

Exegetical Exposition

Introduction:

“If you place your trust in Jesus, then all your troubles will be over.” This has become the understanding of the majority of Christian believers. They believe that because they are Christians, then they are immune from trouble and suffering. There is nothing about that understanding that is true, just as there is nothing about Christian life that is without trouble and suffering. Jesus told His disciples in Jn 16:33b, “In this world you will have trouble and suffering, But take courage, I have conquered the world. Trouble and suffering is inevitable, predictable, and certain, and believers should not lose their minds when it comes. It may shake and rattle us, because we are humans, but it should not paralyze us, because we are Christian believers. Because just as Jesus conquered, we too shall conquer. What happens down here is not the end. The believer’s hope is in Jesus and therefore it is in what is to come. This is why I say, “Everything and I mean everything, will be alright for those who place their trust in Jesus Christ and believe for great things to come. To come when, not anytime down here, but to come when Jesus returns. Listen, this is just the dress rehearsal; Christian believers are waiting on the final act. The act of what happens after this earth is destroyed and a new one is created, and we live on it with Jesus forever.

I talk like this in this introduction because we are in the season of Easter and quickly approaching the Easter Sunday. The days leading up to Easter is all about the suffering of Jesus Christ. We miss that because we want to hurry and jump to early Sunday Morning. But before early Sunday morning, Jesus went through a tremendous

amount of suffering. Look at the benefit of His suffering for you and me. No one has ever said, oh I wish that Jesus did not have to suffer. I wish that this was not a part of God's salvation equation. No, no one is saying that because the suffering was inevitable and the plan of God. It had to happen. But the reason we don't wish away Jesus' suffering is because we knew that it was not the end, but the beginning of something to come in the future. And that which came is that He defeated death and conquered the world. He rose from the dead. There could be no risen Savior if He did not suffer and die.

In this passage Paul deals with reality of suffering that all believers face as a result of being a disciple of Christ. In some regards Paul is saying that the road of discipleship is long and full of trouble! The scripture says that, "a man born of a woman is but a few days and his life is full of trouble." Romans 8:17b is introduced with a conditional subordinating conjunction, "if indeed we suffer with Him", then it concludes with a resultant subordinating conjunction, "that we may also be glorified with Him." In other words, because we suffer with Jesus Christ, then we will also be assured all the more that we will be glorified with Him. This is the reality of the truth that the believer has over the unavoidable suffering that comes to all followers of Jesus Christ.

All is not gloom and doom, and Romans 8:28-39 will give us a hope that convinces us of the victory that we will have over all obstacles of suffering. The subject of this exposition is **Victory over suffering**. The complement tells us that **this is realized in God's purpose for Jesus Christ and God's love for His chosen people**. The

Exegetical proposition says that, "The victory over suffering is realized in God's purpose for Christ Jesus and God's love for His chosen people.

Body

1. The manner in which God fulfills His purpose for Jesus is by guaranteeing the completion of the full salvation process for those loving Him. (28-30)

Verse 28 starts with the word "but" which is a coordinating conjunction with a continuative semantic force. Most English translation render this word "and" because of the continuative force, but I believe it is best translated, "but" because it is the transition from the previous verses in chapter 8, which introduces the truth of suffering for the believer, to the pivotal point of the victory over suffering. The manner in which God fulfills His purpose is by guaranteeing the completion of the salvation process for those who He chooses. That salvation process is not fully and completely realized until the future coming of Jesus Christ in the Second Advent. But the process is progressive and portions of it are actualized during ones lifetime on earth.

a. The reason one knows that all things work out for good is because those loving God have been called according to His purpose (28)

The individual believers has a knowledge that they live through a life of continuous and progressive suffering with the assurance that all things, good or bad, right or wrong, just and unjust will work out in the end in their favor and for their ultimate and eternal benefit. This knowledge is intimating that the truth asserted is not one to be gainsaid,

but is a description of their subjective attitudes¹. This knowledge is based on two facts: the chosen are those loving God and the chosen are being called by His purpose. Those loving God is a description from the human perspective and those being called by His purpose is a description from a divine perspective.² First, those loving God is a term used to describe those in which this passage is referring to. It is not a qualification for knowing the promise, it is a term simply used to describe the children of God or God's people (see 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:3; Eph. 6:24).³ It answers the question of, "who knows this promise?" And, the answer is God's people. Second, those being called by His purpose assure the chosen that their knowledge is not based on them but is based on the divine purpose of God. In other words, it is the purpose of God that is the goal and those being called are the means by which that goal is accomplished.

b. The purpose for God choosing and deciding those who He knew loved Him, were to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ (29a).

Paul writes in verse 29a, "Because those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed in the image of the Son of God." The word foreknew is translated chose beforehand.⁴ And the word predestined is translated decided on beforehand.⁵ Both the choosing and deciding are for the ultimate purpose of conforming the believer to the likeness of Jesus Christ. But the question of how does foreknew translate to chose

¹ John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Epistle to the Roman* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1975), 314.

² Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary, From biblical text to contemporary life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 269.

³ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁴ See the Appendix for document labeled, *Word Study*

⁵ See the Appendix for document labeled, *Validation Paper*

beforehand, has to be understood. Foreknew is a reference to knowing something before it happens. Because the author is referring to someone instead of something, then the definition is centered on a relationship and therefore is describing a selection of an individual in time past that will be realized in a time in the future. But the controversy that surrounds this definition is based on how the selection is made and not who are the selected. The selection is made based on the infinite knowledge of God. Because God is all knowing and cannot disregard what He knows then His selection is based on what He already knows will happen in the future. Therefore, God sovereignly selects individuals beforehand based on His infinite knowledge of the past, present, and future. In other words, those who God knows will be affected by His grace given through Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel He graciously and mercifully selects beforehand. Then, those He decided on beforehand, is solely for the fulfillment of His purpose of conforming those He selected beforehand to the image of Jesus Christ. God determined that the course of action for those He selected would be foreordained as completed in time past with the actualizing of it in time future. That course of action is the purpose of God for the individual believer and that is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. This conformity is sovereignly destined to happen and pre-ordainly declared to all believers for the reasons of God fulfilling His ultimate purpose for Jesus Christ.

c. **The ultimate purpose of God conforming those who love Him to the image of Jesus was so that Jesus would be highly honored amongst many brothers (29b).**

Douglas J. Moo states that, “the last stage of Christian existence is to be conformed to Christ’s own glorious body (see Phil. 3:21).” Because this is the goal that God has for

every believer, then this is the main reason for the assurance of the believer that all things will workout in the end for their eternal benefit. But God's ultimate goal of this whole matter is for Jesus Christ to be highly honored amongst many brothers. Paul writes in the b-clause of verse 29, "So that He might be the first born among many brothers." "So that" is a transliteration of the Greek phrase, εἰς τὸ εἶναι. When an articular infinitive is used with εἰς then it expresses purpose.⁶ Therefore, Paul identifies the purpose as being related to Jesus and His honor amongst many believers. It is that God wanted Jesus Christ to enjoy the community of the family and the pre-eminence of the firstborn.⁷

d. The means in which God used to complete the salvation process was that He predestined, called, justified and glorified those loving Him (30).

God has predestined that those loving Him will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and this is for the purpose that Jesus will be highly honored among many brothers. Listen to this progression of the flow of reasoning made by Paul. Those that God decided on beforehand to be like His Son, He also called. John Stott says, "The call of God is the historical application of His eternal predestination."⁸ The calling of God was based in His purpose concerning the believers and His ultimate purpose concerning Jesus Christ. His purpose has a divine plan, and that plan is the assurance of the successful completion of the entire salvation process for every believer. Therefore, in this verse, Paul is describing the entire salvation process. It is that God in His infinite

⁶ Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998), 332.

⁷ John Stott, *Romans, God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1994), 252.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 252

wisdom of time past knew those who would love Him and He selected and predestined them. Those whom God sovereignly chose and predestined He also called them. This called is made through the Gospel to all mankind. It is only those who respond to the power of the proclaimed Gospel who are the selected and predestined of God. In other words, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the call to all mankind. This is the initiation of the salvation process in the human perspective. Man hears the call of God through the power of the Gospel and if he chooses to believe then He is justified by God and later in the future that same man is glorified at the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, from God perspective, the salvation process starts with His grace and mercy given to all mankind. Man has nothing to do with this portion of the salvation process except be an involuntary recipient of the grace and mercy of God. God's Grace is poured out on all mankind then the call is made through the power of the Gospel. God's justification towards man is determined by the response of man towards God call. All who are justified are guaranteed to reach the completed phase of glorification.

2. The result of God giving up His Son demonstrated that He is on the side of the believer and that He will provide them with all that is needed (31-32)

The concluding result of this section speaks to verses 28-30 and possibly the whole of chapters 6-8, and maybe even to all of chapters 3-8. In verses 28-30 Paul dealt with God's purpose for assuring the one loving Him of the completion of the salvation process, which includes salvation, sanctification, and glorification. In chapters 6-8, Paul deals with the doctrine and teaching concerning the entire sanctification process, which includes the joys and sufferings of being a follower of Jesus Christ. Sanctification is both

instantaneous and progressive. It has an initial start and future end. It starts at the time of salvation and is completed at glorification, which is at the second coming Jesus Christ. This section may also include chapters 3-5, because in them Paul reveals the truth concerning justification. Paul gives this climatic conclusion through a series of rhetorical questions, which are asked in a manner that the answers are already known.

a. **The result of God being an advocate of those who love Him is that no one can be against them (31)**

The Greek word “οὐν” is an inferential coordinating conjunction, which introduces the conclusion to the previous reasoning of Paul. What then will we say concerning these things? The question is posed with an expected answer of “nothing.” There is nothing else that can be said, when the sovereign God of the universe has said it all. What in fact can one add to the assurance spoken of by God concerning the completion of the whole salvation process? Again, the answer is “nothing.” Paul then uses a conditional subordinating conjunction to introduce a second question with the resultant answer being, “no one.” “If God is for us, who can be against us?” All areas of the spectrum are covered with these concluding questions. There are no other words that can be spoken greater than the truth already spoken by God. And, there is no one greater than God therefore no one to fear because God is on our side. “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). The Psalmist said in Psalms 23:4, “I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” The one’s loving God have nothing to fear because the one who

created and sustains all things is with them. Why fear when the object of fear, evil things and evil persons, are like putty in the hands of the all-powerful God.

b. The manner in which God graciously gives the believer all things is demonstrated through Him giving up His Son for them (32).

Cranfield states that this passage is a reference to Gen. 22:12.⁹ This is where Abraham is spoken to by God and commanded not to use Isaac as the sacrifice because God was pleased with the obedient response of Abraham concerning the seed of the promise. In like manner, God has not spared His one and only Son, but offered Him up so that we could fulfill His purpose. Unlike Isaac, God did not rescue His Son, but allow Him to die for us all. God did not spare the creation, but subjected it to frustration so that it could be liberated with us. God did not spare His law, but allow it to become weakened by the sin of man, which gained it initial strength from the command of God so that the only true righteousness would come from God. This is a demonstration of how much God gave up for us. And it is the truth of how gracious He is to give us all things with Jesus Christ.

3. The manner in which those chosen by God are saved from condemnation is that God justifies them and Jesus interceded for them (33-34).

Paul comes with another rhetorical question, which has a predetermined answer. Paul asks in verse 33, "Who will bring charges against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies." Because God is the one who justifies His chosen ones, then there is no one greater than God who can bring any charges to usurp His authority. Not only is

⁹ C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London, England, T&T Clark International, 1975), 436.

there no one greater, but also there aren't any charges remaining that are not covered under God's declaration of justification. Even if there were some charges remaining that were worthy to be heard by God, they could not condemn us because Jesus has already paid for them all through His death on the cross. Not only has He paid for them through His death, but He has also rendered any future accusation powerless through His resurrection. And even if there is an accusation, which makes it to the ear of God, there is Jesus standing and interceding for us all. God has closed any and all loopholes, which could be used to bring condemnation to His Children. John MacArthur states that this teaching by Paul, establishes the impossibility of any person, to lose their salvation.¹⁰

4. The results of suffering caused by worldly trouble will not separate God's people from the love of Christ. (35-36)

Salvation is safe from anyone because of God the justifier and Jesus the interceder. But, Paul also reveals to God's chosen that salvation is also safe from themselves and their circumstances. The Greek word, *τίς*, is translated "who" in verses 33 and 34, but in some cases the interrogative pronoun can mean "what".¹¹ Based on the context of the verses 35-36, this is not describing a person, but actual troubling things and situations.

a. The result of the trouble in the world will not separate God's chosen from the love of Christ (35).

¹⁰ J.F. MacArthur, *Romans, MacArthur New Testament commentary* (Chicago, Illinois, Moody press, 1991, 1994), 510.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 510

Since God has already established the guarantee of the completion of salvation for His chosen believers, then there is really nothing that can reverse or stop that process for completing. There are, however, many circumstances that can slow the process and even make things miserable during the process. Paul identifies those things in this passage as trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and the sword. The list includes things that affect the outside of man, the inside of man, and even the life of man. But, it does not affect the soul and the relationship established by the love of Christ.

b. The explanation of the prophetic writings is that there is no escape for suffering of those chosen by God (36).

Suffering is a major part of the fabric makeup of the believer, but suffering is also a tool used to help the sanctification process along. For one to completely conform to the image of Jesus Christ, which is God's purpose for the chosen, then one must completely live by the Spirit. Even without the external objects of suffering, internally to accomplished this would cause a continuous and progressive war between the flesh and the spirit. The only escape route for suffering is to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Paul points to Psalms 44:22 to express the inability of the believer to escape suffering.

44:22 Yet because of you we are killed all day long;
we are treated like sheep at the slaughtering block.

5. The results of God's love give His chosen a confident understanding of the abundant victory they have over all worldly and spiritual obstacles (37-39).

Paul starts verse 37 with the suspected answers to all of his rhetorical questions from verses 31-36. The answer is, "no." No one can be against us when God is for us. No one can bring charges against us when God justifies us. No one can condemn us when Jesus Christ died, rose and is seated at the right hand of God the Father interceding for each of us. Nothing can separate us from the love that Jesus has for us.

a. The manner of the abundant victory over obstacles is through the love of God (37)

Therefore, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

These things are the same things that Paul has been talking about through out this entire passage. They are the purposes of God for Jesus and God's plan for His chosen. In these things we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

b. The means of the chosen's victory over obstacles is a confident understanding that nothing can separate them from God's love found in Christ Jesus (38-39)

This confidence of victory is not based on anything done by human hands, but it is all based on God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. From God's point of view we are already victorious. From man's point of view the process continues and ends at the second coming of Jesus Christ. But because it is guaranteed through the power of God then we too have the blessed assurance that all things will work out now and in the end for our eternal benefit.

6. Conclusion:

God has given His chosen a truth that gives hope for all eternity. He has assured us that He chose us before the creation of the world and that he decided on us on before the creation of the world. His choosing was based on His infinite knowledge and His deciding was based on His choosing. These two steps are solely the responsibility of God and mankind has nothing to do with them. After God chooses and decides on us beforehand, then He calls, justifies and glorifies us. Man has the responsibility to respond to the call of God. This is the only step in this process that man has responsibility for. Based on how he responds to the call of God, will determine if weather God justifies and glorifies him. If man responds with faith and trust in Jesus Christ, then God provides the rest. But, if the response is negative and rebellious, then he will face condemnation and judgment. God's purpose for Jesus is the center of the entire doctrine of sanctification. It is the plan of God for Jesus to become the first born amongst many brothers that He has assured that they will be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. With that assurance God's chosen are victors over suffering.

So the question is, are you one of His chosen? Have you answered His call for you to come to Him through faith and trust in Jesus Christ? If yes, then you have victory over suffering. Suffering will come and it will cause you trouble. But, you must be convinced that that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, ^{8:39} nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Why, because we the victors over suffering. Just as Jesus suffered we too shall suffer.

But just as He conquered, we too shall conquer.

7. **Applications:**

1. Know that all things work in the favor of the believer
2. Be confident and know that God is on your side and is graciously giving you all things
3. Know that God has justified you and Jesus is interceding for you.
4. Be confident in the truth of God that nothing can separate you from the love God in Christ Jesus.
5. Live your life as a victor over all of your internal and external struggles.
6. Lastly, know that you have the victory over suffering.