

## **Romans 8:26-30 Answers** **God Works all Things Together for Good**

**Introduction:** Last week we discussed the groaning of all creation. Presently both creation and even God's people are in a state of groaning. Our bodies are part of the created order and even though we have been redeemed and have the deposit of the Holy Spirit within us, we still groan. We will still get tired and sick and are liable to grow old and die. Our bodies are also subject to futility and corruption. We have good reason to groan!

ESV **2 Corinthians 5:4** . . . while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened . . .

However despite all the problems of this world, we can live with great hope!

**Structure:** The key verse in 8:18-39 is **8:18** (*reread*). All of 8:19-30 may be said to one way or the other support or explain 8:18 (Cranfield, p. 410).

-----  
**\*\*\*What assurance have we that in our weakness we won't be overcome by all the groaning in and around us (8:26-30)?** 1) The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, 2) God causes all things to work together for our good and 3) God has predestined us to be glorified.

**General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson:** One of Jackson's favorite verses was one found in this passage: 8:28.

**1. This paragraph starts with the word likewise (8:26). Likewise what? What is like what?**  
The whole creation groans (8:22), we ourselves groan (8:23) and likewise the Holy Spirit groans (8:26).

**What weakness do we have (8:26)?** Maybe it is weakness from suffering due to the curse on creation or suffering for following Jesus or being weak with respect to knowing what we ought to pray for. Thus the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groaning too deeps for words (8:26).

**What does the Spirit have to groan about (8:26)?** Perhaps it is over our ignorance of what to pray for! Perhaps He identifies with our weakness and suffering.

**What does it mean to intercede (8:26) for someone?** It is from *huperentugchano*; *huper* means on behalf of; *en* means one and *tugchano* means to hit the mark, to reach, attain or obtain. Thus, it means to attain something on behalf of someone. The equivalent is baseball is a substitute batter, a pinch hitter. The Holy Spirit hits the ball out of the park every time!

**2. According to 8:27, what guidelines does the Holy Spirit go by when praying for us?**  
He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. The Spirit's prayers for us are in perfect harmony with the Father's will. He never prays amiss.

**Who is he who searches the hearts who knows what the mind of the Spirit is (8:27)?** The he is God the Father. **Joke:** The reason God the Father has to read the Spirit's mind is because His groaning is too deep for words!

**3. In the midst of all our suffering (8:17) and groaning (8:23), what guarantee do we have (8:28)?** God works all things together for our good.

ESV **Jeremiah 29:11** . . . I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

**4. Sobering: The promise of 8:28 is not for everybody. To whom is it limited?** It is for those who love and who are called according to God's purpose.

**What does the word all mean (as in all things, 8:28)?** It means everything.

**Does all include accidents (like driving a grounding rod through your hand or poking your eye out in a car wreck or tripping over a bench and breaking your arm)?**

**Does all include illness (thyroid problems, cancer, infertility, a torn ACL, baldness)?**

**Does all include your own personal sin (being inconsiderate of your wife, looking at pornography on the internet, gossip about other people)?** (Those who rationalize deliberate sin based on 8:28 are not reflecting saved thinking. You might just as well purposely fall down to break your arm so that God will work it for good).

**Does 8:28 state that all things are good?** No; in fact many things are absolute evil. What it says is that God will work them for good in your life. Chickens eat worms and bugs and turn them into delicious eggs. God takes all things, including bad things, and works them together for good in your life. God turns broken eggs into omelets and makes lemons into lemonade.

**Parable:** The sole survivor of a shipwreck washed up on the shore of a deserted island. After much work he managed to build a hut, only to have it burn down when he was cooking. That was the last straw; he angrily shook his fist toward heaven and demanded to know why God had allowed that to happen. However, an ocean liner soon appeared off shore and he was rescued. The captain explained he had seen the signal fire and come to investigate.

**5. God works all things together for our "good" — notice it does not say He works the together for our comfort, ease, popularity or prosperity. We had better let Paul define for us what he meant by good. According to 8:29-30, what did Paul mean by "good" (8:28)?** The good God works for us (8:28) includes being conformed to the image of His Son. God's purpose (8:28) is to make us like Jesus. God uses our circumstances to sanctify us.

6. There is a chain reaction of events listed in 8:29-30. It starts with being foreknown and ends with being glorified. Is it possible to break the chain? **Can a person be foreknown but then not be predestined or predestined and never called or called but miss out on being justified or justified and not glorified? Why?** This seems to be a package deal, all or nothing. Helpful in answering the question is the repeated use of the word “also.” Those God foreknew God “also” predestined (8:29). Those who are predestined are “also” called (8:30). Those called by God are “also” justified (8:30) and those He justified God “also” glorified (8:30). It is like a conveyor belt; if step on one end you are automatically taken to the other!

ESV **Philippians 1:6** . . . I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Teacher’s Note:** The links in the chain of 8:29-30 are generally sequential but not rigidly so. For example, I might say that I went to town yesterday and I saw Tim and I saw Joe and I saw Pete. This conveys who I saw, not necessarily in the order in which I saw them.

### 1. Foreknew

**7. In what way did God foreknow us (8:29)?** See *Genesis 4:17*, *Amos 3:2*. Many people think this means God looked down the tunnel of time to see who would of his own free will accept Jesus. However, the Bible never specifically states that is what it means. It is at best an assumption. According to Arminian theologian H.C. Thiessen, “we are nowhere told what it is in the foreknowledge of God that determines His choice . . .” He goes on to write that it is “postulating” to believe that God chose those he knew in advance would accept Him (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 344). At best, it is an argument from silence.

**Word Study:** “Foreknew” (8:29) is from *proginosko* (basis for prognosis). *Pro* means before (as in protrude) and *gnosis* means to know. When a doctor makes a future prognosis based on your current medical condition, his prognosis does not cause the future outcome; it is only based on what he knows about your present medical condition. It is not the same with God. Unlike the doctor, God does not merely know the outcome of a disease. God created the patient, the disease and even the doctor. He has total control over all things and their outcomes. A life guard at the beach is negligent if he allows someone to drown, but the life guard did not cause him to drown. God is not like the life guard. God created and controls the water, the undertow and the swimmer. If God allows someone to die it is ultimately because God wanted that person to die. He may not take pleasure in it, but in the cosmic scheme of things it is God’s will.

For God to foreknow something is for Him to foreordain it to happen. However, in 8:28, it is not what God foreknew, but who; it is people. The Bible says **Adam knew** Eve (Ge 4:17). Adam did not simply know *about* Eve. Adam did not merely know her name or who she was. It means he had a relationship with her. Similarly, God said that **Israel** was the only nation He had known (Am 3:2). This did not mean God was unaware that Egypt and Babylon existed. It means Israel was the only nation He had a covenant relationship with. For God to foreknow certain people means God, in eternity past, purposed to have a relationship with them. It means He fore-loved us; He fore-chose us.

ESV **Amos 3:2** You only have I known of all the families of the earth . . .

ESV **Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

ESV **John 15:16** You did not choose me, but I chose you . . .

## 2. Predestined

Some Christians don't believe in predestination. Yet here the word is right in the Bible (8:29). If you believe the Bible you have to believe in predestination. What they don't believe is the view of it held by Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Luther (the Reformed version of predestination).

**What does the word predestined mean (8:29)?** (*Take it apart*). When you call a travel agent, he will ask, "What is your destination?" Predestination means your ultimate destination has been determined in advance. It is from *proorizo*; *pro* means before and *horizo* (basis for horizon) means to mark off by boundaries, to determine (the horizon is a boundary; it is as far as you can see). Thus it means to predetermine, to decide beforehand, to foreordain. Those God foreknew He put a boundary around.

### 8. According to 8:29, what destination did God decide in advance (predestine) for us?

God predestined that we would be like Jesus. God's plan that we be sanctified is guaranteed by predestination. All hell can't stop it.

ESV **Philippians 1:6** . . . I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**What does it mean to be conformed to the image of His Son (8:29)?** This necessarily involves both salvation and sanctification. The Greek word for image is *ikon* (basis for icon) and means form, image, likeness, such as a king's head on a coin, the reflection of the sun in the water or a child's resemblance to his parents (Thayer #1504). For us now this means to be conformed to the character of Jesus. Later it means we will have a glorified body like He has.

**Application:** *Are you becoming more like Jesus? Are you more like Jesus today than you were yesterday, last week. Last month?* Here is the benchmark:

ESV **Galatians 5:22-23** . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . .

**9. Based on the last part of 8:29, what is the ultimate purpose of being foreknown and predestined by God?** It is so that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brothers. We are adopted as sons into God's family, but Jesus is the firstborn.

ESV **Revelation 5:9** . . . by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation . . .

Predestination does not keep people out of heaven. It is God's way of making sure that "many" (8:29) people will make it to heaven. The truth is, had God looked down the tunnel of time to see who, left to their own free will, would believe in Jesus, He would have seen that nobody would believe. Despite foreseen ill-will He graciously chose some of us to be His own.

**10. Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers. What is the significance of being the firstborn (8:29)?** The firstborn son had preeminence over those born later. He got the bulk of the Father's inheritance. The Greek is *protokos* (literally, first begotten) and can refer to the first born chronologically or to having preeminence (Thayer #4416a). Jesus is preeminent, supreme, elevated above all others.

### 3. Called

**11. We are 1) foreknown and 2) predestined and we are 3) called (8:30). To what have we been called (8:30)?** On one hand God sends out a general, outward call for men to repent of sin and believe in Jesus. Men can and do refuse God's outward call (Mt 22:14). However, in this context, God's calling is inward and irresistible. This refers to God's effectual call. God calls those He foreknew to salvation and sanctification and to be adopted into His family.

### 4. Justification

**12. What does it mean to be justified (8:30)?** To be justified is to be "just as if I'd never sinned". The Greek word (*dikaioo*) is a legal term that means to declare righteous or to acquit (Thayer #1344). Paul went to great lengths earlier in Romans to teach that we are justified by faith in Jesus, apart works. In this passage we get a glimpse behind the scenes in how God works to bring people to salvation.

### 5. Glorification

**13. What does it mean to be glorified (8:30)?** Glorified is from *doxazo* (doxology). The original root meaning had to do with having a good opinion. It grew to mean to adorn with luster, clothed with splendor, render excellent, to make renowned (Thayer #1392). Usually we glorify God, but here He glorifies us! One way He will glorify us is with a glorified body like Jesus now has.

ESV **John 17:22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them . . .

ESV **2 Corinthians 3:18** . . . we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

**Charles Hodge:** Taking this chain as a whole (8:29-30), God sees the end from the beginning. All future events are comprehended and fixed in God's decrees and purpose (Rienecker, p. 367).

## So What?

**14. Putting all together, what is the point of 8:18-30?** It is all about perspective in the midst of suffering and groaning. The key verse is 8:18.

ESV **Romans 8:18** . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Stonewall Jackson believed and loved the truth of Romans 8:28. Yet it was God's plan for him to be killed in the war, accidentally shot by his own troops. God is sovereign over all. You can't move away from your problems. God has you in school and will keep you there until the pass the test. Jackson passed the test. The circumstances of life are God's ministry to you. Thus Paul said that we should be:

ESV **Ephesians 5:20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

We are to thank God in it even if we can't thank God for it. We thank God by faith, not by feeling.

### **15. The next time you encounter suffering, what do you need to remember/realize?**

1. Suffering and glory go together, 8:16-17.
2. There is no comparison between our present suffering and our future glory, 8:18.
3. All creation is presently groaning, waiting for glory, 8:19-23.
4. We can have true hope despite our suffering, 8:24-25.
5. The Holy Spirit is praying for us, 8:26-27.
6. God is sovereign, working all things together for our good, to make us like Jesus, 8:28-30.

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

Stephen E. Atkerson  
www.NTRF.org  
09/21/14