

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 8:18-39.

In Romans 8:18-39, Paul continues to teach the security and assurance of believers in Christ.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 8:18-39 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 8:18-39 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 8:18-39. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is from Romans 8:18-28. Christians are secure, because even in the present sufferings, they are sustained by hope in the renewal of all things, by the help of the Holy Spirit and by knowing God's sovereign control of every circumstance. Three facts encourage Christians amidst their present sufferings: The future renewal of everything, the present intercession of the Holy Spirit and the eternal sovereign control of God over everything that happens. God is working for, in and over Christians! Romans 8:18-25 teaches that God is *working for the future of Christians*. Hope in God's future renewal of everything, including the resurrection of their mortal bodies, sustains Christians amidst their sufferings. Romans 8:26-27 teaches that God is *working in Christians*. The Holy Spirit continually helps Christians in their weakness. He especially intercedes for them, praying according to God's perfect will for the very needs, they cannot express in words. Romans 8:28 teaches that God is *working over Christians*. God sovereignly controls everything that happens to them during their life.

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 8:29-30. Christians are secure, because they are the objects of God's eternal plan of salvation. Christians are predestined to the attainment of eternal life (cf. 2 Thes2:13-15; 2 Tim 1:9). God's eternal purpose for Christians is their *complete* salvation from beginning to end! God's electing love is the beginning of their salvation and God's pre-eminent glory is the final goal of their salvation. All the parts of God's plan of salvation are inseparably connected. The people whom he chose (foreknew and predestined), he calls, justifies and glorifies! Their sanctification that leads to glorification is the result of God's plan of salvation. Therefore actual sanctification in the life of Christians is evidence of their election (cf. Eph 1:4-5). Thus, God works out everything in conformity with his eternal purpose (cf. Eph 1:11).

(S) An important truth for me is from Romans 8:31-34. Christians are secure, because God is for and not against them and has given to them everything required completing his eternal purpose for them.

One. If God is *for* Christians, who can be *against* them? If God has set them free from the law of sin and death (from the dominating and controlling power of their sinful nature), has renewed them by his indwelling Spirit, recognises them as his own children and heirs, has predestined them to justification, holiness and final glorification, then who can be against them (8:31)?

Two. If God has done the greater, he will not leave the less undone! If God has completed his work of salvation through Jesus Christ, he will certainly complete his work of salvation in believers, whom he calls "the chosen ones of God" (8:33)! If God in his eternal purpose gave his own Son, Jesus Christ, for Christians, he will certainly in time give to Christians everything they need for their complete salvation! God's infinite love for Christians cannot and will not fail Christians (8:32)! If God is the Final Judge who justifies those whom he has chosen, then no one's accusations count anymore! The four reasons why no one can condemn Christians anymore are Christ's death, resurrection, enthronement and continual intercession.

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 8:34-39. Christians are secure, because the love of God for them is infinite and unchangeable.

One. Christians are *more than conquerors over people*, because no human being can separate them from God's infinite love for them. No one whom Christians face in the world can hinder God from accomplishing his eternal purpose with Christians! God not only deprives sufferings, which people inflict on Christians, from doing any real harm to Christians,

but he even sovereignly uses these sufferings to contribute to the ultimate good of Christians! The sufferings, which Christians suffer, enlarge the final glory of their victory (8:35-37).

Two. Christians are *more than conquerors over things*, because nothing in creation can separate them from God's infinite love for them. Nothing Christians face in the secular world, in the spirit world, in the present or future world is able to separate them from God's love for them! In order to prevent despondency from even the possibility of getting a foothold, Paul adds that "no created thing" shall be able to separate Christians from God's love!

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 8:18-39 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (8:18-25). How does hope sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

(T) Romans 8:18-25 describes *God's work for the future of Christians*. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by the hope in God's promised future renewal of everything, including the resurrection of their mortal bodies.

One. The subjection of the present creation to frustration and decay *is temporary*. God subjected the whole material and irrational creation to *frustration*, that is, to share in the curse of fallen man. The present creation is *transitory*, is bound to *decay* and therefore groans under its *purposelessness*. It groans because it does not achieve the proper purpose, which God intended for it. The various parts of creation groan together as a grand symphony of sighs (8:22). However, its groaning is not hopeless, but is like the groaning of an expecting mother. It knows that after the agony of its travail, glory will certainly come. Also Christians groan inwardly and wait eagerly for the revelation of this future glory. Christians have the Holy Spirit as *the first fruits* or *deposit*, which guarantees that they will possess this future inheritance of glory (8:23).

Two. The future renewal of all things is a matter of hope, future certainty and future reality! In the future, at the renewal of all things (cf. Acts 3:21), the whole creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and share in the future glory of Christians. Hebrews 12:26-29 says that at the second coming of Christ, the whole creation will be shaken. "Whatever can be shaken, will be removed". God in the white heat of his holiness and purity will consume everything that is unworthy of him (Heb 12:29). Christ's angels will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil (Mt 13:41).

However, "whatever cannot be shaken, will remain". God's kingdom that Christians share with Christ is unshakable (Heb 12:28). Heaven and earth will be renewed, heaven with its perfect conditions will come down to earth and earth will become the home of Christians (Rev 21:1-5). The world will be clothed in new beauty. The mountains will turn into fertile fields (Isa 29:17) and deserts will rejoice and blossom (Isa 35:1-2; 32:15-16). The harmony of heaven will come down to earth, so that whatever still works at cross-purposes, choking one another to death, will then live and work in harmony. For example, the wild animals will dwell in peace together (Isa 11:1-9). Christians will be manifested in their true character as sons of God (8:19). The full glory of their adoption as sons will then be completely realised, especially in the resurrection of their physical bodies (8:23).

Christians are characterised by having hope in this future renewal of all things! Christians are *saved by faith* and their *salvation is sustained by hope*, that is, their present salvation is conditioned by hope and oriented to hope. *Christians know that the salvation they now possess is incomplete and that the future final and complete salvation is a matter of hope as well as a matter of future certainty and reality!* Although Christians cannot see the object of their hope with their human eyes, this future renewal of all things is nevertheless a certain future reality! Therefore, Christian wait for it patiently, that is, they bear the present sufferings on earth with endurance (8:25).

2nd Question. (8:26-27) How does the Holy Spirit sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

(S) Romans 8:26-27 describes *God's work in Christians*. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by the continual help of the Holy Spirit in all their weaknesses, especially by his intercession for them. The Holy Spirit prays according to God's perfect will for the very needs, which Christians cannot express in words.

One. The Holy Spirit helps Christians in all their weaknesses. "In the same way" means, just as hope in the glorious future sustains Christians in their *present sufferings*, likewise the Holy Spirit helps them in their *present weaknesses*. The Spirit is represented as humbly taking upon himself a part of the burden of sorrows, which Christians bear and as continuously coming to the aid of Christians. The *weaknesses* may be any kind of weakness (Heb 4:15; 2 Cor 12:5):

either the ordinary sufferings of a broken world or the specific sufferings for Christ's sake. It is certainly not restricted to their weakness in the matter of prayer!

Two. The Holy Spirit helps Christians especially in the needs, which they either can't express or don't even know. There is always moral and spiritual failure on the part of Christians, so that they come short of what they ought to be, do or pray. Christians do not always know what they ought to pray for, that is, what prayer suits a particular situation. Although they know what to pray for generally, they often do not know what to pray for in any particular need, difficulty or situation. They are not sure if the prayer content is in harmony with God's will (cf. 1 Jn 5:14). Christians often do not even know the deeply hidden needs of their own heart. Therefore they cannot express them in their prayers.

But the Holy Spirit knows the real needs of Christians, both the needs Christians cannot express in words as well as the needs they do not even know they have. As a true Advocate, the Holy Spirit identifies himself with the real needs of Christians and intercedes with God that these needs be met! Because the Spirit's way of thinking is God's way of thinking, the Spirit's intercession is perfect and must always be effective! It never fails! That is why not a single genuine Christian is ever lost (8:29-30). That is also why nothing happens to Christians, which does not first have God's permission. That is also why nothing happens to Christians, which does not genuinely contribute to the attainment of God's perfect plan for them (8:28)!

3rd Question. (8:28-30). How does God's sovereign control of every circumstance sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

(T) Romans 8:28-30 describes God's work *over* Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by God's sovereign control of everything that happens to them.

One. God has sovereign control over the particular circumstances of Christians. Christians are not immune from suffering. Nevertheless, they know that to those who love God, all things work together for good; that is, to those who are called according to his purpose" (8:28). This is a great comfort, encouragement and assurance only for Christians, only for those who love God continuously. Christians know this comfort, encouragement and assurance by personal experience, by the experience of other believers and by the teachings of the Bible. Both good and bad situations cooperate together to attain God's perfect plan. Every single circumstance works together with all the other circumstances to accomplish God's perfect plan for each Christian. Many of the things happening to Christians are evil in themselves, but due to God's perfect love, grace and wisdom, God makes even those evil things work together for good to both the individual Christian and to the progress of his kingdom and glory. Ultimately, not one detail works for evil to Christians!

Two. God has sovereign control over the complete salvation of Christians. God has an eternal plan, which cannot and will not fail (cf. Isa 14:24,27)! From the beginning God chose Christians to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called them to this through the gospel, so that they might share in the glory of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Thes 2:13-14 and Rom 8:29-30).

God works out his eternal plan in time (cf. Eph 1:10). *What God had purposed in eternity, he works out in time. God is always first, not only in what he purposed in eternity, but also in what he works out in time.* At some time in history, he takes the initiative to call those people, whom he chose in eternity. He calls them by sending other Christians to preach the gospel to them. He calls them through the outward call of the gospel that is preached and through the inner call of the Holy Spirit that regenerates them and gives them faith to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. *The outward call* of the gospel is not always effective (cf. Mt 22:14). There are always people who hear the gospel, but do not respond to it or even reject it. But *the inner call* of God is always effective (cf. 1:7)! That is why John 6:44 and 37 teaches that, when God sovereignly draws people to Christ, they will certainly come to Christ and they will certainly be saved! And that is why Romans 8:29-30 teaches that the person God calls is justified and the person that is justified is glorified. God sovereignly controls the complete salvation of Christians from beginning to end!

There is one final end that is more ultimate than the glorification of believers and that is the pre-eminence of Christ! Christ will always remain the "firstborn among many brothers" (8:29). Christ never considers himself completely apart from the people that he came to save (Heb 2:11). That is why Christians are called his brothers. But among all these brothers, Christ is pre-eminent! That is why he is called the firstborn. The expression "first-born" is admirably suited to describe Jesus as the one coming forth from God to found the new community of saints, the brotherhood of Christians, the Church. Jesus Christ is the first of this new community! The purpose of God in the salvation of people was not simply that people should be holy and happy, but that through their holiness and happiness, the glory of Jesus Christ should be displayed everywhere and forever. Jesus Christ, and not the elected Christians, is the central point of God's plan in the history of the universe (cf. Jn 16:14)! Christ's glory is God's glory manifested in its highest form. The great purpose or goal of both creation and salvation is the glory of God (11:33-36)!

4th Question. (8:31-34). How does God's vindication sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

(S) Romans 8:31-34 describes God's work *for* Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by God's vindication.

One. God is for Christians! God gave Jesus Christ to believers! Therefore God will also graciously give to believers all things that are required to complete their salvation! The result is that Christians have the assurance that they will certainly be preserved from apostasy and deadly sins. A promise of salvation, which does not include holiness, includes nothing! In the Bible, salvation is utterly irreconcilable and contradictory to sin. Salvation includes the certainty of holiness. The very end of salvation is holiness! Therefore, God's promise and work of salvation includes God's promise and work of holiness. God's justification of sinners is unthinkable without God's sanctification of sinners! When God has given his greatest gift, Jesus Christ, to Christians, he will certainly give them every other gift needed to complete their salvation. God's infinite love for Christians does not fail Christians and cannot fail Christians (8:31-32)!

Two. God vindicates Christians. If God is the Final Judge who justifies those whom he chose, then no one's accusations count anymore! There is nothing to be dreaded more than sin. But if sin has been pardoned and removed in justification, then there is nothing left to fear! There is no one that can summon Christians to the bar of justice. Although the conscience of Christians still upbraids them, it no longer terrifies them (1 Jn 3:19-20)! Although Christians show sorrow for their sins like God's children (2 Cor 7:9-11), they do not despair like the lost (Rev 6:15-17). Although Christians still commit particular sins (1 Jn 1:8,10), they confess their sins and are completely forgiven and cleansed (1 Jn 1:9).

There are four reasons why no one can condemn Christians anymore. *Christ's death* removed the ground for condemnation. *Christ's resurrection* is the evidence that God has accepted his sacrifice of atonement and that all his claims are valid. *Christ's exaltation* to God's right hand (enthronement) indicates that he is the sovereign Director of all events in the past, in the present and in the future, the sovereign Director of all events on earth and of every aspect of our personal lives. *Christ's continual intercession* as our Advocate with God the Father in heaven (1 Jn 2:1-2; Heb 4:14-16; 7:25) is the evidence that he purposes to save us completely. In his intercession for us, he secures the benefits of his death for us, pleads our cause before God and presents the considerations, which secures our pardon and the continued supply of God's grace for our lives (8:33-34).

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 9.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".