

2009

Romans 8: The Christian's Power for Victory over Sin

Don Fanning

Liberty University, dfanning@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_rom

Recommended Citation

Fanning, Don, "Romans 8: The Christian's Power for Victory over Sin" (2009). *Romans Study Guide*. 8.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_rom/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Global Ministries at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Romans Study Guide by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

Chapter 8 The Christian's Power for Victory over Sin

In the interval between becoming a Christian and the beginning our eternal existence with a new mind and body, the believer continues to exist with a regenerated mind (a new nature and capacities) and a sinful nature in their old bodies. This struggle was depicted in chapter 7, now the reader will discover the prescription for victory through the Spirit over sin.

I. Power for Victory (8:1-17)

Is the believer condemned to a lifetime of defeat and progressive corruption due to the continued indwelling sin factor within him/her (7:21-25)? This answer is found in chapter 8. If we were promised to “receive power” (Acts 1:8), a reference to the Holy Spirit, does this *power* help a believer overcome the resident evil within each him? This chapter gives the steps for unleashing this Spirit power in our lives.

A. The Believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit (8:1-4)

^{NET} **Rom 8:1** There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are **in Christ Jesus**.

² For the law of **the life-giving Spirit** in Christ Jesus has **set you free** from the law of sin and death.

³ For God achieved what the **law could not** do because it was **weakened through the flesh**. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he **condemned sin in the flesh**,

⁴ so that the righteous requirement of the law may be **fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit**.

8:1 In spite of the fact that there is a constant struggle in this life with sin, there is “no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.” Chapter actually begins with a pronoun, *ouden* (“no one, not even one, absolutely not” which is used to negate a concept to mean it becomes “worthless, invalid or meaningless”), which is in the emphatic position and negates the possibility of any condemnation. Then Paul connects 7:25 with 8:1 by the connective “**therefore**” (*ara*, “transition in natural sequence thus *accordingly*,” FRIBERG) to show that the struggle with the propensity to sin in our bodies will not result in “**condemnation**” (*katakrima*, a technical term for the results of judging including the sentence and its execution, “sentence of doom,” FRIBERG). What do the following verses teach us about “condemnation”?

John 3:19

John 3:38

John 5:24

Rom 5:18

- The key to the avoidance of this condemnation is in the phrase “in Christ,” which appears 76 times in the NT, this being the second occurrence (3:24) in Romans. Those who are “in Christ” must have been “placed into” Christ. In the Greek, “put into” translates the word *baptizo*, “to baptize.” Thus to be “in Christ” means that one must have previously been *baptized* into Christ. How does 1 Cor 12:13 make this clear?

- The last phrase of 8:1 found in the King James and New King James is omitted in most other translations. This is due to the fact some ancient manuscripts omit this phrase, but all manuscripts have the identical phrase at the end of v. 4.

8:2 Now begins a series of reasons why there is no condemnation to the believers in Christ. “For” connects this verse to the preceding verse introducing several explanations. The first reason is liberation that comes from the Spirit when the believer is “in Christ.” The believer is “set free” (*eleutheroo*, aorist active, “liberty from the dominion of another’s control”), in a once-and-for-all action. The “law of the life-giving Spirit” is in parallel to the “law of God” (7:25), which is in contrast to the “law of sin and death,” which is in parallel to the “law of sin” (7:25). Just as sure as the law of sin produces death, so the law of the life-giving Spirit results in a permanent new life. In the following verses what are the elements that produce liberation in the believer?

John 8:32

John 8:36

Rom 6:17-18

Rom 8:21-23

8:3-4 The fact of our freedom is established, how is it made possible? The Law was never intended to liberate a person from sin, in fact quite the contrary. In the following verses write out the purposes of the Law:

Rom 3:19

Rom 3:20

Rom 5:20

Rom 7:7

Gal 3:24

- The purpose of the Law is to make sin even more obvious and appear so bad that all hope of ever being “good enough” to be acceptable to God is vanished. All the Law can do is to tell you what you should do, but there is no provision for how to be fully obedient. Verse 3 declares the Law is “weak” (*astheneo*, “feeble, without strength, powerless”). The Law is “good,” and “holy,” but it must depend on the ability of the “flesh” (*sarx*) to fulfill it, but the human sinful corruption cannot consistently avoid the temptation to disobey, thus condemning all human beings. Man’s only hope has to be something outside of him. Understanding the grave reality of man’s disobedience and guilt should be like a “tutor” or “schoolmaster” (Gal 3:24) to teach us that acceptance before God is impossible through our obedience, but only possible through a Perfect Human substitute who did obey perfectly all the law. According to 2 Cor 5:21, how did God “condemn sin in the flesh?”
- Now, with the power of the Spirit within us, the law “may be fulfilled” in us (*pleroo*, aorist passive subjunctive, “cause to abound, complete, carry into effect”). The condition for this victorious living is possible by being enabled to “walk” (*peripateo*, present active, habitually or continuously “make one’s way, progress”) by the Spirit. As a person begins to habitually obey the commandments, the Spirit gives the power

to obey consistently. What is the purpose or effect of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in a believer according to 1 Pet 1:2?

- What does it mean to walk “according to” the Spirit? Just as our sinful nature motivates us to sin, so the Spirit motivates and empowers us to be obedient. In two other verses Paul wrote of walking in the Spirit: Gal 5:1 and ^{NET} Gal 5:25, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit.” (Note: “if” followed by a present tense verb should be translated “since”). Since we are living in the Spirit, we should walk in accordance with the Spirit. How do the following verses help us to understand how to relate to or “walk in accordance with” the Spirit?

Eph 4:30

1 Thes 5:19

1 Cor 3:16

Negatively: Jude 19

B. 8: 5-8 The Opposite Extremes in relation to the Spirit

^{NET} Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh have their **outlook shaped** by the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their **outlook shaped** by the things of the Spirit.

⁶ For the outlook of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is **life and peace**,

⁷ because the outlook of the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it does **not submit to the law** of God, nor is it able to do so.

⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot **please God**.

8:5 To “live according to the flesh” means to be dominated by everything that the flesh produces which means more than sensuality, but here includes their “**outlook**” (*phroneo*, present active: “habitual...” “understanding, opinion”). Thus these people are continually thinking of, gratifying and justifying their behaviors, while forming acceptable worldviews to accommodate their beliefs and values. Once the Spirit becomes a part of our being, then our worldview, the ultimate reality, becomes God-oriented, eternity valued and Christ honoring. This transformation is described in various manners. How do these verses describe this new life?

2 Cor 5:17

Eph 4:24

Col 3:10

8:6 The mind-set or worldview of a person determines their lifestyle. The “**outlook**” (*phronema*, “way of thinking, mind-set, aspirations”) of the “**flesh**” (*sarkos*, “physical body;” as a human being; euphemistically, as the seat of sexual drive with *kata*, “from a human point of view, by human standards;” and in an ethical sense as a “sinful and sensual power tending toward sin and opposing the Spirit’s work,” FRIBERG), which leads to death (physical and spiritual). On the other hand, the “mind-set or worldview” that is according to the Spirit or “of the Spirit” results in life (in all its aspects) and peace (Rom 5:1) both now and eternally. The mind-set of the “flesh” (NT concept) is similar to the OT concept of the “fool.” Just as the “flesh” leads to death, so do the acts of fools. What can be learned in these verses about fools or people of the “flesh”?

Prov 8:36

Prov 11:19

Prov 14:12

8:7-8 Four characteristics of the flesh, or the unsaved. (1) hostile to God (5:10); (2) does not submit (present tense, “is not habitually submitting”) to the law of God; (3) unable to submit to the law of God; (4) cannot please God. Sadly believers can be negatively influenced by the flesh with the same results as the unsaved. What does 1 Cor 3:3 warn?

C. 8:9-11 The power of the Spirit for the believer

^{NET} **Rom 8:9** You, however, are **not in the flesh** but in the Spirit, **if indeed** the Spirit of God **lives in you**. Now if anyone **does not have** the Spirit of Christ, this person does **not belong to him**.

¹⁰ But **if Christ is in you**, your body is dead because of sin, but the **Spirit is your life** because of righteousness.

¹¹ Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead **lives in you**, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his **Spirit who lives in you**.

8:9 Genuine Christians are “not in the flesh.” The verb “**are**” is in the present tense meaning, “habitually or continuously,” thus “are not dwelling in” the flesh, but “are dwelling in” the Spirit. The phrase “**if indeed**” (*eiper*, “if, as is the fact”) does not imply doubt since it is followed by the present tense in the verb, “dwells.” For the believer, he lives totally different kind of life because he has the Spirit of God dwelling within him. The opposite is true of anyone who does not have the Spirit resident within him: such a one does not even “**belong**” to Him (lit., “this one is not of Him”). It is totally impossible to be related to Christ without the indwelling Spirit being “put into” him (Note: God *puts us into* Christ and puts His Spirit into us in the act of the *baptism* of the Spirit simultaneously at the New Birth- see 1 Cor 12:13). What is meant by “a new creature” in 2 Cor 5:17?

- It is hard to miss the parallel usage of the title “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” as referring to the same person. Since these terms are used interchangeably, the deity of Christ is assumed. What is the key to knowing the mark of a true believer in Jesus Christ in these verses?

1 John 3:24

1 John 4:13

8:10 “If Christ is in you” is a special “conditional” statement that assumes the condition to be true and not doubtful, thus “if” can be translated “since” or “because” rendering, “Since Christ really is in you...” The first comparative clause is introduced by a non-translated phrase *to men*, “to be sure” or “on the one hand,” the fact is evident that your “body is dead” (Paul had just cried out in 7:24, “who will rescue me from this body of death?”). The second and opposite clause is introduced by *to de*: “On the other hand,” since Christ *is being* in you, your spirit is alive “through righteousness” (Christ’s righteousness). The NLT puts it this way, “the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.” How is this “righteousness” acquired in these verses?

Rom 3:22

Rom 4:3, 5

Rom 4:6

Rom 5:17

- **Note:** The only way we have the righteousness of Christ is that we must be “put into” [*baptized* into] Christ, thus His righteousness becomes our righteousness; in fact, His life becomes our life, and His position as heir becomes our position of joint-heirs (8:17).

8:11 It gets even better: “If the Spirit...lives in you...” is another understood conditional statement, that is, “*since* the Spirit...lives in you...” There is a two-fold implication to this condition: (1) the power of this immediate indwelling Spirit is so mighty that He was able to raise up Christ from the dead. This is all implicit with the immediate presence of the Spirit at the moment of our salvation. Nowhere is there a need for “more of the Spirit” or a “second work of grace” or a new “endowment, or anointing” of the Spirit after our salvation. From the instant of being placed in Christ (by the baptism of the Spirit) and His Spirit is placed in us (baptism of the Spirit) at our regeneration (by faith) the most powerful Being in the universe who raised up Jesus now lives within our body! This is the “power” promised in Acts 1:8. (2) Just as the Spirit raise up Jesus, so He will give us the resurrected life now (Rom 6:4, 8, 11) and will raise up our mortal bodies in the future resurrection (1 Cor 6:14; 15:42, 53; 2 Cor 4:14). The Spirit of God who is already in us (this is the assumption of the past several verses) is all powerful, therefore, is there any value in begging God for more power?

Col 1:19

Col 2:9-10

- Instead of asking God for more power, what should we be asking God?

D. 8:12-14 — The conclusion of the preceding verses

^{NET} **Rom 8:12** So then, brothers and sisters, we are under **obligation**, not to the flesh, to **live according to** the flesh

¹³ (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are **led** by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

8:12-13 One is obligated to live for the one to whom he owes the most. The flesh can only produce a temporary and passing moment of pleasure, but whose consequences are destructive (they “will die”- v. 13). If something is going to destroy a person, why would he feel compelled or “under **obligation**” to it? (*opheiletēs*, “debtor, obligated to submit to”). Some may feel that if they have sensual, carnal urges that they must yield to them or be frustrated. Paul shows how ridiculous such psychological thinking is. Even believers can succumb to such irrational thinking. According to 1 Cor 3:1-4, can the flesh continue to have an influence on believers?

- The context is referring to how a person lives in the present life, either walking under the influence of the flesh or of the Spirit. The threat that one “will die” is a present active infinitive which follows the present active verb *mello*, “be progressively about to, on the point of or destined to...” Following the dictates of the flesh will lead you

to an early grave. What is the typical progression toward physical death in James 1:14-15?

- On the contrary, those who “by” or “through” the Spirit as the enabler or instrument of the action can “put to death” (*thanatoo*, metaphorically, “destroy, render extinct” or “liberate from the bonds of anything”) the “deeds” of the body (*praxis*, “action, activities of bodily members”). If the Spirit is within us, He has placed us into the death of Christ; therefore, we have been placed in the position of having died to sin already. It is irrational to attempt to continue to live in bondage to that which we have been set free from. What was the argument for our attitude toward sin in Romans 6:2?
Rom 6:10-11?
Rom 6:13?

8:14 Paul had directed his teaching toward true believers (v. 9), who are evident by their relationship to the Spirit: they are “led” by the Spirit (*ago*, present tense, “habitually, continuously...”- “conducting or accompanying someone;” figuratively, “of the influence of being guided;” “influences affecting the mind,” THAYER). Jesus said that the ministry of the Spirit would primarily be three-fold focus in John 16:7-8. What are these three areas of the Spirit’s ministry?

- How do you know if you are led by the Spirit? Do you sense the Spirit’s “rebuke” or “conviction” when you sin or consider sinning? He leads us by bringing to our conscious mind the already revealed Word of God that we understand, in order to guide us into a lifestyle of wisdom and moral godliness that honors Him. He keeps us on His path by bring conviction of sin, a sense of righteousness and an awareness of judgment or accountability for all our actions. If the Spirit’s primary task is to apply the Word to our lives, how are these verses of the revealed wisdom comparable to the “leading” of the Spirit?
Prov 4:4
Prov 7:2
Prov 9:6
- Those sensitive to the Spirit are the “sons” of God (*huios*, “a mature child who can take on an adult family privileges and responsibilities,” ZUCK). As a result of following what the Spirit has revealed, the believer is maturing as a *son* of God. Another word is used in 8:16. This is the favorite word for David’s son in the Greek translation of Proverbs. How do these verses relate to our theme?
Prov 1:10
Prov 1:15
Prov 3:11
Prov 3:12

E. 8:15-17 – Sonship or Slavery

^{NET} **Rom 8:15** For you did not receive the **spirit of slavery** leading again to **fear**, but you received **the Spirit of adoption**, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.”

¹⁶ The Spirit himself **bears witness** to our spirit that we are God’s **children**.

¹⁷ And if children, then **heirs** (namely, heirs of God and also **fellow heirs with Christ**)— if indeed we **suffer with him** so we may also be **glorified with him**.

8:15 The believer's new life is a contrast of two spirits: (1) spirit of slavery to sin and (2) spirit of sonship or adoption. Paul had vividly described the slavery to sin in 6: 16, “you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death...,” which results in fear. What is the secret of breaking these bonds of slavery in **Rom 6:19**?

- The second option is the spirit of “adoption”^{NET} (*huiiothesia*, “sonship, placing as a son,” “emphasis on full enjoyment of privileges of legal heirs,” GINGRICH). This is a legal technical term for adoption as a son with full rights of inheritance (BDAG 1024). As part of the “benefit package” that comes with salvation, all believers are adopted as sons (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). In fact, the former life before knowing Christ is considered to have been a “slave,” which is changed to become a son at salvation (Gal 4:7, “So you are no longer a slave but a son...”). As a result the believer does not need to be enslaved to sin again, nor live in fear of condemnation or death. This entitles the believer to a new relationship with God: now He becomes your “Father” in any language. “Abba” is Aramaic for “father.” Can sonship be undone?
- **Not only are we now a legal son, but also we become “children”** (*tekna*, “born ones, descendants, posterity, true genuine children,” THAYER). What is the significance of this new relationship in **John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1-2**?

8:16 The right of the believer has enormous implications in the future because this relationship never changes once it is established by a definitive commitment to trust exclusively in what Jesus did on the cross and what He has said in His Word. Another work of the Spirit is when He “bears witness” (*summartureo*, “add testimony in support of, confirm, agree with, bear joint witness”) with our spirit of this truth. The idea is either that (1) there are two witnesses: the Holy Spirit bears witness (to someone?) along with, not “to,” our spirit, or (2) it refers to the witness that the believer receives from the Spirit to give a special assurance from an inner witness. It does not make sense that our spirit would bear witness to someone, so it is better seen as the Spirit giving a subjective assurance to complement the objective truths (i.e., the facts of Christ’s coming, substitutionary death and resurrection) of the Gospel. Genuine salvation must have both the objective and subjective aspect to be genuine. Can you distinguish the difference in these verses?

1 John 3:14

1 John 3:18-20

1 John 3:24

1 John 4:6

1 John 4:13

1 John 5:13

1 John 5:20

8:17 Since the believer is a “son” he is also an “heir” (as seen in Gal 4:7), but the added feature of having the right as a “co-heir” with Christ. The exact nature of this inheritance

is not clarified, but the sharing in “His glory” is somehow contingent upon whether “we suffer with him.” Exactly what this means or how it is evaluated is not clarified. However, the “if” clause is a correlative conjunction, which means “on the one hand (*if we are continually suffering together*, present active) “in order that on the other hand” (*we may be glorified together*, subjunctive aorist passive). Can we trust Him to make it worthwhile if we suffer for His Name’s sake? What is the NT teaching on the believer suffering for Christ in these verses?

John 15:20

Col 1:24

2 Tim 3:12

1 Peter 4:12

- Is it worth it in these verses?

Rom 8:18

2 Tim 2:12

1 Peter 4:13

1 Peter 5:10

II. The Ultimate End of the believer and all creation thanks to Christ (8:18-25)

Part of the inheritance of the “heirs” and co-heirs with Christ includes the unimaginable glorious changes that will take place in the new creation when it all is accomplished.

^{NET} **Rom 8:18** For I **consider** that our **present sufferings** cannot even be **compared** to the glory that will be revealed to us.

¹⁹ For the creation eagerly waits for the **revelation** of the sons of God.

²⁰ For the **creation** was subjected to futility— **not willingly** but because of God who subjected it— in hope

²¹ that the creation itself will also be **set free** from the **bondage** of decay into the glorious **freedom** of God's children.

²² For we know that the whole creation **groans** and **suffers** together until now.

²³ Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees?

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance.

8:18 Paul compares the present suffering to the future glory as an introduction to the new section. Paul “**considered**” (*logizomai*, “think according to logical rules, keep a mental record, or a subjective evaluation,” FRIBERG) or gives his calculated evaluation of the “**sufferings**” (*pathema*, “misfortune, calamity, evil affliction; the afflictions which Christians must undergo in behalf of the same cause for which Christ patiently endured,” THAYER). The “present sufferings” lit. translates the phrase, “sufferings of the now time.” They “cannot even be compared” translates the sense of a worth (*axios*, “having weight,” as on a scale, the greater the weight, the greater the worth). Paul had just stated that true believers will be willing to “suffer with him” and now he adds that whatever the hurt or pain of suffering for the name of Jesus does not even compare to God’s plans for the believer. Exactly what this “glory” means is not described. The more **we trust Him** to make this declaration a reality and worthwhile, the more endurance and motivation we experience to face any consequence for following Jesus. What do these verses hint about

this incomparable “glory” that will be revealed in us?

Jer 29:11

Phil 3:10

2 Cor 1:5

1 Pet 4:13

1 Pet 5:1

8:19-21 Human believers are not the only one waiting for this glory to be revealed. All of creation was subject to the judgment of the fall of man into sin (Acts 3:17-19). Creation has an “anxious longing”^{NAS} (*apokaradokia*, “anxious and persistent expectation;” “watching with outstretched hands;” see Phil 1:20 for only other use). The creation “eagerly waits” (*apekdechomai*, indicative present, “continually...” “patiently waiting for”) the “**manifestation** of the sons of God”¹ (*apokalypseos*, “uncovering, laying bare, revelation”). This “manifestation” is used seven times in the NT² to refer to Christ’s return (not the period before His return). This is not a question of who all the sons of God are, but rather everything that is connected with the revealing of their share in His glorious transformation of all creation. Look at what all creation anticipates in these verses:

Col 3:4

Heb 2:10

- **8:20-21** Although creation had nothing to do with Adam’s sin, God’s curse (Gen 3:14, 17-19) subjected every living thing to “futility” (*mataiotes*, “emptiness, purposelessness, frustration” or “perverseness, depravation,” THAYER) and “decay” (8:21), (*phthora*, “corruption, destruction, perishing, decomposition,” THAYER). But the act of “subjection” (*upotasso*, aorist past action, “arrange under, and put in subjection”) by God’s sovereign act was in **hope**, which is the promise of a future restoration of the original purpose and status of all creation. The promise of global restoration to the original creation life will occur in the future simultaneously when the “children of God” are manifested. Sin’s misery is not eternal. What is our hope? 2 Pet 3:13
Rev 21:1
- In the meantime, all creation is without conscious awareness of the difference between their present state and their potential creation-state or future restoration state. This dissonance or difference is only perceived by God. Creation only knows the frustration of corruption and decay, but the “glorious freedom from death and decay” (8:21) is only a hope humans can know about from the revelation in His Word of what God intends to do. But we know there is a day coming when all creation will be “set free” (*eleutheroo*, future passive, “to make free, set at liberty”) from the curse of sin simultaneously when the “children of God” are given their “liberty” (*eleutheria*, “liberation from a dominating power”). How can we know that we are

¹ “Manifest Sons of God” is a phrase taken from this expression to refer to a special group within the Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Movement, Latter Rains Movement and Kingdom Now Theology of supposed end-time apostles and prophets with millennial or Christ-like powers who will conquer all evil and disease then propose to deliver to Christ a demonic free world.

² Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28.

not yet “free” from the “bondage of corruption”?

See also 1 John 3:2

1 Cor 15:51-54

- To teach that this is a present experience of the believer is to completely miss the focus and understanding of the passage; therefore, result in leading people into a delusionary view of life. What is the healthy perspective of this future transformation?
Phil 3:20-21

8:22-22 The groaning that is not uttered? Just as the physical universe “groans” within itself to be free, so believers “groan” to be transformed (*stenazo*, “utterances of a person caught in a dreadful situation and has no immediate prospect of deliverance,” MacARTHUR). In addition everything “suffers” (*sunodino*, “feels the pains of travail with, be in travail together”) from the effects of being under the curse of death and decay. The difference between what is now and what all earthly creation could be and will be is so vastly different that the pain of knowing this difference is like the **pains of childbirth**. Gen 3:16

The same word appears in Heb 13:17. What is the meaning in this passage?

- This new creation actually will take place in two steps. (1) The earth will be renovated, the curse is lifted, Satan is removed, Christ will be personally on earth in a reigning capacity and all believers from the present age will reign with Christ (Isa 11:5-9; 30:23-24; 35:1-2, 5-7; 65:20,25; Amos 9:13). (2) This is the ultimate transformation of the entire universe: for there will be “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1; 2 Pet 3:7-13). How long will the first stage take place, and the second stage?
- “God’s master plan of redemption encompasses the entire universe.” (MacARTHUR)

8:23 The created world is not alone in agonizing over this difference. The believers are the “first fruits” of the Spirit (*aparche*, “first portion of grain and fruit of a harvest and flocks offered to God, figuratively, of persons as the first of a set or category, the first converts,” FRIBERG). The first-fruit concept is like a foretaste of what is to come. When we experience the power of the Spirit to overcome the addicting and destructive power of one sin at a time, we get a foretaste of what total liberation will mean. We “groan” (*stenazo*, present indicative: “continually...” “sigh, groan, complain, grumble” UBS) not only because of present suffering, but now because of a revealed knowledge and personal experience of what will be our destiny. How can we presently experience a little of what this future liberation will mean?

Gal 5:22-23

- These groaning are too deep to be expressed in any language. How can you express in words the agony of the loss of a loved one? Or the pain of failure? They can only be felt. How do these verses express the groaning of the believer?
Ps 38:4
Ps 38:9-10

Rom 7:24

2 Cor 5:4

- The believer knows there is hope, which is the complete “adoption,” (*huiiothesian*, “placed as a son”) that is the “**redemption** of the body” (*apolytrosin*, “a releasing effected by payment of ransom”). Christ’s death-payment was not just for our sins, but in fact, for our whole being. The believer’s soul or spirit is already adopted (“received the Spirit of sonship,” 8:15) as a legal transaction between the sinner and his Savior through faith. This adoption, however, is the completion of redemptive act that is eagerly anticipated by an assured and confirmed hope. How is this described?
1 Cor 15:42-54
2 Cor 5:1-5
1 Thes 4:13-18
Phil 3:20-21

8:24-25 Paul interjects a general principal that overshadows the present discussion. Those who respond by faith have a real **hope**. Our salvation is not as much a past event as it is a secure future. This hope is not a dream or imagination, wishful thinking or a mere possibility, but rather a guaranteed hope based on the clear meaning of the Word of God. Hope is the cure for doubt. Why is hope a “helmet” in 1 Thess 5:8?

- Paul explains what is an axiomatic truth or a definition of hope: what is seen cannot be hoped for. Since now we cannot know by experience our ultimate reality until it happens to us, it remains something that is sure to happen, that is, a hope. The assurance is based on the promises of God. The certainty that what God promises is more certain than what a person can see with his eyes. Notice that the glorification of the believer in Rom 8:30 is spoken of in the past tense because it is so sure. Remaining faithful and eager during the present waiting period is motivated by the assurance that God’s Word never fails. Upon what does the believer trust in these verses?
Eph 4:30
Phil 1:6
1 Peter 1:13
1 Thess 1:3-4
- Another comment is merited with this definition of hope that fits in our understanding of 1 Cor 13:13. Hope is not eternal. When what is hoped for, is finally realized, then hope ceases to exist according to this verse. This is why love is the most important of the triad: faith, hope and love, because love never ceases. The context is dealing with a number of things that cease, but love is eternal.

III. The assurance that God’s plan never fails (8:26-30)

The discussion continues in the same concept of our defective and defiled existence that is not what it was designed to be, but the secure hope of our transformation is a great encouragement.

^{NET} **Rom 8:26** In the same way, the Spirit **helps** us in our **weakness**, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself **intercedes** for us with **inexpressible groanings**.

- ²⁷ And he who **searches** our hearts knows the **mind** of the Spirit, because the Spirit **intercedes** on behalf of the saints according to God's will.
- ²⁸ And we know that **all things** work together for **good** for those who love God, who are **called** according to his purpose,
- ²⁹ because those whom he **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be **conformed** to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
- ³⁰ And those he **predestined**, he also **called**; and those he called, he also **justified**; and those he justified, he also **glorified**.

8:26 Nowhere is the agony of a defective creation felt more than by the Spirit Himself,

Who is sealed within our bodies (Eph 1:13; 4:30), but His prayer and expectation is for our complete transformation (8:11) into the perfect reflection of Jesus (8:29). The word for how the Spirit “**helps**” is rich (*sunantilambanomai*, “to lay hold along with, to strive to obtain with others, help in obtaining”). We neither understand how defective we are, nor appreciate how perfect we will become. In this context, our “**weakness**” (*astheneia*, “frailty, feebleness, sickness of soul or body;” see James 5:14) is in contrast with what it would be like to be in a glorified, in a Christ-like existence, so we don’t know how to pray for it. The Spirit within us knows only too well what we need to be like Christ and “**intercedes**” (*huperentugchano*, present tense so “continuously...” “to intercede on behalf of someone, with specific emphasis upon the fact that what is being done is for the sake of someone else” LOUW-NIDA) for us to that end. The Spirit knows how vast this difference is and what is needed for us to progress toward this future transformation.

- The “**inexpressible**” (*alaletois*, “sighs too deep for words,” GINGRICH; “something that arouses such strong emotions one cannot find words to express it,” FRIBERG; “not to be expressed in words, mute sighs”, THAYER) “**groaning**” (*stenagmos*, “sigh”- Note: same word used with creation in general) is the result of the specific feeling of the Spirit for wanting everyone in whom He dwells to become what he is destined to become in the resurrection (8:23). This is not a mystery tongue of communication within the Godhead. It is the depth of feeling of how much the Spirit desires us to be like Christ. In addition to the Spirit, who else is interceding for us in Rom 8:34?

8:27 Though not specifically identified for rhetorical emphasis, God searches the hearts (Heb 4:13) and He “knows” (*oido*, “perceive with the eyes or any senses;” “knows by intimate or close relationship with someone,” FRIBERG) the mind of the Spirit, that is, whatever is sensed or perceived by the Spirit is immediately sensed and understood by the Father, even when there is no words to express it. The Spirit and Jesus (8:34) are praying that the believer will live out the “will of God.” How important it is for us to be searching His Word so we can live it as the Spirit and Jesus are praying! Though we are ignorant of these constant intercessions on our behalf, they never cease. What a model for us to follow in interceding for others! Who is interceding and how constantly in Heb 7:25? Check out Luke 22:31-32

8:28 Not only is the ultimate goal of all creation and the believer a secure happening, only the believer can begin a transformation toward this wonderful life existence. It begins with a confidence in God’s purpose to bring us progressively into His likeness in anticipation of the grand transformation in the resurrection. The Spirit and the Son are

interceding for us while the Father is working out circumstances to bring about this transformation. We “know” (*eido*, “it is well known, acknowledged;” “having come to knowledge through experience” FRIBERG) that “the ones who are loving God all things are constantly **working** towards good” [author’s free translation]. The word “working” (*synergeo*, “work together with, cooperate with,” LIDDELL-SCOTT) is not a chance occurrence, but a carefully orchestrated series of events that are designed to mature each believer towards what is “good”. What are God’s design and purpose in Ps 25:10?

Compare this concept with Deut 8:15-16 – Why did God lead Israel for 40 years in the wilderness?

What can you learn about God in Jer 24:5-7 that fits in this context?

Notice how Paul defines the ultimate good in 2 Cor 4:16-17. How does this passage fit in the context of Rom 8:28?

8:29-30 The promise of all things working for the good is made to those who were “called according to His purpose.” The importance of these verses in their context is to assure the believer that he will reach the end purpose of his salvation. This section will explain five key processes by which God keeps working for their eventual good (v. 28). This unbreakable chain of events is tied together with the phrase, “He also,” grammatically linking all of them together to indicate an assurance of eternal security. Paul depicts the steps of salvation from God’s perspective, which began long before individual’s faith was exercised. This list does not include all of the steps or processes that God uses to bring someone to Christ and on to his ultimate glorification, but these are the key steps.

(1) A process or sequence of God’s dealings with men begins when He “foreknows” them (*proginosko*, aorist, “to have knowledge beforehand;” “...before some temporal reference point,” LOUW-NIDA). This is more than mere knowledge of events, but in Acts 26:5 it implies a personal knowledge of an individual. As a part of this foreknowledge from eternity past was a few other events that take place before we became a believer:

- a. The Father gives the future believers to the Son (John 6:37)
- b. The Father draws the sinner to Christ (John 6:44); this action is clarified as a general drawing of “all people” (John 12:32) when Christ is “lifted up” – a reference to the cross, and perhaps metaphorically to preaching Christ’s death.
- c. The Spirit’s task is to convict the world concerning sin (John 16:8), before their salvation, in order to draw the sinner to Christ, using the law or the Ten Commandments as a “schoolmaster” (Gal 3:24) to bring people to Christ.
- d. Providentially God sends someone to proclaim the gospel to sinners under conviction (Rom 10:14), who then respond by believing the Word of God preached (1 Thess 2:13). The preached-gospel is the “power of God” (Rom 1:18), because the Spirit works through the Word to bring conviction of their sin, to draw the sinner to Christ and encourage them to trust in His Word which describes His redemptive work on the cross.

e. It is evident that no one can come to belief and trust in Christ apart from the work of the Spirit in the individual's life, but regeneration or the new birth follows the Spirit's work of leading the person to a from-the-heart-faith-trust in the Savior. God's foreknowledge contemplates every possible option and foreknows the ones who will believe working through every circumstance to make it happen.

(2) Those He foreknew He “predestinated” (*proorisen*, aorist, “to predetermine, decide beforehand;” from *orizo*, “determine, appoint, fix, designate, declare a thing”), that is, the end of the believer's life is determined and pre-declared to be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (see also 1 John 3:2). In this context the “groaning” of the Spirit is for this day to come quickly, (it is the “manifestation of the sons of God”—8:19) and it surely will come to pass because it has been “determined or appointed” to happen. This is the end or other extreme of God's gracious dealings with believers which begins with foreknowledge and ends with a declared end of Christ-likeness.

- There is a danger in making this word to mean a universal arbitrary deterministic or almost fatalistic act of God. Paul is simply stating that the end of the believer to become like Christ is as sure and fixed as the very character of God who declared it. The text is not saying that God pre-determined who would believe, but that He pre-determined that all who did believe would definitely be “conformed to His image” when He removed the curse and made the world anew. This is the theme of the whole context. The theology of “predestination” is more derived from the Latin translation of this word [*praedestinavit*] than from the Greek meaning.
- 8:29 The phrase “that he might” refers to Christ (Col 1:18), being the “firstborn among many brethren” (that is, the first One resurrected into a glorified body). This phrase refers to the resurrected Christ whose image all believers will assuredly experience becoming a purified race prepared to live in His presence forever.
- Between these two extremes (foreknowledge in eternity past, and the predetermination of the end of all believers) are three steps in reaching this end. In this whole process not a single believer is lost or forgotten.

(1) Those He foreknew and predestinated He “called” (*kaleo*, aorist, “invite, summon”). How were people in Thessalonica “called” in 2 Thess 2:13-14?

What is meant by the “calling” of God being “irrevocable” in Rom 11:29?

(2) Those He “justified” (*dikaioo*, “to be acquitted, pronounced and treated as righteous”). If all men are condemned sinners before a holy God (Rom 3:22b-23), then man's only hope is mercy and grace to be given an acceptable righteousness that he can never merit. How does one become “justified” in Rom 3:24?

If justification means to be made perfectly righteous, how does 2 Cor 5:21 explain the process?

- (3) **Those He “glorified”** (*doxazo*, aorist, “to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate; to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged”). This future glorification is so sure that it is written in the past tense (aorist) as a singular act already done. This is one of the most exciting themes in the NT. Look up these verses and write their relation to this ultimate purpose of God’s dealings with men:

2 Cor 4:17

Rom 8:18

2 Thes 2:14

2 Tim 2:10

How does 1 Cor 4:5 declare that each believer will be “glorified” by God?

IV. The Conclusion: The believer is secure in Christ (8:31-39)

The salvation that God has designed is described from eternity past to the eternal future, which assuredly God will accomplish. Based on these truths Paul now asks seven questions in an emotional crescendo of Q&A’s that erase any doubt or quench any objection that could be raised.

^{NET} **Rom 8:31** What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all— how will he not also, along with him, **freely give us** all things?

³³ Who will bring any **charge** against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is the one who will **condemn**? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is **interceding** for us.

³⁵ Who will **separate** us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we have complete **victory** through him who loved us!

³⁸ For I am **convinced** that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to **separate** us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

8:31a Paul refers back to this chapter or the entire book to this point, with a special focus on the substitutionary atonement answering why the believer will never be “condemned” (8:1). The answer to the first question, What shall we then say?, can only lead to praise and worship. Paul is always first establishing the truth of a doctrine (induction), then asking the reader for the implications or applications (deduction) (See 4:1; 6:1; 9:14, 30).

8:31b Second question: Who can possibly oppose or interfere with this eternal plan of salvation for all believers? Satan and his army of demons can attempt to interfere (Eph 6:11-13; 1 Peter 5:8), but they cannot ultimately change God’s eternal plan for the believer. The type of Greek conditional clause introducing this question “if...” is followed by a present indicative verb (“is...”), which signifies a fulfilled condition, not a doubtful condition, so the English understanding should be, “Since God is for us.” Paul is

asking if anyone is stronger or has more authority than God Who has declared Himself to be on our side? How did David respond to this truth?

Ps 27:1

Ps 46:1-3

Ps 46:11

- **Consider who could attempt to oppose us.** People could attempt to destroy our confidence in this truth of God's grace granting us a fully paid salvation, such as the legalistic Judaizers of the first century (Gal 2:11-16; 3:1-15; 5:2-6) or the Roman Catholic Church which claims the power to grant or revoke the grace of salvation. No persons on earth or in the spiritual realm can affect any change to God's salvation for us promised in His Word.

8:32 Third question: In answer to the second question, Paul declares that if God would sacrifice His own Son for our salvation, it is preposterous that He would reject us after having cleansed us through the shed blood of Jesus making us perfectly righteous before Him. If He loved us while we were sinners and enemies how could He reject us after He paid for our sins by sacrificing His Son and then gave us His righteousness? Look for the sacrifice God makes in these verses for the benefit of the believer:

Isa 53:4-6, 10

2 Cor 5:21

Gal 1:4

Gal 3:13

8:33 Fourth question: This forensic question: Who will bring any "charge" (*egkaleseo*, "make a formal accusation in court; press charges") against those whom God has "chosen?" (*eklektos*, "picked out, of a quality of persons or things, choice, select, excellent," Friberg -"elect" in KJV). The word is found in 1 Peter 2:4, "rejected by men, but **choice** and precious..." a reference to Christ, so it can't be a reference to how a person is saved, but rather how valuable he is to God. The concept is an adjective, not an action verb. The word refers to the high value of a special people of God who are choice people from God's perspective. Since God is the one who justifies the believing sinner, no accusation can stand against His choice and precious people. Who is the accuser in Rev 12:10?

- Satan will be thrown out of court because the Judge has already declared the believer's sinfulness to be justified on the basis of his faith in Christ.

8:34 Fifth question: Will the Savior change his mind and condemn the believer? This would mean that God would have to act completely in contrary to His stated promises. Even when the accusations against the believer are true, or a proven violation of the Ten Commandments (the law) is confirmed, it is never sufficient for our rejection, because all our sins have been paid for by the blood-sacrifice of our Savior who has covered us with His righteousness. Explain the assurances of our exemption from condemnation given in these verses:

John 5:24

Rom 5:18

Rom 8:1

1 Cor 11:32

- This verse declares four proofs that protect our salvation in Jesus Christ: (1) The fact that Jesus died (paying for all our sins – 1 Cor 15:3), He bore our penalty on the cross.
- (2) “And more than that...” is alive today (Col 3:1; see also Heb 1:3 and 8:1, then 1 Pet 3:22), which proves His victory is valid over sin and death. Being alive we have a living Savior who can be trusted.
- (3) He is at the right hand of God—the place of the highest exaltation, honor and authority. See Phil 2:8-9. See the significance of this statement in Heb 10:11-12.
- (4) Now He lives to intercede for every redeemed soul until we are all safe in glory with Him forever. This was even seen by Isaiah in 53:12 and the author of Hebrews 7:25. What is the special assurance in 1 John 2:1?

8:35 Sixth question: Having established that no other person could take away our salvation, now he asks is there any created being or circumstance who could separate us from His love. The word “who” (*tis*, “who or what”) could refer to the continuation of the question which deals with a chain of negative circumstances however painful can never create a wedge between the believer and his/her Savior. The phrase “love of Christ” is not a reference to the love of the believer for Christ, but the permanent, unchanging love of Christ for the believer. Look up these verse to see the faithfulness of His love toward us.

John 13:1

1 John 4:9-10

8:35b-36 Seventh question is a series of seven circumstances in rhetorical questions all demanding a negative response, “nothing can separate us.” It should be noted that Paul experienced all of these circumstances in 2 Cor 11:23-28.

- **Tribulation:** (*thipsis*, “pressing together,” metaphorically is “oppression, affliction”). This is the most common word used for outward difficulties and emotional stress.
- **Distress:** (*stenochoria*, “narrowness of space,” metaphorically is “dire calamity, extreme affliction”). The idea of being helplessly hemmed in where no human solution or escape is possible, and only divine power can give the strength to endure or resist (see 1 Cor 10:13). Until there is a way out, the Spirit gives the grace to resist.
- **Persecution:** (*diogmos*, “pursuit, chase,” metaphorically is “persecution,” FRIBERG). Paul was “content with ...persecutions...for the sake of Christ...” (2 Cor 12:10). Paul boasted proudly of the church in Thessalonica for their endurance in persecution (2 Thes 1:4). There is “great” reward for those who are so persecuted for Christ’s sake (Matt 5:10-12).
- **Famine:** (*limos*, “hunger, scarcity of harvest”). This was Paul’s experience in 2 Cor 11:27. When Christians are discriminated against on their jobs limiting their income potential or job security. Many believers have been imprisoned for their faith and have suffered hunger rather than appease their persecutors by recanting or silencing their witness.
- **Nakedness:** Paul probably does not mean complete nakedness, since this would have been detestable to a Jew, rather the concept is the lack of sufficient clothing as in cold weather or most of his clothes being torn away. See 2 Cor 11:27.

- **Peril:** (*kindunos*, “danger, risk”). In 2 Cor 11:26 Paul listed eight different “perils” that he willingly faced to spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire, which included the danger of treachery and mistreatment.
- **Sword:** (*machaira*, “a curved weapon for close combat, a dagger” used metaphorically for a “violent death,” FIEBERG). Jesus stated that His coming would inevitably result in this kind of reaction from a rejecting public (See Matt 10:34).

8:36 Paul quotes Ps 44:22 from the Septuagint (also known as the LXX³). Christians should not be surprised if or when they may have to suffer any or all of these aforementioned negative reactions to Christians. Read Heb 11:36-38; Matt 10:37-39; 2 Tim 3:12). The secret to facing such dire opposition is to have already died to self. When Paul spoke of being “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20) he referred to more than a positional truth, but also an emotional truth: Paul held on to nothing in this life, even his own life. Lost, suffering or death meant nothing, because in his own mind he was already dead, just waiting for it to happen. How is this truth applied in these verses?

Col 2:20

1 Cor 4:9

2 Cor 1:9

8:37 In the midst of “all these things” (same phrase as 8:28) we are “more than conquerors” (*hypernikomen*, present active, “keep on being...” “hyper-conqueror, completely victorious, “or “gain a surpassing victory,” THAYER). This continuous victory over circumstances is enabled through Christ’s indwelling presence (see 2 Cor 2:14). Does this mean prosperity and success or an indomitable commitment to trust and hope in God’s purpose.

8:38-39 Paul’s conclusion is that he is “**convinced**” (perfect tense, “I have been convinced, I stand convinced”) regarding the security and safety of the believer in Jesus Christ. Paul will list a series of ten extremes in six categories to include every possibility beginning with death, which is where the earlier list ended (v. 35).

- (1) Extremes of the present existence: Death and life
 - (2) Extremes of created spiritual armies: Angels and demons
 - (3) Extremes of time: present (anything listed in Rom 8:35) and future (any possibility)
 - (4) Extremes of spiritual enemies: powers (or possibly human governments)
 - (5) Extremes of space: height and depth (concepts of the occult forces)
 - (6) Extremes of the entire created realm
- **There is nothing imaginable** that could “separate” (*chorizo*, aorist, “to divide, separate one’s self from, divorce”) us from “the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” People can separate you from their company or ostracize you (Luke 6:22) but they are powerless with God. Nothing in all creation can ever separate us from His love for us.

³ The Koine Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, which is said to have been translated by 70 Jewish scholars between the 3rd to 1st century BC.