaan when the spies returned (Num. 13:23–27), so we Christians have tasted of the blessings of heaven through the ministry of the Spirit. This makes us want to see the Lord, receive a new body, and live with Him and serve Him forever. We are waiting for “the adoption,” which is the redemption of the body when Christ returns (Phil. 3:20–21). This is the thrilling climax to “the adoption” that took place at conversion when “the Spirit of adoption” gave us an adult standing in God’s family. When Christ returns, we shall enter into our full inheritance.

Meanwhile, we wait and hope. “For we are saved by that hope” (Rom. 8:24, literal translation). What hope? “That blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). The best is yet to come! The believer does not get frustrated as he sees and experiences suffering and pain in this world. He knows that the temporary suffering will one day give way to eternal glory.

***The Holy Spirit groans (vv. 25–30).*** God is concerned about the trials of His people. When He was ministering on earth, Jesus groaned when He saw what sin was doing to mankind (Mark 7:34; John 11:33, 38). Today the Holy Spirit groans with us and feels the burdens of our weaknesses and suffering. But the Spirit does more than groan. He prays for us in His groaning so that we might be led into the will of God. We do not always know God’s will. We do not always know how to pray, but the Spirit intercedes so that we might live in the will of God in spite of suffering. The Spirit “shares the burden.”

The believer never need faint in times of suffering and trial because he knows that God is at work in the world (Rom. 8:28), and that He has a perfect plan (Rom. 8:29). God has two purposes in that plan: our good and His glory. Ultimately, He will make us like Jesus Christ! Best of all, God’s plan is going to succeed! It started in eternity past when He chose us in Christ (Eph. 1:4–5). He predetermined that one day we would be like His Son. Predestination applies only to saved people. Nowhere are we taught that God predestines people to be eternally condemned. If they are condemned, it is because of their refusal to trust Christ (John 3:18–21). Those whom He chose, He called (see 2 Thes. 2:13–14); when they responded to His call, He

justified them, and He also glorified them. This means that the believer has already been glorified in Christ (John 17:22); the revelation of this glory awaits the coming of the Lord (Rom. 8:21–23).

How can we Christians ever be discouraged and frustrated when we already share the glory of God? Our suffering today only guarantees that much more glory when Jesus Christ returns!

### **Freedom from Fear-No Separation (Rom. 8:31–39)**

There is no condemnation because we share the righteousness of God and the Law cannot condemn us. There is no obligation because we have the Spirit of God who enables us to overcome the flesh and live for God. There is no frustration because we share the glory of God, the blessed hope of Christ's return. There is no separation because we experience the love of God: "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35)

The emphasis in this final section is on the security of the believer. We do not need to fear the past, present, or future because we are secure in the love of Christ. Paul presented five arguments to prove that there could be no separation between the believer and the Lord.

**God is for us (v. 31).** *The Father* is for us and proved it by giving His Son (Rom. 8:32). *The Son* is for us (Rom. 8:34) and so is *the Spirit* (Rom. 8:26). God is making all things work for us (Rom. 8:28). In His person and His providence, God is for us. Sometimes, like Jacob, we lament, "All these things are against me" (Gen. 42:36), when actually everything is working for us. The conclusion is obvious: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The believer needs to enter into each new day realizing that God is for him. There is no need to fear, for his loving Father desires only the best for His children, even if they must go through trials to receive His best. " 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope' " (Jer. 29:11, NASB).

**Christ died for us (v. 32).** The argument here is from the lesser to the greater. If when we were sinners, God gave us His best, now that we are God's children, will He not give us all that we need? Jesus used this same argument when He tried to convince people that it was foolish to worry and fear. God cares for the birds and sheep, and even for the lilies; surely He will care for you! God is dealing with His own on the basis of Calvary grace, not on the basis of Law. God freely gives all things to His own!

**God has justified us (v. 33).** This means that He has declared us righteous in Christ. Satan would like to accuse us (Zech. 3:1–7; Rev. 12:10), but we stand righteous in Jesus Christ. We are God's elect—chosen in Christ and accepted in Christ. God will certainly not accuse us since it is He who has justified us. For Him to accuse us would mean that His salvation was a failure and we are still in our sins.

Understanding the meaning of justification brings peace to our hearts. When God declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ, that declaration never changes. Our Christian experience changes from day to day, but justification never changes. We may accuse ourselves, and men may accuse us; but God will never take us to court and accuse us. Jesus has already paid the penalty and we are secure in Him.

**Christ intercedes for us (v. 34).** A dual intercession keeps the believer secure in Christ: the Spirit intercedes (Rom. 8:26–27) and the Son of God intercedes (Rom. 8:34). The same Saviour who died for us is now interceding for us in heaven. As our High Priest, He can give us the grace we need to overcome temptation and defeat the enemy (Heb. 4:14–16). As our Advocate, He can forgive our sins and restore our fellowship with God (1 John 1:9–2:2). Intercession means that Jesus Christ represents us before the throne of God and we do not have to represent ourselves.

Paul hinted at this ministry of intercession in Romans 5:9–10. We are not only saved by His death, but we are also saved by His life. “Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, NIV). Peter sinned against the Lord, but he was forgiven and restored to fellowship because of Jesus Christ. “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked permission to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed especially for you that your own faith may not utterly fail” (Luke 22:31–32, WMS). He is interceding for each of us, a ministry that assures us that we are secure.

***Christ loves us (vv. 35–39).*** In Romans 8:31–34 Paul proved that God cannot fail us, but is it possible that we can fail Him? Suppose some great trial or temptation comes, and we fail? Then what? Paul deals with that problem in this final section and explains that nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ.

To begin with, God does not shelter us from the difficulties of life because we need them for our spiritual growth (Rom. 5:3–5). In Romans 8:28 God assures us that the difficulties of life are working *for* us and not *against* us. God permits trials to come that we might use them for our good and His glory. We endure trials for His sake (Rom. 8:36), and since we do, do you think that He will desert us? Of course not! Instead, He is closer to us when we go through the difficulties of life.

Furthermore, He gives us the power to conquer (Rom. 8:37). We are “more than conquerors,” literally, “we are superconquerors” through Jesus Christ! He gives us victory and more victory! We need not fear life or death, things present or things to come, because Jesus Christ loves us and gives us the victory. This is not a promise with conditions attached: “If you do this, God will do that.” This security in Christ is an established fact, and we claim it for ourselves because we are in Christ. Nothing can separate you from His love! Believe it—and rejoice in it!

A review of this wonderful chapter shows that the Christian is completely victorious. We are free from judgment because Christ died for us and we have His righteousness. We are free from defeat because Christ lives in us by His Spirit and we share His life. We are free from discouragement because Christ is coming for us and we shall share His glory. We are free from fear because Christ intercedes for us and we cannot be separated from His love.

No condemnation! No obligation! No frustration! No separation!

If God be for us, who can be against us!

**Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 466–480). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*E. Goal of sanctification (8:18–27).*

8:18. In one sense this verse is the conclusion of the preceding paragraph in which believers are assured of being heirs of Christ’s coming glory. However, Paul reminded his readers that sharing in the glory of Christ in the future required sharing “in His sufferings” in this life. But after careful figuring (*Logizomai, I consider*) Paul concluded **that our present sufferings are far outweighed by the glory that will be revealed in** (as well as to and through) **us**. This future glory is so great that present sufferings are insignificant by comparison. Also the glory is forever, whereas the suffering is temporary and light (2 Cor. 4:17). Certainly this truth can help believers endure afflictions. Romans 8:18 also serves as a topic sentence for the following discussion on the relationship between believers and the whole Creation, both in their afflictions and in their future glory.

8:19–21. The interrelationship of man with the physical creation of which he is a part and in which he lives was established in God’s sentence of judgment on Adam after the Fall (Gen. 3:17–19). In Romans 8:19–21 Paul demonstrated that this relationship has a future aspect in connection with God’s program of salvation for people. He declared, **The Creation waits in eager expectation** (lit., “for the strained expectation [*apokaradokia* is used only one other time in the NT, in Phil. 1:20] of the Creation keeps on eagerly awaiting”) **for the sons of God to be revealed**. The verb for “eagerly waits” (*apekdechomai*) is used seven times in the New Testament, each time to refer to Christ’s return (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). The revealing of the sons of God will occur when Christ returns for His own. They will share His glory (Rom. 8:18; Col. 1:27; 3:4; Heb. 2:10), and will be transformed (Rom. 8:23). All of nature (inanimate and animate) is personified as waiting eagerly for that time.

The reason for this eager anticipation is stated in verse 20. **For the Creation was subjected to frustration**. The Greek word *mataiotēti* (“futility, frailty, purposelessness”; cf. Eph. 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18) describes the change and “decay” (cf. Rom. 8:21) that prevails in all created things. This was not a voluntary subjection because the created world as such had no **choice**. Instead it was a decree of God, the sovereign Creator, **who subjected it**. (This probably refers to God, not, as some have suggested, to Adam.) And yet it was **in hope**, that is, in anticipation of a coming day when the “frustration” would be removed (cf. vv. 24–25). God judged the totality of His Creation along with people for their sin (Gen. 3:14, 17–19).

When God’s program of salvation for people is completed and **the children of God** together experience their **glorious freedom** from sin, Satan, and physical decay, then **the Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay**. God had cursed the physical Creation as a part of His judgment on people for sin because of their position and authority over the Creation as God’s representatives (Gen. 1:26–30; 2:8, 15). Similarly, since God’s program of salvation for people is one of a new Creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the physical world also will be re-created (Rev. 21:5). This will take place in two stages. First will be 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 (Isa. 11:5–9; 35:1–2, 5–7; 65:20, 25; Amos 9:13). The second stage will be creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1; cf. 2 Peter 3:7–13).

8:22–23. In one sense verse 22 is an appropriate conclusion to the preceding paragraph, summing up the present cursed state of the physical creation. Paul said, **We know** (*oidamen*, continuing state of knowledge that grows out of perception) **that the whole Creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth** (lit., “keeps on groaning together and keeps on travailing together”) **right up to the present time**. The emphasis on “together” in these verbs does not include believers in Christ, who are specifically mentioned in verse 23, but involves the various parts of the natural Creation. At the same time verse 22 introduces this new paragraph, which sets forth the hope of future deliverance from suffering under the curse of sin.

Paul had begun this section by referring to the believers’ “present sufferings” (v. 18), a subject to which he returned in verse 23. Believers are described as the ones having **the firstfruits of the Spirit**. This is an appositional use of the genitive and means that the Holy Spirit *is* “the firstfruits” (*aparchēn*) 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. A farmer’s “firstfruits” were the initial harvesting of his first-ripened crops. This first installment was a foretaste and promise that more harvest was to come. Similarly God the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, is a foretaste that they will enjoy many more blessings, including living in God’s presence forever.

Because of “present sufferings” (Rom. 8:18) believers, like the Creation, **groan inwardly** (cf. v. 22; 2 Cor. 5:2) **as they wait eagerly** (from *apekdechomai*, the same word used of the Creation in Rom. 8:19 and of the manifestation of hope in v. 25) **for their adoption as sons**, which is identified as **the redemption of their bodies**. The word “adoption” (*huiiothesian*, “placing as a son”; trans. “sonship” in v. 15) describes a believer’s legal relationship to God as a result of God’s grace received by faith. (Regeneration, however, describes a believer’s relationship to God as a result of the new birth.) Israel had received adoption by God (9:4), a reality undoubtedly growing out of her covenantal ties with God (Deut. 7:6–9). In one sense each believer has already received the adoption because he has “received the Spirit of sonship” (lit., “adoption,” Rom. 8:15) and is a son of God (Gal. 4:6–7). At the same time, as Romans 8:23 states, believers still anticipate their adoption in its completeness, which is said to be “the redemption” (*apolytrōsin*; etymologically the Gr. word describes a release or deliverance or manumission achieved by a ransom payment [*lytron*]; cf. comments on 3:24) of their bodies. This is called the revelation of the sons of God (8:19) and “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (v. 21). It will occur at the Rapture of the church when believers will be raised and transformed with glorious bodies (1 Cor. 15:42–54; 2 Cor. 5:1–5; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thes. 4:13–18). Paul called that day “the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

8:24–25. God has promised that a believer’s body will finally be delivered from sin and its effects by the work of His Son. Those who respond by faith to that promise have **hope**, a confident expectation of that bodily redemption (cf. Gal. 5:5). This is the final step of salvation and it was in that anticipation that **we were saved**. The redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23) obviously has not yet occurred (**Who hopes for what he already has?**), but it is hoped for and eagerly anticipated (**wait** is from *apekdechomai*; cf. vv. 19, 23) with steadfast endurance (**patiently** is lit., “through endurance”) in present sufferings (v. 18).

8:26–27. These verses point out that believers are not left to their own resources in their sufferings (v. 18) and groaning (v. 23). **The Spirit helps** (pres. tense, “keeps on helping”) **us in** (the Gr. here does not have the words rendered “us in”) **our weakness**. It is not that the Spirit helps in those occasional times *when* Christians are weak; their state *is* one of weakness and the Spirit continually helps them. The Greek word for weakness (*astheneia*) may include physical, emotional, and spiritual disability (cf. comments on James 5:14) evidenced by inward “groaning” (Rom. 8:23). “Helps” translates *synantilambanetai*, a rich word that pictures someone helping another carry a heavy load. (It is used elsewhere in the NT only in Luke 10:40.)

One evidence of their weakness is the fact that believers **do not know what they ought to pray** (lit., “what we should pray as it is necessary”). In their weakness both the content and the manner of proper prayer eludes them, **but the Spirit Himself** comes to their rescue and **intercedes** (pres. tense, “keeps on interceding”) **for us with groans that words cannot express**. Natural Creation groans (Rom. 8:22) and believers groan (v. 23), and so does the Holy Spirit. This has nothing to do with praying in tongues, as some suggest. The groaning is done by the Holy Spirit, not believers, and is not stated in words. The help the Spirit gives (v. 26) is His interceding. “Intercedes” translates *hyperentynchanei*, which occurs only here in the New Testament; it means “approaches or appeals to someone.” The One **who searches our hearts** is God (1 Sam. 16:7; Heb. 4:13), and He **knows** (*oiden*, “knows perceptively or intuitively”) **the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes** (*entynchanei*; cf. Rom. 8:26) **for the saints in accordance with God’s will**. Even though the Spirit’s words are not expressed, the Father knows what the Spirit is thinking. This is an interesting statement about the Father’s omniscience and the intimacy within the Trinity. The Lord Jesus continually intercedes for believers in God’s

presence (v. 34; Heb. 7:25) and the Holy Spirit also intercedes on their behalf! Though believers are ignorant of what to pray for and how to voice those requests, the Spirit voices their requests for them.

#### F. Certainty of sanctification (8:28–39)

This section on the doctrine of a believer's sanctification (vv. 28–39) logically follows the discussion of its goal or end (vv. 18–27). To discuss the goal of sanctification—a believer's hope, which he awaits eagerly and steadfastly—is pointless unless realizing that goal is certain. God provided that certainty and confirms the believer's hope, since sanctification from its beginning in regeneration to its completion in glorification is ultimately God's work, which believers appropriate by faith (cf. Phil. 1:6).

8:28. Believers, Paul began, know of sanctification's certainty, and that knowledge is gained by spiritual perception. Christians **know** intuitively (*oidamen*)—though they may not always fully understand and sense it experientially—**that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him** (lit., “to the ones who love God He works all things together unto good”). The things themselves may not be good, but God harmonizes them together for believers' ultimate good, because His goal is to bring them to perfection in His presence (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24). Even adversities and afflictions contribute to that end. The active voice present tense of the verb *synergei* (“He works together”) emphasizes that this is a continuing activity of God. And His working is on behalf of “those who love Him,” who are further identified as the ones **who have been called according to His purpose**. It is significant that a believer's love for God *follows* God's calling of him and is undoubtedly the product of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:19). The word for “purpose” is *prothesin*, God's plan (Paul used the same word in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11). “Called” means more than being invited to receive Christ; it means to be summoned to and given salvation (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30).

8:29–30. These verses give Paul's explanation of what it means to be one who has “been called according to His purpose” and why God keeps on working all their experiences together to their benefit (v. 28). Believers are those God foreknew. This does not mean simply that God foreknows *what* believers will do, but that God foreknows *them*. Nor does divine foreknowledge merely mean an awareness of or acquaintance with an individual. Instead it means a meaningful relationship with a person based on God's choice (cf. Jer. 1:4–5; Amos 3:2) in eternity before Creation. “He chose us in Him before the Creation of the world” (Eph. 1:4).

This eternal choice and foreknowledge involves more than establishing a relationship between God and believers. It also involves the goal or end of that relationship: **Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son** (cf. 1 John 3:2). The entire group that is brought into relationship with God in His eternal plan by divine foreknowledge and choice is **predestined** (*proōrisen*, “predetermined”; cf. Eph. 1:5, 11). God determined beforehand the believers' destiny, namely, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. By all saints being made like Christ (ultimate and complete sanctification), Christ will be exalted as **the Firstborn among many brothers**. The resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ will become the Head of a new race of humanity purified from all contact with sin and prepared to live eternally in His presence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42–49). As the “Firstborn” He is in the highest position among others (cf. Col. 1:18).

Between the start and finish of God's plan are three steps: being **called** (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:28), being **justified** (cf. 3:24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9), and being **glorified** (cf. 8:17; Col. 1:27; 3:4), and in the process not a single person is lost. God completes His plan without slippage. “Glorified” is in the



past tense because this final step is so certain that in God's eyes it is as good as done. To be glorified is another way of saying that God's children will be "conformed" to His Son; and that is God's ultimate "purpose." No longer will they "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

8:31–32. It is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and answered (in vv. 31–39) seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer's eternal salvation is completely secure in God's hands. The first question is general, **What, then, shall we say in response to this?** (cf. 4:1; 6:1; 9:14, 30) The obvious response to 8:28–30 would be to say "Hallelujah," or to stand in open-mouthed amazement.

This leads to a series of six more specific questions. The first is, **If God is for us, who can be against us?** Obviously, Satan and his demonic hosts are against believers (cf. Eph. 6:11–13; 1 Peter 5:8), but they cannot ultimately prevail and triumph over believers. God is the self-existent One and the sovereign Creator and, since He is for believers, no one can oppose believers successfully. He is for believers to the extent that **He ... did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.** The word "spare" (*epheisato*, from *pheidomai*) is the same word used in the Septuagint in Genesis 22:12 where the NIV translates it "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 as the Sacrifice for sin (John 1:29). In view of this supreme act of God's grace, **How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?** 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 (cf. 2 Peter 1:3).

8:33–34. The next two questions Paul raised and answered are forensic or legal in nature. **Who will bring any charge** (*enkalesei*, "make a formal accusation in court; press charges"; cf. Acts 19:40; 23:29; 26:2) **against those whom God has chosen?** 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.** The Judge Himself declares the accused person righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:1). As a result all accusations are dismissed and no one can bring an accusation that will stand.

The related question is, **Who is He that condemns?** The Greek participle *ho katakrinōn* can have a future sense, "will condemn," which seems preferable here. (Cf. *katakrima*, "condemnation, punishment" in 8:1.) Jesus Christ is God's appointed Judge (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31), so Paul answered this question by stating, **Christ Jesus.** But Jesus is the very One whom the believer has trusted for salvation. Furthermore, He is the One **who died—more than that** (lit., "but more") **who was raised to life—who is at the right hand of God** (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) **and is also interceding for us.** The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Judge, but He is also the One with whom each believer is identified by faith. As a result he is a believer's Sacrifice for sin (cf. Rom. 5:8; 8:32), his new life (a believer shares in Christ's resurrection life; 6:4, 8, 11; Eph. 2:5–6; Col. 2:13), his Intercessor (cf. Heb. 7:25; also the Holy Spirit intercedes, Rom. 8:26–27) and his Defense (1 John 2:1). Certainly the Judge will not condemn His own who are in Him by faith! (cf. Rom. 8:1)

8:35–37. Paul's final questions are in verse 35: **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** The context (vv. 37, 39) shows that "the love of Christ" is His love for believers (not their love for Him; cf. 5:5). The apostle suggested seven things a believer might experience (Paul

experienced all of them; 2 Cor. 11:23–28) that some might think could come between a believer and Christ’s love—**trouble** (*thilpsis*, “pressure or distress”; mentioned frequently by Paul in 2 Cor.) **or hardship** (*stenochōria*, lit., “narrowness,” i.e., being pressed in, hemmed in, crowded) **or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword**. These things—stated in increasing intensity—do not separate Christians from Christ; instead they are part of the “all things” (Rom. 8:28) God uses to bring them to conformity to His Son. Then Paul quoted Psalm 44:22 to remind his readers that in this life the people of God must face much affliction (cf. John 16:33) including even martyrdom for some. In the early days of the church one or more Christians were martyred every day, or faced the possibility of it. Their persecutors valued Christians’ lives as nothing more than animals to be butchered.

In all these adversities (cf. “all things” in Rom. 8:28 and “all things” in v. 32 with **all these things** in v. 37), rather than being separated from Christ’s love, believers are **more than conquerors** (pres. tense, *hypernikōmen*, “keep on being conquerors to a greater degree” or “keep on winning a glorious victory”) **through Him who loved us**. Jesus Christ and His love for believers enable them to triumph (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14).

8:38–39. Paul then ended his discussion on believers’ safety in Jesus Christ and the certainty of their sanctification with a positive declaration—**For I am convinced** (perf. tense, “I stand convinced”; cf. 15:14) **that** nothing can **separate** believers **from the love of God** (God’s love for them, not their love for God; cf. v. 35). Paul’s list of 10 items begins with death, where the list of 7 items in verse 35 ended. These elements in God’s universe include the extremes of existence: (1) **death** and (2) **life** (in either death [2 Cor. 5:8–9] or life, believers are in God’s presence); the extremes of created spiritual armies: (3) **angels** and (4) **demons** (angels would not and demons could not undo God’s relationship with His redeemed ones); the extremes in time: (5) **the present** and (6) **the future** (nothing known now, e.g., the hardships listed in Rom. 8:35, or in the unknown time to come); spiritual enemies: (7) **powers** (perhaps Satan and his demons; cf. Eph. 6:12; or possibly human governments); the extremes in space: (8) **height** and (9) **depth** (nothing overhead or underneath can suddenly come swooping down or up to sever believers from God’s love); and (10) everything in the entire created realm. Absolutely nothing in His **Creation** can thwart His purpose for believers **in Christ**. What a climactic way to affirm the certainty of believers’ salvation!

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 1690 – 1700). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**8:20–23** Evil in the world resulted from human sin and selfishness (Gen 3:17). Now the creation struggles in “bondage of corruption” and groans, awaiting its restoration. Christians still corrupted by sin await the redemption of their bodies. Christians value the creation as God’s handiwork and groan with it in eager anticipation of the better days of the new creation (see 2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1).

**8:28** Paul did not say all things *are* good—an absurd claim in view of both natural tragedies and human atrocities. When suffering, Christians might conclude either that God does not love them or that He is not sufficiently protecting them. Paul thus insisted that in all things God works to accomplish what is good for His people. Clearly God does not always spare His people from tragedies, illnesses, and other adverse circumstances of life, or even shield them from their

opponents' persecution (v. 36). In any of these difficulties—and Paul listed some awful ones (vv. 35, 38–39)—God is working for His people's good.

Prosperity theology maintains that “good” means God always physically heals or protects trusting, praying believers from tragedies. But this teaching runs counter to the tenor of this passage. In fact, to say that God always prospers His people borders on heresy, calling into question God's working of His sovereign purposes through His people's suffering (5:3–5; see Jms 1:2–4, 9–11). Rather than promising escape, Paul intended here to provide hope for the afflicted. God will accomplish “good”: His loving purposes for His creation and glory to His people. The “good” concerns their final salvation.

Despite any alleged evidence to the contrary, nothing can separate God's people from His perpetual love.

**8:29–30** Paul assured his readers that God would accomplish His saving purposes for them. Paul listed five distinct aspects of salvation, each building on the former. “Foreknew” denotes possession of prior knowledge, which humans or God may possess. God has previously known who His people will be. Some argue that when predicated of God, this is a special knowledge, equivalent to election: the Hebrew “knowing” implies establishing an intimate relationship. While God knows His people in a special way, it is not certain Paul here intended “foreknew” to equal “elect,” since he knew and used terms for election elsewhere in Rm (8:33; 9:11; 11:5). Besides, how might God have had a special relationship with people before they even existed? In either case, certainly God intimately knows His church (see 2 Tm 2:19).

Beyond God's foreknowledge of His people, He has “predestined” a general outcome for them: being “conformed to the image of His Son,” so that at His coming Christ will exult with His many brothers and sisters who bear His family resemblance. So God “calls” these His own people (9:24–26); He invites them to be His. Before the bar of justice, God declares them “not guilty.” They are “justified.” At Christ's return, God will “glorify” His people, restoring the glory diminished by sin (3:23; 8:17).