

“How the Lord Knows Suffering in the Life of the Believer, Part 3”
The Normal Christian Life – Paul's Testimony Still Speaks, Part 7

Review:

- **All Things Work Together For Good Because the Lord Has Ordained It**

Romans 8:28-30

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

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

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

- Verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” So, he reveals that all of these trials and all of this suffering are according to his grand plan that will culminate in our glorification at the adoption or son-placing, the day of our resurrection, or the moment of our transformation at the Rapture of the Church, which is his Body at our translation into heaven’s glory. This encourages us, doesn’t it, and gives us hope? This is Paul’s testimony. Will we receive it from God?

But the apostle goes on further to explain the basis for his great hope, and it is based on the knowledge of God regarding his intentions and destination for us all! It is all about how God sees us and what his work is to accomplish his great plan in our glorification, but also, his work now in the creation and in us. This is all, therefore, about God’s knowledge of his plan and how even now the Spirit of God dwelling within us is fully and completely operating in harmony with that plan as verses 26 & 27 make real and concrete.

These verses really are a conclusion from what he has just written, and the wording “... **for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...**” is intended to mean that **all of the suffering and trials of our lives here in this fallen and tarnished creation are part of his work in conforming us into the image of his Son!**

- **And then those following and blessed words, “that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Yes, the emphasis is on our Lord Jesus, but what about the other emphasis, on “many brethren”?** **That is us! Praise God.** God’s will and His perfect work, therefore, is ongoing in each of us believers today. And the indwelling Spirit of God,

in communion with both the Father God and us, ministers to us as he cries out from within us in words unspeakable, groanings which cannot be uttered, but full of glory, I am sure. I am reminded of these words Paul also wrote about the same time, perhaps as in his letter to the Romans, but here to the Corinthian believers:

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are [being] changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- Take note: “are [being] changed” or “transformed” is in the present tense here! It is his ongoing work as he works all for our good and our glory, both ours **and his**. And if it all begins with the glory of God and ends with the glory of God, what must be true of our current circumstances? Well, they must be glorious indeed, as the Lord God sees it, and may we know this work of the Lord as glorious if we would take the apostle at his word, for truly it is the word of the living God for us today.
- **We are on the path of his choosing indeed, but there are many challenges standing before us on this road to glory, and as that wonderful hymn by Steve Green in his “The Refiner’s Fire” says so well, often from our perspective at least, “on the anvil of his will”:**

[Verse 1]

There burns a fire with sacred heat
White hot with holy flame
And all who dare pass through its blaze
Will not emerge the same
Some as bronze, and some as silver
Some as gold, then with great skill
**All are hammered by their sufferings
On the anvil of His will**

[Chorus]

***“The Refiner’s fire
Has now become my sole desire
Purged and cleansed and purified
That the Lord be glorified
He is consuming my soul
Refining me, making me whole
No matter what I may lose
I choose the Refiner’s fire”***

- Now onwards to our verses 28-30 for today in chapter 8. Here he explains how it can be true that all things are working together for good. How can that be, considering everything we know about the present evil world and our place in it? Adam's sin with all of its consequences has taken quite a toll, indeed, but the will of Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted, nevertheless.

Verse 30 summarizes 28-29 — “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”: He sees it all as accomplished already, even the glorification! For so it has been ordained by the Lord God Almighty. His plan and work are sure indeed.

But this is Paul's view in conformity to the Lord God's, seeing the end from the beginning and all steps in between as well. The point here is that the Lord God has marked out the boundaries of our lives, and our sufferings and that this is all in the context of the fundamental and always supreme will of God as this verse makes very clear: “Yes, all, from beginning to end, is part of God's plan for his saints, from the calling to the justification to the glorification, and in between is the life with all of its joys and burdens and sufferings. All these are marked out with limits on the latter, in this gracious and glorious plan. We are being conformed and transformed by it all, indeed. **The predestination is not about the persons, as many today are proclaiming, but the work of the Lord in us.**

- So no detail has escaped the Father, the Son, or the Spirit as they each work in and around us to fulfill the plan of grace and truth. Praise God. We are in good hands indeed. We may therefore rejoice always, even in our trials, even in our sufferings.

All Things Work Together For Good Because the Lord Has Ordained It. Well, that is critical teaching indeed. How can we truly live our lives spiritually without this knowledge?

Our Outline Today:

- ***All Things Work Together For Good, and That Is Changing Everything!***
- ***Our Response to Four Questions Reveals the Needs of Our Hearts***
- ***In All These Things We Are More Than Conquerors. Amen.***

I. All Things Work Together For Good, and That Is Changing Everything!

- And so, our apostle writes here, we are all on the road to glory! So much has changed under grace. We may not yet have grasped it fully, so his focus in our verses today is most relevant to our walk in newness of life. All things do work together for good because of these changes, under the fullness of his grace.

Romans 8:31-34

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

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

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

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

- To further encourage us to take to heart what he has written, the apostle now asks us some questions. It should be clear that these are all intended to be “rhetorical”, or should become rhetorical for each of us being taught through them the truths concerning our revealed relationship with Almighty God in the light of our glorious redemption in Christ.
 - But to begin now with questions that may try our hearts, our apostle asks a general and overarching one to alert us to the importance of what is coming next: “What shall we then say to these things?” This is like asking what further questions for God Almighty shall we dare to utter, considering all that has already been revealed here? In other words, what is our heart’s response to all that has gone before? For are we not standing in awe of the magnificence of the redemptive plan of God at this point and perhaps unable to audibly, at least, respond at all?

He introduces these further questions with this overarching one and follows it with the answer: “If God be for us, who [or what] can be against us?” And his answer: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us [or graciously give us] all [these] things?” Yes, the glory indeed, but also the burdens and the trials. Right? Nothing can prevent the working of God Almighty from accomplishing his purposes. Nothing. Amen. Woe to those who claim otherwise, and there are so very many, sadly.

- Then the next question: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?” What can stand in the way of the work of God according to his perfect plan? For, “It is God that justifieth.” This presumes an argument from the greater to the lessor. Justification of sinners is the greatest work of redemption, isn't it? So something lessor is no issue at all. Nothing can prevent the Lord God therefore as he brings us all into his eternal glory. Nothing. Amen.
- Then his questioning continues with “Who is he that condemneth?": The answer is implied in these words: “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Nothing can prevent the Lord taking us to our final destination. The resurrection and glorification of our Lord and his constant “intercession” as well guarantees it. The plan shall be complete. Indeed. Amen.
- But he is not finished, for one question remains in case we are not yet convinced: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”. But before we reach that here and his final and concluding words of encouragement, let's pause to consider what he has been saying here for these questions are not only meant to be rhetorical, but are intended to be that in the highest possible sense, for they underscore for us the very essence of what God's work in our days is really all about: namely, manifesting the grace of God worked out in our lives, moment by moment, as he takes us all unfailingly onwards on the road of his and our glory. For it is his eternal life that is being increasingly manifested in us and through us. Amen.
- Sadly, and disgracefully, I might add, many of God's dear children have never grasped the full scope of this teaching, for they are largely unaware of what God's “dispensational plan of grace” is.

All things work together for good, and that has changed so very much: Our hope, our expectations, our lives!! Changed forever!

Now, with the risk of being overly repetitive, we shall ask again, in Paul's stead, the same four questions:

II. Our Response to Four Questions Reveals the Needs of Our Hearts:

Question One:

[READ] Romans 8:31-32

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

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

- Verse 31: Now, this is the overriding question: “What is our response?”, given all that has just been affirmed here by our apostle? And the response is intended, therefore, to be the general truth that overshadows all that follows. We know the implied answer already, one would hope. NOTHING can truly be against us since God is surely greater than any created being or thing (even Satan)! And he is “for us”! If we dwelt here a moment, we would surely be blessed.
- Verse 32: So the measure of God’s free gift to us is the value to him of his Son. This is such a profound truth in itself, but there is more hidden here. He was “delivered for us all” that his life in resurrection might become ours (1 Corinthians 15:45), life after suffering and death of his only son. And he writes here that these same things will be “graciously” provided to us as well. This would include not only his new life, but also his ongoing suffering due to his intimate connection with each of us. This is what the whole passage is about, isn’t it?
 - “... freely given”: to grant as a favor or freely; this is the realm where we are living, of which Paul writes here. It is where the full magnitude of the grace of Christ, God’s only son, is focused, on each of us! Praise God. Now, to learn how in God’s sight this all works itself out:
 - “with him”: together with him; this is one of Paul’s favorite words, and he often uses it in this same way (See Eph. 2:4 and following verses, for example). So there is a grand exchange here indicated, which we have seen often before in our studies. It is a sharing that is at the heart of what God is doing today under grace.
- This exchange is indicated at the end of Romans chapter 4, and also wherever that teaching is used as the basis for his revelations concerning the Normal Christian Life as in 2 Corinthians 4:

Romans 4:23-25

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was **delivered** for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

2 Corinthians 4:10-12

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always **delivered unto death for Jesus' sake**, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

- Now we may begin to see why this teaching is so important for our understanding. We are subject to many trials in this life that we did not ask for or even perhaps expect, but they are ours, it seems, by the will of God, as the apostle writes here, so powerfully. Aren't these words calling you into the fellowship of his service under grace? I remember so well and shall never forget the moment in my history when they called me.

For this is how God is working today, to bring us into his service as joint participants in the spreading abroad of the glories of his resurrection and life. This is indeed the Normal Christian Life:

[READ] 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you *is* stedfast, knowing, that **as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.**

- So, to summarize these blessed words, Paul here proclaims that this greatest of all exchanges was “worth it all” to Almighty God, but then the question for us is this: since we are accounted one in Christ, was it “worth it all” to us who are “co-participants” with Christ? Are we willing to suffer together with him in this life? This merits our careful consideration.

Question Two:

[READ] Romans 8:33 **Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?**
It is God that justifieth.

- Verse 33: Since we have already been justified (declared righteous in Christ Jesus), no charge against us may legitimately be brought by anyone! Most of this section is in the past tense, including the justification in verse 30. When one has been declared righteous (perfectly, that is) by Almighty God, then no charge can stand. Christ himself is our intercessor:

Question Three:

[READ] Romans 8:34 **Who is he that condemneth?** *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

- Verse 34: No judgment against us may be brought since Christ is our judge, AND our intercessor. His intercession covers us even against Satan's charges.

Question Four:

[READ] Romans 8:35-36

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 thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

- Verses 35-36: Even God's gift of love towards us is secure and surely eternal, whatever happens here in this life! By implication, NOTHING can interfere with this love.

The proof has already been given here. Do you know where? [Hint: See verse 32!]

III. In All These Things We Are More Than Conquerors, Amen.

Romans 8:37-39

37 Nay, **in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that 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 creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **Verses 37-39: All the bases have been covered. We are secure in our Lord Jesus Christ, for now and for all eternity. Amen.**
 - Verse 37 is in reference to the past tense of Christ's completed work for us!! All depends on that being once and for all, of course. WHATEVER OCCURS, WE ARE SAFE IN HIM!
 - This is present tense, but the context makes it clear that it will be true for eternity! The promise in verses 38 & 39 is secured to us by Christ's love, verses 35-37, and that will never change according to our apostle. Do we believe it?

Paul was persuaded. Are we? May it be so. Amen.

Conclusions & Exhortations:

- Have we been encouraged by Paul's teaching? The four questions were digging deep into our souls, for the test comes so often in our trials. But even our sufferings are part of his eternal plan of glory, for us and for the creation in general. The road to glory is paved, not with our good intentions, but with the foundation stones placed there by Almighty God. And that road endures even longer than a Roman road from antiquity, even into eternity.
- Our Lord God has a purpose, and we are in the very center of this work. We have every reason therefore, to rejoice. And again I say, rejoice. And what can we add? Nothing at all. Amen. So be it.

All Things Work Together For Good, But Now We See the Rest of the Story. It all fits together perfectly and in the center of it all is the love of God for us redemptively. So much was accomplished for us when our sin and sins were removed from the picture once and for all.

“Why Do All Things Work Together For Good?”, is our final question. And Paul's teaching on this is so very clear. The answer is that the love of God for us requires it. It is that simple.

[READ] Philippians 1:28-30

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

You are beloved of God! Amen.

