

8:1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*

At the close of the last chapter Paul called himself a “*wretched*” man (verse 24a). He asked who would deliver him from his “*body of death*” (24b). Paul was a man who sometimes “*served the law of sin*” (the old man). How could he find victory? Who would help him?

In this chapter, we find victory. Paul said that it is possible to avoid “*condemnation*” (*katakrima*), a term found only here and Rom. 5:16, 18. It means the “*passing of sentence, condemnation, and its execution*” (CBL, GED, 3:263). Thayer (p. 332) defines it as “*damnatory sentence, condemnation.*” If we try to be justified by law or even works, we will be condemned. We have no hope and no victory through the law or by works.

We can only have hope, victory, and freedom if we are “*in Christ*” (8:1), and we enter into Christ by water baptism (Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). We stay *in Him* by being faithful to His word (1 Jn. 2:24). Abiding in Jesus allows us to avoid all *condemnation*. In Jesus, all people can have peace and salvation. Even though God’s people still sin (3:23), they are “*justified freely by grace in Christ*” (3:24). In Christ, there is grace instead of condemnation. Thus, if we are *in Christ* we should not be fearful or worried about our salvation. Being *in Christ* should give us confidence and assurance because Paul used the word “*no*” (*oudeis*), a word which can be broken down into three separate parts. It begins with a negative adverb (*ou*), then adds a conjunction (*de*) which makes a new word that has the sense of “*not even*” (this term can be found in Mt. 6:29). The addition of a third part (*heis*) creates a meaning something like “*no, not one, no one, none, nothing.*” This is “*a clear and emphatic negative*” (both quotes from the CBL, GED, 4:408).

According to Paul, this confidence and assurance should be right now—this very moment. Christians are currently free from condemnation because they are *in Christ*. This is an immediate blessing given to all who obey the gospel. We do not need to wait until the Judgment Day to be free of condemnation (additional information about being *in Christ* is in the commentary on Eph. 1:1-2, 3).

Obedient believers should feel good about themselves and their faith when they read the first verse in Romans 8. Additional comfort should come from the rest of this chapter because many other benefits are given to those who are *in Christ*. The phrase *in Christ* (or an equivalent expression) is used 172 times in the New Testament (McGuigan, p. 227). This fact strongly implies that being *in the Lord* is important. When we hear this expression, we should not attempt to relate the words to a particular location. Rather, being *in Christ* is better understood as a spiritual union (relationship) with Christ. We are *in Christ* when we are part of His body (the church, Eph. 1:22-23).

The freedom from condemnation is something that can be lost. If Christians spurn the Lord and renounce Christianity, condemnation will be the result unless delinquent Christians repent (compare Gal. 5:4). Whiteside offers a good parallel. “*A person might run into a cave and be free from the storm that raged without, but that does not guarantee future safety.*” Our freedom from condemnation will only continue if we walk in the light and stand in God’s grace (notice the *if* in 1 Jn. 1:7).

Some manuscripts have a longer reading for verse one. This longer reading would be translated, “*who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.*” If this reading is accepted (the KJV has it), it presents a contrast. Those who are in Christ will be interested in spiritual matters and be living according to God’s will versus an existence akin to Satan and the ways of the world.

The first verse in this chapter suggests certain words in the first century were *catchwords*. These words were frequently used expressions that helped teach others the good news and allowed newer Christians to remember key facts about the gospel. One of these *catchwords* appears to have been *in Christ*. Another catchword (which is translated from just one word in the Greek text) was “*put on*” (Rom. 13:12, 14; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:12; and 1 Thess. 5:8).

8:2-4: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The word “*therefore*” (1a) is a conclusion indicator. In these verses the word “*for*” is used (it provides a reason for Paul’s previous comments). Paul said that “*in Christ*” there is a “*law*”—the law of “*the Spirit of life*.” This means there is a law for Christians, but this law is not for justification. We are justified by faith, but justification by faith does not mean we are without rules. The *law of the spirit of life* has been discussed previously in this commentary (see 3:27 where it is referred to as the *law of faith*).

Paul also knew there is the *law of sin and of death*. While some might argue this is a description of Moses’ law, a different explanation seems preferable. God has a law about sin. If we commit sin and we are not forgiven, we die (3:23; 6:23). This is the *law of sin and death* (verse 2). If people wish to be “*free*” from this law (and they can be, verse 1), *obedience* is required. When lost people obey the gospel, death and condemnation are defeated (verse 1). A key word in the second verse is *free* (*eleutheroo*). In Secular Greek, this verb was used to describe the freeing of slaves. Jesus used it (Jn. 8:32) to say that *truth frees* people. Aside from there and here it can only be found in Jn. 8:36; Rom. 6:18, 22—*delivered*; 8:21; Gal. 5:1.

The third verse describes the Law of Moses. Paul made it clear that Moses’ Law was not bad. The law was not a failure in any sense. While it is true that Moses’ Law could not justify people (justification could only come by perfection), it must also be said that God did not intend the Old Testament law to justify people. Justification by Moses’ Law would have been at odds with heaven’s plan because man was “*weak*” (*astheneo*). That is, not “*weakness in the sense of a relative quantity, but of an absolute one: incapability*” on the part of man to do all that was required (Brown, 3:995). God intended the *New Testament* to justify man (Jer. 31:31-34), so Paul said the law “*could not do*” something. These three words come from a single term (*adunatos*), and this word has the sense of *impossible*. This same meaning can be seen four times in the Hebrew letter (Heb. 6:4—see the KJV translation on this verse; Heb. 6:18; 10:4; 11:6).

If Moses’ Law were a suitable means to justify man, why did Jesus need to come into the world (3b)? Moses’ law did exactly what God wanted and it was perfect (Ps. 19:7). In looking at sinful man, God had to make one of two choices: (1) Accept some type of law (such as Moses’ law) as a means for man’s justification or (2) Send Christ into the world to justify mankind. This was an either/or choice and the law option would not have resulted in man’s salvation. Since there was only one way to save man God sent His son and Paul described the process.

When Jesus came, He “*appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh*” (notice the simile; He was *like* sinful flesh). Paul’s statement means Jesus was human. Jesus did not relinquish His deity, but He did take on humanity in its fullest form (Jn. 1:14; Heb. 2:14f). Jesus faced temptations and desires just as we do, but He never sinned. As a result of this He never deserved the *wages of sin* (6:23).

In verse 3, there is an interesting expression (“*condemned sin in the flesh*”). This means that through Christ’s death sin’s power was destroyed. “*God pronounced the doom of sin and brought its claims and its authority over man to an end*” (Expositors Greek New Testament, 2:646). Sin was condemned through the flesh of Christ by His sinless life and His atoning death. Though men still sin, sin’s power to claim individual souls is crushed when lost people obey the gospel.

In the 4th verse, Paul said there was an “*ordinance of the law*” (Moses’ Law). To properly interpret this verse we need to know what this *ordinance* (*dikaioma*) was. The best explanation for it seems to come from the book of Leviticus (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

The Old Testament law required that God’s people be holy. Similar instructions are found in the New Testament. If people are walking after the flesh, they are not holy. Holiness is only pronounced when people “*walk after the spirit*” (they live as the Bible says). Being holy is possible because those in Christ are free from condemnation (compare verse 6). Man’s other choice is “*walking after the flesh*,” and this leads to destruction (verse 6).

Those who lived under the Old Testament were all guilty of sin. While all who are under the New Testament are also guilty of sin, Christians have a new system and status (8:1; 1 Jn. 1:7). Because our sins are so completely removed, it is as if we now fulfill the ordinance of the law. In other words, our position can be compared to a person who lived under the Old Testament and perfectly fulfilled the

law. Our justification is so complete we *fulfill the ordinance of the law*. This explanation is consistent with the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament's definition for *ordinance* (1:335): "believers fulfill the legal claim of God which comes to expression in the law."

8:5-8: *For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: 7 because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: 8 and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

These verses describe two different attitudes towards life. The "*fleshly-minded*" person wants to live as the world lives. The "*godly*" man desires to understand and do the "*things of the Spirit*." The *godly* man is described in 7:25: "*I serve, with my mind, the law of God*" (compare Col. 3:1-3).

When Paul described people "*mind*" (*phroneo*) the things of the flesh, he used the present tense. Since *mind* describes "an 'attitude' or 'disposition' of the mind" (CBL, GED, 5:456), so the ones described in verse 5 did not think about sin and wrong from time-to-time (evil and wickedness are *continuously* considered and contemplated). Sin and immorality are never far from the minds of those who live after the flesh. The present tense is applied to both ways of life in verse 5 so all are living one way or another. "To Paul, only these two 'minds' exist. There is no in-between 'lukewarm' mind. Either a person is living for the flesh or the Spirit" (CBL, GED, 5:457). Compare Jas. 4:4.

Lest we think that Paul described some of the world's worst people, let's take a moment to apply these two attitudes to modern life. In the following examples, determine whether the examples describe *life after the flesh* or *life after the Spirit*.

- A man voluntarily works an 80-hour week. He uses Sunday as a day of rest so he can continue to make money he really doesn't need. Is he living after the flesh or after the Spirit?
- A parent watches television for hours a day but has no time to offer religious training to his or her child. Is this life after the flesh or life after the Spirit?
- A man spends significant sums of money on dining out and many forms of recreation. If he contributes a dollar on Sunday, what would we say?

The choices made by each person are costly. Those who choose to *live after the Spirit* (follow God's will) will suffer inconvenience, be ill spoken of, and will not be on the best of terms with the world. Those who have the *mind of the flesh* will face an even heavier cost. They will die (verse 6). Spiritual death will be their eternal wage (6:23). Paul's word for *mind* in verse 6 (*phronema*) is a noun whereas the word in verse 5 is a verb. The noun is used twice in verse 6, and it describes "the whole sphere of human personality" (CBL, GED, 6:457). Additionally, the "mind of the flesh represents the individual whose goals and energies (his very being) are devoted to satisfying the flesh" (ibid). A person who has the *mind of the Spirit* is controlled by the Word of God and yields to God's desires and goals. "To Paul, only these two 'minds' exist. There is no in-between 'lukewarm' mind. Either a person is living for the flesh or the Spirit" (CBL, GED, 6:457).

If people choose *life after the Spirit*, the blessing of *peace* is promised. Those who follow God's word live lives that are enhanced and bettered. Many illustrations could be given for this; two are listed below.

Those who live *after the Spirit* are blessed because they understand and practice forgiveness. By applying the teachings concerning forgiveness, Christians promote good mental and physical health. The passages that command proper care of the physical body also give Christians happiness and better health. These blessings are often sought but not found by those who live *after the flesh*.

We receive some physical blessings because of Christianity, but Paul apparently had in mind *spiritual* blessings (compare 5:1). One of the reasons to conclude the *peace* (6b) is primarily spiritual comes from the word *life* (6b). This *life* comes to those who *mind the spirit*. If Paul described the

physical realm, he meant *life* (physical existence) only comes to those who are minding the things of the spirit (the saved). Since we know that physical life comes to both children of God and children of the devil, this *life* cannot be physical. The right explanation must be spiritual life and this *life* includes blessings such as joy and peace.

The information in verse 7 shows why fleshly-minded people do not please God. The *mind of the flesh* brings death because it is opposed to God (7a). For information on the word *mind*, see the commentary on the word *phronema* in verse 6. Fleshly minded people have an attitude and a way of life diametrically opposed to deity. The *mind of the flesh* refuses to submit to God's law, and thus submission to God is impossible because man cannot serve God and sin. Serving sin prevents men from serving God since doing both is contradictory. Since Paul used the present tense, the meaning "is that the mind of the flesh does not submit itself to the Law of God; it refuses to be controlled thereby. What is involved is not mere indifference but actual hostility" (Vine, 1:381). John made this same point but used different wording in 1 Jn. 1:6.

To reinforce his point Paul said in verse 8, "*And they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*" Since people living after the flesh have not died to sin, and they do not consider themselves dead to sin, pleasing God is impossible. The CBL (Romans, p. 125) rightly noted that "life in the flesh can be lived by the cultured, educated, and refined, as well as the murderers, thieves, and harlots." *Please* (*aresko*) is a verb that occurs seventeen times in the New Testament. It is used of a dance that *pleased* Herod (Mt. 14:6), members of the first century church (Acts 6:5), Jesus (Rom. 15:3), service to God and the military (2 Tim. 2:4).

The information in verse 8 is connected with baptism. How do people die to sin and stop living in it? The answer is found in Col. 2:12; 3:1-3 and Rom. 6:1-4. If we have not died to sin, we are still *in the flesh*. Being *in the flesh* means that we cannot please God. Those who have not been baptized have not died to sin and are thus *in the flesh*. No person who is accountable to God can please deity until *life after (in) the flesh* is crucified with Christ through baptism.

8:9-11: *But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

The end of the 9th verse says, "*If a man does not possess the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), he is none of His.*" In other words, without the Holy Spirit all accountable people are lost. It may be concluded from Paul's words that the Holy Spirit dwells in God's children. If the Spirit is not present in people who are accountable for their actions, they are unsaved. In contrast to this fact, the first part of verse 9 says Christians "*are not in the flesh*" (Paul described this with the present tense). In the middle of verse 9 Paul spoke about the Holy Spirit "*dwelling*" (*oikeo*) in those who are saved. *Dwell* is a present tense verb that is also used of a woman dwelling with her husband (1 Cor. 7:12); God *dwelling* in light (1 Tim. 6:16); and sin *dwelling* in the body (Rom. 7:17). Here the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (2:495) says it means the Holy Spirit "*lives*" in a person. This same definition is also applied to verse 11.

Most agree that the Spirit dwells in God's people, but there is a lot of disagreement as to *how* He dwells in Christians. Is the Spirit's dwelling literal or is His dwelling figurative?

Owen offers this comment: "This 'Spirit of God' dwells in our physical bodies as his temple (1 Cor. 6:19). He is grieved when we sin (Eph. 4:30). He 'lusts against the flesh', that is, he wants us to do things other than that which the flesh dictates (Gal. 5:17). He strengthens us with power in the 'inner man' (Eph. 3:16; Rom. 7:22; Gal. 5:22). The Spirit 'leads' us (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18). The things taught by the apostle Paul are words 'which the Holy Spirit teaches' (1 Cor. 2:13). Thus, the one in whom the Spirit dwells is led about in life by that which the Spirit has revealed (Eph. 3:5)."

In the 10th verse, Paul spoke of Christ being "*in*" us. The Spirit actually dwells within a Christian and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). Deity is willing to be in fellowship with anyone

who is saved because the “*body is dead*” to sin (6:11). We have been buried with Christ (6:4), and we have died to sin (6:2). We no longer live after and obey the lusts of the flesh (6:12). In 7:25, it was noted that we serve God with our minds. Instead of sin and death, we have “*life*.” We have presented ourselves to God as servants of righteousness, our sins have been forgiven, and we are headed towards heaven. Thus, God dwells with and in His people. Though our bodies are decaying (2 Cor. 4:16), the Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee (Eph. 1:13-14) that we will be raised and will spend eternity with God.

The information in verse 10 is difficult and explained differently by commentators. What is said toward the end of this verse is especially difficult, though commentators such as Vine (1:382) seem to offer the correct explanation. Concerning the body *being dead because of sin* he said, “The body, the human frame, contains the seeds of decay and is mortal, i.e., doomed to death, in the ordinary course of events, on account of sin.” Also, “The body of the believer is said to be dead (albeit he is living in the body), so as to set forth the inevitableness of the fact.” When people obey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-8), they have found “*righteousness*” (9b). Sin kills both man’s body and spirit. The opposite is also true: obedience to the gospel brings *life* on earth and in eternity (compare Jn. 10:10).

In the first century, the Spirit’s dwelling in Christians included the power to perform miracles. Now He exercises His power through the Scriptures (Eph. 6:17). More information about the role of the Holy Spirit and first century miracles is available in the First Corinthians commentary (chapters 12-14).

In verse 11, Paul resumed his discussion of the Spirit’s dwelling place. The Spirit is “*in*” us, and this is described with the present tense (“*dwells*”). As noted in the commentary on verse 9, the Holy Spirit is in us to serve as a promise that God will one day raise us from the dead and take us to heaven (Eph. 1:13-14). Just as we may make a down payment on an item we want to buy, Eph. 1:13-14 affirms that the Holy Spirit is our down payment. He is the “*earnest*” (down payment) to show that God will fulfill His word. He is our guarantee that we will be raised and saved.

Paul did not say the Holy Spirit was responsible for raising Jesus from the dead; the Father did this. Lanier (p. 56) points to the word *also* and suggests that at the final resurrection the Holy Spirit will work with the Father to raise the dead. The power of the Father will be used to raise all people (Jn. 5:28-29), but the Spirit will have a special role that will be limited to the saved.

A small but important point is found in the word “*from*” in verse 11. This is based upon a Greek preposition (*ek*), and it has the sense of “out of” or “from among” the dead. By using this term Paul showed that Jesus really died (He did not “recover” from His experience on the cross), and after Jesus died, He went to the same place everyone else goes (Hades, Acts 2:31). *Hades* is the realm of the dead, and according to Lk. 16:26, it has two “sides” with a barrier between the two halves. Being without sin, Jesus would have been on the “saved” (good) side. A third point from the Greek preposition is that the resurrection is true. For a list of resurrection proofs, see section # 47 in the gospels commentary.

When Paul described man he used the word “*mortal*” (*thnetos*), a term occurring only here; Rom. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5:4. Another interesting term is in 11b. Though rendered “*dwelleth*” (the same translation as in 11a), Paul used a different word (*enoikeo*) at the end of this verse. It is the term used to describe “*faith*” dwelling in the Christian (2 Tim. 1:5). It is also used of “*Christ’s word*” dwelling in the saved (Col. 3:16).

8:12-14: *So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: 13 for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

Here Paul drew a conclusion. Christians are “*debtors*” (*opheiletes*) because the Spirit dwells in them. Because of this blessing, we have an obligation. Each day we have a duty to live for God and not sin. We are bound to a person (Christ), a task (being His child), and way of life (doing what He has said). This requires us to *put to death the deeds of the body so we can have life* (13b). If we fail to do this, death is guaranteed (13a). We will miss heaven.

The word *debtor* (*opheiletes*) has three different senses in the New Testament. There is the literal sense of someone owing money to another (Mt. 18:24). There is the sense of sin; we need forgiveness of our spiritual debts (Mt. 6:12). The third sense given above (people are bound to a task, idea, or person) is used here, and the point is expressed with the present tense. This same sense is also found in Rom. 1:14 and Gal. 5:3. Were we *debtors to the flesh*, we would need to live according to the flesh. Because we are debtors to God (compare verses 11 and 14), we are obligated to live according to the ways of God.

In the middle of verse 13 Paul said those living after the flesh “*must*” (*mello*) die (the KJV says “*shall*”). The original verb describes “an action that necessarily follows a divine decree” (CBL, GED, 4:144). Thayer (p. 397) concurs with this definition as does Gingrich and Danker (p. 501). Gingrich and Danker try to express the thought with words such as “*must, will certainly.*” Paul did not believe in the modern idea that “God will change His mind” and save the unsaved at the end of time. If we fail to live a life pleasing to God, we and all others will be lost! Because Paul used the present tense, this implies that “one after another will die” (Lenski, Romans, p. 516) and these deaths will “die forever” (ibid). “We should not fail to note the clashing terms: ‘if you *live* you are about to *die.*’ Paul intends to reverse these terms in the next sentence and thus emphasize the clash. Men ever think that they are really living when they give way to the flesh whereas in reality they are heading straight for eternal death” (Lenski, Romans, p. 517). Paul used dramatic language to make the same point stated by Jesus in Mt. 7:24-27.

The words “*put to death*” come from a single word in the Greek text (*thanatoo*). This lone word is in the present tense and the active voice. The present tense means we are to *keep on putting to death the deeds of the body*. The active voice means *we* are the ones who are responsible for this job. Putting the deeds of the body to death is *our responsibility*. God has left us with some responsibility, and if we fail to keep the instructions given by Paul, we will face spiritual death. In other places *thanatoo* is used to describe the literal death of someone (Mt. 10:21; 26:59) and our *death* to obeying the Old Testament law (Rom. 7:4).

The way Paul described the Christian life is parallel to some passages in the Old Testament (compare Deut. 11:26 and Deut. 30:15). These passages, when combined with the material in Rom. 8, show that the doctrine of eternal security is false. Although the Bible does not support the doctrine of eternal security, some still teach it. The Bible Knowledge Commentary (p. 470) says: “This does not suggest that a believer who sins will face eternal death in hell; instead, it means he will not enjoy his spiritual life. He will seem like an unsaved person (1 Cor. 3:1-4) and will be unable to enjoy the indwelling presence of the Spirit.”

Many go out of their way to deny the plain statements that show Christians can apostatize and lose their salvation. Commentators who believe in eternal security must resort to illogical explanations because the Bible often shows that the doctrine of eternal security is false.

In this chapter, Paul described his readers as **brethren** (verse 12) and **sons of God** (verse 14). Paul’s *brethren* and these *sons of God* were told, ***For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die.*** It is possible for Christians to lose their salvation.

Many who believe in eternal security appeal to passages like Jn. 10:28. Although some passages might be cited as proof for this doctrine, there is no scriptural support for eternal security. In Jn. 10:28 Jesus did teach that no one can snatch a Christian away from God. However, the sheep (Christians) can *wander off*. Christians can return to living after the flesh (13a) because they have freewill. If this choice is made, they are severed from God (compare Gal. 5:4).

Another error in the religious world is based upon a statement in Rom. 8:14 (the sons of God are led by the Holy Spirit). While most agree that the Spirit leads Christians, many disagree on how this is done. Some claim the Holy Spirit provides the saved with special feelings, dreams, or revelations. Others believe the Spirit leads them only through His word. This matter should not be complicated because God is a God of peace, not confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).

In order to understand how the Spirit leads people, we may use a comparison. People walk either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. If someone is living after the flesh, how are they led? Is Satan (who is the center of the fleshly life) actively appearing to people and speaking to them?

Does he send the unsaved visions and dreams? Is he whispering in the ears of those who are lost?

There is nothing miraculous about being *led* by the flesh. People see sin, it is attractive, and they succumb to it. A similar thing is true for the Spirit. People have God's word, it is attractive to them, and they follow it. Because Paul used the present tense, Christians continuously use its direction and guidance. Paul also applied the present tense in both parts of verse 14: If we are continuously led by the Holy Spirit (through His word), we are continuously (present tense) "*sons of God*." Since this is true the opposite is implied: those who do not continually abide by what is stated in the Word of God are *not* God's people. We must be led by the Holy Spirit through His word because the Spirit's *sword* (power) is the word of God (Eph. 6:17).

For those who look at this verse and see some type of "special sign" coming from the Holy Spirit, it is helpful to share with them some parallel passages. In Rom. 2:4 Paul used the same term here rendered *led (ago)*. He said God's *goodness "leads people to repentance."* Is God's goodness in the lives of non-Christians miraculous or non-miraculous? It is the latter, and this additional reference further demonstrates that just because a text speaks of God's *leading* someone does not mean it is supernatural. When writing to the Corinthians Paul said these Christians had previously been *led away* (same word) to "*dumb idols*" (1 Cor. 12:2). Certainly this leading was not from God. People saw things in idolatry that appealed to them and it was personal lust (desire) that led them into false religion.

The Holy Spirit did offer direct guidance and leading to prophets, apostles, and inspired teachers in the first century. This direct influence no longer exists. God insured that His word was written down and now this word makes us complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Word of God is powerful enough (Heb. 4:12) to give us all that we need in every area of life (2 Pet. 1:3). We can be led by the Spirit through the word of God or we can be led by fleshly desires.

Wayne Jackson (Christian Courier, January, 2002, Volume XXXVII, Number 9, p. 34) offered some thoughtful comments about those who claim to be directly led by the Holy Spirit. He said, "If the Spirit does 'illuminate' with a refinement of understanding, when does one know that he has reached the ultimate comprehension of a particular passage of Scripture? If he is convinced that his understanding of a passage is the result of illumination, may he write it down and declare it as 'scripture'? Would it be possible for him to ever come to a different 'understanding' of that text? If two Christian brothers, both of whom believe that the Holy Spirit is illuminating them, reach a different conclusion regarding a passage, how would one know which of the two is correct? Ideas have consequences, and the concept of 'personal illumination' has serious consequences."

8:15: *For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

In this verse Paul continued to speak about the Spirit. While in verse 14 he said the Spirit *leads* Christians, here he affirmed the Holy Spirit "*is not the spirit of bondage and fear.*" Those who lived under the Old Testament were burdened with a system of fear and bondage. The law contained more than 600 laws and this system burdened those who lived under it. The people were also familiar with sin and they feared its consequences. Because Jesus instituted a New Covenant, Paul said that bondage and fear have disappeared. Under the new system (covenant), things are different. Part of this difference involves the "*Spirit.*"

In the New Covenant, there is the "*spirit of adoption.*" *Adoption (huiiothesia)* gives us full "enjoyment of the Fatherhood of God" (Turner, p. 4), and we should think of it as a *merciful* adoption (ibid). For additional information about this term, see the commentary on verse 23 and Gal. 4:5. The Spirit is given to us because we **are** (not to become) sons (Acts 2:38). Because Christians receive the Spirit at their conversion, they are able to say "*Abba Father.*" The word *Abba* is a Greek and English transliteration of the Aramaic word for *father*. It is used only a few times in the New Testament (here; Mk. 14:36; Gal. 4:6). The meaning of "*cry*" (*krazo*) *Abba Father* (which is in the present tense) may be explained in the following way.

The Spirit "*leads*" us (verse 14). This *leading* comes from our study and knowledge of God's

word. By examining the Word of God we can know whether or not we are God's children. If we are God's children, we can cry *Abba Father*. An illustration of the thought may be drawn from the time Jesus prayed in the garden. The Lord knew who He was and what His relationship with the Father was. Hence, He was able to address God in a passionate and very personal way. The same opportunity exists for us because through the Spirit's leading we too know who we are. Vine (1:384) said this word "was a form of address forbidden among the Jews to be used by a slave to the head of a family." Because *Abba Father* can be understood as something like "Oh Father" (CBL, GED, 1:20), and slaves were forbidden from referring to their masters with this term, (CBL, GED, 1:21), *abba* is proof of the points made in this verse. By saying *Abba Father*, Paul described our "love and intelligent trust" of God (Vine, 1:384). It is "an outcry of praise to God with the words 'Abba, Father'" (CBL, GED, 3:395) and may be an allusion "to a worship situation" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:313). Brown (1:410) described it as "the calling on the Lord by a righteous man," an activity very "common in the Psalms." In another entry (1:614) Brown associates *Abba* with "calling on God in prayer."

A few who have casually studied the word *Abba* have suggested the term means we can think of God in terms such as "Daddy." While it is true that the term does have a "baby-language background" (Brown, 1:614), "even in the pre-Christian era the word underwent a considerable extension of meaning" (ibid). With the passage of time this sense of the word "receded" and "acquired the warm, familiar ring which we may feel in such an expression as 'dear father'" (Brown, 1:614). A similar point is made in the CBL, GED (1:21): "Jews used the term *abba* in a familiar sense, much as children today might say 'Daddy.' But this does not fit Bible times where the term always implied respect and was translated 'Father.'"

8:16-17: *The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: 17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with (him), that we may be also glorified with (him).*

To prove that we are children of God, the Spirit "*bears witness with our spirit.*" *Bears witness* is from a single word (*summartureo*) that is found only four times in the New Testament (here; Rom. 2:15; 9:1; Rev. 22:18—"testify"). Our "being a child of God is confirmed by the Spirit" (Kittle, 4:590). While this definition is consistent with 16b, Paul did not specify how this *confirmation* is done. Certainly the text does not say that it is audible or somehow connected with our physical being. The earlier portions of this commentary have suggested some of the ways the Spirit bears witness with our spirit. The fact that the Spirit dwells within us is a means of witnessing that we are children of God (verse 9). If we live after the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body, thereby abiding by the Spirit's leading, witness is again borne. Because the Spirit is serving as a down payment (Eph. 1:13-14), He *witnesses* that we belong to God. The 27th verse states that the Spirit makes *intercession* for Christians; this is additional testimony from the Spirit that a person is a Christian.

The proof that someone is a Christian is diverse and this should comfort those who are saved. Anyone can use their vocal chords to say *Abba Father*, but only a Christian may say these words with confidence and assurance. The Spirit bears testimony that these words are true and that the one saying them is sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). The Spirit's testimony is the clincher that someone is saved. The Spirit's evidence to prove that someone is a Christian is so strong there is no doubt as to who is saved and who is not. The Spirit's testimony is powerful enough to meet any kind of judicial challenge made by Satan and his helpers.

The importance of proving that we are saved (compare 2 Cor. 13:5) is made known in verse 17. If we are children of God, we are "*heirs*" (*kleronomos*). Every time this word occurs in the New Testament, it has a direct or indirect application to spiritual matters. For a list of all the places this term occurs see: Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14 (these references all describe the same parable); Rom. 4:13, 14; Gal. 3:29; 4:1, 7; Tit. 3:7; Heb. 1:2; 6:17; 11:7; Jas. 2:5.

Are we children of God and thus heirs? Yes! Verse 15 says that instead of being brought into a state of bondage and fear, we have been adopted into the family of God. We are children of God and

we may refer to God as Jesus did (*Abba Father*, Mk. 14:36). Though we are not a “son” in the sense that Christ was (we are adopted), we can be like a natural son. Because we are able to be members in God’s family, we can be *heirs*. God is willing to give us every spiritual blessing now (Eph. 1:3), and there is even more after this life. This inheritance requires, however, that we “suffer” (17b; 2 Tim. 3:12). The word *suffer* (*sumpascho*) is only found here and 1 Cor. 12:26. Here it means “to suffer evils (troubles, persecutions) in like manner with another” (Thayer, p. 597), and it is in the present tense. We suffer with both Jesus (this verse) and with His people (1 Cor. 12:26). Law keeping cannot cause us to become heirs (4:13-14), but being faithful in Christian living will.

God’s interest in us has been compared to children from broken homes. Because of divorce, parents often “sue for custody rights.” In these cases judges may grant weekend visitation rights, holiday rights, summer rights, etc. Many parents want “full custody” of their children, and this is how God the Father views His children. He doesn’t want “weekend” or “summer” rights to them. He wants His to be His people all the time (Compare Rom. 12:1-2). Satan also wants “visitation rights” in our lives, and he too is willing to *adopt* us into his family. We decide who we want to be with, and when we decide for God, we have all spiritual blessings if we remain faithful to the Lord (Eph. 1:3).

8:18: *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward.*

The previous paragraph showed that being joined with Christ means we will suffer. This thought is now expanded. Paul expected “sufferings” (plural) to come to those who will inherit eternal life. Paul also showed that sufferings have a limitation. They are reserved for “*this present time*.” No one who is saved will suffer in eternity. Paul also pointed out that if we were to compare our sufferings with the after life, there is no comparison. The joy experienced by the saved in eternity far outweighs the temporary pain faced by God’s people.

The word translated “*I reckon*” (*logizomai*) indicated careful consideration. It meant Paul had *considered* the temporary and the eternal aspects of human life. He had carefully weighed the price of eternity with God against the pain and trouble that comes from being a Christian. Paul concluded that Christianity is very worthwhile. He realized Christianity and the mind of the Spirit constitute the only realistic choice. As this Christian considered the cost of Christianity against suffering for the Lord, he said sufferings were not “*worthy*” (*axios*), a word that in Classical Greek meant “‘bringing up the other beam of the scales,’ ‘bringing into equilibrium,’ and therefore ‘equivalent’” (Kittle, 1:379). God’s riches for those in Christ far exceed the weight of suffering and agony. Our sureness of this happening is indicated by a word in the Greek text (*mello*) that is hard to see in English translations. This term describes a degree of probability so “great that it can be spoken of as inevitable” (CBL, GED, 4:144).

Paul was the right person to compare these two things. He suffered so much that heaven had to be truly worthwhile for him to live as a Christian. Two useful cross-references are 2 Cor. 11:23-28 and 2 Cor. 4:17.

In verses 19-22, readers encounter a very difficult section of Romans. Most explain this material as describing either the church or the material world (physical creation). A majority of commentators favor the second explanation and this commentary agrees with the second interpretation.

8:19: *For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.*

In this verse, the KJV has the word “*creature*” and the ASV uses “*creation*.” Since Paul seems to have described creation and showed that man is connected to it, the ASV rendering seems preferable. This same term (*ktisis*) is rendered *creation* in the KJV (for examples of this see Mk. 10:6; 13:19). This term occurs four times in Rom. 8:19-22, and it contrasts a child of God with what has been created by God (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:326).

Before sin was introduced to the world, man was in synch with the non-human part of creation. In fact, Gen. 3:1 shows that a serpent spoke with Eve. In the beginning, it appears that snakes and men

were not enemies. Snakes did not bother Eve because there was a perfect balance in the world. Before the fall, there was also no need for clothing. The lack of clothing suggests that the weather prior to the first sin was perfect, or it was so pleasant that clothes were unnecessary. This all changed after the first sin. God promised to create strife between the children of Eve and Satan. Part of this promise must include man's disdain for snakes.

If Gen. 3:17 is studied, we may further conclude that before sin entered into the world the earth was friendly to mankind. Thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18) were not in existence (or they were not a problem) until sin was committed. In light of Gen. 3:19, it seems reasonable to conclude that man was not required to *sweat* for the production of food until after the fall. It was only after the fall that the ground had to be "*tilled*" (Gen. 3:23). Before the fall man was only told to "*dress and keep*" the garden (Gen. 2:15).

We know that gardens are basically either filled with weeds or weed free. The first requires little maintenance and the second requires backbreaking work. It seems that Adam and Eve were in a garden that was free of weeds. The care needed to maintain and cultivate the crops was minimal until sin entered into the world.

In Rom. 8:19, Paul said the creation has an "*earnest expectation*" and is "*waiting*." The word translated *earnest expectation* (*apokaradokia*) "is suggestive of the stretching forth of the head in expectation of something. The only other place where the word is found is Phil. 1:20, 'according to my earnest expectation'" (Vine, 1:385). "The word was used in classical Greek of a watchman in the bow of a ship peering into the darkness, eagerly looking for a beacon of light" (Complete Biblical Library, Philippians, p. 191). This word described a "concentrated, intense hope which ignores other interests" (Wuest, Philippians, p. 44). Here the *creation* (this word is explained in the following paragraphs) "is personified as eagerly anticipating the future glorification of God's people" (CBL, GED, 1:371). Paul said the creation is *waiting* for "*the revealing of God's sons*" (the people who belong to God). Because the word *wait* (*apekdechomai*) has the sense of waiting intensely, eagerly, and with a burning desire, the *creation* is portrayed as having an "anxious expectation" (CBL, GED, 1:335) for the event described by Paul (this word is a present tense verb). What is being longed for is seeing the saved from every generation. At the proper time the righteous will, as it were, be *made known* (shown off; presented) to the *creation*, and this will satisfy a very long and strong desire.

According to verse 20, the *creation* was "*subjected to vanity*" (*vanity* meant *vanity, emptiness, frailty, futility, frustration, disappointment, lack of vigor*). This *subjection* (*hupotasso*) has the sense of "subject, subordinate, place under" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:408) and here specifically means "*be subjected to, be placed under*" (ibid). For other verses which use this word in this same way see 1 Cor. 15:27b, 28a; Heb. 2:8c. *Creation* was *subjected*, but this was not of "*its own will*." The KJV says "*willingly*," and this gives a better sense of the original term (*hekon*). This term is found only here and 1 Cor. 9:17, and it meant "to do something voluntarily or of one's free will" (CBL, GED, 2:366). All these facts help identify the *creation* described by Paul. If anyone (anything) has *not* been subjected to vanity against his or its wishes, he (it) **cannot be the creation** described by Paul.

In trying to determine what has not been subjected to *vanity*, we may ask about the good angels. Have the good angels been *subjected to vanity*? No. Because angels have not been subjected to *vanity*, they cannot be delivered from bondage and corruption.

What about Satan and his angels? Have satanic forces been *subjected to vanity*? Yes. Satanic forces have been subjected to *vanity*, but they cannot be the *creation* that will be delivered from bondage. This is clear because the creation subjected to *vanity* will "*share*" in God's glory and will be "*delivered*" (verse 21). This cannot refer to Satan and his angels because his fate is sealed and cannot be changed (see the notes on Jude 9-10).

Can Christians be the *creation* Paul described? The answer to this question must also be *no* because there is a contrast between *creation* and *Christians* in verses 22-23 (notice the pronouns "*we*" and "*they*"). Deductive reasoning leaves us with only one explanation for the *creation*. The *creation* must refer to the earth and perhaps the entire material universe.

It seems that Paul said the end of time will be so fantastic that it is like the world itself (the earth)

is looking forward to it. The earth and perhaps the universe are portrayed as almost possessing human emotions. The earth (and this is speaking figuratively) knows that it is at odds with man. It realizes that the perfection that once existed has been lost, and it is looking forward to the time when the perfect balance that once existed will return. Compare Rev. 21:23-22:5 and Acts 3:21.

When the second coming of Christ occurs, the whole creation will rejoice. The earth that is now filled with weeds and is somewhat hostile to man will be done away (2 Pet. 3:10) and man will be allowed to again enter into a perfect environment. Before studying verses 20-21, another detail must be noticed. Verse 19 says that the creation *is earnestly expecting* what Paul described.

8:20-21: *For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.*

The “creation” was subjected to “vanity” (see verse 19 for information on this word as well as the word “subjected”). Verse 20 appears to describe the fall of Adam and Eve. Because of sin, there were massive changes in nature. Childbirth changed. The ground changed. God, creation, and man all felt the dramatic effects of sin when the beautiful harmony in the world ended. Proof that this view is right is found in 20b where Paul said, “not of its own will.” This is another example of personifying nature (human emotions are applied to inanimate objects). Nature did not want man to sin. In addition, after man ruined perfection, even nature had to bear some of the consequences.

It should be understood that nature does not literally think and experience emotions. Paul used figurative language to clarify and emphasize his point. This type of figurative speech is frequently found in the Bible.

In addition to nature being pictured in human terms (it thinks and feels), God is also pictured in human terms. There are passages that refer to God’s eyes and fingers (see Job 38:7 for an example). God does not have these body parts since He is *spirit* (Jn. 4:24), but this imagery is used to help communicate important truths.

If nature had a *will* (desire), Paul affirmed that it would have chosen to maintain a harmonious relationship with mankind. Nature was not interested in becoming hostile towards humanity. The book of Genesis shows that God created the earth to be kind to man. After the first sin, however, God put man and nature at odds with each other. This is the point in verse 21.

When man’s sin broke the harmony between people and the planet, *vanity* was brought into the world. As previously stated, this word meant things like *futility, frailty, aimlessness, the inability to reach a goal or achieve results*. After the fall, many things became frail and futile. But with the vanity also came “*hope*.” God promised that a Savior would come (Gen. 3:15) and that this savior would help mankind. This *hope* is related to the thought in verse 21.

Because God created a way to save humanity, both man and “*creation itself*” have hope. Much of this *hope* is found in the word “*delivered*” (*eleutheroo*), a word used in secular Greek to describe the freeing of slaves. In this book this term is used to describe freedom from things like “death” and the “law” in places like Rom. 6:18, 22; 8:2. Paul also used it in Gal. 5:1. Other than these references, the term can only be found in Jn. 8:32, 36 where Jesus spoke of *freeing* people through truth as well as Himself.

What we need freed from is “*bondage*” and “*corruption*.” *Bondage* (*douleia*) has been defined as “*held fast in a yoke of slavery*” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 205). Stated another way, this term denotes “*powers*” which aim to “*subjugate*” man and “*separate him from God*” (Kittle, 2:275). *Corruption* (*phthora*) is applied to the physical body in 1 Cor. 15:42. Here the word has the sense of “*perishability*” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:423). Gingrich and Danker (p. 858) say “*slavery of decay*.” Only one thing can help mankind: Jesus and His word! All other solutions will fail. Using God’s solution and only His solution results in “*liberty*” and “*glory*” if we are “*the children of God*.”

Verse 21 may be correlated with the references previously given (Rev. 21-22 and Acts 3). While man and his environment will never be completely reconciled in time, man can be restored to a

perfect environment and fellowship with God in eternity. Part of the suffering experienced by creation is to remind man “that all sin exacts too great a price” (CBL, Romans, p. 131).

8:22: *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

This verse again seems to personify nature. If nature could talk, we would hear it moan and groan. It is in a state that it does not want. If the earth had feelings and could communicate with us (verse 22), it would say, “I am sorry for all the trouble you have. It bothers me to see you pull weeds and suffer the pain of childbearing. I do not want to do this to you. I have no interest in being hostile to the human race.” Perhaps Paul penned this information to further affirm that the future life will be far better than we can imagine. Notice that Paul personified *all* of nature (“*whole*” creation).

No matter why Paul wrote what he did, there is an interesting lesson to be learned. Many from around the world have passionate concerns about the earth. In our day and time many say, “The earth is angry at us for cutting down trees. We have polluted the streams and Mother Nature is upset with us.” There are also cultures that affirm volcanoes and other natural disasters are the result of angry gods (spirits). Paul classified these and similar ideas as completely false. If anyone is upset, it is the earth because man’s environment is often hostile to human beings. It is as if the earth has no choice but to be antagonistic (because of sin), and this opposition makes nature sad. Thus, extreme environmentalists have a view of the world that is the complete opposite of God’s, and several words at the end of this verse show the painful separation between man and his environment.

“*Groaneth*” (*sustenazo*) is a present tense verb found only here in the New Testament. It has the sense of “*to groan together*” (Thayer, p. 608). Kittle (7:601) noted how in Rom. 8:22-27 Paul spoke “of a triple sighing, that of all creation, that of Christians and that of the Spirit. This sequence is a crescendo.” Nature sighs in verse 22 (as it waits for the end of time and the salvation of mankind). Christians sigh (verse 23, and a different word is used) because their physical bodies are now subject to corruption. When we pray, there are times the Holy Spirit will sigh and groan on our behalf (verse 26). “*Travaileth in pain together*” is from a single present tense verb (*sunodino*) that occurs only here in the New Testament. It has a metaphoric (non-literal sense), and the idea is something like a father who shares with his wife the agony of childbirth. In a similar way the *creation* (nature) is sharing in and feeling the pain of sin until the end of time comes and people are taken to heaven/hell.

8:23: *And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for (our) adoption, (to wit), the redemption of our body.*

This verse offers another reason for concluding that the word *creature* (creation) does not refer to Christians. Paul drew a distinction between the *creature* and Christians. Verses 22-23a say that both Christians and the creature are *groaning*. While the word used in verse 23 is not the same term, it is similar. In this verse Paul used a word (*stenazo*) which is applied to Jesus in Mk. 7:34 (“*sighed*”), used by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:2, 4, associated with elders in Heb. 13:17 (“*grief*”), and lastly occurs in Jas. 5:9 (“*murmur*” in the ASV and “*grudge*” in the KJV). In Rom. 8:23 it has the sense of sighs too deep to utter and it is in the present tense. Christians *and* the creation are waiting for the same thing (the end of time). When time ends, man will again be placed into a perfect environment. At the end of time, man will also be “*adopted*” (*huiiothesia*), a term found only here; verse 15; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5. This is a “technical term” for the new relationship God has with the saved (Turner, p. 4). *Adoption* means we receive the full “enjoyment of the Fatherhood of God” and we should regard our *adoption* as a “merciful” act of God (ibid). Christians have already been *adopted* into God’s family (verse 16), but their adoption has not yet been fully realized (experienced). When the end of time comes, the word *adoption* will have additional meaning.

Someone has compared our adoption into God’s family to a couple that was unable to have children. Because this couple wanted a baby, they adopted a single child. A month after the adoption the wife conceived. When both of these children were in their teenage years someone said to the mother, “Which child is yours?” According to the story the mother said, “Both are.” The person

persisted by saying, “Which one was adopted?” The mother replied, “I’ve forgotten.” Both children had the same rights and privileges. When we are adopted into the family of God, we are viewed and treated as “full sons.”

At the end of verse 23, Paul connected our *groaning* with the “*redemption of our body*.” This means Christians anxiously wait for the time when they can leave behind sickness, death, disease, and trouble. God’s people want to be with their heavenly Father and out of the world. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (1:139) says, “Redemption is certainly not to be understood here as ‘redemption *from* our bodies,’ ...But the flowering of the ‘sonship’ attained in baptism (8:15; Gal. 4:5).” Paul stressed this with the word “*waiting*” (*apekdechomai*), a term also found in verses 19 and 25. This word is in the present tense and it has the sense of eager anticipation, earnest expectation. Christians look forward to a “great climax which gives not only this life but also the whole of creation its meaning” (Kittle, Abridged Edition, p. 147).

The “*first fruits*” (*aparche*) of the Spirit may be compared to a farmer’s “first fruits.” In the Old Testament, the first sheaf of grain was brought to the priest (Lev. 23:10). The initial harvest from the crops was given to God. Such was also done in other religions. In fact, “Most of the peoples of antiquity had the custom of offering to the deity, the master of nature and source of fertility, the firstfruits of their fields and the firstborn of their domestic animals” (Spicq, 1:145). God has given us the *first fruits* (a foretaste of what heaven will be like). Part of our foretaste is found in the “*Spirit*” (He serves as a deposit/down payment, Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22). The Holy Spirit “guarantees that the condition of the sons of God in this world will not remain precarious, imperfect, and threatened” (Spicq, 1:151).

8:24-25: *For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? 25 But if we hope for that which we see not, (then) do we with patience wait for it.*

These verses continue the theme of salvation and they add a new thought—“*hope*” (*elpis*). Three separate interpretations of Paul’s thought are possible, and Robertson (4:376) well expresses them as: “We are saved in hope, by hope, for hope.” Although this subject has already been introduced but not described by this exact word (see verse 21 where hope is implied), here the idea is presented more clearly. Our *hope* (which here has a definite article—the hope) includes liberation and glory (verse 19); the time when the sons of God will be revealed (verse 18); the day that “*glory*” will be given (verse 23); and the time when bodies will be “*redeemed*” (23b).

The word *hope* is an important word in Christianity (compare Heb. 6:18-19); it “is an essential characteristic of our salvation” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, 2:650). In describing the hope that God’s people have, 24b says it is not “*seen*.” We cannot look somewhere and see the glory that God has reserved for His people. We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). The Christian’s faith, contrary to what some assert, is not blind faith. There is evidence for our hopes and beliefs. Because there is evidence (proof), our future is certain. What Christians believe in and hope for is like a solid rock (Mt. 7:24-26).

Another matter to be considered is Paul’s question—*Who hopes for what can be seen?* MacKnight in his commentary on the epistles suggests this *seeing* has the sense of *enjoying*. If we have achieved or attained something that we hoped for, the hope (looking forward to the achievement) ceases. Suppose we hope to someday own a new car. If a time comes when we buy a new vehicle, our hope ends. We do not *hope* for what we possess. This principle is also true of heaven. When we enter into heaven, hope will no longer be necessary or a part of life. Hope is for the things we have not experienced or gained. Since we are waiting to enter into heaven, we are in a state of hope.

The 25th verse completes the thought about *hope*. We are hoping for something that we cannot see. If this were not the case, it would not be hope. As we wait for our hope to come true, we must wait with “*patience*” (*hupomone*), a word which is described in the commentary on Rom. 2:7-9 and 5:3-4. This term “is one of the noblest of NT words” (Barclay, New Testament words, p. 141). Barclay also says this term “is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is past... It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with

resignation, but with blazing hope; it is not the spirit which sits statically enduring in the one place, but the spirit which bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory; it is not the patience which grimly waits for the end, but the patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn” (ibid, p. 144). This is how others have waited (Noah and Abraham are two of the many examples that could be given). We endure life with our hope fixed on God (compare 1 Tim. 5:5). It appears the *hope* theme was often emphasized among the first Christians. Hope may have been stressed because persecution was frequent and severe. For information about the word “wait” (*apekdechomai*), which is a present tense verb, see the commentary on verses 19 and 23.

8:26-27: *And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for (us) with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to (the will of) God.*

Although God’s children have *hope* they also need help. According to verse 26, Christians sometimes fail to properly pray. God’s people sometimes pray for things for which they should not pray. Can we list some examples?

When we pray in an improper way, this is an “*infirmity*” (*astheneia*), a word that describes a weakness. Here it is defined as “the inability to pray in a way that is pleasing to God” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:171). This word along with the context suggests Paul had in mind a specific kind of prayer. The previous verses dealt with suffering (verse 18), groaning, trials and tribulations (verses 31-39). The primary meaning of verse 26 must be related to these thoughts.

When we are presented with great trials (grief), and perhaps feel so overburdened that we cannot find the words to pray, the “*Spirit*” helps. Since the Spirit is deity, He understands our deepest thoughts. He can look into the deepest parts of our being and He can express our thoughts and requests to the Father. Times when we need this benefit include periods of serious illnesses or when we lose a loved one. An excellent illustration of this comes from the life of Joseph Scriven. This man was supposed to be married after he graduated from the University of Dublin, Ireland in 1842. The night before he was to marry his fiancé, she died by drowning. Mr. Scriven devoted the rest of his life to serving the poor while living in Canada. When Scriven learned his mother was seriously ill and he could not be with her in Dublin, he wrote a letter to comfort her. Some of the words from that letter are these: “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” Scriven never intended this to be publicized, but it was placed into a small collection of poems in 1869. Charles C. Converse put the words to music (101 Hymn Stories, pp. 275-277).

The word translated “*helpeth*” (*sunantilambanomai*) described coming to someone’s aid. Wuest (1:140) puts the thought this way: “The word speaks of the action of a person coming to another’s aid by taking hold over against that person, of the load he is carrying. The person helping does not take the entire load, but helps the other person in his endeavor.” Aside from here, the term occurs only in Lk. 10:40. Kittle (1:376) suggests it means “to take up with” and indicates there are times when the Holy Spirit “fashions prayers” which are too difficult for us or are not “adequate before God.” In more general terms, the Spirit comes when we need aid. During times of great distress and difficulty (when we have “*groanings which cannot be uttered*”), the Spirit helps us pray; He makes “*intercession* for us.”

Intercession (*huperentunchano*) is a present tense verb that is found only here in the New Testament. Gingrich and Danker (p. 840) define it as “*plead, intercede*.” The Holy Spirit pleads on our behalf and helps with our prayers when we are suffering the most. *Groanings* (*stenagmos*) is found only here and Acts 7:34 in the New Testament. Since *groanings* is combined with another word (*alaletos*)—this term is translated by the expression *cannot be uttered*—the thought is “with *sighs* too deep for words” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:273). If this is the right interpretation of the passage, the Spirit does not make intercession every time we pray. He only aids

when we are praying during times that are very difficult, and likely praying prayers that are inconsistent with the Father's will (this is more fully explained below).

There are some additional points that are small but important from the Greek text. For instance, Paul used a word with the sense of “*what*” and put a definite article before it (the sense is “*the what*” to pray for). Furthermore, he used another term (*dei*) that has the sense of necessity (this term is like saying a triangle *must* have three sides—it is absolutely necessary). God believes there are some *necessities* in prayer, but we do not always ask for what is crucial. Perhaps because we must suffer some things (and we ask for the suffering to end), we are not asking for what is necessary (God help us through this, not be free from it), and the Holy Spirit must correct the prayer (in regard to this thought, see Rom. 5:3).

If the Holy Spirit sometimes helps with our prayers, does Jesus also help? Do both the Son and Spirit intercede for us? Yes. Both Jesus and the Spirit intercede for Christians. This should not be surprising because Jesus sanctifies us (Heb. 2:11) and so does the Father (1 Thess. 5:23). Even the Spirit is involved with sanctification (Rom. 15:16). If three members of the Godhead can all sanctify man, why is it difficult to accept that two members of the Godhead intercede for the saved in prayer?

The first part of verse 27 seems to refer to the Father. God “*searches the hearts of men.*” Perhaps the idea is that the Father uses the Spirit to carry out this task. Compare 1 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; and 1 Thess. 2:4. Before the New Testament was written, *searcheth (ereunao)* described animals that sniffed out or tracked down their prey (CBL, GED, 2:592). Here the word is in the present tense and indicates that God the Father understands the reasons why some of a Christian's prayers are not acceptable to heaven. Whether praying or not, God is always aware of what is going on in our minds. For the faithful Christian, this should be a great comfort. For the unfaithful Christian, this should be an incentive to return to God.

God also knows “*the mind of the Spirit*” (the Holy Spirit). The Father is so closely connected to this member of the Godhead that He knows what the Spirit is thinking. This illustrates the close-knit relationship and oneness of the Godhead. *Mind (phronema)* is found only four times in the New Testament, and each place is in Rom. 8 (the term is found twice in verse 6, once in verse 7, and here). In the present text it describes the “*whole sphere of the Spirit's personality—thoughts, will, desires, and reasonings*” (CBL, GED, 6:457). Because the thought process is so closely connected within the Godhead, the Spirit always prays in accordance with the Father's will. It may also be concluded from verse 27 that the Spirit never issues a prayer that contradicts the Father's will; this is suggested by the words “*according to the will of God.*” This indicates God is the standard. Since we do not always know the Father's will, and in times of great grief may pray for things that are wrong, or may be too grief stricken to pray, the Spirit helps us, and He uses a divine standard to both measure and carry out His work.

Two points may be offered on verse 27. The word “*intercession*” (*entunchano*) is in the present tense and this same term is applied to Jesus in verse 34. Notice too that it is the Holy Spirit that intercedes for saints, not the Catholic view of *saints* (deceased people) interceding for those still living.

8:28: *And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, (even) to them that are called according to (his) purpose.*

Paul has argued that there are times when the Spirit makes intercession for God's people. Here he brought to light another truth: All things work together for God's people. This includes the *suffering* that is emphasized in this chapter. God can bring good things from the worst tragedies, and His ultimate good (plan) is our being “*conformed to the image*” of Jesus (verse 29).

It should be understood that “*loving God*” includes obedience (Jn. 14:15). The promise made in verse 28 is only to those who have obeyed the gospel and continue to be faithful to the Lord. The word for *love* is *agapao*, the same term used in places like Jn. 3:16. Here it is a present tense verb. Secular writers rarely spoke of *agape* love, and when they did, it was never in the sense found in the New Testament (unconditional love).

Towards the end of verse 28, Paul referred to those who have been “called” (*kletos*). This idea will be further developed in verses 29-30. For now, it should be observed that the promise in 28a is limited to those who are “called according to God’s purpose.” Only those who are called have this and all other spiritual blessings. The method of God’s calling is made known in verses 29-30; here it may be said the Scriptures reflect three aspects of God calling people. (1) All are called to come through Jesus (Rom. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 1:24). (2) A called person is someone who has obeyed the gospel (Jn. 6:45). (3) Being called is essentially synonymous with being a Christian (Jude 1).

8:29-30: *For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained (to be) conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: 30 and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

There is a link between verse 28 and the material in these two verses. This link is based upon the word “foreknew” (*proginosko*). The Bible teaches that God has foreknowledge (see Isa. 46:10; Isa. 44:28-45:7; 1 Kgs. 13:2; Acts 2:23; Eph. 3:10-11; Jn. 6:64; and Jn. 6:6). God knows the future. He knows about every thought, event, and sin that will occur. However, this knowledge *does not affect* the future. That is, even though God knows the choices people will make, all humans still retain the ability to do what they want. God does not interfere with man’s ability to choose; He simply knows the choices that will be made. Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him (Jn. 6:64), but this foreknowledge did not affect Judas’ ability to befriend or betray the Lord. This is a difficult fact for mortal man to understand, but this is what Scripture teaches.

Paul has already claimed that God can bring good things from terrible situations (verse 28). How can God do this? One of God’s tools to fulfill this promise is His foreknowledge. Because God knows what the future holds, He is in a position to help us.

In verses 29-30, it is said that God *foreknew* people. That is, before people were born God knew about them (compare Isa. 46:10). God not only knows the exact time we will be born, He knows the date of our death before we are conceived! He knew that we would be born even before our parents met each other. As Isaiah said, God declares the *end from the beginning*. Even the book of Acts (2:23) offers a partial demonstration of this principle. According to Peter God knew from the “beginning” that sin would enter into the world and man would need salvation. Hence, Christ was *foreknown* and the church was in the *eternal purpose of God* (Eph. 3:10-11).

In verse 29, Paul said God made use of His foreknowledge. Since God knew who would choose to accept the gospel and who would reject it, He “foreordained” some people (the KJV says “predestined”). The thoughts expressed by Paul may be easily understood with a diagram.

SOME WILL BE GLORIFIED. Why?



BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED. How were they justified?



THEY WERE CALLED. How were they called?



BY THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (2 THESS. 2:14). Who heard this message?



THOSE WHO HAD BEEN FOREORDAINED. Who was foreordained?



THOSE GOD FOREKNEW.

God knew who would respond to the gospel and who would not because of His foreknowledge. Instead of selecting some to be saved and some to be lost (a doctrine held by some in the denominational world), God knew the choices people would make. This corresponds with Rev. 17:8, a passage that says names were written in the lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. While the ASV uses the word *foreordained*, the KJV, as noted above, says "*predestined*." The original term (*proorizo*) occurs only six times in the New Testament (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11). As stated above, God knows the future, but this does not prevent Him from giving mankind the freedom to choose salvation or condemnation (be sure to read Lk. 7:30). Those who use their free will to access salvation have been *foreordained*, and this foreordination is based upon *God's foreknowledge*. God does not base it upon His own arbitrary choice. For an additional illustration of this concept, see Acts 2:23. Jesus had the choice of dying or not dying on the cross. Though the Lord had free will, the Father knew what He would do. If *foreordination (predestination, KJV)* means man has no choice about responding to God, then *God's foreknowledge* (verse 29, "*also*") means that all other events in life are set by Him and cannot be altered in any way. From whom we date, where we got to school, whom we marry, the number of children we have, etc. is controlled by God if the denominational doctrine of predestination is true. Another refutation of this false doctrine is found in Rev. 22:17. John said, "Whosoever will may come." This passage may be combined with Jn. 3:16 to show that all people can obey the gospel and be saved. The potential to become a child of God is available to everyone (2 Pet. 3:9; Tit. 2:11). "Scripturally, predestination is never related to any person outside Christ. It always refers to those whom God foreknew would be in Christ (Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 1:5, 11)" (CBL, Romans, p. 137).

There are two very important points at the end of verse 29. The first is found in the phrase, "*to be conformed to the image of His Son*." Some understand this to mean, "Be more like Christ in daily life." This is a possible explanation, but the context suggests a different interpretation. In the previous verses, Paul spoke of suffering and the glory that will come to God's people. Thus, the *conforming* seems to be related to these things. When the resurrection occurs, God's people will be changed. Christians will somehow share in the glory of Christ's body and thus be "*conformed to the image of His son*" (compare 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2). When the saved are finally glorified, they will stop *falling short of God's glory* (3:23). This is a spiritual blessing that will only be realized in eternity. Further proof for this view being correct is found in the fact that *conformed (summorphos)* is used only here and Phil. 3:21: "*who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, (that it may be) conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.*"

The remaining idea in verse 29 is expressed by, "*the firstborn among many brethren*." The word *firstborn (protokos)* is also used in Col. 1:15. This term is one that is frequently misused by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Those affiliated with this religious group fervently allege that *firstborn* means Jesus was the first created thing. While the word *firstborn* sometimes refers to *prominence*, it also refers to *status*. When Jesus is described as the *firstborn*, the term describes His status. It is an affirmation of the Lord's priority, dignity, and supremacy (Vine 1:389) or His "rights, privileges, and prerogatives" (CBL, GED, 5:375). Jesus is first and supreme. He is number one. The word *firstborn* also indicates that Jesus became part of the human race. He did not function as a spectator and watch humanity from a distance. No one can match the qualifications and qualities possessed by the Lord because He was both human and divine (Rom. 1:3-4). Other verses in the New Testament also refer to Jesus as the *firstborn* (these include Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5), and while these deal with something different (His being the *firstborn of the dead*), even these references are "expressive of honor, dignity, or pre-eminence" (Spicq, 3:211-212). For information on verse 30, see the preceding chart.

8:31-32: *What then shall we say to these things? If God (is) for us, who (is) against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?*

The 31st verse begins with a question—“*What then shall we say to these things?*” Paul used this type of question earlier in this book to draw conclusions (3:1, 5, 9; 4:1; 6:1, 15; 7:7). Here the conclusions are based on the things previously discussed in this chapter.

This chapter begins by saying there is no condemnation in Christ (8:1) and we are free from the law of sin and death (8:2). God gives us life and peace (8:6). The Spirit dwells in us (8:9). We are led by the Spirit (8:14) and the Spirit testifies that we are God’s children (8:16). The Spirit groans with our afflictions (8:26). He intercedes for us (8:27) and He works in our lives (8:28). Christians have been foreknown by God and foreordained (8:29). Saved believers have been called to eternal life (8:30). In view of these things, Paul asked, *What shall we say about these things?* In verses 31-39 there are 7 questions that demonstrate the security Christians have in Christ.

One of these questions is at the end of verse 31: “*If God is for us, who is against us?*” The word *if* means *since*. Because God is on our side, who can successfully oppose us? Who can be a worthy opponent? The obvious answer is no one because the greatest power in the universe is on our side.

Lanier said “The ‘since’ is an important point to notice. There have been times when Christians and religious people have said, ‘If you love me God...’. That is the wrong thing to say. This ‘if’ suggests (implies) that God may not love us. He does. This is something to always be remembered.”

One way to remember this is illustrated by McGuiggan (pp. 258-259). He said “I recall an incident in my own life which comes to my mind each time I reflect on this precious verse. My wife and I were living in very humble surroundings (to say the least). A young couple we had led to the Lord were blessed with a fine little house. (It wasn’t much at all, but it seemed a lot to us then.) I well remember my envy and my bitterness. I complained vehemently to God. ‘How is it,’ I wanted to know, ‘that these who have only arrived in your service should already be blessed in a way we have been denied?’ (Juvenile, isn’t it?! A little embarrassing even today after so long a time.) And as I reflected on his Word I could ‘hear’ him tell me: ‘Come on, Jim, you know I love you more deeply than you can know. Don’t let a thing like this bother you.’ But how could he love me when he permitted us to live in such poverty? I mean, another little house shouldn’t be a hard thing for the great Lord of the universe to provide. If he loved me, he would do it! And again I could ‘hear’ him say: **IF** I loved you? What do you mean **IF** I loved you. Haven’t I made that clear once-and-for-all in giving my Son for you?”

Yes, I knew all that. But if he **really** loved me....And still he pursued me: ‘What do you mean **IF I really** loved you? Isn’t the gift of Christ enough to make that clear?’ True, but the little house would put the mark of undoubted certainty on it. Surely that’s not too much to ask?! But still he would not let me alone and his Word bore on into my heart: ‘Is my gift so trivial that a little dingy house would perfect it and make it impressive? Hasn’t your rebellious heart cheapened the gift of my Son? Isn’t it sad that you will suspend a decision about my love for you on whether or not you get a little house? Even though I have poured out my love on you beyond words?’ Ah, what fools we are.”

The next verse (32) contains an argument from the greater to the lesser. Paul stated that God did not “*spare his own Son.*” The word translated *spare* (*pheidomai*) is also found in the LXX (Gen. 22:12 is the reference). The Old Testament tells us that Abraham was able to *spare* Isaac and offer a substitute. Jesus was not spared (rescued from doom or trouble). There are other occurrences of this word in the New Testament, and two of these which are especially interesting are 2 Pet. 2:4, 5.

Not only did God give His Son, Jesus was “*delivered*” (*paradidomi*). That is, the devil was allowed to have a field day with the Lord. God delivered His Son into the world with no strings attached. This is why the devil was able to tempt the Lord in the wilderness for the entire 40-day period, and why Satan only departed *for a season* (Lk. 4:13). Christ was also not spared from dealing with Judas, Pilate, and the Jews. Jesus was “*freely given*” so He could be “*tempted in all points*” like we are (Heb. 4:15). The Father could not have offered a greater gift to mankind.

With this great fact in mind, Paul pointed to a less important detail. If God was willing to give up

His only Son, will He not also be willing to *give us all things*? The answer is yes. If God was willing to part with the greatest, He will surely be willing to part with what is not the greatest.

8:33-34: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; 34 who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Some New Testament passages use imagery from courtrooms and the judicial system, and here is an example of this imagery. Paul asked who will be able to “*lay anything to the charge of God's elect*?” That is, who will be able to successfully charge God's people with sin?

The word *charge* (*enkaleo*) meant “to come forward as accuser against, bring a charge against” (Thayer, p. 166). “Romans 8:33 describes the scene of a heavenly court, before which no prosecutor can stand to speak against the believer” (CBL, GED, 2:209). Helpful cross-references are Acts 19:40—*question*; 23:28, 29—*questions*; and 26:2, 7, because each of these verses has this same word. Paul answered this question with his next thought. In fact, it may be helpful to reverse the two statements in verse 33. Verse 33b says that God justifies His people, and the verb “*justify*” (*dikaioo*) is in the present tense. Since the saved are continuously *justified* (God views them as if they have never sinned), *who can bring and prove a charge of sin*? The answer is clear. No one can charge a Christian with sin. Not even Satan is capable of this. Though the devil may attempt to charge sin to those who are justified and may offer accusations on the Day of Judgment, his charges will be thrown out of court.

When a criminal case is brought to trial, the person charged with a crime is pronounced either guilty or not guilty. The same will be true on the Day of Judgment. Some will be innocent because they are justified and others will be “*condemned*” (verse 34). Paul said “*Christ*” will do the condemning. This corresponds with verses that portray Jesus as the final judge (Jn. 5:22, 27). All the unsaved will be condemned at the end of time, but the process is also occurring at the present moment because *condemneth* (*katakrino*) is a present tense verb.

Because Jesus has a perfect understanding of the human race, He is the perfect judge. Jesus so fully experienced humanity that He “*died*” (verse 34). Because of the Lord's experiences on earth, no one will be able to say to Him, “You don't understand.” Jesus fully understands humanity. Because He has been raised to a position of power, He will have the authority to dispense an eternal sentence that is just. He will also be able to save obedient believers because He “*intercedes*” (*entunchano*, the same word applied to the Holy Spirit in verse 27) for those who are saved. In both places this term is in the present tense. Jesus' death and His continuing work will save everyone who has obeyed the gospel.

Based upon what Paul wrote we know that no one will be able to successfully charge God's people with sin on the Day of Judgment. The opposite of this will also be true, though Paul did not state it. When all appear before Jesus, the unsaved will not have anyone to defend them against eternal condemnation. No one will be able to successfully argue that the unsaved should be spared from punishment.

An important but often misunderstood word in verse 33 is “*elect*” (*eklektos*), a word that occurs about 25 times in the New Testament and is sometimes rendered “chosen.” In this book, it is found only here and Rom. 16:13. As noted in the previous chart, people are *elected* or *chosen* by hearing and responding to the gospel. While Paul used this word as an adjective in Rom. 8:33, Jesus used it as a verb (Jn. 6:70, *eklegomai*), and what the Lord said is very interesting. Jesus *elected* one of the apostles (Judas), and this choice came through exposure to the truths of God, but Judas was a “devil.” Being *elect* (exposed to and even accepting the gospel) is no guarantee of salvation. We must be faithful to our calling (the Word of God) no matter what the cost (Rev. 2:10b).

8:35-37: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than*

conquerors through him that loved us.

Paul has already asked three important questions. The first question is in 8:31 (Who is against us?). The second is in verse 33 (Who can bring a charge against the elect?). The third is found in verse 34 (Who can condemn us?). Paul's fourth question is, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" There is no force in the world that is powerful enough to separate us from God. Only we can separate ourselves from God.

The usual word for "separate" is *aphorizo*, a word that meant "mark off boundaries" and "set apart." Here the word is *chorizo*. This word is used thirteen times in the New Testament (in Mt. 19:6 it describes divorce), and the idea in Romans 8 is that nothing can divorce us from Jesus or even "put a distance between Christ's love and us" (Earle, *Word Meanings In The New Testament*, p. 185). *Chorizo* appears again in verse 39 of this chapter. Paul's word for "love" is *agape*, the same term used in Rom. 5:8.

The seven outside forces described in verse 35 are "tribulation," "anguish" ("distress," KJV), "persecution," "famine," "nakedness," "peril," and "sword." Each of these words "has its own special terror" (McGuiggan, p. 260). The words *tribulation* and *anguish* are used in 2:9 to describe the punishment for evildoers. *Tribulation* (*thlipsis*) described, if we use modern terms, "a bind." Other places where this word occurs shows how it affects Christians. Jesus warned that prior to the destruction of Jerusalem some would face this problem (Mt. 24:9, the KJV renders this word "affliction"). Jesus promised His people that they would suffer this problem in the world (Jn. 16:33, same word), and early Christians were warned about facing this problem in abundance (Acts 14:22). While all Christians can overcome *tribulations* through Christ, Jesus said that not all choose to endure (see Mt. 13:21 where this same term also occurs). Additional uses of this word include a figurative sense to describe childbirth (Jn. 16:21), the benefits of tribulation (Rom. 5:3), the fact that tribulation is temporary and inconsequential when compared to the spiritual (2 Cor. 4:17), the Lord's knowledge of our tribulations (Rev. 2:9), and the need to be patient when tribulation comes (Rom. 12:12).

A secular example of someone who suffered *tribulation* was Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888). Mr. Spafford is credited with authoring the song *It Is Well With My Soul*. "As a young man Spafford had established a most successful legal practice in Chicago....Some months prior to the Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford had invested heavily in real estate on the shore of Lake Michigan, and his holdings were wiped out by this disaster. Just before this he had experienced the death of his son. Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters as well as wishing to join and assist Moody and Sankey in one of their campaigns in Great Britain, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in 1873. In November of that year, due to unexpected last minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago; but he sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled on the *S.S. Ville du Havre*. He expected to follow in a few days. On November 22 the ship was struck by the *Lochearn*, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed in Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, 'Saved alone.' Shortly afterward Spafford left by ship to join his bereaved wife. It is speculated that on the sea near the area where it was thought his four daughters had drowned, Spafford penned this text with words so significantly describing his own personal grief - 'When sorrows like sea billows roll...'" (Kenneth Osbeck, 101 Hymn Stories, p. 127).

The word translated *anguish* (*stenochoria*) stressed closeness and a lack of space. The term is used only here; Rom. 2:9; 2 Cor. 6:4; and 2 Cor. 12:10. It described the distress that arises from difficult circumstances (Vine, "Anguish"). Thayer (p. 587) says the word is a metaphor for "dire calamity, extreme affliction." Ernest Gordon (p. 199) said, "Only exceptionally are Christians called on to win the palm of martyrdom, but the experience of 'tight places' is a universal one." Willmington suggests *tribulation* is associated with *outward* pressure and *anguish* (distress) is *inward* pressure.

The word rendered *persecution* (*diogmos*) meant to "pursue" or "persecute." The verb form of this word is found 45 times in the New Testament (EDNT, 1:338). In most of these passages, the word describes the persecution of Christians (compare Mt. 5:10-12; 1 Cor. 15:9). Here the word is a noun, and as a noun, the first time it occurs in the New Testament is Mt. 13:21. Luke used the noun form of

this word in Acts 8:1 to describe an intense persecution. Even the Thessalonian Christians faced this problem (2 Thes. 1:4, same word). A modern description for this word is “religious persecution.” “The anti-Christian principles of the world’s system are bound to clash with the values and morality of God-fearing Christians” (CBL, GED, 2:155).

The next problem is described by the word *famine* (*limos*). This word is used nearly a dozen times in the New Testament. It literally meant “an absence of food” (Earle, p. 185). This problem was especially troublesome in ancient times. The Old Testament refers to famines about one hundred times and uses three different words to describe this problem. Jesus used this same word to describe a time prior to Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D. (Mt. 24:7), and Paul said this condition often described his state (2 Cor. 11:27, “*hunger*”).

To us, *nakedness* describes the public exposure of most or all the body; in the New Testament, this word (*gumnotes*) meant a lack of proper clothing. Some are poor and “unable to dress themselves adequately” (EDNT, 1:265). The term is used three times (here; 2 Cor. 11:27; Rev. 3:18). Another form of the word occurs in fifteen other places (Mt. 25:36, 38, 43, 44; Mk. 14:51, 52; Jn. 21:7; Acts 19:16; 1 Cor. 15:37; 2 Cor. 5:3; Heb. 4:13; Jas. 2:15; Rev. 3:17; 16:15; 17:16).

The word translated *peril* (*kindunos*) meant “danger, risk.” The only other place where this word is found is 2 Cor. 11:26, a passage that uses this word *eight times!* Paul knew the meaning of *peril*. The words *peril* and *sword* (the word *sword* may be thought of as slaughter or total destruction) bring the progression of a Christian’s potential problems to a climax. Even the most dangerous situations and death itself cannot separate a Christian from the Lord’s love. The word *sword* also suggests that Christians may lose their lives because they believe in and suffer for the Lord.

Paul based the information about suffering on the Old Testament (Ps. 44:22). This Psalm looked forward to the time when people would be Christians, and it predicted that the sufferings would be intense (“*killed*” and “*all the day long*”).

Even though God’s people must face difficult times, Christians are “*more than conquerors.*” The word “*but*” is a strong contrast. Christians may go through great suffering, but they are the true winners.

The expression *more than conquerors* “is all one word in the Greek—*hypernikomen*. It is compounded of *hyper* (Latin *super*), meaning ‘above,’ and *nikao*, from *nike*, ‘victory.’ So it means literally ‘we are super victors’” (Earle, p. 186). “For the Christian victory is not half hearted or feeble. Our victory is like the 222 to 0 football score of one school over another during the early part of the century” (Allen, p. 83). The word that Paul used means that Christians will vanquish and overcome all obstacles (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:399).

There was an ancient god named *Nike* (the god of victory). Since Paul used a form of this word, the implied meaning is that Christians are much more than survivors. The people of God are “super conquerors.” Ernest Gordon (p. 199) said, “Earthly conquerors are victors in victory; more than conquerors are those who rise above defeat.”

8:38-39: *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul was “*persuaded*” (convinced) that other things in life are also incapable of separating us from God’s love. Since the perfect tense is used in the Greek text, Paul had become convinced of this in the past and was still convinced of this when this letter was written. Paul used ten of the most extreme things in life to show that whatever happens to us, we will not be separated from God’s love. These extremes are extremes of *existence* (death and life), extremes of *created beings* (angels and demons), extremes of *time* (the present and the future), extremes in our *enemies* (powers), extremes in *space* (height and depth), and extremes in *everything that has been created* (39a).

Whether we are alive or dead Christians are in the presence of Jehovah God. “In life we live with Christ; in death we die with Him; and because we die with Him, we also rise with Him; and death so far from being a separation is only a step into His nearer presence” (Barclay, Romans, p. 123).

The word “*death*” appears to describe death in its broadest form. Those who are *in Christ* are not separated from their Lord at death (Lk. 16:22, 25). Neither are God’s people separated from the Lord if they die a horrible death (Acts 7:56, 59). The word “*life*” seems to be closely associated with problems and temptations. No matter what happens in daily life, we cannot be separated from God’s love. The word *life* may have also meant that those who persecuted Christians offered to spare the lives of any who renounced the Lord. Christians knew that these offers were irrelevant because God’s people are “more than conquerors” through Jesus. Matthew Henry suggests that *life* and *death* mean: “the terrors of death on the one hand” and “the comforts and pleasures of life on the other.” Whether we live or die, we cannot be separated from the love of God. Vine’s comment (1:391) is also thoughtful: “Life is more dangerous for the believer than death.”

The word “*angels*” may describe good angels and the word “*principalities*” (*powers*, KJV) may describe evil angels because *principalities* is used in Eph. 6:12. The term *principalities* (*arche*) may also describe human governments. No spiritual force (good or bad) can undo our relationship with God. If the word *angels* describes actual angels, Matthew Henry’s observation is exactly right. He said, “The good angels will not [separate us from Christ’s love, BP], the bad shall not; and neither can. The good angels are engaged friends, the bad are restrained enemies.”

The things in the “*present*” and whatever is in the *future* are also incapable of separating us from God’s love. The *things of the present* are probably our present sufferings (8:18); these are the “things of today.”

The *future* describes the “things of tomorrow.” We may also say that the events of time and the events of eternity will not separate us from God’s love.

The words “*height*” and “*depth*” describe space. In the ancient world Hypsoma was the god of high places and Bathos was god of the deep (CBL, Romans, p. 141). There is no distance or pagan god that can separate us from God’s love. Barclay (Romans, p. 124) said *height* and *depth* are “astrological terms. The ancient world was haunted by the tyranny of the stars. They believed that a man was born under a certain star and thereby his destiny was settled. There are some who still believe that; but the ancient world was really haunted by this supposed domination of a man’s life by the influence of the stars. *Height* (*hupsoma*) was the time when a star was at its zenith, and when its influence was greatest; *depth* (*bathos*), was the time when a star was at its lowest, waiting to rise and to put its influence on some man. Paul says to these haunted men of his age: ‘The stars cannot hurt you. In their rising and their setting they are powerless to separate you from God’s love.’”

The love of God is “*in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” Paul believed in *eternal security*, but this security is only for those who are *in Christ*. Some can enter into Christ (Gal. 3:27) and then leave Him (Gal. 5:4). If we leave the Lord, we have lost both our security and our salvation. We decide whether we will stay in or depart from the Lord and His body. If we choose to abide in Him, there is no force that can separate us from God’s love.

McGuigan (pp. 260-261) sums up this section by saying, “Paul took one good long look at the Cross of the Master and from that time forth said: ‘I cannot be convinced that God doesn’t love me!’ He treats us to another one of his incredible **I AM**’s. ‘I am persuaded,’ he said, ‘and there’s nothing in this world or out of it that can change my mind.’ When sickening brutality comes hounding him and asking him: ‘Well, how do you view God’s supposed love now?’ Paul has an answer. If God was able, at the cross of Christ, to take cruelty and sin at their most brutal and senseless level and work redemption for the world through it; if God could do that, then he has made it clear that he is the Lord of brutality and cruelty. My pain and my suffering; your pain and your affliction can be used by God to bring him glory and us, salvation and joy! Believe it!

This man, in essence, has told us: ‘If I had children and they were starving to death, bellies distended, eyes sunken, too weak to cry, but able yet to beg with the eyes for food, of me their father who could provide nothing; if that were the case, I’d remain unconvinced that God didn’t love me. If I had a wife who was being raped and humiliated before my very eyes; and if her cries for help were going up endlessly to her husband who could only watch in frustration. This wouldn’t convince me that God doesn’t love me. And if they were torturing me until I was on the verge of insanity; and if I pleaded with blood-red earnestness to God to bring this all to a halt, and prayed to no avail—this

wouldn't convince me that God doesn't love me!

And what is all that based on? An emotional surge? The possession of the comforts of life? Having a sound mind and enjoying a sound body? Is this the basis of his conviction? Are these the things which lead him to defy everything in heaven? Were it so, when these things were taken away the conviction would be gone. This conviction is based on the historical and historic work of God in Christ Jesus. Dorothy Sayers was right—after Jesus Christ nothing else is really real! Let no man say, Because of war and famine and disease I cannot believe in a loving God. Let him look back to Golgotha and see the divine exhibition which took place in the midst of war and cursing and wickedness. To the time and place where God said: **I DO** love you. I will **ALWAYS** love you. Trust me!”

Before beginning the next chapter some additional passages should be read to set the stage for what follows. The first passage to read is Rom. 3:1-2; this shows that the Jews had some definite advantages. Another passage to read is Rom. 2:17. The Jewish people understood their advantages and they “*gloried*” in what they had. A third passage to be examined is Deut. 7:6. There was a time when the Jews were God's special people. Both Paul and his readers knew that the Jews had been the chosen. In the next chapter Paul began to answer the question, “What will become of these chosen people if salvation is only found by faith in Christ?”