A Practical Study of ROMANS

The Gift of God's Grace

"A Relationship with God Based on His Righteousness"

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<u>Study Number Nineteen</u> – The Father in the Relationship – <u>Romans 8:28-30</u>

We've been pursuing a series of lessons in Romans.

We've talked about the salvation of the sinner in chapter 5. The apostle tells us the results of a relationship with Jesus Christ. He tells us that we're born in sin, we're born in Adam. And before we die physically, we must come to that moment whereby faith we express our own need of Christ and by faith invite Him into our lives.

That process, that moment of saving faith—the Bible calls the new birth. That moment there is a conversion, there is a change of identification. Whereas we were in Adam, now we're in Christ. We discovered that's not a distant relationship either.

Chapter 6 taught us that we are united with Him. We are one with Him. Out of His life flowing through us, there begins to be fruit.

But Romans 6, 7 and 8 are talking about the problems that we

have as Christians becoming like our Savior or becoming righteous.

In chapter 6 we talked about the problem of sin. In chapter 7 we talked about the problem of the Law and the relationship the Law has to making a man righteous after he becomes a Christian. Then into chapter 8 we looked at basically three things.

First, we have been introduced to the fact that at the moment of salvation the Spirit of God came into our lives. And it is the whole function of the Spirit of God to energize the new divine nature that has been placed within us so that the fruit of righteousness begins to result. So our life is not put on a performance basis. The challenge of our lives is to have an ever deepening relationship with Christ and out of that deepening relationship to begin to change.

There are things that help and hurt the marriage relationship. And we express our love by dealing with those things that hurt the relationship. And the depth of our oneness in our marriage relationship is our sensitivity to those which hurt and we have dealt with them. As a result, there's a deeper oneness today than ever before.

And so it is in our relationship to Christ. The writer of the book of Hebrews said, "laying aside those sins which so easily entangle our feet and dog us in the race." (ref. Hebrews 12:1)

Those are the things we put aside because we know that we're

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hurting the relationship.

Now we've also considered this, and that is that Romans chapter 8 also tells us that we have been brought into a family relationship. We are sons and daughters in his family. It is the permanence of that relationship that he's trying to underscore. And as sons and daughters there are rights and privileges that we have.

1. First, we have the privilege of access at any time to cry "Abba! Father!"

2. Secondly, we have the glorious privilege of anticipation of an inheritance. It's incorruptible, it's undefiled and it fades not away.

3. And then we noticed as we concluded in our last message, that we had a problem with suffering. And the apostle contributes the whole matter of suffering to the curse of sin.

From the very beginning the world and all that is in it has been affected by man's sin. And the suffering which creation experiences is a result of the curse. And the suffering that we are involved in, involves the nature that we inherited in Adam. We all are going to suffer.

But we also learned that Christ is the One who suffers with us while we're going through these excruciating periods in our lives.

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Now that brings us to the verse that we're picking up within our study at verse 28.

Notice that it is in a context of suffering. A lot of times we hear people reading this verse and they say, "All things work together for good." That is the good things. That won't fit with the context, will it? Really, it's "all things." It means that. Let's look at it. And we're reading from a translation from the Greek text. It reads a little bit different but it will help us catch the argument of the author. It goes like this:

<u>v. 28</u> And we are knowing that for those who are loving God, all things He is working together for good, for those who are called in accordance with His purpose.

"And"—continuing the thought from the previous verse—"we are knowing"—in the PRESENT experience—"that for those who are loving God,"— underscore that.

"for those who are loving God,"—this is not a truth for somebody who is not "loving God."

Next in the Greek text:

"all things"—and then we have "He". WHO? God.

"He is working"—PRESENT TENSE—"together for good, for those who are called in accordance with His purpose."

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What he is telling us is that when we come into a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, there's something we can know in present experience. And that something that we can know in present experience is:

"all things"—nothing excluded—"is working together for good."

It is "working together" for the ultimate purpose of conforming us more to the image of His Son.

We've heard some of these TV announcements and some of the newspaper announcements:

"Come and expose yourself to the nautilus program and become a new man."

"Shape yourself up for the holidays."

Or when the new year is here, "get rid of all those ugly pounds from your sin during the holiday season."

As a program is desired for physical fitness, so God has a program for spiritual fitness.

And in the program of spiritual fitness, He knows what tools to use. He knows what circumstances will contribute to our best interest in becoming like His Son.

Now notice, when it defines "all things," there is no definition.

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It just simply makes an overwhelming statement. That means "all things" good, bad, bright and dark, bitter and sweet, easy and hard, happy and sad, prosperity and poverty, health and sickness, calm and storm, comforts and suffering, life and death.

All of those things encompassing the whole of every event that touches our life is "working together for good." Now get that. It does not say that all things are good. A lot of people forget that and they enter into this kind of martyr's delight in enjoying being exposed to suffering. And that is not pure Christianity.

God understands that in a sin-laden world filled with suffering, we're going to have some tough things come into our life. Some very, very difficult tragedies that are going to come down the road. And it's alright to cry, it's alright to hurt, it's alright to feel the emptiness and the loss. That's normal. We all experience that.

When there are failures in the lives of those we love, when there is loss by their being taken from us, the comfort of this verse is that God is the one who is working all of that together for the good of all of us who are involved or "who are called in accordance with His purpose."

The problem with us oftentimes is that we're a great deal like Jacob. Jacob at a critical time in his life said, "all these things are against me." And God could have said, "No, they're all for you. It's just that you've failed to see the big picture." So he

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starts into his little discourse of mourning.

"Joseph is not. Simeon is not. Now you're going to take away Benjamin! All things are against me." (ref. Genesis 42:36)

"No Jacob. Your perspective is very limited."

Joseph is and Simeon is and Benjamin will also be back. We're going to get the whole dozen. Just hold on for a while.

But with our perspective so many times we limit and we fail to recognize how God is dealing with us.

The Prodigal Son illustrates the truth that we're trying to get across in a beautiful way. For that father what the Prodigal Son was going through was a terrible pain. And for the son he thought it was freedom. And while he was in the far country, he was having a great time living on his father's wealth. But there is a little phrase when he finally gets to the pig pen which says, "He came to his senses." (ref. Luke 15:17) He began to see things properly.

Now can we say that his departure to the far country, his loss of his father's financial security, the being brought to abject poverty were things foreign to this verse? We can't say that.

We have to say that all of that, including his initial rebellion, his far country, his dwindling finances, his being brought to total devastation was "working together for good." Because when that kid came trucking back down the road, there was

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an old man running to get his arms around him. And there was a brand-new relationship.

We can look at things like that and we fail to realize that we have to apply that personally to our own lives. We just look at the initial event and say, "Oh what a tragedy!" and "God, why me?" Instead of trying to see that maybe that's just part of the things that God deems necessary to the "working together for good" in our life.

And the apostle is saying that all of it is "in accordance with His purpose."

When Joseph comes to the conclusion of his life in witnessing to his brothers he says, "You thought it for evil against me, but God meant it for good." (ref. Genesis 50:20)

Job could say in that time of deep suffering and sorrow and loss, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (ref. Job 13:15)

And Jeremiah says, "Why do you let me see all of this trouble?" (ref. Jeremiah 20:18)

We need to realize that when we're going through rough times it has not changed the character or the purpose of God. Rough times in our lives are, first of all, consistent with His love and then consistent with His ultimate purpose because we don't know that right now. We can't see it.

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And it's so easy to get filled with fear. It's so easy to get discouraged and so easy to get depressed and fail to come back to the truth of this verse: "all things are working together."

We see real tragedy as the newborn infant church begins to multiply because there are those who are opposed to the church and its ministry. And wherever Christians were found, they were taken out of their homes and put into prison. And we say, "Oh, what a difficult time those Christians had!" But isn't it great? Everywhere they went they were scattering the Word of God and the ministry was continuing to expand and grow. Although it looked, from the human perspective, that maybe the Lord really didn't know what He was doing in those situations.

Now notice that little word "together." That helps a lot. God is "working all things together." Now take the event by itself and it's tough to say thanks. It's tough to look at that thing and say that's consistent. And by itself we have a right to say that. But that's not what the text says. The text says it's "working together."

If we're a lover of sweets, there are so many things that sound great! Ice cream, pie, angel food cake, carrot cake—so many great desserts! It's impossible to pass up sweets.

That's the way it is in our lives. The ingredients by themselves don't sound very appetizing. But when we whip them altogether they become something out of sight.

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That's what this word means. God "is working all things together." We take that one thing and we have a case against God. It hurts. It stings. We don't understand it. We're pressed against the wall and we just can't put that together with the total program. God didn't intend for us to.

He said, "Wait till later. You see through a glass darkly. Now I'm going to make it clear later. You just trust Me while we're going through this. Love Me more and realize I'm using it for good although you don't understand it."

It gives us another opportunity to trust Him. He's working it all together in our lives for good.

Someone says, "When you find yourself in the cellar of affliction, start looking around for the wine."

That's a good piece of thought here with this verse. All of them "work together for good."

Don't go to war. Don't fight God. Realize "this thing has come from," Rehoboam heard in 1 Kings 12:24.

There are some places in the world where water appears to be running uphill. That's from a human perspective. But if we got out a plumb line, we'd discover that the water's running downhill. It's just our perspective of it.

And like us many times, we have a blurred perspective. We don't see it clearly. Like one fellow said, "You know life is like

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looking through a magnifying glass. Everything in the center of it's clear but everything out on the edge becomes blurred."

And in the center of our divine magnifying glass is the Cross of Jesus Christ and that tells us there's a God who loves us so much He went to that Cross to die focused on that. That's the center point. And though the other edges of the glass become blurred, realize that the same God who is involved in the blurry edges of the life is also the one that we can see very clearly in the Cross that's in the middle. Because on that Cross, He died for us.

And with Habakkuk we say, "Thou the fig tree will not blossom and though there's no herd in the stall, yet we'll joy and rejoice in the God of my salvation." (ref. Habakkuk 3:17, 18)

Everything is Father-filtered and brought for the express purpose of working together for good and for His glory.

A bunch of people were riding on a Mississippi River steamer and it was terribly foggy. And they were all scared to death because the captain was running that ship like it was wide open and they were afraid they were going to ram into something.

They formed a little committee and they sent a man upstairs to tell the captain to slow down and when he got up there he understood why because it was completely clear and the captain's vision could see for miles. The fog was only about 20

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feet over the water.

And that's just like us. Our lives are whipping on and it looks like they're coming to a destiny and to a conclusion, without any preconceived pattern. But the Father who sees it all clearly knows the direction of our lives and we can trust Him.

<u>v. 29</u> Because whom He foreknew, He also decided upon beforehand those who were to be like his Son in appearance to the end, that He might by the first-born among many brethren.

"Because"—this is why all things work together for good—"those whom He foreknew, He also decided upon beforehand those who were to be like his Son in appearance to the end, that He might by the first-born among many brethren."

Now we have come to some big theological words and we're so glad we're there because we've wanted those defined for so long. Alright?

"Because whom He foreknew,"

What does the word "foreknew," foreknowledge?

That's a quality that only God has. That's a quality to know ahead of time what's going to happen.

Before the beginning of the world, God knew we were going to live and how long we were going to live, and the decisions we

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were going to make with our free will. He foreknew that.

It would be like if someone stood up at the beginning of the year and said, "You know, I know exactly what the stock market's going to do this year." Because our financial security is dependent upon knowing what they know and we'd listen with anticipation to what they had to say.

God knows all of that. He foreknows. And yet He'll never violate our free will.

"whom He foreknew"—He knew it ahead of time.

On the basis of knowing ahead of time, "He decided beforehand those who were to be like his Son in appearance."

Because He knew ahead of time the choices we were going to make, He decided on the basis of the choices He knew we were going to make, those who were going to be made like His Son on the basis of our decision.

"to the end, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

Now let's pick up at verse 30 and then we'll put it all together.

<u>v. 30</u> Now those whom He decided upon beforehand, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

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"Now those whom He decided upon beforehand, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Alright, if we were to put those words in sequence so we could get a hold of it, and define it and to get the implication behind the fact that in verse 28 he has said "all things are working together for good," this is why. God knew before eternity the decisions and the choices we were going to make and He knew what was necessary to bring into our life on the basis of the choices that we were going to make so that we would eventually reflect His Son and ultimately end up in glory.

The whole panorama is a sovereign God who can work all these things together for good. That's what verses 29 and 30 are teaching us.

Now, let's see the progression of the words.

First, FOREKNOWLEDGE. God knows ahead of time so He can predetermine on the basis of His foreknowledge where He's going to invest His stocks, where He's going to invest His time because of this foreknowledge.

That's word number two—PREDESTINATION or predetermination.

That brings us to word number three which is the word ELECTION. Now having foreknown, predetermining, He can

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elect.

Now that He has made His election, there are three things that involve us as persons. They are the words: CALLED, JUSTIFIED and GLORIFIED.

Alright, what's involved in the CALL? Let's say knowing that God knows that we were to be here today and we were to hear this message, He knew that at our age and at this particular day we were going to be provided with an opportunity again to get to know Him. And He is calling us right now. How would He be calling us?

And we're saying, "you know that's true. I'm not usually here" or "I just come once in a while. And I can sense the Holy Spirit speaking to me right now. He's speaking to me about my eternal destiny once again. He's convicting me of sin. Showing me Christ's righteousness and showing me the judgment of rejecting."

That's what's involved in the call. Now when we respond to the call, what happens? We are justified. We are made perfectly righteous in God's sight. That is the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ that's applied to us. That is a perfect, finished transaction. We have a standing before God at the point of our salvation that is perfect.

It is not WHAT we are, but WHOSE we are now! It's not what WE DO but what HE HAS DONE! We have a perfect standing. An eternal transaction has taken place.

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"Just as if I'd never sinned," somebody said, "I am justified before God."

Well, what's left as far as God's work is concerned with us? GLORIFICATION.

What He needs to do is to take us from where we are in our sin-laden body and begin progressively—the Bible calls the word SANCTIFIED, set apart—begins the progressive program of making us righteous like Jesus Christ.

Here's our standing, it's perfect. Here's our state, we're still a sinner. But the rest of our Christian life is an upward climb, sure filled with valleys and deep places of failure and so on, but we're heading toward that standing. That's being made righteous.

And that's what Romans 6, 7 and 8 have been talking about. Now isn't it interesting that he does not mention the word sanctification? He just says, "those whom He called, He justified; and those whom He justified, He glorified!" And he leaves out the whole business of daily becoming more like Christ.

Why? All becoming more like Christ becomes in our life as a Christian is just the birth pains of glorification.

The difference between being progressively conformed to the image of Christ and the ultimate and final work is that here

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and now we reflect Him as we cooperate with the work of His Spirit in making us like Christ. But there and then it's all finished. Just like that. "Soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." (ref. 1 John 3:2) Boom!

"Absent from the body, present with the Lord." (ref. 2 Corinthians 5:8) We leave the old body behind, the old nature behind, we go and we're instantaneously made righteous. The culmination of the work. Glorification is nothing but sanctification completed, made like Christ and so He just uses one word for it.

What is the tense of those verbs?

"those whom He called…those whom He justified, He also glorified."

It's in the PAST TENSE, isn't it?

Before the foundation of the world, God looked down and He had a work to perform, and as far as He's concerned it's already finished.

He called us, He justified us and He glorified us. He knew ahead of time the decision we were going to make. On the basis of that foreknowledge, He predetermined 100 sheep. Those 100 sheep were elected. Those 100 sheep were called. Those 100 sheep were justified. And those 100 sheep will be glorified. Now doesn't that make us feel awful good inside?

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See how totally that divorces it from human performance? It is God doing a work in our lives and God never leaves a work unfinished! He starts with 100 and He ends with a 100!

Shame on us for fearing the fact that He won't complete the good work in us that He's about to perform.

When we get those fears inside about Him not finishing it, and we might be lost at the last minute, our fear is when we get our eyes on ourselves and not on Him. Because He is a sovereign God and what He starts He finishes. And as far as He's concerned, when we look at His word, it's an accomplished fact.

That also gives us a great deal of comfort when we realize that when we're struggling in our failure and our sin. And we're hurting Him so badly by constantly failing Him at every turn.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand." (ref. Psalm 37:23, 24)

That's a great verse. There's a lot of comfort in that. But we keep failing.

One of the greatest passages in the little book *Hinds Feet on High Places* was when poor Much Afraid was trying to make her place to the high places. The good shepherd comes behind and sees her slipping and sliding in the mud and he says to her:

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"Poor much afraid don't be embarrassed. Don't you realize by now that I look on you as you're going to be, not as you are right now. I look on you as you are going to be when you are completed."
(source unknown)

And that's the way God sees us today. In Jesus Christ He gave us a standing that's perfect, a righteousness which stands instead with the Father. And while we're struggling with these intervening years between now and the point of destiny when we meet Him face to face, He's not embarrassed at us. He's not disappointed with us. Oh sure, fellowship is broken, oftentimes by the offenses we allow to go on in our lives. But God sees all of that contributing together for good and He can work it out. Because He already sees it as an accomplished fact that we're glorified because He finishes what He starts.

Now what should this message bring to us as we've meditated on these three verses?

First, we ought to recognize that we're dealing with a sovereign God. He's in control of all of the events that come into our life.

The Bible says, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." (ref. John 1:3)

Colossians tells us: "By Him all things are held together." (ref. Colossians 1:17) The seasons, the times, the weather, the

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movements of the created universe are all in His hands like clockwork, and so is our life. And every event is designed to bring us more into conformity with His Son.

When we recognize that we begin to trust Him. Some people when they recognize that begin to get a little bitter. They say why didn't God just make it one big freeway just so it's easy? Because pretty soon we think we could handle it.

God never brings the unpredictable into our life but what He's trying to teach us once again to get out of the way and let Him handle it because we can't. We don't know when we're going to hit that detour. We don't know when that rut's going to come. Maybe we've been riding down there, kind of smooth for a while. Watch out. Maybe we're becoming self-complacent—comfortable, adequate because things are going our way. God knows what we need.

The Psalmist said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray. It's good for me that I've been afflicted that I might learn Your statutes." (ref. Psalm 119:71)

God brings the unpredictable because we get impatient with Him. We think we can handle it. That's so we won't lean under our own understanding but in all our ways we'll acknowledge Him and then He'll begin to direct our paths again. (ref. Proverbs 3:5, 6)

Maybe we've faced an experience and wanted it nice and comfortable and now God says, "I want it My way. My grace

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will be sufficient for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness, but let's do it My way because I know what's best." (ref. 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Maybe we're fighting that. Where are we in the process? Is God calling us today? Have we responded to His justifying grace by coming to His Son? If we have to say no, the hope is we will.

Are we heading toward glory? Isn't it great comfort? Maybe we're in failure today. Maybe we're out of fellowship. Just to know that He's going to finish the work He began and He'll do whatever He needs to do to bring us to that ultimate moment when we're made like Him.

We close with our lessons from our passage of scripture:

Lesson #1: The promise in verse 28 is for those who are loving God.

Lesson #2: The things that are happening in our lives are in harmony with the predetermined program to bring us into conformity with His Son.

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Lesson #5: The Lord who leads armies makes this solemn vow: "Be sure of this: Just as I have intended, so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen" (Isa. 14:24 NET).

Lesson #6: When you find yourself in the cellar of affliction, start looking for the wine.

Lesson #7: "Though the cherry trees don't blossom and the strawberries don't ripen, Though the apples are worm-eaten and the wheat fields stunted, Though the sheep pens are sheepless and the cattle barns empty, I'm singing joyful praise to God. I'm turning cartwheels of joy to my Savior God. Counting on God's Rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength. I run like a deer. I feel like I'm king of the mountain!" (Hab. 3:17-19 MSG).

Lesson #8: He predestinates 100 sheep. He elects 100 sheep. He justifies 100 sheep. He will glorify 100 sheep.

Lesson #9: The big question we must face now is where are we in this process? Is He calling you right now?

Lesson #10: The Lord is saying: "I look on you as you are going to be not the way you are now."

Father, we praise You for the many things that we learn as we turn the sacred page. We've traveled through a lot of truth in Romans 5 through 8 and yet we've sort of come to the culmination of it, some of these majestic verses at the conclusion of the writings. Lord, we pray that Your Holy Spirit

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will impress upon our minds and hearts the full meaning and impact of the things we've studied. And behind all the things that are in our lives, we know there is a sovereign God who has a plan and a purpose. And in that plan and purpose, He's working all things together for good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of ROMANS

The Gift of God's Grace

"A Relationship with God Based on His Righteousness"

Study Number Nineteen – The Father in the Relationship – Romans 8:28-30

NOTES

v. 28 And we are knowing that for those who are loving God, all things
He is working together for good, for those who are called in accordance with His purpose.
v. 29 Because whom He foreknew, He also decided upon beforehand those who were to be like his Son in appearance to the end, that He might by the first-born among many brethren.
v. 30 Now those whom He decided upon beforehand, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Romans 8:28-30 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. For whom do all things work together for good, according to verse 28?

3. What do you think the phrase "all things He is working together for good" means in verse 28?

4. What does it mean in verse 29 when it says "He foreknew" and "He decided upon beforehand"?

5. What is God's ultimate objective with us, according to verse 29?

6. Who does the "He" refer to in the last part of verse 29?

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7. Trace out God's program in verse 30.

8. Define the key phrases "decided upon beforehand," "called," "justified" and "glorified."

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The promise in verse 28 is for those who are loving God.

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