

• No condemnation continued...

1. The Spirit helps us in our weakness

• Helps with our praying

• Praying without using the mind – sighing too deep for words

• The Father hears and sees

• The Spirit intercedes according 'to the will of God for the saints'

2. God's saving purpose cannot be broken

• The last in a series of arguments developing the truth of 'no condemnation'

God's purpose - A five-fold chain of events

Paul is still developing the thought that the Christian will never be condemned. It cannot happen as a fact. It need not happen as an experience.

1. **The Spirit helps us in our weakness.** While we are in the 'sighing' condition he has just mentioned, the Spirit is present to help us to pray. Despite our weakness in a fallen body God's will gets done in our lives because of the power of the Holy Spirit. ²⁶*Likewise also even the Spirit shares a part in helping in our weakness. For we do not know the thing to pray for as is necessary, but the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words . . .* It is not that we are ignorant of how to pray. Paul's Greek literally says 'the what'. We do not know 'the specific thing' to pray for. We know how to pray; Jesus has taught us. But often we find ourselves in ignorance of God's will. We experience conflicts, failures, controversies, disappointments. But help is given **by the Holy Spirit**. We find ourselves sighing but the Holy Spirit is inspiring the sighing. He is bearing the greater load in the praying. There are times when we are before the Lord, praying over some perplexity, and we find that we have no words. We long to ask for something but we are not sure what to ask for. We find ourselves simply sighing and nothing much else! Yet it takes time. It is similar to the gift of tongues. There is a style of praying where we are not using the mind. In such a situation it is the Holy Spirit interceding in us and praying that God's will might be done.

Romans 8:27 explains 8:26 further. It tells more of what is happening when we are sighing or groaning in the Holy Spirit: ²⁷*and the One who searches the hearts acknowledges what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes according to the will of God for the saints.* The Father knows what is happening. He sees and hears the interceding of the Holy Spirit. Although we are not able to put any specific request before God other than a general longing for his will, the Holy Spirit is within our sighs. The reason why God so approves of the Spirit's intercession is because he intercedes according 'to the will of God for the saints'. Paul's words are plural. There can be times when an entire congregation lifts its voice in inarticulate sighs. The kind of praying Paul is envisaging is audible (although not with words); it is articulate but non-verbal; it may be noisy. The prayer that Paul envisages is energetic. It is intensely wanting God's will to be done. Sometimes such praying will be corporate and an entire congregation will be audibly sighing to God for God's rescuings or for God's will to be done. Paul assumes that every Christian can pray in this way.

2. **God's saving purpose cannot be broken.** Romans 8:28–30 is the last in a series of reasons for saying we are totally and finally released from condemnation by God, and will be kept secure until we reach glory. He says: ²⁸*And we know that for those who love God, all things are working together for good, that is, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

The world has little hope when things go wrong. But 'all things' includes our fallenness, the tragedies that come in our lives, the ill-treatment we receive, the mistakes we make. As long as we get to love God, even our sins will turn around and God will overrule them. It is a daring thought! But who is this promise for? It is for those who love God, those who are 'called'. 'Calling' is God's powerful action in our lives when he brings us to know Jesus Christ. It is for God's elect, those who are called according to his purpose.

Paul explains, ²⁹*For those people whom God has foreknown 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.*

This is Paul's **last** argument in developing what he said in Romans 8:1. This is a very important aspect to the doctrine of predestination. You do not bring in predestination in an **early** stage of your presentation of God's truth. It comes in, 'in arrears', after you have talked about salvation by faith. Predestination is real! It is mysterious but it is taught by the Bible. It includes individual predestination, predestination to salvation, unconditional predestination. Paul is explaining the words 'called according to his purpose' (8:28). He puts this purpose of God to us in a five-fold chain of events. There is foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification.

1. Foreknowledge

- *God takes special note of some people, not all. He sets His love on them*

The first link in the chain is foreknowledge. Those whom God has ‘foreknown’ are the ones who are in the secure and safe purpose of God. This is sometimes taken to mean ‘know in advance **that they will believe**’. Then the whole phrase is taken to mean ‘Those whom God has known would believe he predestined to be like Jesus . . .’. But this is not the meaning at all! This way of taking it is actually a way of getting rid of the idea of predestination! Actually Paul does not say anything about foreseen faith. Paul speaks of some **people** (not all) who are ‘foreknown’ by God. To ‘foreknow’ a person does not simply mean ‘know about’ a person. Because God ‘knows about’ everyone! In the Bible ‘to know’ someone means to ‘take knowledge of them **in one’s love**’, ‘to take them into one’s affection’, ‘to love them’, ‘to choose them’. God takes special note of some people, not all. He sets his love on them. This setting of his love on his people is a ‘fore-knowledge’. It is before the foundation of the world. It takes no notice of works, good or bad. Those whom God has ‘known’ in this way he also plans to get to be like Jesus, not only in holiness but in resurrection-glory.

2. Predestination

- *To conformity to Jesus*

The second link in the chain is predestination. Obviously it includes predestination to salvation, yet it is more than that. It is predestination to total conformity to Jesus.

3. Calling

- *God’s bringing His gospel to us and working in our hearts so that we receive it*

The third link in the chain is calling. Everyone predestined gets called. God will find a way to call every one of his elect. ‘Calling’ is God’s bringing his gospel to us and working in our hearts so that we receive it. God is so determined that his Son shall have a people that although he loves everyone and the gospel goes out indiscriminately, over and above that God works to bring people to his Son. God’s plans for Jesus will not fail. All that the Father gives to Jesus will come to him^{☐1}. God summons them, calls them, into fellowship with his Son^{☐2}.

☐1 John
6:37
☐2 1
Corinthians
1:9

4. Justification

- *Declared righteous*

The fourth link in the chain is justification. Paul has made it clear elsewhere in his great letter that to be ‘justified’ is to be declared righteous because we are reckoned to have the righteousness of Jesus. Everyone who is powerfully ‘called’ by God to faith and to Jesus is given Jesus’ righteousness.

5. Glorification

- *Amazingly transformed or raised from the dead – a new body*
- *No one falls out along the way*
- *All the links in the chain are secure*

The fifth link in the chain is glorification. Christians who are alive when Jesus comes will be amazingly transformed. Others will be raised from the dead, alive in a glorious body, enjoying a glorified world, a new heavens and new earth in which is righteousness. There will be levels of glory. Some Christians will be more glorious than others. But every Christian will be glorified. It is as good as done. Paul puts it in what we call the past tense to emphasize the absolute and total certainty. In his mind the justified are as good as glorified already.

The main point is: no one falls out along the way. Everyone who is loved in advance by the Father is predestined to be conformed to Jesus. No one is left out. Everyone who is predestined to be like Jesus is called. No one is left out along the way. Everyone who has faith in Jesus is ‘justified’. No one falls out along the way. Now the last link is as secure as the previous links. Everyone loved in advance is predestined to be like Jesus. Everyone predestined to be like Jesus comes to faith. Everyone who comes to faith is justified. So how many of those who are justified are glorified? Every one of them! How many of those loved in advance failed to be predestined to be like Jesus? None! How many of those predestined to be like Jesus failed to be called? None! How many of those who were called failed to be justified? None! How many of those justified failed to be glorified? None! That is Paul’s point.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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