

Session 5

November 10, 2019

GOD'S WILL AND MY CIRCUMSTANCES

Romans 8:26-32

The old preacher pointed at our stained-glass windows and admired the skill of the craftsman who could take those mixed up pieces of broken colored glass and forge them together into a beautiful work of art. "That," he said, "is what God can do. He can take the mixed up pieces of a broken life and make something beautiful out of them." I may have only been about ten years old at the time...but I still remember those words of encouragement every time I see stained glass windows.

That's the lesson, as well as the promise that God makes to all of us, in verse 28. But that promise lies sandwiched between two other promises: one of help, and one of triumph.

Help in our weakness (vv. 26-27). One great blessing of serving a living God is that of the continued intercession He makes on our behalf. First, *Christ* interceded on our behalf to save us. Later in Romans 8, Paul tells us that Christ was raised and is seated at the right hand of God where He still intercedes for us. But this ongoing intercession is not to keep us *saved* but rather to keep us *safe*. John reminds us, "My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). The word advocate means both *comforter* and *one who pleads a case*. In this text, however, we see the *Spirit's* intercession. In this case, the Spirit makes up for our inadequacies in approaching God in prayer. Paul's explanation, "because we do not know what to pray for as we should" (v. 26), doesn't mean we don't understand how to pray, or that we run out of requests, but rather that in our human weakness we so often stray from praying within God's will (see v. 27). Hence, the Holy Spirit Himself intervenes for us "with unspoken groanings;" that is, with deep supplication that we could never ourselves put into words. How does this all come together? Because God, who searches the human heart, is in tune with the Holy Spirit, who indwells that human heart. You might say they speak the same language! The result? They keep the believer rightly aligned with the will of God (v. 27).

Conformity to Christ (vv. 28-30). While we may not know how to pray, we do know that God is at work in us, to accomplish His will. So, what is God's will for the us as believers? Ultimately, that we be conformed to the image of Christ. So essential to God is our conformity to Christ, that He predestined it! In God's sovereign plan, He will save some. Those who are saved get that way by His effectual call and His declaration that they are justified (v. 30). The sanctification process conforms them to Christ's image in this life, but only in part. The process is completed in Heaven, at the believer's glorification. Simply put, if you are a follower of Christ, it was predestined that you will conform to His image; partially here, and completely there. It's guaranteed! For that very reason, God sees to it that all things work together for good.

Assurance of victory (vv. 31-32). These verses summarize the conclusions drawn from the previous section. If God adopted us (v. 15), then granted to us His Holy Spirit (vv. 16-17), then promised to work everything out for His good purpose (v. 28), and mandated that we would be conformed to Christ's image (v. 29), and guaranteed this by preordaining every step along the

way—from calling to justifying to glorifying (v. 30); if this all is true, then “who can be against us?” The proof of God sustaining us through any and every circumstance is found in the infinite value of that which He gave for us. If He would go so far as to sacrifice His only begotten Son on our behalf, what of lesser value would He dare withhold?