

I. Safe In God's Hands In The Face Of Suffering With Christ

A. We have been working our way through the section of Romans 8 that begins at vs 17 with a conditional "if" statement – if we suffer with Christ, then we will also be glorified with Christ.

1. Next, Paul explains that comparing the suffering of this present time to the glory to follow produces a mindset that deems the suffering insignificant in comparison to the glory.
2. Then Paul provides a number of promises from God that assure us we are safe in God's hands no matter how painful or costly suffering with Christ becomes.
3. The first promise is that the Holy Spirit will intercede with God on our behalf when we do not know what to pray in the face of suffering.
4. The second promise is that God causes all things to work together for good, when we love God and are living according to His purposes.
5. Today, we are going to look at the rest of Romans 8, which speaks of several more promises and examples of just how safe we are in God's hands even though we are passing through a time of suffering for being a Christian.

B. Prayer

II. Safe in God's hands –

A. Romans 8:29-30 . . . For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; [30] and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

1. I want to begin our examination of these two verses with some definitions.
  - a. Foreknow or foreknowledge is to have previous knowledge of something, or to know beforehand. In the Bible, it often infers love for someone who has yet to appear on the scene. In other words, those God foreknows, He loves.
  - b. To predestine is to predetermine something or to appoint it beforehand with an unchangeable purpose or decree.
  - c. To be called is to be invited or summoned to something.

- d. To be justified is to be counted as righteous so as to be in good standing with God for the purpose of receiving the gift of eternal life.
2. The second thing of importance to consider is that Paul is not establishing a theology of salvation in these two verses. Rather, he is continuing his sequence of reasons as to why we are safe in God's hands in spite of the pain and loss resulting from suffering with Christ.
    - a. Therefore, God not only causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him and live according to His purposes, but one of His purposes is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, in and through our suffering with Christ.
    - b. This is a powerful promises in that suffering has the power to tempt us to distrust God's goodness, or to feel forsaken by God's love, or to fear further suffering so as to pull back in living for Christ.
    - c. Yet knowing that such temptation would come to those who suffer with Christ, and knowing (*loving*) beforehand those who belong to Him, God pre-determined that we would be conformed to the likeness of Christ.
    - d. But why would God do this? So that Christ will be the first born child of MANY children who will live with God for eternity.
      - (1) In other words, God wants something, and He has pre-determined to do what is necessary to get what He wants.
      - (2) And what He wants is many children with the same quality of character, strength of faith, completeness of obedience, genuineness of humility, compassion for people, and love for righteousness as His own dear son, Jesus Christ.
    - e. Therefore, God has predestined all who belong to Him to be transformed and made holy in all their behavior so as to think, desire, speak, and act in ways that reflect or mirror how Jesus Christ thinks, desires, speaks, and acts.
    - f. And how is God transforming us? Paul speaks of this transforming process that works through suffering in Romans 5:3-4 . . . We exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope – or we might say in place of the word “hope,” confident faith. In other words, God has predetermined to build our faith, strengthen our resolve to live for Him who died and

rose again on our behalf, and to have a settled assurance that He is with us, always, even to the end of the age.

- g. As I already said, this promise of safety builds on the previous promise, which is that God is causing all things to work together for good – including the evil actions of our persecutors and the hard times of suffering. In other words, in predestining us to holiness of life, God is overcoming evil with God, and we are recipients of that good.
  - h. Finally, I want to remind you that this transforming work of God, a work He predestined, results in being called, justified, and eventually glorified.
3. The third thing I want to do in relation to these two verses is point out that the truth of vs 29 is placed into a sequence of events in vs 30. Follow along as I show you this sequence, for I believe it is there for a reason.
- a. According to vs 29, God's foreknowledge results in His work of predestining us to Christ-likeness, or what we more commonly call, sanctification – so that Christ will have many siblings of similar quality to himself.
  - b. Then in vs 30, Paul presents a sequence of events, a sequence that begins with God predestining us to sanctification, followed by being called, then justified, and finally glorified.
  - c. What is of interest here is that Paul speaks of God's commitment to our sanctification, or being conformed to the image of Christ, before speaking of God calling us, justifying us, and glorifying us. And I am pointing this out because this progression of events is not unique to Romans 8:30.
    - (1) We read in Romans 2:13 . . . for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. Note: it is those who live righteously or live a sanctified life who are justified.
    - (2) Paul says a similar thing in Romans 6:22-23 . . . But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Here again, the order Paul uses is sanctification and then receiving the gift of eternal life.
  - d. I do not wish to make so much of this that I start a new theology or doctrine of salvation. However, it seems reasonable to conclude

from these three sections in Romans that God places such a high value on godly living that He speaks of it first when talking about justification and the gift of eternal life.

- B. Romans 8:31-32 . . . What then shall we say to these things? (*Or, what more is there to say than has already been said from Romans 8:1-30?*) If God is for us, who is against us? [32] He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him (*Christ*) freely give us all things?
1. In spite of suggesting there is no more that can be said on the subject, Paul continues on and in doing so reveals the foundation and the extent of God's love for His children, and that includes you.
    - a. And what is the foundation of God's love? Paul puts it in the simplest terms, "God is for us!" And if He is the supreme being, then there is no one who is greater than God in any way. Therefore, if God is for us, there is no one who can push God aside or overpower Him in order to take action against us that in any way works against our good, both in this life and throughout eternity. If God is for us, and He is, then we are safe in His hands.
    - b. And what is the extent of God's love? The extent of God's love is manifested by the fact that He willingly subjected His son to all the difficulties, sorrows, and temptations of humanity, and He delivered His son into the hands of evil men to do with Him as they will, and He delivered His son to hell, for the sake of our salvation from the penalty and power of sin.
      - (1) Or as Paul said in Romans 5:8 . . . God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
      - (2) Now if God willingly went to those lengths to save you, will He not just as willingly go to those same lengths to keep you safe? Will He not just as willingly work all things out for your good – presently and eternally? And will He not just as willingly give you every good thing so that you have all that is necessary for life and godliness? And the answer is a resounding YES!
  2. And here is what is so astounding. As marvelous as this promise is, it is just one of the several promises God makes in Romans 8 to assure us we are safe in His hands in spite of the pain and loss we will endure when suffering with Christ.

- C. Romans 8:33-34 . . . Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; [34] who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
1. You can best understand these two verses if you visualize a court of law. In this setting, Paul begins by asking if there is a someone who is able to charge God's elect with a crime that would prevent them from being the recipients of all God has promised, including justification and the gift of eternal life.
    - a. Keep in mind that the larger context is that of suffering with Christ. Therefore, the one who condemns might be the government via a prosecutor, or a community of people acting as a mob – as they did before Pilate in condemning Jesus, or family members trying to get wayward members back to the lifestyle of the family, or the devil – who as the accuser of our brethren accuses them before God day and night (Revelation 12:10).
    - b. And as you already know, the answer to this question is no one outside of God (*which includes Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*) can bring a charge against God's elect.
      - (1) Why? He alone holds the position and power to make the final determination if you are to be condemned or justified.
      - (2) Now if God condemns you, there is no one who can change that verdict. And if God justifies you, there is no one who has the position or the power or who can produce the kind of evidence that will override God's verdict.
    - c. In other words, if we are justified by God, we are safe in His hands, and no one can condemn us to the loss of our justification.
  2. Which raises the question, what is the basis upon which God justifies us so that no one outside of God can alter our justification?
    - a. Paul points to Jesus Christ as the basis for God's justification of repentant sinners. And how is it that Jesus Christ is that basis?
    - b. First of all, He alone, freely and completely died in the sinner's place to pay the penalty for the sinner's sin. Therefore, Christ alone holds the position of Redeemer and Savior.
      - (1) And why is this significant? Because if anyone has the right to condemn the unrepentant sinner and the right to defend the redeemed and justified sinner against condemnation, it is the One who paid the guilty sinner's sin debt.
      - (2) And since no one else can claim that position, Christ, who is God in human flesh, stands alone as the judge.

- c. Second, Christ not only died in our place for our sin, God honored His payment by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His (*that is, God's*) right hand, where He is perfectly positioned to exercise His position as Redeemer and Savior on our behalf, should anyone come and accuse us before God.
  - 3. So we see in these verses not only what God has done to keep us safe, but what He continues to do to keep us safe. Therefore, whether accused falsely or fairly, we have no reason to fear.
    - a. False accusation will be brushed aside by the One who sees all and knows truth from lie, justice from injustice.
    - b. And true accusations will not be held to our account, because the One who intercedes for us will forgive us if we confess and repent, and He will make His forgiveness of us known to the Father, who will accept that defense because it has been made by the One who paid for our sin.
    - c. And this is why Paul said at the beginning of Romans 8, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- D. Romans 8:35-37 . . . Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (*Hebrews 11 lists such things as the experience of believers at the hands of their persecutors.*) [36] Just as it is written, "For Your (*Christ*) sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [37] But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.
  - 1. What Paul has said so beautifully, let me say a bit differently, not that I can say it better, but for the purpose of enlarging your understanding of what Paul is saying.
    - a. There is nothing in this world, human or demon, that has the power to stop God from loving you, or to stop God's love from reaching you – and this includes those times when you are suffering as a Christian.
    - b. And though the unbelieving world sees your suffering as the failure of God to protect you, suffering with Christ is neither a defeat for you nor a failure on God's part nor the loss of God's love.
    - c. Instead, it is a victory for you, a victory whereby you have conquered evil with good through the empowerment and assistance of the Holy Spirit. And it is a victory whereby the righteousness of God in you has prevailed in the face of powerful

forces which have sought to cripple or destroy that righteousness, or force it into hiding.

2. And of course, our premier example of this truth is Jesus Christ, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23).
3. Therefore, have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:4-10).

E. And then Paul concludes this section with these well known words from Romans 8:38-39 . . . For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Living the Christ-like life is rewarding, it brings great blessing, and it is a blessing to others.
- B. However, the Christ-like life also brings suffering, for as Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (John 15:20). Yet suffering with Christ is never an indication that God has failed us or stopped loving us or that we are no longer safe in His hands. And to affirm this truth, God gives us these several promises in Romans 8.
- C. Therefore, may we – as God’s people, and as followers of Jesus Christ, and as salt and light in our sinful world – may we live as Jesus lived, and may we bravely follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, even into situations where we suffer with Christ and like Christ – to the glory and honor of God and to our own glory when Jesus returns.