

## STUDY GUIDE

**NEW VISION**  
**MYTHEOLOGY**  
**EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON**  
**ROMANS 8:18-39**  
11/27/2016



### MAIN POINT

God can and will accomplish His good purposes no matter what.

### INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back over a difficult time in your life. What predominant emotions did you feel during that time?**

**How did you think God felt about your situation, and what did you think He was doing?**

**Did God act differently than you anticipated? How?**

Because we live in a world broken by sin, we will all experience some kind of pain in this life. But for Christians, these difficulties can be viewed not with hopelessness but in light of the future glory that awaits us. Because of who we are in Christ, believers can wait with anticipation for Christ's return, when our glorious future will be realized.

### READ AND REFLECT

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

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:18-22.**

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**How did Paul keep the sufferings of this present time in perspective?**

**What is the good news for us in these verses?**

**How does the promise of future glory help you endure the pain of waiting for Jesus' return?**

Pain is a reality of life in our broken world. In the passage at hand, Paul wanted to put sufferings in perspective. Believers should know that sufferings with Christ are insignificant in view of the glory awaiting them. Paul considered the sufferings of this present time negligible when compared to the glory that will one day be revealed to us, which we will experience in heaven (vv. 18,30). Our future glorification will be the time when God delivers forever His people from sin's presence.

**HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:23-27.**

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Paul then considered the overwhelming privilege we have as God's children and the confidence it creates in our lives. Nothing we face here can be compared to the glory that awaits us, the redemption as God makes all things right. We feel the powerful tug toward this complete transformation and have the present assurance it will take place.

**What reasons for hope do you find in this passage? How is the hope we have in Christ different from other kinds of hope?**

**How does knowing you are adopted by God change your view of yourself and of God?**

**How can knowing your hope in Christ is certain (vv. 23-24) help you endure patiently through a current situation you are facing?**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:28-32.**

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**What does it mean to you to read that God is for you? If you are "for" someone or something, what does that entail?**

**What example does Paul give as the reason we can have confidence that God is a God of ultimate power and unlimited supply? Why is this significant?**

If God did the greater (gave His Son), will He not do the lesser and give us all that is necessary for life and godliness? Of course He will. No matter where we are in current struggles or difficulties, we must remember that the supply line from glory is never cut off and the storehouse from heaven is never depleted. God will not withhold anything from us that we need to persevere in our relationship with and ministry for Him.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:33-39.**

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**What in verses 33-39 gives you evidence of God's unwavering love for you?**

**Of the things listed in these verses that cannot separate believers from the love of Christ, which stands out to you the most, and why? Share an example from your own experience that relates to that point. Why can these things not separate believers from the love of Christ?**

Paul affirmed that nothing has the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The list of potential separators includes physical danger, spiritual beings, present and future occurrences, and powers above us and below us. To clearly indicate that absolutely no thing or person can come between the Lord and His people, Paul concluded his list with "anything else in all creation." Absolutely nothing can come between us and our Lord. Nothing can remove us from His family.

**APPLY**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can we keep the hope of glory in the front of our minds this week?**

**Is there a specific person or group in our church or community that needs to experience the hope of glory? What can you do to make this hope known to them?**

**What difference does trusting in God's love for you make as you try to persevere through difficult times? In what situation will you trust Him more this week?**

**What steps can you take to be more aware of all the positive actions Christ Jesus has done/is doing for you? How can we help remind each other of this truth?**

## **PRAY**

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross that is the ultimate example of His unwavering love for us. Thank Him for His continued faithfulness to His children. Pray that no matter what we face this week, we would be able to cling to the promises of Romans 8 and trust in His love for us.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ROMANS 8:18-39**

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8:18. Paul knew firsthand a degree of suffering that most of us cannot imagine (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28). He must have wondered about the reason for these difficulties and perhaps wondered if somehow he could avoid them. He came to an inescapable and rational decision that his sufferings were not worth comparing with the glory that would be his in the future. Paul knew his ultimate destination was heaven. The reward of heaven would be for him far better both in terms of quality and of duration. He would not allow his focus in this life to be consumed by his suffering. He was always striving to keep an eye toward his ultimate reward.

8:19. The "glory" that will be revealed to us became the occasion for Paul to think about the redemption of all creation. By our sin, we have brought a great corruption into the world. Sin has stained everything. God's concern and plan is to make all things right again, reflecting anew His original plan. Paul personified creation to indicate the extent of this redemption. God will cleanse every form of evil from His creation. God's preeminent example of this regeneration is His sons who will be revealed. One day God's children will be made perfectly into what God intended for them. We do not know exactly what all this will mean, but the beauty reflected by God's children will resonate with the beauty of God's entire universe. In this sense creation waits with anticipation, looking forward to the day when all of God's creation will perfectly reflect His original plan.

8:20. For the creation was subjected to futility refers to the corruption of nature because of sin. Genesis 3:17-19 describes the ruin that resulted from Adam and Eve's sin and provides the imagery for Paul's use of futility in this verse. The word can also be translated as "vanity" or "emptiness." It describes accurately the contrast between the fullness God intended and the emptiness that resulted from sin. Creation was stained by sin. Creation did not spin out of control, going off on its own, but was still subject to God. He remained sovereign though sin corrupted. God forced humanity to endure the consequences of sin because He would not allow sinful humanity to live in a perfect creation. For this reason, creation had to suffer as well. God did this, however, in hope. He had a plan to return to His original design.

8:21-22. The bondage of corruption again reflects the images of Genesis 3:17-19. Just as sin enslaved humanity, it also bound creation and prevented the fulfillment of its purpose, testifying to all that God is. Though nature still testifies to "God's eternal power and divine nature" (1:20), we can only imagine what will happen once it is set free from all of sin's effects. This freedom coincides with the glorious freedom of God's children. Though wrong seems powerful, it is limited. Paul consistently had reminded his readers that suffering, affliction, and difficulties of every kind are not the last word in God's plan. Nor do they represent a frustration of God's plan. Joy will come.

8:23. To have the Spirit as the first fruits means to have the down payment on this future glory and joy. God's Spirit is present in Christians, God is at work in the creation, and His promises are being fulfilled. We know these truths, yet at the same time we groan within ourselves as we strain forward to the glorious future. The presence of sin pains Christians precisely because we have a clear hint of what God will bring about. We groan because we long for God to

bring His plan to completion. Paul focused here on the redemption of our bodies. We experience the effects of sin in various ways. Sin takes a physical toll on us, and in fact physical death itself is a result of sin. Where we feel sin's effect most acutely, we also will experience God's blessing. Redemption means "purchased from bondage." God will liberate our bodies, restoring us to divine health that is both spiritual and physical.

8:24. Our salvation ushers us into an entirely new present and future. Paul described the regeneration of the entire created order and then affirmed it is in this hope we were saved. In English the word hope may refer to an uncertain possibility, as in hoping our team wins or a disease is cured. The Greek word has an altogether different meaning. Paul referred to Christian hope, which has no uncertainty. It is still in the future, not fully realized; but its reality is beyond question. Our future is secure because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. This is our certain hope.

8:25. Christians are saved, as the previous verse stated, but we look forward to the full realization of the meaning of being saved. We hope for what we do not see describes the abiding mind-set of a Christian. We eagerly wait describes our yearning. The necessary strength to embrace hope and continually wait is found in the word patience. Difficult circumstances may seem to be direct evidence for either God's lack of care or lack of ability. But this is not the case. Difficult circumstances simply call for our need to endure. Endurance and victory are often precisely the same.

8:26-27. In our weakness we have the help of the Spirit. Jesus is our intercessor in heaven (Heb. 7:25), and the Spirit is our intercessor on earth within our hearts. We are limited and ignorant, but the Spirit uses unspoken groanings to communicate our needs. Our heavenly Father knows what is happening in our lives and within the deep recesses of our personalities (1Sam. 16:7; Prov.15:11; Jer. 17:10). The Spirit's requests are always according to the will of God and are always answered.

8:28. Who are those who love God? Paul defines them as those who are called according to His purpose. The "called" are all Christians (vv. 29-30). The promise of this verse is that God orders everything for believers so that all of life's experiences work together for our ultimate good. Not everything is good in and of itself, but God uses everything for our good (vv. 35-36). Jesus taught us that God's sovereign care for and guidance of creation covers even the death of a sparrow and the hairs of our head (Luke 12:6-7,22-34).

8:29-30. God has a plan that spans from eternity past to eternity future. Those He foreknew refers to those whom God set His electing love upon in eternity past. Predestined means that God planned from eternity that "those [whom] He foreknew" would become like Christ through spiritual rebirth. Called is the "effectual" call in which God opens our heart so we can hear His voice (cp. Acts 16:14). Justified is God's act of declaration that we are "right" in His sight because Jesus paid our penalty and we received His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). Glorified is the final stage of our salvation.

8:31-34. Paul wrote from first-hand experience about the overwhelming impact of God's love on him (v. 31). The first phrase invites a verdict, what then are we to say? The response to this question is based in reality on the previous seven and a half chapters. This section is the height of Paul's argument. That God is for us is the most important statement Paul could make. We do not need to be afraid of God or uncertain about the present or the future. God has demonstrated He is for us. By comparison, any opposition is inconsequential. The offer of His own Son is the ultimate demonstration of God's favor (v. 32). Paul had experienced many charges against him. His confidence in God was so great, however, that he dared anyone to bring an accusation against God's people (v. 33). God has taken care of the greater things, our eternal destiny and our standing before Him.

8:35-37. These last five verses begin and end with the idea of not being separated from God (vv. 35-39). Death is the great separator, but for believers that separation is only physical and temporary. Each of the perils in verse 35 arise from official suppression of Christianity. Verse 36 is a quote from Psalm 44:22. It shows God's people have always faced great danger. Rather than being extinguished, God's people have survived, flourished, and witnessed a new chapter in God's work amidst humanity. The verse probably refers to all of the items listed in the previous verse but is especially tied to the mention of "sword." Against the modern notion that faith means protection from all difficulty is the biblical fact that faith places us in jeopardy. Paul responded to the Psalm with powerful confidence (v. 37). Even in the face of physical danger, we who are in Christ are more than victorious.

8:38. Paul put forth his experience as proof of the contention that nothing can ultimately defeat a Christian (v. 38). The Greek word for persuaded means "a firm and settled conviction." Paul had no doubt about his confidence. Death nor life is the first pair of challenges that could imperil a Christian's standing before God. Death appears the ultimate separator, the final end. But as Paul argued repeatedly, a Christian is raised with Christ and experiences life with Him. Life refers here to the travails of life. Nothing we have to endure will sever our relationship with God. The second pair, angels nor rulers, could be classes of angelic beings. In light of the contrast between life and death, however, Paul may have meant "rulers above as well as rulers below." The contrast continued between things present and things to come. Nothing in the present day can sever our relationship with God, nor can any future circumstance.

8:39. Paul continued the contrasting pairs with height and depth (v. 39). Some ancient writers used these terms to indicate things above the heavens and beneath the earth. Paul probably meant that nothing from any realm can alter a Christian's security. Or any other created thing is a collective phrase to include anything Paul may have overlooked. In

his experience and in his imagination, nothing will separate us from the love of God. With this stunning certainty Paul concluded this first section of Romans.