

**Venture LifeGroups**  
**Eight**  
**Session 5: The Spirit's Intercession**  
**Romans 8:26-30**

**Main Point**

God's will is that all things be worked to our good, that is, the completion of our salvation.

**Introduction**

1. If you had to pick one word to describe your prayer life, what would it be?
2. What is the greatest struggle you face in your prayer life?
3. What do you think is the purpose of prayer?

**Understanding**

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**| Read Romans 8:26-27.**

1. What is the Holy Spirit's role in prayer? Why is He critical to our prayers?
2. What is encouraging to you about the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer? How should we feel knowing that the very Spirit of God is praying for us?

**| Read Romans 8:28-30.**

1. What is the relationship between verses 27 and 28?
2. What do you interpret verse 28 to mean? What does it not mean? What confidence does verse 28 give believers about events that occur in their lives?
3. When has it been hardest for you to believe this truth?
4. How have you seen God bring something good out of a bad situation in your life?
5. What does verse 29 give as the bottom line (goal) of God's work in us?
6. What does "conformed to the image of His Son" mean?
7. From verses 29-30, what steps are outlined "for those God foreknew"?
8. Which of these steps, are difficult for you to wrap your mind around? Spend a few minutes discussing those.
9. How do these verses give us reason to thank God even if we don't fully understand them?
10. How should we be reassured by the truth that God has known a plan for our lives since before creation?

## Application

1. What might the Holy Spirit be praying for on your behalf this week?
2. God is working all things together for our good. What does this truth—and the rest of Romans 8:26-30—tell you about God? What does it tell you about His desires for you?
3. God is busy conforming you into the image of Christ. What is your responsibility in this process, and what needs to be your response to Him this week?
4. What lessons about prayer did you learn from today's text? How will you go about implementing those lessons?

## Commentary

### Romans 8:26-30

8:26-27. Hope sustains and helps the believer through the present times of suffering. In the same way, the Spirit helps and sustains the believer in weakness, specifically through the ministry of prayer. The advocacy role of the Spirit was promised by Jesus, and this is part of the fulfillment of those promises (see John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). Paul's description of the Spirit's role in prayer is one of the most intimate glimpses we have in all of Scripture of the inner workings of the Godhead. When we are weak and trembling, confused about the purposes of God in our sufferings or our confusion, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

In language we cannot understand, the Father searches the human heart, the abode of the Spirit, to hear the Spirit's prayer. When the Father hears His will being prayed by the Spirit (because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will), then the Father and Spirit are in perfect harmony for the purposes of God to be accomplished in the believer through the instrument of prayer. 8:28. The purposes of God are the most important reality in the spiritual life. The purpose of God's will is what controls everything (see Eph. 1:11) in light of eternity (see Eph. 3:11). God called us to a holy life on the basis of His purpose and grace, and it is that purpose to which we have been called that verse 28 invites our submission.

Our new life in the Spirit is based on God's good purposes for our lives, and that includes suffering. The suffering (v. 17) and groaning (v. 23) that Paul has been discussing is what is in view in verse 28. When we find ourselves in trying circumstances in life, we can know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Read literally, it is easy to see why some consider this the greatest verse in Scripture. It tells us that nothing happens outside of God's plan for our good.

An important grammatical question clarifies the role of God in accomplishing His purposes. All things can be taken either as the subject (as in KJV; "all things work together"), or as the object (NIV [adverbial], "in all things God works"; NASB [direct object], "God causes all things to work"). As the subject, "all things" are in control, and while they end happily, they do so seemingly in and of themselves. When God is the subject, He causes all things to work together for good. In other words, there is no doubting the outcome's ultimate good. Lest we translate according to our theological preferences, it must be noted that (a) there is not a compelling grammatical reason to translate one way or the other, and (b) the meaning is not radically altered with either translation. God and His purpose are the controlling elements of the verse. Paul is clearly subordinating all things to the purpose of God, regardless of how the verse is written.

8:29-30. These two verses explain what God's purpose is in His calling to salvation, and how it is accomplished. First, the purpose: that there might be many who would be conformed to the likeness of His Son. God was not satisfied to have a family with an "only child." Indeed, the entire human family, all the descendants of Adam and Eve, were to have been His family, walking in fellowship with Him for eternity. But since the rebellion of man, it has been His purpose to redeem a family for Himself out of the fallen race.

Second, His method: from our perspective, God adopted us as spiritual orphans into His family, so that His Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. That is the metaphor for what God did behind the scenes to accomplish His purpose. How did God save those whom He adopted into his family? Five of the key actions are listed in these verses, and they are highlighted in the list below:

1. Foreknowledge: God's setting His love upon (choosing) those who would be conformed to His Son's image (Amos 3:2; 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9).
2. Predestination: God's determining the destiny of those upon whom He has set His love.
3. Calling: God's effectual call from death to life those upon whom He has set His love (cf. the calling forth of Lazarus in John 11).
4. Regeneration: God's quickening, making alive, the spirit of those who are called so that they can believe.
5. Faith: God's gift of faith (Eph. 2:8-9) exercised by the regenerate.
6. Repentance: The turning from sin of those who have believed (this step is often combined with faith into a step of faith-repentance, or repentance and faith).
7. Justification: God's declaring as righteous those who have repented and believed.
8. Adoption: God's inclusion of the justified in the family of God.
9. Sanctification: God's work through the Holy Spirit to conform those in the family of God into the image of His Son.
10. Perseverance: God's insuring that those who are effectively called complete their pilgrimage of faith.
11. Glorification: God's fulfillment of His purposes—the making of fallen sinners into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, for eternity.

While these passages have generated much heated discussion over the years (primarily concerning the meaning of foreknew and predestined), there is one key element which, if overlooked, gives rise to confusion, but if observed, gives focus to the passage. That key element is God Himself: God has a "purpose" (v. 28), God foreknew, God predestined, God called, God justified, and God glorified (though future, glorification is written here in a "prophetic past tense"). This passage is all about God, not man! God is the adopter, humans are the adoptees. God is designing, engineering, and accomplishing His salvific purpose in the earth, quite apart from the interference and influence of men and women. In light of this overarching oversight of the Father God over His family, how should that make the believer feel? Or, to use Paul's words, "What, then, shall we say in response to this?" (Rom. 8:31).