

The Book of Romans Study Guide

Chapter 8 (part 2)

In the first part of this chapter, Paul established 4 key realities for believers in Yeshua:

- We are no longer under condemnation for our sins.
- Our identity is in Messiah, and He is in us in a spiritual sense.
- Being led by the Spirit is an indication that we are children of God.
- Our status as children is accomplished by the Father adopting us, and that entitles us to an eternal inheritance, which makes us fellow heirs with Messiah.

8:18-25

v 18 Paul narrows the focus to what lies ahead for believers, by contrasting the suffering of this world with the glory that awaits us. The implication is that the incredible nature of our glorification in the world to come will be worth the inconvenience of suffering in this world.

v 19-22 Then he shifts the focus to the state of creation itself. According to Genesis 3:17-18, the original sin of Adam and Eve caused the corruption of creation, and we see the same message here in verse 20 with creation being subjected to futility (*mataiotēs*, “emptiness”). In response, he presents a personification in which creation is waiting “eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.” This is another way of saying that when Yeshua returns and the true children of God are revealed to the world, it will also be a sign that a new creation is coming a new heaven and a new earth that will not be corrupted by sin, thus, according to verse 21, it will turn slavery into freedom and corruption into glory.

The point is that all of the problems cause by sin that He has been addressing for eight chapters now, has an expiration date. We may not know what that date is, but it is most certainly going to take place when Yeshua returns.

v 23 But wait, there’s more! or as the text reads, “And not only this. . .” It is not just creation that is groaning over corruption, we, as individual believers, groan within ourselves, which I am sure we all can relate to, because of our struggle with sin, even after having been freed from its eternal consequences. So, we all can find agreement with not only waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, which is a reference to our eternal inheritance, but also the redemption of our bodies, which refers to a restoration of what was lost when humanity was corrupted in the Garden of Eden.

v 24-25 So, while we have the intellectual knowledge that these things are in the future for us, we can’t see them yet. And that is what makes it a matter of hope.

8:26-30

v 26-27 Sometimes, we can’t put our frustration with sin or our hope for better things to come into words. And that can make it hard to pray. So, God intercedes or expresses those feelings for us with a groaning by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. That could be speaking in

tongues or just divine expressions of intercession in the spiritual realm. Intercession is about knowing what is best for someone and then pursuing that outcome in prayer.

- v 28 That understanding sets the stage for an often-quoted verse that literally translates from the Greek this way:

“And we know that to those who love God,
all things [He] works together for good,
to those being called according to [His] purpose.”

Notice also the distinction in the order of the words in Greek from our common English translations. This is called a chiasm, which is frequently used Hebrew and Greek literary structure where ideas are mirrored around a central point. In this verse, the mirror is in the form of two clauses: one at the beginning—“to the ones who love God” and one at the end—“to the ones being called according to [His] purpose.”

That establishes two different perspectives. From our human perspective, we are the ones who are loving God while experiencing the circumstances of this world. But, from God’s perspective, we are being called according to *His* purpose, not our own.

The central point in the middle of the verse is the good that arises from all things connected to our love of God and His purposes being accomplished. But the verse does not directly state what that good is. Since we, as humans, tend to interpret the circumstances of life from a self-centered perspective, a good outcome is typically seen as something that produces personal comfort or the elimination of pain and conflict. So, if a situation turns out to be good or desirable for how you live your life, the perception is that God is doing that for you.

- v 29-30 The context of this verse, however, paints a very different picture. Whenever you see the word, “for” in Scripture, whether it is the Greek *hoti* used here, or the Hebrew word *ki* in the *Tanakh*/Old Testament, it serves as the pivot in which the reason or the outcome is described regarding what precedes it. Here, it describes the good outcome of verse 28, and that is a sequence that describes the purpose and process of God’s redemptive plan for believers:

1. “Whom He foreknew He also predestined”

Proegnō, the Greek word translated as “foreknew” is more than just “knowing facts ahead of time.” It is relational knowledge that is drawn from the Hebrew concept of *yada* (to know intimately, as in Genesis 4:1). So, it isn’t just that God saw what believers will do; it’s that He chose to enter into a covenant relationship with us.

Proōrisen, translated as “predestined,” literally means “to mark out a boundary beforehand.” Here, Paul is showing that God pre-determines the boundaries or the end-goal for those He foreknew.

2. “Conformed to the image of His Son”

This phrase is about changing your corrupted nature into a redeemed nature that enables you to exercise your will in harmony with God’s will, and empowers you to act like Yeshua in terms of living righteously and loving others sacrificially.

3. “The firstborn among many brethren”

This phrase connects to what Paul stated in verse 17 about believers being fellow heirs

with Messiah. Since Yeshua holds the right as the firstborn to an eternal inheritance and all authority over the universe, as His adopted children, we are entitled or are next in line to receive our share of that everlasting inheritance, as well as becoming favored servants in His kingdom under His authority, which is a great privilege.

4. **“Called by God”** which describes a purposeful life today.

5. **“Justified”**

The justification of believers is the result of our sins having been addressed once for all by Yeshua when He took upon Himself the judgment that was due us. It is true justice because the judge showed mercy on us by paying our penalty, so that the debt has been cleared completely.

6. **“Being glorified”**

This outcome awaits us in heaven. It is a reference to the final stage of our salvation in which believers will receive imperishable bodies patterned after Yeshua that will no longer be subject to sickness, pain, aging or death. We will be equipped to live for eternity in the presence of God because our sinful nature will be removed entirely, never to be at risk of falling again into sin. We will have unhindered fellowship with God, seeing Him "face to face" and knowing Him fully. And we will live in a state of constant, joyful worship and praise.

Those are the specific six kinds of good in verses 29 and 30 that God causes to work together for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. That is a very different kind of good than what many people anticipate arising from all things in our lives, even the most difficult ones to endure. It is not merely the good of comfort and success, nor our human desires being fulfilled, or even an earthly life without pain. It is the good of becoming transformed and refined believers, effectively shaping us to reflect the character of His Son, while producing spiritual maturity and holiness, and restoring the pure intimacy with God that He intended us to share with Him at the very beginning of human existence.

In other words, this very popular verse is not about God making our lives less troublesome. It is about including us in a complete restoration of God’s relationship with humanity that was broken when sin entered the world. Only this time it culminates with our glorification that cannot be undone, which means we will never be able to sin again. And the amazing thing is the masterful way that God does it by weaving His will into the circumstances of life, while we go about exercising our own will.

8:31-39

In light of the certainty of God being out work in our lives for good, Paul now states a series of questions that are like being a courtroom and determining if any witnesses will come forward to give testimony in a legal case.

v 31 The first question asks: “If God is for us, who is against us.”

v 32 His answer is like a witness declaring that God demonstrated that He is for us by sending His own Son to be delivered up to the cross for our sins. And not only that, He keeps on giving us all things, which is a reference to verses 28-20. Then the other side is given an opportunity to testify who is against us, but no one comes forward in this verse.

- v 33 The next question is: “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?” But no witness comes forward. Instead, God provides the defense by justifying the elect or believers in Yeshua.
- v 34 The next question is: “who is the one condemns?” The only one who is entitled to do that is Yeshua, because He paid the penalty for our sins. And yet, He does the opposite by interceding for us.
- v 35 The last question is: “Who can separate us from the love of Christ/Messiah?” Seven difficult and threatening circumstances are proposed—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness (poverty), peril and the sword.
- v 36 He adds one more by quoting Psalm 44:22 – and that is facing death and slaughter.
- v 37 Paul’s answer is that none of these things can separate us from the love of Messiah because we are able to conquer them through Yeshua.
- v 38-39 He goes beyond this physical world to the spiritual realm by showing that nothing exists there, as well, that can separate us from the love of God—absolutely nothing at all. Since nothing can separate us, that must also mean things like feelings of guilt, unworthiness and failure, or depression, anxiety and dementia, not even scientific discoveries or claims that seem to contradict the reality of our faith. If you are a believer in Yeshua, you can never be separated from God’s love.