



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Lesson 10

Romans 8:28-39 Commentary

New Revised Standard Version

(Romans 8:28) We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

After God calls us into His family through the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ, which includes His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven for us, we come to love God in Christ. Both before and after He called us into His family and the Kingdom of God, God loved us; therefore, God works out everything that happens to us before and after He called us for our good. All things work for the good those God loves and calls, because He has a purpose for all those He loves and calls; therefore, we love God in response to His love and saving grace: “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Because we love God, we strive to cooperate with God in all things and in every situation. In some sense, true Christians make it easier for God to work good out of all that happens to them. Jesus taught, “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10).

(Romans 8:29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.

Before anyone ever responds to the gospel in faith, God knows in advance that they will, and God has determined to work through their faith in Jesus in personal and individual ways so everything throughout their lives will help them conform to and reveal the image of His Son to the world. Jesus Christ is the one and only begotten Son of God and through His work in the lives of those who believe in Him many will be adopted into the family of God. Jesus Christ will reveal His reality through His brothers and sisters (the true followers of Jesus) and lead more people to saving faith in Him.

(Romans 8:30) And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Faith is the believer's response to the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. As believers grow in their faith, knowledge, and love of God, they recognize how undeserving they are to be members of God's family. They know that nothing they have ever done or possibly could ever do would ever qualify them to be adopted children of God or earn them admittance into the Kingdom of God. This humble understanding of the grace of God leads believers to accept the fact that God determined for them or predestined them to be members of His family before He called them. God has never left a believer's salvation to chance. In mysterious ways, God has worked good through the believer's good and bad choices to lead them to saving faith in Jesus. Without understanding the deep mysteries of God, believers know that all of God's offers of salvation, God's promises, and God's warnings in the Bible are honest, loving, just, and merciful ways that God uses to help people come to faith in Jesus, maintain their loyalty to Jesus, obey Jesus, and reveal the image of Jesus Christ in them to others. They also know that they chose to follow Jesus and some of their decisions to follow Jesus were made after great struggles of heart and mind in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. In looking back, they understand that God's Holy Spirit helped them repent of their sins and trust in Jesus, and they see this more clearly as they grow in faith. They glorify God and praise God for their spiritual life and any growth in faith and progress in holy living. As they respond to God in faith and love, they know in fact that God is the One who predestined, called, justified, and glorified them so they would choose to obey Christ, bear the image of His Son, and lead others to faith in Christ as God's grace works through them. Notice, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul is convinced that the good work God begins in every believer's life He will complete; therefore, Paul wrote "glorified" in the past tense, meaning that the true believer's hope of being glorified in the future is assured by Christ and His love from the beginning. With a similar conviction, Paul explained why he prayed for the Philippian Christians: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

(Romans 8:31) What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Earlier in his Letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Romans 8:14) and “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16) and “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26). From the written Word of God and the Holy Spirit within us, we know God is for us as our Lord and Savior. Whoever thinks they are against us and who tries to work against us will have whatever they say and do overruled by God and worked out for our eternal and ultimate good (if not physically in this life, then certainly spiritually and for the next life). We will be glorified as God purposed according to His will despite anything ever done to us by anyone or anything or any other being (angel or devil).

(Romans 8:32) He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?

To illustrate or prove his point, Paul argued that the greatest gift God could ever give us was His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who came to die for us. God gave Jesus Christ up for every believer and He could give us no greater gift. Along with Christ, God has given us everything we need to grow in grace, love, and holiness in this life and throughout eternity. God freely gives us what is best for us, and all these things are related to Jesus Christ in some way.

(Romans 8:33) Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Christians are justified. Now, or if they appear in God’s courtroom in the future, God has and will declare Christians to be right with Him, right in the sight of God, right in His Kingdom, and not under any condemnation—all these things and more God will declare because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If anyone ever dares to bring any charge of being guilty for anything past, present, or future against a Christian, God has already declared them and will declare them in the future, “Not guilty.”

(Romans 8:34) Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

God has not and will not condemn us, nor will God allow anyone to bring a charge against us and condemn us before Him. God will not allow this to ever happen in His Kingdom though it will happen to believers on earth in earthly kingdoms. Christ died to justify believers and He rose again to sit at the right hand of God to advocate and intercede in behalf of believers. The believer has assurance of salvation from the saving work of Jesus Christ in their behalf from the fact that the indwelling Holy Spirit intercedes and prays for them (Romans 8:26) and from the fact that Jesus Christ intercedes and prays for them from the right hand of God (Romans 8:34). Consider also: “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens” (Hebrews 7:25-26).

(Romans 8:35) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

God has and will graciously give believers all things in Christ Jesus and believers have the assurance of the love of God and Christ. Believers are heirs of God and Christ, and in this life those who believe will suffer with Christ and be glorified with Christ (Romans 8:17). Throughout history believers have suffered everything Paul has listed here. Through all these afflictions, believers may be assured that Christ loves them and will be with them. In his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

(Romans 8:36) As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

Paul referred to the Old Testament to reaffirm that the afflictions of Christians in this life were to be expected (Paul quoted Psalms 44:22).

Christians suffer rejection, persecution, and death for the sake of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the same as Jesus suffered for His gospel and our salvation, and as the true prophets in the Old Testament suffered for preaching the truth of God. Christians suffer as sheep that do not fight back because they are powerless to fight back, though Jesus who is all-powerful chose not to fight back when He suffered and died on the cross to save us from our sins. In Old Testament times perhaps, people did not give much thought to a sheep that was sheared or slaughtered (unless sacrificed), the same as many today do not give it much thought when Christians are tortured or martyred (unless they are fellow followers of Christ).

(Romans 8:37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Everything good that we are, have, and will have in the future we enjoy because God loves us and loved us enough to send Jesus Christ into our world to live, die, and live again for us. God's Word and Spirit led us to faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ enabled the just and merciful forgiveness of God for our sins because He died in our place as a sacrifice for us. Christ cleansed us of sin and made us fit for the Holy Spirit to live in us. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to live in us and intercede for us. Because of these events of God in Christ for us, and the intercession of Christ and the Holy Spirit for us, we are more than simple conquerors when afflicted or attacked. Someday we will be completely prepared by Christ to rule and reign with Him in His Kingdom as complete victors over all of His enemies and ours.

(Romans 8:38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

In general, Paul wrote a compelling list of what the followers of Jesus Christ may face with greater or less intensity depending on the purposes of God for them. In death and in life, we might face good angels or evil demons, and these may come to us unexpectedly and in unusual ways, but no power on earth or in heaven can separate us from God in Christ, because God loves us, and God is all-powerful and willing to save us.

(Romans 8:39) nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our future and our security no matter what happens rests in God. We know God loves us and promises to care for us throughout eternity because of Jesus Christ and what He has done and does for us. His intercession for us is only one of many things Jesus does for us. He is our Lord and the Lord over all creation; therefore, He works all that happens and will happen to us for God's purposes and our benefit. And Jesus will always do more for us than we could ever imagine—now and forever.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are two reasons you can give for knowing that everything that happens to you God will work out for your good?
2. How much of your relationship with God depends on Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection? Give a reason with your answer.
3. What does it mean to you to be justified and glorified?
4. What reason did Paul give for us to believe “that God would graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?
5. Why can no one succeed with God if they bring a charge against us or condemn us as a Christian? Give a reason for your answer.

© 2022 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. All Rights Reserved.

Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.

Contact: lgp@theiblf.com.