

## A Study in Romans

### Chapter 8

This chapter contains the antidote to the wretched condition of the sinful flesh that every man and woman has inherited by birth into this fallen world. Paul presents a picture of the glorious benefits of living “in Christ,” as adopted members of the family of God.

#### Liberation by Christ

(Romans 8:1–4) <sup>1</sup> *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

#### (1) *“There is ... no condemnation”*

Paul moves beyond his description of the conflict with his flesh at the end of chapter 7 with a concluding praise that there is “no condemnation” for every believer in Christ. The “therefore” is not merely an answer to the inner conflict for the Christian who still must contend with the sinful nature. It is, however, an answer to his statement in chapter 5 that “through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation” (5:18), and his previous conclusion that all of us are sinners who “fall short of the glory of God” (3:23).

#### (1) *“those who are in Christ Jesus”*

Being “in Christ Jesus” speaks to the believer who stands justified in Christ. Justification is the basis and starting point for sanctification. We must be assured that we are acceptance by God before we can grow in grace and conformity to His will.

#### (1) *“who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit”*

Modern versions of the Bible do not include the end to the sentence because it is does not appear in the manuscript used during translation. Some suggest a conspiracy behind the difference, but reality is that it is more likely an addition to rather than a subtraction from the text. Furthermore, the same statement appears in verse 4, so the message still appears in the passage. If someone was trying to hide it, they would have removed both references.

NOTE: Scribes throughout the centuries were very careful to copy the text. If they were prone to anything beyond recording the exact text, it would be addition, not subtraction of words.

The redeeming work of Christ is applied to the believer's life (justification) in such a way that sin has no more power over the flesh. When sin's power is broken, righteousness and godliness can then be imparted freely (sanctification). This is only possible when we give up trying to obtain righteousness by the flesh (personal willpower) and surrender to the divine leading of the Holy Spirit.

***(2) "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"***

This is a strange way of describing the law. It is probably a reference to one law divided by two powers: the first is the law having fallen into the hands of sin and used to condemn; the second is the law restored to the hands of Christ and used to instill righteousness.

Paul juxtaposes the two "laws" of our life experience. These laws are likely metaphorical for the two contrasting "principles." These principles strive for supremacy of the will, with only one bringing true freedom.

(John 8:36) Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

The law of sin and death is the default law from birth. It's the principle at work before trusting Jesus with our life. From that moment on, the law of the Spirit of life is our new experience. We walk with life that constantly flows from the Source of all life.

***(3) "what the law could not do ... God did"***

We have noted this before. The law has no power to impart life regardless of how a person tries to keep it. The point here is that God can do what the law cannot do.

***(3) "by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"***

God can now impart to us the power of the Spirit of life because He sent Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus became a human being and lived a perfect life—one that is impossible for us to live. He came in our "likeness" and took upon Himself our sin so that He could justly credit us His righteousness.

It would not have been just for Jesus to credit us with His life if He had not first become a human being. Satan would have claimed foul if Jesus did not conquer him on the ground that Adam once stood. Jesus became the new Adam, now having dominion over the earth and the human race.

There has been a wide debate in the church over the nature of Christ. Some believe that Jesus had the nature of Adam before the fall (prelapsarian) while others believe that Jesus had the nature of Adam after the fall (postlapsarian). Yet a complete biblical study of the language used to describe Christ and His mission tells us that Jesus was *unique* in His incarnation.

(Hebrews 11:17–18)<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten (*monogenes*) son,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “*In Isaac your seed shall be called,*”

The word *monogenes* (Greek) means unique or different. It denotes an original class or stock, more than a simple generation. In the above verse, it’s evident that when more than one child was born to a family there could be one who is not the eldest that forms a completely unique sub-class through which something special occurs. Jesus was such a Person.

(Colossians 1:18) And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

When we read John 3:16, we can appreciate more fully what Jesus is saying about Himself: (John 3:16) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten (*monogenes*) Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

“Likeness” does not necessarily mean “sameness.” It bears the connotation of similarity. Jesus was made like us, but He was original—uniquely sent into the world as the Savior of mankind. We need to be careful not to interpret “like” or “likeness” to mean that Jesus had a nature identical to our own.

(Hebrews 2:17) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The emphasis here is God’s incarnation as a physical human being, not His spiritual nature.

### **(3) “He condemned sin in the flesh”**

Jesus condemned sin “in the flesh” in that He stood in the position of mankind and conquered sin without using the divine power accessible to Him as God. Jesus overcame every temptation by relying on His Father, and the Holy Spirit imparted to empower Him with the strength He needed. That strength is now available to us all by faith.

(Hebrews 4:15–16)<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

By taking on our flesh, and condemning sin, Jesus is just in forgiving mankind of sin.

(1 John 1:9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just (*dikaios*) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Injustice is eliminated only through the mercy of a righteous God who forgives. God's sending his Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh gives Him the right to forgive sinful mankind and, in effect, execute justice in doing so.

#### ***(4) "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us"***

Christ purchased the right to justify sinners because He was victorious as a human being. Through justification, the "righteous requirement of the law"—which is perfect obedience—is credited to the believer. Justification is the declaration that the believer in Christ is righteous even though he/she is still inherently sinful.

#### ***(4) "who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"***

Belief is ongoing. It's not a one-time event. It's evidenced by obedience to God's commandments that is made possible by the indwelling empowering Holy Spirit. When a believer in Christ does not walk "according to the Spirit," he/she is saying by His thoughts and actions that they no longer possess the Holy Spirit and the abiding presence of Christ.

### **Spirit is Life; Flesh is Death**

(Romans 8:5–8)<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. <sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Paul launches into an extended statement contrasting the "flesh" (sinful nature) and the "Spirit." These states of living are clearly set in opposition to one another. We cannot live by both the flesh and Spirit, because one leads to death and the other leads to life.

#### ***(5) "live according to the flesh"***

The phrase "according to the flesh" means that we live under the control of our sinful nature. This is an unregenerate state of the mind, allowing the flesh to be the regulating principle of our life. To "live" by the flesh is to carry out those things dictated by the sinful nature, bearing

fruit that is driven by the lower passions. The flesh is totally incompatible with God and His holy purposes for our life.

**(5) “set their minds on the things”**

We can't help but live with the flesh, but we can decide whether it has control of our life. Paul connects our way of life to our way of thinking. *We are* how we *think*.

To “set their minds” (*phroneo*) is to “think about” or “focus on.” It is a mindset; an orientation of the will. Whatever we set our minds on will determine what we focus and depend upon. So, it is essential we feed our mind with the things of God, especially His word. The more we focus on spiritual things, the greater our mind becomes conditioned to trusting God and depending on His grace.

(Christ's Object Lessons, p. 355) Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity.

The saying that we will reap what we sow is applicable here. Listen to how Paul uses this principle in his letter to the Galatians:

(Galatians 6:7–8)<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.<sup>8</sup> For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

One thing we can do to set our mind on the right things for a godly life is to meditate in God's word. David set his mind on God's law (all aspects) and its deeper meaning for life and happiness:

(Psalm 1:1–3)<sup>1</sup> Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;<sup>2</sup> but his delight *is* in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.<sup>3</sup> He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

**(6) “carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”**

Living “according to the flesh” is the same as being “carnally minded.” Flesh and carnal are both *sarx* (Gk), which is why several Bible versions translate “carnally minded” as “to set the mind on the flesh” (ESV, NASB, NRSV).

To be carnally minded ends in death because it is self-dependent, leaving God and His grace out of the picture. Being spiritually minded is “life and peace” because we have given our mind over to Christ. Along with His abiding presence, He has brought life and peace.

Life: (1 John 5:12) He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Peace: (John 20:19) Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

### ***(7) “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God”***

The carnal mind is in a state of rebellion against God. Paul notes specifically that the carnal mind stands against the “law of God,” the law being foundational to His authority and government.

Furthering the thought of 8:1, the law of God condemns those who live by the flesh, but brings liberty to those who are led by the Holy Spirit. We subject ourselves to the law of God through obedience.

### ***(8) “cannot please God”***

Further complicating the condition of carnal living, Paul says that a person guided by the sinful desires of their fallen nature cannot “please” God. Meaning quite the opposite, that He is displeased by them.

This idea of pleasing God appears elsewhere in the New Testament:

(Hebrews 13:20–21)<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,<sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.

(1 John 3:22) And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Fleshly living makes a person incapable of keeping God's commandments. It makes sense then that disobedience is displeasing to Him and will inevitably end in separation and death.

START HERE

## **"But You"**

(Romans 8:9–11)<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.<sup>10</sup> And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Paul now directly addresses his readers, people of faith in the church. He connects the principles he just covered and applies them to the lives of each believer in the church.

### ***(9) "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit"***

Paul reminds all who live in Christ of the difference between themselves and those he just described. People without Christ have nothing to guide them but their fallen nature. As believers, we have divine power within us as the remedy for the flesh.

(2 Peter 1:3–4)<sup>3</sup> His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,<sup>4</sup> by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

(The Desire of Ages, p. 671, 675) Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. ...

By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved.

Christ enables every believer filled with the Holy Spirit to escape the lust of the flesh and the corrupted living that flows from it.

***(9) “if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you”***

This is the first of four “if” (*ei*; pronounced “i”) statements. We are first reminded that we escape carnal mindedness through the Spirit of God. That is, *if* He dwells in us.

NOTE: The if statements demonstrate the absolute necessity of the indwelling Holy Spirit for bringing the abiding presence and realities of Christ into our lives.

How do you know that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? Every Christian received the Holy Spirit when they were “born again” in Christ (John 3:7–8). Being born again is the equivalent of becoming a “new creation” (2Cor 5:17). Those who are born again as a new creation live a pure and godly life as He leads and transforms them in His image. They bear the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23) in their character and bear witness to God’s love and grace using the “gifts” of the Spirit (Rom 12:6–8, 1Pet 4:10).

***(9) “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”***

In the second “if” statement, Paul states with the surprising candor that if we do not have the “Spirit of Christ” (Holy Spirit), then we do not have Christ.

This is such an important teaching for every Christian. It’s not that if we commit a sin, that Jesus has left us. He does not give up on us that easy. But habitual sinful living is an indicator that we have:

- quenched the Holy Spirit,
- never learned to surrender our will to the Holy Spirit, or
- have never been filled with the Holy Spirit.

***(10) “if Christ is in you”***

In the third if statement, we are reminded of the benefits of living in Christ: 1) the sinful body is dead, and 2) the Spirit is life. The life we have in the Spirit covers our sin and brings the righteousness of God that we cannot have without Him.

***(11) “if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you”***

In the fourth “if” statement echoes the first statement. Paul adds “who raised Jesus from the dead.” There is no other life-giving power for someone who is dead than the Spirit of God. The Spirit gives life to your mortal bodies.

NOTE: This removes any possibility of eternal life without the Spirit of God. Far from the error that the soul is immortal.

## **No Longer Debtors to our Sinful Nature**

***[Peter Okrah contributed notes from here through Romans 18.]***

(Romans 8:12–17)<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.<sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”<sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

### ***(12) “we are debtors”***

A debtor is a person who is in debt or is under financial obligation to someone else.

### ***(12) “not to the flesh”***

When Christ dwells in us by His Spirit, we are no longer a debtor to our sinful nature. We don’t have to “live according to the flesh,” but have been freed by Christ.

As Paul said in chapter 6:

(Romans 6:12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

We remain free as long as the Spirit of Christ continues to dwell in us.

### ***(13) “if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”***

Several important lessons in this verse:

First, we must “put to death” the fleshly desires that we crave because of our fallen nature. Paul says that he had to “die daily” (1Cor 15:31).

Second, how do we put these desires to death? Paul says, “by the Spirit.” In other words, we allow the Spirit to remain in control of our will. He provides power over the flesh.

### ***(14) “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”***

All who are led by the Holy Spirit are called “sons of God.” If you do not have the Spirit of God in you, then you are not one of God’s sons.

There are two contexts in the Bible for the term “sons of God.” The first is God’s creation of all human beings. In that respect, we are all sons of God. But this is not the predominant meaning. The sons of God are those who have given their life to Him, to love and obey His will.

(Genesis 6:1–2)<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,<sup>2</sup> that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

Those who obey God will receive the Holy Spirit:

(Acts 5:32) And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

When we follow God’s plan for our life, then He calls us His “sons”:

(Matthew 5:9) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

NOTE: Job describes the sons of God that are in the heavenly realm. These are not human beings, but angelic representatives of other worlds.

### **Creation Groans, But God Delivers**

(Romans 8:18–25)<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.<sup>19</sup> For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope;<sup>21</sup> because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.<sup>23</sup> Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.<sup>24</sup> For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

The theme of 8:18–30 is the believer’s future glory. Earlier in Paul’s letter, we were assured of our great hope for salvation in the judgment (5:1–11). Now he returns to the same through an exposition of the solid basis for our hope as Christians.

**(18) “sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared”**

Paul does not hide the reality that believers experience suffering in life. However, our adoption as sons and daughters of God, and our future deliverance in glory, far surpasses any suffering that we endure on this earth. The glory that we will experience at the second coming is more than enough to lose sight of all the troubles we endure.

After arriving at the tree of life in heaven, Ellen White says: (Early Writings, p. 17) We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out, "Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!" and we touched our glorious harps and made heaven's arches ring.

***(19) "earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits"***

Paul adds to God's deliverance through the personification of all creation by noting that it too eagerly waits for the deliverance.

***(20) "creation was subjected to futility"***

Not only are human beings suffering through the results of sin, all of creation is being impacted. Not only did it do nothing to deserve it, but it is being held back from showing all that it has been created to do.

***(20) "but because of Him who subjected it in hope"***

It is God who put creation into subjection because of Adam and Eve's sin. But it did so temporarily, in the hope of its future redemption. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the Deliverer for all of creation.

***(21) "delivered from the bondage of corruption"***

Paul adds in verse 21 that all of creation will be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God"—meaning that creation will be liberated along with human beings.

The word "corruption" is *phthora* (fthor-ah). This can be translated as perishable, but a better fit here is the English word "decay." The world has been subjected to decay, but will one day be fully restored to its originally intended eternal and incorruptible condition.

Notice the distinct difference between human beings and the rest of creation. We are special, placed in this world as stewards of its good. The actions of human beings impacts the world. We are responsible for its care. We were the ones who instigated its subjection to the

bondage of sin and its resulting “birth pains” (v22), so let’s do all we can to alleviate its suffering.

### ***(23) “firstfruits of the Spirit”***

We experience the “firstfruits” of the Spirit in that our nature is being delivered from the power of sin even now before our final deliverance. It is God who brings life and peace to the soul and the knowledge that our physical suffering is temporary.

### ***(23) “even we ourselves groan ... eagerly waiting for ... the redemption of our body”***

We groan along with all of creation as we wait for the “redemption of our body.” This is the final aspect to salvation where our body is made new; all of the effects of sin are gone forever.

(1 Corinthians 15:54–55)<sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”<sup>55</sup> “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*”

### ***(24) “hope that is seen is not hope”***

There is a connection between hope and suffering. Hope is one of the greatest gifts we have been given as Christians. It is hope that keeps us walking on the path of righteousness every day. It is also the most important thing we have to get us through our pain and suffering.

The nature of hope is that it involves something yet to occur, meaning we haven’t seen it come to fruition yet. When we finally experience our complete redemption, hope is no longer necessary to carry us through the challenges of this life.

(1 Peter 1:20–21)<sup>20</sup> He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you<sup>21</sup> who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

### ***(25) “we eagerly wait for it with perseverance”***

Our hope of salvation in Christ is meant to make us steadfast—to persevere through all the troubles of this life. If we lose our hope, then our faith will fail.

(Hebrews 6:11–12)<sup>11</sup> And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,<sup>12</sup> that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

(The Desire of Ages, p. 224) God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.

## **Intercession for the Saints**

(Romans 8:26–27)<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.<sup>27</sup> Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Paul continues the theme of groaning: creation, human beings, now the Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit's final ministry to/for the saints in Christ's administration of the benefits of His work of redemption from the throne in the heavenly sanctuary.

### **(26) “the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses”**

Continuing the thought on “eagerly waiting,” we are not left alone to endure to the end. We wait on the Lord with the Spirit's help to overcome our weaknesses. The Holy Spirit brings the presence of Christ into our life so that we always walk with the help of our Lord and Savior.

Our weaknesses is a reference to the limitations we possess as mortal human beings.

The word “help” (*sunantilambanomai*) is rare in Scripture, and appears only one other time to describe Martha asking for Mary's help with preparing the meal. It is a help that connotes the idea of one who comes to the aid to take hold with another; to strive to obtain by helping another. The Holy Spirit is our Helper!

(John 14:16–18) “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

We have all experienced times when it's difficult to pray. Sometimes because we are feeling sad; other times because we don't know what to pray for. It is during these times that it is important to know that prayer is a joint activity between us and the Spirit.

(Jude 20–21)<sup>20</sup> But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,<sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

**(26) “we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession”**

Even in the many ways we are weak, we can still “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). We can be confident in the acceptance of God and His ability to give grace when we don’t know what we need to be praying for in any given situation.

“Our inability to pray as precisely as we would like is no hindrance to the working out of God’s perfect will in our lives. We may not know what to ask for in a given situation, but the Spirit does. His requests are in perfect harmony with the will of the Lord for us. As Jesus intercedes for us before the Father (cf. 8:34), guaranteeing our salvation, so the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts, preparing us for that salvation.” (Douglas Moo, NIV Application Commentary on Romans)

This is a two-way intercession. Not only does the Holy Spirit bring our prayer before God, He brings back to us the will of God for our prayer life. We begin to understand how God wants us to pray about a given situation going forward.

**(26) “with groanings which cannot be uttered”**

The phrase, “as we ought,” could refer to people who feel like they have not yet matured in their prayer life. But the phrase “groanings which cannot be uttered,” implies that we couldn’t get the words out, even if we had them.

Likely, Paul is not addressing the manner or words in our prayers, but the content. Only God knows our deepest needs. Who or what should we be praying for, in our life and the lives of others? And also important, what is God’s will regarding these things? The last question helps us learn whether our prayer can be answered.

These groanings are in no way connected to unintelligible utterings by Christians who claim the gift of tongues. First of all, tongues are not mentioned in the Bible in connection with intercession. Second, the groanings mentioned are from the mind and heart of every Christian seeking the blessing of God through prayer.

**(27) “He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is”**

This is a statement clarifying the previous sentence. Paul is talking about the interaction between the Father and the Holy Spirit, as it pertains to the prayers of the saints. The Father knows our deepest longings because not only hears them from the Holy Spirit, but He placed them there according to His will.

Listen to the same verse in the New Living Translation:

(Romans 8:27, NLT) And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

God hears what we ourselves cannot tell Him because of the Spirit that resides in us, who reveals these things so that we can then receive the unspoken needs that we have.

### **All Things Work Together**

(Romans 8:28–30) <sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Paul ends all needless worry about whether God knows our needs and wants by reminding us of the love and care He has for all His children, and the ultimate plan He has promised to work out in each life.

### **(28) “all things work together for good”**

Paul does not say that all things are good, but that they “work together for good.” Things may be going against the direction we think is best, but God doesn't work in the way we think He should work. He works to accomplish what is good for people we may not realize are affected. Could it be that we could be required not to receive a blessing so that someone else can?

We need to be careful not to define “good” using our own defined terms. Good from God's perspective (spiritual) is not materialistic (relationship, job, house, etc.), nor necessarily in the near future. Not that these things can't be. But the greatest good is what comes together in the end for God's glory. He wants us to live as Christ lived and to experience what we are predestined for, eternal life in His everlasting kingdom.

(Testimonies 9, p. 286) All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. The mysteries of grace will unfold before us. Where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. We shall know that infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying. As we realize the tender care of Him who makes all things work together for our good, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

### **(28) “to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”**

There are two conditions stated here for all things working together for good:

1. People who love God (human response). This is one of the biggest questions to ask ourselves: Do I love God? The answer to this question determines your direction in life.
2. People who are called according to His purpose (divine initiative). God calls all people to respond in love and live according to His will.

(Ephesians 1:5, 11–12) <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ... <sup>11</sup> In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, <sup>12</sup> that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

We are invited to be adopted as sons and daughters of God and His purpose in our adoption is to live according to His will.

### ***(29) “whom He foreknew, He also predestined”***

To foreknow is to have knowledge beforehand. Those who respond to His call He predestined to change their life. There is no such thing as responding to the call of God while at the same time rejecting the transformation process that He wants to accomplish.

### ***(29) “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”***

Predestination is all about God’s will to conform every believer in the image of Christ. This is the process of sanctification (although not specifically named). His will for all mankind is the transformation of mind and heart in the likeness of Christ’s character.

(1 John 3:2–3) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Our response to God’s call includes a willingness to cooperate with His pre-planned re-creative work.

### ***(30) “whom He predestined, these He also called ... justified ... glorified”***

To receive the benefits of adoption, which is God desires to give, we must respond to His calling. Once we respond, God takes over the responsibility of working out His plan—to justify His people, as we await Christ’s return, and then one day glorify them at the resurrection.

The calling Paul is referring to is not a general call to all people, but a specific call to every individual to enter into a close relationship with Jesus Christ. When responded to in love, it is a call that gives a person “elect” status (vss. 8:33, 9:11, and 11:7)—one we must remain faithful to until the end.

(Revelation 17:14) ... “those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

What is Paul’s main point as he concludes this section of his letter? He wants to assure all believers that the plan God is unfolding will one day culminate with His people receiving glory.

## **God Is For Us**

(Romans 8:31–34)<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Paul ends this passage with almost rhetorical questions that declare God’s promises to be true. What he has described in the previous verses are realities for every believer.

### ***(31) “If God is for us, who can be against us?”***

Paul is not speaking about temporal deliverance, but the eternal security we have in Jesus our Savior. God is “for us” in that He stands as our Advocate against anything or anyone that wants to do us harm. We can have complete assurance of Christ’s work for us. There is nothing that can stand against those who have put their faith in Him.

### ***(32) “He who did not spare His own Son”***

God gave us the best. He did not hold back. The gift of Christ comes from the Godhead itself, as they gave of their own for the salvation of the world.

### ***(32) “how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”***

In giving His only Son to save the world, God revealed that He would not withhold anything for our benefit. Jesus was the greatest of all gifts, which then opens the door to many other gifts from God’s heavenly storehouse.

(James 4:2–3)<sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

God does not hold back. If we do not receive what we need, it’s because:

1. We have not asked for it,
2. We ask and doubt, or
3. Our life choices have created a barrier to receiving the promised blessing.

(That I May Know Him, p. 7) There is no need for us to hunger, there is no need for us to thirst, while the storehouse of heaven is open for us and the key is given into our possession. What is the key? Faith, which is the gift of God. Unlock the storehouse; take of its rich treasures.

(Steps to Christ, p. 94) Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children, and yet there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants to God. ...

The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?

### ***(33) "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?"***

Underlying the question, "who can be against us?" is the implication that someone will try. That someone is the "accuser of the brethren," Satan himself.

(Zechariah 3:1–4)<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.<sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"<sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.<sup>4</sup> Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

It is the cross of Christ that cast down Satan's accusations against God's people: (Revelation 12:10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

### ***(34) "Who is he who condemns?"***

Considering the questions and answer that come before, this question suggests the futility of anyone who condemns God's people. Not only is it "God who justifies" (v33), but Christ is our just Advocate, by right, because:

1. He died
2. He was raised to life
3. He sat down on the throne next to His Father

4. He intercedes by the blood of His sacrifice in our behalf (substitutionary atonement)

(Colossians 1:19–23)<sup>19</sup> For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell,<sup>20</sup> and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled<sup>22</sup> in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—<sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

### **Who Shall Separate Us from the Love of God?**

(Romans 8:35–39)<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?<sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul ends this section with the motivation that led God to do all these things for us—LOVE.

### ***(35) “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”***

The possibility of being separated from God’s love is no more thinkable than that the Father ceasing to love his Son on the cross. Paul identifies things that would cause the world to cease loving its own, but not so with God.

While we *feel* forsaken at times, we are *not* forsaken. God’s people can have complete confidence in His abiding love to support us through any trouble that comes our way.

### ***(36) “we are killed all day long ... accounted as sheep for the slaughter”***

This is a quotation from Psalm 44:22, noting the suffering of God’s people. He is linking their experience to that of the church, which is experiencing growing persecution.

### ***(37) “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”***

The verb *hypernikaō* (hoop-er-nik-ah-o) is an intensified form of “conquering.” Paul is saying that we are “winning a magnificent victory,” achieved for us through the love of God.

Paul's reference to Christ who loved us (past tense) reminds us of His demonstration of love on the cross. He is using the allusion to the cross to give us assurance that this same love will continue to help us overcome in all circumstances.

***(38–39) “I am persuaded that [nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God”***

This is a promise to God's people who have entered into a covenant relationship with Him. As they remain faithful to Him, they will never cease to experience the special benefits of God's love.

The only thing that can separate us from God is sin.

(Isaiah 59:1–2) <sup>1</sup> Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. <sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

When a person chooses to return to a life of sin, they separate themselves not only from God, but from the special benefits of the love relationship they once had with Him. If they persist in their sin, God will not hear their cries for help.

(Psalm 11:5) The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.

(Hosea 9:15) “All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more.”

(Jeremiah 16:5) For thus says the LORD: “Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people,” says the LORD, “lovingkindness and mercies.”

The word *hesed* is often translated “lovingkindness,” “steadfast love,” and “goodness.” It is a relational word that describes God's actions of love toward His people.

“Divine  $\tau\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta$  [*hesed*] is thus unmerited and exceeds all duties, yet it is not altogether unconditional. God's  $\tau\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta$  is repeatedly characterized as everlasting (Jer 33:11; Ps 136) on the one hand, and yet it may be forfeited and withdrawn (Jer 16:5; compare Ps 77:8; 88:11; 89:49). Divine  $\tau\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta$  is extremely steadfast, reliable and enduring, yet, as Sakenfeld puts it, “God's *hesed* is conditional, dependent upon the good repair of the covenant relationship that it is up to Israel to maintain” (compare Deut 7:9, 12; 2 Sam 22:26; 1 Kings 8:23; Ps 25:10; 32:10; 2 Chron 6:14). Thus divine  $\tau\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta$  is “from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him” (Ps 103:17). Indeed,  $\tau\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta$  (divine or human) presumes relational responsiveness toward or within reciprocal (though often unequal) relationship.” (John Peckham, *The Love of God*)

In a sense, God loves everyone, whether they accept or reject His love. But when it comes to showering people with all the benefits of His love, that is dependent upon obedience to His will. God's special love (*hesed*; acts of lovingkindness) is given to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Notice what God wants to do for those who return to Him after living in disobedience:

(Hosea 14:4) "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him."

The Lord will not hold back His love from those who love Him and remain faithful to His word.

(John 14:21–23)<sup>21</sup> He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

<sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

For these reasons, Jude commands the church to remain faithful in their commitment to love and obey their covenant-keeping God.

(Jude 21) Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.