

Zechariah 12:10 (Opening)

¹⁰ “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Introduction

Have you ever felt like you were at the end of your rope? Like you just didn't know what to do next or where to turn to find help?

Think about this. You're walking in the woods, and you suddenly realize it's getting dark. It's a lot later than you thought it was, and the sun is going down. On top of that, it was an overcast day, so you can't really tell very well which way is west where the sun is going down, so you have no point of reference to find directions from.

So, like any experienced hiker, you reach for your compass. That's when you find out that it fell out of your pocket, and the string you had tied to it to keep it on your belt broke. You have a string hanging from your belt, and no compass to help you.

Or maybe you're driving down a deserted road at night and you get a flat tire. You safely pull over to the side of the road, open the trunk, and find out that your spare tire is also flat. So, you go back in the car, grab your cell phone, and find that you have absolutely no signal. It won't work.

These scenarios are probably a little extreme, but they are good analogies for situations we find ourselves in during our daily life. We think that everything is fine, and then all of a sudden, everything falls apart around us and we have nowhere to turn.

In Romans chapter 8, verses 18-25, Paul has been talking about how our hope in the world to come can help us through the sufferings and difficulties that we find ourselves and put ourselves in. Now, in verses 26 – 30, Paul is going to tell us about more help that we have to make it through our trying times.

Romans 8:26-30

²⁶ *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us*

with groanings too deep for words.²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The Spirit Intercedes

Paul starts by telling the Christians in Rome that when we're totally overwhelmed and we don't know how to pray or what to pray for, the Holy Spirit will step in and communicate for us.

In John 14:15-17, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth, and the Helper.

John 14:15-17

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The Greek word translated here as Helper is a term generally used to describe someone who is like a lawyer, who stands between you and the person you're dealing with. Someone who intercedes for you in a given situation.

Jesus told his disciples that they would have the Spirit of Truth to intercede for them, and Paul reaffirms that here for us in Romans.

Have you ever been so distraught in a situation, so overwhelmed, and you knew you needed to pray about it, but you didn't know what to

pray or even what kind of resolution to ask God for? Sometimes, in times like that, all you can do is go to God and just open up your heart and pour out all those piled up feelings. You don't really say anything, you just pour those emotions out. That's when the Holy Spirit intercedes and helps us communicate with God.

Paul says that God knows our hearts, and that it's God's will for the Holy Spirit to intercede between us and God when we can't express ourselves the way we should. That's one of the things that the Holy Spirit does for us; He helps us pray and express ourselves to God.

Paul tells us that our prayers will be answered according to the will of God. Sometimes it's hard to tell what God's will is. That's another time that the Holy Spirit will intercede for us and help us pray the way we should. And John, in his first letter, reassures us about praying.

1 John 5:13-15

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

John tells us that we can be confident that if we pray for something that is in God's will for us, we can know that He hears our prayer, and that He will answer that prayer according to His will.

It's All Good

Verse 28 of Romans chapter 8 is the favorite verse of many people. But I think a lot of people may be misunderstanding what Paul is telling us here in this verse.

Let's start with what Paul's not saying here. He's not saying that things will never go wrong. He's not saying that we won't have difficulties in

life. That would be contradicting what he's already said in many places already here in this letter.

We know we'll face difficulties. We know we'll have trials. We know that there will be challenges. We know that we'll be persecuted. We know we'll suffer. But, like Paul said in verse 18, that suffering, all those problems will be nothing compared to the glory that we'll see in heaven.

You see, Paul doesn't say all things will **be** good. He says all things work together for good. The difference is very significant. Paul is saying that eventually, everything **will** be good. It may be that things will be more tolerable here on earth, and it may be that things won't really be good until we actually get to heaven. But all things do work together for good.

That's what Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 8:12.

Ecclesiastes 8:12

¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.

But, there's two big qualifiers on that promise. First, it's for those who love God, or in Ecclesiastes, fear God. Those people who belong to the world are not in this group. The people that Paul is talking about are those who are in Christ. Those are the ones who love God.

The second qualifier is that the promise is for those who are called according to His purpose. What does that mean, called according to His purpose? Let's look at 2 Timothy 1:8-12.

2 Timothy 1:8-12

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of

*God,⁹ who saved us and **called us to a holy calling**, not because of our works but **because of his own purpose and grace**, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*

Paul tells Timothy that God saved us and called us to a holy calling, because He had a plan for us, His own purpose and grace. What was that purpose? Well, Paul says that he was appointed a preacher, apostle, and teacher. Those are terms that we're used to, but not very descriptive. The Greek word translated as preacher also means a public messenger of the king. The Greek word translated as Apostle means a delegate, someone who represents a higher authority. And we know what a teacher is.

We're not completely the same as Paul in our calling. However, I do think that we are to spread the message from God, the gospel; we are to represent Christ to the world; and we are to teach the people around us about the good news, the gospel of Christ.

[Conformed to Christ](#)

These last two verses in Romans 8 that we're going to talk about today, 29 and 30, are another place that Peter may have been talking about when he wrote his second letter.

2 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵ *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,*
¹⁶ *as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the*

ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

These two verses have been misinterpreted by many Christian scholars over the past 1500 years or so. But if you go back to some of the earliest discussions of this letter and Paul's letter to the Ephesians, they understood these verses to mean something a little different than the way many people read them today.

The problem words are foreknew in verse 29, and predestined in both 29 and 30. Many people read these two verses and think that God has chosen a specific few people to be saved, and has known from before the beginning of time who those individuals would be. And because He knows who will be saved, He also knows already who will not be saved. The problem with this way of thinking is that the individuals no longer have the ability to choose God, and that has always been in God's plan.

There's a newer translation of the New Testament that's available, called the Modern Literal Version. The purpose behind the Modern Literal Version is to be the most accurate word-for-word translation of the New Testament. The translators have done their best to translate Greek words into the same English word as often as possible. So, let's look at verses 29 and 30 of Romans 8 in the MLV.

Modern Literal Version Romans 8:29-30

8:29 Because, whom he knew beforehand, he also predetermined to be transformed to the image of his Son, to this end, he himself might be the firstborn among many brethren; 8:30 and whom he predetermined, he also called these and whom he called, he also justified these and whom he justified, he also glorified these.

This doesn't completely clear things up, but it does clear it up a little. But let's bring it into full focus. Just like the word "you" in English, the word "whom" can be either singular or plural. In other words, they can

refer to either an individual or a group. In the south they use the word “y’all” to refer to you plural, but there is no word for whom as a plural.

The Greek word here that’s translated “whom” is plural. It’s referring to a group. And not just a group of individuals, which wouldn’t really clear this up at all, but it’s referring to the entire group. With that thought process, let’s look at it again.

Because, the group he collectively knew beforehand, he also predetermined to be transformed to the image of his Son, to this end, he himself might be the firstborn among many brethren; and the group he predetermined, he also called these and the group he called, he also justified these and the group he justified, he also glorified these.

It’s not about God picking and choosing who can be saved; it’s that God puts the offer out to everyone, and anyone who is in Christ will be transformed just as He was at the resurrection. That way when we’re adopted into God’s family, we will (at the resurrection) be transformed to be like Christ. He gives everyone in that group the calling we talked about earlier. He also justifies us and glorifies us.

Paul talks about that transformation into the image of God’s Son in his letter to the Christians in Philippi.

Philippians 3:17-21

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Conclusion

At first glance, this paragraph in Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome looks confusing and somewhat disjointed. But really, Paul's still talking about how we should be looking forward to our home in heaven; that building from God that Paul wrote about to the Christians in Corinth. He talks about how the Holy Spirit supports us in prayer just like our hope supports us through our difficult times in life. And he talks about how God will transform us to be like Christ, so that at the resurrection, when we become the bride of Christ, we will be like Him. And that He will be the first-born of the family of the resurrection, and will continue to be our Lord.

Sometimes we're going to get lost, and find ourselves in those situations that feel like they're hopeless. But God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us share our needs and fears, and our hope in the future resurrection to keep us focused on what's important, so that we can know that eventually, all things will work together for good.

Ephesians 1:3-14 (Closing)

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

¹¹ *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*