

# God's Grace Is For Me: An Exegetical/Sermonic Study of Romans 8

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[Delivered to the Chicago Pastors' Conference, May 3-4, 1993.]

## Introduction

Romans 8 is written for believers – believers who hurt, believers who cry, believers ready to give up, believers about to die, believers who doubt, believers who worry, believers who struggle, believers whose faith is eroding under the daily sin-blasting directed at us by Satan and a sin-sick world, believers who feel they are nothing but “sheep to be slaughtered” (Romans 8:36b).

Romans 8 is written for you and me.

In this chapter, the apostle Paul takes us by the hand and leads us away from our world and life so topsy-turvy and turbulent with sin. He guides us on a retreat to the pinnacle of faith. Once there, he invites us beleaguered believers to rest and to breathe in the warm, refreshing breezes of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Then he bids us survey our life and our world from the Lord's perspective, not ours. What we see comforts us. What we see quiets our guilt-ridden consciences and gives us an inner peace and tranquility. What we see inspires us with hope and gives us a confident strength for our faith-walk into eternity. What we see takes our breath away. For what we see in Romans 8 is this most personal truth: *God's grace is for me.*

By God's grace, I have been standing on this mountain-top of faith for some weeks now. When asked to prepare this exegesis, I decided to use Romans 8 for a series of sermons that culminated on the Sunday after Easter. I needed this series at this time, because I needed a get-a-way to grace. Judging from the warm response of our congregation's members, I would say they needed it to. Printed and audio copies of the sermons were shared within the congregation and beyond – to prisoners, depressed, terminally ill, etc. One couple told me of a very depressed friend to whom they gave the first sermon in this series. Several days later, that friend called. Her depression had lifted. She thanked the couple profusely for the shared sermon. The next day, this friend resigned her job and turned herself in to the authorities! For months she had been embezzling funds from the school where she worked. No one knew – husband, children, friends, administration. But God knew, and she knew. Once this lady learned *God's grace is for me*, she was happy to confess her sin and do what was “right,” despite any and all earthly consequences.

Perhaps we come to this conference depressed. Perhaps we come here angry and worn out. Perhaps we come here convinced that the world is going to hell in a hand-basket, and our church, yes even our family and our personal life is going with it. Then, dear brothers, come away with me and the apostle Paul. Retreat to the mountain-top and be much richer for the journey.

## **Outline of the Chapter**

*(This outline reflects the sermon series I delivered on this chapter. Each major part of the outline was one sermon. I recognize that this outline will therefore differ from others. In one or two instances I have elevated what others deem a sub-point and made it a major part of this outline. I also treated verses 33-34 separately on Easter Sunday, and again the following Sunday as part of the larger concluding section of Romans 8.)*

- I. God's Grace Took Away Condemnation (vs. 1-4)**
  - A. Jesus was condemned for all sins on his cross.**
  - B. There is "no way" that condemnation remains for me.**
  
- II. God's Grace Gives Me the Holy Spirit (vs. 5-17)**
  - A. The Spirit alone gives me life.**
  - B. The Spirit alone guides me through life.**
  - C. The Spirit alone guides me to life!**
  
- III. God's Grace Points Me To Heaven (vs. 18-25)**
  - A. Heaven's glory far outweighs present suffering.**
  - B. Heaven is guaranteed me by God's indwelling Spirit.**
  
- IV. God's Grace Gives Me My Very Own Prayer Counselor. (vs. 26-27)**
  - A. He knows what I feel.**
  - B. He knows what God wants.**
  
- V. God's Grace Is A "Forever" Love (vs. 28-32)**
  - A. God loved me at Calvary. (vs. 32)**
  - B. God loved me from eternity. (vs. 28b, 29-30)**
  - C. God loves me now. (vs. 28-29)**
  - D. God *will* love me forever. (vs. 29b, 30b)**
  
- VI. God's Grace Acquitted Me! (vs. 33-34)**
  - A. Jesus took my place: my verdict, my sentence, my execution.**
  - B. How foolish for me to "appeal!"**
  
- VII. God's Grace Makes Me More Than A Conqueror In Christ! (vs. 33-39)**
  - A. Christ has "more than" conquered sin for me.**
  - B. Christ has "more than" conquered suffering and sorrow for me.**
  - C. Christ has "more than" conquered everything for me.**

- I. God's Grace Took Away Condemnation. (vs. 1-4)  
 A. Jesus was condemned for all sins on his cross.  
 B. There is "no way" that condemnation remains for me.

1 Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. 2 ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. 3 τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, 4 ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.

### Key Words/Grammatical Constructions:

#### Verse 1:

- οὐδὲν adj. cardinal. nom. nt. sg. First in the sentence, hence emphasized. In our vernacular "no way" seems much stronger than a simple negative here. However the translation "Not a single one" would remain more faithful to the original grammar.
- ἄρα logical, inferential particle, building on message of Chapter 7. *so, therefore*
- νῦν This reflects our "present reality" as Christians. This is the only time that Paul combines ἄρα and νῦν in his writings. (R. 1190)
- κατάκριμα (*κρίνω*) *a verdict against, hence guilty verdict or condemnation; nom. nt. sing.*

#### Verse 2:

- νόμος *law* in the sense of *principle* or *rule*; Paul has said much about the "sin-principle." Now he introduces a new "principle." When νόμος is used in a figurative sense, it is usually with a genitive of "authority" or a word of explanation. Hence the "rule of sin" is "the evil forced on me by sin." So also with the "rule of the spirit." (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 1071)
- τοῦ πνεύματος *Spirit* or *spirit*; Translators are divided on this word. Because of the entire phrase, "the principle of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," I believe that "spirit," or "spiritual" fits the context better. The NET translates in this way. Robertson, 780, also allows for this close coupling of the two genitives.
- ἐν *In Christ Jesus*; This connection is critical. "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
- ἠλευθέρωσέν aor. act. ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> sg; Paul eschews "contrary to fact," or any other "iffy" Greek construction in this most weighty matter. He tells us what God has done. He shares with us concrete facts.
- με οἱ σε Textual evidence is divided between "me" and "you." However, it is weighted toward "me." Also, I believe this follows the train of thought better from Chapter 7. Robertson, 402, also says "the vehemence of the passion argues for Paul's own experience." However Robertson then buckles under to disputable textual evidence and treats the passage as if it contained σε.

#### Verse 3:

- ἀδύνατον alpha privative + *power*; literally the "impossibility" or "powerlessness" of the law.

ἐν ᾧ	relative pronoun and relative clause are causal, describing “why” there is a “powerlessness” of the law.
ἡσθένει	act. impf. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg; <i>to be weak</i> .
σαρκός	<i>sinful nature, sinful flesh</i>
πέμψας	aor. act. ptc. nom. masc. sg; <i>God (did) by sending...</i>
ὁμοιώματι	<i>likeness</i> ; Paul is most precise. Jesus was true man, and looked in every way like others who walk on this earth. Yet Jesus is “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).
περὶ ἁμαρτίας	I take this to be a Hebraism borrowed from the Septuagint. Hence, instead of “on account of sin,” the phrase is translated “as a sin offering.”
κατέκρινεν	aor. act. ind; <i>to render a verdict, to judge</i> .
τῆ	I take this to refer to Jesus’ flesh.

#### Verse 4:

δικαίωμα	<i>rightful act, also an acquittal, or not guilty verdict.</i>
πληρωθῆ	aor. act. subj. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg; <i>to be filled up</i>
κατὰ	<i>according to</i> with the accusative.
περιπατοῦσιν	pres. act. ptc. masc. dat. pl; <i>walk of life</i> .
πνεῦμα	lacking the article isn’t absolutely conclusive, but here I feel “spirit” is preferred. (Concerning the use of πνεῦμα: <i>The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , Vol. 4, p. 433, says: The word carries the idea “of a power into whose sphere man has come and which thus shapes his” thinking, his walk of life, and his subjection to the Law of God. This would help explain why it can be difficult to decide in favor of translating “Spirit,” or “spirit.”)

#### Translation

There is therefore no way that a guilty verdict remains for those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spiritual life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do, in that it was weak on account of the sinful flesh, God (did) by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . And as a sin offering, God judged the sin in his flesh, in order that the “righteous” verdict of the law be filed up in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to Spirit.

#### Exegetical/Sermonic Comments:

##### A. Jesus was condemned for all sins on his cross.

“No way therefore now.” Those opening words of this 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter jarred me as I struggled with them again and again. You see, after sympathizing with the “wretched man,” the “wicked sinner” of Chapter 7, I expected something else to logically follow here. I expected Paul to say, “Therefore, you and I have been judged, sentenced and damned. Hunker down and get ready for God’s lightning bolts to send you straight to hell!” But Paul doesn’t say that. He doesn’t have to at this point. That’s because Paul addresses this chapter to “those who are in Christ Jesus.” Paul’s words are for believers, and Paul knows that I (as well as all other guilt-ridden, troubled believers) am hunkered down already. Paul knows that I feel every bit as frustrated and

worthless as he did (Romans 7:21-24). Therefore he turns from the law and now points me to God's grace. He builds on the outburst of praise contained in 7:25, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Paul says, "For what the law was powerless to do, in that it was weak on account of the sinful flesh, God (did) by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And as a sin offering, God judged the sin in his flesh..." Paul does *not* take me to Mount Sinai to read the two stone tablets of the law again. That's because I'm already on my knees. I am crushed in my sin. I am "wretched" as was Paul. I am ready to give up and die. If I turn to the law at this point, I will only become suicidal, for it is an "impossibility" for the law to save me. Not that there is anything wrong with the law. It is holy and righteous because it comes from a holy and righteous God. But it cannot save me. In this regard, it has been "weakened, "rendered inefficient," all because I am a sinner. On this side of the grave, I can never measure up to its absolute-perfectionist standards. I fall short. Therefore I am doomed.

Or am I? "For what the law was powerless to do, God (did) by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And as a sin offering, God judged the sin in his flesh..." Paul takes me into the heavenly tribunal that convened on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. He takes me to Calvary. He gently lifts my chin and raises my eyes. "See those three crosses. Look at the center one! What do you see there? See Jesus condemned in his flesh! Do you know why?" I shake my head numbly. "Please tell me," I groan. "God judged Jesus in your place. God judged 'the sin,' your sin in Jesus' flesh! Your God, in an act that combines both holy justice and free grace, decided to punish all the sins of all time of all people in one place. God did this when he sent Jesus 'as a sin offering.'"

"Do you understand what happened at Calvary? God sat in his heavenly throne-room and declared Jesus guilty for your sins and mine. God sentenced Jesus to the verdict of suffering, death, and separation from God that sins, all sins, your sins deserve!"

## **B. There is "no way" that condemnation remains for me.**

"There is therefore no way that a guilty verdict remains for those in Christ Jesus." Paul's words are bold and brash. It's as if Paul is challenging me: "Are you God? Are you going to push him off his throne so you can usurp his position and be judge, jury, and executioner over your own sins? Are you going to retry yourself? If you are consumed with guilt, if you find no joy in life, no hope, no peace, that's exactly what you are doing!"

There can't be any condemnation left for me, a believer in Jesus! Why? The trial for mankind's sin is over. Paul has established that (but he'll bring it up again later, because he knows how weak my faith can be). The sentence has been handed down. Jesus received my "guilty verdict," so that God could pronounce a "not guilty" verdict over me!

God has made Jesus to be my substitute in punishment, and God has made Jesus my own by Spirit-worked faith. Therefore when God now looks at me, a believer, He always sees me surrounded by the Savior Jesus Christ and his perfection (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). This was his plan of grace for me all along, "in order that the 'righteous' verdict of the law be filled up in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to Spirit." God's gracious plan is fulfilled, only when faith animates a heart once stone-cold in sin (cf. 8:30). His plan is fulfilled only when believers gleefully run along the guideline of God's holy law (Psalm 119:32) according to the power of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

God's grace is for me (Romans 6:14). I can stop whipping myself over sin. I can stop waking up with the nightmares. I can live in peace. Jesus has changed my eternity, and in the process Jesus has changed my "now." Paul wants me to feel the refreshing breeze of the gospel which assures me, "For the law of the spiritual life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and death." I don't have to hunker down and wait for the lightning bolts to hit anymore. Life is good by God's grace in Jesus, for I am already enjoying the spiritual life given to me the moment I was brought to faith (John 5:24). I am already taking my first baby steps – on into eternity.

## II. God's Grace Gives Me The Holy Spirit. (vs. 5-17)

A. The Spirit alone gives me life.

B. The Spirit alone guides me through life.

C. The Spirit alone guides me to life!

5 οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος. 6 τὸ γὰρ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς θάνατος, τὸ δὲ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ζωὴ καὶ εἰρήνη· 7 διότι τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν, τῷ γὰρ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑποτάσσεται, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται· 8 οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύναται. 9 ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ. 10 εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, τὸ μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν διὰ ἁμαρτίαν τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωὴ διὰ δικαιοσύνην. 11 εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὁ ἐγείρας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ζωοποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν.

12 Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ὀφειλέται ἐσμέν οὐ τῇ σαρκὶ τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν, 13 εἰ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆτε, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν· εἰ δὲ πνεύματι τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε, ζήσεσθε. 14 ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν. 15 οὐ γὰρ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας πάλιν εἰς φόβον ἀλλὰ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας ἐν ᾧ κρᾶζομεν, Ἀββα ὁ πατήρ. 16 αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμέν τέκνα θεοῦ. 17 εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι· κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ, εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν.

### Key Words/Grammatical Constructions

#### Verse 5:

ὄντες	pres. act. ptc. nom. masc. pl.
σάρκα	<i>sinful nature.</i>
θρονοῦσιν	pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> pl; <i>to think, set one's mind upon.</i>
δὲ	indicates contrast with previous clause.
πνεῦμα	<i>spirit.</i>

#### Verse 6:

φρόνημα	<i>frame of thought, mind.</i>
δὲ	again, a huge contrast in the verse.

#### Verse 7:

διότι	subordinating conjunction <i>διά + ὅτι; on account that, because.</i>
ἔχθρα	<i>enmity, discord; the desire to be separated.</i>
ὑποτάσσεται	pres. pass. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg; <i>arranged under, hence be subordinate, subject to.</i>
δύναται	pres. mid. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg; Paul gives us the final, infallible, inspired word on Decision Theology.

**Verse 8:**

ἐν σάρκι *in the flesh*; This is the entire sphere of their existence. There's no getting away from it or out of it. The quality of the thing is stressed as shown by the lack of definite article.

ἄρῆσαι aor. act. inf; *to please*.

**Verse 9:**

ὕμεις first person pronoun and the adversative δὲ. The contrasting lifestyles jump off the page at us.

ἀλλὰ We are no longer trapped in the “fleshly mode of existence.”

ἐν πνεύματι First, “a spiritual mode of existence,” then, “Holy Spirit.”

οἰκεῖ pres. act. ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> sg;  *dwell, live*.

πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ A powerful reason for confessing that the Spirit proceeds from the “Father and the Son.

εἰ clause simple conditional, determined as fulfilled. Indicative in protasis and apodosis. This type of clause indicates an “assumed truth,” a certainty.

**Verse 10:**

εἰ clause simple conditional, as above in Verse 9.

σῶμα σὰρξ is not used here. Nevertheless this is similar: “The human body considered as the seat and occasion of moral imperfection, as inducing to sin through its appetites and passions” (Green, 183).

διὰ *because*; sin kills.

δικαιοσύνην righteousness; This is God-given righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Because of God's gracious gift, our spirit is truly alive (ζωή) – free, joyful, contented, at peace.

Again, a simple conditional is used here with indicatives. Note the tenses. We have here the ongoing description of the believer: body dead, spirit alive. This is an “assumed truth”; It is God's scriptural truth. We will have an inner spiritual struggle to the grave. “Holiness” theology doesn't stand in the face of verses like this one.

**Verse 11:**

εἰ clause simple conditional, an assumed truth.

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν Spirit, Father, Son – all three persons of the Trinity are listed.

ἐγείραντος pres. act. ptc. gen. masc. sg; *raise*.

ἐγείρας aor. act. ptc. nom. masc. sg.

ζωοποιήσει fut. act. ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> sg; *to impart life, give life, make alive*. “In the New Testament and post-apostolic Fathers, ζωοποιέω always means “to make alive” in the soteriological sense. The subject is God, or Christ, or πνεῦμα. It is expressly said of the Law that it cannot make alive

(Galatians 3:21).” This verb is used “generally of the eschatological raising of the dead (Romans 8:11).” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 874)

θνητὰ adj. nt. pl; *mortal*.  
 ἐνοικοῦντος pres. act. ptc. gen. nt. sg; Modifies πνεῦμα. Here is great comfort. We are believers, ergo we have the Spirit in us, ergo we are being made alive. Sanctification will happen in us!

### Verse 12:

Ἄρα οὖν Paul often combines these two logical particles; *and so, consequently*.  
 ὀφειλέται nom. masc. pl; *one who is under obligation, a debtor*.  
 σάρκι dative of advantage.  
 ζῆν pres. act. inf. – articularized infinitive.

### Verse 13:

εἰ...ζῆτε pres. act. ind. – assumed truth.  
 μέλλετε + inf. = future; verbs are both pres. act. ind.  
 πνεύματι dative of agent; Here I much prefer “Holy Spirit.” (However, this can also be dative of manner, “in a spiritual way.”)  
 πράξεις acc. fem. pl; *what one does, deed, action, practice*.  
 θανατοῦτε pres. act. ind. 2<sup>nd</sup> pl; *put to death*. Presents here a continuing action, operation. On this side of the grave we can’t finish this work. God finishes it for us when he takes us home to heaven.

### Verse 14:

ὅσοι Relative pronoun, nom. masc. pl; *as many as*. You may be a “bent reed,” and a “smoldering wick”; you may be the chiefest sinner; but if you have the Spirit, you have status. You have sonship. This is God’s grace in action.  
 πνεύματι Dative of agent. Notice how important the Spirit is in the Christian life of sanctification. He leads us.

### Verse 15:

ἐλάβετε aor. act. ind. 2<sup>nd</sup> pl.  
 πνεῦμα δουλείας *spirit of slavery*. This would go contrary to the “principle of spiritual life in Jesus Christ (vs. 2).  
 εἰς aim or purpose (Robertson, 494-495).  
 υἰοθεσίας υἰός + τίθημι; *placement as sons, adoption*.  
 ἐν *by*.  
 Ἄββα Aramaic, a tender form used by little children for their father, hence *Daddy, Papa*.



**Verse 16:**

τὸ πνεῦμα + τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν	a very clear contrast between “the Spirit itself” and “our spirit.”
συμμαρτυρεῖ	pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg; <i>to witness together, testify along with</i> ; The Holy Spirit does this through the Holy Scriptures. We are no longer ἔχθρα, but τέκνα. The two words so similar in sound, number of syllables, but poles apart in status.
ὅτι	declaritive.

**Verse 17:**

εἰ clause	again is “assumed truth.” God assures us with his absolutes!
κληρονόμοι	<i>heir, one who receives what God has promised.</i>
εἴπερ	<i>since, if it is true that.</i>
συμπάσχομεν	pres. act. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl; <i>suffer together with.</i>
ἵνα	purpose clause.
συνδοξασθῶμεν	aor. pass. subj. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl; <i>share in another’s glory.</i> Aorist denotes a single act in time. Therefore we take this as a reference to what will happen to us on the Judgment Day.

**Translation**

For those who exist in a fleshly mode of existence dwell on the things of the flesh, but those who exist in a spiritual mode of existence dwell on the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the fleshly mode of existence is death, but the mind of the spiritual mode of existence is life and peace. [This is so] because the mind of the fleshly mode of existence is hatred against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be. Those who are in a fleshly mode of existence are not able to please God. You, however, are not in a fleshly mode of existence but in a spiritual mode, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that same one does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, on the one hand your body is dead on account of sin, on the other hand your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will also make alive your mortal bodies through the Spirit of him dwelling in you.

And so, brothers, we are debtors, but not to the flesh to live according to a fleshly mode of existence. For if you live according to a fleshly mode of existence, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, just that many are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery again so as to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ, since we suffer together in order that we may be glorified together.

**Exegetical/Sermonic Comments****A. The Spirit alone gives me life.**

Back in high school, we used to have a favorite cheer we used at every basketball game. Starting first with the lowly freshmen and then working our way up to the seniors, each class would shout, “Got the spirit,

yea, man,” with the freshmen yelling, “Go, Go, Go, Go, Go!” The object was to psyche out the opposing team, and (more important) prove your school loyalty by shouting louder than the other classes!

Just what was this “spirit” which we claimed with such religious fervor? I know we were cheering about “school spirit,” but what exactly is that? Normally, the word “spirit” refers to a feeling, or an attitude of the heart. That’s what we mean when we talk about the “spirit of the times,” or when we slap someone on the back and say, “That’s the spirit.”

Is it because of the way we normally use this word “spirit,” that we have such great difficulty in translating the Greek word *πνεῦμα*? I must confess that I am not absolutely sure how each instance of that word is used in the section now under consideration. I am relying on context, my instincts, and linguistic aids in trying to sort this matter out. Perhaps, ultimately, it isn’t so vitally important to know whether each *πνεῦμα* is “Spirit,” or “spirit.” When all is said and done the two are, by God’s grace, inseparable. If not for the “Spirit,” we would have no “spirit,” and we would be damned and doomed in hell. It is most comforting to know that God’s grace gives me the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit alone gives me spiritual life.

Today, however, many Christians do not believe this simple Bible truth. Instead, decision theology is all the rage. Songs, radio messages, books, and many sermons will exhort listeners and readers to “Accept Jesus Into your heart.” Well-meaning, but misdirected evangelists will push altar calls at crusades and confront prospects with the ultimatum: “Make a decision for Jesus.” Perhaps we know some Christians who talk fondly about the day and hour they opened their hearts and allowed Jesus to come into their lives. Though these people may be Christians, they are all mixed up about how they came to faith. You see, they “didn’t get the Spirit”; the Spirit got them!

Paul says, “For those who exist in a fleshly mode of existence dwell on the things of the flesh.” Here the word flesh doesn’t just mean “skin and bones, sinew and blood.” It means rather our old “unconverted, sinful nature and attitude.” Therefore, Paul is talking here about unbelievers, and what he is going to say proves that no unbeliever can wake up one day, smell the coffee and say, “From now on I am going to believe in Jesus!”

Why? Paul tells us to take a good, hard look at the decision-making organ of an unbeliever! Look at their mind! Paul adds, “For the mind of the fleshly mode of existence is death.” An unbelieving mind is only motivated by self-preservation, self-piety or selfishness. And all such unbelieving mental pursuits lead only to death. But can this be? Isn’t Paul being overly harsh? No, he merely gives us God’s infallible assessment of the human mind. Paul lets us glimpse that mind further when he writes, “The mind of the fleshly mode of existence is hatred against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be.” Will you tell me that the fleshly mind, the unbelieving mind will, at some moment in time, suddenly makes a decision for Christ? Then Paul will tell you, God himself will tell you, “The fleshly mind is hatred.” All the unbelieving mind can do is make a decision against Jesus! This is an absolute truth that applies to all people of all time. The unconverted mind is in a constant state of warfare against the Lord. The unbelieving mind will never on its own come to faith, even if the day comes when cows jump over the moon and clouds rain down gumdrops! The unbelieving mind cannot make a decision to believe, because the unbelieving mind will not be subjected to the law of the Lord, “nor can it be,” Paul sadly observes. That means the unbelieving mind cannot obey the first and most basic command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind!”

Then how did it happen that you and I came to saving faith in Jesus? Because “The Spirit got us!” Paul explains, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that same one does not belong to him.” God the Father and God the Son sent the Holy Spirit into our lives. That Spirit, working through the gospel Word, turned the light on in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6) so that we would see Jesus differently. Because of the Spirit, we call Jesus Lord and Savior (1 Corinthians 12:3).

There’s more. Paul says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, just that many are sons of God.” There is only one leader, one mover and shaker when it comes to our faith. That’s the Holy Spirit! He moved us when he picked through the rubble of our dead, spiritually lifeless, unbelieving minds and rebuilt what God wanted in the first place – *faith and life*! As Christians, we can now say with great joy, “We’ve got the Spirit, but only because the Spirit first got us!”

We need this Holy Spirit, for

## **B. The Spirit alone guides me through life.**

Let's go back to that all-encompassing statement in verse 9: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that same one does not belong to him." If we listen closely to what Paul tells us here, we know better than to think that the Holy Spirit is nothing but a one-man, spiritual SWAT team. The Lord does more than send the Spirit out to suppress and neutralize "spiritual, fleshly terrorists" who are in a constant state of warfare. After the Spirit causes the miracle of spiritual rebirth, of faith, the Spirit doesn't get recalled to Heavenly Headquarters to await the next mission. Instead, as only the true God can, the Holy Spirit remains with every believer day-by-day. He must, else we will die spiritually. Paul says, "Now if anyone *does not have* (present tense, continuing action) the Spirit of Christ, that same one does not belong to him."

The Holy Spirit stays with us ("The Spirit of God dwells in you"), because it is his continuing mission to keep us in faith in Jesus Christ and to build that faith. This is so central to his work that Paul even calls him "the Spirit of Christ," the Spirit that Christ sends, the Spirit that points us to Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit's work to make sure that Jesus dwells in us by faith, that "Christ is in you," as Paul puts it. It is the Holy Spirit's daily task to take us up into his lap, there to tell us once again what it means that we are God's children! (v. 14). He tells us, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery again so as to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" It's as if the Spirit tells us, "I know how you feel sometimes. You feel dirty after you've sinned. You feel like a failure when you don't get all your work done, and when you don't do everything you want to for your family. I know how Satan tries to wiggle his way into your heart and make you despair. I know how he loves to make you feel nothing but guilt. But I'm here to tell you about your Daddy, your *Abba*, your Father. I'm here to tell you how much he loves you. He sent Jesus for you. Jesus already died. Jesus already paid for all your sins. Jesus already took away your guilt. Wipe away those tears and smile!"

Has the Holy Spirit taken you up into his lap lately for a good heart-to-heart? No, I'm not claiming you need any middle-of-the-night vision, or out-of-body experience. Nor does Paul want us to expect any such supernatural close-encounters with the Spirit. Nevertheless, Paul does say, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children." You and I possess the complete, written transcript of the Holy Spirit's testimony about Jesus. We have it in God's Word. Every time we take up our Bibles to read again about Jesus, it is as if the Holy Spirit is taking us up in his lap and saying, "Let me tell you about your Savior. Let me tell you about your Father's love."

We need such daily counseling sessions with the Holy Spirit! We need this Spirit for Christian living, for only when the Spirit constantly reminds us we are God's children will we begin to live like it. Only through the gracious working of the Spirit will we "dwell on the things of the Spirit." The Spirit will make us think more and more about God, about serving him, about helping other people, about living selfless lives of service! The Spirit will constantly remind us of our true identity before God: "You, however, are not in a fleshly mode of existence but in a spiritual mode, since the Spirit of God dwells in you." The "indwelling" Spirit will help us overcome our sinful addictions, as he helps us "put to death the deeds of the body," and then "make alive" those same "mortal bodies." That same Spirit will lead us into full and rich Christian lives that are marked by "life and peace."

We've "got to have the Spirit," if we intend to lead Christian lives. And once we get to the end of this life, we won't want to part company then either. How true it is that...

## **C. The Spirit alone guides me to life!**

How many of you have died, gone to heaven, and returned? Raise your hands! No one? I'm not surprised. When it comes to knowing about the next life, we rely on the Spirit to tell us what it is like. In verses 16b and 17, the Spirit's infallible and truthful testimony tells us "that we are God's children. And if children,

then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, since we suffer together in order that we may be gloried together.” Life, hand in hand with the Holy Spirit, is life with a future and with a purpose.

Our life has a future because we are God’s heirs and joint heirs with Christ. What did Jesus receive upon completion of his mission to save us? He ascended on high and returned to the glory, perfection, power and happiness of his heavenly throne. What will we receive when we die? We will receive as a gift a share of that eternity! Heaven will be, heaven is our home! This is true even though the grave lies between us and the promised land. The Holy Spirit gives this final assurance. “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will also make alive your mortal bodies through the Spirit of Him dwelling in you.” (Though this verse appears to have a present meaning, a sanctification meaning, as indicated by the present participle *ἐνοικοῦντος*, I am not ruling out also an application to the Last Day. The minute one hears of our “mortal” body, it’s hard not to think of 1 Corinthians 15. “This mortal shall put on immortality...” Since our sanctification, our glorification is a process that culminates in eternity, I don’t see why both ideas cannot be contained in this verse.)

Throughout chapters six and seven of Romans one question remained. What will become of our mortal body? Here we have the perfect and comforting answer. It will die, but then it will be raised in glory. We will die, but we will rise again on the Last Day. This we know as a fact, because we know all about Easter and Christ’s resurrection. And we know all these things, about Jesus, about our Papa, about life, death, and life again, only “through the Spirit of him dwelling in you.”

Yes, indeed, the Holy Spirit is God’s gracious gift to you and me.

### III. God’s Grace Points Me To Heaven. (vs. 18-25)

#### A. Heaven’s glory far outweighs present suffering.

#### B. Heaven is guaranteed me by God’s indwelling Spirit.

18 Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς.

19 ἢ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἰῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. 20 τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἑκοῦσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι 21 ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ. 22 οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν. 23 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν. 24 τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν· ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς· ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς ἐλπίζει; 25 εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν, δι’ ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

### Keywords/Grammatical Constructions

#### Verse 18:

λογίζομαι	pres. mid. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> sg. – <i>figure, consider, reckon</i> (the Texan definition).
γὰρ	logical; Paul has broached future glorification in verse 17. Now he will elaborate.
ὅτι	declaritive, indirect discourse.
ἄξια	<i>worthy</i> . (One of the original meanings was “to pull down one side of the balance scale.” Hence Paul gives us this idea: sufferings = light; future glories = heavy!)

παθήματα	from πάσχω. – <i>what is suffered, suffering, affliction.</i>
νῦν	adv. used as an adj. with καιροῦ.
πρός	<i>over against</i> – a comparison (Robertson 626).
μέλλω + inf.	= future. (Dare we say a “vivid” construction to show “impending action.”)
ἀποκαλυφθῆναι	aor. pass. inf. – <i>reveal, unveiled.</i>
εἰς	reflecting a decay of the dative (Robertson 535). Also vivid – glory will “burst upon us, against us.”

**Verse 19:**

ἀποκαρδοκία	ἀπο + καρδοκέω (literally, “from” + “head” + “hope”). nom. fem. sg. – <i>to watch with the head stretched out or to crane.</i>
κτίσεως	gen. fem. sg. – <i>creation.</i>
ἀποκάλυψιν	acc. fem. sg. – <i>unveiling, disclosure, revelation.</i>
ἀπεκδέχεται	pres. mid. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to look for, expect, wait for.</i>

**Verse 20:**

ματαιότητι	dat. fem. sg. – <i>vanity, folly, religious error</i> (dative with the verb).
ὑπετάγη	aor. pass. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to place or arrange under.</i>
ἐκοῦσα	adj. nom. fem. sg. (from the participle ἐκῶν) – <i>willing, voluntary.</i>
ὑποτάξαντα	aor. act. ptc. acc. masc. sg. – <i>the one subjecting/arranging under.</i>
ἐφ’	ἐπί
ἐλπίδι	dat. fem. sg. – <i>hope.</i>

**Verse 21:**

ὅτι	declarative.
αὐτή	reflexive nom. fem. sg. – <i>itself.</i> Some see this single word as a hint that our present creation (animals and inanimate creation) will not be annihilated at the judgment, but simply destroyed as we know it now.
ἐλευθερωθήσεται	fut. pass. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to free, set free.</i>
ἀπὸ...εἰς	<i>from...into</i> , very graphic imagery. cf. Isaiah 61 and freeing of captives.
φθορᾶς	<i>decay, corruption, ruin.</i>

**Verse 22:**

οἶδαμεν	perfect with a present meaning – <i>to know, understand, perceive.</i>
συστενάξει	pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to groan together.</i>

συνωδίνει	συν + ὠδίνω. pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to be in birth pains</i> . Out of labor pains comes something that is good. This single verb graphically captures the thought of Acts 14:22.
ἄχρι	preposition with genitive. – <i>up to, until, as far as</i> .
νῦν	adverb used as a pronoun – <i>the now</i> .

**Verse 23:**

μόνον	pronoun used as an adverb.
ἀπαρχήν	<i>first portion, first fruit</i> . That which is set apart for the Lord before anything else can be used. The first part of a sacrifice. If the Spirit in us now is nothing but a “firstfruit,” imagine what is yet to come!
πνεύματος	gen. of apposition, or definition (Robertson 498).
ἔχοντες	pres. act. ptc. nom. masc. pl.
στενάζομεν	pres. act. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl. – <i>to groan</i> .
ἀπεκδεχόμενοι	pres. mid. ptc. nom. masc. pl. temporal – <i>while waiting</i> .
ἀπολύτρωσιν	<i>setting free, deliverance, release, redemption, release due to a ransom paid</i> . appositional.

**Verse 24:**

ἐσώθημεν	aor. pass. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> sg. – <i>to be saved</i> .
βλεπομένη	pres. pass. ptc. nom. fem. sg. – <i>to see</i> . The ransoming of the body hasn’t taken place yet. We wait for it.
ὃ	relative pronoun. acc. nt. sg.

**Verse 25:**

εἰ	simple condition. assumed truth.
ὑπομονῆς	<i>patient endurance</i> . cf. TLH, p. 14, <i>Collect for the Word</i> , “by <i>patience</i> and comfort of Thy holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, <i>the blessed hope</i> of everlasting life...”
ἀπεκδεχόμεθα	pres. mid. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl. – <i>to expect, wait, look for</i> .

**Translation**

For I calculate that the sufferings of this present time don’t measure up over against the coming glory to be revealed in us. For all of creation is craning its neck, waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not willingly, but through the One subjecting it, in hope that also the creation itself will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of glory of the children of God. For we know that all the creation groans together and is in childbirth up to the present time. But not alone! Rather also we ourselves who have the Spirit firstfruit, yes we ourselves groan inside while awaiting the adoption of sons, that is the redemption of our bodies. For we were saved in hope. Now a “seen” hope is not hope at all. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for that which we do not see, we wait with patience.

**Exegetical/Sermonic Comments**

## A. Heaven's glory far outweighs present suffering.

(Use your imagination. Envision a large balance scale. All the pain and suffering we talk about will be piled upon one side of that balance scale. Understand? Let's continue.)

What have you suffered, and what are you suffering right now? Is it your relative who was killed instantly in a car crash? Are you the one suffering from excruciating back pain day and night? Are you the one battling cancer? Are you the one with a bad heart and a pharmacy-full of drugs you're supposed to take every day? Is your marriage on the rocks, or is your child the one who called to share the shocking news that their marriage is blowing up?

What are you suffering? Is it work? The company is downsizing, which is nothing but a polite way of saying that soon you'll be pounding the pavement in search of a job? Or maybe you're sick of your calling and the ulcers it's given you. Maybe you dread each day as nothing but another dead-end, because no matter how hard you work, how faithfully you proclaim Jesus, people don't seem to change, or even listen. Is your life filled with the bottomless pain of depression? Is that depression so deep that even if Jesus came down from heaven and showed you the bright expanse of a blue sky stretching above, all you would see is that small black cloud on the horizon, the one bound to come right over your head and pelt you with softball-sized hail?

What are you suffering? If we continued to share our pain, we'd be here all day and then some. But that's not what we are going to do. Instead, we are going to look past our pain to paradise, for that's where our Father points us in this section of Romans 8. Each one of us can be sure that *God's grace points me to heaven!*

Admit it. Too often the old Hee-Haw tune becomes our theme song, "Gloom, despair, and agony on me...deep, dark depression, excessive misery. If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all. Gloom, despair and agony on me." We fill our minds with the misery of our pain; we dwell on it. In a twisted sort of way, we even revel in it. When we get together with others, we quickly let our conversation turn into an "organ recital." An organ recital sounds like this: "My kidney is bad, I need a transplant. My teeth are bad, and the dentist is soaking me big time for caps, fillings, root canals, and bridges." I think you get the idea. It's not that these physical problems aren't real. They are, but dwelling on them or any other disaster in our personal lives does little else than turn our life into one long pity party!

After all, even the mighty apostle Paul will agree with us that this life is filled with sufferings. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul tells us he was plagued by a "thorn in the flesh." This was a severe physical ailment which he viewed as a hindrance for his work. Nevertheless God decreed Paul would keep his thorn till his dying day. That, dear friends, must have been a bitter pill for the apostle to swallow.

Paul knew all kinds of other sufferings, too. In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul starts to list his troubles: "beatings, imprisonments and riots...hard work, sleepless nights and hunger...dishonor, bad report...(being) regarded as impostors...dying...sorrowful...poor...having nothing." In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul adds to the list: "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled...I have been cold and naked." Paul's life-story contains enough plot-lines for not one, but a dozen soap operas!

Pain and suffering (*παθήματα*)? Paul could go toe-to-toe with any one of us in a pity-party duel, and at the end he'd outlast us!

But why bother? What do we expect from this life! There's bound to be pain and suffering here, because all of the creation is now a prisoner of pain. Paul explains: "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not willingly, but through the One subjecting it, in hope that also the creation itself will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of glory of the children of God. For we know that all the creation groans and is in childbirth up to the present time." Do you want to talk pain, then talk about the pain of our created world! Dutch elm disease, polluted streams and lakes; oil tanker spills; holes in the ozone layer; precious mineral mines

played out and left barren. This isn't what God had in mind when he looked at creation and said, "Behold, it is very good." Calves or lambs which get mysteriously ill and die; milk-cows that get too much fresh hay and bloat up quickly and die; faithful pets which grow old and must finally be put to sleep. This sickness and death is not what God intended for his creation.

But that's the way it is with all life in this world. All of it has been tarnished and corrupted by sin. In an earlier chapter of this same book, Paul explained the fatal consequences of sin. It leads to "death," death "to all." As Paul continues that explanation in chapter 8, he shows us that this life is doomed to "frustration." We will never be free of pain or sorrow here, neither will our world. We can't make our heaven on earth. We can't save our planet, no matter how ecologically correct we are or how much recycling we do. This planet is doomed, because God says so.

It's no wonder that creation groans. It's no wonder that we jump in on the refrain: "Gloom, despair and misery on me..." Even we believers "groan inside while awaiting the adoption of sons, that is the redemption of our bodies."

That's enough! I don't want to stay on the "gloom and doom, suffering" side of the scale in verse 18! Do you? Neither does the apostle Paul. Therefore let's put a little balance into our Christian lives and balance out our make-believe scale. Let's add to the equation, heaven! *Heaven brings balance into the Christian life!* According to Paul, *heaven's glory far outweighs present suffering!* "For I calculate that the sufferings of this present time don't measure up over against the coming glory to be revealed in us." The Greek shows that all the sufferings on the earthly side of the scale don't come close to "weighing" as much as heaven!

That's because heaven is so glorious and so perfect, that our heavenly Father can't even describe it in a way our minds can understand! That's why Paul resorts to vivid pictures to make his point. He portrays all of creation "craning its neck, waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God." Picture all of creation, the trees, the rocks, the hills and valleys, the cows, the horses, the dogs and cats, the cranes, and certainly the giraffes all wide-eyed with their necks stretched as long as they will go! Why? As if to peer around the corner of time into eternity, there to see what we will be like in heaven!

We believers also put up with this present painful time because we know it won't go on forever. Paul compares this life to the pain of "childbirth." There are few things in life that hurt worse. There are few, if any, other pains in this life that lead to greater joy and happiness.

Right now, our world is in birthpains. "But not alone." We groan inside, too. But the pains will pass! "The creation itself will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of glory of the children of God." The pains will pass when we believers receive "the adoption of sons, that is the redemption of our bodies." Our bodies will be transformed into glorious bodies, like the one our Savior displayed after his Easter resurrection! (Philippians 3:21). The momentary pains and sorrows we endure now will forever be a thing of the past! (No more bad kidneys; no more big dentist bills; no more back surgeries; no more dead-end job; no more pink-slips, etc.) All that we will know in heaven will be our Savior, his warming smile and love, his perfect presence and constant strength. In heaven we will realize our full potential. We will be the people God wants – loving, caring, serving, selfless (1 John 3:2).

No wonder *heaven brings balance into our lives!* The prospect of such eternal bliss can wipe away present tears and banish current doubts. Or can it? Can we be sure that heaven lies on the other side? Oh, yes! Paul assures us that

## **B. Heaven is guaranteed me by God's indwelling Spirit!**

Paul knows that many Christians will be from "Missouri" when it comes to this talk of future heavenly bliss. We will be like doubting Thomas. After all, we've never been to heaven. We've never seen it. We've never knelt down to kiss the streets of gold. We've never brushed our hands over those pearly gates. Can a place so wonderful, so glorious, be real?

Yes. God has given us his own Holy Spirit as our personal guarantee of heaven! Paul says, "We ourselves...have the Spirit firstfruit." This Spirit is the Holy Spirit of whom Jesus said, "I will ask the Father,



and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth...I will not leave you as orphans” (John 14:16,18). “We...have the Spirit firstfruit.” Paul wants us to bank on this absolute spiritual truth. Once we are believers, we never walk alone. Jesus walks beside us. The Spirit lives within us by faith.

Why? Think of the Spirit as God’s down-payment on your heaven. I’ll try to explain with a biblical picture. When Joseph’s brothers came down to Egypt to buy grain, Joseph wanted them to leave a brother behind. That brother would be Joseph’s guarantee that the others would return, for they wouldn’t leave their brother hostage in prison.

God leaves us his Spirit here and now, as his guarantee (deposit) that he will come back (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). Jesus will return, just as the Bible says. He will ride the clouds as if his chariot. And we will be raised and taken up into the clouds, so as to be “forever with the Lord.” This is our Christian home. Paul admits that. We don’t see heaven yet, but we know that heaven is no pie-in-the-sky dream. It is as real as the Holy Spirit in our hearts!

Take a look at our imaginary scale one last time. Wouldn’t you agree, *heaven brings balance into our Christian lives!* I thank the Lord that his grace points me to heaven, and I long for the day when I shall see all of you on the other side.

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#### IV. God’s Grace Gives Me My Very Own Prayer Counselor. (vs. 26-27)

##### A. He knows what I feel.

##### B. He knows what God wants.

26 Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξόμεθα καθὸ δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις· 27 ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων.

#### Grammatical Constructions

##### Verse 26:

Ὡσαύτως *just so, in the same way.* Vs. 18-22 – Creation is waiting and groaning; vs. 23 – Believers are waiting and groaning; vs. 26 – Now the chorus is completed. The Holy Spirit comes to our side, waits and groans.

συναντιλαμβάνεται pres. mid. ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. – *to lay hold of something with someone; to help.*

ἀσθενεία dat. fem. sg. – *weakness.*

τὸ τί classical idiom, substantive idea with indirect question (Robertson 1046).

προσευξόμεθα aor. mid. subj. 1<sup>st</sup> pl. – *to pray.*

καθὸ κατὰ + ὄ.

ὑπερεντυγχάνει ὑπέρ + ἐντυγχάνω. pres. act. ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. – *to intercede.*

στεναγμοῖς dat. masc. pl. – *sighing, groaning.*

ἀλαλήτοις alpha privative – *inexpressible, unutterable.*

##### Verse 27:

ἐραυνῶν pres. act. ptc. nom. masc. pl. – *searches.*

οἶδεν	perf. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg.
τί	interrogative pronoun. acc. nt. sg.
φρόνημα	<i>thinking.</i>
κατὰ	<i>according to, corresponding to.</i>
ἐντυγχάνει	pres. act. ind. – a continuing action. This Counselor doesn't give up, get fed up or tired.

### Translation

And in the same way even the Spirit helps in our weakness. For we don't know what we should be praying for, however the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groans. And he who searches hearts knows what is [in] the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's way.

### Exegetical/Sermonic Comments

#### A. He knows what I feel.

When I read these two verses, a picture immediately comes to my mind. I am in a hospital room. In that room is a member, terminally ill. He (she) is surrounded by all kinds of monitors, and has more tubes coming out of him than I can count. He is unconscious, and he is dying. The doctors have just informed us it is only a matter of time. I say "us," because I am not alone in that room with the patient. In a chair beside me is that man's spouse. She is hunched over. Her cheeks are stained with tears. Her eyes are sunken, because she hasn't slept much in the last few days. I want you to envision that woman. That is the person about whom and for whom these two verses of the Bible were written!

What do we do to help a person like that? Do we pat them on the back? Do we say, "I know how you feel"? Sometimes we can do that, because sometimes we have been through the same situation. But most of the time, I don't say that. Why? Because I haven't been married for fifty years yet. Consequently, I can only begin to imagine the loss and the emptiness of losing a lifetime mate. I've never had a doctor tell me, "You've got cancer. You have six months to a year to live." Therefore I don't quite know how I'd handle the shock, or even if I would be shocked!

So what do I say for all those times, when I can't begin to comprehend the heartache and hurt in someone else's heart? I say, "God knows *exactly what you feel.*" This is the soothing and sublime message of the apostle Paul. He assures us, "And in the same way even the Spirit helps in our weakness. For we don't know what we should be praying for, however the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groans." Dear friends, how much would you pay if you could find a Counselor who understood you better than you understand yourself; a Counselor who knew your innermost fears and tears; a Counselor who instantly cut through all surface issues, presenting problems, and emotions; a Counselor who was never too busy to listen to you; a Counselor who empathized and sympathized with you so perfectly and completely that you might as well be twins? What would you pay for this Perfect Counselor? \$100 per half hour? \$500? \$1000?

What would you pay for this Perfect Counselor, if I added this final "kicker" to the equation. What would you pay for the Counselor who always helps, always heals, always soothes, always solves?

Dear brothers, you have such a Counselor in the Holy Spirit, and you can afford this Counselor. He doesn't charge. His services are a gift of God's grace, freely given by our loving Savior Jesus Christ. It gets even better, as Paul tells us here. "And in the same way even the Spirit helps in our weakness For we don't know what we should be praying for, however the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groans." Notice all the present tenses? The Holy Spirit is our Personal Counselor. He can devote his total attention to you, to

me, to all other believers, especially hurting believers, all at the same time! He can do this 24 hours a day, because he is true God. We don't have to worry about scheduling our next appointment. Go back to that poor woman (or man), slumped down in the chair next to the hospital bed. Sometimes, such a person gets so weak, so weary, that the words for prayer won't even come out anymore. Even for such moments, especially for such moments we have a *Personal Prayer Counselor who knows exactly what we feel*. Next time you stand in such a room, next time you are at a loss for the right words to say, remind that hurting member or friend, "The Holy Spirit knows what you feel."

## **B. He knows God's will.**

I'm sure we've all heard about, and perhaps used, prayer chains. Well, let me introduce you to the Ultimate, Divine Prayer Chain. Paul says, "He who searches hearts knows what is [in] the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's way." Not only does the Holy Spirit understand and feel our anguish of heart, but in our most trying times he even understands how muddled our prayers can be! Should I pray for a miraculous recovery for my spouse? Or it is time to let go and ask God to take him/her home? Since the Holy Spirit knows everything we feel, he does in prayer what we cannot do. He takes our prayer to heaven in "inexpressible groans." Then he translates it. When the Spirit lays our prayer before the throne of the Almighty, he casts that prayer into the wording that pleases our Father in heaven. He lays it there in the way God wants (*κατὰ θεόν*). In this way, the Holy Spirit guarantees an answer to every one of our prayers!

I said this section is describing a divine prayer chain. So far it is only a chain of two – the Spirit to the Father – or three if we count the down-and-out Christian. However, there is one more vital link to this Divine Prayer Chain. Though Paul doesn't single him out in this verse, let's not forget the Savior who also is "interceding for us" (8:34). Jesus himself promised, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

There's one other critical element to this text that I haven't touched on yet. In the previous verses, Paul said all creation groans while waiting for heaven. Then he said that the believers also groan, as they yearn for heaven. Now he adds that the Holy Spirit groans, too. He understands our impatience, and it is his highest and most important work to point us to our places in heaven. It is the Spirit's work to assure us, day-in and day-out, that our sins have been forgiven and that we will have heavenly glory "burst" upon us, through us and in us on the Judgment Day.

Here is a message filled with God's grace. Here is a message to take to that person slumped over in the chair next to the hospital bed. Here is a message to tuck away in your own heart.

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## **V. God's Grace Is A "Forever" Love. (vs. 28-32)**

- A. God loved me at Calvary. (vs. 32)**
- B. God loved me from eternity. (vs. 28b, 29-30)**
- C. God loves me now. (vs. 28-29)**
- D. God will love me forever. (vs. 29b, 30b)**

**28** οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. **29** ὅτι οὐς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς. **30** οὐς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὐς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὐς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν. **31** Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταῦτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν; **32** ὅς γε τοῦ

ιδίου υιοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίζεται;

### Key Words/Grammatical Constructions

#### Verse 28:

οἶδαμεν	perf. act. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl.
ὅτι	declarative.
τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν	dative of advantage.
συνεργεῖ	pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. with nt. pl. subject. Present tense; this is always the case, no matter what the current conditions (πάντα) are.
τοῖς οὓσιν	appositional.
πρόθεσιν	προ + τίθημι; <i>a setting forth or before</i> . Used relative to the “showbread” here it means <i>predetermination, purpose</i> .
κλητοῖς	from καλέω – <i>the called</i> .

#### Verse 29:

ὅτι	subordinating conjunction.
οὓς	relative pronoun used demonstratively.
προέγνω	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to know beforehand, to have foreknowledge of</i> .
προώρισεν	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. προ + ορίζω – <i>to limit or mark out beforehand; to design definitively beforehand, ordain beforehand, predestine</i> .
συμμόρφους	σύν + μορφή – <i>of like form, conform</i> .
εἰκόνας	genitive with adjective (Robertson 504) – <i>likeness, exact image</i> . Back in verse 3, Paul showed how Jesus did what we can never do. Jesus came in the ὁμοιώματι of “sinful flesh.” It was only a likeness, not a precise copy, because Jesus was not sinful. Now at least the tables are turned, and we see why Jesus was made to look like us. We are to become like him. However, we will be no cheap copy. We are to be exact copies in every way. In us who believe, the image of God is truly restored.
αὐτοῦ	not just “any son,” God’s one and only, his “only-begotten.”
εἰς τὸ εἶναι	introducing a purpose clause, with articularized infinitive.
πρωτότοκον	<i>firstborn</i> .

#### Verse 30:

οὓς	relative pronoun – acc. masc. pl.
προώρισεν	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg.
τούτους	demonstrative pronoun – acc. masc. pl.

ἐδικαίωσεν	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to justify</i> .
ἐδόξασεν	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – a gnomic or timeless aorist (Robertson 837) – to glorify. Notice the construction of the verse. It shows us a “chain of events.” This is God’s plan as carried through from start to finish.

**Verse 31:**

ἐροῦμεν	fut. act. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl.
πρὸς	<i>to, toward, relative to</i> . Each fact that Paul has cited is a witness that confronts us face to face. Will we ignore the evidence? Will we look away? No way!
εἰ	simple condition, a certain truth if there ever was one!
ὑπέρ	<i>in behalf of, to be for one’s benefit</i> . This preposition carries the shade of meaning “over and above.” Therefore consider: God towers over us, on our behalf. Can anyone or anything really stand across ( <i>κατά</i> ) from us?

**Verse 32:**

ὅς	The pronoun leads. It is prominent. All eyes are now on God.
γε	enclitic particle, takes genitive – <i>indeed</i> .
ιδίου	This is no superfluous adjective. Consider the overwhelming grace which moved God to “spare not” his <i>very own</i> , precious Son!
ἐφείσατο	aor. dep. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to spare</i> .
παρέδωκεν	aor. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>handed over, gave over</i> . There was a hostage situation. Jesus willingly stepped across to sin, death, Satan, and hell, ὑπέρ, in place of you and me. And the Father let him go. This is grace.
πῶς	interrogative adverb – <i>how</i> .
οὐχὶ	a very strong negative – <i>by no means, not at all</i> .
χαρίσεται	fut. mid.-dep. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to give freely, grace us with</i> .

**Translation**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to his purpose. [We know this] because those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the exact image of his own Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, those same ones he also called; and those whom he called, those same ones He also justified; and those whom he justified, those same ones he also glorified.

Therefore, what shall we say about all these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his very own Son, but handed him over for us all, how shall he not also with him grace us with all things?

**Exegetical/Sermonic Comments****God’s Grace Is A “Forever” Love**

A young man and woman stand nervously before the Lord's altar. With hands joined and eyes locked, they repeat the marriage vows after the pastor. "I, John (Mary) Smith, in the presence of God and these witnesses, take you, Mary (John), to be my wedded wife (husband), and pledge you my faithfulness, till death do us part." However, as often as not, such pledges of marital "forever" love are soon dashed on the rocks of infidelity, broken promises, irreconcilable differences, and desertion.

Young confirmands stand before the Lord's altar and pledge their personal "forever love" with their Lord. They hear the pastor ask them, "Do you intend to...stand firm in the confession of this church, and suffer everything, even death, rather than fall away from it? Then declare so by saying, I do so intend, with the help of God." "I do so intend, with the help of God." However, those serious vows about "forever love" and devotion to God will ring empty and hollow for far too many.

"I will love you forever!" We've heard that line before, and we've seen love fail so many times before, that we don't believe those words anymore. We cynically respond, "Prove it." God says, "I will love you forever." Are we so worn-out and cynical that we cast a defiant glance heavenward and say, "Oh yea? Prove it!" If that's how you feel right now, or even if you are only tired, or hurting, or doubting, or worrying and wondering, then you need to hear God say again, "I will love you forever." Here is the proof. A. God loved me at Calvary (vs. 32). B. God loved me from eternity (vs. 28b, 29-30). C. God loves me now (vs. 28-29). D. God will love me forever (vs. 29b, 30b).

### **A. God loved me at Calvary. (vs. 32)**

Married love, romantic love, is fueled and fanned by expressions of that love, by the giving of gifts. Roses on an anniversary, little notes left on the refrigerator, house-hold chores done as a surprise, a hug from that special someone – these are the proofs of love. If we want proof of God's "forever love," there is no better place to start than Calvary. Paul takes us there with familiar words. "Indeed, he who did not spare his very own Son, but handed him over for us all, how shall he not also with him grace us with all things?" What was Calvary if not the demonstration of the deepest, most selfless love this world has ever seen! For what happened there? According to Paul, God was giving! He held back nothing. He gave his best, his dearest, his very own. He gave us Jesus.

Jesus also gave himself. The poet has rightly said, "Why did they nail him to the cross? His love would have held him there." Jesus' love led him to Calvary. Jesus' love kept him at Calvary. Jesus' love moved him to this final act of sacrifice, whereby he completely set aside all his power, his wisdom, and his glory! He called off the legions of angels and commanded them not to storm that ugly place of crucifixion! Rather Jesus chose to suffer, but not only the pain of crucifixion. Jesus suffered the pain of the ages, because he suffered your pain and mine. Jesus suffered the painful punishment for every sin ever committed, every sin even now committed, every sin to be committed to the end of time. Jesus died so that "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

God can truthfully say to each one of us, "*I loved you at Calvary!* I loved you just as you are, filthy and dirty with sin; lives messed up and headed nowhere. I loved you so much that I came to you where you are – down and out in the gutter, hopeless, helpless, spiritually lifeless I loved you enough to give you my very best, my darling, my precious one. I gave you my Jesus."

I hope Calvary begins to chip away at your cynicism, your fear, and your worry. I pray Calvary will begin to show you that when God says, "I will love you forever," he means it. For on Calvary, Jesus stretched out his arms in death and gave us a hug that lasts through the ages. However, God does more to prove his love. It is also true that...

### **B. God loved me from eternity. (vs. 28b, 29-30)**

How many people get nervous on their wedding day? Just about everybody! Those wedding vows are serious business. For reasons already mentioned, many must wonder, "Will our love last five, ten even fifty or

more years?” Yet contrast those wedding vows with what our Lord asks us to do. You and I are asked to enter into the noblest and deepest relationship of love and trust with our God in heaven. You and I are asked to believe, come what may, that God’s love is free, gracious, dependable, changeless, tireless, and “forever.” Believing that is a tall order, isn’t it? World-weary, emotionally-scarred, even spiritually-scarred as so many of us are, there lurks doubt in our mind. Will God really love me forever? What if I sin again? What if it is a really big sin – adultery, greed, anger, assault, murder, drugs, or alcohol abuse? What if I fail in school, at work, in the home? Will God actually stand by me no matter what? Can the words of Jesus really be trusted when he assures me, “I will be with you always.”

The apostle Paul wants us to know the answer like he does. He says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to his purpose. [We know this] because those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the exact image of his own Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, those same ones he also called; and those whom he called, those same ones he also justified; and those whom he justified, those same ones he also glorified.” Paul is talking about *election* here.

Do you find comfort in the doctrine of the election? All too often we don’t, because we try to diagram this doctrine on the blackboard of our little gray cells. The minute we hear about God choosing, about God electing some to salvation, we want to ask, “What about the rest? Did God elect them, choose them to go to hell.” *No way!* That cannot be true because God so loved the “world” (John 3:16); God “did not spare his very own Son, but handed him over for us all!” Nevertheless we persist in our deluded imaginations, like so many preschoolers at the blackboard trying to analyze the programming of the space shuttle’s onboard computers! Though the Bible itself tells us that no man has ever been the Lord’s Counselor, we try to reason out the very depths of his counsel – his election. We worry and we fuss over election wondering, “What if I am not elect? Maybe I’m not a true believer. Maybe my faith is a fleeting one or superficial. Woe is me!”

No, “Woe isn’t me!” Let’s use the doctrine of election in the way God intended. Let’s use it in the only way it is described in the pages of Scripture. God is telling cynics, God is telling battle-weary and sin-sick Christians like you and me, “I love you. I know that’s hard to believe, because your earthly relationships often blow up in your face. This one won’t, not from my side. I promise you. I will love you in Jesus the next year, the next five, the next ten, the next fifty. My grace will move me to “be there for you” all your life. Because, you see, I already *have loved you forever!* I not only loved you before you were a glimmer in your Father’s eye. I loved you before my creative power caused the shlinmering and glimmering of the stars, the sun and the moon. I loved you with purpose. I set my eyes on you from eternity. I picked you out. I’m not going to change my mind now.”

Nevertheless, a part of us, our sinful part, wants to object to this steadfast, forever love of God. We think, “Oh, Lord, if you only knew what I did last night in the back seat of that car. Or if you only knew how much alcohol or how many drugs I’ve taken. If you only knew how messed up my job is, or how stressed out my family is, Lord, you wouldn’t love me or want me then.”

However, God responds, “But I do know. I knew your very heart from eternity. I saw everything you would do! Despite that, I chose you. I brought you to faith. I moved you to trust me by my gospel call. In that moment I justified you personally. I declared you “not guilty” of everything you had done. I have invested eternal planning and effort in bringing you to faith. I didn’t even spare the blood of my Son for you. Don’t you think I will hang in there for you the rest of your earthly days?”

God doesn’t give up on us! He keeps coming and coming and coming again to reach out and hold us to his bosom. That’s what he’s doing in these few verses from Romans 8.

### **C. God loves me now. (vs. 28-29)**

Paul, speaking for the Almighty, tells us, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to his purpose.” I wonder how many thousands of Christians, even millions of Christians, have heard these words while lying flat on their backs! These are words for the

dying. These are words for those awaiting surgery. These are also words for the hurting – for the parent who has lost a child; for the spouse who has been deserted and left with a fist-full of unpaid bills and a houseful of screaming children.

“All things work together for good.” God proves his love for us daily. He takes sickness, death, natural catastrophe, depression, unemployment, and somehow makes things work out for our good according to his plan. He takes all the terrible things that we would never pray for, and he uses them to strengthen us, to build us, to make our faith grow.

He makes everything work out for what is truly good (*ἀγαθός*), his good! That doesn't mean God promises we will be rich, healthy, or even happy in this life. But he does promise that everything that happens to us, happens for his purpose. Maybe it happens for our spiritual good. Maybe it happens for the spiritual good of someone else.

“All things work together for good.” God uses everything in life to work for his “purpose.” First, he makes us believers. Then he makes us stronger believers. Paul says, “[We know this] because those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the exact image of his own Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” God provides the precise pattern for our life and faith. That pattern is Jesus. With every passing day, with every pain and problem, with every Bible reading, with every worship service, with every quiet moment spent with a fellow believer, God is “conforming” us to the pattern of Jesus. God is building up our faith. At the same time, he also uses us as his clay pots to bring others to faith! For you see, it is also God's plan that Jesus will be the “firstborn among many brothers.”

Is it any wonder that Paul can size up all the opposition that confronts us in this life, and yet declare: “Therefore, what shall we say about all these things? If God is for us, who is against us?” Who or what can stand up against the infinite power, wisdom, and love of the Lord God who towers above us! Nothing and no one can frustrate God's purpose, for God has made not only a life-long project out of you and me, but a forever project. He's not about to dump us now, not with the goal so close at hand. The apostle Paul gives us conclusive proof of that!

#### **D. God will love me forever. (vs. 29b, 30b)**

By now I hope our cynicism is all but crushed, our world-weariness all but brushed aside. There are only so many ways God can prove his love to us. He did it at Calvary. He did it from eternity. He's doing it even now by making everything in our life work out for good. All this God does with a single purpose in mind. God wants to love you and me forever in heaven. Listen to what the Lord promises to do for us the rest of our days in this world, “Indeed, He who did not spare his very own Son, but handed him over for us all, how shall he not also with him grace us with all things?” God has given us his best. He's given himself in the dear Son, Jesus Christ! Besides Jesus, certainly God will grace us with all kinds of other gifts – food for our table, clothes for our back, a roof over our head, a car in the driveway.

And God will do much, much more. He will give us strength for the journey, comfort for when we cry, joy to fill our empty heart. He will give us his friendship. “I will be with you always... Come to me.” Jesus' promises aren't empty or idle. He will never turn his back on us, never be too busy for us, never be shocked by the deepest or darkest secrets of our lives. Instead, he will take us by the hand through this life, because together we are “glory” bound (*δοξάζω* – a timeless aorist)! Jesus wants to be the “firstborn among many brothers.” That's why he died and rose again. That's why Jesus came out of his empty tomb, and after all his work was finished, he was glorified in heaven above! Jesus did this not as a sort of divine drill, a flexing of his omnipotent muscles. No Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose again all because of the plan, the purpose we talked about earlier. God wanted us to be the objects of his “forever” love. God wanted us in heaven.

And God will take us there – just as surely as he has loved us from eternity, loved us at Calvary, called us by the gospel, justified us, loves us now, and conforms us to the perfect image of his Son. The final link in God's unbroken, golden chain of grace is that we are to be “glorified.” All of God's gracious plan culminates on



the Judgment Day, on the Day of Resurrection, when all God’s children finally get to go home, the day when all God’s children get to see their Lord God face to face, even as he assures us once more, “*I love you forever!*”

## VI. God’s Grace Acquitted Me! (vs. 33-34)

**A. Jesus took my place: my verdict, my sentence, my execution.**

**B. How foolish for me to “appeal!”**

<sup>33</sup> τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ; θεὸς ὁ δικαίων· <sup>34</sup> τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν; Χριστὸς [Ἰησοῦς] ὁ ἀποθανῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεῖς, ὅς καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

### Key Words/Grammatical Constructions

#### Verse 33:

ἐγκαλέσει	ἐγκαλέω + κατὰ + genitive – <i>to come forward as an accuser against</i> . fut. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg.
ἐκλεκτῶν	<i>chosen, elect</i> .
θεὸς	Notice the dramatic effect caused by the sparsity of words and position of words. <i>God</i> is the one who justifies!

#### Verse 34:

κατακρινῶν	fut. act. ptc. nom. masc. sg. – <i>to bring a charge against, condemn, bring in a guilty verdict</i> .
Χριστὸς	Note again the dramatic position!
ἀποθανῶν	aor. act. ptc. nom. masc. sg. – <i>to die</i> .
ἐγερθεῖς	aor. pass. ptc. nom. masc. sg. – <i>to be raised</i> .
ἐντυγχάνει	ἐντυγχάνω + ὑπὲρ – <i>to make intercession for</i> . pres. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg.

Consider the two verses grammatically. We find no “iffy,” difficult Greek conditionals. We find no legalese or theological technospeak. We find concrete terms used in the simplest of sentences that even a small child can understand.

### Translation

Who will come forward as an accuser against God’s chosen? God is the one who justifies! Who will condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that who was raised! And he is the one on the right hand of God, who is also interceding on our behalf.

### Exegetical/Sermonic Comments

**A. Jesus took my place, my verdict, my sentence, my execution.**

If you are anything like me, you are a little disillusioned with our judicial system in America. I am especially tired of these endless “appeals,” that are bogging down our court systems. You can be a murderer, caught dead to rights at the scene, convicted with a mountain of concrete evidence, and yet you may appeal! Why? Maybe you will argue that some of the evidence was obtained illegally, or some tiny legality wasn’t

observed, thus invalidating the trial on a technicality. Even if your appeal is denied, you can appeal to another court, a higher court! So it happens that some cases are tied up in the legal system for years!

But at least all these appeals have one thing in common. Defendants are appealing a *guilty* verdict! When is the last time you heard about a disgruntled defendant appealing an *innocent* verdict? How stupid that would be!

Yet sinful humanity has been “appealing” and denying the greatest verdict of the ages for some 2,000 years! Sinful humanity has been ever so foolish in dragging out a senseless litigation process, because in the trial I am talking about now, all mankind was declared *not guilty*, innocent and forgiven before the Lord God Almighty in heaven.

I am talking, of course, about what happened to Jesus Christ, God’s holy Son, on Maundy Thursday evening and Good Friday. While the Sanhedrin hauled Jesus from one mock tribunal to another, the real trial was taking place in God’s heavenly courtroom. God was trying his holy Son. Though the chief priests and Pharisees must have strutted like peacocks when they coerced the weak-willed Pilate into authorizing Christ’s crucifixion, it was actually God in heaven who had, long before, passed this horrible sentence upon his Son.

That’s because God tried humanity at Golgotha and humanity was found wanting. The all-wise and all-knowing Lord God found evidence against each member of the human race, evidence that proved we were guilty as sin. God pronounced, “The imagination of a man’s heart is only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5). Jesus echoed this judicial finding when he said, “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean” (Matthew 15:19). The Lord God who doesn’t make mistakes, the Lord God who committed no procedural errors in his divine trial, pronounced his verdict: “*All have fallen short!*” Every one is guilty. Based upon that sweeping verdict, God pronounced sentence: “Death under my curse.”

However, it was God’s just and gracious plan that Jesus was to be our Substitute under God’s law, sentence, and punishment. Therefore Jesus Christ took our place as defendant in God’s tribunal. Jesus took our place when he bore God’s curse on the cross. Jesus endured the sentence for all of mankind’s crimes and all of our sins! As Paul so emphatically, simply yet powerfully declares: “Christ Jesus is the one who died.” And with that death, God finished his trial. How can we be sure? Paul shouts, “*Christ Jesus* is the one...who was raised.” When Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, the Father was announcing to the world, “*Case Closed!*”

### **B. How foolish for me to “appeal!”**

That’s why the apostle Paul can exult, “Who will condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that who was raised. And he is the one on the right hand of God, who is also interceding on our behalf.”

Till the Judgment Day, Jesus will continue his work as a heavenly “advocate,” a lawyer who constantly reminds the Father of his trial, his judgment, his sentence, his satisfaction! What took place at Golgotha is final! The devils will not find some “unholy technicality” upon which to overturn God’s judgment. Nor will God change his mind! It will be true forever that Jesus was declared “guilty,” so we are now declared “not guilty!” Jesus was executed, so now we are set free!

Why do we insist on appealing this gracious verdict day after day, year after year? Why do we allow guilty consciences to rob us of joy? Why do we worry whether we do enough, or work hard enough for the Lord in his kingdom? Why do we dwell on the size of our faith? We cannot undo Golgotha! We cannot overturn God’s verdict. We cannot seal up Jesus’ tomb and hold him down! Through Jesus, you and I are forgiven! Through Jesus, we have something more than six feet of dirt and the old “666” to look forward to. We have heaven waiting! And we have the “court transcripts” to prove it – in God’s Word, the Bible!

Therefore stop the worrying and the constant “appealing.” God has decreed it! Jesus suffered. Jesus died. Jesus paid. Jesus lives. This is certainly God’s grace for you and me. We stand acquitted.

## **VII. God’s Grace Makes Me More Than A Conqueror In Christ! (vs. 33-39)**

### **A. Christ has “more than” conquered sin for me.**

**B. Christ has “more than” conquered suffering and sorrow for me.**

**C. Christ has “more than” conquered everything for me.**

**33** τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ; θεὸς ὁ δικαίων· **34** τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν; Χριστὸς [Ἰησοῦς] ὁ ἀποθανών, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεὶς, ὃς καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. **35** τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; θλίψις ἢ στενοχωρία ἢ διωγμὸς ἢ λιμὸς ἢ γυμνότης ἢ κίνδυνος ἢ μάχαιρα; **36** καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι

Ἔνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν,

ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς.

**37** ἀλλ’ ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς. **38** πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε θάνατος οὔτε ζωὴ οὔτε ἄγγελοι οὔτε ἀρχαὶ οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα οὔτε μέλλοντα οὔτε δυνάμεις **39** οὔτε ὕψωμα οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

### Key Words/Grammatical Constructions

**Verse 33-34:** (Treated grammatically in previous section.)

#### Verse 35:

χωρίσει	fut. act. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to separate</i> .
θλίψις	<i>put the squeeze on, compression; pressure</i> .
στενοχωρία	<i>a tight spot, calamity</i> .
διωγμὸς	from διώκω – <i>persecution</i> .
λιμὸς	<i>hunger</i> .
γυμνότης	<i>nakedness</i> .
κίνδυνος	<i>danger, peril</i> .
μάχαιρα	<i>Roman short sword</i> .

#### Verse 36:

καθὼς	<i>as, just as</i> .
γέγραπται	perf. pass. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>it is written</i> in Psalm 44:22.
ὅτι	recitative.
Ἔνεκεν	<i>because of</i> .
θανατούμεθα	pres. pass. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl. – <i>to be killed, put to death</i> . What a mournful verb! Always in the process of dying, but never put out of our misery. This is the height of frustration, depression, despair.
ὅλην	<i>all</i> – accusative of time. This adds to the hopelessness of the present tense in the verb.
ἐλογίσθημεν	aor. pass. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl. – <i>deemed, considered, reckoned</i> .
πρόβατα	nom. nt. pl. – <i>sheep</i> .
σφαγῆς	objective genitive – <i>sheep headed for, doomed to slaughter</i> (Robertson 501).

**Verse 37:**

ἀλλ'	<i>as, just as.</i>
ὑπερνικῶμεν	pres. act. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> pl. – <i>to be more than conquerors, be completely victorious.</i> Consider: We “think” we are sheep headed for the slaughterhouse. The opposite is true. Our enemies have been slaughtered. The field of battle is littered with their corpses. We have nothing to fear.
διὰ	Here is the all-important lifeline. Without a connection to our gracious Lord, we are nothing
ἀγαπήσαντος	aor. act. ptc. gen. masc. sg. Books can and have been written about the amazing, undeserved love of our Lord.

**Verse 38:**

πέπεισμαι	perf. pass. ind. 1 <sup>st</sup> sg. – <i>persuaded, convinced, trust, rely on, be confident, certain, sure.</i> This is the conviction of saving faith.
γὰρ	logical. Paul introduces the reasons for his startling statement in verse 37.
οὔτε	οὐ + τέ.
ἀρχαί	<i>first place in power and rank; hence, power, authority, ruler, leader</i> (whether earthly or spiritual).
ἐνεστώτα	perf. act. ptc. nom. nt. pl. – <i>those things in a present state of existence, the things that are now.</i>
μέλλοντα	pres. act. ptc. nom. nt. pl. – <i>the things about to be, the future things.</i>
δυνάμεις	<i>power, strength, supernatural power.</i>

**Verse 39:**

ὑψωμα	<i>height.</i>
βάθος	<i>depth</i> (We cover all the phobias, don't we...).
κτίσις	<i>creature.</i>
δυνήσεται	fut. mid. ind. 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg. – <i>to be able to.</i>
χωρίσαι	aor. act. inf. – <i>to separate.</i>
τῆς...τῆς	The doubling of the definite article shows us this is “one” love. God’s love is always “the love in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Translation**

Who will come forward as an accuser against God’s chosen? God is the One who justifies! Who will condemn? *Christ Jesus* is the one who died, more than that who was raised. And he is the one on the right hand of God, who is also interceding on our behalf. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will pressure or calamity or persecution or hunger or nakedness or danger or the sword? Just as it is written:

On account of you we are being put to death all day long.  
We are considered as sheep for the slaughter.

*No!* In all these things we are more than conquerors through the one who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor authorities, neither the things that exist now nor the things that are about to be, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Exegetical/Sermonic Comments

#### A. Christ has “more than” conquered sin for me.

Well, how did the past week go? Did you live every day as if an Easter Sunday? Was your head held high, and your outlook on life bright? Was there a spring in your step? Did you hop in the car this morning, rush to this conference, and shout at every car that cut you off, “*We are more than conquerors!*” Or was your week somewhat less than “victorious”? Was it lousy? Was it the same old “grind” at work? Did several more difficult counseling cases add to an already overloaded week? Was your sermon “backburnered” till late Saturday night, so that on Sunday morning it was little more than half-baked? Did the ladies get into another fight at their guild meeting? Were you the only one who showed up for evangelism calling? Did the treasurer tell you to hold off on cashing your check until after next Sunday’s service?

*We are* more than conquerors, you know. Though the pressures I just mentioned, and possibly many others, may have pressed in upon us from every side, that doesn’t change the glorious facts as the apostle Paul shares them with us! *We are* more than conquerors *in Christ!*

If we are the “more than conquerors” that Paul here describes, then we ought to be able to stride into a room like Charlton Heston did in the movie, *The Ten Commandments*. Our head should be held high; our eyes should be ablaze with confidence; our chest out; our back straight; our shoulders square. We ought to carry ourselves in such a way that we could blow over our opponents merely by going “phew.”

Tragically, however, you and I often don’t look much like conquerors. Our head is down; our shoulders are slumped; our eyes are sunken from sleeplessness. We are the ones who look as if the tiniest wisp of a breeze could blow us over!

Why? All too often we plod through life still carrying the crushing weight of our sins. Paul wants us to be *convinced*. Those sins have been “more than conquered.”

With the freshness of a spring breeze, his words brush over our beleaguered souls: “Who will come forward as an accuser against God’s chosen? God is the one who justifies! Who will condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that who was raised! And he is the one on the right hand of God, who is also interceding on our behalf.” For one last time in this glorious chapter, Paul takes us by the hand and leads us into God’s heavenly tribunal. This is the courtroom the Lord convened on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. You and I and all humanity were the real defendants. This is a knowledge that could make our shoulders slump all the more, because we all must admit that according to God’s law – which requires not only an outwardly decent life but which demands absolute perfect holiness in thoughts and desires – we are all wide open to all kinds of accusations and charges! In God’s eyes, apart from Christ, we are all guilty as “sin.”

However, Paul dispels our gloom when he says, “Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that who was raised! And he is the one on the right hand of God, who is also interceding on our behalf.” God cannot and will not ignore our sin. That is true. However, it is also true that God dealt with our sin through our substitute, Jesus Christ. Christ died because he was condemned for our sins. Christ died to pay the penalty of all our sins. When he rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, that resurrection announced to the world, and to us, that what Jesus had done was enough to pay for the sins of the whole world! Because of Good Friday and Easter, “There is therefore no way that a guilty verdict remains for those in Christ Jesus.” As Easter announced, God’s case is forever closed! He will not punish us believers for our sins, because they have already been sentenced and punished in Jesus.

If the devil still comes around, therefore, insisting that we are more worthless than rug lint, more vile than sewage, and worthy only of the fires of hell, then the devil is contradicting God! God says that in Jesus, we are “not guilty.” Satan’s charges are groundless.

If our own conscience plagues us night and day and robs us of peace night and day, then we have a right to tell our conscience to “shut up!” For St. John says, “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” (1 John 3:20). And if well meaning, but misguided fellow believers continue to lay one guilt trip on us after another (quite often because we don’t do things their way), then we need to look them in the eye and say, “It’s wrong to try to manipulate me in thus way. In Christ Jesus, I am forgiven. In Christ Jesus, my sins have been more than conquered.”

Dear Friends, walk like conquerors, because in God’s eyes, through Jesus, your past is as white and pure as the driven snow! But maybe you know this quite well. Maybe you appreciate what God’s grace has done to give you forgiveness. Nevertheless, your shoulders remain slumped and your eyes sunken because life right now is hard. So maybe you need to hear...

## **B. Christ has “more than” conquered suffering and sorrow for me.**

Has he? Does Jesus really take away the pain and sting of life here and now? Maybe you didn’t have the money to pay your taxes, so now you’re buried a little deeper into debt. Maybe your pain is a little worse every day, but there’s nothing the doctor can do for you, because your condition is terminal. Maybe your marriage is “shot,” because your spouse left you for a more handsome and virile man, or a more voluptuous and alluring woman. Maybe your child is a juvenile delinquent, a gang member on drugs.

Perhaps you don’t feel like the sheep, idyllically pastured in a serene green meadow, drinking now and again from a still, deep, pure pool of water, not a care in the world, with Jesus the Good Shepherd at your side! Maybe you feel a whole lot more like the sheep described by Paul in our text: “Just as it is written: ‘On account of you we are being put to death all day long. We are considered as sheep for the slaughter.’” Paul is quoting from Psalm 44:22. Even the Psalmist of old could see that life in this world is often very hard. Quite often it looks as if God has forgotten us. Sometimes it even seems as if we are being punished for being Christians! Sometimes it seems as if we are dying inch-by-inch, moment by moment, with no end in sight. However, it is never true that God has forgotten us. Nor is it ever true that our troubles will swallow us up. “God is faithful,” Paul promises in another of his letters. “He will not let you be tempted (tested) beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. “ (1 Cor. 10:13) Trouble and hardship may be severe pressures that seem to squeeze us in from all sides, but they can’t really harm us. Persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and the sword may threaten our physical existence, but none of these things can touch our soul. In fact, as Paul observed earlier in this same chapter, all these sufferings and sorrows only “work together for good to those who love God.” These problems strengthen our faith by driving us to our knees and closer to our Lord in dependant faith and trust!

If your last week, last month, or last year was really rotten, however, you may remain unconvinced about Jesus conquering sorrow and sadness. You may still feel more like the sheep led to the slaughter than God’s lamb safe in His arms. Then dear friend, it’s time to start walking like a conqueror. Conquerors walk “by faith,” not “by sight” That’s because appearance can be most deceiving! Psalm 44 aptly describes how Christians often look in this life. There have been periods of time when Christians were fiercely persecuted, when they were rounded up to be killed. In our society, we Christians are objects of ridicule. We are called unscientific and “stupid,” because we don’t believe in evolution. We are labeled “homophobic,” because we teach that homosexuality is a sin condemned by God. We are branded as dangerous and intolerant, as “holier-than-thou,” because we uphold the moral standards as contained in God’s 10 commandments. More often than not, it still looks as if we Christians are nothing but sheep for the slaughter. It looks as if our cause is losing, and our enemies are pressing in upon us, ready for the kill. That’s the way our life may look, if we walk only by sight. However, if we walk by faith, and share Paul’s triumphant conviction (nznEt6[tm]), we will be convinced that above all the clouds of

our suffering and sorrow, the Son is still reigning. Jesus has been raised to life and “is the One on the right hand of God, Who is also Interceding on our behalf. “

So, despite all present appearances to the contrary, we are “more-than conquerors in Chn’st. “

### C. Christ has “more than” conquered everything for me.

From the pinnacle perspective of faith, Paul penned some of the most comforting and most victorious words we Christians can ever hope to hear. “NO! In all these thing-25, we are more than conquerors through the One who loved us For lam convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor authorities, neither the things that exist now nor the things that are about to be, no powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Chn’st Jesus our Lord.”

Death can’t defeat us or separate us from God. Easter proves that whether we live or die, we belong to the living Lord. Life can’t defeat us or conquer us, because our Savior has said, “I will be with you always” We Christians have an omnipotent, omnipresent Bodyguard. Angels aren’t about to derail our faith, because the Bible tells us they are God’s servants to help and protect us. Satan and the evil angels can’t snatch us and drag us off to hell because when Christ rose from the dead, He descended into hell and declared His eternal victory over satan. Now the devil is like a dog on a chain, nothing more. Life may be hard now, and it may be worse in the future. It may be filled with pressures and tight spots and ridicule and hunger and cheap, imitation tennis shoes instead of Reeboks (yultvovl6), but nothing in life can wedge God away from us. God has bonded with us forever. His love is secure in Christ Jesus, and will be until we stand on the threshold of heaven itself

WE ARE “MORE THAN” CONQUERORS IN CHRIST! Throughout this study, have you wondered why Paul says we are “more than conquerors? Wouldn’t being a conqueror be sufficient? Alexander the Great was a conqueror. Julius Caesar was a conqueror. Genghis Khan was a conqueror. Napoleon was a conqueror. Patton was a conqueror. Norman Schwarzkopf was a conqueror. But they are all “bush-leaguers’ compared with Jesus. He didn’t just defeat our enemies, He crushed them. He didn’t eke out a close, come-from-behind victory over satan, sin and death. Jesus annihilated them, and He did this all for us. He gave us, by grace, all the blessings of His Easter Victory!

When we remember this every day, when we live each day as if it were Easter, then we will be able to walk like conquerors. Then we will stand on the mountaintop of our faith and survey the battlescene where Christ alone is victor. And when sin comes back to haunt us, when suffering and sorrow begin to daunt us, when satan and all his helpers slink in to taunt us, then we will be convinced, “WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS IN CHRIST!” Easter’s victory is forever ours.

And maybe, just maybe, by God’s grace and power, we’ll square up our shoulders, hold up our head, puff out our chest, and simply go “pew.” Amen.

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