

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME VIII
IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW
JULY 3, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Note: Tomorrow is July 4. The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, announcing the separation of 13 American colonies from Great Britain and forming a new nation: the United States of America. During this holiday, let's thank God for the rights and freedoms we enjoy in the USA.

Discussion Starter: What are some American rights and freedoms you are thankful to God for?

Key Text: *"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. 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 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."* (Romans 8:26-30)

As pioneer missionary William Carey served the Lord in India, one of his most precious possessions was a printing press his supporters had sent him. Carey had spent years learning the language so he could produce the Scriptures, dictionaries, and grammar books in the local dialect. He printed gospel and educational literature for distribution to thousands of people on the press. One day when Carey was away, a fire broke out and completely destroyed the building, the printing press, and numerous Bibles and books. When Carey returned and was told of the tragic loss, he showed no signs of despair. He thanked God that he still had the strength to do the work over again. He started immediately, not wasting a moment in self-pity. When news of the loss and Carey's enduring faith reached England, it sparked an interest that sent more financial support and materials—including several new printing presses—than Carey had ever received. Before his death, Carey surpassed all of his earlier achievements. William Carey kept his faith in the midst of great adversity because he knew the great promise of Romans 8:28 in today's lesson: God works everything together for the good of those who love Him and follow His purposes. We, too, can have this same enduring faith when we trust Romans 8:28!

1. The Holy Spirit helps us when we don't know what to pray.

"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." (v.26-27)

We have access to God in prayer, but at times the burdens we carry are so heavy that we struggle with expressing our thoughts and feelings to God in prayer. In those times, the Holy Spirit takes our too-deep-for-words groanings (v.26) and, as our Intercessor, communicates them to the Father as prayers that conform to His will (v.27).

Discuss: What are some things about prayer you're thankful for?

2. God works all circumstances together to bring good to a believer—no pain or suffering is ever wasted.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (v.28)

Note that this verse applies only to Christians—those who love God and are committed to His purposes (v.28)—it does not apply to non-believers. Up to this point in Romans 8, Paul has been describing tough realities of the Christian life, such as suffering and waiting. Now Paul emphasizes that God will work in and through our hardships to bring about a specific end—our good (v.28).

Discuss: In what ways have you personally experienced Romans 8:28?

Discuss: What kinds of “good” (v.28) do you think God wants to work in our lives?

3. God knew from eternity past who would choose to receive Him, and He predetermined that every person who would receive Him would progressively be shaped into the character of Jesus.

“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 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.” (v.29-30)

God’s ultimate purpose for us has always been that we should become like Christ. Those who choose to follow Christ have been predestined by God to be “justified”—that is, be made right with Him through their faith in Christ (v.30a; Rom.5:1). Those who would be justified would also then be “glorified” (v.30b)—that is, be shaped by God to reflect His beauty and grace to others. Notice that Paul writes all of this in the past tense, indicating that in God’s eyes our justification and glorification are as good as done!

Discuss: How does the fact that God sees you positionally as already justified and glorified affect your hope and confidence in Christ?

Discuss: How can God use suffering to shape us into Christ-likeness?

Discuss: Why do you think God’s ultimate will for us is that we be conformed to the image of Jesus?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“What is Praying in the Spirit?” article at www.gotquestions.org

“How Can All Things Work Together for Good?” article at www.biblestudytools.com