

Romans 8:26-30 – “Further Encouragements”

(Pew Bible Page: 944)

Intro: Last week we received great encouragement from learning that not only creation but we ourselves will be restored completely when Jesus comes again. Our verses ended with an expression of great hope because of these facts, and we were told that this should encourage us to await patiently for all these things to be fulfilled. Not content with those encouraging truths, the Apostle went on to give us two more words of encouragement in the verses we have before us tonight: We are being helped in prayer and we are being helped providentially as we await the return of our King.

Proposition: God has promised us mighty helps as we patiently await Christ’s return. Count on these graces to sustain you as you wait for Jesus to come.

Billboard: (vv.26-27) The Spirit Helps Us in Prayer
(vv.28-30) God Has Undertaken the Completion of Our Salvation

(vv.26-27) The Spirit Helps Us in Prayer – Encouragement number one: The Spirit helps us in our weakness. **Romans 8:26–27 - 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.* “Likewise” meaning that in the same way we are encouraged to wait patiently in hope for the restoration of creation and our complete redemption (cf. vv.16-25) here another encouragement is given to us: The Spirit’s help in our prayer life. We are in weakness. How? “*We do not know what to pray,*” as another translation puts it. It is not the form our prayers should take that is in question, but rather the content that is a mystery to us so often. We are ignorant of our needs. We don’t realize our own vanities, failings, sins, and ignorance. We don’t know what to ask for and are often perplexed by life’s unexpected challenges, twists, and turns. Sometimes our lives are a mess and sometimes we ourselves are a mess!

The Spirit comes to our aid. How? He joins us in our prayers. He places within our hearts strong longings to pray and often these longings are inarticulate “*groanings too deep for words.*” He urges us to come to God’s throne in prayer with our questions, uncertainties, doubts, and fears. He helps us to throw ourselves on the only One who has the answers.

Secondly, He encourages and guides our prayers. Mark 9:2-8 gives a revealing example of this kind of help. How often have you prayed for something and received an answer in a completely different way than you expected? Perhaps verse 27 explains such occurrences. The Father searches our hearts discerning our deepest needs and the Father knows what the Spirit is praying because He knows the Spirit’s mind since the Spirit always asks for the very thing the

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Father wills to give us. Significantly, what is pictured in this passage is the Spirit’s intercession for the individual who is praying. This does not seem to be the Spirit praying for the needs of others through the one praying but appears to be prayer for needs of which the one praying is unaware. Doubtless, the Spirit helps us when we intercede for others as well, but that doesn’t seem to be what’s in focus here. Whatever the focus, the picture in view is a picture of what Ephesians 6:8 calls “*prayer in the Spirit*” – prayer in which the believer and the Spirit work together to achieve God’s good purposes.

This passage also reminds us of Jesus’ words on prayer in Luke 11:11-13, which hint to us that even when we don’t know what to ask, the Father can always be counted on to give us the good gift of the Holy Spirit in answer to believing prayer. **Luke 11:13 - 13** *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*” To pray is to engage with God the Father, through Jesus the Son, in fellowship with God the Spirit. What an encouraging privilege!

[DOCTRINAL POINT] We are not left without help in our prayers. The Spirit helps us to pray as we ought.

[ILLUSTRATION] I suppose all fathers want their children to learn how to do certain things that delight the father’s heart. Perhaps it’s playing golf or baseball. Maybe it’s building something with hammer and nail. It could be something as simple as learning to appreciate good books. Whatever the desire, the most effective way to implant it in the life of the child is for the father to come alongside and help as he or she tries to master the skill. Hands on instruction is always the most effective way to pass on a useful skill to a novice. Isn’t it wonderful that our heavenly Father has given us “hands on help” in prayer through the Holy Spirit’s groanings within our hearts?

[APPLICATION] We need to know that our Father in Heaven has not left us alone in our struggle to live lives of godliness and grace as we await the return our Jesus, our King. The Holy Spirit is at work helping us, encouraging us, correcting us, and counseling us as we walk the road to Glory. The Father searches our hearts and listens to the Spirit’s pleas on our behalf. Isn’t it good to know that we are not alone? God is working in our hearts to help us become all He purposes for us to be.

(vv.28-30) God Has Undertaken the Completion of Our Salvation – Here is another encouragement for those “in Christ.” God is at work in our lives daily, working to bring about His good purpose for us. **Romans 8:28–30 - 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*

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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 encouragement begins with the word, “And,” which signals that we are to receive another additional encouragement. God is at work in our lives to bring about His good purpose for us, a purpose He has planned since before time began. Here is something “*we know*” (or should know!): For all who love God – that is, for all who have responded to His first love of us (cf. 1 John 4:19) – God is providentially working all things for our ultimate good. This promise is for believers only – “*for those who are called according to his purpose.*” This is His electing purpose, i.e., according to the purpose for which He chose us. Which was what? Verse 29 tells us.

Those He “*foreknew*” – was acquainted with before the world was created – He “*predestined to be conformed to the image of His son.*” This “foreknowledge” is not mere prescience – knowledge ahead of time that we would say yes to putting our faith in Him – as Amos 1:3-2:8 & 3:2 demonstrate. Not prescience, but acquaintance is what is meant by “foreknowledge.”¹ So, God knew us as His children before time began and He predestined us as well. For what? Not for election as His children, for His foreknowledge led to that, but rather He predestined us to be “*conformed to the image of his Son.*” In other words, to be like Jesus when all is said and done. God’s purpose in choosing us is to make us one of the many brothers of His first-born Son, Jesus. We are being made like Him, though without question this does not mean that we will become God. We are being made *like* Him in character, not *essence*. God is working this project and He will not fail in this purpose. Indeed, He cannot fail in this purpose. Verse 30 works out the actions God takes on our behalf to fulfill His purpose.

Those He predestined; He called effectually. This is not merely an outward invitation through the offer of the Word, but an inward desire for salvation implanted in the heart by His Spirit as well.² He works through persuasion and those whom He persuades (all He calls) He justified – puts into a right relationship with Himself. He also glorified each one He justified. To be glorified means to be made ultimately perfect in Christ.

Notice that each of these actions are expressed in the past tense, as things God has ALREADY done. All of this follows inevitably, in other words, because He has taken us out of Adam and placed us “in Christ.” We have been removed once for all from the “reign of Sin,” and have now come under the “reign of Grace” (cf.5:20-21). Notice too that the process began before creation (“*whom he foreknew*”) and ends after creation’s restoration (“*he also glorified*”). Finally, don’t miss the fact that the whole story is a God story from beginning to end. There is

¹ See also Deuteronomy 7:6-8 for proof that we, like Israel, were not chosen for any special quality in us.

² Calvin.

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no hint here that you and I contribute anything – it is all about what He has done, is doing, and will do for us. What a great encouragement!

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God is at work in our daily lives and will surely bring His purpose for us to completion.

[ILLUSTRATION] Isn't it comforting to know that God has not left our salvation and ultimate glorification in Christ to chance? He has a purpose, and He is at work to ensure that His purpose, planned before the foundation of the world, comes to perfect completion when Jesus comes again.

[APPLICATION] What greater assurance could we ask for than to know that our salvation is God's project, not ours? It's true, you know. Our Bibles leave no real doubt. Our challenge concerning this truth is the same we face with anything else God tells us in His Word: Will we trust Him, even though we may not be able to grasp all the details with our limited understanding? Our salvation ultimately doesn't depend on our being able to rattle off theological truths, nor does it depend on our performance in any way. It only comes down to one matter: Are we “in Christ”? When we are in Christ, all else follows inevitably. Let me encourage you: Rest in these truths. God loved you before the foundation of the world. God predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son. God called you and put you into a right relationship with Himself. God has glorified you, declaring you to be perfect in Christ now and perfect with Christ later. Here is comfort for our weary souls! Only trust Him now.

Conclusion: Last week we received great encouragement as we wait for the return of Christ and I hope you are encouraged by this week's study as well. Let's thank Him in a word of prayer.