

Romans 8:26-32 (NKJV)

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

1

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.

2

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?

3

- I used to think of all the references to salvation in the NT as singular, that is, as referring to regeneration, or salvation from Hell, so we can go to Heaven when we die
- AND I assumed justification was essentially equivalent to salvation in the singular sense
- That is what I was always taught
- So I used to think that Rom. 8:29-30 describe the process of salvation from God's perspective

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- That traditional teaching – which came out of the Reformation – is quite problematic in texts like this and in other places where salvation or eternal life include *works* (such as in Luke 10:25; John 6:27; Rom. 2:7; 6:22; Gal. 6:7-8; 1 Tim. 6:12, to name only a few)

5

But then I came to realize that salvation is dual in the Scriptures –

- a) initial salvation by faith alone, in which one's spirit becomes regenerated, and
- b) ongoing salvation of the soul (aka *sanctification*) by cooperating with God to live obediently and do works pleasing to the Lord, which ultimately result in inheritance and reward at the Judgment Seat

- Apart from a dual understanding of salvation and eternal life, Scripture will be misinterpreted and misapplied

6

- Rom. 8:29-30 do NOT describe the process of salvation from God's perspective
- These verses describe the process of sanctification unto reward from God's perspective – and not as automatic, but conditional
- God apparently included this section of Scripture (Rom. 8:26-39) on the heels of the previous section (8:12-25) to bring comfort and encouragement to those who are on the pathway to becoming firstborn sons to glory
- He wants us to remain faithful amidst persecution, so we can on to glorification

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God makes 5 promises in Rom. 8:26-39 to encourage us to persevere in hope

Rom 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Promise #1: The Holy Spirit is praying for firstborn sons

8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

8

8:27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

- What is the will of God, in this context?
- It is that His children not get deterred by the sufferings of this present time, but continue on to becoming sons to glory by living righteously

8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

9

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

Although it is true that our sufferings cannot be compared with the coming glory (8:18), still we are weak and groan even in the midst of Christian victory (v 23). Thus we urgently need divine help in our weaknesses. And this is precisely what we receive through the indwelling Spirit, who *likewise also* (in addition to producing His first fruits within us [v 23]) gives us this help.

10

Zane Hodges, Commentary (cont'd):

In fact, *our weaknesses* are manifest precisely in our times of prayer when, under the pressures of suffering, we try to make intelligent requests from God. But we have no real ability to assess any stressful situation we are in and to know precisely what it is really necessary for us to pray for at such times. Into this gap, Paul assures us, comes the intercessory work of the Spirit who dwells within us.

11

- How grateful we should be that the Spirit of God prays for us to be victorious in times of suffering, that we will remain steadfast unto glorification!
- v. 34 says that Jesus also prays for us!
- *groanings which cannot be uttered* – Does that mean the Holy Spirit speaks to God the Father in some inarticulate language that we don't understand?
- That would be an odd thing for God to tell us
- Hodges gives a much better explanation

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Zane Hodges, Commentary:

Consequently, in the midst of our own inarticulate groanings, the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us. Although some commentators have thought that the *groanings* ... referred to here are those of *the Spirit*, this seems quite improbable. The preceding context speaks clearly of our own groanings (... v 23) and the reference is surely to that. When our own inability to know how to pray in the necessary way results in inarticulate ... expressions of anguish and concern, the Spirit intervenes. He prays the requests we ourselves do not know to pray.

13

- Does it not make more sense that the Holy Spirit takes *our groanings* (which is contextual, v. 23) and makes them prayer requests to God when we don't know how to pray amidst our particular situation?
- v. 27, the Spirit makes intercession for us – He prays for us amidst our pilgrimage throughout life – *according to God's will*
- God's will is that we become mature, firstborn sons to glory
- Jesus is praying for that (v. 34) and the Holy Spirit is praying for that! (v. 27)

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God makes 5 promises in Rom. 8:26-39 to encourage us to persevere in hope

Promise #2: All things work together for good for firstborn sons

Rom 8:28 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.

- Is this promise for all Christians with no conditions attached?
- No! NOT all Christians love God – and that is obvious in that they do not obey Him

15

- Those who love God, who are on the pathway of becoming one of God's glorified sons, can be assured that every circumstance of life, every trial, every burden, every persecution, is working in their favor
- We tend to think of certain things in life as BAD; e.g., circumstances that are not favorable to us, things we do not enjoy, things that cause pain and suffering
- But God says, "Everything that happens in your life is for your good, on the pathway to becoming a son to glory."

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God makes 5 promises in Rom. 8:26-39 to encourage us to persevere in hope

Promise #3: Firstborn sons are being called and justified, and will be glorified

8:29 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.

17

- Does foreknowledge require foreordination?
- In other words, does God's knowledge of something happening before it happens mean that He has already predetermined its outcome?
- NO! God certainly has the POWER to make things happen His way, if He wants
- But we know from the Scriptures that He has given man a free will to choose
- He knows what they will choose in advance of their choosing, but He doesn't predetermine their choices or the outcome

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- Rom. 8:29 says God FOREKNOWS those who will make choices to become conformed to the image of Christ (i.e., become sanctified)
- Knowing this He also PREDESTINES, which is not the best word chosen by the translators

G.H. Lang, *World Chaos*:

For this unjustified word they went back to Catholic Versions, the Rheims and the Vulgate, which have *predestinavit*, whereas the earlier English Versions of Wycliffe and Tyndale had the softer and more accurate word "preordain."

19

G.H. Lang, *World Chaos (cont'd)*:

These later translators had reason for forsaking the Latin, and its restoration by the Authorized Version has had the disastrous effect of fixing in the mind of the English reader the fatalistic notion so foreign to Scripture.

A thing may be foreordained without it being irreversible, for it may be ordained on conditions, which not being fulfilled the ordination lapses. And this is the case here.

20

G.H. Lang, *World Chaos (cont'd)*:

This conditional element has been given little, if any, weight in Calvinistic treatment of this theme and is often strongly repudiated. Yet it is quite evidently present, and it rules out completely every attempt to attach a fatalistic sense to these passages. God's foreordination was conditioned by something that He foreknew, and by its very terms is conditioned by the response of man.

21

- So the best word choices are: FOREORDAINS or Young's preferred word: FORE-APPOINTS
- In other words, knowing those who will make choices to become sanctified, He PREDETERMINES the outcome – by the end of their life, they WILL BE sanctified and conformed to the image of Christ if they remain on that path
- God will enable to this end, because He knows they have chosen this

22

- Some might argue that means God is making the choices for the individual
- It doesn't mean that at all – the child of God will still endure temptations and trials and persecutions – any of which could derail him/her from going on to glorification – and that is obvious from the verses that follow
- But God knows those of His children who will continue to choose rightly – not perfectly, but consistently – and He predetermines the outcome

23

- Why does God bother to do this? Why does He predetermine or foreordain those whom He foreknows will go all the way through to glory?
- So that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brethren
- What is the advantage of that?
- He can begin to develop a relationship with them even now by *chastening* ("child-training") the firstborn sons to glory (Heb. 12) so they will be prepared to rule with Him

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- This predetermination is not to initial salvation; it is to soul-salvation, conformity to the image of Christ
- That requires not only obedience (walking in the Spirit, v. 14), but also suffering with Him
- Co-suffering leads to co-glorification (v. 17)
- Those whom God predetermines to be conformed to the image of Christ, He then CALLS
- God's CALLING ties v. 30 with v. 28, which says that *all things work together for good to those who ... are the called according to His purpose*

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What is His purpose?

- That they be conformed to the image of Christ (v. 29) so they can be adopted as firstborn brethren (vs. 14-17) to become Christ's bride and co-rulers
 - This is what all creation eagerly awaits
- 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

26

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

In Pauline doctrine, to be "called" is not merely to be "invited" ... Rather, as BDAG states, "from the meanings 'summon' and 'invite' there develops the extended sense *choose for receipt of a special benefit or experience, call.*"

- In other words, God CALLS in the sense that He chooses those whom He foreknows are on the pathway to becoming His glorified sons

27

- Next, He JUSTIFIES them, but this has nothing to do with salvation
- Justification is not positional, legal, or forensic, as the Reformers taught
- To be justified is to be declared righteous at any given point in time, based on one's behavior, and ultimately at the Judgment Seat

Bob Wilkin, note in Hodges's Commentary:

This justification is *vindication at the Bema of the believers who respond properly to the call*

28

- Those whom God justifies He GLORIFIES
- Only those who live righteously, by faith, will be given a garment of encasement in light; all others will be ashamed
- Many commentators believe this is the "clothing" that Adam and Eve lost in the Fall that caused them to be naked and ashamed
- Summary: Those whom God foreknows will become sons to glory, He fore-appoints to become conformed to the image of Christ; then He calls, justifies, and glorifies them!

29

- vs. 29-30 describe the process of sanctification unto reward from God's perspective – and it is not automatic, but conditional
- Since it's from God's perspective, then that means none of us can know if we have been fore-appointed by God as a son to glory
- Even if we are confident that we are presently on the pathway to glory, we don't know if we will remain on that path

30

- Knowing that God calls, justifies and glorifies those whom He foreknows will remain on the pathway to glory, God's promises should keep you persevering in hope
- If you are presently on the pathway, by God's grace, remain on the path

31

God makes 5 promises in Rom. 8:26-39 to encourage us to persevere in hope

Promise #4: Firstborn sons can succeed, for God is on their side

8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

8:32 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?

8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

32

8:34 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.

- If God is on your side, is there anyone who can oppose you successfully?
- Of course not! So persevere, knowing He is in your corner, so to speak
- We will face great opposition even from Christians who do not agree with the message of kingdom inheritance

33

- Even Christians practice "cancel culture"
- They merely do it in spiritual-sounding garments, labeling it "biblical separation"
- More often than not, so-called "biblical separation" is unbiblical, driven by opinions, viewpoints, and personal preferences rather than biblical truth
- We DO have an obligation to separate from other believers in limited instances, but fundamentalism often defaults to hyper-separation, which is displeasing to Jesus, who prayed for unity amongst the brethren

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- Regardless of any opposition you may face – spiritual or psychological or physical – you can know that God is on your side, if you are walking in the Spirit
- If you continue to have a right spirit amidst seasons of persecution and suffering, Jesus will reward you richly, for He promises:

Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

35

Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

5:12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- v. 32 reminds that God gave up His own Son to die for us
- That being the case, won't He give us everything we need to succeed, including strength to carry on?

36

- Hodges translates v. 32b, “How shall He not also graciously give us, together with Him, all things?”
- The phrase *together with Him* implies something far greater than merely help *now*, as needed, although that is wonderful
- It also suggests that one day He will also give firstborn sons glorification in His presence!

37

- v. 33 – *Who dares to bring a charge against God’s elect?*
- *Elect* is not a salvation term, but a sanctification term
- G. Campbell Morgan, *The Parables of the Kingdom*: “Election in Scripture is to the Church, and never to salvation.”
- G.H. Lang, *World Chaos*: “The passages as to election and preordination do not apply to the question of salvation, but rather to the prospect of persons already saved.”

38

- Shawn Lazar wrote an excellent book titled, *Chosen to Serve: Why Divine Election is to Service, Not to Eternal Life* (the title speaks for itself)
- v. 34 – *Who is he who condemns? Your legalistic, fundamentalist brother?*
- That’s not his place, it’s God’s – who is *actually* qualified, who died and rose again and is seated at the right hand of God
- Why does man think he can take on God’s roles and responsibilities?
- Rest in knowing Jesus is praying for you!

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God makes 5 promises in Rom. 8:26-39 to encourage us to persevere in hope

Promise #5: Firstborn sons receive an abundance of His love

8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

8:36 As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

40

- 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
- Keep in mind the context: God is speaking about firstborn sons, those who walk in the Spirit and suffer with Jesus
 - Does God love in degrees? In other words, does He love some more than others?
 - YES, absolutely!
 - We have somehow accepted the lie that God loves everyone equally

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- To be sure, God loves all mankind, even sinners – John 3:16, *For God so loved the WORLD, that He gave ...* (see also Rom. 5:8)
 - But the Bible is clear that He loves in much greater degree those who fear Him and live righteously!
- Ps. 103:11 (HCSB) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His faithful love toward those who fear Him.
- The term *faithful love* is translated from the Hebrew word *chesed*, which means God’s lovingkindness, His steadfast love

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- Unfortunately, the KJV and NKJV translate it *mercy*, which is only one aspect of *chesed*
 - *faithful love* is about the best we can do in English without getting too wordy
 - Notice His *faithful love* is GREAT toward those who fear Him, which implies it is NOT as great toward those who do NOT fear Him
- Ps. 103:17 (ESV) But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him ... to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

43

- God loves the whole world, but He shows far greater love toward those who fear Him and keep His commandments
- In the context of Rom. 8, God shows greater love toward those of His children who are becoming conformed to the image of His dear Son
- Because He foreknows that they will keep obeying Him and loving Him, He showers the fullness of His love upon them

44

- His overflowing love continues reassuring that all things work together for good in their lives – even so-called bad things -- and nothing can separate them from His love –
- Not tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword
- Paul then adds a quote from Ps. 44 about believers being hunted down and persecuted:
- *v. 36 For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

45

- That is why God's love is so important: His loving arms overwhelm us, not merely with protection and strength, but also with the assurance that He truly loves us – tremendously – regardless of what happens in our lives
- Despite fierce opposition, we are *more than conquerors* through Him who loves us
- Firstborn sons are *more than conquerors* in that we not only defeat the enemy through Christ, we have His love (and the implication is: *they don't*)

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- In the context of Rom. 8, God's overflowing love – His much greater degree of love – is not for *all* children of God, but reserved for those who have chosen to honor Him, obey Him, and love Him – i.e., firstborn sons
- Christians in general love to claim the promises of Rom. 8, but those who are not living righteously should realize that these promises are not for God's carnal children
- They are for those who are walking in the Spirit, becoming conformed to the image of Christ

47

- If you are not an obedient child of God, then you don't love God, because Jesus said, "If you love me, you will be keeping my commandments." (Jn. 14:15; see also Jn. 15:10)
- If you don't love God, then all things are not working together for your good, and you are not called according to His purpose
- You are not being justified and will not be glorified
- And you cannot claim that nothing will separate you from God's love

48

- Rom. 8:31-39 is NOT about “eternal security,” as it is commonly taught and applied
- It is about the surety of inheritance for those who are living righteously

Bob Wilkin (note in Zane Hodges’s *Commentary*):

The believer who is walking according to the Spirit is one who is experiencing God’s love even when he is undergoing persecution for his faith.

49

8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Paul includes matters of life and death, the supernatural realm, matters in the present and even matters in the future, all of creation, and even things at the highest levels and lowest levels

50

- **NOTHING – NOTHING AT ALL!** – can separate firstborn sons from God’s love!
- That should drive us to endure **ANYTHING** for God’s glory
- And if we do, our future reward will be glorious, beyond description!

51

If you are on the pathway to becoming a firstborn son to glory, stay on that path, by claiming God’s 5 promises to enable you to persevere in hope amidst suffering

1. The Holy Spirit is praying for firstborn sons
2. All things work together for good for firstborn sons
3. Firstborn sons are being called and justified, and will be glorified
4. Firstborn sons can succeed, for God is on their side
5. Firstborn sons receive an abundance of His love

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