

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 8:18-39 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

The salvation of Christians, which was *purposed* before the creation of the world by God the Father, *merited* within past history by Christ the Son, *applied* throughout history until today by the Holy Spirit and *proclaimed* in the gospel (1:16) is absolutely certain!

The salvation of Christians is *grounded* in God's eternal purpose of election, which is his unmerited and unchanging love for those who come to faith. When we were still sinners, enemies of God and completely lost (5:6,8,10), God was the first to show his love for us¹!

The salvation of Christians has been *earned* by Christ's sacrifice of atonement on the cross two thousand years ago and is presently *realised* by Christ's sovereign reign and unceasing high priestly work².

The salvation of Christians is *applied* to individual hearts and lives, where it is made a reality. This is done through the Holy Spirit that comes to dwell in the Christians.

In Romans 8:18-39, Paul continues to teach the security and assurance of believers in Christ.

OUTLINE

(IV) 8:18-28. The salvation of Christians is secure, because it is grounded in the hope that eventually all things will be renewed!

a. God's work *for* the Christian: the future renewal of everything (8:18-25).

b. God's work *in* the Christian: the present intercession of the Holy Spirit amidst his weaknesses and sufferings (8:26-27).

c. God's work *over* the Christian: his sovereign control over every circumstance and event amidst his suffering (8:28).

(V) 8:29-30. The salvation of Christians is secure, because it is grounded in the fact that they are the objects of God's eternal plan of salvation.

a. God's foreknowledge (8:29a).

b. God's predestination (foreordination) (8:29b).

c. God's calling (8:30a).

d. God's justification (8:30b).

e. God's glorification (8:30c).

(VI) 8:31-34. The salvation of Christians is secure, because God is for them and has given to them everything required to complete his eternal purpose for them.

a. God's total backing (8:31).

b. God's self-sacrificial and gracious giving (8:32).

c. God's vindication (8:33-34).

(VII) 8:35-39. The salvation of Christians is secure, because the love of God for them is infinite and unchangeable!

a. Christians derive no comfort from hardships and persecutions (8:35-36).

b. Christians are more than conquerors over people and over things (8:37-39).

EXPLANATION

(IV) 8:18-28. The salvation of Christians is secure, because it is grounded in the hope that eventually all things will be renewed!

Three facts encourage Christians amidst their present sufferings: The future renewal of everything, the present intercession of the Holy Spirit and the eternal sovereign control of God over everything that happens. God is working for, in and over Christians!

a. God's work *for* the Christian: the future renewal of everything (8:18-25).

8:18. For I consider (vipn) that the sufferings in the present (now) time are not worthy (to be compared with) the glory that is to be³ (vppa+) revealed (+vnap) in us.

8:19. For the creation, with outstretched head⁴, is eagerly (expectantly and patiently) looking forward⁵ (vipn) to the revelation of the sons of God.

¹ 1 John 4:19

² Hebrews 7:25

³ G: melló

⁴ G: apokaradokia

⁵ G: apekdechomai

8:20. For the creation was *once for all* subjected (viap) to futility⁶ (aimlessness, purposelessness, transitoriness), not willingly⁷) (i.e. was subjected against its own will), but (it was) because of him who subjected (vpaa) it, in hope
8:21. that also the creation itself will be set free⁸ (vifp) from its bondage to decay (corruption, deterioration)⁹, (leading) to¹⁰ the glorious freedom of the children of God.
8:22. For we know (by relationship with God, and by reflection on his revelation)¹¹ (vira) that the whole creation continues to groan together¹² (vipa) and suffer agony together¹³ (vipa) until now.
8:23. Not only this, but also we ourselves, who have (vppa) the first fruits of the Spirit, groan continually (vipa) within ourselves as we eagerly continue to await¹⁴ (vppn) our adoption as sons¹⁵, (that is), the redemption¹⁶ of our bodies.
8:24. For it was in hope that we were *once for all* saved (viap); but hope that is seen (vppp) is (vipa) no hope, for who continues to hope (vipa) for what he continues to see (vipa)?
8:25. But since we continue to hope (vipa) for what we do not see (vipa), we continue to wait for it (vipn) with patient endurance¹⁷.

The present sufferings of Christians are temporary (8:18). The present sufferings of Christians are not inconsistent with being a Christian. But the coming glory of Christians makes these difficulties look insignificant. The sufferings are the result of human sin. The future glory is the result of God's grace. For Christians, suffering is temporal, but glory is never-ending.

Paul is thinking of general sufferings: sickness, disappointments, losses, failures, frustrations, being mortal, etc. that belong to this present age that stretches to Christ's second coming. The glory that will be revealed refers not only to the new earth, but to the glorious reality of living in the presence of Christ and being transformed into the likeness of Christ. That is why the glory is revealed *in* the Christians!

Hope in God's future renewal of everything, including the resurrection of their mortal bodies, sustains Christians amidst their sufferings.

The subjection of the present creation to futility and decay is temporary (8:19-23). Paul uses personification to describe how the whole creation is presently *groaning* under its degradation and is eagerly looking forward and expectantly longing for the revelation of this future glory. Here the creation is the whole created universe except human beings (and angels). God subjected the whole creation to share in the curse of fallen man, that is, to *futility*: to be *transitory* and bound to *decay*. Since the fall of man into sin the creation's potential has been arrested, its development curbed, its intended glory chained. Therefore it groans under its *purposelessness*. It groans because it does not achieve the proper purpose, which God intended for it at the original creation. The various parts of creation groan together as a grand symphony of sighs. Remember, they are birth-pangs, not death-pangs. They are followed by new life!

The future renewal of all things is a matter of hope, future certainty and future reality (8:24-25)! Also Christians groan inwardly and wait eagerly for the revelation of this future glory. Christians have the Holy Spirit as *the first fruits* or *deposit*, which guarantees that they will possess this future inheritance of glory in all its fullness.

However, the groaning of the whole creation and of Christians is not hopeless. It is like the travail of an expecting mother. They know that after the agony, glory will certainly come!

In the future, at the renewal of all things¹⁸, the whole creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and share in the future glory of Christians: the glorious liberty of the children of God!

The whole creation will be shaken and renewed. At the second coming of Christ the whole creation will be shaken. The whole material universe will be shaken to pieces and the only things that will survive are those that are unshakeable! Here the transitory nature of the created universe is contrasted to the new order that Christ brings¹⁹.

The present heaven and earth that has become like a worn-out garment will be rolled up and changed. Here the transitory nature of the created universe is contrasted to the eternity of Christ²⁰.

⁶ G: mataiotés

⁷ G: hekón

⁸ G: eleutheroó

⁹ G: phthora

¹⁰ G: eis

¹¹ G: oida

¹² G: sustenazó

¹³ G: sunódinó

¹⁴ G: apekdechomai

¹⁵ G: huiiothesia

¹⁶ G: apolutrósisis

¹⁷ G: hupomoné

¹⁸ Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13

¹⁹ Hebrews 12:26-29; cf. Haggai 2:6-7

²⁰ Hebrews 1:10-12; Psalm 102:25-27

The present heavens²¹ and earth²² will disappear with a roar, that is, will pass away, come to an end with great suddenness. The elements will break up (decompose) into their component parts (molecules and atoms) through burning by fire. The earth with all the works in her (scientific mysteries: physics, chemistry, probably astronomy, cosmology; and every invention, creation and construction of man, however hidden) will be laid bare, that is, *will be brought into the light and thus found out*²³. *Nothing that ever happened will remain hidden*²⁴. *The works of man will consequently be punished or rewarded*. They will be fairly punished because in the bright light of God they are found not to be blameless. They will be rewarded because they are found to be unstained²⁵.

“Whatever can be shaken, will be removed”²⁶. God will consume everything that is unworthy of him in the white heat of his holiness and purity²⁷. Christ’s angels will weed out of his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil²⁸. Every plant that the heavenly Father has not planted, will be pulled up by the roots²⁹. And the unbelievers (those who do not believe in Jesus Christ) and the unrighteous will go away into the eternal fire, that is, eternal punishment³⁰.

However, “whatever cannot be shaken, will remain”³¹. God’s Kingdom that Christians share with Christ is unshakeable³²! The material heaven and earth will be renewed. God in Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem (the Church) and all the perfect conditions of God’s heaven (God’s dwelling)³³ will descend as the New Jerusalem onto the new earth and become the home of Christians³⁴. The world will be clothed in new beauty. The mountains will turn into fertile fields³⁵ and deserts will rejoice and blossom³⁶. God’s Word will accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it. The mountains and hills will burst into song before God’s people, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars, the myrtle will grow³⁷. The harmony of heaven will come down to earth, so that whatever still works at cross-purposes, choking one another to death, will then live and work in harmony. For example, the wild animals will dwell in peace together³⁸.

The second coming of Christ will be accompanied by the great and glorious change of the external world. It will be ‘the renewal of all things’³⁹ or ‘the restoration of everything’⁴⁰. The two words have the same meaning here.

[Some people object that the renewal of a literal world would require us to understand all such passages about the glory of the future earth *literally*. This for example, would require us to believe that “the temple will again stand on top of the mountains”⁴¹, the old earth will be literally ‘refurbished’, etc. This argument is wrong, because when the Bible says, “the heavens declare the glory of God”⁴², then we do not understand the words *literally* as if inanimate nature actually speaks human language, although we do understand them as speaking of the literal material and visible heavens! Likewise, the prophetic descriptions of the state of the earth at the time of the second coming of Christ should not be understood *literally materialistically*, although they speak of a great and glorious change/transformation of literally the external world! There will be no literal Jewish temple on a mountain on the new earth, because “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple”⁴³! The Bible does not contradict itself. Every human teaching, which is in conflict with the clear teaching of the Bible, is false.]

Christians will be manifested in their true character as sons of God (8:19). The full glory of their adoption as sons will then be completely realised, especially in the resurrection of their physical bodies (8:23). The resurrected body will be something other than “flesh and blood”⁴⁴.

²¹ 2 Peter 3:10

²² Matthew 24:35

²³ 2 Peter 3:10

²⁴ Ecclesiastes 12:14; Hebrews 4:13; Revelation 20:12

²⁵ 2 Peter 3:14; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:5-11; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

²⁶ Hebrews 12:27a

²⁷ Hebrews 12:29; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

²⁸ Matthew 13:41

²⁹ Matthew 15:13

³⁰ Matthew 25:41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 21:8

³¹ Hebrews 12:27b

³² Hebrews 12:28; cf. Matthew 13:43; 25:34,46

³³ Hebrews 12:22-24

³⁴ 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-5

³⁵ Isaiah 29:17

³⁶ Isaiah 35:1-2; Isaiah 32:15-16

³⁷ Isaiah 55:10-13

³⁸ Isaiah 11:1-9

³⁹ G: paliggenesia. Matthew 19:28; cf. Revelation 21:5

⁴⁰ G: apokatastasis. Acts 3:21

⁴¹ cf. Isaiah 2:2

⁴² Psalm 19:1

⁴³ Revelation 21:22

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:50

The Christian hope in this future renewal of all things. Christians are characterised by having hope in this future renewal of all things! Christians are saved by grace through faith⁴⁵ and never by merely hope (5:1-5)⁴⁶. Their *salvation is sustained by hope*, that is, their present salvation is conditioned by hope and oriented to hope. *Christians know that the salvation they now possess is incomplete and that the future final and complete salvation is a matter of hope as well as a matter of future certainty and reality!*

Worldly hope consists of wishes, desires and longings, based on useless human views of things (even of human scientific statements) or on the empty promises of false prophets. Christian hope is grounded in God's revealed Word and is a certain future reality⁴⁷. While faith takes possession of the salvation merited by Christ in the past, hope takes possession of the future blessings of this salvation!

When Christians are impatient about their present sufferings, they express their *dissatisfaction* with God's design. Or when Christians claim for the present life elements which belong to the future perfect renewal of all things (for example: absolute freedom from sickness and sorrow based on Revelation 21:4-5), they also express their *impatience* with God's plan.

b. God's work *in* the Christian: the present intercession of the Holy Spirit
amidst his weaknesses and sufferings (8:26-27).

8:26. And in the same way, the Spirit always comes to help (lends a hand together)⁴⁸ (vipn) (us) in our weakness. For what we should pray for⁴⁹ (vsad) as one should⁵⁰ (vipa), we do not know⁵¹ (vira), but the Spirit himself continually intercedes on behalf of⁵² (vipa) (us) with unspoken (that are not expressed in words, too deep for words)⁵³ groaning⁵⁴.

[Latin translation: 'inenarrabilis', unspeakable, inexpressible, that cannot be expressed at all].

8:27. And he who continually searches⁵⁵ (vppa) our hearts knows⁵⁶ (vira) the mind (i.e. the intention) of the Spirit, because the Spirit continually intercedes (vipa) for the saints in accordance with God ('s will)."

The Holy Spirit intercedes for the inexpressible and unknown needs of the Christian. 'In the same way' means, just as hope in the glorious future sustains the Christian in his present sufferings, so the Holy Spirit helps him in his present weaknesses.

The *weaknesses* may be any kind of weakness: either the ordinary sufferings of a broken world or the specific sufferings for Christ's sake. They may be temptations⁵⁷ or thorns in the flesh⁵⁸. It is certainly not restricted to their weakness in the matter of prayer!

The Christian is sustained amidst his present weaknesses and sufferings by the continual help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is represented as humbly taking upon himself a part of the burden of sorrows, which Christians bear and as continuously coming to the aid of Christians.

There is always moral and spiritual failure on the part of the Christian (cf. chapter 7), so that he falls short of what he ought to be, do or pray. The Christian does not always know what he ought to pray for, that is, what prayer suits a particular situation. Although he knows what to pray for generally⁵⁹, he often does not know what to pray for in any particular need, difficulty or situation. He is not sure whether the content of his prayer is in harmony with God's will⁶⁰. Often the Christian does not even know the deeply hidden needs of his own heart. Therefore he does not express these needs in his prayer or cannot express them in his prayer.

Prayer is directed to God (the Father)⁶¹. God searches the heart⁶². The Holy Spirit lives in the heart of the Christian⁶³ and knows the real needs of the Christian. Therefore God always knows the mind of the Holy Spirit. *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and always prays according to God's perfect will for the very needs, which the Christian:*

⁴⁵ Ephesians 2:8-9

⁴⁶ cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12; Colossians 1:4-5

⁴⁷ Hebrews 3:6; 6:11-12,18-19; 7:19; 10:23; 11:1,10,13,16,26; 12:3

⁴⁸ G: sunantilambanomai

⁴⁹ G: proseuchomai

⁵⁰ G: katho dei

⁵¹ G: oida

⁵² G: huperentugchanó

⁵³ G: alalétos

⁵⁴ G: stenagmos

⁵⁵ G: ereunaó

⁵⁶ G: oida

⁵⁷ Hebrews 4:15

⁵⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:5

⁵⁹ Matthew 6:9-13; Colossians 1:9-12

⁶⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 1:22-24; 1 John 5:14

⁶¹ Matthew 6:9

⁶² Jeremiah 17:10; cf. Revelation 2:23

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 3:16

- *does not express in words (Greek: alalétos) - unexpressed (not expressed in words, but sounds) groanings/sighs, because he does not know how to express his needs.*
- *cannot express in words (Latin: inenarrabilis) - inexpressible (inaudible/soundless) groanings/sighs, because he does not know that he has those needs*

As a true Advocate, the Holy Spirit identifies himself with the real needs of the Christian and intercedes with God that these needs be met!

Five important observations with regard to the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

(1) The first observation: It is the Holy Spirit who intercedes and not the Christian who prays. Some Christians interpret this passage as dealing with how Christians pray to God. They say that the Holy Spirit causes the Christian to pray with inexpressible groanings, that is, with aspirations, desires and emotions, which words cannot express, which are heard, but not understood. They claim that the Holy Spirit dictates to them what they ought to say in prayer and how they should present their cause in prayer: whether with intelligible words or with unintelligible sounds.

This interpretation would too easily identify the Christian's expressed (uttered, audible) groanings or noises as absolutely an expression of the Holy Spirit praying in and through him. It would also cause the Christian to think that the highest form of prayer, which God approves, is praying in unintelligible words! Other Christians even identify this form of prayer with 'praying in tongues'⁶⁴. However, *praying in tongues is said to be the praying of people and not the praying of the Spirit!*

The correct understanding is that it is the Holy Spirit himself who intercedes. The emphasis is not how the Christian prays to God, but how *the Holy Spirit* intercedes with God for the Christian. It is not man who prays, but the Spirit who intercedes! It is not the intention of man's prayer, but the intention of the Spirit's prayer that is known by God. God the Father listens, not to the uttered groanings of man's prayer, but to the unuttered groanings of the Spirit's prayer (8:27).

(2) The second observation: The Spirit's intercession (8:27) is like Christ's intercession (8:34). In the Gospel of John, *the Spirit is the Representative or Advocate⁶⁵ of Christ*. He represents Jesus Christ and his thoughts and will in the Christian on earth⁶⁶. However, in the book of Romans, *the Spirit is the Representative Advocate⁶⁷ of the Christian*. He represents the Christian and his needs to God in heaven (cf. 8:34)⁶⁸! The Spirit takes his stand next to the Christian on earth and presents his needs to God the Father in heaven. Thus, the Christian has Christ as his Intercessor in the court of heaven and the Spirit as his Intercessor in the theatre of his own heart. *Christ's intercession is like a father's prayer* for all the family members, while *the Spirit's intercession is like a mother's prayer* presenting a child's specific needs to the heavenly Father.

(3) The third observation: The groanings of the Spirit are not prayers formulated in intelligible words. The Spirit's intercession certainly has content, but is either expressed and heard or not expressed and not heard at all.

The original Greek text⁶⁹ and the Syrian and Armenian translations of the Bible say: "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with *unspoken* (not expressed in words, wordless, too deep for words) groanings: groanings that *are not expressed or heard in intelligible words*, but are nevertheless expressed and heard in unintelligible sounds.

The Latin translation of the Bible says: The Spirit intercedes for us with *unspeakable* (unutterable, inexpressible, soundless) groanings: groanings that *cannot be expressed or heard* at all.

(4) The fourth observation: The Spirit's intercession ascends to God's throne in the form of the Christian's unexpressed or inexpressible groanings or sighs. The Spirit's groanings can only be understood as *registered in the heart of the Christian*, because it is there that God searches the Christian and there that he finds these groanings or sighs:

- *not expressed in words (Greek: alalétos) - unexpressed (but audibly expressed in sounds), because he does not know how to express his needs.*
- *or cannot be expressed in words (Latin: inenarrabilis) - inexpressible (inaudible/soundless), because he does not know that he has those needs.*

The Spirit's intercession by means of these groaning/sighs *makes use of the Christian as his instrument of prayer*. Therefore, the groaning/sighs are expressed in either audible sounds or only in inaudible sighs.

However, *the Christian should be careful not to confuse his own praying in audible sounds or inaudible sighs with the praying of the Holy Spirit!* Although the Christian is aware that the Spirit makes use of these groanings in his heart to intercede with God for him, he cannot claim that when he expresses his prayer in either unintelligible words or sighs or other noises that these are the intercessions of the Spirit! Christians must not forget that God searches the motives and

⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:14-19

⁶⁵ G: paraklétos

⁶⁶ John 14:16-17,26; 16:14; cf. Romans 8:9-10

⁶⁷ G: paraklétos

⁶⁸ Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2

⁶⁹ G: alalétos, from 'laleó', 'to speak'

intentions of the heart (8:27a)⁷⁰! Romans 8:26-27 speaks about how the Holy Spirit intercedes with God for the Christian and not about how the Christian should (may) pray to God!

(5) The fifth observation: God knows that the Spirit's intercession is in accordance with his perfect will. God continually searches the heart of the Christian. He knows everything in it⁷¹ and he knows the content, meaning and intent of the Spirit's intercession for the Christian. Romans 8:26-27 speaks about what the Holy Spirit intercedes with God for the Christian and not about what the Christian is praying to God!

The Christian cannot claim that what he thinks he is praying in either unintelligible words or sighs or other noises is what the Spirit is interceding for him! The content of the Spirit's intercession is not revealed to the Christian!

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and thinks exactly as God, the Spirit's intercession is perfect and must always be effective! It never fails! That is why not a single genuine Christian is ever lost (8:29-30). That is also why nothing happens to the Christian which does not have God's permission and which does not genuinely contribute to the attainment of God's perfect plan for him (8:28)! These groanings and sighs in the Christian's heart point to the fact that God does "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine"⁷²!

c. God's work over the Christian: his sovereign control over every circumstance and event amidst his suffering (8:28).

8:28. And we know⁷³ (vira) that to those who continually love (vppa) God all things continually work together (cooperate)(vipa) for good, (that is,) to those who are (vppa) called⁷⁴ according to (his) purpose⁷⁵.

The Christian is not immune from suffering. Nevertheless, a believer is sustained amidst his present sufferings by God's sovereign control of every particular event or circumstance in his life.

This is a comfort, encouragement and assurance only for those who are called according to God's purpose and who love God continuously. Believers know this by their own experience⁷⁶, by the experience of other believers⁷⁷ and by the teachings of the Bible⁷⁸. They have this comfort, encouragement and assurance in all kind of circumstances without restriction.

Both good and bad situations cooperate together to attain God's perfect plan with the world and with every Christian. The context speaks of all sufferings and afflictions of the present time (8:17-18) and of the future time (8:35-39). The circumstances may include prosperity⁷⁹, poverty⁸⁰, weaknesses⁸¹, trials⁸², catastrophes⁸³, discipline⁸⁴, persecutions⁸⁵ and suffering⁸⁶. Even evil designs are overruled by God for good⁸⁷. Also entities lying outside the personal experience of Christians are divinely ordered and directed to work for good of those who love God. For example: angels⁸⁸, Satan and demons⁸⁹, the nations in the world together with their rulers⁹⁰ and the mighty forces of nature⁹¹.

Every single circumstance works together with all the other circumstances to accomplish God's perfect plan for each Christian. Many of the things happening to Christians, like sickness, wars and the persecution by non-Christians, are evil in themselves, but due to God's perfect love, grace and wisdom, he makes even those evil things work together for good to both the individual Christian, to his family and friends and to the progress of his Kingdom in the world. Thus, ultimately, not one single detail works for evil against Christians!

(V) 8:29-30. The salvation of Christians is secure, because it is grounded in the fact that they are the objects of God's eternal plan of salvation.

⁷⁰ Hebrews 4:12-13

⁷¹ 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Jeremiah 17:9-10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 4:13

⁷² Ephesians 3:20

⁷³ G: oida

⁷⁴ G: klétos

⁷⁵ G: prosthesis

⁷⁶ Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 7:9; Nehemiah 1:5; Psalm 37:17-19,39-40; 97:10; Isaiah 56:6-7; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 8:3; James 1:12; 2:5

⁷⁷ Joshua 24:2-3; Acts 5:17-42; 8:1-4; 10:1-48; 13:44-52; 15:36-40; 26:1-23

⁷⁸ Genesis 45:5-9; 50:15-21; Jeremiah 29:11

⁷⁹ 1 Timothy 6:17-19

⁸⁰ Proverbs 30:8-9

⁸¹ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

⁸² James 1:2-5

⁸³ Luke 13:1-5

⁸⁴ Hebrews 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8

⁸⁵ Matthew 5:10-12; Romans 8:17-18

⁸⁶ Romans 5:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:12

⁸⁷ Genesis 50:20; Nehemiah 4:15; Proverbs 16:4

⁸⁸ Hebrews 1:14

⁸⁹ Ephesians 6:10-18

⁹⁰ Psalm 2:1-12; 48:4-8; 149:6-9; Acts 9:15

⁹¹ 1 Samuel 12:18-20; 1 Kings 8:35-40; Luke 8:24-25

a. God's foreknowledge (8:29a).

8:29. (We know) that those God *once for all* foreknew (choose beforehand)⁹² (viaa) he also *once for all* foreordained (predestined)⁹³ (viaa) (to be) conformed to the likeness of his Son, so that he might⁹⁴ be (vnpa) the firstborn⁹⁵ among many brothers.

The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature says that the verb 'to foreknow' used of God means 'to choose beforehand' in Romans 8:29 (active of God) and 1 Peter 1:20 (passive of Christ) and the verb used of Jews means 'to know from time past' (for a long time) in Acts 26:5 (active of people). And the Lexicon says that the noun⁹⁶ means 'foreknowledge' in the sense of 'God's omniscient wisdom and intention' in Acts 2:23 (of Christ) and 1 Peter 1:2 (of Christians). *God not only knows beforehand, but determines beforehand everything that will later happen in history.* God's foreknowledge is the basis and condition for man coming to know God.

God has an eternal plan that cannot and will not fail⁹⁷!

- **God had a plan for Jesus Christ:** God *chose* Jesus Christ before the creation of the world, but Jesus Christ was only revealed to the world in these last times⁹⁸. "He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself"⁹⁹. "This man was handed over to you (sinful people on earth) *by God's set purpose and foreknowledge* and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him"¹⁰⁰.
- **God also has a plan for each Christian:** "From the beginning God *chose* you (Christians) to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He *called* you to this (salvation: justification and sanctification) through our gospel"¹⁰¹, which has been proclaimed throughout history (3:21; 10:18). God has an eternal purpose, in which he chose certain people to be saved and in which he *predestined* them to be conformed to the likeness of Christ (8:29-30)¹⁰². It is the responsibility of every Christian to make his *election and calling sure*¹⁰³ by first receiving what God gives¹⁰⁴ and secondly by making every effort to grow in Christ likeness¹⁰⁵.

God's foreknowledge is not conditional election, but sovereign election (8:29a). God's foreknowledge¹⁰⁶ is not God's knowledge beforehand of who would believe in the future. This would make the faith of the believer the determinative factor and the foreknowledge of God conditional on man's faith. God's foreknowledge is rather *God's knowledge of whom he selected (chose) to believe in the future.* This shows that God's foreknowledge is not conditional election, but *sovereign election!*

Conditional election is grounded in (determined by) what man would do in the future. Conditional election believes that God chooses those people whom he knows will choose him (will have faith in Christ) in the future. Christians who believe in conditional election, must add an extra clause to their interpretation of the words 'God's foreknowledge', namely, God foreknows "those who would repent and believe in the future". The Bible does not warrant the addition of this unwritten clause¹⁰⁷. *Christians, who believe in conditional election, regard the ground of their election as something in man: man's free will, man's faith, man accepting Jesus, man's good works, etc. instead of something in God: God's purpose, God's grace, God's love¹⁰⁸!*

Sovereign election is grounded on (determined by) what God did before time existed. God's foreknowledge certainly includes his pre-science (knowledge before) of everything that will happen in future history, but God's foreknowledge is much more than his pre-science. *God knows beforehand everything that will happen, because God determines beforehand everything that will happen! He knows before who would believe, because he determines before*

⁹² G: proginóskó

⁹³ G: prohorizó

⁹⁴ G: eis to

⁹⁵ G: prótotokos

⁹⁶ G: prognósis

⁹⁷ cf. Isaiah 14:24,27

⁹⁸ 1 Peter 1:20

⁹⁹ Hebrews 9:26

¹⁰⁰ Acts 2:23-24

¹⁰¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

¹⁰² cf. Ephesians 1:4

¹⁰³ 2 Peter 1:10

¹⁰⁴ 2 Peter 1:4-5; cf. Philippians 2:12

¹⁰⁵ 2 Peter 1:5-9; cf. Philippians 2:11

¹⁰⁶ G: prognósis < proginóskó

¹⁰⁷ cf. Revelation 22:18-19

¹⁰⁸ Romans 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:9

who will believe. In his sovereignty God gives faith to them¹⁰⁹. 'Faith' is in the first place a sovereign gift from God and only in the second place a responsibility of man to exercise when it is given to him¹¹⁰.

Foreknowledge in the Old Testament. The word 'to know' or 'knowledge' in the Bible has a very special meaning: It does not simply refer to *intellectual knowledge* of certain facts, but to a *special relationship* between two parties. In one sense it refers to the intimate love of the husband for his wife in the sexual relationship¹¹¹. In another sense, it refers to the intimate love of God for those he chose to be his own people¹¹². Therefore, God's foreknowledge is *God's intimate love for those he chose beforehand*. The people God foreknew (8:29) are equivalent to the people he loved with a distinguishing or selective love beforehand, that is, those he chose before the creation of the world (8:33)¹¹³. Thus, God's foreknowledge can never mean conditional election. It can only mean sovereign election!

In the Old Testament, the word 'to know'¹¹⁴ refers to *God's selective knowledge which regards a person with favour and makes him an object of his love and care*¹¹⁵. For example, "Abraham is chosen" (which means 'to know' and in the pluperfect tense means 'known forever')¹¹⁶. It is here correctly translated with 'chosen'! For example "Israel is chosen" (which means 'to know' and in the second aorist tense means 'once for all known')¹¹⁷. It is here correctly translated with 'chosen'!

Foreknowledge in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the word 'foreknowledge' is used in the sense of *choosing (selecting, determining) beforehand who is loved*. Note the following examples:

- Matthew 7:21-23; John 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:19. In all these passages the word 'to know' is used in the sense of *selective knowledge*. God (Jesus) knows whom he intimately loves and chooses to belong to himself.
- Acts 2:23. Christ was crucified according to God's "purpose and foreknowledge". That is, God did not merely have *pre-knowledge* that this would happen, but actually *pre-determined* that this should happen¹¹⁸!
- 1 Peter 1:2. The particular situation the Christians in Asia Minor found themselves in (they were strangers in the world and scattered to various provinces) was due to the fact that they had been "chosen according to God's foreknowledge, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, and for obedience to Christ". That is, in eternity God chose them according to his gracious selective foreknowledge, and in time he worked this out by regenerating them through his Spirit. His purpose with their election or pre-determination was that they would be sanctified by his Spirit and that they would obey his Christ. God did *not merely have pre-knowledge* that this would happen to them, but *actually pre-determined* that this should happen to them.
- 1 Peter 1:20. God "knew before the foundation of the world" that Christ would be the Lamb of God. That is, God did *not merely have knowledge beforehand* that this would happen (as if it was only decided in time that Jesus would die for sins), but *actually pre-determined* before the creation of everything that Jesus Christ would be the sacrifice of atonement for sins. Compare Psalm 40:6 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament: "Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but a body you have prepared for me"¹¹⁹!

Foreknowledge in the letter to the Romans. The above is exactly what the letter to the Romans also teaches:

- Romans 8:29-30. God did *not simply have pre-knowledge* that Christians would be saved and conformed to the likeness of Christ, but he *actually pre-determined* that this should happen! Therefore he effectually 'called' them (8:28 and 8:30)!
- Romans 9:6-16. People become God's children, not by natural descent (from Israel), but by God's *sovereign promise* to Abraham¹²⁰. They become God's children, not by their own works, but by God's *sovereign election* (before they were born) and *sovereign call* (after they were born). They become God's children, not by their own desire (free will) and their own effort, but by God's *sovereign mercy*!
- Romans 9:16-24. "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden." "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." "God *chooses* to show his wrath to the objects of his wrath in order to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he *prepared in advance* for glory."

¹⁰⁹ John 6:44,37-40,65; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1

¹¹⁰ cf. Philippians 2:12-13

¹¹¹ Genesis 4:1. Hebrew: we-ha <Adam jad>a (knew) et Hawah (Eve). NIV: Adam lay with his wife.

¹¹² Genesis 18:19. Hebrew: "ki jed>ati-u (for I have known/chosen him)(Abraham) lema>an <asher (with the purpose that) jetsaweh (tsuh) (to command) et-banau (his children) we-et-beto (and his house) <acharau (after him)...to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just , so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

¹¹³ cf. Ephesians 1:4

¹¹⁴ H: jad<a'

¹¹⁵ Genesis 18:19; Exodus 2:25; Psalm 1:6; 144:3; Jeremiah 1:5; Amos 3:2; Hosea 13:5

¹¹⁶ G: oida. Genesis 18:19

¹¹⁷ Amos 3:2. G: ginóskó,

¹¹⁸ Isaiah 53:10; Acts 4:28

¹¹⁹ Hebrews 10:5-7

¹²⁰ Genesis 18:14-19

- **Romans 11:1-10.** God did “not reject the people whom he foreknew”. Instead, “he reserved for himself” 7000 people who did not bow down to idols. That is, God did not reject everyone in Israel. *He saved* all those in Israel whom he sovereignly foreknew/chose, even if they were only a remnant. This also means that God did not save those whom he did not foreknow. Instead, he allowed them to be hardened. So, God did *not simply have pre-knowledge* that 7000 Israelites would be saved and the others would be rejected, but he (God himself) actively chose for himself 7000 people and saved them. And he (God) actively chose not to save the others, but allowed them to be hardened! Thus, God actively pre-determines who would be saved and who would be rejected.

Thus, *God’s foreknowledge is not a foresight that recognises that something would happen, but a foresight that determines that something should, must and will happen!* Moreover, God’s foreknowledge not only says something more than simply *to know beforehand*, but also says *something different than predestination.*

Predestination is grounded on God’s foreknowledge (God’s distinguishing love). God’s foreknowledge (distinguishing love) pre-determines who will be saved and God’s predestination (foreordination) pre-determines what they are saved for. God sets his mind on some *people* beforehand (foreknowledge), and then destines them beforehand to *the proposed end* (pre-destination). The objects of God’s foreknowledge are certain people and the objects of God’s predestination are certain goals. In Romans 8:29-30, the objects of God’s foreknowledge (distinguishing love, sovereign election) are *Christians* and the object of God’s predestination is *that these Christians will be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ* so that Jesus Christ may be the pre-eminent One among many brothers.

b. God’s predestination (foreordination) (8:29b).

God’s predestination¹²¹ means that God *determines (ordains, decides, appoints) the destination beforehand.* He determines beforehand what will happen in the future. God’s predestination existed in God’s mind long before the event actually happens in time. It existed in God’s mind even before the foundation of the world!

Predestination in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the word ‘predestination’ is used in the sense of *determining (ordaining, appointing, deciding) beforehand what will happen.*

God the Father has pre-determined (literally: *pre-horizoned or pre-encircled*) his chosen people. In his boundless love he set them apart from all other people in the world to be his people, his family.

While foreknowledge focuses on the people God elected, predestination focuses on the purpose to which they were elected. God not only chooses beforehand the people whom he loves with a special love, but also determines beforehand the destination to which they are appointed.

- **Acts 4:28.** The plan, which God predestined (ordained, decided or determined before) to happen (namely, that the political and religious rulers of the earth would stand up against Jesus Christ)¹²², actually happened in history.
- **1 Corinthians 2:7-9.** Before time began God predestined his wise plan (to let Jesus Christ be crucified in order to save his elect) and in time he revealed this plan of wisdom through the preaching of the gospel¹²³.
- **Ephesians 1:4-5.** It expresses the relationship between God’s foreknowledge and God’s predestination. In eternity before the creation, God chose certain people in love to receive every spiritual blessing through Christ and he determined them to be adopted as his sons, to be holy and blameless, also through Christ. Thus, God’s electing love (equivalent to God’s foreknowledge) comes before his predestination to a specific purpose. When people adopt a child they are unable to impart their spirit to the child, but when God adopts sons and daughters he imparts his Spirit! Therefore there are no human analogies for ‘the adoption’ of which Paul speaks.
- **Ephesians 1:11.** The events happening to Christians in time are the manifestations of God’s plan (the purpose of God’s will) which he predetermined in eternity.

Predestination in the letter to the Romans.

- **Romans 8:29-30.** Those people, whom God foreknew (in the sense that he loved them with a distinguishing or selective love from the beginning), he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. Again, God’s foreknowledge comes before God’s predestination. Because God’s predestination means that God determines beforehand *the destination* to which certain people are appointed, God’s foreknowledge must mean that God chooses *these certain people* beforehand to be his people.

God’s foreknowledge may not be interpreted apart from God’s predestination! God’s predestination does not specify what Christians ought to be, but what they are destined to be! It is not man who chooses and determines what he will be, but God!

c. God’s calling (8:30a).

8:30a. And whom he once for all predestined (foreordained)¹²⁴ (viaa), those he also once for all called (viaa).

¹²¹ G: prohorizó

¹²² Psalm 2:1-2

¹²³ 1 Corinthians 1:21-30

¹²⁴ G: prohórizó

God's calling¹²⁵ is God's foreknowledge and predestination before time that is realised historically in time! God works out his eternal plan in time¹²⁶. What God had purposed in eternity, he works out in time. God is always first, not only in what he purposed in eternity (his foreknowledge and predestination), but also in what he works out in time (his calling, justification, sanctification, glorification).

The outward call through the preaching of the gospel. Within time in history God takes the initiative to send his people out to proclaim the gospel. Christian apostles (missionaries sent out by the Church)¹²⁷, evangelists, preachers, teachers and ordinary believers¹²⁸ should call people through the preaching of the gospel to receive Christ and be saved¹²⁹. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!¹³⁰" *This is the outward call of the gospel, which is not always effective.* There are always people who hear the gospel, but do not respond to it or even reject it¹³¹.

The inner call through the Holy Spirit. The inner call is God's call in time (in history) of those people he chose in eternity. He calls them through the inner call of the Holy Spirit that regenerates them¹³² and gives them faith to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord¹³³.

Only when God himself calls people through the work of his Holy Spirit in their hearts are they genuinely and certainly saved! Only when God through his Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement¹³⁴ and regenerates them¹³⁵ will the preaching of the gospel be effective. *This is the inner call of God, which is always effective (1:7)!* When God in his sovereignty draws certain people to Christ, they will certainly come to Christ and they will certainly be saved¹³⁶! When God in his sovereignty gives people to Christ¹³⁷, Christ reveals God and his Word to them, gives them eternal life, sees to it that not one of them goes lost and that every one of them will finally be where he himself is. That is why Romans 8:29-30 teaches that when God (effectively) calls a person, that person is also (effectively) justified, sanctified and eventually glorified! God in his sovereign wisdom and power controls the complete salvation of Christians from beginning to end! No one on earth deserves to be chosen, called, justified or glorified. When someone is effectively called, it is pure grace¹³⁸!

Those whom God predestined to be like Christ in their spiritual and moral character, in their sufferings and in their future glory, he effectively calls. This means that by the external call through the gospel preaching and the inner call through the effective work of his Spirit and grace, God leads Christians to the end to which they are destined¹³⁹.

God's calling is always an effectual calling (sufficient to bring it into existence). The people called are definitely distinguished from the rejecters. The called are really the good seed that is sown by Jesus Christ¹⁴⁰. The called are really saved by the Spirit's sanctifying work¹⁴¹; are really given faith¹⁴²; are really justified¹⁴³; really belong to Christ¹⁴⁴; really belong to God's Kingdom¹⁴⁵; really have fellowship with Christ¹⁴⁶; really experience Christ as God's power and wisdom¹⁴⁷ and really have a certain expectation (hope)¹⁴⁸.

God's calling is not only the effective outworking of his eternal plan of salvation (looking backwards), but also the unbreakable link to the effective completion of his eternal plan of salvation (looking forward). The people that are

¹²⁵ G: verb: kaleó, noun: klésis

¹²⁶ Ephesians 1:10

¹²⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:20; 6:1-2

¹²⁸ Matthew 10:32

¹²⁹ Mark 1:14-15

¹³⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:20.

¹³¹ cf. Isaiah 1:22-4; 66:4; Matthew 22:1-14; Hebrews 3:15; 4:1-2

¹³² John 3:3-8; 16:8-9

¹³³ Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1

¹³⁴ John 16:7-10

¹³⁵ John 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-7

¹³⁶ John 6:44,37

¹³⁷ John 17:2,6,9,12,24

¹³⁸ Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

¹³⁹ Philippians 1:6

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 13:37

¹⁴¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:13

¹⁴² Acts 13:48

¹⁴³ Romans 8:30

¹⁴⁴ Romans 1:6-7

¹⁴⁵ 1 Thessalonians 2:12

¹⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:9

¹⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:24

¹⁴⁸ Ephesians 4:4

effectually called are actually moving forward in the process of sanctification¹⁴⁹ towards glorification by God¹⁵⁰. Their glorification includes receiving the promised eternal inheritance¹⁵¹.

d. God's justification (8:30b).

8:30b. and whom he *once for all* called (viaa), those he also *once for all* justified (viaa).

God's justification¹⁵² means that God pronounces the former sinner as completely righteous in his eyes on the ground of Christ's righteousness and henceforth regards and treats him as completely righteous! The believer in Jesus Christ is completely and perfectly forgiven. God will never bring his sins into remembrance¹⁵³.

Man's responsibility in justification. In some passages in the Bible the responsibility of man in justification (and sanctification) is emphasised. For example, Romans 5:1 says that Christians have been justified by faith. God's calling elicits the appropriate response of man, namely, repentance and faith. Justification is received by the instrumentality of faith. *While in God's calling, faith is the result, in God's justification, faith is the pre-condition.*

God's sovereignty in justification. However, in other passages in the Bible, not man's responsibility¹⁵⁴, but only God's sovereign action¹⁵⁵ is in view! For example, in Romans 8:29-30 as God's foreknowledge and predestination are not to be defined in terms of man's activity, likewise God's calling, justification and glorification are not to be defined in terms of man's activity!

Although God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, (sanctification) and glorification effect people and are actually experienced by Christians, *it is still God alone who is active in these events*. No activity of man supplies any ingredient of the definition of these words or contributes to their efficacy.

e. God's glorification (8:30c).

8:30c. and whom he *once for all* justified (viaa), those he also *once for all* glorified (viaa).

The glorification of believers. From eternity God chose people and determined that they be conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is the highest goal conceivable for man! Christians will be conformed:

- to Christ's moral and spiritual character¹⁵⁶
- to the kind of sufferings he endured (8:17)¹⁵⁷
- to his glorious resurrected body¹⁵⁸
- and to his future glory (8:17,30)¹⁵⁹.

This transformation to which Christians are predestined refers not only to justification and the process of sanctification, but also to glorification: becoming like Christ, which is the glorious end for every Christian¹⁶⁰!

Christians are predestined to the attainment of eternal life¹⁶¹. God's eternal purpose for Christians is their *complete* salvation from beginning to end! *God's electing love is the beginning of their salvation and God's pre-eminent glory is the final goal of their salvation*. All the parts of God's plan of salvation are inseparably connected. The people whom he chose (foreknew and predestined), he calls, justifies and glorifies! Their sanctification that leads to glorification is the result of God's plan of salvation. Therefore actual sanctification in the life of Christians is evidence of their election¹⁶². Thus, God works out everything in conformity with his eternal purpose¹⁶³.

The glorification of God. There is one final end that is more ultimate than the glorification of believers and that is the pre-eminence of Christ¹⁶⁴ and the eternal glory of the Triune God¹⁶⁵! God has sovereign control over this ultimate goal of creation.

¹⁴⁹ 2 Timothy 1:9

¹⁵⁰ Romans 8:30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:12

¹⁵¹ Hebrews 9:15

¹⁵² G: verb: dikaioó

¹⁵³ Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; cf. Isaiah 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:18-19

¹⁵⁴ cf. Mark 4:1-20

¹⁵⁵ cf. Mark 4:26-29

¹⁵⁶ Ephesians 1:4-5; 4:24

¹⁵⁷ Philippians 3:10

¹⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21

¹⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:7

¹⁶⁰ 1 John 3:1-3

¹⁶¹ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 2 Timothy 1:9

¹⁶² cf. Ephesians 1:4-5

¹⁶³ cf. Ephesians 1:11; Romans 9:11; Isaiah 14:24,27

¹⁶⁴ Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁶⁵ Romans 11:36; cf. Isaiah 42:8; 43:7

The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. Christ will always remain *the firstborn* among many brothers (8:29). Christ never considers himself completely apart from the people that he came to save¹⁶⁶. That is why Christians are called his *brothers*. But among all these brothers, Christ is *pre-eminent*! That is why he is called *the firstborn*.

The term ‘first-born’ does not refer to ‘first in time’, but to ‘*first in position*’, that is, to Christ’s pre-eminence¹⁶⁷. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body¹⁶⁸; the Shepherd of the flock¹⁶⁹; the Chief-Shepherd of all the under-shepherds (elders) of the flock¹⁷⁰; the Bishop (Overseer) of the worldwide Church¹⁷¹ and the Standard for the transformation of all Christians (8:29). The expression is admirably suited to describe Jesus as the one coming forth from God to found the new community of saints, the brotherhood of Christians, the Church. And Jesus Christ is the First of this new community! He is “the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty” “The First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”¹⁷². Jesus Christ is not only the Son of Man (his human nature), but also the Son of God (his divine nature)¹⁷³. He is God (9:5)¹⁷⁴ and this unique distinctiveness guards his pre-eminence forever! The brothers and sisters forever remain creatures, even when they are given immortality and eternal life, but Jesus Christ is forever the Creator¹⁷⁵. It is among these many brothers and sisters that this pre-eminence appears!

Man does not have pre-eminence on this earth or on the future new earth! The world-view of the Christian is not man-centred, but God-centred! The purpose of God in creation of the universe and particularly the earth was not to give this creation away to man to use as man thinks is good (the view of deism and secularism), but that through the stewardship of man over creation¹⁷⁶, the creation may proclaim the reality and glory of the Living God¹⁷⁷.

Likewise, the purpose of God in the salvation of people and their recreation (regeneration, transformation) was not simply that people should be holy and happy, but that through their holiness and joy the glory of Jesus Christ should be displayed everywhere among people and heavenly beings and forever (8:29)¹⁷⁸. Not the elected Christians, but Jesus Christ is the central point of God’s plan in the history of the universe. The Spirit of God working in Christians and in the Church brings glory, not to Christians or the Church, but to Jesus Christ¹⁷⁹!

The glorification of the Triune God. And because Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God¹⁸⁰, the glory of Jesus Christ is the glory of God manifested in its highest form! The great purpose or goal of both creation and salvation is the glory of the Triune God. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (11:33-36)! Whoever does not glorify Jesus Christ, also does not glorify God¹⁸¹.

God is glorified when Christians are brought into Christ’s glory, that is, when Christians are made to be like Christ’s glorious likeness and when they are caused to share in Christ’s glorious inheritance. This is the goal of making people of all the nations into disciples of Jesus Christ¹⁸²! Discipleship begins with justification, continues with sanctification of character and life, growth in maturity and fruitfulness in God’s Kingdom and is completed in glorification. Glorification here refers to the completion of the process of salvation and announces the certainty of its accomplishment.

God’s eternal plan has two foci: the sovereign love of God from eternity before time and the pre-eminent glory of God throughout time unto eternity. God’s eternal love for Christians is finally expressed in the glorification of Christians with Christ in the age to come!

Whenever Christians by faith see this panorama that stretches from the love of God before time began to the glory of God at the end of time, then the sufferings of this present age are viewed in their true perspective. The sufferings of this present age are the circumstances that accompany Christians on their pilgrimage to this future glory. The present sufferings can simply not be compared to this future glory!

(VI) 8:31-34. The salvation of Christians is secure, because
God is for them

and has given to them everything required to complete his eternal purpose for them.

¹⁶⁶ Hebrews 2:11-12

¹⁶⁷ Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 1:5

¹⁶⁸ Colossians 1:18

¹⁶⁹ John 10:16

¹⁷⁰ 1 Peter 5:4

¹⁷¹ 1 Peter 2:25

¹⁷² Revelation 1:8; 2:8; 22:12-13

¹⁷³ Matthew 26:3-64; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1

¹⁷⁴ John 1:1,18; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 2:8; 1 John 5:20

¹⁷⁵ John 1:3,10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2-3

¹⁷⁶ Genesis 1:28

¹⁷⁷ Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-20

¹⁷⁸ cf. Revelation 5:13

¹⁷⁹ John 16:14; cf. Isaiah 42:8

¹⁸⁰ Colossians 1:1

¹⁸¹ John 5:23; cf. Luke 10:16; 1 John 2:23

¹⁸² Matthew 28:18-20

Romans 8:31-34 describes God's work for the Christian.
The Christian is sustained amidst his present sufferings by God's vindication.

a. God's total backing (8:31).

8:31. What then shall we say¹⁸³ (vifa) in response to these things? If God (is) for us, who (can be) against us?

If God has set the Christian free from the law of sin and death (i.e. the dominating and controlling power of their sinful nature), has renewed him by his indwelling Spirit, recognises him as his own child and heir and has predestined him to justification, holiness and final glorification, then who can be against him? Are there people, things, events or circumstances that could hinder God from accomplishing his eternal purpose?

b. God's self-sacrificial and gracious giving (8:32).

8:32. He who did not spare¹⁸⁴ (viad) his own Son, but *once for all* gave him up (to deliver over)¹⁸⁵ (viaa) for us all – how will he not also with him graciously give¹⁸⁶ (vifd) us all things?

God gave the greatest for his elect. If God has done the greater, he will not leave the lesser undone! If God has completed his work of salvation *for believers* through Jesus Christ, he will certainly complete his work of salvation *in believers*, whom he calls "the chosen ones of God"! If God in his eternal purpose gave (delivered) his own Son for his elect, he will certainly in time give the Spirit to them to justify, sanctify and glorify them. So God's gift of Christ is effectual.

Who delivered Jesus Christ? It was not the betrayer Judas who delivered Jesus to his enemies for money. It was not the politician Pilate (the governor) who delivered Jesus out of fear to the Jews for political advantage. It was not the religious Jews who delivered Jesus to the government out of envy for gaining religious advantage. But it was God himself who out of love delivered Jesus for the salvation of his people!

On the one hand, Jesus was delivered to condemnation and abandonment, which sin deserved¹⁸⁷. On the other hand, Jesus was delivered to whatever Satan and his evil allies could do to him¹⁸⁸.

God delivered Christ, not for all people in the world, but "for us all", whom God foreknew and predestined, called and justified (8:29-30), that is, for all those whom God had chosen (8:34).

Jesus Christ laid down his life "for the sheep"¹⁸⁹. And they are "many"¹⁹⁰. The Bible therefore does not support the notion of universal atonement or universal salvation.

But within the scope of all those embraced in election, there is no restriction and no exclusion, no matter their cultural background (10:12)¹⁹¹, social abilities¹⁹² or the life they lived before they become believers¹⁹³!

God will give everything needed to complete the salvation of the elect. God has given the most precious he had, Jesus Christ, to those who believe in Christ! Therefore God will also graciously give to them, not all things they desire, but all things that are required to complete their salvation! The result is that Christians have the *assurance* that they will certainly be preserved from apostasy (the abandonment of faith) and from deadly sins.

A promise of salvation, which does not include *holiness*, includes nothing! In the Bible, salvation is utterly irreconcilable and contradictory to sin: to lying, hatred, religious and honour killing, corruption, immorality, greed, pride, etc. Salvation includes the certainty of holiness. The very end of salvation is holiness! Therefore, God's promise and work of salvation or justification (righteousness) includes God's promise and work of sanctification (holiness). God's justification of sinners is unthinkable without God's sanctification of sinners!

God will not fail Christians. When God has given his greatest gift to Christians¹⁹⁴, he will certainly give them all other gifts¹⁹⁵ and everything needed to complete their salvation¹⁹⁶. Christians are sure of their salvation, not because they are

¹⁸³ G: legó, eró, eipon, eiréka

¹⁸⁴ G: pheidomai

¹⁸⁵ G: paradíómi

¹⁸⁶ G: charizomai

¹⁸⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13

¹⁸⁸ Acts 2:23; Psalm 22:12-16; Luke 22:53

¹⁸⁹ John 10:11

¹⁹⁰ Mark 10:45; Romans 5:19

¹⁹¹ Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:11

¹⁹² 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

¹⁹³ 1 Timothy 1:15

¹⁹⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:15

¹⁹⁵ Ephesians 1:3

¹⁹⁶ Ephesians 1:11; Philippians 1:6; 2:13

sure of their own constancy, but because they are sure of God's unchanging love (8:35,39)¹⁹⁷. God's infinite love for Christians cannot fail them and will not fail them (8:31-32)!

c. God's vindication (8:33-34).

8:33. Who will bring any (legal) charge¹⁹⁸ (vifa) against God's elect¹⁹⁹? It is God who justifies²⁰⁰ (vppa).

8:34. Who is he that condemns²⁰¹ (vpfa)? Christ Jesus, who *once for all* died (vpaa), more than that, who was *once for all* raised from the dead (vpap), who *continually* is (vipa) at the right hand of God, who also *continually* intercedes (vipa) for (on behalf of)²⁰² us.

Christians have received complete forgiveness. If God is the final Judge who justifies those whom he has chosen, then no one's accusations count anymore! There is nothing to be dreaded more than sin. But if sin has been pardoned and removed in justification, then there is nothing left to fear! There is no one that can summon Christians to the bar of justice.

Satan will continue to accuse Christians²⁰³, but he is a liar²⁰⁴ and his accusations have lost every semblance of justice, because he can no longer point to the unaccomplished work of Jesus Christ.

The conscience of Christians will still upbraid them, but it will no longer terrify them²⁰⁵! Christians as God's children show sorrow for their sins²⁰⁶, but they do not despair like the lost²⁰⁷. Christians still commit particular sins²⁰⁸, but they confess their sins and are completely forgiven and cleansed²⁰⁹.

Four reasons why no one can condemn Christians anymore.

- Christ's death removed the ground for condemnation. If God has already condemned sin on the cross, who will condemn Christians?
- Christ's resurrection is the evidence that God has accepted his sacrifice of atonement and that all his claims are valid.
- Christ's enthronement at God's right hand (his exaltation) indicates that he is the sovereign Director of all events in the past, in the present and in the future, of all events on earth and of every aspect of our personal lives.
- Christ's continual intercession as our Representative or Advocate with God the Father in heaven²¹⁰ is the evidence that Christ purposes to save us completely. In his intercession for us, he secures the benefits of his death and resurrection for us, pleads our cause before God the Father and presents the considerations which secure our pardon and the continued supply of God's grace for our lives²¹¹.

(VII) 8:35-39. The salvation of Christians is secure because the love of God for them is infinite and unchangeable!

a. Christians derive no comfort from hardships and persecutions (8:35-36).

8:35. Who will separate (vifa) us from the love of Christ? Pressure (oppression, affliction, tribulation) or narrowness (distress, anguish) or religious persecution or hunger or nakedness or danger or sword?

8:36. As is written (virp): "For your sake²¹² we continually face death (the danger of being killed, especially of the death sentence)(vipp) all day long; we are once for all considered (viap) as sheep to be slaughtered."

The apostle Paul is speaking not only from inspiration, but from personal experience. He had experienced six of these seven hardships before he wrote the letter to the Romans²¹³. And by means of the seventh hardship, the sword, he was later put to death²¹⁴.

¹⁹⁷ Jeremiah 31:3

¹⁹⁸ G: egkaleó

¹⁹⁹ G: eklektos

²⁰⁰ G: dikaióo

²⁰¹ G: katakrinó

²⁰² G: huper

²⁰³ 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:11

²⁰⁴ John 8:44

²⁰⁵ 1 John 3:19-20

²⁰⁶ 2 Corinthians 7:9-11

²⁰⁷ Revelation 6:15-17

²⁰⁸ 1 John 1:8,10

²⁰⁹ 1 John 1:9

²¹⁰ 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7

²¹¹ John 1:16

²¹² G: heneken

²¹³ 2 Corinthians 11:23-29

²¹⁴ cf. 2 Timothy 4:6

By quoting Psalm 44:22 Paul shows that there is nothing strange or unexpected about suffering for the Lord's sake. But the Christian derives no comfort from suffering. The Christian derives comfort only from the fact that Jesus promised, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven"²¹⁵.

b. Christians are more than conquerors over people and over things (8:37-39).

8:37. But in all these things we are continually more than conquerors (are winning a most glorious victory)²¹⁶ (vipa) through him who once for all loved (vpaa) us.

8:38. For I am convinced (persuaded)²¹⁷ (virp) that neither death nor life, neither angels²¹⁸ nor demonic principalities²¹⁹ (since they were thought of as having a political organisation), neither present events and circumstances²²⁰ (vpra) (participle) nor coming events and circumstances²²¹ (vppa)(participle) (in the dimension of time), nor any powers²²² (miracles and signs)²²³,

8:39. neither height nor depth (in the dimension of space), nor any other created thing, will be able (vifd) to separate²²⁴ (vnaa) us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amidst all these difficult circumstances Christians are all the time winning most glorious victories. They are conquering all kinds of powers, whether material or spiritual, and will certainly be conquerors together with Christ as his second coming²²⁵!

Christians are more than conquerors over people. Christians are more than conquerors over people, because no human being can separate them from God's infinite and unchangeable love for them. No one whom Christians face in the world can hinder God from accomplishing his eternal purpose with Christians! God deprives sufferings, which people inflict on Christians, from doing any real harm to Christians. And in a sovereign way uses these sufferings to contribute to the ultimate good of Christians! The sufferings, which Christians suffer, enlarge the final glory of their victory (8:35-37).

Christians are more than conquerors over things. Christians are more than conquerors over things, because nothing in creation (literally: "no created thing") can or shall separate them from God's infinite love for them. Nothing Christians face in the secular world, in the spirit world, in the present or future world is able to separate them from God's love for them! *Not a single kind of suffering can separate Christians from God's love for them!*

²¹⁵ Matthew 5:11-12

²¹⁶ G: hupernikaó

²¹⁷ G: peithó

²¹⁸ Galatians 1:8

²¹⁹ G: archai

²²⁰ G: enhistémi, (ta) enestóta = things that are present.

²²¹ G: melló, (ta) mellonta = things that are on the point of/about to (happen).

²²² G: dunamis

²²³ 2 Thessalonians 2:9

²²⁴ G: chórizó

²²⁵ Revelation 17:14; 19:11-21