

FREE AT LAST

"THE FUTURE IS NOW"

ROMANS 8:28-39

Things do not last long in our culture. Consumer products are often built with "planned obsolescence," a design and marketing strategy that limits the longevity of a device. Most electronic devices today are built to be replaced rather than repaired. When your printer or your laptop or your phone is more than a year old, you begin to search for a replacement rather than a repair shop. Often it is less expensive to purchase a new device rather than trying to fix the faulty device. One popular high-tech manufacturer recently encountered trouble with its customer base because they were intentionally slowing down the functionality of their older devices. Many perceived this programmed slowdown as a move to encourage replacement sales.

Faith places a high value on "long-lasting" items, perhaps more than technology does. The Bible uses terms such as "eternal," "everlasting," and "forever" as ways to describe the fullness of our faith. One of the greatest comforts provided with faith is that its full effect is forever. When a person places faith in Jesus, he or she can be assured that "whoever believes in him [Jesus] shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Faith is not something that has to be frequently exchanged or replaced. Faith does not run out of battery life, nor is it something

Our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and with Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature.

– Samuel Rutherford

that has to repeatedly be traded out for new faith. Faith is forever.

Faith can be small (Luke 17:6) or even doubting (Mark 9:24). At times we may require divine assistance in our faith (Luke 22:11). We can be confident that God is serious when he offers eternal benefits as the result of our faith (John 11:25). There is no "planned obsolescence" in the gift of faith that God provides us.

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation by Grace is a multifaceted belief that provides for us forgiveness of sins, righteousness in the presence of God, and a new ability to live free from the bondage of sin. Much of the book of Romans details many of these aspects of Salvation by Grace. An important aspect of the salvation that God provides is the assurance that God's salvation is complete and permanent. Salvation, if not permanent, is not really of grace. If we must do things by our own efforts to keep this salvation active, then we are working rather than trusting. The permanence of our salvation is often labeled "Assurance of Salvation."

Assurance of Salvation is the promise that our faith in Christ has eternal consequences and benefits. When a person trusts in Christ, he or she can be assured that God will save and not abandon. Assurance of Salvation is one of the crowning joys of faith in Christ. In the book of Romans, Paul spends considerable time explaining how salvation operates (Romans 1:16-8:39). At the end of this

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explanation, Paul emphasizes the permanence and the unfailing character of this salvation. Paul's final thoughts about salvation are exuberant praise to the God who loves us and will not separate himself from those who believe. In times of fear, weakness, doubt and difficulty, we can take comfort in the truth that our Salvation by Grace is forever. Nothing in our life, no external force, nothing in all of creation can reverse the love God has for us in salvation. Remembering that God's love for us is eternal and that we cannot be separated from His love is of great assurance and comfort to us regarding our salvation. We can be assured that our eternal life is forever.

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 8:28-39

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No

one. Christ Jesus who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- *Circle each occurrence of the word "love" in this passage.
- *Draw arrows connecting each occurrence of the word "things" in this passage.
- *Double underline the pronoun "those" in v. 28.
- *Draw arrows from the word "those" in v.28 to the phrases that identify the word.
- *Box each word that shows the action of God in v. 29.

- *Underline the word "firstborn" in v.29 and draw an arrow to a word showing who this is.
- *Box each word that shows the action of God in v. 30.
- *Number the seven questions found in v.31-36.
- *Write the reference Psalm 44:22 beside the phrase "As it is written" in v. 36.
- *Double underline the word "conquerors" in v 37.
- *Double underline the word "separate" in v. 39.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Describe the "things" Paul is referring to in this passage (Romans 8:28, 31, 37).
2. According to Romans 8:28, God is at work. What kind of work is God doing (consider Romans 8:29-30)?
3. Paul asks a number of questions in Romans 8:31-35. What are his overall conclusions to these many questions?
4. What is meant by the phrase "gave him up for us all" in Romans 8:32? How does this display love?
5. How does Jesus "intercede" (Romans 8:34) for us (consider Romans 8:26-27)?
6. Paul says we are "more than conquerors" even though we are "considered as sheep to be slaughtered." How do you reconcile these two images?
7. Why is it important to be reminded that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35, 39)?
8. To what extent are we secure from anything separating us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39)?
9. How is the love of God found or displayed "in Christ Jesus" (consider Romans 8:34-35, 39)?

Final words often end with a flourish. The ending of a great speech, book or drama often pulls out all the stops to finish with maximum impact. Watch any film and you will find the final scene swelling with moving background music and close-up shots for full effect. The final scene is the *final* scene and should be unforgettable.

Paul concludes his grand treatise on the good news of the Gospel (which he began in Romans 1) with these final verses in Romans 8. In these eight chapters, Paul makes the case for the need of the Gospel (Romans 1-3), the means of the Gospel (Romans 4-5), and the implications of the Gospel (Romans 6-8). Because we have this Good News of Jesus, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16), we can take great comfort and encouragement even though we may face significant problems and trials in our lives today. Paul unleashes a rapid-fire delivery of a number of rhetorical questions (Romans 8:31-37) and then sweeps from extreme to extreme (Romans 8:38-39) to exclaim that nothing within all of creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. The grandness of the Gospel is the glory of our peace. One scholar writes of the ending of Romans 8, "Nowhere in the annals of sacred literature do we find anything to match the power and beauty of this remarkable paean of praise" (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 173).

Paul will go on to discuss how the Gospel impacts God's previous promises (Romans 9-11) and will also discuss in practical ways how those who have accepted the Gospel should live their lives differently (Romans 12-16). But the book of Romans swells to a dramatic climax at the end of chapter 8.

Just before this grand ending (Romans 8:31-39), we find a most famous passage about the work of God in our lives. Some would attach Romans 8:28-30 with the dramatic statements of Romans 8:31-39. Others would suggest the passage is a continuation of discussion regarding the work of God's Spirit as described in Romans 8:13-27. In either treatment, Romans 8:28-30 are commonly known verses among Christians and are frequently used for encouragement and exhortation. Let's consider a few items regarding this well-worn portion of Romans. First, the word order of Romans 8:28 is curious. Most of our English versions place "things" before "love" in Romans 8:28, whereas the original language places "those who love God" first with "things" following after. A rough translation might be "We know that those who love God have all things worked together by God for

good . . ." The emphasis here is that God is working on the behalf of those who love him. Paul further identifies this "working" as being on the behalf of those whom God has called. We have confidence that just as God has given us so much (fully discussed in Romans 8:1-27), he will also work on our behalf to bring us to full fruit and maturity.

"Things" in Romans 8 may point back to the things that include persecution and trial (Romans 8:18-21). Romans 8:29-30 may also be in Paul's mind as he considers all the things God is doing to ultimately make us "glorified." In both considerations, we understand God is bigger than the "things" that are challenging us in life. We can have confidence that God is working around us, in us, and through us. God will bring us to a finalized, glorified state. This is the ultimate end of his working.

Paul's final words in Romans 8 form a hymn of praise, highlighting the greatness of God who has brought to us this freedom (Romans 8:2) and into an inescapable love (Romans 8:39). Some would classify this final section as a peroration, a form of rhetoric that served as a highly stylized concluding remark. "According to classical rhetoric theory, [*a peroration*] was to move the audience to accept the case made already in the speech, of which the peroration formed the climax. If, as seems likely, this is what Paul is seeking to achieve in 8:31-39, the passage forms an important transition between his response to objections that his gospel undermines moral standards and the status of the law on the one hand (6:1-8:13), and to charges that his gospel does away with Israel's special place in the purposes of God on the other (9:1- 11:36)" (Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 359). Paul offers seven questions that outline the greatness of God's love. The overall idea presented in these questions and their answers is that God has already proved himself sufficient as the source for our salvation. Nothing else could be done for us that he has not already done. We are foolish if we think that we can contribute anything to the value or worthiness of our God's loving offer of salvation to us.

Yet some would argue and others may feel that because Christians suffer, they may no longer be saved (Romans 8:35-36). To this Paul makes his final argument. Even though we may be considered "sheep to be slaughtered," in reality we are "more than conquerors" through him that loved us (Romans 8:37). Even in suffering, we know that we are victorious. The word "conquerors" could be translated "hyper-victorious." Our salvation and its

success do not depend upon our current circumstances. We know that we are in the center of God's care when we know that we are the objects of his love through faith in Christ.

Paul finishes his flourish of praise by jumping between extremes to show that absolutely nothing can remove us from the new life we have in Christ. Paul cites four spectrums and two ultimate expressions of power to show that God and his love are greater than any challenge we face in this life. In Paul's world, many of these extremes were connected to astrological or spiritual forces. We know that God's love is greater than any other power, real or imagined. Anything possible in all of creation is not enough to remove us from God's love. Our life with him cannot be negated by any internal or external force.

If we are honest, we can feel down, disheartened,

and discouraged when life is difficult and dangerous. We may be tempted to give up on God or despair at his ever rescuing us from our current situation. Salvation and all of its glories should be frequently rehearsed in our hearts and minds. We may groan (Romans 8:22-23), experience weakness (Romans 8:26), and even suffer persecution (Romans 8:35) to the point of despair. We should be encouraged that these sufferings do not compare to the glory that awaits us (Romans 8:18). God is at work in the hard things of our lives and will be successful in making us glorified (Romans 8:28-30). We know that God has given us so much (Romans 8:31-34) and nothing can separate us from his powerful love (Romans 8:35-39).

We can be assured that God will complete his salvation and ultimately be glorified in us. His character and love are our guarantee.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Do not despair! God's love for you is intense. God has been long at work on your behalf. Nothing within all of creation can remove you from God's love found in Jesus Christ.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 8:28-39 and your response to it.

What does God want you to know?

How does God want to change you?

How does God want to use you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 28 **work** "The present tense verb [work] declares God's continuing activity in working all things 'unto good' in the lives of His people. 'For good' (*eis agathon*) denotes the goal of the divine working, but the verb does not indicate when or how soon that goal is attained. The verb may mean that God 'cooperates with' all these things to attain His goal for His own, but the expression [for good] suggests that in the providence of God all things 'work together with or cooperate in' the achievement of the intended 'good.' Watson suggested a medical analogy 'Several poisonous ingredients put together, being tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. So all God's providences, being divinely tempered and sanctified, work together for the best to the saints'" (D. Edmond Hiebert, "Romans 8:28-29 and the Assurance of the Believer," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1991, 176).

v. 30 **glorified** "The glorifying of God's people forms the climax of the 'sorites' - the literary construction employed in verses 29 and 30, in which the logical predicate of one clause becomes the logical subject of the next. More importantly, it forms the climax of the divine purpose; it involves their ultimate and complete conformity to the image of Christ. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory' (Col. 3:4; cf. 1 John 3:2)" (F. F. Bruce, *Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 167).

v. 32 **gave him up** "The word [*paradidomi* - gave him up] is prominent especially in the gospel passion predictions and is picked up from Isaiah 53, where it is used three times in the LXX [Greek version of the OT] to describe the 'handing over' of the suffering Servant. Paul uses the word frequently with reference to Jesus' death: sometimes as here, of the Father's 'handing him over' to death and at other times of the Son's own 'giving of Himself' to death (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). We are reminded again that, although the ultimate agent in the sacrificial death of Christ is the Father, the Son was no unwilling sacrifice" (Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, WEC, 583).

v. 34 **interceding** "A dual intercession keeps the believer secure in Christ: the Spirit intercedes (Rom. 8:26-27) and the Son of God intercedes (Rom. 8:34). The same Savior who died for us is now interceding for us in heaven. As our High Priest, He can give us the grace we need to overcome temptation and defeat the enemy (Heb. 4:14-16). As our Advocate, He can forgive our sins and restore our fellowship with God (1 John 1:9-2:2). Intercession means that Jesus Christ represents us before the throne of God and we do not have to represent ourselves" (Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*, 432).

v. 36 **sheep** "A quotation from Psalm 44:22 reinforces what Paul has been saying in the last few words rather than in the thought of the all-embracing reach of the love of Christ. The words in the original psalm express the perplexity of the people of God in the face of inexplicable suffering. But Paul cites them to bring out the truth that for God's people there is real risk and a call for real devotion. Christians might be tempted to think that because the love of Christ is so real and so unshakable they need not fear that they will run into trouble. Scripture shows that, while the love is sure, so are troubles" (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 339).

v. 37 **conqueror** "To be more than a conqueror over affliction, distress, persecution, and so on indicates that these enemies are actually turned to the good of believers through the power of God. This does not detract in the least from the fact that these are enemies that frighten believers, not does it deny that they involve suffering. To criticize this point of view as Pollyannaish, Stoic or insufferably romantic misses the mark by far. The point is that the love of Christ is so powerful that it turns our greatest enemies into our friends (cf. Rom. 8:28)" (Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 460).

v. 38 **creation** "The scope of this phrase is boundless, but it has been pointed out that it could be translated 'any other creation'-'other' being the Greek *heteros*, which means another of a completely different kind. Paul may have been addressing the fascinating possibility of the existence of other worlds and other peoples. Whether there are such creations we do not know, but, more important, we do not worry, because, if they exist, and if they are more powerful than we (two monumental 'ifs!'), they cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Stuart Briscoe, *Romans: The Preacher's Commentary*, 182).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Parents, there are so many gems in our passage this week! So many truths we want our kids to hang onto and believe with all their hearts! We desperately want them to know that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him". We want them to be able to quote as the slightest threat of opposition that "if God is for us, who can be against us". We never want them to question God's goodness and how he will "graciously give us all things". In moments of doubt we want them to remember that "nothing can separate us from the love of Christ". When fear of failure or defeat come we want them to know that "in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us". If you don't regularly dive into the deep end with a passage in your home - this is the week to do so. Understanding the truths of Romans 8:28-39 will provide a secure foundation for your child's faith journey. All of our hope lies in God Himself. If we are trusting in our own efforts or accomplishments, we are deceived. Our identity and future destiny rest solely on Christ's work on the cross. If we want our kids to live confidently before the Lord, we must be intentional about leading them to His truth and having hard discussions about life in view of God's eternal plan. These are not wasted moments, parents. I'm praying you have many of them in the years to come.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 8:28-39

1. Who does God work good for?
2. What does verse 37 call us?
3. What can separate you from God's love?

What Do You Think

The passage has many great verses in it. Which one is your favorite? Why?

What R U Going To Do

Someone you know needs to be encouraged by a truth in our text this week. Maybe they need to know that God is working in their hard situation for good. Make a point to tell someone about this week's text and tell your small group about it.

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:5 - *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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