

Safe in God's Love

Rom 8:28-39

SS Lesson for 08/07/2016

Devotional Scripture: 1 John 4:7-21

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Rom 8:31

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S WORK (ROM 8:28-30)

Work of ensuring all things are for our good (28)

All things for good because God intended them that way (Gen 50:19-20)

All things for good to test obedience (Deut 8:2)

All things for good to bring about humble submission (Dan 5:20-22)

All things for good to prove God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:7-9)

All things for good to bring about God's rewards (James 1:12)

Work of conforming us (29)

Conforming us to the purpose of God's will (Eph 1:11)

Conforming us through the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2)

Conforming us through being made new in the attitude of the mind (Eph 4:22-24)

Conforming us through reconciliation (Col 1:21-23)

Conforming us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

Work of justifying us (30)

Justification through faith apart from the law (Rom 3:28)

Justification that brings peace (Rom 5:1)

Justification through Jesus' blood (Rom 5:9)

Justification through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11)

Justification through grace (Titus 3:7)

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PROVISION (ROM 8:31-34)

Provision of deliverance (31-32)

Deliverance through transformation (Phil 3:20-21)

Deliverance through trust (2 Cor 1:10)

Deliverance through righteousness (Ps 34:19)

Deliverance because God knows how to deliver (2 Peter 2:9)

Provision of righteousness (33)

A righteousness that brings eternal life (Rom 5:21)

A righteousness that we have in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

A righteousness that God made through Jesus (2 Cor 5:21)

A righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)

A righteousness that comes from God through faith (Phil 3:9)

Provision of intercession (34)

Deliverance from Satan through Jesus' intercession (Luke 22:31-32)

Intercessions because it is commanded (James 5:16)

Intercessions for God's wisdom and revelations for others (Eph 1:16-17)

Intercessions for inner strength for others (Eph 3:16-17)

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE (ROM 8:35-39)

Love through suffering (35-36)

Love during suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

Love during suffering because of future glory (2 Cor 4:17-18)

Love during suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

Love during suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

Love through power to conquer (37)

Conqueror because whether we live or die it is gain through Jesus (Phil 1:21)

Conqueror because we can overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5)
Conqueror because we have the victory (1 Cor 15:56-57)
Conqueror because God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10)
Love through challenges (38-39)
Challenges that test (Matt 4:5-7)
Challenges where trusting in God who takes small things to defeat the large (1 Sam 17:41-49)
Challenges that should be overcome by standing firm in God (Dan 3:15-25)
Challenges that may be like being sent out as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:1-3)
Challenges to pray while suffering (James 5:13)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

The Certainty of Sanctification (8:28-39)

Application

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR COMMENTARY

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines how we as Christians can be **Safe in God's Love**. The **study's aim** is to recognize that God is all-powerful and that His works and desires cannot be set aside or ruined by anyone. The **study's application** is to learn that we can rest in God's provision for our salvation and our eternal safety in Him.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 8:31

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

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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

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

8:29-30. These verses give Paul's explanation of what it means to be one who has “been called according to His purpose” and why God keeps on working all their experiences together to their benefit (v. 28). Believers are those God foreknew. This does not mean simply that God foreknows *what* believers will do, but that God foreknows *them*. Nor does divine foreknowledge merely mean an awareness of or acquaintance with an individual. Instead it means a meaningful relationship with a person based on God's choice (cf. Jer. 1:4-5; Amos 3:2) in eternity before Creation. “He chose us in Him before the Creation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). This eternal choice and foreknowledge involves more than establishing a relationship between God and believers. It also involves the goal or end of that relationship: **Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son** (cf. 1 John 3:2). The entire group that is brought into relationship with God in His eternal plan by divine foreknowledge and choice is **predestined** (*proōrisen*, “predetermined”; cf. Eph. 1:5, 11). God determined beforehand the believers' destiny, namely, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. By all saints being made like Christ (ultimate and complete sanctification), Christ will be exalted as **the Firstborn among many brothers**. The resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ will become the Head of a new race of humanity purified from all contact with sin and prepared to live eternally in His presence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-49). As the “Firstborn” He is in the highest position among others (cf. Col. 1:18). Between the start and finish of God's plan are three steps: being **called** (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:28), being **justified** (cf. 3:24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9), and being **glorified** (cf. 8:17; Col. 1:27; 3:4), and in the process not a single person is lost. God completes His plan without slippage. “Glorified” is in the past tense because this final step is so certain that in God's eyes it is as good as done. To be glorified is another way of saying that God's children will be “conformed” to His Son; and that is God's ultimate “purpose.” No longer will they “fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

8:31-32. It is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and

answered (in vv. 31-39) seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer's eternal salvation is completely secure in God's hands. The first question is general, **What, then, shall we say in response to this?** (cf. 4:1; 6:1; 9:14, 30) The obvious response to 8:28-30 would be to say "Hallelujah," or to stand in open-mouthed amazement. This leads to a series of six more specific questions. The first is, **If God is for us, who can be against us?** Obviously, Satan and his demonic hosts are against believers (cf. Eph. 6:11-13; 1 Peter 5:8), but they cannot ultimately prevail and triumph over believers. God is the self-existent One and the sovereign Creator and, since He is for believers, no one can oppose believers successfully. He is for believers to the extent that **He... did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.** The word "spare" (*epheisato*, from *pheidomai*) is the same word used in the Septuagint in Genesis 22:12 where the NIV translates it "withheld." God said to Abraham, "You have not withheld your son." Then God directed Abraham to spare Isaac and to offer a ram as a substitute (Gen. 22:2-14), whereas God offered His own Son as the Sacrifice for sin (John 1:29). In view of this supreme act of God's grace, **How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?** Since God gave the greatest Sacrifice of all, His own Son, He will certainly not hesitate to give believers all other things pertaining to and leading to their ultimate sanctification (cf. 2 Peter 1:3).

8:33-34. The next two questions Paul raised and answered are forensic or legal in nature. **Who will bring any charge** (*enkalesei*, "make a formal accusation in court; press charges"; cf. Acts 19:40; 23:29; 26:2) **against those whom God has chosen?** Satan is identified as "the accuser" of God's people (Rev. 12:10; cf. Zech. 3:1). His accusations are valid, because they are based on the believer's sinfulness and defilement. But Satan's accusations will be thrown out of court, because **it is God who justifies.** The Judge Himself declares the accused person righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:1). As a result all accusations are dismissed and no one can bring an accusation that will stand. The related question is, **Who is He that condemns?** The Greek participle *ho katakrinōn* can have a future sense, "will condemn," which seems preferable here. (Cf. *katakrima*, "condemnation, punishment" in 8:1.) Jesus Christ is God's appointed Judge (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31), so Paul answered this question by stating, **Christ Jesus.** But Jesus is the very One whom the believer has trusted for salvation. Furthermore, He is the One **who died—more than that** (lit., "but more") **who was raised to life—who is at the right hand of God** (cf. Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22) **and is also interceding for us.** The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Judge, but He is also the One with whom each believer is identified by faith. As a result he is a believer's Sacrifice for sin (cf. Rom. 5:8; 8:32), his new life (a believer shares in Christ's resurrection life; 6:4, 8, 11; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:13), his Intercessor (cf. Heb. 7:25; also the Holy Spirit intercedes, Rom. 8:26-27) and his Defense (1 John 2:1). Certainly the Judge will not condemn His own who are in Him by faith! (cf. Rom. 8:1)

8:35-37. Paul's final questions are in verse 35: **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** The context (vv. 37, 39) shows that "the love of Christ" is His love for believers (not their love for Him; cf. 5:5). The apostle suggested seven things a believer might experience (Paul experienced all of them; 2 Cor. 11:23-28) that some might think could come between a believer and Christ's love—**trouble** (*thlipsis*, "pressure or distress"; mentioned frequently by Paul in 2 Cor.) **or hardship** (*stenochōria*, lit., "narrowness," i.e., being pressed in, hemmed in, crowded) **or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.** These things—stated in increasing intensity—do not separate Christians from Christ; instead they are part of the "all things" (Rom. 8:28) God uses to bring them to conformity to His Son. Then Paul quoted Psalm 44:22 to remind his readers that in this life the people of God must face much affliction (cf. John 16:33) including even martyrdom for some. In the early days of the church one or more Christians were martyred every day, or faced the possibility of it. Their persecutors valued Christians' lives as nothing more than animals to be butchered. In all these adversities (cf. "all things" in Rom. 8:28 and "all things" in v. 32 with **all these things** in v. 37), rather than being separated from Christ's love, believers are **more than conquerors** (pres. tense, *hypernikōmen*, "keep on being conquerors to a greater degree" or "keep on winning a glorious victory") **through Him who loved us.** Jesus Christ and His love for believers enable them to triumph (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14).

8:38-39. Paul then ended his discussion on believers' safety in Jesus Christ and the certainty of their sanctification with a positive declaration—**For I am convinced** (perf. tense, "I stand convinced"; cf. 15:14) **that nothing can separate believers from the love of God** (God's love for them, not their love for God; cf. v. 35). Paul's list of 10 items begins with death, where the list of 7 items in verse 35 ended. These elements in God's universe include the extremes of existence: (1) **death** and (2) **life** (in either death [2 Cor. 5:8-9] or life, believers are in God's presence); the extremes of created spiritual armies: (3) **angels** and (4) **demons** (angels would not and demons could not undo God's relationship with His redeemed ones); the extremes in

time: (5) **the present** and (6) **the future** (nothing known now, e.g., the hardships listed in Rom. 8:35, or in the unknown time to come); spiritual enemies: (7) **powers** (perhaps Satan and his demons; cf. Eph. 6:12; or possibly human governments); the extremes in space: (8) **height** and (9) **depth** (nothing overhead or underneath can suddenly come swooping down or up to sever believers from God's love); and (10) everything in the entire created realm. Absolutely nothing in His **Creation** can thwart His purpose for believers **in Christ**. What a climactic way to affirm the certainty of believers' salvation!

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Romans 8:31 is a summary statement. It is asking a question about "these things." What things? This kind of question naturally throws us back into the context. We must consider the larger argument of the book of Romans, and chapter 8 in particular, in order to receive the full impact of what Paul was saying. First of all, "these things" refers to the whole book of Romans thus far. The term concerns Paul's powerful description of salvation in Christ through justification. Chapters 1 through 3 outlined that all the world is found in sin and that all are guilty before God. There is no hope of salvation in ourselves—not through morality, good works, law keeping, or anything else. We are hopelessly condemned by God's Word. However, there is a merciful solution to this problem. It is the doctrine of justification by faith, outlined in chapters 4 and 5 of Romans. Through simple faith in Christ we can be declared righteous before God through Christ's atoning death for us. We are given a righteousness we could never produce on our own. This is salvation by grace through faith. The next chapters of Romans examine the implications of this gift of grace, namely, that it will lead to a new life in Christ (chap. 6) and that it affirms the holiness of God's law, which leads us to see our need of Christ (chap. 7). What shall we say to these things? This mighty plan of salvation makes us safe in the love of God. We are saved by God forever. Nothing or no one can take this away. That is why the Bible says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "These things" also refers to the immediate context of Romans 8. Paul went through the long list of God's acts of salvation on our behalf, including foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. All of these terms are presented in the past tense. They are utterly completed and finished through the grace of God. From eternity past to eternity future, the believer is held safe in God's love. Foreknowledge and predestination look at our salvation from eternity past. God knew us and elected us to be His own. Calling looks at God's work to woo us to Himself by His Holy Spirit during our present life. By His grace we are drawn to salvation. Justification looks at the act of God's pardon. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God swiftly and completely pardons us and makes us His own dear children. Glorification looks at the events of the eternal future when God safely takes believers home to heaven. Even that yet-to-be-received gift is so certain that it is stated in the past tense. The people God saves He will safely keep all the way to heaven. Indeed, if "these things" in Romans 8 are true, and they certainly are, then we are safe in God's love from the moment we are saved until the moment God takes us home to glory. "These things" are wonderful. They reveal to us the extent of the love of Christ (Eph. 3:18-19).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When a much-loved person dies, we often hear these sorts of things being said to the grieving: "God knows what he is doing; this is for the best." "It's hard for you to understand now, but God has a plan." "Someday you will understand why God did this." These are variations of the flippant statement, "Everything happens for a reason." To make such statements is to put us in the untenable position of saying that our loving God is responsible for a horrible tragedy that has ripped hearts open. Yet this is not a Christian idea. It might "work" in Buddhism or possibly in extreme forms of Islam, but it is not a biblical idea. Why? The Law of Cause and Effect proposes that there are reasons (causes) for all things that happen (effects). At one level, this is true, but there are two angles to consider. First, if we live in an entirely mechanistic world, then everything that happens is preordained because of the physical nature of the things involved. If this is correct, then it means that there is no free will because everything we do is merely the result of chemical processes in our brains; this is the worldview of science without God. In contrast, those who hold to the cause-and-effect worldview but who also believe in God say that the only exceptions to mechanical processes are God's deliberate manipulations of the forces of nature. In other words, these two choices say that human tragedy is either the result of inevitable mechanical processes or the intentional intervention of God. Everything happens for a reason? Tragedy must then be a product either of impersonal natural processes or the willful actions of a supernatural God. Yet this is not what most folks have in mind when they say, "Everything happens for a reason." What they usually mean is "Everything happens for a good reason." The implication is that something good always comes out of tragedy, even if we have to wait a long time to experience it. All of this seems to have a biblical veneer when proof-

texted by verses such as Romans 8:28: "We know that in all things God works for the good." But how does this play out in real life, especially in the time of tragedy? Is there comfort to be found in "everything happens for a reason"? Today's lesson, taken from the marvelous words of Romans 8, will help us see things from a biblical perspective.

One of the most popular Roman deities of Paul's day was the goddess Fortuna, equivalent to the Greek goddess Tyche. Her popularity can be seen in that one of Paul's companions was Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), a Greek name that means "fortunate one." Roman coinage of the first century often bore an image of Fortuna. The Romans believed that gods and goddesses like Fortuna were in control of destinies. Much pagan religious activity was based on either determining the will of such deities through divination or influencing them through temple offerings or worship. The Romans believed their gods were capricious and unreliable, and that fortunes or luck could take a turn for the better or worse on a god's whim. In the book of Romans, Paul presents a view of the Christian God that is entirely different.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Assurance of God's Work (Rom 8:28-30)

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

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

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

Work of ensuring all things are for our good (28)

All things for good because God intended them that way (Gen 50:19-20)

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

All things for good to test obedience (Deut 8:2)

2 Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

All things for good to bring about humble submission (Dan 5:20-22)

20 But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes. 22 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

All things for good to prove God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:7-9)

7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

All things for good to bring about God's rewards (James 1:12)

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Work of conforming us (29)

Conforming us to the purpose of God's will (Eph 1:11)

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

Conforming us through the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2)

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Conforming us through being made new in the attitude of the mind (Eph 4:22-24)

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Conforming us through reconciliation (Col 1:21-23)

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Conforming us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Work of justifying us (30)

Justification through faith apart from the law (Rom 3:28)

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Justification that brings peace (Rom 5:1)

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Justification through Jesus' blood (Rom 5:9)

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Justification through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11)

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Justification through grace (Titus 3:7)

7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Assurance of God's Provision (Rom 8:31-34)

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

32 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?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 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.

Provision of deliverance (31-32)

Deliverance through transformation (Phil 3:20-21)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Deliverance through trust (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance through righteousness (Ps 34:19)

19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance because God knows how to deliver (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Provision of righteousness (33)

A righteousness that brings eternal life (Rom 5:21)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A righteousness that we have in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

A righteousness that God made through Jesus (2 Cor 5:21)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

A righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)

5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

A righteousness that comes from God through faith (Phil 3:9)

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Provision of intercession (34)

Deliverance from Satan through Jesus' intercession (Luke 22:31-32)

31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Intercessions because it is commanded (James 5:16)

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Intercessions for God's wisdom and revelations for others (Eph 1:16-17)

16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Intercessions for inner strength for others (Eph 3:16-17)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Assurance of God's Love (Rom 8:35-39)

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

36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

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

39 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.

Love through suffering (35-36)

Love during suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Love during suffering because of future glory (2 Cor 4:17-18)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Love during suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Love during suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

Love through power to conquer (37)

Conqueror because whether we live or die it is gain through Jesus (Phil 1:21)

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Conqueror because we can overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Conqueror because we have the victory (1 Cor 15:56-57)

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conqueror because God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Love through challenges (38-39)

Challenges that test (Matt 4:5-7)

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Challenges where trusting in God who takes small things to defeat the large (1 Sam 17:41-49)

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" 45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." 48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

Challenges that should be overcome by standing firm in God (Dan 3:15-25)

15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." 25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Challenges that may be like being sent out as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:1-3)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Challenges to pray while suffering (James 5:13)

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Certainty of Sanctification (8:28-39)

There is an expression that goes something like this: only two things in this life are certain, death and taxes. Now this may be true for the unbeliever, but for the true believer in Jesus Christ we must add at least one more thing—sanctification. That is the force in these concluding verses of Romans 8. All of the struggles, all of the turmoil, all of the agony, is a part of God's plan to conform us to Himself.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

Verse 28 stresses that not only are all things for God's glory, but also for the good of the Christian. Then, also, it is God who is active in all the affairs of our lives, for "It is God who causes all things to work together." The events of our lives are no accident; they are the handiwork of the sovereign God. We are reminded that it is **all things** which work for our good. This must include those things which are pleasant as well as the unpleasant, the things we would call good, and those which we think bad. No circumstance fails to contribute to our good and God's glory. Finally, we should see that all things work **together**. We cannot look at things in isolation, yet we are incapable of seeing from the beginning to the end, so we must trust in God to accomplish His good and perfect and acceptable will in His own way in our lives.

Verses 29 and 30 remind us that salvation from beginning to the finish is the work of God, and that He loses no one along the way. Those whom God foreknew are those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world, before they did anything, good or evil. The basis of God's free choice is grace, and not the merits of the chosen (for indeed we have no merit before God). God did not look down through the corridors of time and choose those whom He knew would come to trust in Him. The expression 'to know' often conveys the concept of choice (cf. Genesis 18:19; Jeremiah 1:5). To foreknow here and elsewhere (e.g. Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20) can mean 'to choose beforehand,' and such must its meaning be here.⁴³

The sequence of verses 29 and 30 is this: foreknowledge (that is election), predestination, calling, justification, glorification. **Foreknowledge** determines who God's children will be; **predestination** determines what God's people will be (conformed to the image of Christ); **calling** is that point in time when the unbelieving elect is irresistibly invited to be a part of God's family; **justification** is the sinner's participation in the benefits of the work of Christ on his behalf; **glorification** is the full future realization of all that God has purposed us to be. Glorification is spoken of in the past tense because of its certainty of coming to pass. We say to our children sometimes, "If you do thus and so, you've had it." We do not say "You will have it," but "You've had it" because it is a sure thing. So it is with our ultimate and final sanctification. There is no question of its coming to pass.

Do you see that from election to glorification it is entirely in God's control? **Our sanctification does not rely upon our faithfulness, for we would never make it.** Our sanctification relies completely upon God, and what God determines will come to pass. Paul has not said that some of those whom God has chosen will be called, nor that some of those who are called will be glorified. From election to sanctification, it is the work of God and it is certain.

Our response to these things (vv. 31-39). The confidence of the Christian in the light of these certainties is expressed in verses 31-39 by a sequence of questions and answers.

(1) **"What then shall we say to these things?"** (v. 31). If God is on our side, who could be against us? This is not to say that there is no one against us, for Satan is our adversary. But if God is for us, who is Satan to oppose us? I did not have an older brother, but I was an older brother, and there is no greater security than being with big brother. If the sovereign God of the universe is for us, then there is no enemy that can harm us. If God's power was sufficient to save us, if God's love was strong enough to send His only Son to the cross, then there is nothing which He will not do for us as His sons (v. 32).

(2) **"Who will bring a charge against God's elect?"** (v. 33). God, the sovereign judge of the universe, has declared us to be righteous through the work of His Son. Who, then, would dare to accuse us before God?

(3) “Who is the one who condemns?” (v. 34). Would anyone dare to condemn us before the God Who has given His only Son to save us. He has borne our sins on the cross. There is no condemnation. Further, He is at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf.

(4) “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (v. 35). Is there anything in this universe greater than God? Is there any one greater than He? No! Indeed not. If this be true, then there is nothing that can ever separate us from the love of God. Our salvation, our sanctification, is as secure as the God of heaven is strong. It is with this confidence that we may live out our Christian responsibilities, knowing that God is the source of our salvation and our sanctification, and, therefore, it is sure.

Application

(1) We should be thoroughly convinced that the salvation and the sanctification of the saint are fully the work of God. We cannot agree with Charles G. Finney who wrote: “It is self-evident that the entire obedience to God’s law is possible on the ground of natural ability. To deny this is to deny that man is able to do as well as he can. . . . It is, of course, forever settled, that a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, on the ground of natural ability.”⁴⁴

I am convinced that the reason so many Christians throw in the towel in their spiritual lives is that they have been misguided into thinking that their spiritual life is within their ability. From Romans 6, we must conclude that we are responsible to live godly lives, but we are not able to do so, apart from the work of the cross and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

(2) We must realize that even with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, entire sanctification will not be reached in this life. That redemption of which Paul speaks in verses 18-25 is yet future. Though it be future, it is absolutely certain.

(3) Romans 8 gives us the assurance to live confidently and victoriously. Our confidence rests wholly on the sovereignty of God in salvation and sanctification. “Well did James Denney once observe that whereas assurance is a sin in Romanism, and a duty in much of Protestantism, in the New Testament it is simply a fact.”⁴⁵ On the basis of this fact of assurance, we may live the Christian life confidently.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/10-agony-ecstasy-romans-8>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

As this lesson is being written in early 2014, a rare thing has happened in college basketball: a team has finished its regular season without any losses, going 31-0. Despite this flawless record, the team is not ranked #1 in the national polls as it heads into the year-end tournaments. Teams that have losses are ranked ahead of this undefeated team. Several reasons are cited, but the main one is that this team does not belong to one of the so-called power conferences, and therefore its competition (“strength of schedule”) has been inferior. Its victories therefore don’t count as much. This is frustrating for the fans of this team. What more could their team do than win all of its games? We may feel sometimes that our lives are rather unimportant since we don’t belong to a “power conference” of high-visibility Christians. We may feel that our daily struggles to love and obey God are insignificant and even trivial compared with those Christians whose lives seem very influential. Yet that is not the perspective of Romans 8. All of us are important to God. All people are valuable to him. His love is so inclusive that he gave his Son as a sacrifice for the sins of all people, not just the rich or famous. When Paul shouts, “We are more than conquerors,” he does not leave some of us out. When the apostle roars that nothing can separate us from the love of God, he does not follow with a list of exceptions. Let us live each day in the full assurance that God will never pull his love from us and that we have overcome the world through our faith in his Son.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. Every experience in a believer's life will not be pleasant, but we can trust God to work all things out for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28)
2. The experiences of this life are part of God's plan to make us more like Christ (vss. 29-30)
3. Believers are assured of ultimate victory with God on their side (vs. 31)
4. Christ's death gives us confidence that God will not change His mind and condemn us (vss. 32-34)
5. Our troubles drive us to God in faith as we trust Him to use them for His greater plan (vss. 35-36)
6. No enemy or hardship can snatch us from God's loving hand (vss. 37-39)