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Romans

8:28-39

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

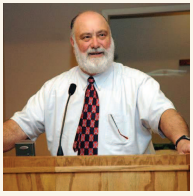
If God be for us, who can be against us?

ROMANS 8:31, EXCERPT

Romans 8:28-39 speaks to the believer's confidence in God's purpose and preserving love. John Weaver follows the passage through an extended series, considering providence, calling, justification, and the assurance that rests in Christ. These messages connect doctrinal confidence with patience and faithful conduct in the midst of difficulty.

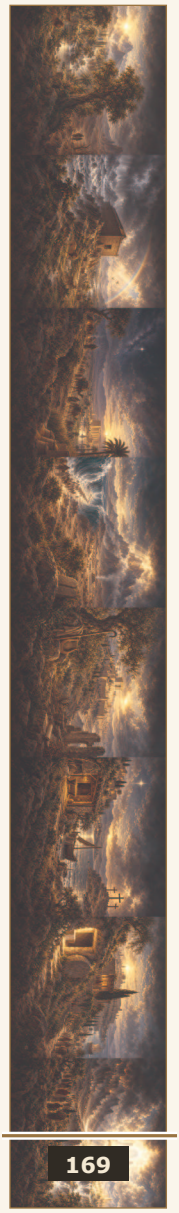
“There is a difference between salvation and the assurance of salvation.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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BOOK 169

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Romans 8:28-39

New Testament Studies

John Weaver

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Romans 8:28-39

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CHAPTER 1

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part One

Introduction to the Series

This is an introductory message to Romans 8:28, and this is the introduction to this verse. I want to take two or three weeks and look at this verse, especially because I think it is very well demanded and needed in this day and time. Romans chapter 8, verse 28, says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

The proof of this assertion continues: “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. 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.”

The Book of Romans as a Book of Power

The book of Romans is a book about power, especially the power of God. It deals with the power of God to save, to justify, to preserve, and to enable. In fact, one of its key verses is Romans 1:16. There the Apostle Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now, let us go back to this phrase: "for it is the power of God." The word power is the Greek word dunamis, from which we get our English word dynamite. Literally, he says that the gospel is indeed the dynamite of God. The book of Romans also gives us illustrations of God's providential power as well.

Romans is one of the most tremendous books in the New Testament and one of its most theological books. Many scholars say that it is Paul's magnum opus—that is, his greatest epistle, his greatest writing. Let me give you a quote that Martin Luther said concerning the book of Romans. Martin Luther, a reformer, said, "The chief book of the New Testament is the book of Romans. It deserves to be known by heart, word for word, by every Christian." Thus, Martin Luther recommended memorizing the entirety of the book of Romans.

Certainly, everyone in this room knows Romans 8:28. Every Christian knows Romans 8:28. Every professing Christian knows Romans 8:28, and practically most believers know Romans 8:28. It is one of the most famous and one of the most often quoted verses in the New Testament.

This verse may be taken out of context. It may be abused, misused, or misapplied. But you can say one thing for sure: it is extremely well known.

There are many people who try to derive comfort from this verse when it does not apply to them at all. I am going to show you the limitation on this particular verse. There are many people who try to derive comfort who do not deserve that comfort and who misuse and abuse this verse. There are others who are genuine Christians, but who have never analyzed this passage and do not understand it;

consequently, they miss some of the greatest comfort and assurance that God has for them.

In Romans 8:28, Paul is making an assertion. He is laying down a proposition. Then, in verses 29 and 30, he proves that assertion. He proves that proposition. You will find that this is the way the Apostle Paul writes throughout all of his writings. He will always state a proposition or make an assertion, then go forward to explain that assertion or proposition, and usually make an application. The Apostle Paul's writings can always be divided into three simple categories: exposition, explanation, and application.

That is the type of real teaching and preaching according to the Word of God. God always wants us to expound His Word, explain His Word, and apply His Word. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul expounds truth, explains truth, and applies the truth. He does the same thing in the book of Galatians and in the book of Ephesians. There is always this division.

Before we begin to look at even verse 28 of Romans 8, we ought first to look at the immediate context. The entirety of Romans chapter 8 deals with biblical assurance. In the immediate context, the Apostle Paul lays down three grounds for our comfort, consolation, and assurance. Look, beginning with verse 18, and let us read through verse 25: Romans 8, verse 18.

The Immediate Context of Romans 8:28

Paul says, "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. For the earnest expectation of the creature"—or of the creation—"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 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? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

What the Apostle Paul is doing in this passage is showing the great disproportion between the sufferings which we endure in this life and the weight of glory that God has laid up for us in the next life. The present sufferings that we are enduring are absolutely insignificant when compared with the eternal weight of glory. As he says in verse 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."

He goes on to talk about the glory that is going to be revealed in this creation. God subjected this world to the curse because of our sin and our rebellion, but when our Lord returns, even this curse is going to be lifted from the earth, and the creation itself is going to be set free into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Let me give you a statement that I hope will explain this point. I am going to use the phrase "the model of the saints." I will explain this more in the weeks to come: the model of the saints.

Paul said, “that I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with that eternal weight of glory which is laid up for the children of God.” Why did I say that this is the model of the saints? Consider Job. Job certainly endured a great deal. In fact, Job went through more than you and I have ever been through, probably more than you and I have ever been through put together.

All of us may have lost loved ones, but we never lost ten children at one time. Nor have we ever lost everything that we ever possessed at one time like Job did. Job not only suffered the loss of his children and the loss of all his property and possessions; he also suffered a terrible disease and was in great pain and discomfort. Yet, in light of all his losses, Job said, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.” In another passage, Job said, “...though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” Job was saying, “It doesn't matter if the worms eat my body

even while I'm alive. Yet I know that in my flesh I shall see God." There is going to be a resurrection, and I shall behold him myself. The sufferings that I have been through are not worthy to be compared with the glory that's going to be revealed.

James says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and patience. Behold, we count them happy who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercies."

How many of you would be willing right now to suffer the loss of everything you possess if you knew that within three or six months you would get back double everything you had? How many of you would be willing to suffer the loss of everything you have and continue to trust God, even if you did not know that you were going to get back double?

The point is this: Job lost everything he had. But in the end, what did God do? God gave him back double everything he had lost. You could say that Job's end, materially and physically, was not worthy to be compared with his former beginning; in other words, his ending was twice as much as he had at the beginning. But if you think that was the blessing, when God doubled everything he had, Job said that was nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory laid up for him, because he knew that in his flesh he would see God, whom his eyes would behold, and not another.

The truth is that what the Apostle Paul is encouraging us in Romans chapter 8 is this: it does not matter what we go through as Christians. It does not matter if it is the loss of children, or the loss of a husband, wife, or parents, or economic loss. Whatever it is, the apostle is saying that the sufferings in this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed. So much greater and more magnificent will be the glory laid up for those who love the Lord. Very clearly, then, he is encouraging us by giving us the model of the saints.

He said in James 5, "Take Job, and take my brethren the prophets, for an example." All our sufferings, though we complain, are not worthy to be compared with what God has laid up for us.

The Ministry of the Spirit

Paul gives a second ground of encouragement: the ministry of the Spirit. The first ground was the model of the saints; the second is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He says, "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. 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."

Look at the phrase, "Likewise the Spirit," or literally, "in like manner, the Spirit." Just as verses 18 through 25 were a ground of comfort, consolation, and assurance, so now we have another ground: the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As hope sustains us in our sufferings, it is the Holy Spirit who sustains us and helps us in our infirmities.

He says, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Have you ever been to the point where you did not know what to pray? I have. Sometimes you cannot even utter words; you just groan. Sometimes it is only, "Oh, Lord." Sometimes you simply shed tears. I talked to someone recently whose only ability was to sit there and weep—so broken.

The thing that thrilled my heart was this: the Lord knows the heart, and the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us. Have you ever stopped to think that the saints of God are blessed in the fact that we have actually two intercessors? We have the Lord Jesus, who is our intercessor in the court of heaven, and we have the Holy Spirit, who is our intercessor in the theater of the heart.

So even in our darkest hour, even in our deepest ignorance, there is always the Holy Spirit who maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. You have, first of all, the model of the saints as a ground for encouragement; secondly, the ministry of the Spirit; and then, thirdly, the matter of the Scriptures which are given to us in verse 28.

That brings us to this passage: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called

according to his purpose." This third ground of comfort is given to us in verse 28. God is sovereignly working everything out for our good.

The Divine Limitation of Romans 8:28

Before we begin to look at verse 28 in detail, I want us to look at it generally, because there is something so glaringly obvious that no one of us could miss it. The very first glaring detail, the most obvious truth, is that there is a divine limitation in this verse. All things do not work together for good for everybody. All things do not work together for good for unbelievers. All things do not work together for good to the wicked. Look at the limitation: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

The interesting thing about the Greek language is that Greek was not constrained in writing the way we are today in English. If you were writing a sentence in English, you would usually have your subject first, then your verb, and perhaps a direct object. The subject is usually placed at the beginning. But that is not the way it is in Greek. In the Greek language, if you wanted to put the verb first, you could; if you wanted to put the subject first, you could. In other words, the Greek writer always put at the beginning of the sentence that which he wanted to emphasize.

The Greek construction is this: "And we know that to the ones loving God, all things work together for good, to them who are called according to His purpose." The divine limitation, then, is placed in this verse. It is only those who love God, only those who are called according to His purpose, for whom things work together for good.

Let me put it to you like this: all things are not right with the world, and all things do not work out for the good to the unbeliever. In fact, the opposite is true for those who do not love God. If you can read, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," the opposite is also true: we know that all things work for the bad to those who do not love God.

Old Testament Examples of God Working Evil for the Wicked

Let me show you how not everything works together for good to those who hate God, but everything works together for the bad. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 22. I want to show you some Scriptures and then call to your mind some illustrations that I am sure you will remember. Begin reading there with verse 1, and try to visualize what is happening. We have a king in 1 Kings chapter 22 by the name of Ahab. Ahab was a wicked, ungodly reprobate. You remember that he hated God, married Jezebel, and prosecuted the prophets of God. Ahab had gotten Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to come in, and he was trying to persuade Jehoshaphat to go to war with him.

There was a Ramoth in Gilead that belonged to the children of Israel. What Ahab wanted was to go back and reclaim that land for Israel.

That is certainly a worthy goal; there is nothing wrong with it. If Mexico came over, took over Louisiana, and captured it from us, would it not be a worthy goal for us to get together and go get our land back? Of course. There is nothing wrong with that.

Let us note what happens in 1 Kings chapter 22. The problem was that Ahab was a wicked reprobate. They continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. Syria had captured Ramoth-gilead, and it came to pass in the third year that Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came down to the king of Israel.

Did anybody catch what I just read? Jehoshaphat came down to the king of Israel. Here is Jerusalem; Jehoshaphat is king of Judah. Here is Samaria; Ahab is king of Israel. Jehoshaphat came down, but he went up, since Samaria is north of Jerusalem. Although he went up, God said he came down because he was associating with a wicked reprobate.

The king of Israel said to his servants, “Know ye not that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and that we be still and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?” He said to Jehoshaphat, “Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead?”

I have never understood Jehoshaphat. He said to the king of Israel, “I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.” How could he say, “I am as thou art”? Jehoshaphat was a good and godly man; he was not the same as Ahab. I know he was saying, “I’m going to work with you,” but my soul: “I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thine horses.” Then Jehoshaphat said, “Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.”

Why did Jehoshaphat give his word that he would be with Ahab before he inquired of the Lord? He should have inquired first. So he says, "Inquire at the word of the Lord."

Verse 6 says, "Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go up against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat then asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?"

Who were those four hundred prophets? They were prophets of Baal—the four hundred, probably, that Elijah took out. Jehoshaphat asked again, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we might inquire of him?" The king of Israel answered, "There is yet one man, just one, Micaiah, the son of Imla, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Jehoshaphat replied, "Let not the king say so." Then the king called an officer and said, "Hasten hither Micaiah, the son of Imla."

How did Ahab know where Micaiah was? Didn't the Spirit of the Lord carry these prophets hither and yon? Of course not. He knew where Micaiah was because he had him in prison. Verse 10 says, "And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets"—these false prophets—"prophesied before them."

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 22:11-24 (KJV)

And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron, and he said, "Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push

the Syrians until thou have consumed them." And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand." And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." And Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." So he came to the king, and the king said unto him, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" And he answered him, "Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." And the king said unto him, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?"

Now he knew Micaiah was mocking him. Micaiah said, "And I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace." And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" And he said, "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left."

"And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" And Micaiah said, "Behold, thou shalt see in that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself."

It did no good. God killed him anyhow. And the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." And Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me." And he said, "Hearken, O people, every one of you."

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes." And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. I think I would have thought that was a setup right off. But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." When the captains saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel," and turned aside to fight against him. Jehoshaphat cried out. When they perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. Then a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.

He said unto the driver of his chariot, "Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded." The battle increased that day, and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even; and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

Was God working everything out for the good for Ahab? What was God working out? God was working everything out for the bad. He wanted Ahab at Ramoth Gilead to die. God sent lying spirits in the mouths of his prophets. God sent Micaiah to tell him the truth, but Ahab did not believe the truth. God worked everything out to get Ahab to that battle so that he could kill him. The Bible says a certain man drew a bow at a venture; he did not even know who he was shooting at, but simply shot an arrow.

And it caught him right between the shoulder blades. You see, folks, all things do not work for the good to those that hate God. They work for evil. Do you remember, in the book of Esther, a man by the name of Haman? Remember the gallows that he built for

Mordecai? Who was hanged on those gallows? Haman and his sons. All things do not work together for good to those that hate God. It always works for their evil.

What about Jehoiachin? Second Kings, chapter 23. What about Zedekiah, Second Kings, chapters 24 and 25? Zedekiah hated God. Zedekiah was the last king of Israel—or Judah, not Israel. He was the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar came against him. Guess what God said? God told Zedekiah, "Because you've done evil, you're going to suffer." Zedekiah stood there and watched Nebuchadnezzar's men kill all of his family. Then they plucked out his eyes, blinded him, put him in chains, and took him away to die in a dungeon. Was God working out everything for Zedekiah's good? He was working out everything for Zedekiah's evil.

How about Jeroboam the son of Nebat? You remember him in First Kings, chapter 11? He was the man who made those two golden calves and caused Israel to go whoring after other gods. What about Omri, the father of Ahab? What about Zimri? Zimri was a wicked king. He rose up and murdered the king who was before him. Then Omri came against Zimri. Guess what Zimri did? He burned the palace down upon himself and killed himself, and I guess other people as well. Were all things working together for the good for Omri and Zimri? No. They were working out for evil, for the bad, because they were wicked, ungodly reprobates.

Did all things work together for good for Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Christ? Of course not. He went out and hanged himself. Our Lord said it had been better for him had he never been born. No, all things were not working out for the good for Judas Iscariot. Were all things working out for the good for Ananias and Sapphira in Acts, chapter 5? No.

God killed them because of their sin and rebellion. Did all things work out for good for Demas, who forsook Paul, the gospel, and God? No. Did all things work out for the good for Elymas the sorcerer? No. Did all things work out together for good for Simon the sorcerer? No. Did all things work out together for good to those antediluvians, those people who died in the flood? Can you just see Noah with the bumper sticker on the back of that ark saying, "Smile, God loves you," as all these people are being drowned? Did all things

work out together for good to those who were in Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain?

If God is working things out for the good to those who love Him, He is working out everything for evil for those who hate Him. Ultimately, there is one division: those who love God and those who do not love God. By the way, I am going to explain why the Apostle Paul uses the phrase, “We know that all things work together for good to them who love God.” Why did he not say, “We know that all things work together for good to those who believe on Jesus Christ”? Why did he not use some other expression? I will explain why.

Ultimately, there is one division between those who love God and those who do not love God; those who are saved and those who are unsaved; those who are converted and those who are unconverted; those who are regenerated and those who are unregenerated. God is not working everything out for the good of those who hate Him. He is working out everything for their destruction.

Notice what the Word of God says in Psalm 7, beginning with verse 11: “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he”—that is, the wicked man—“turn not, he”—God—“will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He”—the wicked—“made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.”

"His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Does that sound like God's working out everything for the good to those that hate him? No. He's working out everything for the evil and for the bad for those who hate him.

Psalm 9, verses 15 through 17, says, "The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."

Now compare this with verses 8 through 14: "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people

in uprightness. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: that I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation."

Verses 8 through 14 show what God is to the righteous. Then verse 15 says, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."

God is only working things out for the good to those that love Him. He's working everything for the bad for those who hate Him. Psalm 10, verse 2, says, "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart—I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent."

The psalmist says concerning this wicked man, “Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.” Look closely at verse 15 again. What did the psalmist say? “Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.” How did they perish? God killed them. God worked it out for their evil, not for their good.

New Testament Confirmation and Final Application

In John chapter 3, verse 18, our Lord says, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Here is the condemnation: he that believeth not on Christ is condemned already. Verse 36 says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” The wrath of God abideth on him? Yes.

Hebrews 10, verse 28, says, “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.” Go back to Deuteronomy 18, 19, and 21. If someone killed somebody, or did something worthy of death, and two or three witnesses testified, he was put to death. No mercy. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

The comfort from Romans 8:28 is only to those who are loving God, only to those who are called according to His purpose. There is no comfort in Romans 8:28 for the wicked, for the ungodly, or for the unbeliever. God is working things out in their lives for their bad. Listen, sinners may have many feast days, but they never have any safe days, because there is not a moment, not a second, not a minute that the wrath of God is not burning hot against them, and God is working everything out for their destruction. So Romans 8:28 has a divine limitation on it, and that is, it is reserved for those who are loving God, those who are called according to His purpose.

If this sinks into you, it does not matter if the economy crashes. It does not matter if literally all hell breaks loose. It does not matter if society goes the way of the dogs. What do we know? God is working all things out for good to those who love Him. Our hope, our comfort, our assurance are in His sovereign, providential control.

Father, we do ask Your blessing and help upon us today. We are so thankful, Lord, that You indeed are working everything out for our good because, Lord, we love Thee because You first loved us, and we are called according to Your purpose. We praise Thee and we worship Thee, and give Thee honor and glory through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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CHAPTER 2

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Two

In Romans 8, beginning with verse 28, the Apostle Paul writes: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified.”

Introduction and Review

Last week I began a series on verse 28 particularly, and I may go through the rest of the chapter. I was dealing primarily with verse 28. The message I brought was an introduction to verse 28, and also discussed its limitation. In verse 28 Paul lays down a proposition. Then he goes on to explain as well as to affirm that proposition in verses 29 and 30.

In this passage, in the immediate context, the Apostle Paul lays down three truths for the encouragement and consolation of Christians. First of all, there is the model of the saints. I explained that in verses 18 through 25, where the Apostle said that he reckoned the sufferings in this present life were not even worthy to be compared to the glory that is going to be revealed. Secondly, there is the ministry of the Spirit in verses 26 and 27.

Thirdly, there is the matter of the Scripture, which I said I would explain a little bit more this week in verse 28. The main thing I want to emphasize again by way of introduction is this: When you read verse 28, one of the first things you should be struck with is the limitation of this verse: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Therefore, not everything works together for good for the unbeliever, the wicked, the reprobate, or the rebellious. In fact, according to Scripture, everything works together for their bad.

We looked in 1 Kings chapter 22 at the life of Ahab and how God worked it out to get Ahab to Ramoth Gilead just so he could kill him. We looked at Haman in the book of Esther and at Athaliah in 2 Kings chapter 11. We mentioned Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and Jeroboam and Omri. We mentioned Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, Elymas the sorcerer, and Demas. We talked about those antediluvians, those people who lived on the other side of the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah. God was not working out everything for their good because they hated him. They despised him. God was working out everything for their evil.

Now, when we begin today in Romans 8 in verse 28, I want you to note that the Apostle Paul begins this section with two very important words. Actually, we should say three, because the conjunction there, "and," shows you the connection with the preceding verses. But he begins verse 28, "And we know." So the very first thing that catches your attention should be the two words, "we know." What Paul is assuming is that this knowledge is in all of the saints. He is saying that this knowledge is so fundamental, so elementary, that everyone ought to know it. There are numerous truths in the Bible that are so fundamental and elementary that Paul assumes all Christians know them. If I dwelt on this phrase, I believe

you could see that the entire New Testament just about would have to be covered, especially the writings of Paul.

The Foundation of Knowledge: 'We Know'

For he says in Romans 6 and verse 16, “Know ye not.” In other words, here is something that everybody ought to know. It is simple: “To whom you yield yourself servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey, whether of sin and of death or of obedience unto righteousness. Know ye not.” Look at Romans 7 and verse 14: “For we know that the law is spiritual.” Here is a fundamental, elementary truth. Look at Romans 8 and verse 22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Then, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1, the apostle says, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.” Note it once again: “For we know.” That is another truth so elementary and fundamental that Paul assumes every saint knows it.

The same thing is true in Romans 8:28, when Paul says, “And we know.” This is one of those fundamental, elementary truths. Paul says, “And we know,” but what does he mean? Compare verse 26 with verse 28. In verse 26 he says, “Likewise, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Then, in verse 28, he says, “And we know.”

Paul has just said, “We know not,” and now he says, “We know.” Now, wait a minute. How can these two truths be reconciled? Let me ask that another way. How is it that we can be so ignorant, so confused, and so helpless on the one hand, yet so positive, so encouraged, and so assured on the other? Paul has just said, “We know not,” and now he says, “We know.” The paradox is resolved when we realize that a Christian can be absolutely certain about the ultimate while being almost totally ignorant about the immediate. Christians do not know everything, but there is one thing we do know: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”

You could apply this to yourself. Look at the situation in which Don and Joyce find themselves, Bob and Nancy, and many of us. There are some things we do not know, do not understand, and do not comprehend. But there is one thing that we do know. In other words, we should never, ever let the immediate destroy what we know about the ultimate. The fact that we do not know what is happening around us, or do not understand it at this very moment, does not mean that we do not know that everything is going to be worked out ultimately for our good and for God's glory.

It is exactly at this place that the flesh, the world, and the devil will attack you quickest. When you are confused, helpless, ignorant, and do not understand, inevitably the enemy will say, "You cannot be a Christian. You would not be going through this if you were. God does not love you. Look at what you are experiencing and how you are suffering. You cannot be saved." At this point, you have to agree with your adversary and say, "You are right on one thing. I do not understand. I do not know. I do not fully comprehend it. I do not know the mind of God totally. I may be confused on this one issue, but one thing I do know: ultimately, God will use this and everything else in my life and work it out perfectly for my good and for his glory."

In other words, you and I are absolutely assured of the ultimate victory. We are not to allow particulars to interfere with the whole. Do not focus on the incidents of life with such intensity that you lose sight of the ultimate, or of the whole outworking of God in your life. You may lose a battle, but that does not mean that you have lost the war. The war, the ultimate, is already won. We may not understand the battles in which we are engaged, but we do know that the victory is ours.

There is a principle here: the Word of God teaches that you and I are not exempt from the trials and troubles of this life. We are going to go through many things, and we may go through a lot of things in the next couple of years that we will not understand or comprehend. But we know the ultimate: the captain of our salvation is at the helm of the ship. He is in absolute total control, working everything out for our good and for his glory.

You can take these two phrases, "we know not" and "and we know," and say that they are a complete summary of the Christian life. There are many things that we do not know, but ultimately we do know that we are going to come out the victor in Jesus Christ. That is why Paul wrote, "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

The Foundation of Our Knowledge

Let us begin today by considering the foundation or basis for this knowledge. A few weeks ago, I spoke to you about epistemology. Epistemology answers the question, How do we know? If you are a child of God, how do you know that all things are going to work out for your good and for God's glory? That is a question in reference to epistemology. How do you know? What is the ground upon which you and I can most assuredly say, “And we know”?

Grounds for Assurance: Express Statements of Scripture

There are, first of all, two very obvious grounds. Number one, we have the express statements of Scripture. There are multitudes of promises and scores of plain, simple statements in the Bible that God is providing, protecting, and working everything out for His people. And may I ask you this question: Why should He not do so? According to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 10, and Zechariah chapter 2 and verse 8, God said, “Whosoever toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye.” God's people are therefore referred to as the pupil, the tenderest part of the body. He says, “You are the apple of my eye.”

Hold Romans chapter 8, and let us look first in our Bibles to Psalm 91. As you turn to Psalm 91, find Hebrews chapter 1 also, because we are going to look at a comparison verse in just a moment. I want to share some of these express statements of Scripture before we go further. Look in Psalm 91, beginning with verse 1.

“Psalm 91, verse 1. Watch carefully. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Wait a minute. Where does God place His people? He

places us in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. What will that enable us to say? Look in verse 2: “I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in him will I trust.”

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.” Did you hear that? “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.” What is the snare of the fowler? Does anyone know? It is a snare to catch a bird. In other words, men set snares, and God says He is going to deliver us from all these snares set by wicked men, from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence. “He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust.”

"His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Now watch, thou shall not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flyeth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee."

Some of you men who were in service will remember this illustration. During boot camp, they took us out and showed us fields of fire with 11 man squad. For those who were not in service, there were 11 men lined up, usually with two BARs, Browning Automatic Rifles.

That was the weapon of choice when I was in service a long time ago. Two Browning Automatic Rifles were on the ends, shooting in a crisscross pattern. All the other men in between had fields of fire and angles. It did not matter which way you came; there were bullets coming at you. My field of fire might be from this door to that window, while Henry's might be from that door to that wall, with everything crisscrossing.

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 91:1-16; Hebrews 1:14 (KJV)

They took us out at night. Every fifth bullet they shot was a tracer, which means you could see it was red. For every red bullet, there were four that you did not see. When that eleven-man team started firing, all you could see was a solid

sheet of red. I often wondered, "Oh Lord, how does anybody get through that?" And yet thousands of people did.

And that's what God says: "A thousand shall fall at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." You're talking about protection. Let's go on and look at it. He says in verse 8, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked." It's not going to happen to you, but you're going to see it happen to them. Why? "Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the most high thy habitation. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against the stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion, and the adder, and the young lion, and the dragon, shalt thou trample under thy feet."

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

Go back to verse 11: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Hebrews 1, verse 14, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" Do you realize that we have angelic servants, angelic ministers who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation? In other words, they're the ones that protect us up until the time we are converted and continue to protect us even after we are converted. They are ministering spirits. So here, the entirety of Psalm 91 demonstrates the providential care and protection and deliverance of Almighty God.

Here's an express statement of Scripture. God says, "I'm working out for you. A thousand may fall at my right hand and 10,000 at my feet, but it's not going to come nigh you."

Matthew chapter 6 gives us a comparison concerning God's care. Beginning with verse 25: "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought

for your life what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Then God says, "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into their barns. Yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they?"

It is true that our Heavenly Father takes care of us. But it is also true that we have to work. God uses means. If you were to come to my house, you would see some of the fattest sparrows and finches and wrens you've ever laid your eyes on. You know why? Because I have three feeders out there, and they gorge themselves on them every day.

Who is feeding those sparrows? God is, but he is using me. If God did not provide for me, I could not provide for them. "Are not you much better than they?"

Here is the uselessness of worry: "Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment?" Why are you so uptight about the things of this world? "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought," that is, do not be anxious, "saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles and the heathen seek. For your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Most of us waste precious time and energy on things we should not even be thinking about. Notice what David says in Psalm 37:25: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Isn’t that amazing?

Here is an express statement in Scripture that our Father knows what we need and He will take care of us. All of our trials, all of our

troubles are going to work out for our good and His glory. We need to compare this with the book of James, chapter 1, as well.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 5, beginning there with verse 1: “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace where we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Now watch verse 3: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations.”

Let me tell you what the word glory means. It means to exalt; it means to jump up and down again. Consider the comparison. Verse 1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Verse 2 says, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” The word rejoice is exactly the same word as glory in verse 3.

When we begin to think of the eternal weight of reward and glory that is ours with Jesus Christ, we rejoice, we jump up and down, we exult. Then Paul says in verse 3, “And not only so, but we jump up and down and exult in tribulations.”

When was the last time you said, “Thank God the IRS is after me”? When was the last time you said, “Well, thank God I don’t have enough money to pay my bills”? When was the last time you said, “Well, thank God I was sick all last week”? Yet Paul says, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations. Why? Knowing that tribulations worketh patience. And patience, experience. And experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”

What is the ultimate end of our tribulations? It is for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts. Our tribulations give us patience; patience gives us experience; experience gives us hope; and hope makes us not ashamed. Ultimately, the end is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

James says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations,” that is, different kinds of temptations. “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting

nothing," or that you may be mature and complete. The ultimate end of our tribulations and trials, then, is maturity in Christ.

The point I am trying to make is this: Even when we do not understand, and even though we do not like what we are going through, God still uses it. Peter speaks of the saints of God, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." The saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Here is the assurance and glory of what is to be revealed: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice," though now, in this life or season, "if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Some of these things can crunch us, seemingly. But what is the result? "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

The testing and trial of our faith, which oftentimes produces heaviness, is nothing more than our Lord refining the gold in our lives. Ultimately, it is for our good and for His glory. Even the discipline and chastisement that God has to bring into our lives because of our sins works for our good and for His glory.

So we have express statements of Scripture that enable us to say, "And we know." There is a second area in which we can say with all assurance, "And we know": not only the expressed statements of Scripture, but also the experience of the saints.

James says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." The prophets are examples of suffering, affliction, and patience. Throughout the Bible, whether we study the life of Elijah, the life of Elisha, or the prophets, we find much suffering and persecution, which produced patience and godliness in their lives.

Grounds for Assurance: Experience of the Saints

"Behold, we count them happy who endure." We have heard of the patience of Job and seen the end of the Lord. God works everything out for our good and His glory, and the experience of the saints shows this.

Consider Joseph. He was sold into slavery in Egypt. When his brothers went down to get corn, Joseph knew them, but they did not know Joseph. Joseph said he would keep Simeon there as insurance because they were all slaves; they had told him they had a baby brother at home. That baby brother at home was Joseph's whole brother.

These other brothers were half-brothers. He said, "Unless you bring him back, surely you're all spies." So the boys came home. Old Jacob said, "Where's Simeon?" They told him the man had held Simeon in Egypt and said, "Unless we bring Benjamin back, we're not going to get any food."

"Why didn't you even tell the man you had a brother?" Jacob asked. They answered, "How did we know he was going to ask to see him?"

When the food ran out, Jacob said, "Go on back." They said, "We're not going to go without Benjamin, because if we go without Benjamin, we're going to all be put in prison and we're not going to get any food."

Genesis 42:36 says, "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have you bereaved of my children? Joseph is not." He thought Joseph was dead. "And Simeon is not." Simeon was held in jail or in the palace down in Egypt. "And you will take Benjamin away." That was his baby. Watch what he says: "All these things are against me."

How many of those things were against him? None. Joseph being down in Egypt was for him. Simeon being held in Egypt was for him. Getting Benjamin there was for him.

Not one thing was against him. Everything was for him. Was it for Joseph's good that he was sold as a slave? Of course. Was it for Moses' good that he had to go into the desert for forty years and unlearn everything he had learned in Egypt? Yes. Here is a tough

one: Was it for David's good that his infant child, born of Bathsheba, died? What is the answer? Yes. It was hard, heart-rending experience, but as far as good, it was for David's good.

Was it for David's good that Absalom rebelled against him and ran him off the throne? Yes. It was another heart-rending experience, but it was still for David's good. David said in Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." All of that taught David to be obedient. In verse 71 he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

David said, "I learned more about my Lord and more about truth." In verse 75 he says, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right and that thou in faithfulness has afflicted me." All you have to do is read Psalm 51. You will find that everything that happened to David was for his good.

Most of us have grown so soft and lazy, and have been so pampered by ourselves and others, that we do not tend to think suffering can be for our good. As you read Hebrews chapter 11, ask yourself: Was this for the good of those saints? Verse 32 begins, "And what shall I more say?"

Hebrews tells us, "For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, and slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth.

Was all that suffering, imprisonment, persecution, and martyrdom for their good? The answer is yes. Let me use a simple

illustration. If you came into my kitchen and asked what was in a bowl, I might tell you it was flour and ask you to take a tablespoonful and eat it. You would say, “I don’t eat that.” Then I might show you a bowl of salt, and you would not want to eat that either. I could show you sugar, which would be too sweet, and milk, while you continued to refuse a tablespoonful.

All these ingredients individually may not taste good. But if you take them all, mix them together, and put them in an oven, what do you get? A cake, or bread, or whatever. I am not a cook or a chef, but when all those things are put together, they are delicious.

You and I may not like what is happening to us, but the truth is that it is still working out for our good. It may not be good to us, but it is good for us, and God is certainly going to work it out.

The Extent of This Knowledge

In Romans 8:28, Paul says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” We have considered the foundation of this knowledge: first, the expressed statements of Scripture; and second, the experience of the saints. Now consider the extent of this knowledge. “All things” covers everything imaginable.

The Extent of 'All Things'

In the context, Paul is dealing with sufferings. In verse 18 he says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this life or of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Then, in verse 35, he asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?”

He continues: “Or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

All these things that Paul mentions have to work out for our good. You may say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, I have one thing that is not going to work out for our good.” What is it? “Sin.” I am going to tell you, dear friend, sin is still going to work out for our good. You ask, “How can it?”

Have you ever stopped to think that it was sin that made the prodigal son so sick of himself and his life that he said, “I’ll rise and go to my father”? He became tired of eating with dogs and living like a dog. God used his sin and rebellion to make him sick of it.

Have you ever thought about Rahab the harlot? How could God ever use sin? Had Rahab not been a harlot, she never would have taken two strange men into her house. Decent women do not take strange men into their homes. Yet she took them in, and through those two men she was spared, ultimately converted, and even added to the genealogy of Christ.

God controls even sin. There was a man in the Bible by the name of Samson. He was a Nazirite; he was not supposed to touch a dead body or drink wine. Yet he went down to the Philistines, married a Philistine woman, and was totally disobedient to God. Could God use his sin? Yes. But let me remind you: he suffered for his sin. There is another principle in Scripture: if you sin, you suffer. Nobody ever gets by with sin. But that does not mean God will not use that sin, because God is in control.

Samson went to sleep in Delilah's lap. Delilah cut off his hair, and when the Philistines came, she shouted, "The Philistines are upon you." He arose, shook himself, and wist not that the Lord had departed from him. He went out, and they caught him, bound him in chains and fetters, put out his eyes, mocked him, and made fun of him. Slowly but surely, his hair began to grow.

Finally, they said, "Bring Samson out that we may make sport of him." He was led by a little boy, and he told the boy, "Get me to the two pillars of this temple." Samson prayed, "O Lord, allow me to avenge myself. Give me thy grace and my power this one last time." He took those two pillars and pulled them down, and of course Samson died. But Scripture says, "And he killed more of God's enemies in his death than he did in his life."

Did God use that? The answer is yes. Did God work that out for Samson's good? The answer is yes.

Three Ways God Works All Things for Good

All things work together for good, including those things God allows or permits to happen in our lives. These are things God could stop from happening, but He does not. God could stop the incident, the trial, or the problem, but He does not. Job is the classic example. God allowed Satan to test and try Job. Satan could not do one thing without permission from God, and God could have stopped it. God did not need that test; He knew Job, though Job may not have known Job. Yet God allowed it to happen. There are things in our lives that God permits or allows to happen.

Many times, these are what we would know as cause-and-effect relationships. Here is a little baby. You told that baby to keep his hand away from the fire, but he disobeys and puts his hand in it. What is the result? He is going to get burned. Could God supernaturally and sovereignly protect him from being burned? Yes, but He does not. He permits or allows it to happen.

Why? God's training of us is almost like the training of our children, or like training a young man to take over a profession. There comes a time when you have to back off and let them learn the hard way. The child who sticks his hand in the fire will not do it a second time; he learns. A young man may have been trained in the business while his father or a dear friend supervised him and kept him from making mistakes. Finally, you get tired of trying to live his life for him and say, "I back off. Make your own mistakes." Let him make one or two, and he will learn.

There is an old adage: experience is the best teacher. I like what Brother Kersey said: "Unhappily for most people, experience is the only teacher. They won't listen." God sometimes permits or allows things to happen in our lives that He could sovereignly stop, but He does it to teach us a lesson. Secondly, God sometimes does things directly to us and sends things directly upon us for our good.

Now let me burst a couple of bubbles. The average professing Christian—not our people; I believe you know better—thinks of our

Heavenly Father as nothing more than a loving, generous, kind, gracious God who doles out His blessings upon request, looks benignly at our sin, rebellion, and wickedness, winks at us, and lets us do our own thing. God is not like that. Some professing Christians, unhappily, think of God even on a lower class. They think of God as nothing more than "their little black servant boy," who must do their bidding whenever they call upon Him.

Both of these views are totally erroneous and completely unbiblical. Most of us—I know the adults for sure—were whipped as children. We were chastised. Some of us were beaten. I talked back to my father one time; that was all. When he got through with me, I learned that you do not talk back.

I did not like what happened to me, but I can assure you it was for my good. What grates on me today is to hear children say “yeah, yeah” back at their parents, argue with them, and fuss with them. The old-timers had a cure for that: a woodshed and a switch. According to how big you were, sometimes it was a swift kick in the seat of the pants. But you learned.

What I am trying to show you, dear friend, is this: sometimes God whips us the same way. He sends things directly upon us. Look in your Bibles at Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6: “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live, for they that is the earthly fathers, verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure? But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous nevertheless afterwards. It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." Sometimes God will do just like your earthly father. He will take you up and whip the daylights out of you—economically, familially, maritally, physically, mentally, emotionally, whatever it takes. But when He

gets through with you, you will have learned, and you will be the partaker of His holiness. The peaceable fruit of righteousness will be in your life.

Sometimes God permits or allows things to happen. Sometimes God sends things upon us. And thirdly, sometimes God withholds His blessings or withdraws Himself from us. What does that mean? Let me put it bluntly: He turns from us. We cannot find Him; we cannot discern Him; and it seems as if He has deserted us.

We do the same things with our children. Sometimes we allow them to learn the hard way. We could stop them, but we let them go through with it. Sometimes we send things upon them directly, in chastisement. Sometimes we simply turn our face and refuse to smile upon them, refuse to acknowledge them, and let them learn what it is like to be ignored.

You say, "You'll have to show me that in the Bible." Look, first of all, in the Song of Solomon, chapter 3, verse 1. It is a beautiful song—the song of Christ and the church, as well as marital love. Here the bride says, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. I sought him, but I found him not. So she says I will rise now and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth. I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me, to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Finally she finds him, but at first she says, "I sought him, but I found him not."

In chapter 5, beginning with verse 1, the Lord comes to His bride and says, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Then the bride says, "I sleep, but my heart waketh. It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." After Christ is opened, the bride says, "I have put off my coat. How shall I put it on? I have washed my feet. How shall I defile them?"

"My beloved put his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved, my hands

dropping with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone. My soul failed when he spake. I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer."

Sometimes, when you pray, heaven seems to be brass. You do not know which way to go or turn; it seems as if God has withdrawn Himself. Hosea 5:6 gives another illustration: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them." He had withdrawn Himself from them.

In the New Testament, Mark 3:7 and Luke 5:16 show that on occasion Christ withdrew Himself from His disciples. In such times, when God withdraws Himself and we do not know which way to go, it may seem that God does not care. These are the times when the wicked taunt us with the question repeated in Psalm 42: "Where is now thy God?"

In other words, “We’ve got you in our hands. We’re doing with you whatever we want. Where is your God whom you said that you trusted in and would deliver you?” Let me tell you something, dear friend. When God withdraws Himself, there is nothing but dryness, barrenness, and emptiness. It is at that point that we realize how weak, helpless, and hopeless we are, and how desperately we need the Lord. In other words, we learn to value His fellowship more than anything in the world.

Usually, when God withdraws Himself, He does one of two things. First, He will give us spiritual understanding and illumination so that we may know what is going on in our lives. We know God has withdrawn Himself; we know it. We know that we are suffering probably because of our sin or our neglect of Him. Or there is a second thing that God can do. If God keeps us ignorant, He will at least give us grace to trust Him even in the dark.

Conclusion and Application

Isaiah 50:10 says, “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath

no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." When it is dark, and we cannot see, and we do not know, what are we supposed to do? Keep on trusting. Keep on obeying. Keep on doing what is right. In the words of Job, "I'll trust Him even though He slay me."

Paul said, "And we know that all things work for good to them that love God." We know this based upon the expressed statements of Scripture and the experience of the saints. Any and every thing, individually, particularly, and collectively—all things—are ultimately going to redound for our good and God's glory. Do not go out of this room saying, "Well, I can sin; God is going to use it."

That is a whole sermon in itself. God may use your sin, but I can assure you that you will suffer for it. You will never, ever get away with sin. So many people want to identify with David in his adultery, but they never want to identify with David in his repentance and in what he suffered for his sin. He who sins must suffer. Yet we know that all things are working out for our good and God's glory.

Let us pray. Father, help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Speak to our hearts today. We may be confused and ignorant of immediate circumstances, trials, and problems. We may not fully comprehend their impact upon us or know which way to turn. But one thing we do know is that somehow You are going to work everything out for our good and for Your glory. For this we thank You, and we bow to You and worship You, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Three

Introduction and Review

Romans 8:28–30 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified.”

We have been looking at this passage now for three weeks, counting today. The very first lesson that I gave you in Romans chapter 8, verse 28, was that I wanted you to notice the limitation. That is, not all things work together for the good for everybody. It only works together for good to them that love God and to them who are called according to His purpose.

I took the Bible and showed you how God is working everything out to the bad for those who do not love Him. We looked at a number

of illustrations from the Bible. We looked especially at verses where God said that He would bring the wickedness of the wicked down upon their own head, there to fall into the pit which they have dug, there to be ensnared in their own snare. So God then is positively working things out for the bad, for those who hate Him. There is a definite limitation on this verse.

Then last week I dealt with the phrase, “and we know that all things work together.” First of all, I dealt with the foundation of our knowledge. How is it that we actually know that all things work together? There were the express statements of Scripture. We went through the Bible and looked at a number of those express statements, especially Psalm 91 and many other passages where God is providentially and powerfully working everything out for His people, for their good and for His honor and glory.

There was also the experience of the saints. James chapter 5 gives us this instruction: “Take my brethren, the prophets who have spoken to you in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and affliction and patience.” Then he said, “You've heard of the patience of Job.” We can look at the experience of the saints in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in history after New Testament times, and we see that God is indeed working all things out for our good and His glory.

This brings us to the fullness, or the extent, of our knowledge, because he said, “and we know that all things.” The “all things” refers not only to sufferings in the immediate context. In verse 18, the apostle Paul says, “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.” He also speaks of death, persecution, tribulation, and distress, declaring that none of these things will be able to separate us from the love of Christ. Literally, all things work together for our good.

There are three specific areas. First, there are those things that God sovereignly allows or permits in our lives. Many of these are what we would call cause-and-effect relationships. God could, if He so chose, sovereignly stop them from happening, but He does not. He allows them, permits them, and lets them take their course.

Second, there are those things that God sovereignly sends. We looked at Hebrews chapter 11: “If you endure chastisement, where all are partakers, then are you sons and not bastards.” Sometimes He positively sends chastisement upon us, and He tells us why: that we might be partakers of His holiness. After the chastening, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.

Third, there are times when God withdraws Himself or withdraws His blessings. Even those times work out for our good and for God’s glory.

When the Apostle Paul wrote, he did not write simply as a theologian and scholar. He was indeed both, but he was not interested merely in writing a scholarly treatise. In every book Paul wrote, there is a practical application of his doctrine and theology. You remember that in the first message I told you Paul always gave us an exposition, an explanation, and then an application. He was not simply a theologian and scholar; he was also a pastor, interested in applying what he taught.

The Failure to Apply God's Word

One of the greatest failures of modern-day Christianity is the failure to apply the Word of God. I will go further: that is the failure of the average Christian. We sit in church, listen, learn, and lay hold of facts, truths, and principles, but we never obey them, practice them, apply them, or incorporate them into our daily lives.

Consequently, we forget them. When trials, tribulations, adversities, and problems come, we do not even think of those truths and principles. We totally ignore them and try to work things out as best we can in our own power and strength. We ignore God and His truth. One of our greatest failures is indeed the failure to apply the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul is not interested in anyone knowing his theology merely for the sake of knowing it. He wants his theology to be worked out in daily life, so that we may have practical obedience. The reason we are so dry, dead, barren, destitute, and unsuccessful

in our Christian lives is that we have not learned to apply the Word of God.

Now take what I have just said and apply it to Romans chapter 8 and verse 28. Look at that verse again: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” It does us absolutely no good to glibly quote Romans 8:28 when we are in trouble. If there is no application, it does us no good simply to quote it.

The Features of Those to Whom Romans 8:28 Applies

How to Know if Romans 8:28 Applies to Us

How do we know that Romans 8:28 applies to us? More specifically, how do you know that Romans 8:28 applies to you? How can I say that I know Romans 8:28 applies to me? The answer is very practical: we must ascertain whether or not we conform to the description of the people to whom it applies. If you and I have the same features and characteristics, if we conform to the description given in Romans 8:28, then no doubt that verse does indeed apply to us. What are the features of those to whom this verse applies?

We have already seen the limitation on it, and here that limitation is explained even further. The third point today is the features of those to whom Romans 8:28 applies. The very first feature is found in verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” The first point under the features of those who love God is this: “them that love God.”

Why Paul Wrote 'Them That Love God'

Why did the Apostle Paul not say, “And we know that all things work together for good to them who believe in God”? Or why did he not say, “And we know that all things work together for good to them who believe in Christ”? The answer is that it is possible to believe in God and not be a Christian. It is even possible to believe in Christ and not be a Christian.

James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble.” The devil believes in God.

Is he a Christian? No. Demons believe in God. Are they Christians? No.

How, then, can a person believe in Christ and not be a Christian? All that person may have is an intellectual or historical assent to certain facts. Simply to say, "I believe there was someone who lived sometime in the past by the name of Jesus Christ, and I believe that he died, and I believe that he rose again, and I believe he's in heaven," does not make a person a Christian. That is merely mental assent to certain historical facts. It can be an intellectual faith.

Now, it is true that a Christian believes those things, but it is more than simply an intellectual fact. The truth is this: it is one thing to be religious, and another thing to be a Christian. What you have today is a lot of religious people who are not Christian. Therefore, it is easy to see why Paul did not say, "And we know that all things work together for good to them who believe in God," or, "We know that all things work together for good to them who believe in Christ," because most people would confuse intellectual, historical faith, even pure human faith, with saving faith. No, our text says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

There are other texts in the Bible that use this phrase. This description is given in other places. First Corinthians 2:9 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." So God has only prepared some things for those that love him. He says, "I have not seen it. You have not heard it. And man has not thought of the things that God has prepared for them that love him."

First Corinthians 8:3 says, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." It is a past perfect in the Greek: If any man love God, the same has been known of him. In other words, God knew the man first. It is the same thing that John said in 1 John 4: "We love him, because he first loved us." Here is another description of them that love God.

Now, let us go back to Romans 8:28 and ask this question: Why then did Paul write, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"? Let me give you several reasons. First

of all, the phrase “them that love God” gives us a strong contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian. What do you mean, a strong contrast? Let me explain it. First of all, look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4.

I could turn you to many passages, but let me just turn you to a couple. Look in Ephesians, chapter 4, beginning there with verse 17. Paul is describing here unconverted individuals. And look at what he says: “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

Now, let us stop there just for a moment. God says that an unconverted man’s understanding is darkened. God says that he is alienated from the life of God. God says that he is ignorant. And he is blind.

Now, folks, let me tell you something. That is bad. And I would go further and say that is bad enough in and of itself. But God says it is even worse than that. Because unconverted men are not just blind, alienated, ignorant, and darkened. The Scripture teaches that they hate God. Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to Romans chapter 8 once again, and let us go back to verse 7. The apostle Paul writes: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.”

The word enmity is a strong word for hatred. He says, “Because the carnal mind, that is the natural mind, is hatred, extreme hatred against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” What is God saying? God is saying the man who has never been converted, the man who does not love Him, positively hates Him. His mind is not merely blind and darkened; he is not simply alienated and ignorant. He positively hates God.

Now, we have a little problem. Go to the average individual who is unconverted and ask, “Do you hate God?” What are they going to say? “Oh, thank God, no.”

It boils down to this: Whom are we going to believe? Are we going to believe God, or are we going to believe someone who is ignorant,

blind, and alienated and does not even know what he is talking about? I want to tell you something: An unsaved man may not hate the God he has imagined, but he hates the God of Scripture.

Consider Luke chapter 19, verse 14. Here the attitude of unconverted individuals is plainly stated: “But his citizens hated him.” This attitude does not always shine forth this clearly, but it is still there nonetheless. The Bible says that the citizens hated him. This is a parable about Christ. Christ is the Lord, but His citizens hated Him and sent a message after Him, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

Here is the question: How do we know they hated Him? They refused to submit to His rulership. They said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” How do we know that the unconverted man hates Christ? How do we know that he hates God? They refuse to submit and surrender to the one true living God through Jesus Christ, His Son.

Luke chapter 21, verse 17, says, “And ye shall be hated of all men.” Christ tells His disciples this plainly. Why will all men hate us? Christ said, “For my name’s sake.” He said that they would hate us because they hate Him. In John chapter 15, beginning with verse 18, Christ explains this further.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Isn't that amazing? An unbeliever, or the world of unbelievers, cannot hate us as Christians without hating Christ. The reason they hate us is because they hate Christ. Verse 19 says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Verse 25 says, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

Do the unbelievers hate Christ? Yes. Do they hate God the Father? Yes. You may ask them, "Well, do you hate God?" They will say, "No." But God says, "They hate me." This is why Paul writes in

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God": it shows a strong contrast between those of us who love Him and those who hate Him.

There is another reason Paul wrote that we know all things work together for good to them that love God: love is all-inclusive. When you love, every part of you loves.

Love is All-Inclusive

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is known as the Shema Yisrael, a very famous passage. Every Orthodox Hebrew synagogue usually starts its services with, "Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad." "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." It continues, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Heart, soul, and might: the word might means literally vehemently, with great diligence, with all of your strength, with everything that you have. Another use of the word might appears in 1 Chronicles 29. It does not refer merely to physical strength. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our might.

Love is all-inclusive; it involves everything. In 1 Chronicles chapter 29, David said unto all the congregation, “Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God.”

He continued: “The gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, the brass for things of brass, and iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.”

What does the word “might” refer to in verse 2? More than zeal; it refers to possessions or money. David says, “Now I have prepared with all my might”—or, “I have prepared with all my money”—“for the house of my God,” including gold for things made of gold, silver for things of silver, and so forth. Then he says, “Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good”—or my own proper money—“of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.”

He then says, “Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls.” “The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver.” David prepared with all his might. You see, his might included his possessions.

You do not have to beg a man to give to the kingdom and cause of God if he loves God. Love is all-inclusive. Everything that we have, we love Him with, and we give to Him willingly, liberally, and freely. There are churches where the preacher speaks about giving and tithing continually. If people love God, they do not have to hear it preached even once, if they will listen and make application. Love is all-inclusive.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew 22, beginning with verse 35. Our Lord takes this from Deuteronomy. "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Isn't that amazing? Which is the great commandment in the law?

Note that he did not quote any of the ten. Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. "This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

How could our Lord say that? Because if you do not love God, none of His commandments mean anything to you. You are not going to obey them or do them. If you love God, then you will love man as God commands you to love him. If you do not love God, you

are not going to love man. Remember the passage our Lord spoke about in Luke chapter 18? There was an unjust judge who feared not God and regarded not man. When you do not fear God, when you do not love God, you are not going to have any regard for man. But when you love God, then you shall regard man. That is why He said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." He said in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

He said that, first, to show the strong contrast between those who love Him and those who hate Him; and second, to show us that love is all-inclusive—it involves everything that we have. That is why He said in Colossians 3, "Set your affection on things above and not on things below, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." If we love God, His Word and His truth will be in our minds. They will be revealed in our actions, and we will obey Him.

Love is Practical and Demonstrable

Love is practical. There is no such thing as theoretical love. Love is not only practical; it is always demonstrable. You can always demonstrate it. Suppose Alice, my wife, asked me, "John, do you love me?"

When someone says, “Well, I love God,” I responded, “Yes, in theory.” Would that be a great comfort to her? But that is the way most people say, “Well, I love God.” In theory, it is what they mean.

Let us suppose that I told Alice I loved her, yet I never kissed her, touched her, helped her, tried to please her, or did anything nice, sweet, or romantic. In fact, suppose I totally ignored her except for an occasional acknowledgement. How long do you think she would really believe that I loved her? That is exactly the way people treat God. They almost totally ignore Him, except for an occasional acknowledgement. If you treated your wife, your husband, or your children like that, they would pretty soon figure out that you really did not give a flip about them.

There is no such thing as theoretical love. Love is always practical; it is always demonstrable. Look at 1 John 3:16: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” God did not

just tell us, “In theory I love you.” He demonstrated it. There was a practicality to it. He laid down His life for us. That is why John goes on to say that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Then verse 17 shows the practicality and demonstrableness of love: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

If Chester came to me and said, “Brother Weaver, I’m hungry. Could I have something to eat?” and I replied, “Well, Chester, may the Lord bless you. Be ye warmed and filled,” sending him away without feeding him, what is John saying? “How dwelleth the love of God in me?” If I love him, he is hungry, and I have food to feed him, guess what I am going to do? I am going to feed him.

Love is a practical, demonstrable attribute. If I say, “Be ye filled and warm,” and send him away without feeding him, you can mark it down: I do not love him. It is a demonstration that I hate him.

I want to impress something upon you that I have told you repeatedly. In light of this message day, I hope you will see the absolute importance of what I am telling you. Our Lord has given us a very practical way to demonstrate our love for Him. It does you absolutely no good to tell Jesus Christ, or God the Father, that you love Him unless you demonstrate it in the way He has commanded.

It does me no good to tell my wife I love her and then totally ignore her for six months. She will not believe me, and she should not. God knows our hearts. If we tell Him that we love Him and do not demonstrate it in the practical way He has ordained,

Obedience as the Evidence of Love

He knows that we do not really love Him. You say, “What is that way?” Look back in your Bible to John chapter 14, beginning with verse 15. Let me emphasize this over and over: this causes me great concern, because it is so exceedingly plain and simple that I do not see how anyone could err in this understanding.

I always told my children, “What I want from you is your obedience. That is all I want.” Why? Because I know that if they love

me, they will obey me. If they obey me, it is a demonstration that they love me. If they do not obey me, it is a demonstration that they hate me. I do not care how much they tell me, “I love you, Daddy.” As long as they disobey me, they are demonstrating that they positively hate me.

Christ said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “Lord, I want to tell you, I love you.” “Are you doing what I told you to do?” “No, but Lord, I love you.” “No, you do not. Because I said, if you love me, keep my commandments.” Verse 21 says, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

Did you hear what He said? “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” If I told my wife that I loved her, and then started running around with ten or fifteen women in town, would you really believe that I loved her? No, she would not. If you tell God that you love Him, yet totally ignore His commandments, break them, and do everything He tells you not to do, do you think He believes that you love Him? No, He does not believe that. Our Lord said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”

Verse 24 says, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” If you do not love God, you hate Him. Christ said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” The way you demonstrate that you love God and Christ is by obeying His commandments. The way you demonstrate that you hate Him is by disobeying His commandments.

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” How did Jesus Christ demonstrate that he loved the Father? By keeping His commandments. As Christ said in John chapter 8, “I do always those things that please him.” How could He say that? Because He loved His Father. He demonstrated it by being obedient in every area of His life to His Father.

Romans 13:10 says, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Love is not feelings,

sentimentalism, or emotionalism; it is obedience. “Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Verse 8 says, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” How can that be? Because if I love Don, I am going to keep God’s law toward him. If I do not keep God’s law toward him, I do not love him. That is what the Bible says: “For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

The passage gives this illustration: “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” If I leave Anita alone and do not try to steal her from Don, honor her, honor his children, do not steal from him, do not covet what he has, and treat him the way God tells me to treat him, I love him. But if I try to steal his wife, his money, or his children, I hate him. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

In 1 John 5:2, John tells us exactly the same thing that Romans 13:8–10 tells us: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” How do I know that I love Beth, and how do I know that I love Brian? Because I keep God’s commandments toward them. I treat them the way God tells me to treat them.

If I took Brian outside and beat the stuffings out of him, leaving him with a broken arm, broken ribs, a crushed jaw, and teeth knocked out, and then looked at him and said, “Brian, I love you,” do you think he would believe me? No. I do not love him if I do that to him; I hate him. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

In other words, if I love God, I am going to treat my brother exactly the way God tells me to treat him. First John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” It ought not to grieve us that we cannot commit adultery. It ought not to grieve us that we cannot steal, lie, cheat, or murder. This is the love of God: that we keep his

commandments. Obedience is the demonstration of the fact that we love God.

First John 2:3 says, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do I know that I know God? How do I know that I am a genuine child of God? He enables and empowers me by his Holy Spirit and his grace to bring my life into conformity to his Word. Verse 4 says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Where does that leave most professing Christians? We say that we love him, but we do not keep his Word. We do not obey him. God says that the man who says that is a liar, and the truth is not in him. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Look in the book of Jude, verse 21: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” How do we keep ourselves in the love of God? If the love of God is some abstract, ethereal thing floating around in the universe, we have problems. But 1 John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” When Jude wrote, “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” he was saying, keep yourselves obeying God’s Word and God’s commandments.

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” What God wrote through the Apostle Paul—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God”—was not only a strong word of contrast, nor only teaching that love is all-inclusive. He was teaching that God has given us a very practical and demonstrable way of evidencing that we love Him. This love is not affected by trials, tribulations, adversities, or persecution.

Love Unaffected by Trials

No matter what trial, tribulation, adversity, or persecution you are in, you can, by God’s grace and power, still obey Him. See how practical that is? But most of us become so down and discouraged, or get into so many problems, that we say, “I don’t feel like reading my Bible. I don’t feel like studying. I don’t feel like praying. I don’t feel like going to church.”

Then we give in to feelings rather than obeying God. Love is not feelings; love is obedience. It does not matter how you feel—you may still obey God by His grace and power. Nothing will prevent us from evidencing and demonstrating our love.

Conclusion and Prayer

How do I know that all things are working together for good for me? I know because my life fits the description of those in this verse to whom God said all things work together for good: I love Him. How do I know I love Him? Because I obey Him. I bring my life into conformity with His Word.

You say, "Brother Weaver, does that mean a perfect obedience?" Of course not. There is no one going to be perfect in this life, but it does mean there is going to be a constant and continuous obedience. You are going to be doing right far more often than you are doing wrong. It means you are going to struggle to always obey Him, no matter what situation you are in.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Those who are keeping His commandments, those who are obeying Him. And as Jesus Christ said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" He could have just as easily said, "Why do you say that you love me if you're not going to obey me?" It is the same truth.

Father, we ask Thy blessing and help today. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and enable us to demonstrate genuine love by obeying Thee and bringing our lives into conformity to Thy Word. In Jesus Christ's name, amen.

CHAPTER 4

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Four

Introduction and Review

Paul writes, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified.”

The very obvious truth lying on the surface of this passage is that there is a divine limitation. God is not telling us that everything works out for the good of everyone. Everything does not work out for the good of those who hate God, those who are wicked, and those who are the enemies of God. Rather, everything works out for their evil and their bad. We looked particularly at Ahab in 1 Kings chapter 22, and at a number of other people in the Bible whom God destroyed, using every circumstance to bring them to their death. So there is a divine limitation on this verse.

Secondly, we began to look at the foundation of our knowledge. The Apostle Paul says, “and we know.” What is the very foundation of our knowledge? First, we saw the express statements of Scripture, where God repeatedly says that he is working everything out for our good and his glory. Secondly, we looked at the experience of the saints, particularly Job. James 5 says, “Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering and affliction and patience.” Then he goes on and says, “You have heard of the patience of Job.”

We also began to consider the fullness, or extent, of this knowledge: “and we know that all things work together for good.” Thus we delved into what he meant by “all things.”

In the immediate context, he is dealing with sufferings of every kind. For he says, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall follow.” There were three things that I gave you that all things work together for our good. Number one, there are things that God permits or allows to come our way, things that God could sovereignly stop, but he does not, such as cause-and-effect relationships. Secondly, there are those things that God specifically sends our way, such as chastisement, correction, and many other areas that God sends our way. Thirdly, there are times when God withdraws himself, and seemingly we cannot find him.

Last week we began, thirdly, with the features of those to whom Romans 8:28 applies. How do we know that Romans 8:28 applies to us? How can I say that Romans 8:28 applies to me? The answer comes back: if you and I have the qualifications, if we have the descriptions, and if we have the features in our lives that are mentioned in this particular verse, then no doubt this verse applies to us. We dealt with the phrase, “and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” The first feature, the first characteristic by which we know that Romans 8:28 applies, is those who love God. This phrase, “those that love God,” was used because it contrasts the Christian and the non-Christian.

In fact, Scripture says repeatedly that those who are not Christians hate God. They hate Jesus Christ. The world may not use that language, but God certainly uses that language. Christ said, “If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.”

Secondly, love is all-inclusive. That is why he said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, with all thy being.” Thirdly, love is very practical and demonstrable. Our Lord said it like this: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” I went through the Word of God and showed you that if we love God, we will obey him.

The Called According to His Purpose

Today we come to the second feature mentioned in verse 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.” I want to deal with the phrase “to them who are the called.” I might quote “according to his purpose,” but that will be another study. I do not know how deeply I need to get into this subject. If necessary, I can continue this message another Sunday or two.

The Second Feature: The Called According to His Purpose

Here is my proposition to you: If you comprehend and understand what I am teaching today, wonderful. If you have questions, let me know, because I can go further, explain more fully, and show more Scripture. But I hope today will be sufficient to give you an understanding of what Scripture means when it says, “to them who are the called.”

In this passage, the righteous are identified not only as those who love God, but also as those who are the called according to his purpose. When you study Scripture, you find that there are many names given to saints in the Bible. We are called believers, saints, sheep, the elect, the church, and the bride. There are numerous names and titles given to us.

But you must ask yourself: Why would the Apostle Paul introduce this phrase, “the called,” in the middle of Romans 8:28? Why does he say, “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”? Why not simply say, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God”? That would be a good place to stop. But he goes on and says, “and those who are called according to his

purpose." The reason is that this phrase, "the called," explains why we love God. We cannot love God unless we have been called unto his salvation. Why do I say that? Because of Romans 8, verses 7 and 8.

We looked at it last week. He said, "The carnal mind is enmity"—that is a strong word for hatred—"it's hatred against God. It's not subject to the law of God. Neither, indeed, can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." That is why in Ephesians 2, verses 1-3, he says, "and we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In other words, we hated God.

That is why John writes in 1 John 4 and verse 19, "We love him." Why? "Because he first loved us." He loved us and called us unto his salvation; therefore, we love him. The calling explains why we love God.

Objective and Subjective Aspects of Salvation

Salvation is both objective and subjective. The objective basis for our salvation is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, was raised from the dead bodily, ascended bodily into heaven, is there interceding for us, and will return for us. The objective basis of my faith, and of your faith, is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

How ridiculous it is for someone to say, "But I don't feel saved." No wonder you do not feel saved. Salvation is not by feeling; salvation is by the person and work of Jesus Christ. That never changes. History will not change it. Feeling will not change it. Depression will not change it. Discouragement will not change it. The objective basis of my faith is what Jesus Christ has done—not what I experience or feel, but what Jesus Christ has done.

Jesus Christ purchased salvation. He not only purchased it and worked it out, but He actually arose from the dead that He might actually give salvation. Acts 5, verses 30 and 31, says: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with or at his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Christ actually gives us repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is just as much the gift of God as faith is.

Peter is reporting his preaching to Cornelius and those of his household. When Peter tells these believers what God has done, notice their response. Acts 11, verse 18: "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted or given repentance unto life." Note, first of all, it is repentance unto life. Notice, secondly, God gave them that repentance.

In 2 Timothy 2, beginning with verse 24, the Apostle Paul writes Timothy, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient," and in verse 25, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." So when do men recover themselves out of the snare of the devil? When they acknowledge the truth. When do men acknowledge the truth? When God gives them repentance.

Now, listen carefully. Philippians 1 verse 29 is a verse we do not like to quote. And I will tell you why: "Unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him." But note what he says: "for unto you it is given on behalf of Christ." So faith is a gift and repentance is a gift. The point I am trying to make is this: There is nothing left to chance or fate or fortune when it comes to God's salvation. I will explain this later. Whatever God does, He does on purpose. So we are the called according to His purpose.

Now, Jesus Christ and His work are the objective basis for our faith. There is a subjective side, and that is this: The subjective side of salvation is when the Holy Spirit of God applies that salvation to our lives. When the Holy Spirit applies that salvation, it is known as efficacious grace or effectual grace. It means that it is grace that actually works, grace that brings us into salvation.

Definitions: Common Call vs. Effectual Call

The definition of the word efficacious means to bring to pass. It means to accomplish, to effect, to energize, so as to produce the desired effect. This is an efficacious or effectual calling. The word calling, which will be explained later, is the Greek word kaleo, which literally means "I call" or "I summon."

The Common Call

Two distinct calls are taught in the Word of God. The first is known as the common call. The common call is nothing more than the external proclamation of the gospel, or the preaching of the written Word, declaring what men ought to do in order to their salvation. It tells men that God demands that they repent and believe. They may not repent, and they may not believe, but still that external preaching will render individuals inexcusable in their disobedience.

The common call goes to everyone indiscriminately. It is outward, universal, and external. This is the preaching of the gospel and the preaching of the Word of God. It is the external proclamation of what men ought to do, and it renders them inexcusable when they disobey. I could show you many passages, but here is a very clear illustration.

Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 55. Here is what you and I would know as the general, or common, call. Isaiah chapter 55, verse 1: “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, without price. Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Verse 3: “Incline your ear, and come unto me, and hear, and your soul shall live.”

"And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah continues, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This is a common call.

When I preach, I call upon men to repent and turn to the Lord and to seek the Lord. This common call is not limited to any nation, group, or class of men. It goes to all. It simply goes to everyone, whether sheep or goat, or whoever you are. It is the preaching of the gospel.

The voice of nature is not to be confused with the common call. It is true that "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Romans 1 is true when the Bible says, "for the heavens and the earth reveal the righteousness of God, and the wrath of God against unrighteous men." Certain things may be clearly known of God and about God by virtue of creation. But whatever truth you can get from creation is not the common call. Creation has enough light to condemn you, but not enough light to convert you. When you preach repentance and faith, you are giving revealed truth, not merely general truth.

Where there is no revealed gospel, there is no gospel call, or common call. The common call is nothing more than the external preaching and proclamation of the written Word of God.

Secondly, there is the effectual, or efficacious, call. It is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, He enlightens our minds to the knowledge of Christ, renews our wills, and persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, who is fully and freely offered to us in the gospel. The effectual call is the work of God's Spirit: the Holy Spirit convicts us, enlightens us, enables us, draws us, and brings us savingly to Jesus Christ. It is termed effectual to distinguish it from the common call.

Biblical Evidence for the Effectual Call

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul writes, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Then he makes this distinction: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only.” Word only is the common call. That is all I can do; I cannot save anybody or bring anyone to Christ in my own power. The external preaching of the Word of God is the common call. But Paul tells these Thessalonians that the gospel came not in word only; something was added. It was

effectual: “but also in power,” “and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

Now notice the result of this effectual call. Paul says, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost.” Then, in verse 6, “and you became followers of us and of the Lord.” What made them become followers of Paul and followers of the Lord? The call came not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit.

The common call goes to everyone indiscriminately; it is universal. But the effectual call, according to the Bible, goes only to God’s sheep—to God’s elect, whoever they are and wherever they are. Christ said in John 10:1–5, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. Now watch. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice. And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him.” Why? “For they know his voice.”

What does our Lord do? He calls His own sheep by name. And when He calls them, they follow Him, for they know His voice.

There were some who did not believe on Christ. And look what Christ tells them: “But you believe not.” Why? “Because you're not of my sheep. As I said unto you, My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.” So the reason these did not believe was that they were not His sheep. Here is a call, then, that comes to the sheep.

Someone will object and say, “Well, Brother Weaver, this effectual call does not go to everyone.” That is true. But may I defuse that objection with this: The common call does not even go to everyone. You say, “But Brother Weaver, Christ said, ‘Preach the word to every creature. We're to go into all the nations.’” That is true. But may I remind you, first of all, in the Old Testament?

The Common Call Is Not Universal

Look in Romans chapter 3, verse 2. In fact, let us read verse 1: “What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way, chiefly, chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Who had the Word of God in the Old Testament? Israel did. The Assyrians did not have it. The Babylonians did not have it. The Hittites did not have it. The Jebusites did not have it. The Word, even the external proclamation of that Word, went to Israel.

Now look in your Bibles to Acts 16. I will show you the same thing is true in the New Testament, beginning there with verse 6: “Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. And after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.” Paul and the others wanted to go to Asia, but the Holy Ghost said, “Don't you go over there and preach.” Then they said, “We'll go to Bithynia,” and the Holy Spirit said, “Don't you go there and preach.”

The point I am making is that even the common call is not heard by everyone. There are people in Africa, Russia, China, and Romania who have never heard the gospel. And I will shock you: There are people in America who have never heard the gospel, some of them probably in our hometowns. So you cannot say, “Well, the effectual call doesn't go to everybody.” That is true. But even the common call does not go to everyone. This common call is to be preached wherever we can preach it. It is outward. It is universal. It is external.

The Common Call and the Effectual Call

The common call renders men inexcusable. The effectual call is always inward and particular; it is to the sheep, and it makes men partakers of Christ. The common call may bring men to a profession of Christ, but the effectual call will bring men into a possession of Christ. There is a big difference.

The word called is the word kaleo. You will find it many times in our Bibles. Sometimes it is the verb kaleo, and sometimes it is

kleitos, the noun. Sometimes this word is used of an appointment to an office, for instance, in Hebrews 5 and verse 4. Sometimes it is used in the sense of naming, as in Matthew 1 and 22: "He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Occasionally, this same word is used of the common call because it is a general invitation. But more often, it is used of the particular call, that effectual call where God actually brings someone into salvation.

The Called as a Title for Believers

What I want to do today is show you in the Bible a distinction between the common call and the effectual call.

God's people are sometimes referred to as the elect of God, the sheep of God, the bride, and numerous other names. But another name for the people of God is simply "the called." Romans 1, verses 6 and 7, says, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." So the saints are referred to as the called ones. Verse 7 says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Here is a call that actually ends up in making people saints. One of the names of the people of God is simply the called ones: "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ."

Our English word church comes from the Greek word ekklesia. Ek is a preposition which means "out of," and klesis means "the called ones." What is the church? It is the called-out ones. So even the word church refers to the called ones.

Now, let me begin showing you this distinction between the common call and the effectual call. Look in your Bibles to the book of Jude. The book of Jude, the last book before Revelation. Jude verse 1. No reason to say Jude chapter 1, is there? All right, Jude, verse 1, because there's only one chapter in Jude. Jude, verse 1, look at what he says, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called."

Now, I want you to note in this passage the word "called" is equal with "sanctified" and "preserved." So we are the sanctified ones, we are the preserved ones, we are the called ones.

Now, very clearly, this verse teaches a distinction between the common call and the effectual call. Do you remember what the Bible said in Matthew 25 verse 14? "Many are called, but few are chosen." Now, very clearly in this passage, if you just simply say, "Well, the word called here is the common call," then what you have, then, is everyone who's ever heard the gospel being sanctified and preserved.

Which would certainly lead to universalism, which is not true. We know not everybody is saved. We know that everybody is not going to be saved. Here is a distinction because those who are the called are also the preserved ones, and they're also the sanctified ones. So the word called here has to refer to something other than just simply an external call. It refers then to what is known as an effectual call.

Let me show you another passage. Look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2 and verse 39. Acts 2 verse 39. Look what Peter says as he's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2 verse 39. You got it? Acts 2 verse 39. Peter says, "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now the phrase, "as many as," is a limitation. God does not call everyone in the same way. Some are called only by a common call, and some are called by an effectual call, so he says, "to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now, look in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 17, verse 14. Let me show you once again how the word called can only refer to those who've actually been brought into salvation. This does not refer to those who've just merely been invited or merely who have heard the preaching of the gospel. Look in Revelation, chapter 17, verse 14.

In this passage, he says, “These shall make war with the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them.” “The Lamb shall overcome them.” Why? “For he is Lord of lords and King of kings.” “And they that are with him are called, chosen, and faithful.” We are called, chosen, and faithful; those three terms apply to every real child of God. We are called effectually because we have been chosen, and because of that God has counted us and made us faithful.

Very clearly, this verse does not mean that everyone who has ever been invited externally would be with Christ. Many have heard and have never repented and turned from their sins. That would be contrary to Matthew 22:14, where he said, “Many are called, but few

are chosen." The word called here refers to those who have been called effectually, those who have been saved by the grace of God.

Now let us go back to 1 Corinthians 1 and work our way through some of these verses. Notice the title given to the saints of God. In 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul says, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother." Was Paul merely invited to be an apostle, or did God actually make him an apostle? He was called—powerfully and effectually brought into the office of apostleship through the will of God.

Now watch verse 2: "Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. With all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours." Once again, in verse 2, the word sanctified and the word called are synonymous.

Look down to verse 9. This is a powerful passage: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called." But what did this calling do? Was it merely an external proclamation that they heard? No. He says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is a calling that actually results in someone being brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ. This is the effectual call.

Distinction in 1 Corinthians 1

Now let us see in this same chapter the distinction between the common call and the effectual call. Verse 18 says, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God." Skip down to verse 23: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." What is happening in verse 23? It is the common call. Paul is preaching, and everybody says, "That's a bunch of bull."

"I don't want to hear that. That's foolishness." That is what they are saying. But look at verse 24: "But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

There is a difference. In verse 23, everybody says, "That's a bunch of foolishness." In verse 24, those people say, "Christ is my salvation.

Christ is the power of God. Christ is the wisdom of God." Look at verse 26: "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty."

The mighty, wise, and noble hear the common call, but they do not receive this effectual call—not many of them. Some may, but not many. That is why he says, "For you see your calling, brethren."

The Effectual Call in Romans 8:28-30

Turn to 1 Corinthians 7:21. In this passage, the word calling refers to salvation. He says, "Art thou called," that is, called into salvation, "being a servant or being a slave? Care not for it. But if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." Then he explains: "For he that is called," that is, into salvation, "in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man. Likewise, also he that is called," that is, into salvation, "being free, is Christ's servant. You're bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." Therefore, the word calling here refers to salvation.

Now let us return to Romans 8, our text. We are considering that word in verses 28 and 30: "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."

"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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified."

Romans 8:28 does not promise that all things work together for good to those who have merely heard the preaching of the gospel. The Bible gives serious warnings that those who have heard, if they do not repent, shall perish. That is why our Lord said in Luke 13, "Except you repent, you shall likewise perish." Therefore, the word called here must mean the effectual call, by which the Spirit of God actually brings us into salvation.

Look again at verse 30: “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called.” This has to be the effectual call, because “whom he called, then he also justified,” and “whom he justified, then he also glorified.” If God has called you into His salvation, you have been justified, and your salvation is so sure that He speaks of you in the past tense: you have been glorified.

There must be a difference between the common call and what we know as the effectual call. Romans 9:23 says, “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he afore prepared unto glory.” God shows mercy to vessels of mercy whom He had before prepared unto glory. Our choosing, as other verses will show, was before the foundation of the world.

Further Scriptural Proofs

Verse 24 continues: “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles,” and Hosea says, “I will call them my people which are not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved.” “In the place where it was said of them, You are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.” Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.” The calling here makes people the people of God; “a remnant shall be saved.”

In 1 Peter 1:15, Peter says, “But as he who hath called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation.” Who has called us? God. God said, “I've called you into my salvation. I've brought you into it. Now be holy as I am holy.” This is the calling Peter is describing: God has called us into his salvation, and therefore we are to be holy as he is holy.

Again, in 1 Peter 2:9, we read: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who have called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Notice what he said: “that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Here is a calling that actually brought you out of

darkness and placed you in light. Here is a calling that actually made you the people of God. Here is a calling that actually made you receive mercy. Therefore, we ought to show forth the praises of him who have called us. That is the effectual, powerful call that brought us into salvation.

In 1 Peter 5:10, we read: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” This is a calling that results in eternal glory, and that calling is through, or by, Jesus Christ. Did you hear that? He says the God of all grace has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

Likewise, 2 Peter 1:3 says: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” Here is a calling that actually results in glory.

Now, I saved a couple to end with. I want you to turn back to 2 Timothy chapter 1. I don't see how anyone, unless they are willfully blind, cannot see this one verse. In verse 8, Paul says, and by the way, I like to use this passage when I'm dealing with preachers, especially, and Christians who have been imprisoned for their faith's sake and for their obedience to Christ. Paul writes, Timothy, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner." Paul is in prison. He said, "Timothy, don't you be ashamed of me. I'm in prison for the faith's sake. I'm in prison for obeying Christ." So he says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." You do what's right, you'll end up where I am. That's what he's saying. Now look what he says in verse 8. "According to the power of God." Watch verse 9.

"God, who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Now the word calling and the word saved, or the word called and the word saved are synonymous. He saved us. He called us. If I say I am the called of Jesus Christ, that is the same as saying I am the saved one by Jesus Christ. So He said He has saved us, He has called us with a

holy calling. And it was not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and His own grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world ever began.

Now, look in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 2. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2. And let's begin reading there with verse 12. Let me show it to you in this passage. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 12. "That you would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." So God's called you into His kingdom. He's called you into glory. Now look what he says in verse 13. 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13.

Paul writes, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually"—powerfully, savingly—"worketh also in you that believe." He said the reason you believe is because God worked something in you effectually. Look in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians 2. 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 13. 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 13.

Paul writes, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Now, wait a minute. It is true that God chose us to salvation. Election is the foundation of salvation. But it is also true that God has ordained the means to the end. The means to that end is repentance and faith. So he says that God has chosen you to salvation “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

In other words, two things must actually happen in you before you are saved. The Spirit of God must work in you, which will result in you believing the truth. Watch verse 14: “Whereunto He called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That calling results in obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How did it happen? It happened through the preaching of the Word of God, but not through that only; it happened in the power of the Holy Spirit, because he said it is through the sanctification of the Spirit.

Paul said the same thing in 1 Thessalonians: “But our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost. And you became followers of us and of the Lord.” Here, then, is a distinction between the common call and the effectual call. In Romans 8:28, the Apostle Paul writes, “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.”

Application and Assurance

He is talking about those who have been savingly brought into repentance and faith and who embrace Jesus Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel. How can I know whether or not I am a called one? How does God actually call? The author of this call is God Himself: “He hath called us unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ. God is faithful who hath called us.”

How do we know Romans 8:28 applies to us? Paul says we can know it applies because, first, we love God. That is, we are obeying Him. The reason we love God and obey Him is that God called us, and He did it on purpose. Therefore, whatever comes our way, since we are among the called ones of God and God is working everything according to His purpose, He will work everything out for our good and for His glory.

That is the most assuring truth: come what may, God is going to work it out for my good and for His glory. How do I know that? Because I love God. How do I know I love God? Because I obey God. How do I know I am one of the called? Because I love God and obey Him. What made me love God? God made me love God. “We love him, because he first loved us.” How did He make me love Him? He called me, and I am in His purpose.

If I am in His purpose, God is going to finish what He started. Paul said it in Philippians 1: “Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” God did not start something to stop it. He did not pick us up to drop us.

As Moses wrote in Deuteronomy to the children of Israel, he brought them out that he might bring them in. Whatever God does,

allows, or sends, every detail will work together for our good and His glory, because we are the called ones and love Him. If we meet those qualifications, that truth applies to us.

Closing Prayer

Father, help us in the name of Jesus Christ. Enable us to rejoice that Thou, in Thine infinite grace and mercy, hast called us to the obtaining of the fellowship of Jesus Christ and to the obtaining of Thine eternal glory. It is not of works, lest we should boast, but by Thy grace given us in Christ Jesus, even before the world began. Enable us to praise Thee and trust Thee. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Five

Romans 8:28-30 says: “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. 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. 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.”

Review of Previous Messages

Let me take a few moments to review. I am really excited about the messages for the next two weeks. While I was gone on this trip, as usual, I tried to do a good bit of studying in advance, because everything is piling up on you by the time you get back—phone calls, mail, and all kinds of problems coming up. The next two messages that follow this one, I hope, will be greatly encouraging and greatly assuring, because they contain blessed truths from the Word of God.

We have been in Romans 8:28 for at least four weeks. I began by bringing a message on the limitation of this verse. I pointed out from Scripture that not all things work for good for everyone, but only for those who love God and those who are called according to his purpose. The Word of God shows that all things do not work out for good for those who hate God; rather, all things work out for their evil and their bad.

Secondly, we dealt with the expression "we know," where he said, "And we know that all things work together." First of all, we know because of the expressed statements in Scripture. God gives us promises over and over, and he states these truths categorically. Secondly, this knowledge is based upon the experience of the saints. He said, "Take my brethren, the prophets, for an example of suffering and affliction and patience," and, "You have heard of the patience of Job." We can look at the experience of the saints, not only in the Word of God, but in history. We know that all things work out for good to those that love God.

Thirdly, we dealt with this phrase: "We know that all things." We considered not only the fact of our knowledge, but the fullness of our knowledge. In dealing with "all things," we dealt first of all with those things that God permits or allows to come our way.

We have dealt with those things that God could sovereignly stop if He so chose, but does not; those things that God purposefully and deliberately sends our way; and those things that refer to when God withdraws Himself from us. Then we dealt with the features of Romans 8:28. The first feature was "those that love God." "All things work together for good." To whom? To those that love God.

I showed you from the Word of God that love is obedience. It is not sentimentality, and it is not emotionalism. It is obedience. We know that we love God, John says, because we keep His commandments. Jesus Christ Himself said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

Next we looked at the second feature: "those who are called," the Bible says in verse 28. We considered calling in the Bible and the distinction between what is known as the general call and the effectual call. One relates simply to the outward preaching and

proclamation of the gospel, declaring unto men their responsibility and what men ought to do in order to be converted. The second deals with the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life. It is the Holy Spirit who enlightens the mind, renews the will, elevates the affections, and draws us savingly to Jesus Christ.

So he says in verse 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.” Today we are going to deal with this phrase, “according to his purpose.”

Introduction to 'According to His Purpose'

You have got to ask yourself this question: Why must it be true that all things work together for good to those that love God and to those who are called? The answer comes back: because it is according to His purpose.

All things work together for good for me because I love God. The reason I love God is because I am called, and the reason I am called is that it is according to His purpose. Stop and think about that. That means I am in the purpose of God. You are in the purpose of God. What a tremendous and powerful thought. God says we love Him because we have been called, and we have been called because we are in His purpose.

Now, the outworking of all things for our good is not an end in and of itself. The real object is God’s purpose. Our good, and any good that comes to us, is nothing more than the carrying out of the great purpose of God.

The guarantee that all things will work together for our good is based upon God's purpose. This is the ultimate goal and the ultimate ground of our assurance. Verses 29 and 30, which we will get to next week, are an exposition of the phrase “according to his purpose.”

Now watch in verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Notice the comma. “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. 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." Verses 29 and 30, then, are an exposition of the purpose of God.

The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 18 that every purpose is established by counsel. That is true not only in regard to man, but also in regard to God, which I will show you a little later. God has not drawn a bow at adventure. He has not left anything to chance, fate, fortune, or luck. Let me say it very plainly: there is no such thing as chance, fate, fortune, or luck in a world ruled by God, because God is in absolutely sovereign control, and his providential control extends to everything.

Hold Romans 8 and look in Proverbs chapter 16. Every one of us has played Monopoly, and we have played many games involving dice. I assure you that when you had those dice in your hand and were rolling them, you never, ever thought about the sovereignty and providence of God. Yet the Bible says in Proverbs 16 and verse 33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Do you realize that you cannot even roll a pair of dice without God controlling their outcome? Dice is plural and die singular. You cannot even throw them without God sovereignly working out how they come up.

Now turn in your Bible to Acts chapter 1. New Testament believers believed that, because when they were trying to choose someone to replace Judas, look what they prayed in Acts chapter 1.

In Acts chapter 1, we read of two people chosen to replace Judas: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." Of course, these two had to meet certain qualifications. "And they prayed and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.'" "And they gave forth their lots." "And the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

The Word of God tells us in Matthew 10:29 that a sparrow cannot even fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father. It is absolutely amazing to think of all these little birds flying along—not one can fall

to the ground apart from the sovereign, providential directive and control of our Heavenly Father. Also, our Lord said, “The very hairs of your head are numbered.” God does not have a greater job counting on some heads than He does on others, but stop and think. Every time you brush your hair and look in your brush and see a handful of hair, God knows exactly how many hairs you lost. He knows exactly how many hairs are still on your head. The implication is that God is in absolute sovereign control of everything.

If God is so fastidious even over the casting of dice, so fastidious over a sparrow falling to the ground and the loss of a single hair on our head, do you think that God would be any less fastidious when it comes to the great work of salvation? Would He leave salvation entirely up to chance? No. Would He leave salvation entirely up to a fallen, stubborn, rebellious, perverted creature? The answer is no.

As I have studied this, I am of the firm persuasion that no one can really know anything, or at least not very much, about God and His great salvation without understanding, in some degree, this purpose of God. Salvation with God was not an afterthought. It did not happen that Adam sinned and God said, “Oh, what am I going to do now?” No, that did not happen. There are no readjustments in God’s plan. You cannot slip up on God’s blind side, for God does not have a blind side. There are no slip-ups, no accidents, and nothing that has forced God to change His mind. According to the Word of God, everything was planned to the utmost and most finite detail before the world ever began.

Now, let me show you several truths concerning God's purpose, and then we're going to come back to Romans 8 and begin to make some applications.

God's Purpose is Eternal

First of all, I want you to understand that God's purpose is eternal.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians chapter 3, and let's read there with verse 11.

Ephesians 3 and verse 11.

And I want to take just a moment and explain one word here.

In Ephesians 3, verse 11, the Bible says, "...according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, I want to emphasize, of course, the word "eternal"—"according to the eternal purpose."

So whatever God's purpose is that he had in Jesus Christ, it is eternal.

That is, it was before the foundation of the world.

It was before creation.

It was before time.

It is not temporal, but here's the truth I want to emphasize and explain.

Watch this carefully.

"According to the eternal purpose"—singular.

"...which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now you and I will pick up a theology book and we'll turn to the doctrine of God, and inevitably there's a section there and it says "the decrees of God."

But do you realize the reason it says "the decrees of God" is because of our finite human understanding?

Do you realize that God only had to have one decree, one purpose, which involved anything and everything?

But see, you and I can't think like that.

We're not omniscient.

We do not have all wisdom.

And so what we do is we list things one at a time, and we will list them in succession, and we'll say, "This was here, and this is second, and this is third."

But God did not have to do that.

Since God is omniscient, since God had all wisdom, God only had to make one decree or one purpose, and that is that eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ before the world began.

Now, I want to show you how this relates to Christ particularly.

And in Christ, I'll show you later, we are involved in every aspect.

Note, if you would, in 1 Peter 1.

1 Peter 1.

And look, if you would please, beginning there with verse 18.

1 Peter 1, verse 18.

1 Peter 1 verse 18, Peter writes and he says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,

who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."

So when was the work of Jesus Christ set up?

Before the foundation of the world.

Even his death, burial, resurrection—everything.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation 13 and verse 8.

Revelation 13 and verse 8.

Look what the Bible says, Revelation 13 and verse 8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

So Jesus Christ then, and everything involved in Jesus Christ, was ordained, determined before the world ever began.

It relates to this eternal purpose which God had in Christ Jesus.

Now, I want you to turn back in your Bible to the book of Hebrews, chapter 13.

Let me show it to you again.

And while you're turning there, find 2 Timothy, because we're going to go there next.

Look in Hebrews, chapter 13, if you would, please.

Verse 20.

This is one of my favorite verses.

It is exceedingly beautiful.

It is exceedingly full

of truth.

Look, if you would, Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 20. Paul—or the author of the book of Hebrews, many think is Paul—

he says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

So there was a covenant that was entered into between God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the people of God

before the foundation of the world.

So God's purpose is eternal.

It is not temporal.

There is no such thing as a temporal purpose with God.

God is not bounded by time.

God is the one that created time.

Note, if you would please, in 2 Timothy 1 and verse 9.

2 Timothy 1 and verse 9.

Just to show you that we were involved in that purpose of Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world.

He says in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9, talking about God "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling,

not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

So here the Bible says very plainly that we were in Jesus Christ and God gave us grace in Christ before the world began.

So very clearly then this purpose of God is eternal.

It is not temporal.

So that's why he said in Ephesians 3 and verse 11, he talks about "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began."

So God's purpose, first of all, is eternal.

Secondly, number two, God's purpose is immutable.

God's Purpose is Immutable

I-M-M-U-T-A-B-L-E, immutable, which simply means unchangeable.

God says in the book of Malachi, "I, the Lord, change not."

God is the only immutable being there is.

I want you to look in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 14.

The Immutability of God's Purpose

Let me begin showing you the immutability of God's purpose. In Isaiah chapter 14, verse 24, we read: “The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” He continues: “That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders.”

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” Look at those questions. Who is going to cancel out God's eternal plan? Who's going to make it void? No one. His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? The answer is no one.

Do you remember what he said in Daniel 4 and verse 35? God “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” In Job 42, Job said, “I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.”

So no one can thwart God, no one can hinder God, no one can stop God, and no one can overthrow God. If there is anyone or anything that can hinder, thwart, and overthrow God, then that thing is greater in power than God, and God would not be omnipotent. He is saying that his purpose is immutable.

Look in Isaiah chapter 19, beginning with verse 11: “Surely the princes of Zoan are fools. The counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish. How say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? Where are thy wise men? And let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.” Were all the wise men and counselors of Pharaoh able to stop the purpose of God against Egypt? Of course not. Why? Because his purpose is immutable.

Look in Isaiah 23, verse 9: “The Lord of hosts hath purposed it.” He is talking about Tyre: “The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.” The Lord has purposed it. Were the rulers and merchants of Tyre able to stop their destruction?

Of course not, because God had purposed their overthrow. Isaiah 46 shows us the certainty of God's purpose. God says, “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’” He continues, “Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

God said, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” David said in Psalm 115:3, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” The very fact that God is God means that He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, because God is the most free and independent being. He is not under coercion, outside pressure, or external forces. He says, “I will do all my pleasure. I've purposed it. And I'll bring it to pass.”

Now turn back to Romans 8. I will tie this together more later, and even more next week, but notice the assurance of our salvation

and the assurance of our victory based upon the purpose of God. God's purpose is not only eternal; God's purpose is immutable. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and those who are called according to his purpose.” Verses 29 and 30 explain the purpose of God.

Then verse 31 asks, “What shall we then say to these things?” What things? Especially those relating to the purpose of God. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” If God has purposed something in our lives, who can deter it? Who can disannul it? Who can stop it? The answer is absolutely no one and nothing.

The thought continues in verse 35: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Remember, we are talking about the purpose of God, the purpose of God in Christ, and we are in Christ. Therefore, we are in that purpose. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

God's Purpose Is Unconditional and Absolute

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No. As it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Why? Because God has purposed it. No one can thwart, overthrow, hinder, or disannul the purpose of God. Thus he gives, as the ultimate ground of our assurance, the eternal purpose of God. God's purpose is eternal. God's purpose is immutable. Thirdly, God's purpose is unconditional and absolute.

When I use the word unconditional, I mean this: It is not dependent upon any particulars or anything that is not parcel and part of the decree or purpose itself. The purpose of God is not dependent upon particulars that are outside of the purpose of God.

Acts chapter 2 illustrates this, especially concerning Jesus Christ and that eternal purpose. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Everything that happened to Jesus Christ happened by the determinate counsel of God. God had determined before for it to be done. The plaiting of the crown of thorns, the beating him on his head with the crown of thorns on his head, the crucifixion, the spitting, the cursing, the slapping, the spear piercing his side—everything was absolutely determined.

Acts 4 says, "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Not one thing happened to Jesus Christ that had not already been predetermined in the counsel and the wisdom of God.

It is exactly the same in every area of God's purpose. There are no particulars that are outside the purpose of God that affect God's purpose in any way whatsoever.

Romans 9 explains it: “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. That is, perish the thought. Don't even think that. “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Why did God choose Jacob? The only answer you can come up with based upon this passage was because of his own purpose. Jacob and Esau had not even been born. They had done neither good nor evil. Their works would not and could not have influenced God whatsoever, because God is absolutely independent. God is absolutely free. And so he says, “that the purpose of God might stand.”

Second Timothy chapter 1, verse 9, says, “...who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” So if you were in God's purpose today, it's not because you had anything to do with it. It's not because of your works, your deeds, or your merits. It's because of God and his grace. God's purpose is unconditional and absolute. How can I say that it is absolute?

The answer is because it is rooted and grounded in God himself. Ephesians 1:4-5 says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

Why did God choose us? Why did God save us? He did so “according to the good pleasure of his will.” Ephesians 1:9 says, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” His good pleasure is synonymous with his purpose. Whatsoever our Lord is pleased to do, that is what he does, as Psalm 115:3 says. Thus, the good pleasure has become the purpose. Verse 11 says, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” What was his good pleasure is his purpose, and what was his purpose is now the counsel of his own will. In other words, it is consummately wise, because God is involved.

Application to Romans 8:28

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to

his purpose." First and foremost, Romans 8:28 is a declaration that God has a definite plan and a definite purpose with respect to salvation. You could read "according to his purpose" as "in accordance with" or "because of his purpose." In other words, God has drawn up his plans, drafted a course of action, and is putting that plan and purpose into operation.

It is no accident that you are saved. God does not save people by accident; he saves people on purpose. He deliberately saved you. God makes no mistakes. He makes no slip-ups, commits no errors, and has no accidents. Whatever he does is done according to purpose. Stop and think about the ramifications this has in Romans chapter 8, especially verse 28. When God saved you, he did so on purpose. What does that mean? It means that you are involved in the eternal purpose of God.

God cannot fail, and God cannot allow you to fail since you are in His purpose. This is the ultimate ground of our assurance. This is what we basically call the perseverance of the saints. Why is it that we will persevere? Why will we remain in faith, repentance, obedience, holiness, and godliness? The answer is that we are in the purpose of God. God is working out that purpose, and God is not going to fail. What has He said? "I will do all my pleasure." It is going to come to pass; it is not going to fail.

God Actively Brings His Purpose to Pass

Secondly, Romans 8:28 and the following verses demonstrate that God Himself is actively engaged in bringing His purpose to pass: "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. 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. 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."

So God is involved in the outworking of His purpose. This purpose involves God's strength, power, wisdom, and control. What greater assurance do you want? No wonder Paul wrote, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We have the omnipotence of God behind us,

under us, and around us. You talk about making someone dominion-oriented and victory-oriented—that ought to do it. That ought to encourage you.

God Will Successfully Fulfill His Purpose

Thirdly, Scripture tells us that God will successfully bring His purpose to full and final fruition. Ephesians 1:9 says, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he had purposed in himself.” Where did He purpose it? In Himself. So that is not going to fail. It cannot fail for lack of wisdom because He is omniscient; it cannot fail for lack of power because He is omnipotent; it cannot fail for lack of control because He is sovereign. “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” What is God ultimately going to do? He will gather together in one all things in Christ.

God is going to get everyone together in Christ, who are in Christ, that are in heaven and in earth. God said, “My plan, my purpose will be fully brought to pass.” He is going to have His Son, Jesus Christ, the head of a new race and a new world order. And it will be brought to pass by the purpose and by the power of God.

So when the Bible says in Romans 8:28, “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,” it has reference to that eternal, immutable, unconditional, and absolute purpose which God purposed in Himself in Christ before the world ever began.

Dear friend, if you can overthrow God, you may defeat and thwart His purpose. But if you cannot overthrow Him, His purpose shall stand. Let me spell it out: the wicked are going down, and God’s people are coming up, because God has purposed it.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank Thee today for Your eternal purpose, which You purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord. There can be no faults, no failures, no defeats in Your plan and in Your purpose, for You are the omnipotent, sovereign, omniscient

God of the universe. And we thank Thee that Thou hast made us and saved us according to Your purpose and Your grace. Give us, Lord, the assurance in this passage that since we are in the purpose of God, we cannot fall and we cannot fail because You're God and You're going to bring to pass that which You purposed. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Six

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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."

Review of Previous Studies

We began by looking at verse 28 and saw that there is a divine limitation in this verse. All things do not work together for good for everyone, but only for those who love God and those who are called according to his purpose.

Secondly, we looked at the foundation of our knowledge, for he said, "we know." We know because of the express statements of Scripture and because of the experience of the saints. Then we looked at the fullness of our knowledge, for he said, "we know that

all things work together for good." We delineated at least three things: those things that God allows to happen; those things that God purposefully and deliberately sends our way; and even those times that God withdraws himself from us.

Then we looked at the features in verse 28. The first feature was, "all things work together for good to them that love God." To love God meant to obey him and to bring our life into conformity to his word. The next feature was those who were called. There is a difference between the general call and the effectual call; this has reference to those who have been savingly called by him. Finally, we looked at the phrase "according to his purpose." The Bible teaches that God had an eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ before the world began.

Introduction to God's Purpose in Verse 29

Our text today emphasizes the truth as to whom God's purpose applies. Look, if you would please, at verse 28 and then verse 29. Verse 28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Verse 29 continues, "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." So verse 29 tells us who are the called according to his purpose. We say in verse 28 that all things work together for good to those who love God. Why do they love God? Because they are called. Why are they called? Because they are in the purpose of God. And what is the purpose of God all about?

The same individuals are described in verse 29 as those who are foreknown and predestinated. Then, in verse 30, they are also called—not only foreknown and predestinated, but also justified and glorified. So the principle is this: God's purpose in salvation applies to these people, whoever the "for whom" is back in verse 29. In other words, these are the ones who shall most definitely be saved.

Let me put it like this. In verses 29 and 30, you have the golden chain of God's salvation. If you are in that first link of the chain, you are going to be in the last link of the chain. For instance, look at it. He says in verse 29, "For whom he did foreknow"—what happened?

"He did predestinate." Now skip down to verse 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." The "whom" is the same, beginning with verse 29 all the way through verse 30. That is why, if you are in the first link of that golden chain, you are going to be in the last link as well. You will be glorified.

Refutation of Universalism

Now let me tell you, first of all, negatively, what this passage is not teaching, and let me tell you what this passage is condemning. This passage is not teaching, and the Bible does not teach, what is known as universalism. That is the belief that everyone will be saved. I do not know if you are aware that there are many churches and many religions that teach universalism. One of them, of course, is the Unitarian Church. They believe that ultimately every individual is going to be saved, period.

But do you realize that some go even further than that? Some teach that not only is every individual going to be saved, but all fallen angels will be saved and even the devil himself shall be saved. This is usually referred to as the restitution of all things. That is the theory that propounds that everyone, including the devil, is going to be saved. Inevitably, this theory is based upon a perverted and an unscriptural view of the love of God, because they teach that God is love; therefore, God will not lose any of His creatures, not even the devil himself.

Inevitably connected with this is what we know as the theory of a second chance: somehow, after death, some individuals are going to be given a second chance. By the way, may I remind you, salvation is not by chance. Salvation is by grace, and, of course, it is by the purpose of God. Presumably, according to this theory, after some people die, they are given a second chance; then they understand the error of their ways, accept Christ, repent, and believe in God, and thus they are saved. Thus everyone is going to be saved.

This teaching of universalism is very consoling and very comforting to a lot of people, because it allows them to have the best of both worlds, so to speak. It allows them to live in sin and rebellion

and wickedness and the lust of the flesh, and then never suffer the consequences of their sin and rebellion. Yet even a casual reading of Scripture should very clearly dispel this unbiblical theory. Hold Romans 8:28.

But let us go back in our Bibles, first of all, to the book of John, chapter 3, and begin at one of the most familiar verses. In John 3:16, the Scripture says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This verse clearly teaches that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will not perish, but will have everlasting life.

But what does the opposite of that teach? It also teaches that whoever does not believe in Jesus Christ shall perish. Verse 18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already." Verse 36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." John chapter 10 follows.

Even a casual reading of Scripture ought to tell you that not everyone is going to be saved. In John 10, verse 3, Jesus speaks of the shepherd and the sheep: “To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice. And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.” In verse 11 He says, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” In verse 14 He says, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” Then, in verse 26, speaking to the Pharisees, He says, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

John 17 likewise teaches that not everyone is going to be saved. Concerning Jesus Christ, verse 2 says, “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” Then, in verse 9, He says, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for

they are thine." He is speaking of those whom the Father gave Him, whoever they are.

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." So Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. We will come back to this passage a little later, but notice it in light of what is being shown here. The Word of God also says in 2 Timothy 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Universalism teaches that all will be restored in the end because of the love of God. Yet Revelation 20 says, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." At least three personages are not going to be saved.

John continues: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Then he says, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 22 says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

A casual reading of the Bible lets you know that not everyone is going to be converted. We may not understand these truths, like

them, or agree with them in our spirit. But the fact is, that is what the Bible teaches, and we must bow to it.

Returning to Romans 8:28, Paul writes, “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.” Romans 8:28 reveals that we are called according to his purpose. What is God's purpose for those whom he has called? Verse 29 makes it very plain.

God's Purpose: Conformity to Christ's Image

He says, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,” here it is, “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Verse 29 gives us two specific purposes, or one purpose with two aspects. First, that we might be conformed to the image of his Son. Secondly, that he, Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren.

In declaring God’s purpose in verse 29, Paul is at the same time enunciating its absolute certainty. I’ll show that a little bit later. When Paul declares God’s purpose, he not only gives us the main purpose, which I’ve just mentioned, but a secondary purpose as well. Let me put it like this: the ultimate purpose is the glory of the Son of God, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. The secondary, or ancillary, purpose mentioned here is that we might be conformed to the image of his Son. In other words, we are in God’s purpose to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, first of all, we’ve got to look closely at the purpose with respect to us, the called ones. What is the purpose of God for us who are called? Well, some say forgiveness.

Conformed to the Image of Christ

Forgiveness is indeed a wonderful and blessed truth, but forgiveness is not an end in and of itself. So many people try to rejoice as if forgiveness were the end. You have seen the bumper stickers: “Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.” It is true that we are forgiven, but forgiveness is only the first step toward God’s ultimate purpose for us. What is God’s purpose?

Someone might say justification. Justification is more than forgiveness. It is a legal act of God, whereby God declares us righteous before His law. He sees no evil, wickedness, or rebellion in us based upon the righteousness of His law. Justification is an important truth, but it is not the end. It is merely a step toward the end.

Some might answer, imputation. Imputation is a glorious truth. The Bible tells us that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us. We not only have a perfect forgiveness, we don't have a perfect standing, but we have a perfect righteousness before God because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. But imputation is not an end in and of itself. No matter how many of these truths you can enunciate, they are not ends in themselves. They are steps toward the ultimate end: that you and I might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

To understand this, we must look carefully at some of these words. In verse 29, he says, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” First, consider the word “image.” The Greek word is eikon. The English word “icon” is taken directly from the Greek, spelled differently. Eikon literally means an image, a likeness, an exact representation, or a resemblance.

The Bible says that we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we have the same Greek word, eikon: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Notice what he says: “with open face beholding as in a glass,” that is, the Scriptures; it is our mirror. Beholding the glory of the Lord there, we are changed into the same image.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the same word appears: “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Jesus Christ Himself is called the eikon, or image, of God. Colossians 1:15 says concerning Jesus Christ that He is “the image of the invisible God.” It is the word eikon. The word eikon means a resemblance, a likeness, an exact representation, but it

means more than that. It does indeed mean likeness, but it is a special kind of likeness.

It is a special kind of resemblance: a derived resemblance, a derived likeness, a derived representation. I stress the word "derived" to distinguish it from what we would call an accidental likeness. Let me explain. You may pick a flower and wander a couple of hundred feet before picking another flower, and those flowers may look alike. They may have a resemblance; they may have the same shade, the same shape, and perhaps even be the same kind of flower. But their likeness is accidental. They simply happen to resemble each other; we would call that an accidental likeness. There are also people who look like other people.

When Alice and I were engaged, many years ago, we were down in Fernandina Beach, at the fort there, walking and taking a tour. I looked behind me, and my heart went into my throat because I saw her father watching us. I thought, "Did he follow us down here to spy on us?" I said, "Alice, turn around and look at your father." She turned around and did a double take. It was not her father, but he looked exactly like her father.

That was an accidental likeness. You and I know people who look like other folks, though they are not related. It is not a derived likeness; it is what we would call an accidental likeness. You can take an image on a coin, say Lincoln's image on the penny. That is not an accidental likeness. It is a derived likeness, because that image was purposely and deliberately stamped on the coin. It is just like the picture of George Washington on a one Federal Reserve note. That is a derived likeness. It was taken from George and put on that piece of paper; it is not accidental.

The same thing is true of pictures on stamps. That is not accidental; it is a derived likeness. In other words, what he is saying is this: We have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, and the image that you and I are going to have, should have, and will have is not an accidental likeness. It is derived. It is given to us from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is the original, and we derive the likeness from him.

Romans 8:29 says, “For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” The word “conformed” is the Greek word summorphos. Sum is a preposition meaning “with.” Morphos, or morphe, is the Greek word for “form.” Thus, “conform” comes from summorphos, which literally means to be jointly formed together, to be formed together with, to share the form of, or to bring into the same form with.

The Meaning of Conformity and Image

The apostle uses the same exact Greek word in Philippians 3:10: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” In other words, jointly formed together with him. When the Bible speaks of you and me being conformed to the image of Christ, it does not refer to a mere superficial likeness or conformity to form. It is a likeness of essence.

It is a likeness of essence, an outward expression of an inward essence or of an inward nature. We are made conformable, or to be like unto the Son of God, in our inward essence. In other words, we are to bear his stamp upon us and in us. His likeness is to be in our very nature, the whole of our personality.

“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 term “brethren” emphasizes this very concept. If Christ is going to be the firstborn among many brethren, it means that here is an identity of essence. There is going to be a family resemblance. We’re going to be conformed to his image.

Romans chapter 5, beginning with verse 12, explains it more thoroughly: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through

the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

Here is a comparison. The main thrust is this: In Adam, we sinned. In Adam, we transgressed. In Adam, we died. In Adam, we became sinners. In Adam, we became rebellious creatures.

We were under the curse and the condemnation of God and the judgment of God. Every one of us has borne the image of Adam, in that sense of the word, because we are his descendants. All of us were born sinners. We were born rebellious. We were born condemned. We may not necessarily look exactly the way Adam looked. We may have a different color of hair, and our eyes may be a different color.

But the truth of the matter is that we have a sameness of essence. We have a derived likeness from him. Because he sinned, we sinned in him, and consequently we were made like unto him.

Now, the same is true in reference to Jesus Christ. We were once in Adam, but now we are in Christ. There is a likeness, a resemblance, an image that is derived from Christ, just like our old nature was derived from Adam.

Martin Luther, the reformer, said many years ago, and he said it truthfully, "All men hang from the girdle of two men." You are either hanging from the girdle of Adam or hanging from the girdle of Christ. You are either in Adam or you are in Christ.

He said that Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren. This image, this likeness, is a derived likeness. We are to be jointly formed together with Christ.

Hebrews chapter 2, beginning with verse 10, says, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call

them brethren." He says that Christ is bringing many sons unto glory, and that He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Because brethren have a unity of essence, brethren also have a certain likeness. It is a derived likeness.

Let us go back to Romans 8 for a moment and look at verse 30. Let me show you a connection here. Romans 8, verse 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." You need to underline the word "glorified." You see, to say that I am conformed to the image of Christ is to say that I am his brother. And to say that I am his brother is the same as saying that I am glorified. In other words, our ultimate conformation to the derived resemblance and likeness and image of Jesus Christ is so absolutely certain and sure that Paul talks about it in the past tense.

Now, let us go back very quickly to Hebrews chapter 2. Note verse 9 first of all, and then verse 10. Hebrews 2, verse 9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory." Now what does it mean when he says, "in bringing many sons unto glory"?

Well, look back in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 5 and verse 2. Look at what the Word of God says. Paul says: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God—what is the glory of God? What does it mean to be glorified? What does it mean to be conformed to the image of his Son? What does it mean to rejoice in the glory of God? Well, look in Romans 8, beginning with verse 18, and I think you'll see it. Romans 8, verse 18. Watch what he says.

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

The whole earth is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Are not we already sons of God by faith? Yes. Are we not sons of God by adoption? Yes. Then what is he talking about? "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

What is the creation waiting on? "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." What, then, is glorification? Glorification is when we will not only be spiritually speaking, but physically speaking, glorified; our bodies will be redeemed.

There will no longer be any sin, rebellion, or wickedness. The whole creation will be released from its bondage of corruption that was placed upon it because of our sin. To be conformed to the image of Christ, the ultimate reference has even the glorification of our bodies. We are to be conformed even now, here, by his grace; but the ultimate and completion of that is when even our bodies are glorified.

Paul says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Even our bodies will be conformed to the image of Christ. Paul said, "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." To be glorified means that we shall be like him. We will not only be like him in spirit, but we will be like him even in body. The Bible says in Hebrews 2 and verse 9 that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor. As he is, so shall we be.

Let us consider some implications of this truth. What follows is the most important part of the message today, and if it takes hold of you, it may change your entire understanding and perhaps your entire life. The Bible says in verse 29, "For whom he did foreknow,

he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he, Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren."

We must be absolutely careful in explaining our conformity to His image. It is a derived likeness, and we are to be conformed to Him in spirit as well as in body, but we must remember that Jesus Christ is unique. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He is the only Son of God, the only One who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 1, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."

Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God. Conformity to His image does not mean that we become a son of God as He is the Son of God. The Bible says in John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Jesus Christ is unique. When the Bible says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," the phrase "only begotten" comes from one Greek word, monogenes. It literally means "one of a kind." Jesus Christ is unique; there is no one like Him.

He is the Son of God by eternal generation. We are the sons of God by adoption. We are therefore not the same as He is, and we do not become gods. Contrary to what Mormonism and many other false religions teach, we do not become gods. Even our Lord differentiates between "my Father" and "your Father," and "my God" and "your God."

When our Lord speaks in the Bible, he differentiates between "my Father" and "your Father," and "my God" and "your God." He does not say that God is our Father in the same sense that he is his Father. It is true that he taught us to pray, "our Father which art in heaven," but he did not include himself in that petition. When he told those at

the tomb to go and tell the others, he said, "You tell them I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Thus, when Jesus Christ calls God his Father, he means something entirely different from what we mean when we call God our Father. He means that he is one and the same with him.

They understood it that way. In John 5, they took up stones to stone him because they said, "Thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Jesus Christ is unique. Therefore, when I say that we are conformed to his image, that does not mean that we become gods, or that we become a god like Jesus Christ. Of course not.

Christ as the Second Adam and Federal Head

Secondly, what does it mean when it says that we are to be conformed to his image? The phrase "to be conformed to his image" refers to Christ as the second Adam.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning with verse 45, we read: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." Jesus Christ is here referred to as the second man and the last Adam.

In Hebrews chapter 2, beginning with verse 14, note the wording: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were"

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Jesus Christ is called the second man and the last Adam. How can He be called the second man? Clearly, a multitude of men lived between Adam and Christ, so Christ was not second chronologically. Since Christ existed in heaven, He should be the first man you would

think. But He is called the second man because He is the second man in time and history to sustain a federal representation, a federal headship, with a people.

That is the contrast given in Romans 5: in Adam, all died; in Christ, all were made alive. In Adam, all were sinners; in Christ, all were delivered. Jesus Christ is called the second man because He is the second individual to sustain a federal headship, a federal relationship.

In Adam, in the garden, what Adam did, we did. When Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam looked, we looked. When Adam lusted, we lusted. When Adam rebelled, we rebelled. In Christ, it is the same thing. When Christ died, we died. When Christ arose, we arose. When Christ ascended, we ascended. When Christ sat at the right hand of God, we sat down at the right hand of God in Him, because He is our representative and our federal head.

He is called the last Adam because there will never be another individual who will sustain this type of relationship. That means there is no other salvation outside of Jesus Christ. If you are not saved by Jesus Christ, then you are not saved.

God the Son, the eternal God, condescended to take to Himself a human nature. Mary was not the mother of God; she was the mother of the human nature of Jesus. The Son of God condescended to take that human nature. He is one person with two natures: perfect God and perfect man. The nature He assumed when He became flesh and blood was a perfect humanity. Jesus Christ never sinned. He came, Son of God, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

As Hebrews chapter 2 says, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. When God the Son condescended and took to Himself human nature, it was a perfect human nature. Jesus Christ said in John 8:29, “I do always those things that please him.” He never sinned. Jesus Christ glorified human nature, demonstrating that the perfect man could obey God and did obey God.

We derive our new nature as Christians, as children of God, from the second Adam. We do not derive our nature from the Son of God,

and we do not become gods. We derive our new nature from the perfected human nature that Jesus Christ has taken to Himself.

Jesus Christ came into this world to start and found a new humanity. He is the firstborn among many brethren. Christ came to start a new race. Adam was the head of a race, and now Christ is the head of a new race. A race started in Adam, and now a new race has started in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is indeed the Savior of the world. He is the one who inaugurated and started a new race, a new humanity, a new world order, because we are going to be conformed to His image. That image is the perfect humanity that is in Jesus Christ.

In 2 Peter 1:4, the Bible says, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” The divine nature of which we become partakers is not that eternal nature which the Son of God has as God, but the divine human nature, in the sense that Jesus Christ has perfected that human nature in and of Himself. Human nature in Christ was not deified, and the deity in Christ was not humanized, but Christ is one person and thus is referred to as the divine nature. In other words, we have become perfect in Christ. We do not become gods, since there is only one God, but we have received a new nature.

Union with Christ and Shared Inheritance

He is the head; we are the members. Ephesians chapter 5 contains a tremendous passage on marriage and a tremendous truth. I've taught it. I want to point this out to you. He says, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Now, this is how close we are: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

Two people can live together long enough that they not only think alike and act alike, but sometimes begin to look alike. You would be amazed at what Alice and I do at the same time. We will even reach for the radio knob at the same time to turn it down. Nobody has said anything to the other, but our hands will sometimes bump as we reach for it. In Jesup, we used to play the oldlywed game. You know what that is: people are asked about their husband's or wife's

favorite food and other things. It is not the newlywed game, but the oldlywed game. Out of all the times we played it as a church, Alice and I won every time. Every time. And there are people who have not been married longer than we have.

The point I am trying to make is this: “A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” In other words, you begin to think alike, act alike, and talk alike. You have the same values. Look in verse 32: “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” What does he say? If you have the derived nature of Christ and live with Christ, you begin to think like Him, talk like Him, and act like Him. When God gets through with us, we will be like Him in every respect.

Do you remember what 1 John 3 says? I know many of you can quote it. He says, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

Now look back to Hebrews chapter 2, verse 9. I want to take just one phrase, and then we will look at two other passages and close for the day: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” Remember, we shall be made conformable to His image. What does that mean? If Jesus Christ is crowned with glory and honor, we who are conformed to His image shall be crowned with glory and honor as well. If Christ is reigning, we shall be reigning with Him. Now, the two passages are Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 3. Turn there to Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 3. Let us begin reading with Romans 8, verse 16.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 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.” The Bible tells us that we are joint heirs with Christ.

If I had four children and died, I would not normally leave everything to one child. I would leave it to all four, with something like “share and share alike,” or “divide equally among themselves.” Why? Because I love them equally. The Bible tells us that we are not only heirs of God, but joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Whatever Jesus

Christ gets, we get. Why? Because we are in Him. We are made conformable unto Him, and all the honor and glory that He has, we have.

Now look in 1 Corinthians 3:21: “Therefore let no man glory in men.” Why should I glory in a man because of his money, appearance, or property? “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” Whatever Christ has, we have. The ultimate purpose in God saving anybody is the glory of the Son of God.

Conclusion and Prayer

Secondarily, if He is to be firstborn among many brethren, He must have brethren. We are to be conformed to His image, with a new race, a new humanity, and a new world order, wherein dwelleth righteousness: no fractional reserve banking, no CFR, and no corrupt legislation. He is our Legislator in Christ. Remember, Satan is a counterfeiter, and the world is trying to do only what Jesus Christ has done.

Speak to our hearts. We are thankful that we are to be totally and completely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. As we live here and now, awaiting the ultimate glorification of our bodies, may we, even in our spirits, attitudes, and dispositions, demonstrate the derived likeness of Jesus Christ in us. May we think the way Thou wouldst have us think, act the way Thou wouldst have us act, and speak the way Thou wouldst have us speak. May we live according to Your Word, giving You honor and glory in Christ’s name. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Seven

Introduction and Review of Romans 8:28

Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 28:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified."

We have been in this passage for the last six weeks, so I cannot review all of it. First, in verse 28, we looked at the divine limitation. God does not say that everything works together for good for everyone, but only for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose. The Bible also shows where all things work together for the bad, for the evil of those who hate God and do not love Him.

Secondly, we looked at the foundation of our knowledge. How do we know? There are two specific ways. First, by the express statements of Scripture. We went through the Old Testament and the New Testament, seeing repeatedly that God is working everything out for our good. Secondly, by the experience of the saints; he mentions this in Job chapter 5 and verse 11.

Then we looked at the fullness, or extent, of this knowledge: “And we know that all things work together for good.” The “all things” include all sufferings and every trial that comes our way. Some are things God allowed to come our way, which He could have stopped if He had chosen, but did not; therefore, they will work together for our good. Others are things that God purposefully and deliberately sends our way.

Even chastisement, according to 1 Corinthians 11 and Hebrews chapter 12, works together for our good. There are also those times when God seemingly withdraws Himself and His blessings. Even those things work together for our good.

Then we look at the features in this verse. How do we know that verse 28 applies to us? The answer is very practical. It is given, number one, to those who love God. To love God is to obey Him. Our Lord said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." The Word of God says, in 1 John 5 and verse 3, "And this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and they are not grievous unto us." So the first feature is those who love God.

Secondly, there are those who are the called. The Bible distinguishes between what is known as a general call and an effectual call. Those who have been brought savingly to Jesus Christ by the power of His Spirit are known in the Bible as the called ones. We are called according to His purpose. Ephesians 3 and verse 11 speaks of the eternal purpose which God had in Jesus Christ our Lord. God only had to have one purpose that would encompass and include everything, because God is omniscient.

Last week we dealt with the fact in verse 29 that the purpose for us as believers—those who love God and have been called—is that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. Ultimately, Jesus

Christ is going to be the head of a new race, of a new humanity. He is going to be the firstborn among many brethren.

The Primary Purpose: Christ as Firstborn Among Many Brethren

We are coming again to verse 29, to the latter part: "that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." In reality, the second aspect mentioned in verse 29 is the first, because it refers to Jesus Christ, God the Son: that Jesus Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren. In the Bible, the term "firstborn" is a term of preeminence. Throughout the Bible, the firstborn is regarded not only as holding a position of preeminence, but also a position of special recognition, special respect, and honor. God is telling us that His purpose in creating and saving us is that He might bring glory to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What happens to us is secondary; it is ancillary. The primary purpose is to bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ. God's primary purpose in saving us, and in doing anything and everything, is to glorify His Son.

This should give us comfort, consolation, and assurance, knowing that the very honor of the blessed Trinity is involved in our salvation. God's honor and glory are involved. What an honor it is, and should be, for each of us to be involved in the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, Brother Weaver, what assurance are you talking about?" The Bible says that Jesus Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The Assurance of Salvation Rooted in Christ's Success

Stop and think for a moment. What if He had no brethren? What if no one were saved? Instead of being a place of preeminence, there would be a place of failure. If Jesus Christ had left heaven, assumed humanity, suffered, bled, and died, been resurrected and ascended into heaven, and no one had ever been converted, it would not be a position of honor for Him. It would be a position of defeat and failure. The very success of the glorifying of Jesus Christ is at stake. If there is no glory for Christ, there is only failure. How could Jesus

Christ have the place of preeminence and glory if He failed? The answer is, of course, He could not.

This is the broad distinction between the first Adam and the second Adam. The first Adam failed, sinned, and was driven from the garden; the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, succeeded and brought honor and glory to His Father and to Himself. This is the ultimate assurance of our salvation: Jesus Christ did not fail. He is going to be the firstborn among many brethren, and since He is the firstborn among many brethren, it means we shall be there. Here is the ultimate guarantee of our salvation. Jesus Christ will be glorified; He will indeed be the firstborn among many brethren, exactly as God declares, and we shall be glorified with Him.

Isaiah 53 gives us the absolute assurance that Jesus Christ will not fail, and He has not failed. In Isaiah 53, verse 10, the Bible says, "Yet it pleased the Lord," that is, God the Father, "to bruise him," that is, God the Son. "He hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul," that is, Christ's soul, "an offering for sin," watch now, "He," Christ, "shall see his seed."

Not maybe. Not "hope so." He shall see his seed. "He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." Remember that the pleasure of the Lord in verse 10 concerns our Lord's sufferings, because it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Everything that our Lord suffered, everything that our Lord endured, is going to prosper. It is going to succeed. It will not fail.

Now look at verse 11: "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." There is no "hope so" or "maybe" about it. He shall. There is an absolute guarantee, for Jesus Christ did not fail.

Now consider our Lord's high priestly prayer in John 17, beginning with verse 23. Here is the assurance that our Lord has and the request that He made of His Father, showing once again that there is no failure in the work of God the Son. Our Lord is praying, and He says, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

Now watch what He prays: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my

glory, which thou hast given me before the foundation of the world, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." Note what He said: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." It is Christ's will that His brethren be with Him. It is the will of the Father. He prayed it. Let me ask you a question: How many prayers of our Lord did God the Father deny or fail to answer? None. So when our Lord said, "I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," very clearly we shall be with Him wherever He is.

Let me show you the ultimate purpose of God in Jesus Christ. In Ephesians chapter one is a tremendous passage. Look what God the Father is going to do in Christ. There is not going to be any failure. Everything will be absolutely perfectly successful. In Ephesians 1:10, we read, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times," He, that is God, "might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him."

Why is this verse so important? Because it says exactly the same thing that Romans 8:29 says. Every one of us are going to be gathered together in Christ. Whether we have died and gone unto glory, or whether we are alive and remain on this earth, we shall be gathered together in Him. Why? Because He is the head. He is the firstborn among many brethren. God's will and God's purpose is that we be gathered together.

Let me show you how absolutely sure and certain this is going to be. In Ephesians 1:20, we read, "which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places." So Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Verse 21 says that He is "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Christ is already exalted. Christ already has all power in heaven and earth. There is no principality, no power, no might, and no dominion that can stop Him, thwart Him, or hinder Him. God "hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Now consider Colossians chapter one. This is a passage that every one of you are familiar with. Philippians chapter two, beginning with verse five, says, "Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus."

“Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man,” he humbled himself, “and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross.” Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, of things in earth and things in heaven and things under the earth. Every tongue shall confess.

Does that passage speak of failure? No. It is an absolute guarantee. The purpose of God is to glorify His Son. Colossians 1:18 says, “And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he, Christ, might have the preeminence.” Adam failed, the first Adam. But the second Adam succeeded.

The argument Paul gives us in Romans 8 is this: because the glory and headship of Jesus Christ is the ultimate object of salvation, our salvation is absolutely certain, sure, and assured. Why? Because we are wrapped up in Him. He shall not fail. He has not failed. Everything that God has purposed in His Son must fully and finally, successfully and ultimately come to pass. Why?

God's purpose is perfect in every respect. It is perfect in every detail and every part. It is perfect as a concept and as a thought, and perfect in its execution at every stage. Why did Jesus Christ come on this earth bodily when He did? Why did He not come a thousand years earlier, or five years later? Why did He not come five minutes early or two minutes later? Scripture says in Galatians 4, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.” In other words, when it pleased God, in the perfect detail of God's perfect purpose, that is exactly when Jesus Christ came—not a minute too soon and not a minute too late.

May I remind you that not only was the plan of God perfect, but the Son of God was perfect Himself. That is why He said in John 8 and verse 29, “I only do always those things which please the Father.”

Paul's argument in Romans 8 and verse 29 is that we are assured of our salvation because we are assured of the glory of Jesus Christ. He shall not fail. God will gather together in Him and make Him the head of everything, that Jesus Christ might have the preeminence.

The Bible says, “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.” There are several terms in this verse that we have gone over and several that we have not, but we must examine them very carefully from the Scripture.

The Five Steps in God's Purpose (Romans 8:29-30)

The word “for” is very important after Paul says in verse 28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Then he introduces this little word “for.” Verses 29 and 30 are explanations and elucidations of verse 28. Paul is continuing to explain why God’s purpose is going to come to pass. This word “for” is designed to emphasize that every step, every part of this great purpose of God, has been worked out in absolute detail. God saw it all. God planned it all. God purposed it all before the foundation of the world.

In carrying out the purpose of God for us, there are five steps that are mentioned. What are they? In verse 29, he says, “For whom he did foreknow.” There is foreknowledge. Secondly, in verse 29, “he also did predestinate.” There is predestination. Skipping down to verse 30: “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” Thirdly, there is calling. “And whom he called, he also justified.” Fourthly, there is justification. “And whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Fifthly, there is glorification. Here, then, are the five steps in working out the purposes of God toward us: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.

I want you to note that calling is at the center. There are only five terms: calling is in the middle, with two on one side and two on the other side. Thus, calling is at the center, with two steps or two truths on either side of it.

When Paul wrote this, he wrote under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This means that the order in which these things are given is divine. They were given purposefully and deliberately in this way. Foreknowledge and predestination have reference to what God has decided or determined to do in reference to us, or in respect to us. Justification and glorification are more practical, in the sense that they refer to what God has done to us. Right in the middle of these terms is the word calling, and calling is the term that connects these two pairs. Let me try to give you an illustration, and then we will show you Scripture.

Calling as the Connecting Link

Suppose that you and I are building a highway. Everyone has seen the humongous concrete dividers they put in the highway while it is being built. Here is a whole pile of these heavy concrete dividers. I do not know what they weigh—four or five tons, maybe, or a couple of tons; it does not matter. They are sitting over there, useless and worthless. But we are going to use them to work on and build a highway.

First, we have to divide the highway so the cars can travel safely. We have a huge crane. What does the crane do? It moves over, picks up one of the dividers, brings it, swings it around, and puts it in place. When that crane grabs it and puts it in place, it is applying what we had already determined, planned, and purposed to be done with those concrete blocks.

Calling, then, is that which connects foreknowledge and predestination with justification and glorification. Let us see how the word calling is very clearly used in the sense of grabbing. In Philippians 3:12, the Apostle Paul writes, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Paul said, “I have not reached that state of glory that I am going to reach. I am not already there now.”

He continues, “But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” In more common language: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after if that I may grab that for which also I am grabbed by Christ Jesus.” What does Paul say? “Christ grabbed me. Christ called me.”

Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the saints of God. What happened? God grabbed him. God called him in such a way that he said, “Lord, who art thou?” Then, secondly, he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Very clearly, this grabbing, or calling, is the point at which God actually begins to apply His purpose in our life. That is why the word calling is at the center.

Let us look in Romans eight and verse twenty-nine at the word “foreknow,” because Scripture says, “For whom he did foreknow.”

The Meaning of Foreknowledge

The Greek term is prognosko. Pro is a preposition meaning “to,” “toward,” or “before,” and gnosko is the verb meaning “I know.” Thus, the word literally means “to know beforehand,” or “to foreknow.” We have an interesting English word taken directly from the Greek noun, letter for letter.

If you go to the doctor and he examines you, you ask him, “What is your prognosis?” Someone who seemingly tries to tell the future is called a prognosticator. The Greek word prognosis is our English word, spelled exactly the same, and it simply means forethought or foreknowledge.

The term foreknowledge is extremely important because the first move in our direction, and the application of God’s plan and purpose of redemption, is determined and controlled by God’s foreknowledge.

We must be careful at this point and take pains to understand each of these words. First of all, it is the Word of God. We want to bow to the Word of God. Whatever God teaches is right. We may not understand it, and we may not agree with it, but it is still God’s Word, and it is right. We bow to it and believe it.

Immediately, when you begin to talk about God's foreknowledge, most people confuse it with God's omniscience. God is omniscient. By that I mean He is all-knowing. He knows everything actual, everything imaginable, everything past, present, or future. God not only knows what is; He also knows what could have been. He not only knows what did happen; He knows what could have happened. God knows absolutely everything.

When you begin to talk about foreknowledge, most people try to confuse foreknowledge with events, actions, or things which come to pass. It is true that God foreknows, but Scripture shows that the word "foreknow" does not necessarily refer to what we would think of as merely an actual knowledge of future events. It is far more than that.

The word foreknowledge is very easy to study. Why is it very easy to study? Because the English word foreknowledge occurs only four times in our New Testament. The Greek word occurs five times, but the fifth time it is translated differently and therefore does not read foreknowledge. If you use a concordance and look up foreknowledge, you will find it occurs four times. But if you use a Greek lexicon and look up progenosko, then search the Scriptures for progenosko, you will find that it occurs five times in the New Testament. Let us look at these five times and see exactly what it means.

Before we ever look at the Scripture, let me tell you what most people think. They say, "God foreknew. God foresaw who would believe, and therefore He chose them, or elected them, to believe." That is unscriptural on three counts.

First of all, it would deny the biblical doctrine of election. Instead of election, you would have ratification. God would not be choosing anybody; God would merely be ratifying what they chose.

Secondly, that is a denial of total depravity and human inability. What it postulates is that some people are able to believe in and of themselves, while others are not able to believe. But Scripture says, "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that seeketh after God. There is none that understands. They're all gone out of the way."

Thirdly, it would make salvation based upon man's work instead of God's grace and God's purpose. If God foresaw who would believe and then ordered things based upon what they did, salvation would no longer be by God's grace or by God's purpose; salvation would be based upon the work of man. Very clearly, that cannot be the correct interpretation of foreknowledge.

I want to emphasize something before we look at the Scriptures. Every time the word foreknowledge is used, it has reference to people and not events. Certainly, events are included, but the basic application is to people. Let us go to the very first occurrence, found in the book of Acts, chapter 2, beginning with verse 22. In this passage, you can see that the very first occurrence has reference to Jesus Christ.

"You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you as you yourselves also know."

Now watch: "Him," not events, "Him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God. You have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Verse 23 says, "Him being delivered." How was God delivered? By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Foreknowledge and determinate counsel are linked together, and they have reference to Him. The foreknowledge of God, in reference to Christ here, actually has the thrust and impact of foreordination.

You could read it like this: "Him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreordination of God, you have taken him by wicked hands and crucified and slain." Did God foreordain Jesus Christ to be the Messiah? Yes. Did He foreordain everything that would happen to Him? Yes.

Now, look in Acts 4. The word foreknowledge does not occur in Acts chapter 4, but very clearly the truth is here in this passage, beginning with verse 27. Peter says, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together," for "to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel

determined before to be done." So my question is this: What happened to Jesus Christ?

Not one thing except that which God the Father ordained. So the word foreknowledge is equal to and synonymous with foreordination. God did not simply know what was going to happen to His Son and therefore determine that it was going to be done based upon the fact that it was going to happen to Him. No, the Bible says that God planned it, purposed it, and ordained it to happen. God did not look down from heaven, foresee that men would crucify His Son, and say, "Oh, well, since they are going to crucify Him, I might as well consent for Him to be crucified." Of course not. That is not sovereignty. That is not purpose. That is fate, chance, luck, or fortune. That has not one thing to do with salvation.

Everything that happened to Jesus Christ happened by the predetermined counsel of God. It was foreordained from the foundation of the world. So the word foreknowledge, in one sense of the word—I will explain more later—is equal and synonymous with foreordination.

Now look in Romans 8 and verse 29. I am not going to explain this one right now, but I want to show you that here is the second occurrence of the word foreknowledge. We will come back there in just a moment. Scripture says, "For whom he did foreknow," or literally, "for whom he did foreordain." Note the "whom." The "whom" is people: people for whom He did foreknow, or foreordain, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. If you look in your Bibles to Romans 11 and verse 2, you will find the third instance of the word foreknowledge in Scripture.

Paul writes, "God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew. Know you not what the scripture said of Elias? How he make an intercession to God against Israel, saying," and he continues. But look at verse 2 again: "God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew." This passage certainly does not mean that God looked down, saw that Israel would fall and apostatize, and therefore consented to their fall and apostasy.

No, that is contrary to the Apostle's argument. What the Apostle Paul is arguing is that God has not cast away His people whom He has foreknown, whom He has foreordained, whom He has forechosen, and whom He has foreloved. The Apostle Paul is saying, "No, God has not cast them away."

This is exactly the same argument that he is using back in Romans 8:28. That is why he is showing us the absolute certainty of our salvation.

In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter writes, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace unto you and peace be multiplied." Note that he says, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." This is the fourth occurrence of the word foreknowledge.

Here is where most people say that God foreknew who would believe and therefore chose them to believe. But that is not what Scripture is saying at all, because the word foreknowledge here has the force and power of foreordaining. It has the force and power of foreloving and forechoosing. Moreover, it is not events that God foreknew, but people. Peter writes, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers," that is, to these believers, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect." He is calling these who have believed and who are scattered the elect of God. They are elect according to God's foreknowledge, through sanctification of the Spirit and unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. "Grace unto you and peace be multiplied." This is the fourth time the word foreknowledge occurs.

The fifth occurrence shows how the word is translated. In 1 Peter 1:18-19, Peter writes, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Then verse 20 says, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."

The word “foreordained” is progenosko. That is the fifth time the word is used in the New Testament, and this time it is translated “foreordained.” Jesus Christ was foreordained to be the Messiah, and everything that happened to Him was foreordained from before the foundation of the world. It is God the Father who ordained Christ for His work. It is God the Father who set Him aside. It is God the Father who purposed that He come and be the Savior.

So let me say it again: foreknowledge means foreordination. In Romans 8:29, and in every one of these passages, the word “foreknow” has the reference and the force of foreordaining.

Now, earlier I had used a couple of other terms. Not only foreordination, I said "forelove" and "to forechoose." Why did I say those words? Because of the way the word "know" is used in Scripture. If I were to ask Chester a question, he might respond, "I know the answer to that." What he means by that is this, "I've got the intellectual acumen to answer that. I know the facts. I've got it in my brain. I've got it in my head." And usually when we think about "know," that's what we think about because we think of knowledge, we think of facts. But the word "know" is used in a deeper, more intimate way in the scripture than just an intellectual acumen or an intellectual accumulation of facts. You say, "Well, how is it used?" Well, let me show you.

Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Amos. The book of Amos, Minor Prophet, Daniel, Hosea, Joel and Amos. Amos chapter 3 and look if you would please at verse 2. Look what God tells Israel. Are you there? Amos 3 verse 2. God says to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." Now, wait a minute. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Did God not know the Babylonians? Did he not know the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Hivites and the Perizzites? Did he not know the Assyrians?

Well, of course he had intellectual knowledge of them. That's why he destroyed them. That's why he judged them. But how can God look at Israel and say, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"? What he is saying is "you only have I chosen, you only have I loved." It was Israel that God gave his word to. It was Israel that God gave the sacrifices to. It was Israel that God gave the

tabernacle and the temple to. It was Israel that God gave the priesthood to.

He didn't give any of that to any other nation. "You only have I loved. You only have I chose of all the families of the earth."

Now, let me show you how that is used. Humanly speaking, it means the same thing. It has reference to an intimate, personal relationship. Look in your Bibles to the book of Genesis, chapter 4. I could multiply these illustrations, but I think these will be sufficient. Look in Genesis, chapter 4 and verse 1. Genesis 4, verse 1. "And Adam knew Eve his wife." Now, does that mean that Adam just said, "Oh, you're my wife, I just recognized you"? No. "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived."

"And bare Cain and said, I've gotten a man from the Lord." So it has reference then to an intimate, personal, loving relationship. Look in Genesis 4, verse 25. "And Adam knew his wife again." Oh, you're Eve, I just recognized you again. No, no, no. "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bare a son." You see, the word "know" has reference then to a personal, intimate, loving relationship.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Luke. I'll show it to you in the New Testament. Luke chapter 1, and look in verse 34. The angel Gabriel has come to Mary and is telling her that she is going to be the woman chosen by God to bear the Lord Jesus. So look what happens. Luke chapter 1 verse 30: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and in his kingdom there shall be no end."

Then Mary said unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" You mean she didn't know Joseph? She was engaged to him? Well, what does it mean? It means she was a virgin. She had never had a relationship with a man. That's all it means. She knew plenty of men. She was engaged to Joseph, betrothed to him. So she is saying, "How can this be? I've never had an intimate, loving relationship with a man."

I'm just showing you how this word is used. There is a difference between a knowledge of facts and knowing someone. I could use this statement and you would comprehend it. I could say, "I know every woman in this room. But I know my wife. But I know her totally different from the way I know you." Now, watch Matthew chapter seven.

Let's begin reading there with verse twenty-one. Look what Jesus Christ says: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, in thy name done many wonderful works?"

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Did our Lord not have an intellectual grasp of who these people were? Of course He did. That is why they were there being judged. But what is He saying? “I never had an intimate, personal, loving relationship with you. You are not mine. Depart from me.” The word foreknowledge, then, not only has the force of foreordaining; it also has the force of foreloving and forechoosing.

Illustrations of Foreknowledge as Sovereign Love

Two passages beautifully illustrate the word foreknowledge. In Deuteronomy 7, beginning with verse 7, God tells His people, Israel, “The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people.” It was not their greatness: “For ye were the fewest of all people.” Why, then, did God love Israel and choose Israel? Verse 8 tells us: “Because the Lord loved you.” God said, “I loved you. Because I loved you.”

“I just chose you because I chose you. I ordained you because I ordained you. I picked you out. You’re mine. The reason I did it is because I will to do it.” The Lord did not set His love upon them nor choose them because they were more in number than any people, for they were the fewest of all people, “but because the Lord loved you.”

Jeremiah 31:3 says, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” Therefore,

because of that intimate choice, that intimate love, and that foreordination, “with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” I called you. I grabbed you. I apprehended you. I brought you to My place and put you in My salvation. So the word foreknowledge not only has the force of foreordination, but also foreloving and forechoosing.

Now let us go back to Romans 8. Paul is giving us absolute assurance of our final salvation. He says in verse 28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Why do we love God? Because we are called. Why are we called? Because we are in His purpose. Verse 29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”

Applications: Assurance, Holiness, and Humility

"To be conformed to the image of His Son, that He, Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren." If God has designed to glorify His Son, Jesus Christ, and we are in that purpose and design, what assurance we can have! God will not fail. He never has, and He never will. If Jesus Christ is going to be glorified, if He is going to be the firstborn among many brethren, you can marker down: the brethren are going to be there with Him. He will not fail.

Second, this truth does and cannot lead to what is known as antinomianism. Nomos is the Greek word for law, and anti means against. Antinomianism means being against God's law. Someone may say, "If I am absolutely assured that I'm going to be in heaven, then I can live any way I please." I answer in two ways.

Yes, that would be true if you are genuinely saved. If saved, you will be pleased to live in obedience to God, because God has purposed and ordained that you be conformed to His Son, Jesus Christ. But if you mean, "I can live any way I please; I can go out and sin and rebel and be wicked and wrong," no. John says in 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us. For had they been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us."

The truth is that this truth leads to greater holiness, because God has ordained that we be conformed to His Son, Jesus Christ. If our ultimate and final goal is to be like Him in every aspect, how much

more should we endeavor to be like Him now? Our Lord said, "I only do always those things which please the Father." If you are in Christ, you want to be that way as well. Sin will grieve you. You do not want to sin or do what is wrong and wicked; even the thought of it upsets you.

Third application: there is no other truth that will bring you to your knees before God like this truth, when you realize that, in spite of your sins, wickedness, rebellion, and hatred, God set His heart upon you, loved you, chose you, and ordained you in spite of your sins and yourself. All you can say is, "Oh God, I am not worthy. I am not."

But thanks be to His marvelous and miraculous grace. He saved us and put us in His eternal purpose to glorify His Son, Jesus Christ, for whom He did foreknow, foreordain, forelove, forechoose. He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He, Jesus Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren. Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for Your so great salvation. We thank Thee, Lord, that there is an absolute assurance that Jesus Christ will be glorified and we in Him, for our Lord prayed, "I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Make us holy indeed. May we strive, in time and in history, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. May we glorify Him, our Elder Brother, and give Him the place of preeminence and honor and respect in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 8

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Eight

Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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.”

Introduction and Context

I did not really intend to preach this long on this passage, but the more I preached, the more questions arose and the more things needed to be explained. I want to get down to verse 31 and the rest of this passage, at least to answer some of the questions asked there. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “Who is he that condemneth?” There are actually about five questions asked in this passage. The truth of God’s Word is that everything is interconnected.

Sometimes it is difficult to find a stopping place. As long as there are questions, I want to continue to preach and try to answer them. Let us begin by looking primarily at verse 29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”

Last week, we looked particularly at the word foreknowledge. I told you that the word foreknowledge, prognosco, occurred five times in Scripture—four times in English, and once translated “foreordination” in 1 Peter chapter 1. I showed you how foreknowledge literally meant to foreordain, to forechoose, or to forelove.

Today we come to the word predestinate: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.” Let me make several statements concerning what I preached last week and what I am preaching this week. First, the ground we are treading upon is holy ground. How can I say that? Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 28 testifies that we must treat God and serve God with reverence and godly fear. Certainly this is His Word. Whenever we find a passage that gives us insight into the mind and will of God, we must treat it as though we are treading upon holy ground. The Bible says that we have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Seven Preliminary Statements on Approaching Predestination

We must not approach these subjects, foreknowledge and predestination, in a merely intellectual manner. We are not simply to view them as an intellectual test, mental gymnastics, or an exercise in brain expansion. We are to look at these passages and words in an attitude and spirit of adoration, praise, and worship. Whenever you begin to talk about predestination and election, you must come to the Word of God.

I probably have told you this in time past, but I am going to tell it to you now simply because it first came to my mind again. When I began to read the Word of God years ago, I began to see the words elect and predestinate all through the Scripture. God had just called me to preach, and my usual schedule was reading the New Testament all the way through every week and the Old Testament all the way through once a month.

I did not know what these words meant, and it bothered me. So I went to my pastor and said, “Look, I want you to explain something to me. Every time I turn in the Scripture, I find the word predestinate or elect or chose or chosen. I do not understand these terms. Would you please tell me what they mean?”

My pastor had probably preached twenty-five or thirty years. His answer was, “Well, John, there are some things in the Scriptures we are not meant to understand. Secondly, there are some things in the Scriptures that kill our soul-winning zeal, and we just let them alone.”

I was a young man, and I said, “Sir, it just appears to me that if God had not intended for us to understand them, He would not have revealed them to us to begin with. Secondly, it also appears to me that any soul winning that the Bible kills ought to be killed anyhow.” With that, I turned around and walked away. I was not angry. I simply realized I was not going to get the answers from him.

We cannot come to these truths with simple curiosity. We must desire in our hearts to know what the Word of God teaches and to bow to the Word of God. In Exodus chapter 3, verses 1 through 5, Moses saw a bush burning, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, "What is this? I'll turn aside and I'll see this bush." He was curious. But when he got there, God said, "Take off thy shoes, for the ground upon which you are standing is holy ground." We do not come with a spirit of curiosity or with mental gymnastics. We come with the attitude that we want to know what God is saying and teaching us.

Secondly, in this arena, we are tied only to the Word of God. On these subjects, we are shut up to the Word of God. We do not yield to man-made philosophies, pragmatism—that is, what works—subjectivism—that is, what I think or believe—or traditionalism—that is, what I have always been taught. The only thing to which we yield is the Word of God. God is the one who tells us what He means, and we must bow to that Word.

One of the principles of the Reformation came in two words: Sola Scriptura, Latin for "the Scriptures alone." The Scriptures alone are our sole authority for faith and practice. We are shut up to what the

Word of God says. We do not start with what we can understand or reconcile. We start with the Word of God and bow to it, because whatever God says is right. We may believe the Word of God even though we are not able to understand or comprehend it. But we will never understand it unless we study it and see what God actually says. At that point, we must lay aside all preconceived ideas and prejudices and bow to the Word.

Thirdly, these are not truths to be argued about or defended with a controversial, argumentative, rebellious, bitter, or angry spirit. I cannot make you see anything, and you cannot make me see anything. If God does not turn the lights on, none of us will understand anything. So why should we argue about it? We may disagree, but we are not to become bitter or angry.

Some years ago, I was in Americus, Georgia, with a preacher. We were in his office talking about God's sovereignty in these areas, discussing election and predestination and quoting Scripture. The door was open, and his secretary was sitting at her desk nearby. We had been talking fifteen or twenty minutes, not trying to hide anything, but simply rejoicing and reviewing some of these Scriptures. Suddenly, she came bursting through the door, visibly angry and upset.

Her voice was at a high pitch. She said, "I don't care what the Bible says. I know God's not like that." My mouth fell open. I looked at the pastor. It was his member. He called her name and said, "Do you realize what you just said? You just threw God and his word out the window. You have made yourself the sole determiner of who God is, and what God is, and what God's word says."

When she said, "I don't care what the Bible says," she was not only unwilling to bow; she wanted to argue. I am going to show you later that this fits hand-in-glove with these truths. We do not argue, defend, or debate with a controversial, angry, or ugly spirit.

Fourthly, it is very important that you listen to this: these truths—foreknowledge, predestination, and election—are for believers, not unbelievers. What does the Bible say in 1 Corinthians 2:14? "The natural man," that is, the unsaved man, "receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

An unsaved man does not want to hear about election or predestination because he is a rebel and a sinner. He already hates God; he does not want God to be in control of anything. The context of Romans 8 is written to believers. Sinners are not to concern themselves with doctrines such as election, predestination, and foreknowledge. They had better concern themselves with the doctrines of repentance and faith. I want to give you two quotes. One is from Octavius Winslow, who wrote a number of books and was a tremendous preacher. He has been dead about 200 years.

The second one is from John Bradford. John Bradford was a contemporary with Latimer and Ridley, who were burned at the stake in Oxford, England. Listen, first of all, to what Octavius Winslow said: “It is not essential to your salvation that you believe in election, but it is essential to your salvation that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In your case, as an individual debating the momentous question of how a sinner may be justified before God, your first business is with Christ and with Christ exclusively.” Listen: “You are to feel that you are a lost sinner and not an elect sinner.” What was he saying? You had better make sure you are lost. Then, after God saves you, you can study election. John Bradford said it like this: “If you feel not safe, then know that predestination is too high a matter for you to be disputers of until you have been scholars in the schoolhouse of repentance and justification, which is the grammar school where we must be conversant and learn before we go on to the university of God’s most holy predestination and providence.” If you have not learned the grammar school of repentance and faith, you have no business talking about election and predestination. Men are not saved merely by believing in the doctrine of election. Men are saved by believing in Jesus Christ.

It is useless to argue these truths, especially with unbelievers. These truths are meant to comfort, console, and encourage believers. Fifthly, the proof that one has rightly approached and understood these doctrines is that he will be driven to obedience and holiness.

When someone says, “Well, if somebody’s going to be saved, they’re going to be saved anyhow. Nothing I can do about it. And if

I'm going to be saved, I'm going to be saved. Nothing I can do," that is not only flippant; it is irreverent, and it is contrary to the revealed Word of God. It is true that you may not have ability, but you certainly have responsibility before God, and God commands men to seek Him. If you have been an antinomian—that is, if you are against God's law—and think, "Well, I'm saved and I can sin and rebel and be wicked and wrong and ungodly," then you have not understood the doctrine of election and predestination. These doctrines drive one to holiness and humility; they do not drive one to rebellion and wickedness. Sixthly, the way to understand these truths is to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:13 that spiritual things are to be compared with spiritual.

He says, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," and then, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Thus, the only way we can learn what these words, truths, and doctrines mean is to compare them with the rest of Scripture. Whatever we interpret these words to mean must conform to the analogy of faith.

If I say, "This verse means this, and this word means this," and you respond, "Brother Weaver, look over here. Here is a whole passage that says absolutely contrary to what you are saying," then I must tell you that my interpretation of this verse is wrong, because the Bible is right. Do you follow me? When your interpretation of a passage disagrees with the total teaching of the Word of God, your interpretation is simply wrong. God's Word is not wrong.

The only way we can learn these truths is by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. The illumination of the Holy Spirit is a given; we must have that illumination, or we will never understand anything.

The understanding of foreknowledge and predestination is not essential to salvation. You may be saved and be a genuine child of God without understanding election, predestination, and foreknowledge. In fact, no one in this room understood these truths when he was converted. I never understood them when I was converted. Thus, one may be a genuine Christian without understanding these truths.

There is a difference between salvation and the assurance of salvation. One may be genuinely saved and not understand these truths, but one cannot have the absolute assurance of salvation and not understand them. These truths are not essential to salvation, but they are essential to the assurance of salvation.

Let me caution you. I am going to show you some things about predestination this morning, but I cannot cover everything or answer all your objections in one setting. Lay aside preconceived ideas and prejudices, and see whether what I am saying is what the Word of God teaches. Let us look at it in black and white from the Word of God.

Predestination is a very important doctrine, because this truth and its interconnecting truths take us deeply into the infinite mind, purpose, and will of God. The doctrine cannot be evaded. We cannot go around it or pretend that it is not in Scripture. It is clearly set forth in Scripture, both in letter and in spirit. We must believe something about it because it is in the Word of God. If we desire to be biblical, we must be honest with Scripture and seek to believe whatever the Scripture teaches.

Let me begin by giving you a definition of predestination. If you look up the word predestination, or predestinate, in Strong's Concordance, you will find that the Greek word is prohorizo. Prohorizo. This is a very simple word, and yet it is so profound.

Definition of Predestination (Prohorizo)

Horizo simply means to mark out, bound, or set the limits. With pro placed in front of it, it means to mark out or set beforehand, to set the limits or boundaries in advance, or to designate before. What English word do we get directly from the Greek word horizo? Horizon.

The horizon is that which marks off, limits, or bounds and separates what we can see from what we cannot see. I have been out in the ocean on a shrimp boat and could see for miles. The ocean was as smooth as glass, and yet there was that horizon. I could not see beyond it. The horizon marked off and set the boundaries; it limited what I could see and what I could not see.

One of my favorite states is Montana, the Big Sky Country. You can stand on one of those mountains and see what looks like for ages. It is beautiful and exquisite, yet there is a horizon. You can see so far, but no further. The horizon marks off, limits, and sets the boundaries. Even inside the city, when you look up, there is a horizon. You may not be able to see past the skyscrapers, and yet it is there. The horizon has as its business to set a limit. Everything within the horizon, or within the limit, is in one category, and everything beyond it is in a different category or limitation.

The word predestinate, then, literally means to mark out the boundaries beforehand or to designate beforehand. It means that God, having foreknown, foreordained, or forechosen these people, places them within a certain boundary, limit, or horizon. Look back to Romans chapter 8, verse 29: "For whom He did foreknow," that is, forechoose or foreordain, "He also did predestinate," that is, He marked out the boundaries and set the limits. God has not only chosen or marked out a people; He has also marked out something for them. He has mapped out a certain destiny for His people. That is what the word predestinate means.

We had company this past week from West Virginia. When they were ready to leave, they wanted to know the easiest and quickest way to get back to the interstate. I predestinated them to get back to the interstate.

Six Facts Concerning Predestination

This is a bad illustration because it still raises a lot of questions, but at least you get the idea of marking out. I predestinated them to get back to the interstate. How did I do it? I marked out. I set the limits. I said, "This is the way to go to get to your desired destination. If you want to get to your desired destination, you will stay within these limits that I have marked out."

Every one of us does that before we go somewhere. That is the part of wisdom. May I remind you that God is not unwise. God is not a fool. God has marked out and mapped out exactly what He has intended. God has set apart, marked out, and predestinated an ultimate destiny for those whom He foreknew. What is it? Look at Romans 8 and verse 29: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did

predestinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son." God marked out, mapped out, set the limits, and set the boundaries for us, that we would stay within those boundaries and be conformed to the image of His Son.

It is called predestination because there is a sure determination of the order of means for the end. God has determined this order by Himself before any actual existence of things; it is therefore called predestination. Predestination is that aspect of foreordination whereby the salvation of the believer is taken to be effected in accordance with the will of God, who has called him and elected him in Christ unto life eternal. The important thing to remember is that predestinate means to mark out, to limit, and to designate in advance or beforehand.

Predestination is a Biblical Truth

Let me give you about six undisputable facts concerning predestination from the Scripture. Fact number one: predestination is a biblical truth. That does not need to be said, but for the sake of emphasis, I shall say it. Romans 8:29 says, "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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." In Ephesians 1:5 we read, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will," and verse 11 says, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

I read those passages to show you that the word predestinate does occur in the Bible. If it occurs in the Bible, it is a biblical truth. God put it there for a reason. So, first of all, it is a biblical truth. I have known people who hated this doctrine. Have you ever stopped to think about the implications of that? If you hate the doctrine, you hate the word of God, which teaches the doctrine. You have to believe something about it, because it is indeed a biblical truth.

Predestination is an Act of God

Number two, predestination is an act of God. It is something that God alone does. Look back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. I want to emphasize one word, and then we will go back to Ephesians chapter 1. Romans 8, verse 29: "For whom he," that is God, "did foreknow, he," God, "also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Moreover, whom he," that is God, "did predestinate, them he also called. And whom he," God, "called, them he also justified. And whom he," God, "justified, them he also glorified."

So predestination is an act of God; it is something that God does. The Bible says that God did predestinate. Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1. Let us begin reading with verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." So we are talking about God the Father. He "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He," that is God the Father, "hath chosen us in Him," that is in Christ, "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us," that is God the Father, "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will." This is something that God has done—the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look in Ephesians 1 and verse 11: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him," that is God the Father, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." In every one of these instances, predestination is shown to be a work of God.

The word predestination not only occurs in the Bible in letter, but also in spirit. The same idea is given to us in many passages of the Bible under a different Greek word. Let me show you what I am talking about. Look in Romans 9 and verse 23.

Romans 9:23 says, "And that he," that is, God the Father—go back to verse 22 to pick up the first phrase, "What if God?"—"might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had aforeprepared unto glory."

The word “aforeprepared” is from the Greek word proetoimazo, which literally means to fit, prepare in advance, ordain before, or prepare before. Literally, he says that God “might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels which he had before ordained or before prepared or before fitted unto glory.” It is something God has done. It is a different word, but it is still the spirit and idea of predestination.

Look in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 5:9: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” Once again, this is something God does. The word “appointed” is the Greek word tithami, meaning to place, ordain, purpose, or cause to stand. We may read it, “For God hath not purposed. For God hath not ordained.”

“For God hath not caused us to stand in the place of wrath, but to obtain the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note that the reason we obtain the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ is because God has not appointed or ordained us to wrath. The very fact that we have obtained the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ comes to pass because God did not appoint us to wrath. That means He appointed us to life, which is predestination, or foreordination.

Now look at one other passage, Acts chapter 13 and verse 48. This word should be very easily understood.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad." The next phrase says, "And glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." The Greek word there is tasso, T-A-S-S-O. It means to assign a certain position, or a lot, or to appoint, or to ordain. You could read it this way: "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed," or "as many as were predestinated to eternal life believed," or "as many as were assigned the portion of eternal life believed." In this passage, once again, believing is the result of having been predestinated, ordained, or appointed. This word is very easy to understand.

How can I say that? Look in your Bible to Romans chapter 13, verse 1. Everyone in here can quote this verse. Watch this word carefully. It is the same Greek word, tasso, that you find back in Acts 13, verse 48: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for

there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God."

Why do we have the family? God ordained it. Why do we have the church? God ordained it. Why do we have the state? God ordained it. It is the same word. We have these institutions based upon the ordination or appointment of God. That is exactly what he is saying back in Acts 13, verse 48. We believe, or we have eternal life, because of the appointment and predestination of God. So very clearly, there are other words. Although it is not prohorizo, they give the spirit of the truth of predestination, although it is not the same exact word.

Number three. Predestination is an eternal act of God. It follows that if predestination is an act of God, then, since God is eternal, predestination must be an eternal act. God is not a creature of time. God is not bound by time. Whatever God does, God does in eternity, because God was before time. Notice, if you would, in Ephesians 1 and verse 4: "according as He," that is, God the Father, "had chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." And He says "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." It was before the foundation of the world, so it has to be an eternal act since God is an eternal God. All of God's acts are like God; they are eternal.

Predestination is an Eternal Act of God

Number four. Predestination is based upon, grounded upon, and established upon the good pleasure and the purpose of God. Look in verse 5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will."

Predestination is Based on God's Good Pleasure and Purpose

Why did God predestinate you to be conformed to the image of His Son? The answer is that it pleased Him to do so. It was according to the good pleasure of His will—not that you deserved it, earned it, or merited it. It simply pleased God to do it. Look at verse 9: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure," which He "hath purposed in himself." So whatever God was pleased to do in verse 5 became His purpose to do in verse 9.

And in verse 11, "...in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." What was His pleasure in verse 5 is His purpose in verse 9; according to verse 11, it is the counsel of His will. It is called God's pleasure because God was under no constraints. It is called God's purpose because He willed to do it. It is called the counsel of His will to show that whatever God does is consummately wise. We may not understand it, but it is still wise.

Predestination does not find its ground in men, either in what we do or what we do not do. Predestination does not depend upon men, but the differences in men are the result of predestination. Otherwise, it would not be based upon God's good pleasure and purpose.

Predestination Encompasses All Things

Before going any further, remember the definition: the word predestinate means to mark out or to set the boundaries in advance. Predestination, then, covers and encompasses all things. God has marked out, set the boundaries, and set the limits for everything. For instance, look in your Bibles to Job 38.

Those who live close to the ocean ought to appreciate this. Why has the ocean not broken its banks and swallowed up your home, your town, and your state? Look what the Bible says in Job 38, beginning with verse 8: "Or who shut up the sea with doors when it break forth as it had been issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and break up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Why is the ocean stopped where it stops? Because God shut it up with the door. God predestinated its boundaries. He said, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further."

"I've marked out your limits. I've marked out your boundaries. You're not going beyond this." That's predestination. God has predestinated the boundaries or the limits of the sea. Look in your Bibles to the book of Acts. Hold the book of Job; we're going to come back there just a little bit later. Look in the book of Acts, chapter 17.

Did you know—maybe you never thought about it—do you know the reason why we live in America? Why America exists? Do you know why the Chinese live in China and the Japanese live in Japan? I'll tell you why: because God predestinated the boundaries of the nations. Look what the Bible said in Acts 17, verse 26.

He says, "...and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." So God not only predestinated the limits of the sea; He's predestinated the limits and the boundaries of the nations. The reason Japan is where Japan is, that's where God put it. The reason China is where China is, that's where God placed it. The reason America is here, God determined beforehand, this is where we would be. That's predestination.

Since you're in the New Testament, look in Matthew chapter 10. I want to show you once again how thorough God's predestination is. You know this passage. Look at verse 29. He asks this question: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your heavenly Father." God's predestination even occurs and places limits on the little sparrows. That's why I said in the next verse, "that the very hairs of your head are all numbered." That's why I'm as bald as I am. God placed my limits. God placed my boundaries. I'd like to have a thick head of hair like Chester, but I don't. And I never will have. Why? Because there are boundaries.

Go back in your Bibles to the book of Job. I'm going to show you that this predestination not only affects seas and nations and sparrows and hair, but men in general. Look in Job chapter 7, verse 1: "Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?

Of course there is. Everybody in this room one day is going to die. Do you know when you are going to die? Exactly when God determined, because He gives life and He takes life. Someone may say, “Brother Weaver, I will shorten that. I will take a gun and go out and kill myself.” God ordained the means to the end as well. If you take a gun and kill yourself, that is when God ordained that you die, in the way that you die.

Look in Job 14:1. Here it is in black and white, and you can see the vast applications: “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” We can say amen to that. “He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me to judgment with thee?” Now look at what Job asked in verse 4: “Who can bring a clean thing out of unclean? Not one.” Who can save himself? Not one.

Watch verse 5, speaking about man: “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” Can man do whatever he wants to do? No. Can Satan do whatever he wants to do? No. Even Satan has to get permission from God to do things. Why? God has appointed his bounds. God has set his limits. “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”

Have you ever wondered why you are not a millionaire? God has appointed our boundaries financially, just as He has appointed our boundaries in every other way. He has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. I will probably never be a genius, and I will probably never be a mechanic. My bounds are set.

That does not mean I am not responsible to learn everything I can learn and do what I can do. But I have my limits, and every man has his limits. That is why Psalm 103 says, “He remembereth our frame, he knoweth that we are but dust.” We have our limits. We can do only so much and go only so far.

Since it is plain that God has appointed and marked out the boundaries of the sea, the nations, sparrows, and man in general, is it any wonder that He has marked out and mapped out the boundaries and limits for His people? Of course not. That is why I said, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate” what? “To be conformed to the image of his son.” He has mapped out and marked out the boundaries in which we are going to walk, and those boundaries will ultimately issue in our being conformed to the image of His Son.

Number six: Predestination is the mapped-out route—or route, however you want to pronounce it—that God has ordained in the accomplishment of our salvation.

Predestination is the Mapped-Out Route of Salvation

Look in your Bibles at Ephesians chapter 1, to see clearly that this does have to do with our salvation. Romans 8:29 should be plain when it speaks of being conformed to the image of His Son, for that is ultimate salvation. Ephesians 1:5 says, "Having predestinated us" to what? "To the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." The very fact that we are saved, the very fact that we are adopted into the family of God through Jesus Christ, is the result of predestination. "Having predestinated us unto"—that is the end; that is the goal.

Look in verse 11: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated." How did we get the inheritance? We were predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

God has not only ordained the end; He has ordained the means to the end. I do not have time to handle every objection, but most people try to think of predestination this way: God takes a man by the nape of the neck and by the seat of his pants and says, "Well, I want you in heaven," and into heaven he goes, kicking and screaming, "But I do not want to go! I do not love Christ!" Or they picture God picking up a man by the seat of his pants and the nape of his neck and throwing him into hell, while he cries, "But I want to be saved! I want to be holy!" That is not predestination. God not only ordains the ends; He ordains the means to the end. Everyone who is in heaven wanted to go there.

They will to go there. It was just God who made them want to and who made them willing. Everybody who went to hell wanted to go there. They wanted sin, rebellion, and hated God.

To show you that the means has been ordained as well as the end, look back to Romans 8:29: "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." Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called.

Calling involves the preaching of the gospel. "And whom He called, them He also justified." What is justification? I can deal with that later. It is our righteous standing before God. Moreover, whom He justified, them He also glorified. There is the truth of imputation: when God justifies us, He gives us a legal, righteous standing before Him and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. We are made completely righteous, both in body and spirit.

Thus, God who has ordained the end has ordained the means to the end. When He has ordained us to be conformed to the image of His dear Son, we are marching down the route He has mapped out and marked out, containing the means to reach that end and destiny. We will use those means and reach that destiny because God has bounded, limited, marked out, and mapped out the way we are to walk.

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," to be conformed to the image of his Son. To me, folks, that boggles my mind: to think that one day I shall be as holy and as righteous, and in conformity to the will of God, as Jesus Christ himself, both in body and spirit. What an amazing, marvelous truth.

Applications: Worship and Assurance

If you understand what I have taught, you understand that God is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end, and everything in between. He is a sovereign, holy, wise, omnipotent God who has planned and purposed our salvation to the nth degree, even the way that we are to walk. Such a God deserves nothing but praise, adoration, and worship. Nothing is left to chance, fate, or luck. God has ordained everything.

The Apostle Paul says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

"For of him," that is, originally, "and through him," providentially, "and to him," ultimately, "are all things, to whom be glory for ever." God, in infinite wisdom, has mapped out and predestinated the way that we are to be conformed to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Our assurance of salvation rests upon the wisdom and the Word of God. There can be no greater assurance, for there is nothing greater than God. If God has said that we have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, we are going to be conformed to the image of His Son. We are not going to fall, fail, be tricked and deceived, or be thrown out of the way. We shall be conformed to the image of His Son.

That is what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He lists all of these things and says that nothing ever, ever will stop us from reaching the goal that God has determined for each of us who have been saved by His grace. We shall be conformed to the image of His Son. What absolute assurance.

When the devil comes knocking on your door and says, "Look what you did; look what you said; look at your attitude." You can answer, "Yes, sir, Mr. Satan, I agree with you. I did that; it was wrong and wicked. But I repented, and God has forgiven me. Furthermore, one of these days I will never, ever sin like that again, because God has determined that I'll be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. I'll be perfect in Him."

Father, in Thy Name we bow today. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the assurance of our salvation. We thank Thee, Father, that Thou art an all-wise, loving, heavenly Father, working everything out for our good and Your glory. Enable us to praise Thee and love Thee. In Christ's holy and blessed name, amen.

CHAPTER 9

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Nine

Introduction to Justification

Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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.”

We have been in this passage approximately two months, covering many truths concerning Romans 8:28 and verse 29. We have been working through verse 30, covering predestination and foreknowledge. I had already covered calling earlier, so I was not necessarily going to repeat that. But verse 30 says, “...and whom he called, them he also justified.”

I wanted to take at least a couple of Sundays to explain justification. Today’s message will only be an introduction and may

cover one point; the main body of the message will be during the next service. Look again at verse 30: "...moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; whom he called, them he also justified."

Justification by faith is the grand, great, and glorious doctrine that God used during what is known as the Reformation. It was this doctrine that God used to bring multitudinous numbers of people light and to bring men out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Martin Luther, one of the leading reformers, said, "The doctrine of justification by faith is the article of the standing or the falling church." To the degree that a church understands justification by faith, it is either a standing or a falling church. If it comprehends and grasps it, the church stands; if it does not, it is a falling church. Therefore, if you want to examine the health of a church and see how prosperous it is spiritually speaking, you need to examine its understanding of the concept of justification by faith.

The Age-Old Question and the Gospel Answer

There has been a basic question all down through the ages. In the book of Job, chapter 25, verse 4, the Word of God asks, "How then can a man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" So the basic question is, "How then can a man be justified with God?"

This age-old question is answered by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says in Romans chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Watch: "For therein," that is, in the gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

It is very clear, then, that if you and I are in error on the doctrine of justification by faith, we are going to be in error on a number of other vital points in the Bible. If we are wrong on the doctrine of justification by faith, we will be unbiblical in our Christology, that is, the doctrine of Christ. If we are wrong on justification by faith, we will be in error in our theology, that is, our doctrine of God.

If we are in error on justification by faith, we will be in error on soteriology, that is, the doctrine of salvation. If we are in error on justification by faith, we will be in error in anthropology, that is, the doctrine of man. And if you are in error on justification by faith, there is no way in the world that anyone can have any real, genuine assurance of salvation.

Importance of Justification

Luther was right in one sense of the word when he said justification by faith is indeed the article of the standing or the falling church. This doctrine of justification is important for two very obvious reasons. Number one is this: it is indeed important for the glory of God, for the glory of God. Of course, the Bible teaches that everything is done for His honor and for His glory. The Bible tells us in the book of Luke, chapter 2, verse 14.

When our Lord was born, the angelic host was singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” So this doctrine is important, first of all, for the glory of God, and secondly, for the good of men.

The Bible teaches us that God's works in creation, providence, and redemption are the manifestation of God's glory to His rational creatures, to the end that His creatures may praise and glorify Him. For instance, look in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Ephesians chapter 1. We've been there many times, but let me show you several other verses that reveal the fact that this doctrine is important for God's honor and God's glory. Ephesians 1:6 says, “To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” So it is the praise of the glory of His grace. Verse 12 says, “That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.” Verse 14 says, “Who is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”

So God's great salvation, God's justification by faith, is for His own honor and glory, and never is the glory of God more fully displayed than in the method by which God justifies sinners. If you do not understand justification by faith, in essence, you rob God of

His honor and His glory, because justification by faith is associated with the glory of God.

Secondly, this doctrine is important for the good of men. When I say the good of men, I refer, first of all, to those who have been called into God's great salvation, because the Bible tells us that the gospel is the power of God. It is that power that brings us out of darkness into His marvelous light; it is that power that makes us the child of God. And it is also for the good of men, not only those who are called, but of those who are yet to be called.

The Doctrine of Justification

What is the hope of sinners? The hope of sinners is the mercy and grace of God, who justifies and saves.

There was no evangelism during the Dark Ages because men did not know the Word of God or the Gospel, and they had no hope. Evangelism began after the Great Reformation, but its great thrust began after men understood the doctrine of justification by faith. If you study all the major revivals that have occurred in this country or any other country, you will find that one of the leading truths was the doctrine of justification by faith. So let us begin by asking, What is justification?

Definition of Justification

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything done by them or wrought in them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them and received by faith alone.

Justification is an act of God: God is the author. It is an act of God's free grace: that is the source of justification. It is an act of God's free grace unto sinners: those are the subjects of justification. It is an act of God's free grace unto sinners in which He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight: that is the essence of justification.

It is not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ: there is the

ground for justification. By God imputed to them: there is the method of justification. Received by faith alone: there is the means of justification. This is the definition I will explain and show from the Word of God.

Buchanan, who was a godly Puritan, said this: “The best preparation for the study of the doctrine of justification by faith is neither great intellectual ability nor great scholastic learning, but a conscience that is impressed with a sense of our actual condition as sinners before God.” If you really want to learn justification by faith, you do not need great intellectual acumen. What you need is a conscience made aware that we are exceedingly sinful before God. If we need justification, then we are in a state of condemnation. If we are condemned, we are guilty before God.

Justification as a Legal Declaration

There are only two states. You are either justified or condemned. One or the other; there is no in-between. I heard someone say that being saved is like being pregnant: either you are or you are not. That is the truth. Being justified versus being condemned is one or the other, with no in-between.

So what does the word justify mean? What do we mean when we say that God justifies the ungodly? What does it mean when it says, “Those whom He called, He justified”? To justify someone is to declare or pronounce that person righteous in light of God’s law.

Justification is a judicial, legal, and forensic term—a term of the law courts. That is why we refer to our court system as the judicial system. Suppose Ed were charged with robbing a bank. There is an indictment against him, and he is brought before the judge and jury. At that trial, he is either justified and found not guilty, or condemned and found guilty. Justification, then, has to do with the legal aspect of salvation.

I want to emphasize that justification does not refer to any subjective change wrought in a person’s disposition. It is solely an objective change relating to our standing in the law of God. Justification does not do anything in a sinner. It is not experiential;

it does not change moral righteousness, or moral character. Justification is not the infusing of righteousness.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that if you are justified, you have been infused with righteousness. I am going to show you how that is not only unbiblical, but absolutely blasphemous.

Justification has a legal side. It is objective. It is not experiential. It has nothing to do in us. Literally, justification is a change of status whereby one who is guilty before God, and therefore under a deserving sentence of condemnation before God and His law, and subject to eternal banishment and punishment, is brought out from that standing and brought before God to a standing of not guilty and of being holy in the sight of God. Remember, it is a legal pronouncement.

Biblical Evidence for Legal Declaration

If someone tells you, “Well, Brother Weaver, I don’t feel justified,” there is a reason why you do not feel it. Justification is not subjective; it is objective. Deuteronomy 25:1 shows that justification is a legal pronouncement: “If there be a controversy between men and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them, then they,” that is, the judges, “shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.”

How in the world do judges justify the righteous? Do they infuse righteousness into them? Do they make them righteous? Of course not. They simply recognize that the person has not sinned in light of the law, and they declare him to be innocent. How do they condemn the wicked? Do they make the wicked guilty? Do they make the wicked evil? Do they infuse wickedness in him? No. They realize that before the law he has violated that law, broken the law, and transgressed it, and they declare him to be so.

So justification and its opposite, condemnation, are both legal terms. Look in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs chapter 17. Proverbs 17 and verse 15. Proverbs 17 and verse 15. Look what the Bible says, Proverbs 17, verse 15: "He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

Now, remember, the word abomination means a stench in God's nostrils. How in the world, then, does a man become an abomination to God when he justifies the wicked? Well, now let me tell you something. If justification means to infuse righteousness into, well, justifying the wicked then certainly would not be a bad thing, would it? Because he'd be making the wicked righteous. Well, what does he mean? "He that justifieth the wicked." That is, he that pronounces the wicked innocent when he's guilty.

And then he says, "...and he that condemneth the just." That is, he pronounces a man as condemned when he knows the man is innocent. He said even both of these are abominations to the Lord. So if you justify someone when they're guilty, or if you condemn someone when they're innocent, that legal declaration is an abomination in the sight of God. So it does not mean infusing anything, it just simply means a legal declaration.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Luke chapter 7. Luke 7 verse 29.

Now, if you believe that justification means to infuse righteousness like the Roman Catholics teach, you've got a real problem with this passage. The Bible says in verse 29, "And all the people that heard him," that is, John the Baptist, "and all the people that heard him and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." Well, how do these people justify God? They were saying in light of God's law, we're sinners. God is holy in light of God's law. God is just. We're unjust. And God is right in condemning us. They were not infusing righteousness into God. They were just declaring that God was just and right and holy, and that's what justification is. Look in your Bibles to the book of Luke chapter 16 and verse 15. Luke chapter 16 and verse 15.

This one is very easily understood. "And he," that is Christ, "said unto them..." In fact, let's go back and read verse 14, just so you can see the Pharisees are involved. "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things and they derided him." That is, they were making fun of Christ. "And he said unto them, Ye," that is, you Pharisees, "ye are they who justify yourselves before men."

"But God knoweth your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is the abomination in the sight of God. Ye are they that

justify yourselves in the sight of men." How were they justifying themselves? They were telling everybody they were righteous when they were not, holy when they were not, and not sinners when they were. They were justifying themselves.

Every one of us has a problem with that. How many of us, when we sin or do something wrong, throw up our hands and say, "I give up, I just sinned, I violated God's law, or I just did something wrong"? What most of us say is, "If Don had not said what he said, then I would not have done what I did. It is Don's fault; it is not really mine." What are we doing? We are justifying ourselves. We are giving an excuse.

Justification vs. Condemnation

The truth is, man cannot justify himself. Justification, basically speaking, is nothing more than a legal declaration, a legal pronouncement in light of the standard of the law of God.

Justification is the antithesis, or opposite, of condemnation. Hot and cold are opposites; big and small are opposites; justification and condemnation are opposites. This ought to demonstrate once again that justification is a legal pronouncement. In Romans chapter 8, verse 33, the question is, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Then comes the statement: "It is God that justifieth. 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." The Bible says that justification is the opposite of condemnation. If God has justified us, then no one is going to condemn us.

Romans 8, verse 1, says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." There is no condemnation. No man can come along and say, "Well, Chester, I pronounce you condemned," if God says you are justified. It does not matter about man's pronouncements. What does that mean?

It literally means the papal bulls are not worth the paper they're written on. The Pope can't condemn anybody that God justifies. Don't care what the Pope says. You can rant and rave against a

justified person all day long, cuss him, and condemn him, but that does not change anything. Condemnation and justification are opposites.

Since we're in the book of Romans, look in Romans chapter 4 and verse 8. It does not use the word justify, but it is still an equivalent expression because it plainly expresses the truth of justification. In fact, let's go back to verse 6. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." David said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." That is, God will not charge sin to his account. Why will God not charge sin to his account? Because man's been justified. He's been declared righteous in light of the law.

The whole book of Romans is dealing with this principle. In Romans chapter 1 and verse 18, the Bible says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ungodly men who hold the truth down." That is, they suppress it and hold it back. When you get to Romans chapter 2, men are condemned. Romans chapter 3, men are condemned. When you get to Romans chapter 4 and the latter part of chapter 3, he begins his argument on justification by faith. The whole context shows that justification is a legal pronouncement in light of the law, and condemnation is a legal pronouncement in light of the law. Justification is a passing of a sentence, just like condemnation is the passing of a sentence.

Distinction from Regeneration and Sanctification

Now distinguish the difference between justification and regeneration, and justification and sanctification. Although I am distinguishing these truths, in reality, you cannot have one without the other. The individual who is justified is regenerated and sanctified. They go together, but they are not identical; they are not the same thing. For instance, justification differs from regeneration, although it is separately connected in several ways. Regeneration is the act of the Father.

James 1:18 says, "...of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Justification is the sentence of the judge. You remember

Genesis 18? I think it is verse 25. Abraham asked, "...shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" God is the judge of all the earth.

Regeneration is the act of the Father; justification is the sentence of the judge. Regeneration gives me a place in God's family, while justification secures my standing before the throne of God. Regeneration is internal, being the impartation of divine life to the soul. Justification is external, being the imputation of Christ's obedience and righteousness to my account. In regeneration, I am drawn in repentance to the Father's house. In justification, I am given the best robe, which fits me to live in the Father's house. There is a difference between regeneration and justification, and likewise between justification and sanctification.

Sanctification is moral and experiential; justification is legal and judicial. Sanctification results from the operation of the Holy Spirit in me. Justification is based upon what Christ has done for me. Sanctification is gradual and progressive, slow and taking a long time. Justification is instantaneous and immutable. Sanctification admits of degrees and is never perfect in this life.

You ought to be more sanctified tomorrow than you are today, and more sanctified next year than you are this year. But justification is complete and perfect; it admits no addition. No matter how great the Apostle Paul was and is, he is no more justified than Henry Klingler. They have the same standing, the exact same standing. Justification does not admit degrees: you are either justified or you are not. Sanctification concerns the state of the sinner and produces a moral transformation in character. Justification concerns the standing of the sinner and is a change of legal status. Justification is not the same as regeneration or sanctification.

But you cannot have one without the other. You never find a man who is justified but never regenerated, nor an individual who is justified but never sanctified. They all go together. When you confuse these terms, or sever one from the other, you confound and confuse the doctrine of salvation. You also confound and confuse the saints of God.

What, then, is justification? Justification is the act of God whereby He forgives our sins and counts us righteous freely by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, on the ground not of our own works, but only by the representative obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ; and it is received by faith alone.

The Author of Justification

Who is the author of justification? Romans 8:30 says, "...moreover whom he," that is God, "did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Verse 33 asks, "...who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." The author of justification is God alone. Justification is the work of God.

Justification is attributed in the Bible to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. If justification is the work of God, and each person of the divine Godhead is involved in it, then each person is God. Romans 8:33 attributes justification to God the Father: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Acts 13:39 continues this consideration: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things."

Acts 13, verse 38, says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man," that is Jesus Christ, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him," that is by Jesus Christ, "all that believeth are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." So in Acts 13:39, justification is attributed to God the Son.

Then 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you," that is, you were wicked individuals. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." So justification is attributed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

You say, "Well, Brother Weaver, how can justification be the work of each person of the Godhead?" God the Father justifies us as He pronounces us righteous in light of His law. God the Son justifies us as He imputes His righteousness, which He worked out, to us. God the Holy Spirit justifies us as He clears up our justification, seals us

unto the day of redemption, and gives us the assurance of His salvation. So very clearly, it is the work of God.

Deuteronomy 32 gives us a passage showing how this is worked out. In one sense of the word, it is a statement of justification and also a statement of condemnation. Deuteronomy 32:39 says, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me,” says God. “I kill and I make alive.”

"I wound and I heal. Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." So it is God, then, who either justifies or condemns. It's God who either kills or makes alive. It's God who either wounds or heals.

Now look back in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 3. Let's go through this very quickly. Romans chapter 3. And look, if you would please, at verse 26. In fact, let's begin reading with verse 23. Romans 3 verse 23. He says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Now watch verse 24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and I'll cover this probably next week, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say at this time, his righteousness, watch, that he," God, "might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." So God, then, is just when He justifies.

And that's an explanation in and of itself. But God is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Now look in your Bibles to verse 30. He says it again. Romans 3, verse 30: "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith." So it is one God who justifies. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 30. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, he says, "But of him," that is God the Father, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Now, when the Bible says that Jesus Christ has made unto us righteousness, that is another way of saying that Jesus Christ has made unto us justification. Because it is by His righteousness that we are justified.

And then if you look at Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 23. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 23. The Bible says here, "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men," or justified men, "made perfect." So justification then is an act of God.

So God is the author of justification. Now let me make some applications just based upon this one truth that God is the author of justification. The first one is this: if God is the author of justification, and since justification is a declaration of God, it means it is a declaration that none can cancel and none can alter. Look back in Romans 8, in verse 33. Like I say, I'll cover this more several weeks in advance.

Applications of God as Author

But he asked this: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Since God is the author of justification, it is a declaration that none can cancel or change. No man can alter it. Brother Chester and I might get into a lawsuit against some governmental body because of unconstitutional acts. We could have the case in a district court, and the court could rule in our favor. We might be happy that we finally won, but the other side could appeal to an appellate court, which could reverse the lower court's ruling, and we would lose. Or we could win in both courts, and they could appeal by writ of certiorari to the Supreme Court, which could reverse, change, or alter the decision.

But it does not work that way with God's legal pronouncements. When God justifies us, when God pronounces us righteous, there is no man, no demon, no devil, no world, no flesh—there is nothing that can cancel, change, or alter God's declaration. As He asks, and I will cover it later, "Who is he that condemneth? It is God that justifieth." God's legal pronouncement stands. He is the judge of all the earth.

Secondly, God is the author of justification. Since justification is a declaration of a legal fact, it is a legal pronouncement; and since God is its author, it is based upon truth and reality. All through the Bible,

God said that the man that condemneth the just and the man that justifieth the wicked are both an abomination unto God. Why? Because when you condemn the just or justify the wicked, the sentence is not based upon truth, righteousness, or reality.

This ought to excite you. When God justifies us in Christ Jesus, it is based upon truth and reality. In Romans 3, He said that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus Christ. How can God look at us—sinners who are wicked, who have violated God's law and transgressed—and say, "I pronounce you righteous"? Is that just? Not if that is all God did. But that is not all God has done. God has set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation for our sins.

Jesus Christ not only died; Jesus Christ lived a perfect, holy life. He kept all of the law of God. He said, “I only do always those things which please my Father.” Jesus Christ worked out a perfect righteousness. God took His sinless, only begotten Son and sent Him forth to be a propitiation for our sins. Christ died as our substitute. God says, “Since My wrath has fallen upon Him, and since His righteousness now is imputed to you, who before were a wicked, ungodly sinner, I look at you now, not as what you were, but what you are in My Son. I compare you now to My law, and I find you holy and righteous, and so I justify you.” God's sentence is based upon truth and reality.

Thirdly, since God is the author of justification, it is a declaration based upon grace. We are the ones who have foully revolted against God. We deserve condemnation and everything attached to it. But it was God's grace and mercy that sent Christ. It was God's grace and mercy that sent His Word. It was God's grace and mercy that sent the Holy Spirit to convict, enlighten, and draw us. Everything is based solely upon the grace of God. That is why Paul wrote, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

What does it mean when he says, “Whom he called, he justified”? Fundamentally, it means that God looked at us and at His law, and He does not see us as we are in and of ourselves. He sees us as what we are in Christ. Then He compares us in Christ to His law and says, “Not guilty. Justified. You are not a violator; you are not a

transgressor in light of My law, because you are now in Christ, who suffered in your stead."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee this day, and we thank Thee for justification by faith alone. We are not justified by grace plus works, merits, or anything else. We are justified by grace through faith alone. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ and His so great salvation. We pray that Thou wilt open our eyes and teach us the truth of Thy infinite grace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee, thanking Thee for justification by faith alone. We are not justified by grace plus works, merits, or anything else, but by grace through faith alone. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ, who suffered in Your stead, and His so great salvation. Open our eyes and teach us the truth of Your infinite grace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part Ten

Introduction and Review

Romans 8, beginning with verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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.”

We have been in Romans 8, verses 28, 29, and 30 for the last nine weeks, dealing with this passage in detail. The very first thing we looked at in Romans 8:28 was the divine limitation on that verse: all things do not work together for good for everyone, but only for those that love God. I gave you, first of all, the foundation of this knowledge: it was based upon the expressed statements of Scripture and the experience of the saints. Then I showed you the fullness of this knowledge: we know that all things work together.

I dealt with the features involved in this verse: number one, them that love God; number two, them that are called. I gave you a whole message as to why we know that everything works good, because we are called according to His purpose. Then I dealt with being conformed to the image of Christ, and with such words as foreknow and predestinate.

Last time we began explaining the word justified in verse 30. Justification is a judicial term, a legal declaration, a declaration of the law court. Here is the definition I gave you: "Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners in which He pardoned all their sins, accepted and accounted their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ by God imputed to them and received by faith alone." We began looking at that definition, beginning with the author of justification. Justification is an act of God, and I went through the Bible and showed you where it is God who justifies.

The Author of Justification

In fact, all you have to do is read verses 29 and 30: "For whom he," that is, God, "did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified." So justification is an act of God. If justification is an act of God, it matters not what other people say, think, or feel. The only thing that counts is the declaration that God gives.

I have known Christians to become upset with other professing Christians and say, "That individual can't be saved." But it does not matter what your view or understanding of that person's salvation is. If God has justified that individual, that individual is saved regardless of what you think. Man's determination and man's pronunciation does not affect the reality or truth of justification. You could stand up here today and say, "Brother Weaver, you're not saved." It does not matter what you say; it is what God says that counts. Whoever God justifies is genuinely justified. On the other hand, you could tell me that you are justified, but if God has not

pronounced you justified, then, regardless of what you say, you are not justified. The declaration must come from God.

The Source of Justification: God's Free Grace

Now we proceed with the source of justification. Justification is an act of God's free grace. Romans 3:24 says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Grace has been called unmerited favor. But grace is not only unmerited; it is also uninfluenced favor shown not only to the undeserving, but also to the hell-deserving. Neither human worthiness, nor works, nor will attracts it, nor the lack of them repels. Grace is therefore not simply unmerited favor; it is undeserved favor shown to those who are positively hell-deserving.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24, "being justified freely by His grace." Let me explain a term to you. It is very important that you catch hold of this term, because you will hear me say, and you will hear other preachers say, that we believe in free grace. There used to be a magazine entitled The Free Grace Broadcaster. What does the term free grace mean?

After service, Ed could take me out and buy my dinner at the Holiday Inn, and I could look around and say, "Everybody, I got a free meal." By that I mean it did not cost me anything. But that is not what free grace means. Free grace does not mean that it is like a free meal.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24, "being justified freely by His grace." Now look in your Bibles to John chapter 15, verse 25. Jesus Christ says, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." The phrase "without a cause" is exactly the same word that is translated "freely" in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24. So we could literally read Romans 3:24, "Therefore being justified without a cause."

In other words, there is absolutely nothing in man that draws forth and merits the grace of God, just as there was nothing in Jesus Christ that drew forth and merited the hatred of men. Men hated Jesus Christ freely; they hated Him without a cause. So when God

justifies us, He does so freely—that is, without a cause. There is absolutely nothing in man that attracts, woos, draws, or merits the grace of God. In fact, there is everything in man that ought to repel and drive away the grace of God, because we are positively wicked and ungodly in the sight of God.

Free grace means that grace comes unmoved, uncaused, solely from the pleasure of the God of all grace. Man does not earn it, man does not merit it, and man is not the moving or motivating cause. Grace comes only at God's pleasure.

Grace is Sovereign and for God's Own Sake

Romans 5:21 says, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, if grace is reigning, that means grace is on the throne. That means grace is sovereign only because it belongs to the sovereign God of the universe. If grace is sovereign, then it comes at its own imperial pleasure and not at the whim of man.

Free grace is the very core of the gospel. Free grace is the only hope of fallen men. We have neither the slightest degree of merit nor ample price to purchase God's grace or God's salvation. Therefore, the Bible says we have been justified freely, or we have been justified without a cause. There is nothing in us that could obligate God to give us grace.

Why did God forgive you of your sins? Do not answer out loud, but why did God forgive you of your sins? Someone will say, "He forgave me because I asked Him." Why did you ask Him? You may say, "He forgave me because I repented." Why did you repent? Let me show you, ultimately, why God forgives anyone of his sins.

Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Now why did God do it? For His own sake. Whatever God does is for His honor and for His glory. Psalm 106:8 says, "nevertheless He saved them for His namesake that He might make His mighty power to be known."

So why did God save you? For His namesake. Revelation 4:11 says that God created all things for His own pleasure. God saves us for

His own sake, forgives our sins for His own sake, and justifies us for His own sake. The source of justification, then, can be nothing other than the pleasure and the grace and the mercy of God. It is unmerited. It is uninfluenced. That is why we say we are justified by His grace. Do you realize that God was not obligated to save anyone?

God could have justly left every one of us to the strict condemnation of the law. You may say, "God could not have done that." Well, He did so to the fallen angels. He did not provide salvation or a Savior for them. He left the fallen angels to be doomed and damned for eternity, and He could have justly done the same to us, but He did not.

That is what the Bible says in Romans 8:32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" I am going to preach from this passage a little later, but note the question: "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?"

God could have justly left us to ourselves, but He did not. That is why the Bible says in Titus chapter 3, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." It is not anything that we have done.

Let me delineate this for you. In what way can we say that justification is an act of God's unmerited, undeserved, and free grace? Three ways chiefly. Number one, it was nothing but pure grace that God was willing to accept payment at the hand of a substitute.

Three Ways Justification is Free Grace

Let me explain that. Suppose Anna owes me five hundred dollars. I come to her and say, "Anna, I want my money." She replies, "Pastor Weaver, I do not have that money." But she promised to have it that day, and I want it. I tell her that I am very upset and am going to beat her into the ground because she owes me five hundred dollars. She says, "But I am a woman." I answer, "I do not care who you are. You owe me that five hundred dollars." She owes it to me; there is no problem there.

But Sue comes along and hears me. She asks, “Brother Weaver, are you angry with her?” I say, “Very much so. She owes me five hundred dollars, and I need and want my money. She does not have it and will not give it to me. I just told her I am going to beat her into the ground.” Sue says, “Brother Weaver, you do not have to get upset or hurt Anna. I will give you the five hundred dollars for her.”

Am I obligated to take the money from Sue that she has offered to give me for Anna? No, because Sue does not owe me; Anna owes me. If I am willing to take it from Sue and let Anna go, then it is nothing but grace.

We say we are saved by the work of Jesus Christ, and that is true. But Jesus Christ did not owe God the Father; we did. The very fact that God was willing to accept payment at the hands of a substitute was nothing but pure grace. Secondly, it was wondrous grace that, after God graciously accepted a substitute, He Himself gave the substitute.

Look at Romans chapter 3 and verse 24: “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.” God not only agreed to accept payment at the hand of another; God also provided the other to receive the payment at His hand. God gave God to be our substitute. Thirdly, it was absolute, amazing grace that God the Son, the substitute, was willing to take our place and be our surety.

The Subjects of Justification

There is no way in the world I can give you an illustration of this. But if you knew that I was fixing to go through some of the worst sufferings known to man physically, mentally, emotionally, even spiritually, and you knew all about those sufferings, and you came up to me and, if it were possible, said, “Brother Weaver, I’m going to take those sufferings for you. I’m going to go through that in your place. You don’t have to,” would you be willing to do that? Most of you would say, “Brother Weaver, I love you, but not that much.”

When Christ became our substitute, He knew exactly what He was going to have to suffer, because He was God. He was willingly presenting Himself to be our surety and our substitute. That’s why

the hymn writer wrote, “O to grace, how great a debtor, daily I am constrained to be. Let thy grace, Lord, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.”

God did not have to accept a substitute, but He did. He did not have to provide that substitute, but He did. And that substitute did not have to come in our place, but He did. Therefore, the source of justification is only the free grace of God. The author? God. The source? God’s free grace. Justification is an act of God’s free grace.

The Subjects of Justification: Sinners

The subjects of justification are sinners: not the godly, but sinners; not the righteous, but sinners; not the moral, but the immoral. Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners.

When you consider the subjects of justification, you need to look at them from three different perspectives. First, you must look at the subjects of God’s justification from the standpoint of God’s decrees. Romans 8:33 asks, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”

"It is God that justifieth." From the standpoint of God's decrees, the subjects of justification are God's elect. Secondly, from the standpoint of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, the subjects of God's justification are those who believe. Acts 13:39 says, "and by him," that is, by Christ, "all that believe are justified from all things which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." From the standpoint of the quickening of the Holy Spirit, and of the power, grace, and ministry of the Holy Spirit, who are the subjects of justification? It is those who believe. From the standpoint of God's decrees, it is God's elect; from the standpoint of the work of the Holy Spirit, it is those who believe. But from the standpoint and perspective of what we are in ourselves, what is the answer?

Romans 4:5 gives the answer: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." It is not the godly who are justified; it is the ungodly. When we examine what the subjects are in and of themselves, they are the ungodly.

In fact, they are classified as sinners. Ephesians 2:1-3 says that we were dead in trespasses and sins. What were we like? We were dead in trespasses and sins. We walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. We were the ones who had our own way. We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, the children of wrath.

But it is God that justifies the ungodly—not the faithful, not the fruitful, not the righteous, not the moral, but the ungodly. Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Verse 10 says, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." So God classifies us as sinners and as enemies.

Who are the subjects of justification? Let us return to our definition: justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners. Look at Romans chapter 4 and verse 5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly."

John Owen, explaining the phrase "but to him that worketh not," says, "To say he who worketh not is justified through believing is to say that his works, whatever they may be, have no influence in his justification, nor hath God in justifying him any respect to them. Wherefore, he alone who worketh not is the subject of justification, the person to be justified. That is, God considers no man's works, no man's duties of obedience in his justification, seeing we are justified freely by his grace." So the Bible says, "But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly."

Biblical Illustrations: Abraham and David

Let me emphasize it again. It is not the obedient, but the disobedient; not the reconciled, but the unreconciled; not those who are submissive, but those who are rebels. It is not those who are loyal subjects, but those who are haters and despisers of God—those who, by their character and by their works, demonstrate that they are worthy of nothing but damnation. And yet God justifies the ungodly.

Romans chapter 4 gives two illustrations of this. Verse 1 asks, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to

the flesh, hath found?" Then it says, "For if Abraham were justified of works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Now let me ask you a question. When God found Abraham—and Abraham did not find God and was not even looking for God—where was he? He was in Ur of the Chaldees. He was an idolater; he did not know God. God came to him, revealed Himself, called him by His grace, and said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." When God came to Abraham, Abraham was an absolute idolater.

Here is another illustration. Even as David also described it, “the blessings of the man, of whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Let us talk about David for a moment. I know the Bible says that David was a man after God’s own heart, after God’s safety. But may I remind you that David was an adulterer? David was a murderer. And so here is a man who is an adulterer, and God saves Abraham. Here is another man who is guilty, polluted, and vile, and God saves him.

Very clearly, it is not anything done by them. It is nothing but God’s free grace. In this grace, God may justify even the very wicked, the most wicked sinner. You remember what Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15: “This is a worthy saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Very clearly, then, since justification is by God’s grace, the subjects viewed in and of themselves are sinners, and God justifies them by His grace. So the gospel, which proclaims the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, is distinguished from every other religion. Every other religion teaches morality in the sense that man must be moral in order to be saved. I do not care if it is Hinduism or Buddhism; whatever it is, you have got to do something or be something in order to be saved according to their religions. But it is

God who justifies the ungodly. In other words, in Christianity, all a man has to be is a sinner.

I think that qualifies most people. The greatest sin and the greatest sinner can be saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Listen to these stanzas from one of my favorite hymns: "Come ye sinners, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus stands ready to save you, full of pity, joined with power. He is able, He is able, doubt no more. Let not conscience make you linger, nor fitness fondly dream. All the fitness He requires is to feel your need of Him."

The Essence of Justification

"This He gives you, this He gives you, 'tis the Spirit's rise and being. Lo, the incarnate God ascended, pleads the merit of His blood. Venture on Him. Venture only. Let none other trust intrude. None but Jesus, none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." Listen to that: "Come, ye sinners, weak and wounded, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore." Lords, you come like you are.

Christ is the one who saves. Why? Because God justifies the ungodly. The author is God; the source is God's free grace; the subjects are sinners.

Let me give you a fourth one: the essence of justification. Whenever you begin to talk about justification, inevitably, invariably, you have to get to the question, What does it mean to be justified? Of what does it consist? What is it made up of?

The Essence of Justification: Pardon and Imputed Righteousness

Justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous. When you talk about justification, you are talking about more than forgiveness of sins. Justification actually has two parts. You could say there is a negative and a positive. The negative is that He gets rid of our sins, or pardons all our sins. The positive is that He accepts us righteous in Jesus Christ.

The individual who is justified sustains a twofold relationship to God. First, he was a responsible creature under the law. Secondly, he was a guilty criminal, having transgressed that law. His criminality has not canceled his obligation to keep that law. We are sinners, yes; but although we are criminals before God, we are still obligated before Him. Consequently, justification has to have two parts.

On the one part, you have an acquittal from condemnation and from guilt. On the other part, you have a reception into God's favor. You have a standing before God. Acts 26, verse 18, shows these two aspects. Paul says that God sent him "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sins," that's one part, "and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." That's the second part. So there is not only forgiveness of sins, but also an inheritance.

Romans 4, verse 11, speaks of righteousness being imputed: "and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." There is a positive aspect.

Titus 3, verse 5 through 7, says, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Christ has not only paid all of my debts, but He has also fulfilled and discharged all of my responsibilities.

The law giver is the law fulfiller. Justification, then, is God's verdict. Justification is God's pronouncement. God says, I not only forgive the sins, but I am going to give a perfect righteousness, which I am going to explain shortly. There is going to be not only a negative, but a positive. We are not only going to receive forgiveness of sins, but an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me, says the Apostle Paul. Jesus Christ has not only died and forgiven me of my sins, but He has also given me a perfect righteousness. He has fulfilled my responsibility before the law.

The Ground of Justification

The one other point today is the ground of justification. What is the ground of justification? Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, which he pardoned all their sins, accepted and accounted their persons righteous in his sight. And here is the ground. Listen carefully: “not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ.”

The Ground of Justification: Christ Alone

I mentioned this several weeks ago, but I want to mention it again because it is very important. There are degrees in sanctification. We have a perfect sanctification that is in Christ; there are no degrees in that. But practically speaking, there are degrees in sanctification. I may be more sanctified than Tony. I may be more holy and more obedient than Tony is. Tony may be more obedient and holy than Don is, and Don may be more obedient and holy than Henry is.

You follow what I am saying? There are degrees in sanctification, but there are no degrees in justification. You and I are equally just as justified as the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John. There are no degrees in justification. Justification is like being pregnant: either you are or you ain't; there's no in-between. When you are justified, you are totally, fully justified.

Now note first the ground of justification. God gives us a negative, and I am going to show it to you in the Bible. Our definition says, “not for any works done by them.” Please understand, we are never ever justified by works. Titus 3:5 says, “not by works of righteousness which we have done.” There is a negation. Look in your Bibles to Romans 3:28. It says, “therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith,”

“without the deeds of the law.” You are not justified by works. Look in your Bibles to Galatians 2:16. Here is a passage that is exceedingly clear. Paul says, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law

shall no flesh be justified." So very clearly, justification is not by the works of the law. I met a man years ago, and he was an older man.

I enjoyed talking to him because he lived through the Great Depression. He could give you information that you just could not get anywhere else. But I witnessed to him because I did not believe the man was a Christian. He told me that he was all right and that he was going to get in heaven. I asked him upon what basis he believed he was going to see the Lord.

He said, "Well, I don't beat my wife. I pay my bills and I treat my neighbor right." I had to respectfully look at him and say, "Sir, you're lost. That will never, ever get you in the presence of God." We're not justified by what we do. Let's suppose Britt could be perfect from this day forward. He never committed another sin and was mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically perfect. Would that get him into the presence of God? No. What about all those sins he committed before he got perfect? There is no provision made for previous sins and previous failures. A fallen, sinful creature can never give God the perfection that God demands.

You remember what He said in Isaiah 64 and verse 6: "all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." We're all as an unclean thing in His sight. If it were possible to be saved by our works, Christ died in vain. We're not saved by anything that is wrought by us, nor are we saved or justified by anything that is wrought in us.

A man may be justified by faith and through faith and in faith, but never because of faith. Faith is something that is wrought in you; faith is not the grounds of justification. Every saved individual repents, but you are not saved, nor are you justified, because of your repentance. Repentance is something that is wrought in you.

It is put in you. It is worked in you. It is God who worketh in you, both to will and do His good pleasure. It is true that God's people are obedient, but obedience does not justify us. Obedience is something that is wrought in us.

What is the ground of our justification? I have given you the negatives: it is not anything brought by us or anything brought in us. Here is the positive: it is the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and His work are the ground of our

justification. That ground is wholly, completely, and totally outside of ourselves. It is the person and work of Christ and only Christ. It is not Christ plus our faith, nor Christ plus our repentance. No, it is only Christ. We are justified only by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is His perfect righteousness that justifies us—His work, not anything that we have done or anything that has been done in us.

Christ's Work as the Sole Basis

It is Christ who died to satisfy the demands of God's holy law. It is Christ who died to satisfy the wrath and anger of God. So we are justified by Christ alone. In John 17:19, Jesus Christ says, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." For their sakes I sanctify myself. In other words, we are justified based upon the personal work of Christ.

Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Remember, the tabernacle was an emblem, a symbol, and a type. If you want to go back to the Old Testament types and shadows, you do not have any right to our true author, which is Jesus Christ. Verse 11 says, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp." "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Why did Christ suffer? That He might be our justification; that He might not only pay our sin debt, but give us a perfect righteousness as well.

Every saved sinner is declared righteous before God. Every sinner is declared righteous only because of the person and work of Christ. It is not my faith that saves me. Although I am saved by faith, it is Christ who saves me. Faith is only the means by which I come to Christ. We are justified not for anything that we have done, nor for anything that has been brought forth in us, but only on the basis of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

It is true that we have faith, but God gave us that. It is something that has been worked in us. It is true that God gave us repentance; that is something that has been worked in us. It is true that God has given us obedience; that is something that has been worked in us.

We are not justified on the basis of any of those things wrought in us. We are justified only by the person and work of Christ.

Conclusion and Illustration

Let me give it to you like this. Here is God's law. God looks at His law and smiles, because that law is an expression of His holy will. The law, according to Romans 7:12, is holy, just, and good. Then God looks at the sinner and frowns. Why? Because the sinner is unholy, unjust, and wicked.

Now, in justification, God looks at His law and smiles because He is satisfied with it. It is holy, just, and good. And now He looks at the sinner who is in Jesus Christ and smiles, because that sinner is holy, just, and good in Jesus Christ, because of what Christ has done. Not because the sinner repented; that was something wrought in him. The sinner would never have repented had God not given him repentance. Not because the sinner believed; the sinner would never have believed had God not given him faith. Not because the sinner obeyed; the sinner would never have obeyed had God not given him obedience. God is pleased with him because of what His Son did. His Son fulfilled the law of God perfectly to give us a perfect righteousness. Therefore, we are justified based solely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank Thee for Your love. We thank Thee for Your grace. Help us, Lord, to live for Thee. Help us to understand, Lord, as Martin Luther said, the doctrine of justification by faith is the article of the standing or the falling church. And as we understand this doctrine, we're going to live holy and godly lives and give Thee honor and glory for what Thou hast wrought in our lives. Enable us to praise Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 11

Review of Justification

Romans 8:28-30 says, “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. 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. 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.”

I want to take extreme pains to make sure that we understand this doctrine, because, as Martin Luther said, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the article of the standing or the falling church. To the degree that we understand it, to that degree we are going to be able to stand. To the degree that we do not understand it, to that degree certainly we are going to fall. Justification by faith alone is one of the leading principles, not only of the Reformation, but also of the Word of God.

The definition we have been using is this: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, and accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them and received by faith alone.

By way of review, the author of justification is God Himself. When God justifies, that individual is justified. It does not matter what other people say or think. God alone is the author of justification.

Secondly, the source of justification is God's free grace. Romans 3:25 and John 15:25 show that the word “free” means “without a cause.” A free meal does not cost us something, but free grace means that there is nothing that calls that grace. Jesus Christ said, “They hated me without a cause.” That phrase is the exact same Greek word as being justified freely in Romans 3:25. Free grace, then, means there was no moving cause on our part that brought the grace of God.

In fact, we could say there was just exactly the opposite, because there was everything in us by nature that would repel God, because we were sinners and wicked and ungodly. So I told you that the source of justification is the grace of God. Then thirdly, we looked at the subjects of justification last week. And I told you that as you viewed the subjects of justification, you had to view them from at least three different perspectives.

Number one, from the perspective or from the standpoint of God's decrees, they are referred to as God's elect. Number two, from the standpoint of the effects produced by the quickening of the Holy Spirit, they are referred to as those that believe. And then number three, from the standpoint of what we are in and of ourselves, we are referred to as the ungodly. So the Bible says in Romans chapter 4 and verse 5, it is God who justifies the ungodly. So in and of ourselves, we are ungodly, sinners, wicked, and undone. So Scripture then emphasizes the subjects of justification are indeed the ungodly. And since mercy is extended to us through Christ, very clearly He is the godly one and we are the ungodly one. And then we looked at the essence of justification. What was the essence?

What is it made up of? Well, justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners whereby He pardoneth all their sins. That's one part, forgiveness. "...and accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight." That's the second part. So there's a negative and a positive to justification. In one sense of the word, He forgives our sins. On the other sense, He makes us righteous and counts us righteous in Jesus Christ.

So He gives us a legal title. Now, when we ended last week, I believe, we ended on the ground of justification. And let me just review this for a moment, because the ground of justification is not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ.

The Ground of Justification

Now, it was while I was discussing this point that I saw some puzzled looks on some people's faces, and I said that I would explain it more this week. But when I said last week that the ground of our justification was not for anything wrought in them, that means we are not justified on the grounds of our faith, because faith is wrought in us. And we're justified by faith and through faith, which I'll explain later, but we're not justified because of faith. You see, repentance is wrought in us, but we're not justified because we repent. Obedience is wrought in us, but we're not justified because we're obedient. So it is not for anything wrought in us, nor is it for anything done by us.

For instance, Titus chapter 3 says in verse 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In other words, it was absolutely nothing wrought in us or done by us. The positive ground is the full satisfaction and perfect obedience of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the full, solid, total, and complete ground of our justification. Whatever Jesus Christ is and whatever Jesus Christ has done, He alone is the ground of our justification. It is not anything wrought in us or done by us, but solely the person and work of Jesus Christ.

With that review, let me begin today with the method of justification. As we tie these points together, you will understand

why we are not justified because of faith: by faith, through faith, but not because of faith. What, then, is the method of justification? Listen to this definition again:

The Method of Justification: Imputation

"Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardoneth all their sins, and accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them."

What, then, is the method of justification? The method is imputation. If your understanding of imputation is muddied, you will not be clear on a number of other doctrines. The method God uses in justification is imputation. There are only three instances of imputation in the Bible: the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity; the imputation of believers' sins to Christ; and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. If you are unclear about the doctrine of imputation, you will be unclear about many other doctrines as well.

Romans chapter 4 plainly states the method of justification. Referring to Abraham, the Bible says, “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Note the word “imputed”: that righteousness might be imputed to them also. Verse 22 says, “And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” There is the word “imputed” again. Verse 24 says, “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” There is the word “imputed” again.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19, the Bible says, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Verse 21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

The method whereby God justifies the ungodly is by imputation. The word “impute” literally means to credit or to charge to someone’s account. What God does is charge and credit to our account the perfect righteousness of Christ.

This is clearly illustrated in the book of Philemon, the little book right before Hebrews. It has only one chapter and twenty-five verses, yet many wonderful doctrines are taught in it. One of those doctrines clearly illustrated for us is the doctrine of imputation. Onesimus was a runaway servant, a runaway slave. He fled from the house of Philemon, got down into Rome, was having a good old time, got arrested, and was thrown into the dungeon with the Apostle Paul. It was there that he was converted. Paul now sends Onesimus back to Philemon. Paul writes, “If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.” Watch.

"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." Paul says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Charge it to me; I will pay it. He then adds, "I'm going to tell you, you owe me yourself as well. So if you're going to charge me, you're going to be in trouble." This is a little jab on the side, reminding Philemon that he owes Paul himself.

Whatever Onesimus owes, Paul says, put it on his account. That is imputation: you take what Onesimus owes and charge it to Paul's account. How is it that God can judicially, legally, and righteously declare us righteous when in reality we are sinners, wicked, ungodly, and undone? This is the question that must be answered.

The answer is that He constitutes, or places, us in Christ. He charges Christ's righteousness to us, and then declares us righteous. The righteousness of Christ is counted as ours.

If you do not understand the imputation of Adam's sin, you will not understand the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Look in Romans chapter 5. In this passage we see the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity. In verse 12, the Bible says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." All sinned once and

for all in Adam. Therefore Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity. In verse 14, he says, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

"Who is the figure of him that was to come." We are talking about the method of justification. In 1 Corinthians 15, notice verse 45: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." There is a comparison between Adam and Christ.

Look again at Romans chapter 5, verse 14: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Then notice this amazing statement: "Who is the figure of him that was to come."

The word "figure" is the Greek word tupos. It is where we get our English word "type" from. Literally, Adam was the type of him that was to come.

How can Adam be a type of Christ? Adam was of the earth, which we just read in 1 Corinthians 15, and Christ was the Lord from heaven. Adam was natural; Christ was spiritual. Adam sinned; Christ never sinned. Adam failed; Christ succeeded. How in the world can Adam be a type or a figure of Christ? The answer is that Adam was a federal head. Adam was a representative.

And what he did, we did. When he sinned, we sinned, and his guilt was imputed to his posterity.

How does that relate to Christ? Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Christ is now the federal head and representative of a new race. What Christ has done, we have now done, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.

That is why Christ's death is considered our death, Christ's resurrection our resurrection, Christ's ascension our ascension, and Christ's being seated at the right hand of God our being seated there. The Bible says we are seated with Him in heavenly places because

whatever He has done has been imputed to us. How, then, was our sin given to Christ?

The answer is by imputation. How was Christ's righteousness given to us? By imputation. Let me illustrate it. Suppose this tube of ChapStick is our sin, and this pocket knife is the perfect obedience Jesus Christ worked out in obedience to God and to the law. Galatians 4:4 says that, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Jesus said in John 8:29, "I do always those things that please the Father." He obeyed the law perfectly. That is why Isaiah 42 says that He will magnify the law. Jesus Christ therefore worked out, earned, and merited a perfect righteousness.

Through imputation, God imputes our sin to Jesus Christ and credits our sin to His account. The Bible says plainly, "For the wages of sin is death."

Here is a question: Did Christ ever sin personally? No. He was the perfect, sinless Son of God. Well, how then could Christ die? The answer is, our sin was charged to His account. He was imputed. He was legally and judicially a sinner by imputation. Therefore, He died in our stead as our substitute. But then the righteousness that He worked out is now imputed to our account.

When God declares us righteous, it is because He has constituted us, He has made us righteous in Christ. Therefore, it is a legal, righteous, and judicial declaration that here we stand, in reference to God's law, as right and holy, because we are standing now in Christ. The framework of imputation is the covenant of grace and union with Christ. God can impute to our account the righteousness of Christ because He unites us to Jesus Christ.

Names of Imputed Righteousness

The Bible gives several names for this imputed righteousness. Romans 1:17 says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." He is talking about the gospel. Romans 3:22 likewise says, "Even the righteousness of God." Twice now, this righteousness is called the righteousness of God. Why is this imputed righteousness referred to as the righteousness of God? The answer is that it was wrought by

Christ the God-man, who is God. It is a righteousness that belonged to God Himself.

Secondly, Romans 5:18 gives another designation: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Why is it called the righteousness of one? Because it was the one person of the Trinity, the second person of the Godhead, who actually worked out and earned that righteousness. He was the one who did it. It is not partly our righteousness and partly His righteousness. No, it is the righteousness of one. It is totally and completely the righteousness that has been earned, merited, and worked out by Jesus Christ alone. So it is not only called the righteousness of God; it is called the righteousness of one.

Romans 8:4 calls it "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Why is it called the righteousness of the law? Because it was wrought and earned by Christ in conformity to the law. The perfect righteousness that we have in Christ is that righteousness which is in perfect agreement with the law of God. Romans 4:13 gives the next reference.

Romans 4:13 says, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." It is called, not the righteousness of God, not the righteousness of one, and not the righteousness of the law, but the righteousness of faith. Why? Because this righteousness is revealed to faith and received by faith alone.

Fifthly, it is called the gift of righteousness. Romans 5:15 says, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Verse 16 says, "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." Verse 17 says, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

It is called the gift of righteousness, the free gift, and the gift of grace because it was freely wrought by Jesus Christ and is freely given by Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:13 says, "...and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." What robe is this that Christ has on, and what robe is this that He gives us? It is a robe of righteousness. It is called a robe of righteousness because it covers all our sins and makes us acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ.

The method God uses to justify is the method of imputation. There is absolutely no righteousness inherent in any of us. Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." We are all as an unclean thing in His sight. There is none in us by nature. The only righteousness we have is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Someone wrote this couplet: "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die; another's death, another's life, I'll rest my soul eternally."

What is it that I am counting on to get me into the very presence of God? The only answer is the righteousness of Jesus Christ: His life, His work, and His death. It is not what He has done plus what I do, nor what He has done plus what someone else does. No. It is what Jesus Christ alone has done. We are saved by grace through faith alone, and the method God uses in justification is imputation. He imputes, or charges, our sins to Christ, and He imputes and credits the righteousness of Christ to us.

The Instrumental Means: Faith Alone

The instrumental means of justification is faith. Our definition says that justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, wherein He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only or solely for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed unto them and received by faith alone.

Several leading principles came out of the Reformation. One was Sola Scriptura: the Scriptures alone are our sole authority of faith and practice. Another was Sola Fide: faith alone. Another was Soli Deo Gloria: to God alone be the glory. Let us return to sola fide, by

faith alone. That one little word “alone” makes the big difference. It is the difference between truth and error, life and death.

You remember the illustration of Dwight L. Moody on the train. I do not always agree with Moody, but I agree with what he said here. He was seated by another preacher who tried to convince Moody that works were necessary for salvation, that it was not faith only but faith plus works. Moody said, “You know, our religions are really not that different.” The man smiled, thinking he had made some headway. Moody continued, “In fact, there are only two letters different between my religion and yours. Mine is spelled D-O-N-E and yours is spelled D-O.” There is a great difference between “and received by faith alone.”

Acts 10:43 says, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

Romans 3:22 emphasizes the righteousness of God: “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” These passages make clear that the righteousness of God is received by faith, and that it is offered unto all and upon all them that believe. There is no difference among those who come to God in this way. Romans 3:28 says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

We are justified by faith alone. It is not our works that save us, and it is not our works that help save us. We are justified by faith alone. The law cannot justify anyone, because justification does not come through the deeds of the law. The law instead brings us unto Christ, and Christ is the object of faith. Faith, not human merit, is the ground of justification.

Galatians 2:16 says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Galatians 3:24 adds, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

A man is justified in faith, by faith, and through faith, but never on account of faith. Faith is not the ground nor the substance of our justification, but simply the hand that receives the divine gift offered to us in the gospel. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is the ground of our justification. If we were justified on account of faith, then our faith would be our ground rather than the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Listen to this question from the Westminster Confession of Faith: "How does faith justify a sinner in God's sight?" The answer is: "Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works which are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith or any other act thereof were imputed to him for justification, but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applies Christ and his righteousness." Faith justifies only because it is the instrument by which he receives and applies Christ.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself this question? Can a man be saved without repentance? No. Repentance is absolutely necessary unto salvation. Christ himself said in Luke 13, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Yet why does the Bible never say that we are justified by repentance? Repentance is clearly necessary unto salvation, but the Bible never talks about being justified by repentance.

Good works are the fruits of salvation. They do not save us, but evidence and demonstrate that we have been saved. Why does the Bible never say that we are justified by good works or by obedience? The answer is that faith is the only grace that is totally receptive.

Faith is the only grace that is totally receptive. Faith is nothing more than the outstretched hand receiving Christ and the righteousness of Christ. That is why we are justified in faith, through faith, and by faith, but never on account of faith.

Suppose I am starving to death, literally on my last leg. Chester walks by with two loaves of bread, and I hold out my hands and say, "Please, I'm starving." Chester is merciful and places a loaf of bread in my hands. I eat that bread, and my life is spared. Then I get up and say, "Thank God for my hands; my hands saved me."

Did my hand save me? No. What saved me? The bread. My hands were merely the instrumental means of getting the bread to my mouth; it was the bread that saved me. If I am starving and you place a bowl of cereal before me with a spoon in it, I eat the cereal and my life is spared. Then I hold up the spoon and say, "Thank God the spoon saved me." How ridiculous. It was not the spoon that saved me; it was the cereal. The spoon was only the instrumental means of getting me to the cereal.

Faith is the only gift, the only grace that is absolutely and totally receptive. That is why a man is saved by faith, in faith, and through faith, but never on account of faith. It is not my faith that saves me; it is Christ who saves me. Faith is the instrument that lays hold of Christ, apprehends Him, comprehends Him, brings Him to me, and gives me His righteousness. So I am saved in faith and through faith, but never on account of faith. It is by faith alone—Sola Fide. Now, wait a minute. Someone may say, "Brother Weaver, when you begin to teach and preach that it is by faith alone, that is going to give some people ground for easy-believism."

Faith Alone and Easy-Believism

You do not pervert the gospel to destroy easy-believism. Easy-believism is wicked, wrong, and unscriptural: it says a man can make a profession of faith, live as he wishes, and go to heaven no matter what he does. That is hogwash; it is not Bible. You are not saved by decision. But the way to destroy easy-believism is not by perverting the gospel. The gospel is that we are justified by faith only. The way to destroy easy-believism is to show that everyone whom God justifies, He sanctifies. Real saving faith always works, always has evidence, and always has fruits. If there is no fruit and no evidence, there is no saving faith. We must not say, "We have to get rid of easy-believism and cheap churchism, so we will require people to believe and to do this, this, and that."

The truth is that you never have to beg a saved person to do what is right. If he has really been saved and sees in the Word of God what is right, he will do it. Salvation is by faith alone. Yet real saving faith, although we are justified by faith alone, is never alone, because it always brings obedience, good works, and all that accompanies

them. As James said, “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Real saving faith is a faith that always works.

We are justified by faith, and faith alone, whether that faith is great or small. If you have not read Pilgrim’s Progress, I encourage you to read it, if only for the joy of reading about Mr. Little Faith. You will find that Mr. Little Faith was just as saved as Mr. Great Faith, because it is faith alone that receives Christ. It does not matter whether that faith is great or small.

Weak Faith vs. Great Faith

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose this town has been covered with the Ebola virus. People are dying left and right, and there are differing degrees of sickness. Here is a man who has just been infected; clearly, he has more strength than the man who has had it for five or ten days. Suppose the whole town is infected, and I invent a machine that automatically heals you if you simply touch it. I set the machine in the middle of town.

Tony has had Ebola only a few hours or a day. He still has some strength, so he runs to the machine, hits it so hard he almost knocks it over, and grabs hold. He is instantly cured. But Ed has had it for two weeks and can barely move. He crawls, almost at his last breath, reaches out, and touches the machine with one finger. Which man is healed? Both. It did not matter how strongly they touched the machine, just so they touched it.

Now consider our Lord walking down the road. He looks up into a tree and says, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” Zacchaeus skinned down that tree so quickly that, when he hit the ground, he said, “Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Jesus Christ said, “This day is salvation come to this house.” Suppose Zacchaeus, as he probably did, grabbed our Lord and hugged Him. Here was Zacchaeus, full of energy, strength, and faith, reaching his arms around our Lord. Was he saved? You know he was, for Christ said he was.

But here was another woman who had wasted all her living on doctors and, for twelve years, had an issue of blood. She had no money and very little strength. But she said, “If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.”

Was Zacchaeus more saved than she was? No. Was he more justified? No. We are justified by faith alone. It does not matter whether that faith is weak or great, small or big, so long as it is faith that appropriates and receives the person and work of Jesus Christ.

If you grasp this truth, the next time you pray—whether for a child, a husband, a wife, or finances—you can say, “Lord, I come to Thee in faith. My faith may be weak and small, but it has laid hold on Jesus Christ. Hear my prayer, not based upon the amount of faith I have, but upon the person and work of Jesus Christ.” What boldness He gives us in prayer, and to live scripturally, because we can say, “We have received Christ.”

His work is our work. His righteousness is our righteousness. Let us live as He would have us live, so that we can say, “Father, I only want always to do those things which please You.” Why? Because we have been justified by the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by faith alone.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your blessing and help. Lord, teach us Thy Word. Build us up in the most holy faith and enable us to understand the truth of justification. We stand righteous before Thee, not because of anything wrought in us or done by us, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ, imputed to us and received by faith alone. We ask Your blessing in Christ’s name. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 12

Introduction and Review of Romans 8:28-30

Romans 8, beginning with verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, him he also called, and whom he called, him he also justified, and whom he justified, him he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” These are verses 28 through 30, leading us to verse 31. We have covered verse 28 in detail, verse 29 in detail, and most of verse 30 as well. We have just finished a three-part series on justification: “whom he called, he also justified.” I was not going to deal with the word “glorified,” because I did so when we discussed what it meant to be conformed to the image of Christ. If you are unclear on that, you need to go back and listen to that tape. Today we come to verse 31.

Catechetical Instruction in Romans 8

The greatness of God in salvation is almost incomprehensible. In this passage, the Apostle Paul analyzes this so great salvation by asking questions and answering them. This is what we know as catechetical instruction. When you catechize someone, you ask a question and wait for the student to give the answer. Sometimes you have to prompt or help the student, but you keep asking the same question, and the student keeps giving the same answer until, slowly but surely, it is something into his mind and he can recite it verbatim.

We taught our children catechetical instructions. I remember most of them myself. The very first question is, “Who made you?” The answer is, “God made me.” “What else did God make?” “God made the sun, the moon, the earth, and all things.” “How many gods are there?” “There’s only one God.” “And in how many persons does He exist?” “Three: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost.” “Who are our first parents?” This is simple catechetical instruction. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul does in Romans chapter 8. The first question he asks in verse 31 is basically an introductory question.

This one question leads to five others revealed for us in the rest of this chapter, which we will consider one at a time.

Contrast Between Positive Assertion and Negative Attack

Note, first of all, the contrast between verses 28 through 30 and verses 31 through 39. In verse 31 he says, “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Then he asks, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also freely give us all things?” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” “It is God that justifieth.” “Who is he that condemneth?” “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.” “Who is he that is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?” Then he asks another question.

The point is this: The contrast between verses 28 through 30 and verses 31 through 39 is the contrast of a positive and a negative. In

verses 28 through 30, Paul states God's salvation very plainly and positively. However, in verses 31 through 39, he states the same truth in a negative manner by asking questions.

There is a principle here of vital importance: you and I must not only assert the truth, but we must also attack the error and the evil. In verses 28 through 30, Paul asserted the truth. In verses 31 through 39, he attacks the error by asking questions and giving the answers. The only way we can attack error and evil is by means of a negative. We state the truth, bring up objections or negatives, and then answer them. In doing so, we establish the truth more firmly, not only in our minds, but in the minds of others as well.

The General Question: 'What Shall We Say to These Things?'

So let us look at verse 31, the introductory, general question: “What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” The first thing that ought to enter your mind is simply this: What things? He said, “What shall we say then to these things?” What things is the Apostle Paul talking about? You have to consider, first of all, an immediate context and then a remote context. So when Paul asks, “What shall we say then to these things?”

The immediate context refers you back to verses 29 and 30, where Paul speaks of God's purpose, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Thus, when he asks, “What shall we say then to these things?” he is referring to the things he has just written.

The more immediate context would refer to the entire chapter. In chapter 8, verse 1, he says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The entirety of chapter 8, then, is talking about the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ. It is a broader scope and a broader theme than verses 28, 29, and 30. Therefore, the immediate context is verses 28, 29, and 30, while the remote context is chapter 8 in its entirety.

Even the remotest context is Paul's argument beginning in chapter 1, verse 16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for

it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." From chapter 1, verse 16, through chapter 8, verse 39, the Apostle Paul gives one complete argument.

So when he asks, "What shall we then say to these things?" immediately he is referring to verses 28, 29, and 30; remotely, to chapter 8 in its entirety; and in the remotest context, to his entire argument beginning in Romans 1:16.

Now look back at Romans 8:31 and at the question he asks: "What shall we then say to these things?" What things? God's purpose, God's foreknowledge, God's predestination, God's calling, God's justification, and God's glorification. "What shall we say to these things?" Can we say anything against them? Can we impugn them? Can we deny them? Will we speak lightly and flippantly of them, or will we prize them and hold them fast?

Three Principles for Responding to God's Truth

What the Apostle Paul is saying is essentially this: What I have just given you is a glorious truth. It is a blessed reality, and you had better learn to respond properly to it. Now, I want to give you three principles that we are to learn from this question. Look at what he asks again: "What shall we then say to these things?" Here is the first principle.

When God sets forth His truth in His Word, we ought to study it, consider it, think of it, and make application of it. Let me make a statement, and then back it up with Scripture. Your attitude, your actions, and your words demonstrate what position you really hold concerning the Word of God. They evidence where you stand on the Word of God, either for or against it.

How can I say that? Look back in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 13. Hold Romans chapter 8, but look in Acts chapter 13. In this passage, the Apostle Paul had been preaching. When the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.

“But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.”

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should have first been spoken to you. But seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Note what he said to them: since they put it from them and did not want it, and since they judged themselves unworthy of it, how did they put it from themselves? How did they judge themselves unworthy of it? By speaking and contradicting and blaspheming against it.

When you hear a man talking against the Word of God, blasphemously, ignorantly, wickedly, you can understand very clearly that he is an enemy of God, an enemy of Christ, and an enemy of the Word of God. So that means this: you and I had better be careful about what we say concerning the Word of God.

There is a vast difference between saying, “Well, I don’t understand that,” or, “I don’t see that,” and ridiculing someone because he believes something that we do not see. You follow me? When you begin to contradict and blaspheme, it shows that you are against the Word of God. You can inquire and ask questions, study, and disagree, but you do not blaspheme, and you do not speak against the Word of God. So the very first thing we have got to understand is that when God sets forth His truth, we are to study it, consider it, and make application of it. The second one is this.

Every revealed truth has its relationship with other principles and other revealed truths in the Word of God. When God reveals a truth in His Word, we have to understand that there is a relationship. For instance, if we look back in verse 30, the Bible says, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” What relationship does predestination have to calling, or calling to predestination? What relationship does calling have with justification, or justification with sanctification? All of these truths are interrelated. Therefore, we cannot hold one truth above another or one truth against another. We have to see that the truths are interrelated and understand that every truth God reveals has a proper relationship with every other truth He has revealed.

Thirdly, unless we study and understand these truths, we will not be saying anything to them; we will be saying everything against them. There is a big difference. Paul says, “What then shall we say to these things?”

The Five Questions and Their Answers in Romans 8:31-39

Let me show you how Paul is dealing with a negative and the answer he is going to give. Romans 8:31: “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” The answer is, and I will explain this later, that God’s person is invincible. This question deals with His power.

In verse 32 is the second question: “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?” The answer is, God’s grace is inexhaustible. In the first one, God’s person is invincible. Now God’s grace is inexhaustible. In other words, if God has given us the most basic and fundamental thing, then God is certainly going to give us all things in Christ.

In question number three, in verse 33: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “It is God that justifieth.” God’s verdict, which I will explain later, is incontrovertible. No one can contradict or overthrow God’s verdict.

The fourth question is asked in verse 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.” The answer here is that God’s pardon is incontestable.

When God pardons and forgives, that is it; no one can contest it. The fifth question is in verse 35: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” The answer, explained through verse 39, is that God’s bond is inseparable.

Let us look at these five questions, though not all of them in detail today, and at least examine verse 31: “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Exegesis of 'If God Be for Us'

The first question is an objection to, or a challenge to, God's power. It is a challenge to God's omnipotence and His invincibility. Let me lay this out clearly. He asks, "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Do you realize the problem some people have with Scripture? They do not understand the way Scripture was written. The word "if" does not necessarily mean that there is doubt. I could ask Tony, "Will you buy me a Pepsi today?" and he might reply, "If I go to town, I will." What does that mean? It means he may or may not go to town; there is a question as to whether he will. But if he goes, he will do so. In other words, there is some doubt.

Whenever you see the word "if," however, you must understand that certain rules of language do not make "if" a question of doubt. In the Greek language, the little word "ei," when it is in the indicative mode, as it is here, has the absolute certainty of force behind it. There is no question and no doubt. Literally, he is saying, "What shall we then say to these things? Since God is for us, or because God is for us, who can be against us?"

Now let me show you how important this is. Hold on to chapter 8, but look back in your Bible to Matthew chapter 4, where you have the temptation of Christ. Notice what Satan says in verse 6: "And he said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone."

Look at what Satan says to Christ: "If thou be the Son of God." In the Greek, it is "ei" with an indicative. There is no question.

Satan was not doubting whether Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He knew He was. In the Greek, it is the "ei" with the indicative, and literally he says in verse 6, "Since thou art the Son of God, and since it is written of you..." Then he goes on to tempt Him. So it has the absolute force of certainty.

If you look back in Romans chapter 8, you have the same thing there in verse 31: "If," or "since," or "because" God is for us, who

then can be against us? In light of the fact that God is for us, in light of the fact that God is on our side, who can be against us?

The Identity and Power of God

How do we know that God is for us? All we have to do is take it into context. We know that God is for us because it is God who predestinated us. It is God who chose us. It is God who called us. It is God who justified us. It is God who glorified us. God has to be for us, or else He would have left us in our sins. If you have been saved by the grace of God, then you know that God is for you; and if God is for you, who then can be against you?

Here is how we know that God is for us. He says in Colossians 1:12, "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet," or suitable, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is God the Father who made us suitable to be partakers of the saints in light. He has also delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

How do I know that God is for me? Because God has made me meet. He has made me suitable in Christ to be a partaker with the saints in light. He has delivered me from the power of darkness, and He has translated me into the kingdom of God's dear Son. So I know that God is for me.

What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? So my next question is, Who is God?

What God is he talking about? You said, "Brother Weaver, very clearly the only God there is is the God of Scripture." That is correct. That is the God that the Apostle Paul is talking about. He is talking about the eternal, infinite, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, sovereign, supreme being of the universe, who rules and reigns according to his own counsel and his own will. If that one God be for us, who can be against us?

Do you remember when David said in Psalm 115 verse 3, "But our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." Do you realize only God can do whatever He pleases? Most of us have realized we cannot do as we please; we have to do what we have to do. I get so tickled at young people who want to hurry up and run

away from home so they can do whatever they want to do. Then, when they get away from home, they find out they never have any time to do what they want to do. They only have time to do what they have to do. Do you realize I had more time for myself when I was James' age and Renee's age than I have ever had since I have been an adult?

You see, the truth is this: only God can do as he pleases. You remember Daniel 4 and verse 35: the Bible says that "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Job said in Job 42, "Thou canst do everything, and no thought can be withholden from thee."

So when he asks, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" he is referring to the sovereign, omnipotent God of the universe who does as he pleases. There is no one more powerful, more wise, more glorious, more sovereign than God. None! In fact, do you remember? God himself says, "I am God, and beside me there is none else."

When Paul asks this question, and I want us to keep it in the context, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Paul is not saying that as Christians we do not have enemies. We have enemies, powerful enemies. It really does not do them any good to be our enemies, because God is on our side. God is for us. God is the one who will work out all of their machinations and all of their evil schemes and plans and deeds. He will overrule and work all of that out for our good, based upon Romans 8 and verse 28. In other words, it is God who will overthrow our enemies. So the Apostle Paul is not saying we have no enemies.

What he is saying is that it will do them no good to fight against God, because God is more powerful, more wise, and in far greater control. If it ever sinks down into your mind that it is God who fights for and protects His people, dear friend, it will give you a great deal of comfort.

Biblical Examples of God as Shield and Refuge

Look in your Bibles to Genesis 15. Let us see what God told Abraham. Note, if you would please, verse 1: “After these things the

word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." May I ask you what a shield is for? It is for protection. You put that shield in front of you to protect your person from harm and danger. And what did God tell Abraham? "Don't be afraid. I am thy shield. I am thy protector."

Now look in your Bibles to Psalm 27. This is a passage that I would encourage you to memorize. Psalm 27, verse 1: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" What is that question? "Whom shall I fear?" Remember, the question is asked in light of the fact that God is our light and our salvation. "Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me, therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy." "I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

Now look what he said: "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." Why? Because the Lord is my salvation, the Lord is my light, the Lord is my shield. He said, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." Look in your Bible to verse 13 of Psalm 27.

Look what he says now: "I had fainted"; in other words, I would have been overcome and overwhelmed, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." When is God my shield? When is God my protector? When is God my light? When is God my salvation? Now, in the land of the living.

What will it take to keep us going? What will it take to keep us unafraid? A realization that the sovereign God is for us. He is invincible. No one can stop Him.

Psalm 34 says, “I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” How are we going to bless the Lord at all times? “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my” fears. “They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them. The Lord is our shield, the Lord is our protector.

Psalm 46 was one of Martin Luther’s favorite psalms: “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing.” Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength.” What is your refuge? It is where you run into for protection. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear”—wait, did you hear that?

The psalmist says, “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.” God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the

chariot in the fire. “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

When you can say, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed,” let me ask you a question: If a tornado came roaring through this town in the next fifteen minutes, toppling every house and leveling every building, could you say, “I will not fear”? That is what the psalmist said: “Though the earth be removed.” What if the hurricane comes? “I will not fear.” What if the Chinese invade us? “I will not fear.” What if the whole economy collapses? “I will not fear.” Why? Because if God is for us, who can be against us? Our God is invincible. He is going to work everything out for our good and His glory.

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” The Lord is our shield; our Lord is our protector.

Jesus Christ said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” How much power does Jesus Christ have? All. That means even our enemies are absolutely under His control. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 20, speaks of God's great omnipotent power.

Paul wants us to know how much power was extended, or, I should say, exerted, in saving us. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.” Do you realize? The same almighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead was the same almighty power that saved you. That is what he said.

He raised Christ from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Conclusion: No Fear Because God Is Invincible

So let me ask this question another way: What is Jesus Christ over? Everything. Now, if God be for us, what good is it going to do for anybody to be against us? What is the answer? None. Because ultimately, God is going to overthrow all of our enemies.

I like Psalm 2: “Why do the heathen rage? And the people imagine a vain thing.” You know what a vain thing is? It is that which is useless. It is worthless. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” That really upsets God, doesn’t it? That really, really terrifies God, doesn’t it? “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.” Why? Because God is in absolute sovereign control.

Now, here is Paul’s question: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The answer is that God is invincible. None can thwart Him, hinder Him, stop Him, or overthrow Him. God cannot be stalemated, checkmated, outwitted, overpowered, or alone. Why then should we fear? We should not, because God is for us, and it does no one any good to be against us.

If you apply this truth to the world scene today and consider the powerful political influence that Christ and His people have, you don't understand one thing: ultimately, in His time, they will get exactly what's coming to them, because Christ cannot be defeated. He's the sovereign of the universe.

Father, we ask today that You would help us, speak to our hearts, and instill in us that there is no reason to fear, for greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. God our shield, God our protector, God our sovereign, we give ourselves anew this day and ask for Your mercy, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 13

Introduction and Review

Romans 8:28-32 sets the stage for this thirteenth message on Romans 8:28. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Those whom God foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son; those whom he predestinated, he also called; those whom he called, he justified; and those whom he justified, he glorified. The passage then asks, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” It continues: “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?”

The previous twelve messages cannot all be reviewed without consuming the entire time. Last week, however, we considered verse 31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” We were dealing there with the invincibility of God, with the power of God.

Now, Paul is dealing with the latter part of this chapter. Verses 28 through 30 stated the truths of God's grace and God's mercy to us positively. In other words, that is a positive statement. But when Paul begins with verse 31 and continues through verse 39, he is dealing with negatives.

He is establishing the truth not only by stating it positively, but also by dealing with any objections that may arise. Paul points out an error and deals with the error as well. This is part of what we would know as catechetical instruction, where he asks a question and then gives the answer until it is enforced into the mind of the hearer. In asking these questions, Paul is handling any objections that may arise from his teaching on verses 28 through 30. The first question was, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

In other words, someone says, “Well, we've got enemies. What if our enemies arise against us?” Paul answers, “What difference does that make?” God is omnipotent. God is all-powerful. God is invincible. No one can thwart him; no one can hinder him. Therefore, his purpose must undoubtedly come to pass. He handles that objection in verse 31.

The Argument from the Greater to the Lesser

In verse 32, Paul says, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” and then asks, “How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Verse 32 is one of the strongest, most powerful, and undeniable arguments for assurance and the final perseverance of the saints that there possibly can be. Paul is giving us an example of logic, an example of reasoning. In logic, this type of reasoning is called a fortiori. A fortiori reasoning is an argument from the greater to the lesser. In other words, if the greater is true, then the lesser is bound to be true as well.

For instance, if I were able to demonstrate that a million gold coins is money, then held up one gold coin and said, “This is money also,” I would be arguing from the greater to the lesser. If a million of these gold coins is money, then a single gold coin would be money as well.

That is exactly the kind of argument Paul gives us in verse 32. “He that spared not his own Son”—that is the greatest. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”—that is the greatest. “How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” That is the lesser. So if God has done the greater for us, He is certainly going to do the lesser.

Paul uses this type of argument frequently. In Romans chapter 5, beginning with verse 8, he says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Now, what is this phrase? “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Now look at Paul's argument. If God has done the greatest for us while we were his enemies—if He has given us His Son, Jesus Christ—is not God much more now going to continue to bless us and help us, since we are no longer His enemies, for we are now His children? And that's why He keeps saying, “much more, after we have been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” The argument, then, in Romans 8:32, is like the argument in Romans 5:8–10. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser.

The Importance of Facts and Doctrine

In Romans 8:32, he says, “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?” That's important. Every time you study the Word of God, note not only the facts but the doctrine. Facts are vitally important. Some people say, “Don't bother me with the facts,” but facts are important.

Paul's arguments are always based upon fact. They are based upon historical fact. Some say, “It is the spirit of the matter that really counts, not the facts.” You might argue with the spirit or the interpretation of something, but you cannot argue with the fact. The spirit may mean different things to different people, but the fact can only mean one thing. Paul bases his argument upon historical fact. The doctrine comes from that historical fact. Let me say it another

way: the explanation and exposition of that fact is doctrine. That is the same truth stated in three different ways.

I like what that old Negro preacher said. Someone asked him why he was such an effective preacher. He said, "The reason I'm such an effective preacher is I tell them what I'm going to tell them, and then I tell them, and then I tell them what I told them." So I am saying the same thing three different ways. Once you have the fact, that fact must be applied. You cannot apply a fact unless you understand the doctrine attached to it, unless you understand its explanation and exposition. The Apostle Paul gives us a historical fact, then expounds and explains it, which is the doctrine that enables us to apply that historical fact. We have many historical facts, and certainly a tremendous one in Romans 8:32. But we want not just the fact, but its application to our lives.

God's Inexhaustible Grace in Its Mystery

The whole point of this message, and of its continuation next week, is that God's grace is inexhaustible. Paul's argument is against an objection: "Well, suppose God just saves us and drops us? Suppose God saves us and then ceases to do for us? Maybe we're too great sinners." Paul argues that this is impossible, because God's grace is inexhaustible.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" I am going to give you three ways that God's grace is inexhaustible, but only one of them this morning. First, God's grace is inexhaustible in its mystery. Is it not wonderful and mysterious that God would give His only begotten Son for sinners like you and me? Very clearly it is. The Bible says, "He that spared not his own Son." That is the only phrase I want to deal with today, and I want you to see three things from it. First, note the person.

Look closely at verse 32: "He that spared not his own Son." Who is the "He"? Go back to verse 31: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Verses 28 through 30, the entire context, deal with God. Thus, when the Bible says that He—God—spared not His own Son, it tells us that the cross, Calvary, is a work of God. This is something God has done. In other words, God has already given us His Son.

The Crucifixion as an Act of God

Crucifixion—the crucifixion of Christ—was not merely a work of man. It is true that men were used as instruments, and that wicked men crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. But do not take the attitude, "Well, those men, they're the ones that did all this." Yes, God used them, but the men are not the ones who did to Christ what was done to Christ. They only fulfilled the decree of God. Acts 2:23 says, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." It is true that God used men.

But the answer is this: the only reason those men did to Christ what they did was because of the eternal decree and counsel of God. Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He had been slain predeterminedly in the counsel of God. Acts 5:30 says, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Once again, it is true that wicked men were the instruments. It is true that wicked men nailed Christ to the cross.

But the truth of the matter is this: Are you listening? Had God not sent forth His Son, no wicked hand would have ever touched him. Had God not decreed that Christ be the substitute, no one would have nailed him to the cross. Had God not sent his Son, no one would have ever touched him. The argument Paul gives us in Romans 8:32 is that the crucifixion was not just an act of man, but primarily, basically, and fundamentally an act of God. It was God who gave Christ.

Second, the crucifixion was not simply a work of the devil, nor merely a work of the principalities and powers. We live in a day and age where everyone likes to blame everything on the devil. We say, "The devil made me do it." When the devil had nothing to do with it, it was usually our own wicked hearts that made us do what we did. Most of us are not big enough fish for the devil to even mess with anyhow.

If you study the Bible, you will find that, as far as I know, there are only three individuals whom the devil personally tempted: Job, Christ, and Peter. He entered into Judas, but he tempted Peter as well. Those are the only three whom the Bible specifically names.

The devil does not have to trouble most of us because we are so wicked of our own and have so much sin and ungodliness. Why bother with what you already have? So do not blame it all on the devil.

It is true that the devil is the enemy of God, that he hated Christ, and that he tempted Christ. He may have inspired and motivated those men to hate Christ and crucify Him. But remember this: the devil is God's devil. He can go only as far as God will allow him to go, and he can do only whatever God will allow him to do. God has him on a chain, and he can function only the way God would have him function.

Now I want to show you that the crucifixion was an act of God. I want you to understand that this is very important. Turn in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 19, and look at what Jesus Christ says to Pilate. When Christ stood before Pilate, He stood silent for a while. Finally, in verse 10, Pilate became upset and said, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Pilate was saying, "Don't you know who I am? I have power to crucify you and power to let you go." Look at verse 11. Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Pilate could have nothing unless the Father had already determined what was to be done. It was God who had delivered Christ into his hands.

Isaiah 53 is the great passage on the suffering of the Messiah. Note verse 4: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Did not men smite Him? Yes. Did not the devil do his best against Him? Yes. But who was it that ultimately smote Him? It was God.

Look down in verse 6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Who laid it upon Christ? The LORD, God the Father. Verse 10 says, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” He continues, “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge

shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Who was it that bruised Him in verse 10? It was God the Father. Who was it that laid the iniquities on Him in verse 11? It was God the Father. So the crucifixion was an act of God. It was not just an act of man.

Look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” You have got to understand who the “he” is and who the “him” is. “He”—that is, God the Father—“hath made him to be sin for us.” Who was it that imputed our sins to Christ? It was God the Father.

In Colossians 2:13-14, we read: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Who put it upon Christ? God the Father.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers"—that is, the devil and all his minions—"having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The crucifixion was not just the work of man. It was not just the work of the devil. No, it was the work of God. In that work, God destroyed the power of the devil. He broke the principalities and the powers.

Look in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2:4, speaking of Christ: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Was Christ chosen to be the Messiah? He was chosen to be the Messiah, the substitute, and the ransom, chosen of God and precious. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." It was God who gave Christ.

Look back to 1 Peter 1:18-20: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." It was God who decreed and determined that Jesus Christ be the sacrifice, the ransom, the Redeemer.

Why am I saying this? For two reasons. First, Romans 8:32 begins with the word "He"—He, that is God the Father, who spared not His Son. The Bible plainly tells us that the crucifixion is an act of God. Second, what assurance, comfort, consolation, or guarantee of salvation could there be if the crucifixion were an accident, the work of man, luck, chance, fate, fortune, or the work of the devil? Some say, "Well, Jesus didn't intend to be crucified.

The Meaning of 'Spared Not'

The idea that Christ merely made people a little mad and that they took His death further than He intended is hogwash. It is blasphemy. There is no comfort, assurance, or salvation in that. The only comfort we can have, the only assurance of salvation, and the only guarantee of our salvation is that the crucifixion was not a work of man, it was not a work of the devil, it was a work of God. It is something that God has done. In that we see the absolute, wonderful, and mysterious grace of God, who spared not His own Son. So it was God who gave His Son.

Note secondly, in verse 32: “He that spared not.” I want to deal with the word “spared.” The word for “spared” is pheidomai in the Greek. Put an “ou” in front of it, which is a negative, and it negates it. The word pheidomai literally means to be charitable toward, or to be lenient with. With the negative before it, the phrase literally means that God was not charitable toward His Son. God was not lenient with His Son. God did not hold back anything. This is the word upon which the application at the close is based primarily.

The same word appears in Romans 11:21: “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” This shows how forceful and powerful the word is. If God did not spare the natural branches, but lopped them off and judged them, you had

better take heed. Then the passage says, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.”

The same word and construction appear in 2 Peter 2:4-5: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” What does the Bible mean when it says that God spared not the angels that sinned? He judged them. What does it mean when it says that God spared not the old world? He judged it. He poured out His wrath and His justice upon it. God did not spare the natural branches, the angels, or the old world.

Let me show you one other passage to give you the force of the word “spare.” Look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 20 and verse 29. In this passage, the Apostle Paul uses the same word. You talk about a perfect picture. Look at this. Acts 20:29 says, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Then he said, “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Now look at verse 29. Here is the thing: “Not sparing the flock.” “Shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Do wolves have mercy upon sheep? Do wolves treat sheep leniently and charitably? What do they do? They devour them.

That is the picture God gives us in Romans 8:32: “He that spared not his own Son.” He allowed the full justice, the full wrath, and the full righteousness of vengeance to fall upon Christ. He held nothing back.

The Object: His Own Son

What happened at Calvary was pictured by an Old Testament illustration. I want you to turn to two passages: first of all, Genesis 22, and secondly, Hebrews 11, because Hebrews 11 will give us the New Testament application. Go back, first of all, to Genesis 22.

Everyone understands that Genesis 22 is where Abraham was going to deliver up Isaac, his only son. God told him to take Isaac

and offer him as a sacrifice. When Abraham started to do so, the angel of the Lord stopped him. In Genesis 22:16, God says, “And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.” Note the word “withheld”: “and hast not withheld.”

The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew. Certain parts of Ezra and Daniel contain some Chaldean, or Aramaic, but mainly it was written in Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Greek. How, then, can the word “withheld” here be applied to Romans 8:32 and the word “spared”?

The answer is found in the Septuagint. Whenever you see LXX, which means seventy, it refers to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Septuagint was quoted by Christ and by the apostles. Thus, when you come to the word “withheld” in the Septuagint, it is exactly the same word: “spared not.”

He said, “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing and hast not spared thine son, thine only son.” Hebrews 11 shows how Genesis 22 was a figure of Christ. Hebrews 11:17 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

Abraham’s purpose and heart was to slay his only son, and God knew it. God stopped him, and when Isaac came back down off that mountain with him, it was a figure of Christ—not only a figure of God not sparing His Son, but also a figure of the resurrection. So when the Bible says, “He that spared not,” the words mean that God did not withhold. God did not spare His Son anything in life or in death. Whatever it took to save His people, satisfy His justice, honor His law, magnify His holiness, and make Him just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus Christ, God did not withhold it. God poured it upon His Son.

The Scripture says, “He that spared not.” Romans 8:32 contains another phrase: “his Son.” “He that spared not his own Son.” This is

the third point: the object. The first thought was the person, He—God. The second was the action—spared not. Now the object is His Son.

Who was it that died on the cross? The answer is Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? He is the only begotten Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, the second person of the Trinity, who Himself is God incarnate. You say, "Brother Weaver, I believe that. Why are you emphasizing this?" Let me tell you.

Because there are liberal theories of the atonement and concerning Jesus Christ. They are wicked, blasphemous, and wrong, but they exist. One is the so-called martyr theory: Jesus Christ was not God in the flesh, but merely a good man who died for a good cause, showing us that we must be true to our convictions. We do need to be true to our convictions, and Christ is indeed our example, according to 1 Peter 2. But He is more than our example. He is our substitute, our sacrifice, our Savior, and our Redeemer. He was not merely a good man; He was God in the flesh, perfect God and perfect man. Therefore, whenever you hear someone speak of the martyr theory, understand that they are actually denying the deity of Jesus Christ.

If you deny the deity of Christ, if Christ was not God, then we are all lost and still in our sins. It is that simple, because only God could redeem and save. But there is another liberal theory heard quite frequently today, known as the universal sonship theory. This is the problem with liberals: they use exactly the same words that we use, but attach different meanings to them.

For instance, if you ask a liberal, "Do you believe that Christ was divine?" he will respond, "Well, of course I do." If you press him, he will add, "I believe in the divinity of all men." He is saying that Christ was no more God than we are God, and that Christ was a son of God in the same way that we are sons of God. That is a denial of the deity of Christ.

It is true that you and I are sons of God by adoption. But Jesus Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation. There never was a time when He was not God, and there never was a time when He was not the Son of God. You remember John 3:16: "For God so loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The phrase "only begotten" is one word in the Greek: monogenes. It literally means one of a kind, unique. There is none like Jesus Christ. He is God's only begotten Son.

That is why the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Without all controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. When Jesus Christ came, He was God incarnate, God in the flesh.

Now look back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 22. This has always been a beautiful picture to me, but we should pay close attention to the Word of God. Most of the time when we read Scripture, we do not pay attention to the words, to what is there, much less to what is missing. This is the story where Abraham is taking Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice at the command of God. They are going to the mountain.

Applications

In Genesis 22, Isaac asked Abraham, "My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Isaac was beginning to realize that something was missing. They were going to worship God and offer a sacrifice; here was the wood, and here was the fire, but where was the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

So they went both of them together. Notice one word that we normally read into the verse. We would read it, "God will provide for himself a lamb." But that is not what Scripture says. Abraham did not say that God would provide for himself. He said, "My son, God will provide himself." God will give God.

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. All those lambs slaughtered at the Passover pictured Jesus Christ, because God was going to give God. God was going to provide Himself, His only begotten Son, to be our sacrifice, our substitute, and our Redeemer. Remember Paul's

argument: “He that spared not his own Son.” Paul is arguing from the greater to the lesser.

Applications and Warnings

The first application is very simple: salvation is a work of God. This is something that God alone can do and does. Jonah 2:9 says, “Salvation is of the LORD.” There is not a man who can save himself, help save himself, or save anyone else. That is why, if Jesus Christ is not God, we are in a great deal of trouble. We are lost, because only God can save.

Second, it is God the Son who purchased our salvation. It is true that God the Father sent the Son and gave the Son, but it is God the Son who purchased our salvation. Third, it is God the Spirit who applies that salvation. If you deny the Trinity—that God is one God in three persons—you destroy salvation. Salvation is a work of God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

No Leniency for Christ-Rejecting Sinners

Here is the final application from Romans 8:32: “He that spared not his Son.” Listen carefully. If any sinner—any unconverted, unrepentant, non-Christian—ever has any hope of leniency and charitableness, believing that God will exercise that leniency and charitableness toward him even though he is a rebel, wicked, wrong, and ungodly, that hope is in vain. It is useless. It is worthless.

You say, “What are you talking about, Brother Weaver?” I am talking about this. If there was ever a time that God would be lenient with sin, if there was ever a time that God would be lenient with wickedness, if there was ever a time that God would be charitable toward sinners, certainly it would have been when sin was imputed to His own dear Son. But Scripture says, God spared not His Son. Do you think that God would spare you when you have hated Him, rejected Him, denied Him, broken His law, and trampled His Word under your feet? Do you think that somehow on judgment day God is going to smile at you and wink and say, “Well, I am going to send everybody else to hell, but you just skip on into heaven”? You are deceived. You are deceived. You are deceived.

You know what most sinners think? Most sinners think that they are going to make it somehow. They think that some way God will make an exception with them. They believe that somehow God is not going to be as just as His Word declares. They believe that somehow everybody else may be damned, but not them. They believe that everybody else may be damned, but not them. I have got news for you.

If you have never bowed to Jesus Christ, turned from your sins, embraced Him in faith, and received Him as your only substitute and only Savior, you are going to find out that God will never, ever be lenient with a Christ-rejecting, God-denying, Bible-hating rebel. If there was ever a time that God would have been charitable, He would have been toward His only Son.

But He spared him not, and He will not spare any other sinner.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy. Drive home this important truth: it was You, Lord, who gave Your Son. The crucifixion is the work of God. Because You spared Him not, but delivered Him up for us all, we can have assurance, hope, and a guarantee of salvation. How shall You not also with Him freely give us all things?

Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, I pray for our young people and for every adult, that You would drill into their souls that God hates sin, and the only way God will ever be merciful to a sinner is in and through Jesus Christ. Without Him, there is no mercy and no hope—only a sure and certain judgment, and a fearful looking for the day of destruction. Enable us to trust in Him. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 14

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 14

Introduction and Review

Romans chapter 8 begins with verse 28 and continues through verse 32: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. 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. 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. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?”

In verse 31 we dealt with God’s invincibility. This was indeed a question about God’s power. In this context, Paul has listed the truth in a positive form in verses 28 through 30. Now, in verses 31 through 39, he is dealing with the negatives, that is, the objections that come back to the truths he has taught in verses 28 through 30.

This is the a fortiori form of argument, an argument from the greater to the lesser. We dealt with the importance of facts and the exposition of those facts last week in verse 32. We began in verse 32 and covered one point: God's grace is inexhaustible in its mystery. Verse 31 dealt with the fact that God is invincible; verse 32 deals with the fact that God's grace is inexhaustible.

We looked at three points. First of all, God's grace is inexhaustible in its mystery. I pointed out the person in verse 32, "He," that is, God the Father; then the action, "spared not"; and then the object, "His own Son," or God the Son. The application is that there is absolutely no hope for any sinner who thinks that somehow God is going to be lenient to him in the day of judgment, because God spared not His own Son. If God was ever going to be lenient with sin, it would have been when sin was imputed to His own dear Son.

God's Grace is Inexhaustible in its Miracle

Now we come to the latter part of this verse. The second point is that God's grace is inexhaustible in its miracle. The Bible says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Thus God's grace is inexhaustible in its mystery in the first part, and inexhaustible in its miracle in the second part: "but delivered Him up for us all."

Once again in this statement, we see the action of God the Father. I pointed out last week the importance of seeing that Calvary, the crucifixion, was a work of God. It was not necessarily a work of man or a work of the devil. It was indeed a work of God. This was something that God did.

When you read verse 32, "He that spared not His own Son," that is the negative. Here is the positive: "but delivered Him up for us all." The negative and the positive give strong emphasis to the action of God. This is something that God has done. Far from sparing Him, far from treating Him leniently, the Bible tells us that God delivered Him up.

Let us look first at the word "delivered." The Bible says, "...but delivered Him up for us all." The word "delivered" is paradidōmi. It literally means to surrender, to yield up, to deliver. Let me show you

the force of this word. Hold Romans 8, but look back in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 27, where this same word is used in several passages.

In Matthew 27, verse 2, the Bible says, “And when they had bound Him,” that is, bound Christ, “they led Him away and delivered Him unto Pontius Pilate the governor.” When the Bible says they delivered Him, they surrendered Him, they yielded Him up to Pilate.

Look in verse 18 of the same chapter: “For he knew for envy they had delivered Him,” or surrendered Him or yielded Him up. Verse 26 says, “Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.” Here the emphasis is that Christ was surrendered, yielded, and given over to be crucified.

One last passage is in Acts chapter 12, verse 4: “And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him.” This is in reference to Peter. Notice that the Bible says, “delivered him unto the soldiers.” Peter was surrendered or yielded over to those soldiers.

I gave you these Scriptures to show that this is the word God uses to speak of Christ: Christ was surrendered or yielded up. If you look in your Bibles to Romans 4 and verse 25, you will find that Paul has already used this word and this truth to explain what God has done to Christ.

Romans 4 and verse 25, when the Scripture says concerning Christ, "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."

So Christ then was delivered up.

He was surrendered.

He was yielded up.

Now, you say, "Brother Weaver, I understand the point that God delivered Him up."

But if you ask this question, "To whom did God deliver Christ?"

What did He deliver Him up to?

Now, the Bible says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

What did God yield Him or surrender Him up to?

Well, let's try to work it out.

Look in your Bibles, if you would please, first of all, to the book of Luke chapter 22 and verse 53.

Luke chapter 22, verse 53.

In this passage, Luke 22, verse 53, the Bible says this, Christ is speaking, and He's speaking to these wicked men who have come after Him, and He says, "When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness."

Now, there is a sense, and I'm going to explain it to you, that Christ was delivered up to the power of darkness.

He was delivered over to the enemy.

For the enemy did do to Him whatsoever he pleased.

In fact, I want you to hold Luke chapter 23, but look in your Bibles to the book of Colossians chapter 2.

Colossians chapter 2, just to show you that Christ was delivered over to the power of darkness.

In the book of Colossians chapter 2, note verses 14 and 15.

The Bible says, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross."

Watch.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

So somehow, someway, Christ was delivered over to Satan and his minions to do their worst.

And what did Christ do?

He triumphed over them.

Now if you look back in your Bibles to the book of Luke chapter 23 and verse 25, let me show you another area in which Christ was delivered up.

Luke chapter 23 and verse 25.

The Bible talking about Pilate, "And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison," that was Barabbas, "whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will."

So Christ now is delivered up.

He is surrendered over to the will of wicked men.

They spat upon Him.

They cursed Him.

They beat Him.

They hit Him.

They mocked Him.

They scourged Him.

They crucified Him.

So Christ now has been delivered up not only to the powers of darkness, but to the wicked men.

In other words, Christ was delivered up to all of the agony, all the suffering, and all the death that the law of God demands.

Consider Christ in the garden. Luke 22 says, “And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.’” “And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” When He rose from His prayer and came to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow and said to them, “Why sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

Note the words, “being in agony.” He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. We get our English word “agony” from the Greek word agōnizomai, which means to be in great agony, to be in great stress, to be in great pain.

Have you ever asked yourself why Christ was in agony? Why did Christ suffer what medically is known as hematidrosis, which is a bloody sweat? That is when you are under such pressure that some of the vessels burst in your body, and blood actually comes out in the form of sweat. Why was Christ in such agony? Why was Christ under such pressure?

Matthew 27:46 says, “And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’” That is to say, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Of all the physical agony, and all the physical, mental, and emotional agony that our Lord went through, the greatest of all was His spiritual agony, because Christ cries, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Why was God withdrawing Himself from Christ, in the sense that there were no evidences of the intimate relationship and fellowship that He had with the Father? Why had all those things been withdrawn? Consider 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For He,” that is, God the Father, “hath made Him,” that is, God the Son, “to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Now, in God's act of imputation, Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, was made sin. That is, our sin was imputed to Him. He was counted as a sinner.

You and I do not really think too much of that, because we sin all the time. We sin every day. We were born sinners. But what could you imagine would be in the soul of the holy, sinless Son of God, who had never known sin personally, who had never committed a sin, and who had never entertained any wicked thing in His mind, thought, or deed? What in the world would it be like for the sinless Son of God, all of a sudden, to have our sin imputed upon Him, and for His holy soul to revolt from such an act? He was always holy and

only ever did those things which pleased the Father, and now He was to be made sin.

Christ was not just made sin; Christ was made a curse. The Word of God says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'" In other words, all of the judgment, all of the anathema of God, and all of the wrath of God were poured upon Christ.

The Bible says, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God." He endured the cross, despising the shame.

Why was our Lord in agony in the garden? Why did He sweat great drops of sweat as blood? Because He knew. He knew that He was going to be made sin for us. He knew that He would be made a curse for us. He knew that He would lose the evidence of the Father's blessing, love, and acceptance. That's why He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Remember that I told you last week I would emphasize another portion of Isaiah 53, but I want you to look at it.

Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” Do not just think about the physical sufferings of Christ; think about His spiritual sufferings.

“All we like sheep have gone astray. We’ve turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” Hear the sinless Son of God bearing sin, because sin is now imputed to Him.

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was He stricken. He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, because He had done no

violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief," when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.

Now look at Romans 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son." That is the negative. Here is the positive: "But delivered Him up for us all." What did He deliver Him up to? Not just to the power of darkness, and not just to the will of wicked men, but He delivered Him up to be made sin for us and to be made a curse for us. He delivered Him up to all of the sufferings—physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually—anything and everything that it would take to satisfy the justice of God, the holiness of God, and the law of God. He surrendered or yielded Christ to that.

The Scripture says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for..." Literally, "for" means "on behalf of." It does not simply mean "for our benefit," though certainly it was for our benefit. It means that Christ was delivered up on behalf of. This little word "for" refers to substitutionary atonement. Christ was delivered up in the place of, instead of, His people. You should have suffered everything that He suffered and gone through everything that He went through. All of the anger and wrath and justice of a righteous God should have fallen upon you—but it did not.

It fell upon Christ as our substitute. That is why we believe in a substitutionary atonement. He was there in our place, suffering in our stead. So the Bible says, "but delivered Him up for." The next word is "us": "He delivered Him up for us."

The Personal Nature of Christ's Sacrifice

Since He delivered Him up for us, did God deliver up Christ, all of His suffering, for sweet, innocent, obedient, godly people? Well, of course not. What does the Bible say? "When we were yet sinners, when we were enemies of God, Christ died for us." Another Scripture says that Christ died for the ungodly. What does the Scripture say in Ephesians 2? "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins." He then talks about how you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.

In other words, you had your sin, your rebellion, and your wickedness, and Christ was delivered up—or God the Father delivered up Christ, the sinless Son of God—for sinners, for His enemies, for those who were walking in rebellion toward Him. So God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us.

The next word is "all": "He delivered Him up for us all." Who is the "all"? The body of Christ. It certainly would not be every individual who ever lived, because a multitude had already died and gone to hell before Christ had ever come. Look at the context. Who is the "us all" in verse 32? Go back to verse 31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us…" There is the same "us": "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who is the "us" in verse 31? The same "us" in verse 32.

Go back to verse 30: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He also justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified." According to verse 30, the "us all" is those who have been predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. According to verse 29, it is those predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Verse 28 says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Thus, the "us all" in verse 32 is those called according to His purpose, those who love God. He was delivered up for us all—the body of Christ.

God's Grace Is Inexhaustible in Its Magnitude

What does the Scripture say? "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." What did He say in Acts chapter 20? He told those elders, "Take heed of yourselves and to the flock of God, which Christ hath purchased with His own blood."

Well, let me show you a miracle. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Galatians chapter 2. You see, it is one thing for you and me to say that Christ died for the church, for His people, for the body, or for the elect, whoever they are. But here is the miracle: when you can say with the Apostle Paul, in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Do you see that? “He gave Himself for me.” He gave Himself for me. Has it ever dawned upon you that everything that God the Father did to Christ and everything that Christ went through was for you? You. You. “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” That kind of narrows it down and makes everything that Christ went through extremely personal: “He died for me.”

God's Grace is Inexhaustible in its Magnitude

I want you to look back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. Let me try to piece this argument together. Our third point today is this. I have had three points: God’s grace is inexhaustible in its mystery, God’s grace is inexhaustible in its miracle, and God’s grace is inexhaustible in its magnitude. Look at it, he says in the latter part, “How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Now let me deal with the phrase “with Him.” Have you ever stopped to think that everything that God has ever done for us has been in and through His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Let me go a little bit further. All that God the Father shall ever do for us will be in and through His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him.” All of our spiritual blessings are in Him.

Now, I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of Galatians chapter 3. While this passage does not have exactly the same force that I want to emphasize, it does have the same idea. Look in Galatians 3, verse 1. Look at Paul’s argument.

Paul asks the Galatians, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” Then he asks, “This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” and, “Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

The Galatians were trying to go with the Judaizers, adding works to grace and works to faith. Paul’s argument is clear: having started out in the Spirit, could they now be made perfect by the flesh? Of course not. The same argument applies here: having received

everything from God the Father through Jesus Christ, can we now do it on our own? Of course not.

The only thing that you and I ever receive from God is through Christ. God the Father gave Christ, and it is from God the Father and from Christ that His Spirit flows to us. We have nothing except through Christ. It is in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ that God gives us all things.

Go back to Romans 8. He says, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The word "freely" is dōrean. It literally means freely, gratuitously, and then without a cause. In John 15:25, Christ said, "They hated me without a cause." It is translated "freely" in Romans 3:24; it is the same word here: "How shall he not with him also freely," that is, without a cause, "give us all things?"

When we pray, we do not go to God and say, "Father, I want You to know that I have been good today. I have done the best I could do. Since I have done the best I could do, I ask You to bless me." How many blessings will we receive because we have done the best we can do? None. We do not say, "Lord, I did not cuss anybody out today, so send me an extra blessing." No. The only way we can get to God the Father and receive anything is through Jesus Christ.

There is nothing in us that merited or drew forth God's grace in the first place, and nothing in us that can continue to draw it. The only thing we ever receive from Him is free grace. It is without a cause; there is no cause in us. Everything is wrapped up in Christ. That is why Colossians 1:18 says that in all things, He must have the preeminence.

The Bible says that with Him, He's freely—freely. That is, without a cause in us. You don't have to work for the blessings of God. God doesn't give them to us based upon what we do or what we don't do. He gives them to us based upon Jesus Christ and what He has already done.

"How shall He not also with Him freely give?" The word "give" is very important. It is the Greek word charizomai. It has its root word charis, where we get our English word "grace." You remember the charismata, the gifts of the Spirit? It simply means gifts of grace.

Someone says he has a charismatic personality. All the word means, basically, is grace: a favor, a kindness, a gratuity, a grace.

So, how shall He not with Him also freely in grace give us all things? Note the words, "all things." What are the "all things"? Go back to verse 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

Application: Assurance and Provision

Do you realize our needs are met through Christ? Some of the questions we have concerning this Y2K problem involve limited money and what to do. May I remind you, Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your needs through Christ Jesus, our Lord."

I have found this to be true all of my life. If we will be faithful to God, obedient to Him, trust in Him, lean upon Him, and do with what we've got the best we can for His honor and His glory in faith, inevitably God is going to make sure that all our needs are supplied. He is not going to do it if we go out and squander and throw everything away, but He is certainly going to supply our needs. He is going to make sure that we are survivors.

"How can you say that?" Because of what David said, and I believe it's Psalm 37: "I've been young and now I'm old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." My God shall supply all your needs. He said, "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

First Corinthians 3:21–23 says, "Therefore let no man glory in men." Why? "For all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

How much has God the Father given us with Christ? What is the answer? All things. The truth is, everything in this world is already ours in Christ.

Here is Paul's argument: If God has done so much for us in not sparing His Son, but delivering Him up for us when we were His enemies and sinners, if God did the greatest for us when we were in that condition, shall He not much more do the lesser now that we are

His children and have been reconciled to Him? How can we doubt the grace of God? How do we ever think that He will fail us now, leave us to ourselves, or not give us grace and mercy? How could we ever think that He would refuse to come to our aid, refuse to supply our needs, or not work things out for us?

If God has done the greatest, He is not going to hesitate to do the lesser. If God saved us while we were His enemies, He is certainly going to continue to bless us since we are His children. However erring we may be, He is still going to do whatever is necessary to discipline us, bring us back to Himself, and give us what we need.

What a tremendous argument for assurance and perseverance. If God has done the greatest for us in Romans 8:29 and 30, shall He not do the lesser in verse 32? "How shall He not also with Him freely, in grace, give us all things?" What a powerful, tremendous argument.

Conclusion and Prayer

Those who are without Christ have no hope. But those who are in Christ have no cause to fear and no need to tremble. Why? Because "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

Father, thank You for Your love to us. Thank You for Your grace and mercy and kindness. We do ask that You would teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, enable us, Lord, to trust in Thee and lean upon Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 15

Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. 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. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?”

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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.”

Introduction and Review of Romans 8:28-32

We have been in Romans 8:28 and the following verses for the last three or four months, beginning with verse 28 and working down to verse 33. Verses 28 through 30 state the truth positively, while verses 31 through 39 state the same truth negatively. The Apostle Paul sets forth the truth positively and then handles objections or challenges to the truth he has laid out.

In verse 31, Paul deals with the fact that God is invincible: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” This is a challenge to God's power. God is invincible; no one can overthrow or defeat Him. God is omnipotent.

Then verse 32 says, “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?” Here is the truth that God's grace is inexhaustible. The challenge is, “What if God's grace runs out, or what if God refuses to be gracious to us?” Paul says that is an absolutely ridiculous argument. If God has done the greater for us—if He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us—how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Very clearly, Paul deals with the fact that God's grace is inexhaustible.

Paul's Classification

Today we come to verses 33 and 34, but I am only going to be able to deal with verse 33. The point is that God's verdict is incontrovertible. That is, it cannot be overturned, altered, controverted, or changed.

We are dealing with verse 33: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.” The Apostle Paul demonstrates the truth that God's verdict is incontrovertible in two ways. First, in verse 33, he considers the possibility of someone bringing a charge against us. He asks, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” I will explain this today. Secondly, in verse 34, which we will begin dealing with next Lord's Day, he considers the possibility of someone somehow condemning us or proving that we are in a state of condemnation. Today we are dealing primarily with verse 33, with someone bringing a charge against us.

Paul's Classification: 'God's Elect'

Let us begin by noticing, in verse 33, point number one, Paul's classification: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” Pay strict attention to Paul's classification, and note the title given to the people of God. It is “God's elect.” It is important that we emphasize this truth because it is crucial to the apostle's argument. Scripture teaches that God does indeed have an elect people, and He calls them that. Hold Romans chapter 8, but look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 24. Let us begin there with verse 24. Note what the Scripture says in Matthew 24, verse 24: “For there shall arise false Christs,”

and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." So he says, if it were possible, indicating it's not, they should deceive the very elect. Look in verse 31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." So once again, the people are called God's elect. Look in Luke 18, verse 7. Luke 18, verse 7. Luke 18, verse 7. Our Lord says, "And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" So he asks, "And shall not God avenge His own elect?" So each time they have been called God's elect. Look in your Bibles to the book of Colossians chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3, note if you would please verse 12. Colossians 3, verse 12.

Here the Apostle Paul writes, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." Notice he says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God." Look in the book of Titus chapter 1 and verse 1.

Now I'm showing you this to prove that this title, this classification, is given to God's people over and over. Notice Titus 1 and verse 1, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." Now, he says, "according to the faith of God's elect." Look in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 2. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 2. Hear the Word of God says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Then if you look in 1 Peter 5 and verse 13, 1 Peter 5, verse 13. He says, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son." Then if you will turn to 2 John, 2 John chapter 1, of course there's only one chapter there, but 2 John 1 and verse 1. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." Now, he calls her the elect lady. Look in verse 13. "The children of thy elect sister greet thee." So he's talking about entire churches, and he's referring to them as the elect.

Now, if you'll turn back in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 1. And note, if you would please, verse 4. 1 Thessalonians 1.

Paul simply says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Then, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, he makes this statement: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

These passages demonstrate that God does have an elect people, people whom He has chosen; therefore, they are called God's elect. Now, if you look back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, let me ask a question: Why did the Apostle Paul use, in verse 33, this term, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

It is true that the word elect, and especially the term "God's elect," summarizes the teaching in verses 28 through 30. It is also true that the word elect, or its equivalent, occurs seventy-three times in the New Testament alone. It is the same way of saying that God has a peculiar people, which is a term that Peter uses. The Scripture says that we are His peculiar possession. So it really does not matter, in one sense of the word, whether you speak of God's peculiar people, God's peculiar possession, or God's elect. Basically, that is one and the same. But why is it that Paul wrote, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Why Paul Uses 'God's Elect' Instead of Other Terms

Why did he not write, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of him that believeth on Jesus?" Or why did he not write, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of Christians?" Why did he say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Why?

Why does Paul emphasize that we are God's elect? One of our main problems in grasping the concept of salvation, and one of our main problems in grasping the assurance of salvation, is the fact that we humanize it.

Listen carefully. There is no such thing as a humanized salvation in reality. It is a misnomer, because only God can save. Jonah 2:9 says, "Salvation is of the Lord." In reality, there is no such thing as a humanized assurance of salvation. But that is basically what we do: We try to humanize salvation.

For instance, we refer to Christians as good men. God's people ought to be good men, but our Lord said in Mark, "There is none good but one, that is, God." Romans 3 says, "There is none good, no, not one." When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, "Good Master," Christ said, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." What Christ was saying was, If I am good, I am God. And if I am God, you do not come running into My presence demanding something of Me. By the way, our word "good" comes from the word "God."

We understand what we mean when we say, "Doc is a good man," or "Chester is a good man." We even refer that to ourselves, but the truth is, good men can do bad things. Sometimes good men become bad men. What have we just done? We have humanized salvation by saying, "Well, he is a good man." But good men can change. If a good man does bad things—even if he does not become a bad man, but does bad things—what happens to salvation, or to the assurance of salvation? Your assurance was based on what you did or did not do, and so was your salvation.

Sometimes we refer to Christians as those who have made a decision: "He has decided for Christ." Scripture never uses that phrase. It is something we have humanized, institutionalized, and

made up. If someone simply decided for Christ, what keeps him from deciding against Christ? What keeps him from undeciding?

I was preaching in the Greenville County Jail in Greenville, South Carolina. The jailer was a friend of mine, and as I walked in that night he said, "Johnny, I got a good one back there for you." He was holding a man who had murdered his wife and his mother-in-law. They let all the prisoners out into the bullpen. One man stood back against the wall and listened while all the other men were up front.

After the message was over, a man who had been charged with murdering his wife and mother-in-law came up to me and said, “That was a good message, preacher. These men in here really needed that.” I asked, “And you didn’t?” He said, “No, I’m already a Christian.” I asked, “Aren’t you in here charged with murdering your wife and your mother-in-law?” He answered, “Oh, yes. Yes.” I said, “Well, how do you know that you’re a Christian?”

He said, “Because I went forward at a Billy Graham crusade and made a decision.” I told him, “Sir, I’ve got news for you. The Scripture says, you know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” I said, “Now somebody’s lying, and I don’t think it’s God.” That does not mean a murderer cannot be saved. But here was a man who made a decision, quote unquote, and evidently decided against God, because he turned around and did exactly what God said not to do.

We have humanized salvation. We say, “He’s a baptized individual,” or, “He’s a member of such and such church.” But what if someone breaks his baptismal vow or refuses to keep the church covenant? “This person is willing to come to Christ.” What if he wills to go away from Christ?

What we have done is humanize God's salvation and assurance, and most of our questions arise from that fact. Salvation is not a work of man; it is a work of God. Assurance is not a work of man; it is a work of God. That is why Jonah 2:9 says, "Salvation is of the Lord."

This is exactly Paul's argument in verse 33. Look at the latter part of verse 33: "It is God that justifies." It is not man. It is not anything that man does or anything that man says. It is God who justifies.

What is Paul saying? Salvation is of the Lord. It is God who justifies. Justification and salvation are not in our hands; they are in God's hands. They are not based upon our works, but upon the work of God. They are not in our acts, our deeds, our will, or our work; they are in God. It is God who justifies. If we desire to honor God, give Him glory, and walk in the assurance of salvation, we cannot and must not humanize salvation. We must remember that we are God's elect, God's peculiar people, and God's particular possession.

In other words, we must learn to think in biblical terms. Why, again, did he say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Having partially answered that question, let us notice not only Paul's classification, but secondly, Paul's challenge. He asked in verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Paul is challenging the objectors and the critics. His challenge is a legal one, presented in the form of an illustration of a case being tried in a court of law.

Paul's Challenge: A Legal Courtroom Illustration

Picture, if you will, that we are in a courtroom. Here is the judge, the jury, the people, and a prosecuting and a defending attorney. The Apostle Paul stands and asks this question: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He is calling on anyone who can come forward and bring a legal charge against one of God's elect. The word "charge" is very important. It is the word ekkaleo, and it literally means to bring into account, to accuse, to incriminate, or to call into question.

I want you to see the other places where this word is used, and in every instance it is used in a legal framework. Look in Acts chapter 19, beginning with verse 35. Paul was overthrowing the work of the silversmiths because he was preaching against idolatry. The silversmiths said, “Man, Diana’s the great one,” and they gathered a great convocation, hollering, “Great is the goddess Diana.”

It was an unlawful assembly. “And when the town clerk”—the appointed city official—“had appeased the people, he said, ‘Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things

cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. Go to law.'

"'But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called into question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.'" When he says, "we are in danger to be called into question," literally he is saying, "We're in danger of being accused." We're in danger of being incriminated, of being brought to account for this day's uproar. In other words, it is a legal term and a legal matter. Charges can be brought against us; we have held an unlawful assembly.

Now look in Acts chapter 23, beginning with verse 28.

Paul, of course, is the subject here. Claudius Lysias, the captain, has rescued him. He is writing a letter to Felix, the governor, and says in Acts 23:28, "And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, that is the Jews accusing Paul, I brought him forth into their council." Then he says, "Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds." The word "accused" in verses 28 and 29 is exactly the same word as "charge" in Romans 8:33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who shall accuse them? Who shall bring a matter before a court of law?

In Acts 26:2, Paul says, "I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews." They have laid a legal charge against Paul. In verse 7 he says, "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused"—that is, indicted, incriminated, and brought into account—"of the Jews." Every time this word is used, it is used in a legal context.

It is important to comprehend that when Paul says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" it is a challenge in

relationship to a legal verdict. We are talking about a courtroom. The Bible tells us in Revelation 12:10 that the devil is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us in our own consciences. When you do something wrong, perhaps without thinking, something says, "How can you be a Christian and do that?" Or, "How can you be a Christian and say that, act like that, or have an attitude like that?" Then your own conscience condemns you. In one sense, that is one way he accuses us.

The Accuser's Lack of Standing

Another way he accuses us is by using other people, sometimes even Christians. When he uses them, they are acting as junior counsel to the devil. In other words, they are in league with him, operating in the prosecutor's department.

This brings us back to why Paul used the term, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” He did not say, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s Christians?” or, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of him that believeth in Christ?” Why? Because this is strictly a legal matter, and the answer is not dependent upon my works. It is not dependent upon my belief. It is dependent upon an act, a work, a choice, a verdict of God and of God alone. This challenge is in God’s court and in God’s court of law.

Paul uses a form of ridicule to show the absolute preposterousness of anyone bringing a legal charge against any of God’s elect. You have ridicule in the courtrooms of man all the time, and God uses this through the Apostle Paul to show how utterly preposterous it is for anyone to try to lay anything to the charge of God’s elect.

Look back to verse 31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” What would you think if I stood here and behind me, beside me, or with me was the omnipotent, sovereign God of the universe, while three people, a dozen people, or a whole world had arrayed themselves against me? What could they possibly do to me if God is protecting me? Nothing. No one can overthrow God. No one is more powerful than God. God is omnipotent; He is the all-powerful One. Thus, Paul uses ridicule, centered on the question, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

What good would it do anybody to be against us? It is the same type of argument in verse 33: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies.” To bring a charge against God’s elect, one must be in God’s courtroom, with God as Judge, using God’s law.

You would laugh someone out of existence for fighting against God, saying that he is the most foolish, ignorant, and stupid of men. Paul is saying that it is equally foolish for anyone to think he can approach the Judge of the universe, in His law and in His courtroom, and bring a charge against one of God's elect.

Let me show you several things to consider. First, man's relation to God is a legal one, and God's dealings with man have always been through covenant. A covenant is a legal document. This is true whether we speak of the covenant of works with Adam, the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, the Noahic covenant, or the eternal covenant that we have in Christ according to Hebrews 13:20. God's relationship with man has always been legal and always through covenant; a covenant is a legal document.

Secondly, God Himself has ordained the law that governs His relationship with men through the covenant. The law was promulgated, ordained, delivered, given, and enforced by God. God made the law. He says that His relationship with man is always on legal terms, and that He has given a law by which this relationship shall be maintained.

Thirdly, God is the administrator of His law. Look in your Bibles at Isaiah 33:22, while holding Romans 8. This is a verse you need to memorize. The Bible says, "For the Lord is our judge." That is the judicial branch. "The Lord is our lawgiver." That is the legislative branch. "The Lord is our king." That is the executive branch. "He will save us."

The founding fathers derived the three branches of our government—the judicial, legislative, and executive—from this passage. What is God? God is King, yes; God is Lawgiver, yes; but God is Judge. All three offices are bound up in God. That is why Abraham asked in Genesis 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

God's relationship with man has always been on legal terms. He has written and given His law, which regulates those terms on which He will have intercourse with man. God has always been the administrator and judge of that law, and any charge brought by anyone must be brought in terms of God's law. This is true not only in God's law but also in man's law.

Suppose I go into a courtroom while it is in session, and the judge says, "Does anyone have any business with this court? Let him speak now." I raise my hand, approach the bench, and say, "Your Honor, I want you to have Russ arrested and imprisoned." The judge asks, "Why?" I answer, "Well, I don't like him. I don't like his attitude. I want you to put him in prison and throw away the key." The judge would say, "Bailiff, would you escort this man out of my courtroom? He's crazy."

I cannot have Russ arrested because I dislike him, nor can I have him blessed by the court because I like him. If I go to court against Russ, it must be based on a legal claim. If there is no legal claim, I have what is known as no standing. I have no right to be there because I have no valid, legal, lawful claim that would put me in that court of law.

Why, then, can the devil, nor anyone else, bring a charge against any of God's elect? They have no standing and no right to be there. Let me show you something else that happens in the courtroom. Suppose there is a legal battle, and Chester is fighting for what is right. He is doing a good job, and everybody says, "Yeah, boy, Chester's got him." Then the prosecuting attorney comes up and says, "Your Honor, there's something Mr. Taylor overlooked."

“You will find this in Rule 4A, Subsection 1, Subsection B, Subsection 3, and Subsection 4Q,” or whatever. And lo and behold, there it is. Everything that Chester has done has gone down the tubes because of one little rule of law way down in the book somewhere that he had not seen. It can never happen in God’s court of law like that, for God wrote the law, God knows the law, and God is the one that enforces the law. So Paul is asking, “Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”

He is saying nobody can, because they are not going to have any standing. Paul's conclusion is not only his classification and not only his challenge, but also his conclusion: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

Paul's Conclusion: 'It is God that Justifies'

Remember, a few weeks ago I brought three messages on justification. Justification is a legal act. It is a judicial act. It is a verdict from the judge. Please remember this: justification is more than forgiveness and more than a pardon. Justification is a declaration of a right standing in relationship to the law.

Romans 3:24 says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." We do have remission of sins through the forbearance of God, "to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." How can God be just when He justifies a sinner?

Every one of us has sinned, violated His law, and deserves death. The answer is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21. God can be just because He sent His Son to be a substitute. That substitute not only died in our place, in our stead, but also worked out a perfect righteousness, which is now imputed, or given, or charged to our account.

It is a legal term again. "For He hath made Him"—God the Father hath made Him, God the Son—"to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Justification, then, is not merely negative; it is also positive. God not only forgives our sins and pardons us, but imputes to us a positive righteousness, which is in Jesus Christ alone.

One of the most beautiful illustrations of this is in Zechariah chapter 3. "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. And Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O

Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.' Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And unto him he said, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' And I said, 'Let them set a fair mitre upon his head.' So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by."

The Hebrew word "resist" literally means to attack or accuse. Here is Joshua standing before the Lord, and Satan standing there to attack, accuse, or indict Joshua. But the Lord said unto Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" That is, "Is not this one a mighty log? Is not this one that I have chosen?"

Who is doing the rebuking? God Himself. Why? Satan has no standing. He has no right to bring a charge against Joshua. You say, "Oh, but look, Joshua has filthy garments." Yes, he does. But God said, "I have forgiven thee, I have pardoned thee," and He takes away his filthy garments. What does He do? He clothes him with righteousness.

He puts the mitre upon his head. Here is an absolutely perfect picture of what God does for us in justification. God removes our filthiness and vileness. God clothes us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Then He looks at us, and He looks at the law, because we have now kept the law perfectly in Jesus Christ, and God says, “Justified.” More than forgiven, more than pardoned, we are imputed with a perfect righteousness.

Dead to the Law and Alive in Christ

Now, look in your Bibles to Romans 7. Let us begin reading there with verse 1. Paul writes, “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?”

Now he gives an illustration to prove that: “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

The Apostle Paul is not teaching on marriage and divorce at this particular point. He is teaching something far more important. What is it? Look down in verse 4. “Wherefore”—here is the conclusion based upon the illustration that he just used about the woman being bound to her husband as long as she lives, or as long as he lives. But if the husband be dead, she is freed. Note verse 4: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Now, wait a minute. What does he mean when he says that we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ? Does that mean that we can now go out and steal and kill and fornicate? Of course not. What does it mean when it says that we are dead to the law? It means we are dead to the law as far as condemnation is concerned.

The law can no longer condemn us. Let me give you an illustration. Suppose a man walks through that door, shoots Ed between the eyes, and kills him. We are horrified. We identify the man, perhaps wrestle him down and catch him. The sheriff arrests him, and after a trial he is found guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced to death in the electric chair. He is back in prison, waiting for the appointed day of execution. A month before that day, however, he drops dead of a heart attack. What is the law going to do to him? Will they keep him in the cell for another thirty days, then drag him out, put him in the electric chair, and execute him? No. What can the law do to him now? Nothing. He is dead.

How can God's law condemn us if God has justified us? We are not under that condemnation; we are now in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There can be absolutely no condemnation because we are dead to that condemnation and alive in Christ. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus." There is no condemnation. Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." How is Christ the end of the law for righteousness? I do not keep God's law to make myself righteous. Christ has already kept it for me, and I am righteous in Him. I now have a perfect righteousness.

Applications: Doctrine, Assurance, and Handling Accusations

Let me make some applications and tie things together. First, understand the importance of doctrine. Many people today say that doctrine is not important, but doctrine is important. Many live by their feelings and experiences. Here is an illustration: I heard about a pastor who had resigned his church, or was going to resign.

At this particular time, we had a Bible Institute, and I had seven or eight young men studying for the ministry. I was always trying to find places for them to preach, so I stopped at a church and talked to the pastor. I knew him. I said, "Brother, I understand that you've resigned or that you're going to. I was concerned whether the church needed any pulpit supply. I've got some young men who could take care of it while they locate another pastor."

The pastor said, "Well, I was going to resign. But I feel like now that this is the place for me to be. I feel better now than I've ever felt before. I feel like we're going to have a good work here, and I feel like we're going to do great things."

I thanked him for allowing me to offer help, turned around, walked out, and got in the car. Alice asked, "What did he say?" I said, "He'll be gone in thirty days." And he was. Do you know how I knew that? "I feel. I feel. I feel. I feel."

Folks, feelings do not count. It is the Word and the will of God that count. If that man had said, "It is God's will that I stay here based upon His Word," I would have had a different attitude. People say, "Well, I feel saved today." Wonderful. What if you wake up in the morning with a stomachache, a virus, diarrhea, a headache, and a temperature of 104? Do you feel saved then? No, you don't.

"Well, I had an experience last year." You will forget that experience. In fact, the devil can give you experiences himself, and your own flesh can give you experiences. If you trust in your feelings or your experiences, you can be shaken. But if you know the truth from God's Word and say, "Here I stand, God help me, I can do no other," you cannot be moved.

That is why Paul is saying that you had better understand some doctrine: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." You had better understand the doctrine of justification. Secondly, how do you handle accusers? How do you handle your own conscience when it begins to condemn you? The only way you can answer is this: You have no standing to accuse me before God. It is God who justifies. You cannot alter, overthrow, change, or reverse His verdict. It is incontrovertible. It is God that justifies—not man, and not my conscience. It is God.

If you understand the doctrine of justification, you understand that we have been justified not from one sin, but for all sin. So many people get confused on this. They say, "Brother Weaver, I understand how God can forgive me and justify me of my past sins, but what about my present sins or even the sins I might commit in the future?"

That's a pretty good question. How many sins had you committed personally before Christ was crucified? None. You weren't even alive. You weren't even around. Christ died not just for past sins, but for future sins as well. When God justifies us, He justifies us from all sins, even those He knew that we would commit, even as Christians. So, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? No one. Why? It is God who justifies.

This does not give us a right to run out in sin. God's people are not going to do that. I've heard people say, "Well, Brother Weaver, if I believed that, I'd live any way I please." Well, that's true. If you've really been converted, you're going to live the way that pleases God, and that's going to please you. But if you want to run out and sin and disobey God and get into all kinds of wickedness, you've never been converted to begin with. Something's wrong with you.

But the truth is, we have been justified. No one can have a legal right to incriminate us before God's court according to God's law, for God Himself is the judge. Anyone who tries will find God's answer to Satan in Zechariah 3:2: “The Lord rebuke thee.” You have no standing. You have no right to sin.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day and ask Thy blessing and help. May we praise Thee for Thy so great salvation and glorify Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

CHAPTER 16

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 16

Introduction and Review of Romans 8:28-34

Romans 8:28-34 says: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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. What shall we say then to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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.”

Today we come, believe it or not, to the 16th message on this passage, dealing with at least part of verse 34. The broad subject is

Romans 8:28, but we began dealing with the objections or questions Paul raises in verses 31 through 39. Verses 28 through 30 were positive, while verses 31 through 39 were negative in the sense that Paul lays out his clear doctrinal teaching and then takes questions or objections to that teaching.

In verse 31 he asks, “What shall we say then to these things?”—the things he has just spoken of in verses 28 through 30—“if God be for us, who can be against us?” Here he refers to God’s invincibility and power. What if men united in revolt or rebellion against God? What difference does it make if the omnipotent, sovereign God of the universe be for us? What good will it do for anyone to be against us? Paul deals with the fact that God is invincible. Then, in verse 32, he deals with the fact that God’s grace is inexhaustible. Someone may ask, “God saved us and was gracious to us, but what if God ceases to be gracious to us?”

And so he says, "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's argument is that if God has done the greatest for us while we were enemies, while we were sinners, how much more is he not also freely going to do for us since we're now his children? He points out the fact that God's grace is inexhaustible. You don't need to worry about God's grace ever drying up or ceasing. God is certainly going to continue to be gracious to us, especially since we're now his children.

In verses 33 and 34, we're seeing that God's verdict is incontrovertible. No one can overthrow it, no one can change it, and no one can overturn it. He asks in verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." The word "charge" literally means an indictment or an accusation. Paul is dealing with someone bringing a charge against a child of God, coming to lay a legal charge to indict or to bring someone into account before God. If that did happen, they would have to use God's law and appear in God's courtroom with God as judge. No one has standing to sue, neither Satan nor man. That's why he says, "It is God that justifies." Who is going to overthrow God's verdict? The answer is absolutely no one.

Neither Satan nor man has a standing to sue. It's impossible for anyone to bring a lawful charge against any of God's elect. That's why he said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." Therefore we conclude with the Apostle Paul in Romans 8 and verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

The 'What If' of Christ Condemning Us

At the beginning of this discussion, I told you that verse 34 dealt with the possibility of someone condemning us, or bringing us into a state of condemnation. The two thoughts, the one in verse 33 and the one in verse 34, are intimately connected, yet they are different. If no one has the standing to sue, then it is not possible for them lawfully to bring us into condemnation or into a state of condemnation. As I was preaching last week, I saw the lights light up in Chester's eyes; when he leaned over to Susie, I knew he had come up with the next "what if" Paul was going to discuss.

But what if Christ turns against us? Christ has standing to sue. Christ is the only one who does have standing to sue. Paul answers that "what if" in verse 34: "Who is he that condemneth?" Then he makes the statement, "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."

Note the variation between verses 33 and 34. In verse 33, the question is, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Here we are dealing with the verdict, the courtroom situation, and the declaration of justification by God the Father. Then, in verse 34, he says, "Who is he that condemneth?"

These questions are intimately related, and yet they are different. Verse 34 is not necessarily dealing with the act or declaration of justification as verse 33 did; it is dealing with condemnation. What if Christ came back and said, "Well, I think I'm going to condemn this individual anyhow"? God justifies, but what if Christ says, "Well, I think I'll change and condemn this individual"? Now you have to remember—and I am going to take the time to show you—that Christ does have standing to sue.

Christ's Standing to Judge

Because all judgment has been committed to the Son. John chapter 5, verse 26, says, "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of God." The Scripture says that He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also. Verse 22 says, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."

Acts 17 records Paul preaching on Mars Hill. Bringing his sermon to a conclusion, he says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Why does God command all men everywhere to repent? "Because He," that is, God the Father, "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man," that is, by Jesus Christ, "by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he," God the Father, "hath given assurance unto all men, in that he," God the Father, "hath raised him," that is, Christ, "from the dead." So God is going to judge the world through Christ.

Second Corinthians chapter 5, verses 10 and 11, says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. Again, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that we may receive the things done in our body according to that which we have done, whether it be good or bad."

One last passage, Revelation 6, verses 15 through 17, shows that the Son has all judgment. The Word of God says, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and

As Revelation says, the rocks will cry, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the

Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Now, as you turn back to Romans chapter 8, understand that all judgment has been given to the Son. It is true that the Son has standing to sue. But what Paul is telling us in verse 34 is this: it is unthinkable to believe or even suggest that, after God the Father has justified us, God the Son would ever condemn us.

Why is it unthinkable to suggest that Christ would turn and condemn us after we have been justified? Let me give you three summary statements. If Christ condemned one whom God the Father had justified, first, that would be defiance to the Father. What did Jesus Christ say in John 8:29? "I do only always those things which please the Father." Jesus Christ said, "I and the Father are one." Jesus Christ is not going to contradict the Father, for He is God. They are one. Whatever God the Father issues as a verdict is also the verdict of God the Son and of God the Spirit. Thus, for God the Son to condemn someone whom God the Father justified would be defiance to the Father.

Why Christ Will Not Condemn Us

Secondly, it would be a defeat of the Holy Spirit to condemn one who has been regenerated and converted. Why should the Holy Spirit regenerate, convict, or convert someone if ultimately that person would end up condemned and overthrown? Thirdly, it would be a destruction of the Son's own work.

What does the Bible say in Isaiah 53:11? "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." For Christ to condemn one whom the Father had justified, one of His own, would be to destroy His own work. In verse 34, Paul gives us a perfect summary of the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. He asks, "Who is he that condemneth?" Then he answers: "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."

The Apostle Paul is here dealing with the mediatorial work of Christ. Christ died, Christ was buried, Christ arose, Christ ascended into the heavens, and Christ is now seated at the right hand of God,

making intercession for us. How can these statements of truth assure us that we will never ever be condemned, not even by Christ Himself?

First of all, remember that all of these statements refer to our Lord's mediatorial work. Each of these facts, truths, and propositions is true of Christ because they were done for us. It is for us that Christ died. It is for us that Christ arose from the dead. It is for us that He is seated at the right hand of God, and it is for us that He is interceding.

None of these things would ever have been true of Christ had He not come as our mediator, our substitute, our representative, and our federal head. Christ would never have had to die had He not become the God-man, the mediator.

You must remember that God the Father did not send Christ to condemn us. He sent Christ to save us. Look in your Bibles at Romans 8, but turn back to John 3.

John 3:17-18 says, "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." And verse 18 says, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Why is it that God did not have to send His Son to condemn the world? The answer is very simple: because the world was already condemned. It is true that after Christ came, there was added a new dimension to that condemnation: He is in the world and the world believed not upon him. Now there is an additional condemnation, but God did not send Christ for the express purpose of condemning the world. He sent Christ for the express purpose of saving His people, of saving the world, so to speak. And there is a new world order in Christ, as we've already taught. Very clearly, then, the world was already condemned, but God sent Christ to save us. The purpose of Christ's mediatorial work, then, is not to condemn, but to save.

Paul asks, "Who is he that condemneth?" Then he answers, "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." You could put the first part into the form of a question: "Who is he that

condemneth? Shall Christ, who died?" You've got the same import and the same impact. It is the same as saying, "It is Christ that died."

Christ Died for Us

Paul is demonstrating that it is unthinkable that Christ would ever condemn us or be the cause of our condemnation, because He is the one who died for us. How then is it unthinkable? Because in dying for us, He received our condemnation, that condemnation that was due our sins. That is why He died in the first place. Jesus Christ was and is the sinless Son of God. He did not deserve to die. He did not need to die. There was nothing that Jesus Christ ever did that was wrong or sinful or wicked in and of itself.

Now, it is true that men tried to condemn Christ, and Satan tried to condemn Christ, but they could not. For instance, at our Lord's trial, witnesses were paid to perjure themselves. Mark 14:56 says, "For many bear false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together." Verse 59 adds, "But neither so did their witness agree together." Men were paid to bear false witness against Christ. They tried to indict Him. They tried to accuse Him. They tried to find some wrong and wickedness in Him, but they found none. And by the way, if the scribes and Pharisees could have found something against Christ, I can assure you they would have, for they hated and despised Him.

In John 14:30, the Bible says this. Jesus says, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." What is He saying? The world cannot point to one thing that He has done that is wrong. Neither can Satan. There is nothing in Him that Satan can lay hold on to condemn, indict, or accuse Him. The Lord Jesus, then, is the sinless, innocent, perfect Son of God. What does that mean? It means this: God says in Ezekiel 18, "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die."

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." Now, since Jesus Christ was sinless, since Jesus Christ was perfect, Jesus Christ did not need to die. Jesus Christ did not deserve to die. You may ask, "Well, Brother Weaver, why did He die then? Was it because, as some liberals say, Christ really did not intend to die, but things

simply got out of hand and it was beyond His control?" That is really hilarious, but I have read liberal theologians who said that.

But look in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 26. I think you will find the answer to the claim that Christ's death got out of hand and went beyond His control. When they came to take Christ, Peter pulled out his sword and cut off Malchus's ear. Matthew 26:51 says, "And behold, one of them who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, 'Put up again thy sword into his place. For all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Peter, Christ said, if I needed protection, I would not need you to do this. My Father would give Me more than twelve legions of angels. What was a legion? Twelve thousand men? Six thousand men. Six thousand men. Thus, He was saying that He could have more than 72,000 angels at His disposal. One angel, in one night and with one stroke of the sword, killed 185,000 Assyrians. I do not think 72,000 angels would have had much trouble with this world if Christ had wanted to defend Himself.

The reason He died was not that things got out of hand or that He was incapable of defending Himself. Why then did He die? Look at verse 54: "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Christ was sent by the Father. He was ordained to be the mediator, the substitute, and our satisfaction. He was ordained to die in our place. He was the Lamb of God. God ordained that Christ would take our guilt and condemnation. He cannot be the source of our condemnation, because His very death proves that He took our condemnation upon Him.

What is that in logic? Reductio ad absurdum. It is an absurd logic that says Christ can condemn us, although He is the one who took our very condemnation upon Himself.

Do you remember what Jesus Christ prayed in John 17, verse 4? He said, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to

do." In John 19, verse 30, His last words upon the cross were, "It is finished." What was He talking about when He said that?

Christ's Active and Passive Obedience

Christ came to do two things. He had an active and a passive work to do. The active work was that He came, as Isaiah 42 says in verse 21, to make God's law honorable in all things. As Galatians 4 says, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Jesus Christ, being made under the law, worked out a perfect righteousness and a perfect obedience to the law of God. That was His active work.

His passive work was when He was placed upon the cross as our substitute. The wrath, anger, and justice of God came upon Him, and He received in our place a just and righteous condemnation.

Jesus Christ literally paid in full. He received in full. He bore the guilt and condemnation for His people, receiving the fullness of God's wrath and the fullness of our condemnation. Since He received the fullness of our condemnation, there can be nothing left. It is all paid for; it is all done. God's justice is totally and completely satisfied.

Now consider a passage most of you can quote, though you have probably never thought about it in this light. In 1 John, chapter 1, verse 8, he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." If you and I say that we have not sinned, we are liars. Even after we have been converted, we have sinned. I think I told you this years ago, but I have never forgotten it. This probably happened to me twenty or twenty-five years ago.

God's Justice Demands Our Pardon

I walked into a cleaners carrying some suits to be cleaned. I knew the man who owned the cleaners claimed to be a Christian, though I did not know until after he spoke to me that he was a Nazarene and believed in sinless perfection. I said, “Isn't it wonderful that Jesus Christ cleanses us from our sins?” He remarked, “I don't know, I hadn't sinned in 15 years.”

After my mouth got back closed, I looked at him and said, "Sir, you just did. You lied. For Scripture says, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'" But look at the next verse: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now, I want to call your attention to this fact: He is faithful and just. To do what? Forgive us our sins.

Everyone in this room has sinned. You not only sinned before God saved you; you have sinned since God saved you. Some of you sinned this morning on the way to church. Some of you sinned since you have been here.

When we sin, we sense guilt and condemnation. It does not matter whether you are fussing at your wife, screaming at your husband, upset because of your children, or whatever it may be. You take the attitude, "Well, Lord, the wages of sin is death, and I deserve to die. I sinned against You." Let me tell you something, folks: that is true in and of yourselves. You do deserve to die because you are sinners. If that is all you are looking at—what you are in and of yourself—you have real problems.

But we are not what we are in and of ourselves. As Christians, we are what we are in and of Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us." In other words, once we have been saved and justified, the very justice of God is on our side, and God must faithfully discharge us and pardon us for our sins. Why? Because our sins have already been paid for in and by and through Jesus Christ. Thus, when we sin as Christians—and there certainly is no license to sin—the justice of God demands that God not condemn us, but pardon us, because of what Jesus Christ has done.

Suppose Chester owed me $200. He does not, but suppose he did. He came and said, "Brother Weaver, here's that money I owe you," and I cheerfully took it. Two days later, he came again and said, "Brother Weaver, I've been forgetting to give you this money I've got. Here's the $200 I owe you." He paid me again. If I took that second $200, put it in my pocket, and walked away, would that be just? No. Would it be right? No.

I would actually be a thief, violating God's law. You and I understand that no one has the right to demand payment twice. If God the Father has forgiven us in Christ because of what Christ did, if Christ has paid the full price, and then God turned around and demanded that we pay for our sins, what would that be? That would be double payment. Is that just? No—not with man, nor with God. God has already been paid.

God's character and attributes become a guarantee of our security in Christ. He is faithful and just. Christ, who bore our condemnation, will never condemn us; and God the Father, who has accepted the payment of Jesus Christ, will never condemn us. That would be unjust on His part, and Scripture says that God is faithful and just.

What Paul is arguing in Romans 8:34 is this: Jesus Christ, who received our condemnation and bore it on our behalf, will never, ever condemn us. He who has paid the price will never turn around and demand that we pay it again. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." Note the two words, "yea rather": "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

Christ is Risen Again

Why does he say, "yea rather"? Why did Paul not end his argument with the fact that Christ died for us? I think 1 Corinthians chapter 15 gives us the answer. The first point—that Christ died for us—would have been useless unless the second point was true.

Beginning with verse 12, Paul says, "Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." If there is no such thing as a bodily resurrection, then Christ has not been raised from the dead. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also in vain. Yea, we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised, and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins. Then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

What is Paul saying? There has to be a bodily resurrection from the dead. If there is not a bodily resurrection, if God did not raise Christ from the dead, then we are still in our sins. We are lost; we are still condemned.

The very first point—that Christ died for us—would be useless unless he could say with confidence, “yea rather, that he is risen again.” He is no longer dead. He is now alive.

What is the significance of that? Look back in your Bible to Romans chapter 4 and verse 25. I have quoted this verse several times, but I want you to look at it in this light. We will read verse 24 so that you can see that we are referring to Christ.

"But for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." So God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." The Bible says that Christ was not only delivered for our offenses, but he was raised again for our justification. In other words, the fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ is absolutely essential for our assurance. In Romans 4:24, it is God who raised our Lord from the dead. He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again, that is, by God the Father, for our justification.

The Resurrection as God's Receipt

Romans 8:34 says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again." Paul is emphasizing the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead. Acts 13:30 says, "But God raised him from the dead." Note that God the Father raised him from the dead. There are a multitude of passages, but these will be sufficient.

Ephesians 1:19-20 speaks in Paul's prayer of "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," that is, God the Father's mighty power, "which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places."

Why is Scripture emphasizing that God raised Christ from the dead? Romans 4:25 says that Christ was delivered for our offenses

and raised for our justification. It is not the resurrection of Christ that justifies us. Literally, verse 25 can be understood this way: He was delivered for our offenses and was raised because of our justification. What is Paul saying? Paul is saying that the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof of our justification. It is the assurance of our justification. He was delivered for our sins.

Because we had sinned, violated God's law, and were guilty, the just and righteous condemnation of God was upon us. He was delivered for our sins. Remember, that is the passive part of our Lord's work. What was the active part? He worked out a perfect obedience and a perfect righteousness to that law. He was delivered for our offenses; God placed our condemnation upon Him. But in justification, we are also imputed, or given, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. God not only delivered Christ for our offenses, but raised Him because of our justification.

In our salvation, God not only paid for our sins through Jesus Christ, who bore our condemnation and guilt; He also imputed to us Christ's perfect righteousness. He justified us. He pronounced us innocent, righteous, and perfect in light of our standing with His law. What does that mean? The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's receipt to the world: "Paid in full. I'm perfectly satisfied. I'm perfectly placated. I am perfectly happy and appeased with the work of my Son. I accept it totally and fully. The death and the work of Christ pleases me, and as a consequence, I'm going to demonstrate my pleasure by raising him bodily from the dead."

The bodily resurrection of Christ is the proof of our justification. We now have a perfect righteousness in Christ and a fully paid receipt that the guilt and condemnation of our sins have been justly and righteously dealt with.

Our Union with Christ in His Resurrection

Look back in your Bibles to Romans 6, and begin reading with verse 8: "Now, if we be dead with Christ," that is, if we died in Him, and we did, "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Now watch, knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him." We are in Christ, which means we cannot die and cannot come into

condemnation. Death has no more dominion over Him. Verse 10: "For in that he died, he died unto sin once. Watch, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

You could put a little word there beside which would explain it, I suppose: “he liveth unto God forever,” or “eternally.” Likewise, we who died in Christ were raised from the dead in Christ, and we forever live with God eternally.

Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2. Here it is, Ephesians chapter 2, beginning there with verse 5. Ephesians 2, verse 5. In fact, let’s read verse 4: “But God, who is rich in His mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins,” watch, “hath quickened us together with Christ.” When Christ was raised, we were raised. “By grace you’re saved and have raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Watch, here’s the forever, here’s the eternality: “that in the ages to come, that in the eons to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

So what is he saying? He is saying that when someone comes along and says, “Ah, but what if Christ, who does have standing to sue, changes his mind?” That is absurd, unthinkable, and impossible. It will never happen. We are in Christ, and Christ died unto sin once; and in that He died once, He liveth unto God forever. We are in Him.

In 1 Peter 1 and verse 3, Peter says it just a little differently. He says that God hath begotten us again unto a lively, or living, hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He lives, we live as well. So when someone comes up and says, “But what if?” Paul says, “Hang on, I’m handling that objection.”

Conclusion and Illustration

No one can ever bring us into a state of condemnation. Let me put it like this. I’ve used this illustration, but it’s still apropos at this point. I was coming down through Atlanta late one night, trying to stay awake. I was trying to find anything on the radio that would keep me awake, one or two o’clock in the morning. There was an old black

preacher on the radio, and he was preaching from John chapter 10. I listened for a few minutes, and he said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

“Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. I and the Father are one.” I never have forgotten what that old black preacher said: “Children, if you've been saved by the grace of God, you are in the hand of God the Son, and God the Son is in the hand of God the Father. Nobody can pluck you out of his hand. Now, listen: God the Father, He won't pluck you out of his hand. God the Son, He won't pluck you out of His hand. God the Spirit, He won't pluck you out of His hand. And come to think of it, them's only three that can do any plucking anyhow.”

He may not have understood everything, but He understood that one point: it is God who will never condemn us, because our Lord is the one who received the condemnation for us. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof that we have been justified, and everything is perfectly settled and accounted for with God for us through Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, we ask for your help today and for your blessing. Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith, and Lord, may we give Thee praise and honor and glory for Thy great and wondrous and marvelous work. We thank Thee, not only, Father, for receiving our condemnation in Christ Jesus, but for imputing to us the perfect righteousness in Him and raising Him from the dead, that we may know we've been justified by the grace of God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 17

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 17

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” Paul continues: “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. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?”

He then asks, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? 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.”

Review of Previous Objections (vv. 31-33)

In verse 31, Paul answers the objection to his teaching in verses 28 through 30: What if something happens? God's person is invincible. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” No amount of enemies can ever do anything against us because of the invincibility of God. In verse 32, the second objection is answered by the truth that God's grace is inexhaustible: “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?” If God has done the greatest for us when we were His enemies, He certainly will continue to do the lesser things for us now that we are His children.

In verse 33, God's verdict is incontrovertible: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.” Verse 34 declares that God's pardon is incontestable: “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.” Thus, in verses 33 and 34, Paul answers two objections: What if someone tries to bring an indictment against us? What if someone tries to accuse us?

Paul demonstrates that it is impossible for anyone to bring an accusation against God's people because they have no standing to sue. And if they did, it would have to be according to God's law. Then God Himself is the judge, and no one can appeal from the verdict of God. No one can overthrow it. God's verdict, then, is incontrovertible. It cannot be changed or altered.

Introduction to Verse 34: God's Pardon is Incontestable

The next objection came in verse 34: What if, somehow, we were still brought back into a state of condemnation? Christ Himself does indeed have standing to sue, so what if Christ changed His mind? The Apostle Paul says that is impossible as well: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

The very death of Christ proves that He took our condemnation upon Himself. Christ did not need to die; He did not deserve to die. Everything that happened to Christ happened for us, on our behalf,

as our substitute. This passage deals with the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. The fact that Christ died demonstrates that He took our condemnation upon Himself. He who took our condemnation upon Himself can never then be the source of condemnation for us. Paul adds, "yea rather, that is risen again."

That is an added emphasis, because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is positive proof that God was satisfied, placated, and appeased. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's receipt to His people marked, "Paid in full." Had God not been pleased and satisfied, Christ would never have risen from the dead. Very clearly, He was. We can never come into condemnation because Christ took our condemnation, and His resurrection proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was satisfied with His sacrifice.

Paul continues his argument for the final perseverance of the saints in verse 34, demonstrating once again that everything that happened to Christ happened for us. Christ is our substitute and our mediator. In the middle of verse 34, Paul leaves the death and resurrection of Christ and deals with the heavenly session: Christ's ascension, His seating at the right hand of God, and His making intercession for us.

The Heavenly Session of Christ Defined

This is known as His heavenly session. Once again, this indeed is for us and on our behalf, and it assures our ultimate perseverance. In this heavenly session, Christ is elevated, the Bible says, far above, or even higher than, the heavens. It is part of the exaltation of Christ. Hebrews 7:26 says, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." So Christ is made higher than the heavens in His exaltation.

The exaltation of Christ was the answer to His prayer in John 17:5, when He prayed, "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. Now glorify Thou Me with Thyself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." After He died and was raised from the dead, forty days later He ascended into the heavens, and He sat at the right hand of God to make intercession for us.

As we begin to think about this, understand that there are at least four descriptions of this heavenly session given to us in the Bible. For instance, in Romans 8:34, Christ is represented as being at the Father's right hand: "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." Romans 8:34 tells us that Christ is simply at the right hand of God. If we read Acts 7:56, Scripture represents Christ as standing at the right hand of God. Thus the Bible gives us these descriptions of Christ's heavenly session: He is higher than the heavens, He is seated at the right hand of God, and He is also represented as standing there.

When Stephen was stoned, he said he saw heavens opened and the Son of Man standing by the right hand of God. When you read such passages, and we will read them later, as Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3, the Bible tells us that Christ is seated at the right hand of God. There is a reason Scripture says that Christ is seated. Yet Scripture represents Him as being at the right hand of God, as standing at the right hand of God, and as being seated at the right hand of God. I believe there is a reason why Stephen saw Christ standing. I believe Christ arose to receive Stephen, the first martyr, into His bosom. It is just that simple. Christ is also pictured walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 13.

Every one of these pictures describes the exaltation of Jesus Christ. You can ask yourself a question as you look at Romans 8:34: Why in the world does the Apostle Paul introduce the heavenly session of Christ at this point? He asks, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again."

You might stop there and say, Well, that is sufficient. But let me tell you why I believe the Apostle Paul introduces the heavenly session of Christ at this point. It is a little word that we use frequently: overkill. What the Apostle Paul is doing is not merely arguing, debating, or reasoning; he is demolishing the objections of the objectors. Literally, he is blowing them out of the water. I have been involved in several court cases, and one attorney told me, "Brother Weaver, you want to win the case. You don't want to just kill everybody in it." I said, "You don't understand. I want to make

sure I win this case because I'm going to use everything that I can use lawfully to demolish and destroy the opposition." That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is doing. He is literally demolishing the objectors.

To understand Paul's argument in Romans 8:34, you have to have a knowledge of the Old Testament, especially the Old Testament priesthood as it related to the tabernacle and the temple.

Old Testament Priesthood as a Type of Christ

The high priest was probably the most important person in the Old Testament. Scripture emphasizes that he had one main duty: once a year, he went into the holiest of all to offer the sacrifice, or the blood of atonement, and place it upon the altar. That was his main function. He did other things, but he made this atonement once a year.

Everything the Old Testament high priest did was figurative of Jesus Christ and the work that He does. Hebrews 9:7 says, “But into the second, that is into the holiest of all, went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors or the sins of the people.”

“The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” Verse 9 says, “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience, which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood.”

“He entered in at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Notice again the statement in verse 9: “Which was a figure for the time then present.” What that high priest did in the Old Testament prefigured the work of Jesus Christ. The word here is parable, from which we get our English word parable. It

literally means a similitude, a comparison. What happened in the Old Testament can be compared with what Christ did. The reason the word is parable here is that it is a comparison, a similitude.

It is not exactly the same. Because the work of Christ, although it agrees and is similar to what the Old Testament priest did, there are also differences as well. And I'm going to point some of those out in just a moment. But the Holy Spirit is telling us that when that Old Testament high priest offered his sacrifice once in a year, it was not a permanent sacrifice. It had to be repeated year by year.

And, of course, he says in verse 9 there that this service could not make the comers or those people worshiping there perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Now, I want you to remember that it was the high priest that bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon his breastplate. If you look in your Bibles, hold Hebrews chapter 9. But look in your Bibles to the book of Exodus, chapter 28, and let's read verses 29 and 30.

There are other passages, but this will be sufficient. Exodus, chapter 28, and look if you would please, beginning there with verse 29. Exodus 28, verse 29. "And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof, and to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loose from the ephod."

"And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth into the holy place for memorial before the Lord continually." Aaron was representing the people. He was literally their representative when he went in once a year to offer this sacrifice.

How did those people know that the sacrifice was accepted? How did they know that God was pleased and placated for another year? The high priest had on a priestly garment prescribed by God. On the bottom were bells and pomegranates. When he moved, the bells could be heard. If those bells stopped ringing, he was dead; God had killed him. Exodus 28, beginning with verse 34, says, "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate upon the hem of the robe round about, and it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and

his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not."

As long as those bells were ringing, they knew that he was performing the function of his office and that the sacrifice had been accepted. They knew their sins had been covered and that God was pleased to bless them for another year.

This was the chief function of the high priest in the Old Testament. Out of all the furniture in the Holy of Holies, one piece was conspicuously absent. There was the ark, and the cherubim on top of the ark, but there was no chair. There was no place for the high priest to sit down in the Holy of Holies, because his work was never finished. He had to do this year by year.

But what does the Scripture say about Christ? Christ, when He offered Himself once and for all, sat down. Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." It was therefore necessary "that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Hebrews 9 says, “For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the truth, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others. For then must He have often suffered since the foundation of the world. But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Now go back to verse 23: “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these,” that is, the blood of bulls and goats. The tabernacle and the temple were patterns; they were not the reality. We tend to think that if we had been alive in Old Testament days, seeing the sacrifice, touching the blood, smelling the sacrifice burning, seeing the priest, and hearing

the bells, we would have been seeing reality. No. That was only the type, an emblem, a pattern.

Verse 24 says, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Christ entered into the real Holy of Holies, heaven itself, the presence of God. All those other things were mere types, shadows, emblems, and figures. They were not the reality.

Hebrews 10 continues the same argument: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices,” that is, the Old Testament sacrifices, “there is a remembrance again made of sins every year,” every time the high priest went in.

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins, wherefore when He cometh," that is, Christ, "when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." What is He saying? He is saying that all of those Old Testament sacrifices could never, ever really cover the sin. They could not purge the sins. They were simply types and symbols.

Hebrews 9:24 says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands," that is, the tabernacle and the temple, "which are the figures of the truth, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us." Why did Christ enter into heaven itself for us? Because He was fulfilling that Old Testament type, that Old Testament figure in which the high priest took the blood and went to the Holy of Holies once a year. After Christ had shed His blood and given Himself as the sacrifice, He entered into the real Holy of Holies, into the presence of God Himself.

Hebrews 1:3 says, "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of

His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Scripture says that Christ sat down.

Hebrews 10:11-14 gives the comparison: "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. Why is it that Scripture emphasizes that Christ sat down on the right hand of God?

Christ's Seating Demonstrates His Deity and Finished Work

Sitting at the right hand of God most clearly and definitely teaches us that Christ is God Himself. God the Father calls God the Son the man that is My fellow or the man that is My equal.

John 5:23 says, "That all men should honor the Son even as," or equal to, "that all men should honor the Son equally as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him."

Very clearly, then, if Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God, if Jesus Christ is the man that is His fellow, if Jesus Christ is His equal, it means, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. Now, let me make this exceedingly clear. You may not be able to quote Isaiah 42 and verse 8, but I'll quote it for you. Do you remember what God said? God said, "I am God, and beside Me there is none other, and My glory will I not share with another, nor give My honor to it." Now, Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God. He must be God, because God is not going to share His glory and His honor with anyone else. So when the Father said, "Sit Thou by My right hand," it was a clear indication and a definite teaching that Jesus Christ is God.

Secondly, I've already hinted at this, but I'm going to show it to you in Scripture. When Christ sat down at the right hand of God, it

proves that His work was final, finished, and complete. Sitting down is a sign of finality. It means that nothing further needs to be done. Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Hebrews 10:10 says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," once for all. So Jesus Christ has finished the work. That's what He said in John 19:30: "It is finished." Sitting at the right hand of God not only demonstrates that Christ is God, but that His work of redemption is finished and completed.

Thirdly, being seated at the right hand of God signifies the high content and satisfaction that the Father has in the work of Jesus Christ. This is shown in Psalm 110, where the Father said, "Sit Thou by My right hand."

Psalm 110, verse 1, says, “The Lord said unto my Lord,” in other words, God the Father said unto God the Son, “Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” In other words, even the heavenly session of Christ is a demonstration of the fact that God the Father was pleased and satisfied with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Fourthly, sitting at the Father's right hand demonstrates that God has rewarded Christ for the completion of His work. Let me say that again: sitting at the Father's right hand demonstrates that God the Father has rewarded Christ for the completion of His work.

It is very important that you understand this, because it is crucial to Paul's argument. Do you remember what Christ said? In Matthew 28:18, Christ said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth.” What power was given unto Christ? This was the lordship, sovereignty, and authority that God gave to Christ by virtue of the fact of His perfect obedience to God and His law.

Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1. I want you to see that Christ's exaltation was indeed a reward by God the Father. Ephesians 1, verse 19, says, “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in

this world, but also in that which is to come." It continues, "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." What did God do? God raised Christ from the dead and rewarded Him. He gave Him all power and authority.

Now, since you're close there, turn to Philippians chapter 2, and let's begin reading there with verse 8. Here is the crucifixion of Christ; here is His humiliation: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Because of His perfect obedience, what has God done? "Wherefore..."

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christ's Exaltation as Reward and Pronouncement

God has rewarded Christ for His perfect obedience and His completed work. This is why Paul says in Romans 8:34, "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God."

What Paul is arguing is this: If God has already rewarded Christ for saving us in a perfect manner, is it conceivable that anything could go wrong in our salvation? The answer is no. It is inconceivable, because Christ has completed the work. It was a perfect work; there was not one thing wrong with it. God went ahead and rewarded Christ. Christ has been exalted to the Father's right hand and given all authority and all power. Since God has already rewarded Him, what could go wrong? Absolutely nothing.

When the Bible says that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, it is also a pronouncement as to who He is and what He is now doing.

For instance, look back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 5 and verses 30 and 31. Peter is preaching. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted

with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Why did God exalt Christ? God exalted Him to be a Prince—that is, to be a ruler, to have dominion, power, and authority—and to be a Savior. In other words, God exalted Him so that Christ could literally put into practice the salvation that He had wrought, the salvation that He had earned. Christ, then, is a Prince, a ruler, and a Savior, and it is Christ who actually gives His salvation. He gives repentance. He gives forgiveness.

Paul says it a little differently than Peter here, but it is the same truth. Romans 14:9 says, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." Christ has been made Lord. He said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given unto Me." Then He gave the Great Commission. We are to go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them all things whatsoever He has commanded us. Then He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." When Christ is seated at the right hand, it is not only a pronouncement of who He is, but what He is doing: He is putting into exercise the power and authority that has been given to Him.

All of this is in His mediatorial work. All of this is for us. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." What assurance do we have, then, that we, the people of God, will most definitely be glorified and most definitely be with Christ? Let me go back and use Paul's terminology: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" The answer is a 100% assurance. How can I say that? The answer is because, in reality, we are already with Christ. Positionally, look at it. Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2. Let us begin reading there with verse 4.

Believers' Position in Christ Guarantees No Condemnation

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)." He hath quickened us together with Christ. In other words, when God raised Christ from

the dead, He raised His people from the dead. He quickened us as well.

Go back to Ephesians 1, verse 19, and look at Paul's prayer: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power?" Paul is saying, I want you who believe to know the greatness of God's mighty power in your salvation. Now read verse 19 again: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power?" "Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." The same almighty power that raised Christ from the dead is the same almighty power that raises us from the dead, spiritually speaking.

That is what he means in Ephesians chapter 2: "And you hath He quickened together with Christ? For by grace ye are saved." Then verse 6 says, "And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

If Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and we are in Christ, where are we seated? At the right hand of God. Everything that Christ did, He did for us. He is our mediator. We are in Him. No one can remove us from our position in Christ; therefore, we can never come into condemnation. To remove one of God's people and place him back into condemnation, he would have to remove Christ and place Christ back in condemnation.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 6 that, in that He died, He died unto sin once and for all. He dieth no more. It is impossible to put Christ again into a position of condemnation, and it is impossible to put those who are in Christ there. So, if we are in Christ, the Apostle Paul is arguing, do not come saying, "What if? What if?" Our position is that He died for us, was raised from the dead for us, was exalted for us, and we are with Him in that exaltation. Now, look back in Romans 8, because in verse 34 there is one other phrase I want to deal with.

Christ's Intercession Secures Our Perseverance

If you see this in its entirety today, it ought to really give you the utmost confidence in God's so great salvation. But look in Romans

8:34: “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.” Why would Paul add that little phrase, “who also maketh intercession for us”? It is very obvious that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, that He is the high priest, and that He is certainly interceding for us. The Scripture tells us that. But why is Paul adding it here? Because Paul is dealing with another objection: “I understand that Christ died and took our condemnation. I understand that God raised Him from the dead, and that is His receipt that He was satisfied. I understand that we are seated in Christ, but what if some of us fall into some grievous sins?”

That is why Paul says, “who also maketh intercession for us.” Look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 7, beginning with verse 23: “And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” What happened to Aaron? He died. What happened to Eleazar? He died. What happened to Abiathar? He died. All of those Old Testament priests died. “But this man,” that is Christ, “because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” Based upon the fact that Jesus Christ will never, ever die, He has an immutable, unchangeable priesthood. “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

What is the argument in Hebrews chapter 7? “Wherefore He is able also to save them completely, totally, perfectly, absolutely.” How can we say that Christ can save us totally, perfectly, absolutely? Because He ever lives to make intercession for us. How many of Christ's prayers has the Father denied? None. What did Christ say? “I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me always.” This man ever liveth to make intercession for us; therefore, He is able to save us totally, perfectly, completely.

It is true that we sin. Why is it that we do not fall? Because He intercedes for us. He prays for us. His salvation is absolutely perfect.

Although Ephesians 5 speaks of husbands and wives, its main theme is Christ and the Church. Most of you can quote this passage, but consider it in this light: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might

sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." How perfectly is Christ going to save us? We will be without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish, without any such thing. Why? Seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

The very fact that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God means that Christ ever lives to secure for us the benefits of His death and the benefits of His obedience. He secures them and gives them to us. We cannot lose them because Christ never dies. He has an unchangeable priesthood. He has a perfect priesthood, and the Father always hears His prayers.

In John 5, verse 24, Jesus Christ says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." It is impossible for one of God's own to be brought again into a state of condemnation. Why? We passed from that state into a state of life, and Jesus Christ forever lives to make sure that we stay in the state of life. That is why Paul wrote in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Application: Come Boldly to the Throne of Grace

How should this message affect you? Hebrews 4:14 gives one clear answer: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Or our confession. "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Jesus Christ went through everything that you and I go through, sin excepted. He was betrayed. His family mocked Him. His brothers and sisters did not believe on Him for a long time. People hated Him, lied about Him, slandered Him, and ridiculed Him. Everything happened to Him that happens to us. He was hungry. He was thirsty. He did without.

He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He went through everything we go through, except sin. He is no stranger to suffering, rejection, ridicule, or persecution. He knows our needs. Therefore, He says, "Let us therefore come"—how? Meekly? Weakly? Timidly? No. "Let us therefore come boldly."

Lord, I need help with my children. I need help with my wife, my husband, our finances, and my health. Lord, help me. I need Thee. I have been told by You to come boldly because You are my high priest. You make the intercession. You pray for me.

The argument that the Apostle Paul is giving in Romans 8:34 is this: While Christ is at the right hand of God, exercising His ministry, we can never fail or fall, because His salvation is absolutely perfect. He secured it, and He is there exercising the benefits of that so great salvation. We must learn to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. We must learn to run to Jesus Christ with every problem and every heartache.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You to bless us, help us, and teach us. We are thankful that Thou art indeed the perfect high priest and that You ever livest to make intercession for us. May we learn to come to Christ boldly, that we may find grace to help in a time of need. We are needy people. We need Thee to touch our children and our lives, and to give us wisdom, insight, and direction. Lord, help us and do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Romans 8:28-39 Series

Part 18

SCRIPTURE READING - Romans 8:28-39 (KJV)

Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. 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. 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. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?"

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

sword? As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.'"

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Introduction: Positive and Negative Sections of Romans 8

After dealing with Romans 8:28-30, I told you that section was where Paul was teaching positive doctrine. When he began verses 31-39, he was dealing with the objections and challenges to the truth taught in Romans 8:28-30. Thus, verses 28-30 are positive, while verses 31-39 are negative. In verse 31, there is an attack on God's person, and Paul's answer is that God's person is invincible. In verse 32, there is an attack upon God's grace, and the answer is that God's grace is inexhaustible. In verse 33, there is an attack upon God's verdict, and the answer is that God's verdict is incontrovertible. In verse 34, there is an attack upon God's pardon, and the answer is that God's pardon is incontestable. Now we come to verses 35 through 39.

God's Bond Is Inseparable

God's bond is inseparable. The argument that the Apostle Paul gives us in verses 35–39 is the climax of the entire argument in Romans chapter 8. The passage may be broken down as follows: verses 35–37 are the last challenge that the apostle undertakes to the final perseverance of the saints. Then, in verses 38–39, he not only finishes the particular argument, but at the same time summarizes the entirety of the argument that began back in verse 31.

In verse 31, God's person is invincible. In verse 32, God's grace is inexhaustible. In verse 33, God's verdict is incontrovertible. In verse 34, God's pardon is incontestable. In each of these, there was a challenge to the perseverance of the saints. When we come to verse 35, the final objection and challenge, we notice something different.

The Final Challenge: Our Side and External Trials

All of these previous challenges referred to God: God's person, God's power, God's verdict, and God's attitude. But when the Apostle Paul begins in verses 35 and 36, he takes the challenge from a different perspective. This challenge arises from our side. What if we should fail? What if we should falter? What would make us fail or falter? Look at verse 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then, "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" These are some of the things we might consider capable of making us fall and fail.

In verse 36, he quotes Psalm 44:22: "As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.'" Paul emphasizes that the trials, persecution, distress, famine, and slaughter that come to us in verse 35 arise from the fact that we are Christians. That is why he says, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." All these things come upon us simply by virtue of the fact that we are Christians.

Our Lord has told us in the New Testament, "If they have hated me, they're going to hate you. If they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you. The servant is not greater than the master." Very clearly, we are going to be persecuted simply because we are Christians. The Apostle Paul said it more plainly: "This know that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"—not hope so, not maybe so, not a possibility. If you live godly, you shall suffer persecution.

Historical Persecution and the Meaning of Tribulation

All you have to do is stop and think back to the early Christians, to the first century. Many Christians were tortured and slain simply by virtue of the fact that they were Christians.

Now let me explain that. It was not necessarily an all-out attack upon Christians just because they were Christians. There were political implications. In Rome, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. If you wanted to worship Aphrodite, have at it. If you wanted to worship Diana, go for it. They could care less. If you

wanted to worship Jesus Christ, it did not bother the Roman emperors, as long as once a year you swore by the genius of Caesar. Once a year, at minimum, you said, "Caesar is Lord." In other words, Caesar gives me my liberty and privileges and enables me to believe what I want to believe.

The early Christians refused to say that Caesar is Lord. They said, "How can we say that? Caesar is not Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord." So Christians were put to death, not simply for being Christians, but because they refused to swear by the genius of Caesar. They refused to say that Caesar is Lord and were put to death as traitors to the state, considered treasonous individuals.

You could usually say, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Every one of you has heard of Nero. Nero was a wicked, ungodly emperor. It is a fact of history that when Nero wanted to go out at night and view his gardens, he had Christians tied to stakes, poured over them a form of petroleum, and lit them alive. As their bodies burned and gave off light, he walked around and smelled the roses, so to speak. Here is a certain truth: "For thy sake we're killed all the day long." They were killed because they were Christians and refused to say that Caesar is Lord.

Now, look, if you would please, at verse 35. The question is, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?” Let me tell you about the term “tribulation.” It comes from the Latin word “tribulum,” from which we get our English word “tribulation.” The Greek word is “thlipsis,” but our English word comes from the Latin “tribulum.”

The tribulum was a means whereby the Romans threshed their grain. It was a large board or table with pieces of flint and iron, and anything that was tough, sticking up through it. The Romans would take their wheat and beat it over this tribulum—thus, tribulation. As they beat it down, the word “tribulation” came to mean any type of hardship that beat you down, pressed you down, or even brought you to death.

In fact, if you look in verse 36, when he quotes from Psalm 44, he says, “As it is written, ‘For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’” So there is an apt picture of

death. This tribulation was sometimes even unto death, as sheep being led to the slaughter.

The Nature of Distress and the Believer's Response

He mentions in verse 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress?” All of us know what tribulation is. I have just explained it: being literally beaten down and distressed. But do you realize distress can be more than physical? Distress can be mental and emotional as well. I do not know if you have ever studied the history of prisoners of war. Some of you may have.

We had a good friend who was in the Bataan Death March. One day he was at our house, and my wife had fixed rice as part of the meal. All of a sudden it dawned on me—we were not related, but we always called him Uncle Bob. I said, “Oh, Uncle Bob, I am sorry. I never thought about it, but my wife has rice on the table.” He said, “That’s OK, that’s OK. I love rice. That’s what kept me alive for three years.” You tend to think that you would get tired of something like that. But although Uncle Bob lived physically, he never would discuss all the horrors and things he went through because of the stress it brought back. I thought about this as I was preparing this message. I read years ago that one thing the communists did to break down men was to make them perform meaningless labor.

In other words, here is a rock. They would make you work all day putting it on this side of the road. The next day, you would have to work all day putting it back on the other side, continually, day after day, week after week, month after month, until you were literally broken down and wondered what the point of even living was. But it dawned on me: if you and I would learn to follow biblical truth, we could never be broken down like that. Why?

Because Scripture says, "Whatever we do in word or deed, or whether we eat or drink, do what? Do all for the glory of God." If I move that rock to this side of the road one day, why am I doing it? For the glory of God. If I move it to the other side the next day, why am I doing it? For the glory of God.

There is a meaning, then, even to what the world would call meaningless labor. So the apostle is saying that tribulation is not going to separate us from the love of Christ, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor sword.

The Question: Can Our Flesh Withstand?

Now, the question is this: When you start looking at all these things, how in the world can we stand up to them? How is it possible that you and I could live under this strain? You have to know, as well as I do, that flesh is frail and weak. If you and I were put under the pressures of first-century Christians—now, I realize that many of us are being attacked, and we may be losing money, losing our livelihood, or facing prison. That is bad. I am not trying to minimize it.

But may I point out the fact that, at least right now, we are not wandering in deserts and in dens and in caves of the earth, wearing sheepskin and goatskin, being destitute and tormented like they were in New Testament times. Hebrews 11 speaks very eloquently of what some of these individuals went through. At least we still have the clothes on our backs, we can still eat, and we still have comfortable homes.

We do not go through what they went through. But how, in the world, can we stand up to all this? That is a good question and a good challenge: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And then he says, "Shall any of these things that I've just mentioned separate us?" Is it possible that we could fail because of the weakness of our flesh?

They cause the pressure and persecution. Years ago, I had the opportunity to go to England to study for two weeks. One place I visited was near Oxford University, where Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake. Latimer was a tremendous preacher. He originally sought to save his life by recanting—that is, by denying what he had preached and taught concerning Jesus Christ. His life was spared because he recanted. Yet afterward he was so remorseful and repentant that he marched back and said, “I recant my recantation. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I believe everything that I preached was true and accurate. I am not going to take it back or

deny it." The court then sentenced him to be burned at the stake. When he heard the sentence, Latimer said, "Well, let this hand be burned first, which signed the recantation."

Latimer and Ridley were burned to death because they refused to recant. Stop and think about that. That is pretty tough. What will enable us to stand through all of these things? The answer is that God's bond is inseparable.

Identifying the 'Us' and the Love of Christ

Let us go back to verse 35 for a moment. The question is, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" In the context, we have to ask who the "us" is. Who shall separate us? If we go back to verse 33, he answers it: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who is the "us"? It is God's elect.

If we go back to verse 32, we will answer it further: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Who is the "us"? It is God's elect. If we look back at verse 31, it says, "What shall we say then to these things?"

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" So who is the "us"? It is the ones that God is for. If we go back to verse 30, we find that the "us," the ones that God is for, are the ones He has predestinated, the ones He has called, the ones He has justified, and the ones He has glorified. So the question is, Who shall be able to separate us? If we go back to verse 29, we see that it is the ones He foreknew. If we go back to verse 28, we find that it is the ones who have been called according to His purpose.

So He gives us two answers. First of all, He asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" By the way, look back at verse 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." Notice that "glorified" is past tense.

Does anybody in this room have a new body as of yet? No. But you have been glorified. Why? Because if you are one of those mentioned in Romans 8:28 through verse 35, there is an absolute certainty that you will be glorified. It is so certain that God has already spoken of it in the past tense. It has already, basically, happened. It is that sure.

Secondly, let me point out what He asked in verse 35: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” It is important that you understand this answer. The love of Christ does not refer to the love that we have for Christ, but rather to the love that He has for us. I am going to prove that to you in just a moment. So the question is, “Who shall separate us,” or “What shall separate us from the love that Christ has for us?” In verse 35, Paul is not asking, “Can our love stand up to these things?” He is asking, “Can the love of Christ stand up to these things?” That is the key issue. That which is important is Christ’s love to me. Yes, I want to love Christ.

But may I remind you what he said in Psalm 103? “He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust.” What does that mean? It means He knows our limitations. He knows what we can do and what we cannot do. He knows everything about us. Someone may ask, “Brother Weaver, how in the world do you know that in verse 35 he is talking about Christ’s love to us and not our love to Him?” Look down in verse 37.

He says, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” The reference, then, is to Him that loves us, not to us that love Him.

The Past Tense of Christ's Love and Its Significance

Now, after we read in verse 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” and know that it is the love that Christ has for us—for verse 37 says, “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”—let me ask another question: Why does verse 37 say that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us? That is past tense. Does not Christ continue to love us? Does He not love us now? Yes, He does. Why, then, did the Apostle Paul put this in the past tense?

Let me tell you why. He is referring to the great act of His love wherein He gave Himself. Look in your Bibles to Romans 5, beginning with verse 6: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”—a once-for-all act, as we have seen last week. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God

commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." So when Paul says, "through Him that loved us," he is talking about this great act that Christ did in giving Himself.

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." He continues, "Even as the Lord loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it."

So when Paul says in Romans 8:37 that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, he is talking about the love that brought Christ to earth, the love that made Christ become incarnate, and the love that Christ gave in laying down His life for us.

Now he is asking, "Who shall separate us from this love?" The love is His love. What are "these things"? In the immediate context, it refers back to verse 35 and what follows: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Are these things going to separate us? He says no. In all of these things, we are more than conquerors. Is death, is life, are angels, principalities, powers, things present, or things to come? Are any of these things going to separate us? No. In all of these things, we are more than conquerors.

More Than Conquerors Through Christ's Love and Sovereignty

He is saying it is not just that we win, nor merely that we have the victory or are conquerors; he says we are more than conquerors. What does that mean? In all of these things, we not only face them and defeat them, we demolish them. How are we more than

conquerors? The answer is twofold. First, we are more than conquerors by the love of Christ, because nothing shall ever separate us from the love of Christ. Secondly, we are more than conquerors through Him who is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

That is what we have been preaching about for the last seventeen weeks. What are we talking about in verse 28? "And we know that all things work together for good to them that are called according to His purpose." Why? Because He is sovereign, He is powerful, and He is able to take all of these things—tribulation, distress, persecution, nakedness, peril, and sword—and make them work for our good.

In one sense of the word, the world is mighty stupid. By "world," I mean the ungodly who are in the world, especially the ungodly leaders. In fact, God calls them fools. If you study history, biblical history, or any history, you will find that all persecution has ever done to Christians is drive them closer to Christ and make them greater Christians. The attacks of the world are not our greatest enemy; the enticements of the world to our own flesh are.

Persecution Drives Believers Closer to God

When you and I really get in trouble and are persecuted, things start popping into our minds. Paul says in Romans 8:18, "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." What is he saying? Paul says, "I think I can put up with a little loss of revenue, a little loss of liberty, a little loss of flesh, just so I may have the additional glory for being faithful to Christ."

In 2 Corinthians 1:5, Paul says, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." In other words, the more we suffer for Christ, the greater consolation and comfort we have in Christ. In verse 9 he says, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

When you get in trouble and under persecution, what does it do? If you are a child of God, it drives you to God, to His power, to His grace, and His mercy. If you are not a true Christian, persecution will

drive you away from God. But if you are a true Christian, it will drive you closer to the Lord.

Paul was stoned and left for dead, beaten with 40 stripes a number of times, spent a day and a night in the deep—that is, floating around in the ocean—hated, cursed, spit upon, and finally had his head chopped off. Yet look what he writes: “For our light affliction”—remember, here is a man who had been stoned and left for dead—“for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Out of all Paul's sufferings, what does he say? “This light affliction, which is but for a moment.” We can put up with a number of things for a little while if we understand that it is a moment, that it has an end, and that it is something light.

All that Paul went through, he deemed but a light affliction. You remember what he said in Philippians chapter 1? When he was in prison and it looked as though he was about to die there, he said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He said, "I am in a strait betwixt two." He had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better—for him, as Paul said.

Nevertheless, he said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." The easy way out for him was to die and be with the Lord. The difficult way was to live and continue ministering to them, but they needed him, so God did not let him die at that particular time. The point is this: even if our lives are lost, humanly speaking, they are not lost. All persecution can really do is drive us back to God.

Thomas Browning, a godly pastor who suffered under the persecutions of Charles II of England, was in prison facing death. In an excerpt from a letter to his congregation, he wrote: "The cup of afflictions for the gospel is the sweeter the deeper. The deeper the affliction, the sweeter it is. A stronger cordial, nearer the bottom. When you get to the very dregs and ultimate of it, the nearer you get to the bottom, the stronger the cordial. I mean," he said, "death itself."

What is he saying? The more you suffer for Christ, the sweeter the consolation and the more grace God gives you. If you have wondered how men could be tied to a stake, set on fire, and burned alive while singing psalms and praising God, this is how: when that time comes, God gives added grace, courage, and mercy. The closer you get to suffering death for Christ, the stronger the cordial, the sweeter it is, and the more grace He bestows.

Paul's Persuasion and the Comprehensive List of Inseparable Things

That is why the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:37, “Nay, in all of these things, we're more than conquerors.” Christ will never, ever let us go. That bond cannot be separated.

Look at verses 38 and 39: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Apostle is not only summing up his argument; he is making a wonderful declaration. He says, “I am persuaded.” He is not depending upon his feelings. He is saying, “I am certain. This is positively true.”

The interesting thing is that the Greek word is in the passive tense, which means Paul has been persuaded. Paul was not persuading himself. Something external was persuading him of these truths. What persuaded him? It was the very truth he was setting before us. Paul had come to a settled conclusion and certainty. He had been persuaded by the truth he had just laid before us in Romans 8:28 through verse 39.

Go back to verses 29 and 30: “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He also justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Paul said, “I am absolutely persuaded.”

Now note verse 39: “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God,” and note this descriptive phrase: “which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Why was that phrase added—“the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our

Lord”? No doubt in Paul's day, as today, many people claimed to love God and to be in God's love while hating and despising Jesus Christ. Paul says that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Some claim to be in God's love and to love God, yet hate Christ. They hate repentance, redemption, and reconciliation.

The only love that God the Father has is that love which is in Jesus Christ. To reject Jesus Christ is to reject the love of God. When people tell me, "Well, Brother Weaver, I love God, but I'm not a Christian," you don't love God. "Well, I love God, but I don't believe in that blood atonement." You don't love God. "Well, I love God, but I don't believe the Bible." You don't love God. The only love that God has and the only love that God sheds abroad is that love which He has for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In 1 John 3:16 we read, "Hereby perceive we the love of God." Remember, the word "perceive" means to lay hold on, to grab, to comprehend. How do we comprehend the love of God? "Because He laid down His life for us." How did He do that? In Jesus Christ. How do we know that God loves us? In Jesus Christ.

First John 4:8 says, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." There are a lot of people who claim to love, but they really don't love. Here is the explanation: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." And verse 10 says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Four Pillars of Assurance: Love, Power, Oath, and Character of God

How did God love us? Through Christ, through giving Christ. When someone tries to say, "Well, I love God, but I don't love Christ," or, "I love God, but I don't believe the Bible," that's impossible. God loved us in Christ and sent His Son to be our Redeemer and give us redemption.

Paul asks, “Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?” No. “Distress?” No. “Persecution?” No. “Famine?

Nakedness, peril, sword?" No. None of that is going to do it. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He says, "For I am persuaded, I am confident, I am certain, I have a settled conclusion, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature"—anything that you can imagine—"nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul lays out four things that you and I can use to come to the same settled conclusion. First of all, it is the love of Christ. You could put down the love of God, because the love of God and the love of Christ are one and the same. Nothing is going to sever that bond.

Suppose I stop loving Christ. Is my salvation dependent upon my love for Christ or His love for me? Very clearly, it is dependent upon His love for me. The most holy and godly saint does not love Jesus Christ the way Jesus Christ deserves to be loved. I am glad salvation is not based upon how I love Him, but upon how He loves me.

If you will consider this love of God, you are going to come to the same conclusion Paul came to: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then, in verse 37, "We're more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Secondly, he wants you to consider the power of God. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" What good would it do for anyone to be against us? None. In 1 Peter 1, the Apostle Peter says that we are kept by the power of God unto salvation. I do not keep myself; God keeps me by His power.

How do I know that I am just so surely and certainly glorified as if I had already been? Because of the love of God, because of the power of God, and, thirdly, because of the oath of God. Do you remember back in Hebrews chapter 6, where he says by two immutable things—and one is it is impossible for God to lie—and then, secondly, he talks about the oath that God has given. May I remind you of what our Lord said in Hebrews chapter 13 in verse 5: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

So you have the very oath of God, the power of God, and the love of God. And there is a fourth thing mentioned all through this: the

character of God. God is not going to change His verdict. God is not going to change His pardon. How do I know God is not going to change His pardon? Because He said in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, change not." God is immutable. He says that the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. Jeremiah 31, verse 3, says, "Yea, with an everlasting love have I loved thee; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

So God is immutable. God is unchangeable. Paul is saying that if you will consider these four truths—the love of God, the power of God, the oath of God, and the character of God—you too can come to this settled conclusion: nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, one last passage. Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 40. Many of you can quote this passage, but look at it. It is so beautiful and so powerful. I want to be able to read it. Isaiah 40, beginning with verse 26: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth."

Conclusion: Look to the Lord, Not Circumstances

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, 'My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God'? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

If you are discouraged, defeated, distressed, doubtful, or upset, you are looking at the wrong person. You are looking at yourself, other people, and circumstances. But if you look to the Lord, you will find His love, His power, His oath, and His character. And He never fails.

How certain am I that the saints will be fully glorified? Just as certain as God is. For God is the one who is our guarantee. If God can fail or be overthrown, we have problems. But until then, I agree with the Apostle Paul: "For I am persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Father, in Thy holy name, we pray. We ask for Thy grace and mercy. We thank Thee for the assurance of salvation that we have through Jesus Christ. Bless us and fill us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

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