

Romans 8:28-39

PREVIOUS

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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Romans 8:28-39

The Revelation and Resolve of the Holy Spirit

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Romans 8:28 And we know that [God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.](#) 28 For [those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become, conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren](#) 31 [What then shall we say to these things ? If God is for us, who is against us?](#) 32 He [who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things ?](#) 33 [Who will bring a charge against God's elect ? God is the one who justifies;](#) 34 [who is the one who condemns ? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.](#) 35 [Who will separate us from the love of Christ ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ?](#) 36 [Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."](#) 37 But in [all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.](#) 38 For I am [convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing,](#) will be [able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord](#)

We want to look briefly at verses 28-39 of Romans 8. In verses 28-29 we will see the Revelation of the Holy Spirit—the fact that God is actually causing everything to work together for good. That means we are going to

be changed into the image of His Son. Then in verses 30-39 we will see the Resolve of the Holy Spirit—to carry out the plan of God, all the way until that event when we are glorified and the sons of God are revealed.

Romans 8:28

Let's start by looking at the Relationship of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Paul wants us to realize something we know already. What is it? That "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

"**To work together**" is the present active indicative of *sunergeo*. *Sunergeo* means to be a fellow-worker, that is, to co-operate. God Himself is the One working in our behalf and causing all things to work together for good.

The word "good" is *agathos*, meaning good, benevolent, profitable, useful good. In other words, God will cause everything in our lives to become beneficial, spiritually profitable, useful and good, even in a fallen world filled with sin and corruption. Think of ordinary table salt. It is composed of two poisons, sodium and chlorine. Yet when properly combined they produce an extremely beneficial substance.

"To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." The word for love here is *agapao*, which means to love in a social or moral sense. Jesus defines who "those who love God" are in John 14: 21, 23: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."

"To those who are called according to His purpose." The word used here is *kletos*—the ones who are invited, appointed, selected. We did not go to Christ, He called, invited us. The invitation is in John 3:16. By now I'm sure we can all say that together: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

We learn that the calling is always "according to"—the Greek word is *kata*—His purpose. Think back to some of the things we saw in chapter 6. In verses 1-6 we learned that God has made me a brand new person in Jesus Christ. We have been united with His resurrection life. His life now is now in us. In verse 6 we read that we are no longer slaves to sin. In verse 8, we read that we will live with Him. Not only one day shall we live with Him, we live with Him every day now. Wherever I go, there He is. Verse 11, you should "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Verses 12-14 tell us that we are not to let sin reign in us. Instead we are to present ourselves to God "as instruments of righteousness." You cannot overcome sin, but Jesus in you can overcome you. Then, in verses 15-23, Paul presents us with the choice we have to make: do we go back and live in sin? Do we go back up under the law? Or do we take advantage of God's grace? Verse 23 says that we have been invited to receive the "free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:29

Let's move on to Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." We are never in danger of losing our salvation. Let me explain why.

God foreknew. The word is *proginosko*—to know beforehand, to foresee. God knew who would and who would not be saved, though He obviously wished that none should perish. God not only foreknew our salvation, but also foresaw its ultimate completion in glorification. He predestined us "to become conformed to the image of His Son."

"Predestine" is the Greek word *proorizo*. Its meaning is "to limit in advance," that is, "to predetermine," to determine or decree beforehand. The church has been disrupted due to the misunderstanding which surrounds this word.

We must consider the divinely intended meaning of this word by examining the critical passages where it is used. Look first at 1 Corinthians 2:7: "but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory." it has something as it's object which is the wisdom of God, which was predestined for our glory, or as a benefit of our salvation. In Acts 4:28 we read, "to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur."

The action of Herod and Pontius Pilate in crucifying Jesus Christ is said to have been predetermined or foreordained by the hand and will of God. Dr. Spiros Zodhiates says, "*This indicates that Christ's mission, especially His death and resurrection, was not ultimately the result of human will but originated in the eternal counsel of God which decreed the event, determining all its primary and secondary causes, instruments, agents, and contingencies.*"

One Bible dictionary describes predestination this way:

Two major concepts are involved in the biblical meaning of predestination. First, God, who is all-powerful in the universe, has foreknown and predestined the course of human history and the lives of individuals. If He were not in complete control of human events, He would not be sovereign and, thus, would not be God. Second, God's predestination of human events does not eliminate human choice. A thorough understanding of how God can maintain His sovereignty and still allow human freedom seems to be reserved for His infinite mind alone. Great minds have struggled with this problem for centuries.

Predestination is used of God's actions in eternally decreeing both the objects and goal of His plan of salvation. **Proorizo** has a personal object, the plural relative pronoun **hous**, whom. This relative pronoun refers to those previously mentioned as those whom God foreknew. The translation is, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." The objects of predestination are those whom He foreknew. Predestination does not involve a predetermined plan only but also includes the individuals for whom the plan is devised. The goal of predestination is expressed in the phrase, "To be conformed to the image of His Son."

The objects of salvation, of course, are those who respond to the "whosoever will" of God's love. The goal for those who receive this wonderful free gift of God's grace is that we be conformed into the image of His Own Son Jesus Christ, "that He might be the first-born [**prototokos**] among many brethren."

Christ, the Son of God, became the firstborn of a new race. The predetermined goal of salvation for those whom God foreknew is stated to be conformity to the image of God's Son. The stated purpose of this task is that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. **Prototokos** presents Christ as the preeminent or ranking member of the group.

Interpreters have viewed the emphasis as falling upon either the phrase "among many brothers" or the word "firstborn." If you accept the former, then the upshot of Paul's words is that God predestined the elect to glory so that they might share in the inheritance allotted to Christ as God's Son. That is, God desired to include with Christ a host of other but lesser heirs, brothers among whom Christ would stand as preeminent.

However, this misses the point of the passage, which stresses not the number of the elect but the astonishing goal of their salvation—conformity to the very image of the Son Himself.

The latter emphasis seems most fitting. The conformity of sinners into the glorious image of God's Son places Christ among them. The ultimate goal of salvation, the glory of God, is thus achieved. Yet, some find it difficult to understand how the conformity of God's elect would serve to bring about Christ's position as firstborn. How is it that the salvation of sinners makes Christ the firstborn? Is He not so upon His own merit and in consideration of His own character? It can be replied that the effect in view is not one that has reference to Christ Himself or the Father's estimation of Him. Rather, the effect has reference to Christ before man.

God's design in original creation was to reflect His glory in man and the world. The fall of Adam defaced the image and consequently God's preeminence among humanity was lost. Salvation is the restoration of man to his original purpose. Therefore, since the salvation of sinners restores the divine image in man, Christ cannot but be exalted and made preeminent among them.

Those who receive Him by faith are baptized into Him and take on His characteristics because of His Spirit living in them. A process is begun, and conformity to Him in character and conduct is the purpose for it all.

Romans 8:30

We move on now, to see the Resolve of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 8:30**: "and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

In this verse, Paul shares one of the strongest statements on eternal security in the Bible. As far as God is concerned, even our glorification is so certain it can be written in the past tense. But, as far as we are concerned it has not yet happened.

We are "predestined", "called", "justified", and "glorified". Here is the word **proorizo** again. We must relegate this to the whole human race. We are not allowed into the counsel of the Godhead to discover who it is that will respond. We must remember the "whosoever will".

We are "called"—we have been invited. Our name has been called aloud! It is done! Oh, what staying power this gives us while we still reside in this suffering world.

We are "justified"—Jesus has paid the price. Our sins are covered. Our accounts are square with God.

We are "glorified"—it might not seem like it now! But to God's mind, it is a "done deal". What He has said WILL happen!

Romans 8:31-32

Here we come to a marvelous promise. Romans 8:31 says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" Oh, how Paul has nailed down the fact that there is no condemnation to those in Jesus Christ. The bottom line is "If God is for us, who is against us?" The "if" here is the absolute sense of God is for us. It could be read, "Because God is for us."

How much is God for us? Look at Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" My friends, there is no greater gift anyone can give us!

Jesus Christ dying on the cross for us, and raising from the dead, is not only the foundation for our salvation but for our security in Him. If God has given us the greatest gift, is there any lesser gift that He will not give? In fact, Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Clearly, we have been given "all things" in Christ. We see some of those things in the next verses.

Romans 8:33-35

Romans 8:33: "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." The world, and the devil, continue to bring charges against us. The word here is *egkaleo*, a charge. It means to accuse, to arraign. But God justifies—**dikaioo**—declares to be, and shows to be, righteous. God Himself paid the penalty so that we could be declared righteous and proven to be righteous.

Romans 8:34: "who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." We have God Himself interceding for us. Christ, the one who came to die, and was raised and sits at the right hand of God. He died for our sins; they can never condemn us again. He was raised from the dead declaring to the world who He was, and His resurrection power resides in us today. And He who sits at the right hand of the Father will pray us home.

Here is a marvelous promise. **Romans 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?" Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? The word **tis** can mean "who" or it can mean "what". **Chorizo** means to separate, to divide asunder. But none of these things, or anything else, can separate us "from the love of Christ."

Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22 in verse 36: "Just as it is written, 'For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'"

Long before Paul wrote this epistle, God's faithful people had suffered, for centuries, at only at the hands of Gentiles, but also at the hands of fellow Jews. If anything could separate us from the love of Christ then it would have taken place long ago. Paul quotes from the Psalmist reciting the worst conditions for God's people.

But instead of separating them from God's love, verse 37 tells us, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." The difficulties only drew them closer into it. It is through Him that we conquer and are conquered.

Finally, verses 38-39: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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."

Can you think of anything that isn't covered by that? We are eternally loved and free and secure in Christ.