

Paul quotes from Psalm 44 in Romans 8 –

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

Paul is talking about the unjust suffering that we face:

tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword.

Sometimes the Psalms can be hard to sing because we aren't used to them.

So before we sing Psalm 44, let's think about its structure and meaning.

The eight stanzas in your psalter correspond well with the structure of the Psalm.

Verses 1-8 (the first three stanzas) explain the situation.

Our fathers have told us about what God did for them.

You set them free from the land of Egypt.

You brought them into the land by the power of your right hand.

And in verses 4-8 the Psalmist says that his own generation has “owned” that.

This is not merely something our fathers' believed.

We also believe this – we also have seen God's faithfulness.

As we sing Psalm 44:1-8, we confess both what God has done in the past –

but also our confidence in God's work in our own lives.

But then comes verses 9-16 (stanzas 4-5).

There's a problem.

You have rejected us, O Lord.

We have been defeated by our enemies.

“You have made us like sheep for slaughter  
and have scattered us among the nations.”

As we sing Psalm 44:9-16, we confess that too often we *have been* defeated.

We cry out to God that things are not as they should be.

Verses 17-22 (stanzas 6-7) are the surprise.

You would expect that the Psalmist would now say, “and this is because of our sin.”

But he doesn't.

He says, “All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you,  
and we have not been false to your covenant.”

Psalm 44 is not talking about how my sin leads to consequences –

Psalm 44 is talking about how we suffer for Christ's sake.

“Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

Psalm 44 is a Psalm of the cross,

because Jesus was the faithful servant of the LORD  
who suffered injustice as the innocent sacrifice for our sins.  
And now we who are in Christ suffer with Christ.

And so we cry out with the sons of Korah in the last stanza (verses 23-26),  
“Awake! Why are you sleeping, O LORD?...  
Why do you hide your face?...  
Rise up; come to our help!  
Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.”

### **Introduction: All Things Work Together for Good (8:28-30)**

In Romans 8 Paul has told us,

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (1),  
because in Christ Jesus God has done what the law (weakened by the flesh) could not do.  
Indeed, Paul goes so far as to say that if you are in Christ Jesus,  
then you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you (9).

All of this is entirely and only because of what Jesus has done.  
And so now we are debtors – we have an obligation – to live according the Spirit  
and not according to the flesh.

Paul makes it clear that the Christian life is not an optional thing.

And there is even a conditional statement to this effect:

*If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (13).*

You have received the Spirit of adoption – you are now children of God,  
heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ

(and here comes the condition again):

*provided we suffer with him in order  
that we may also be glorified with him (17).*

Verses 18-30 then explore this suffering that we are called to endure.

Paul says that the creation itself is groaning,  
longing for the revelation of the sons of God.

And therefore we also groan as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons.

We have the Spirit of adoption – but we wait eagerly for our adoption –  
the redemption of our bodies at the resurrection.

We have received the firstfruits of adoption as sons in Christ, by faith.

But we have not yet been openly declared sons of God  
by the resurrection of our bodies.

Think back to how Romans starts:

Paul says Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power

according to the Spirit of holiness  
by his resurrection from the dead (1:4).  
He was already the Son of God –  
and yet the resurrection declared it openly and publicly to all.  
If that is true for Jesus, how much more will it be true for us!

Verses 26-27 set forth the Spirit's work in interceding for us  
because we do not know how to pray as we ought.

So verses 28-30 are concluding Paul's discussion  
of how the Christian ought to think about suffering.

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,  
for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Is this true?  
Is it true that *all things* work together for good for those who are called?

Who are the "called"?

You may be thinking of Jesus' usage of the word call,  
when he says, "many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14)  
There Jesus speaks of the "call" in terms of the outward preaching of the word.  
The preaching of the word goes forth indiscriminately.  
The "outward call" as it were is given to all.

But that is not what Paul is talking about here.  
Because Paul knows full well that *not* everything works together for the good  
of the apostate and the hardened sinner – who in the end rejects the call.  
That is why Paul speaks here of those who are called "according to his purpose."  
In fact, Paul's "according to purpose called" turns out to be identical to Jesus' chosen.

We see this in verse 29:

*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,  
in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Verse 29 helps us understand something more about "the according to purpose called."  
If you want to talk about the purpose-driven life, spend some time with Rom 8:28-30!  
Because God's purpose is what is driving the whole passage!

If we are called according to God's purpose –  
then we are driven by what *he* is doing.

And what he is doing is making us like Jesus.

Verse 29 starts a chain of connections –  
whom he foreknew he also predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

But verse 29 also contains an important interruption.  
Because we are predestined *to* something:  
to be conformed to the image of his son.

We have seen that Paul uses a lot of “co” words  
(the prefix “sum” in Greek is like the prefix “co” in English).

Just in Romans 8:16-29 Paul uses 9 “sum” words:  
8:16 – The Spirit co-witnesses with our spirits  
8:17 – we are co-heirs with Christ,  
provided we co-suffer  
that we might also be co-glorified.  
8:22 – the creation has been co-groaning  
and co-travailing.  
8:26 – and the Spirit co-helps us  
8:28 – all things co-work (work together) for good  
And now 8:29 – we are predestined to “con-formity” to the image of the Son.

I’m not sure why every translation seems to make summorphous a verb.  
It is in fact an adjective.

What’s so important about this?

An adjective refers to a characteristic or quality –  
it is NOT an action.

We are predestined to have this characteristic about us.  
It is not a future action.

Perhaps the best way to translate it would be,  
*Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to conformity to the image of his son.*

But verse 29 is talking about what God decided to do before all ages.  
Verse 30 then explains how this is applied to us in history:

*And those whom he predestined he also called,  
and those whom he called he also justified,  
and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Here you seen the priority of “the call.”

The call is the first step.  
The call is how God's voice reaches through our darkened hearts  
and brings us to life.  
The call is prior to justification and glorification (plainly).  
And certainly the call is prior to all human response –  
since it is God's voice that wakes the dead.

To give just a few other references:

Paul also uses this way of speaking in:

1 Cor 1:9 – “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son”

Eph 4:4 – “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that  
belongs to your call”

1 Thess 2:12 – “walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom  
and glory.”

God's call gives us life and brings us into fellowship with his Son.

The call also awakens faith in us –  
and therefore we are justified by faith because of the Call.

Here in Romans 8, Paul does not mention regeneration or sanctification here,  
but regeneration and sanctification  
are brought to their glorious conclusion in glorification.

But that same call that gives us life and brings us into fellowship with the Son,  
also transforms us and makes us new.

Everything about salvation – from justification to glorification – is rooted in this Call.

Indeed, so effective is this call  
that Paul says that glorification is as certain as justification.

He doesn't say “those whom he justified he *will* glorify,”  
no, rather he says that those whom he justified he glorified.

So God's call lies at the root of our whole salvation.

### **1. If God Is for Us, Who Can Be against Us? (8:31-32)**

*What then shall we say to these things?*

Paul's “what then” signals a transition here.

He is bringing to a conclusion all that he has said since chapter 3.

*If God is for us, who can be against us?*

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,  
how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

This goes back to Paul's point about the inheritance that we looked at last week  
from verses 15-23.

We have received the firstfruits of the Spirit –

we have received the Spirit of adoption.

In Romans 8 Paul lays out the work of the three persons of the Godhead in our salvation.

The Father purposed to save us.

The Son accomplished our salvation.

The Spirit applies that salvation to us and dwells with us  
as the presence of the exalted Christ with us.

Jesus, the Son of God by nature, has received the inheritance from the Father.

And we have received the Holy Spirit

as the pledge and guarantee that we will receive the adoption as sons –  
the redemption of our bodies.

God's purpose in calling you is conformity to the image of his Son.

He has given you his Spirit as the firstfruits – the downpayment of that inheritance.

Therefore, Paul says,

*If God is for us, who can be against us?*

If God sent his only Son to die for us –

do you really think it possible that he will give up now?

Verse 32 makes it clear that we have all these things in Christ:

*How will he not also **with him** graciously give us all things.*

God has called us into fellowship with himself *in Christ*.

All that is ours – this glorious inheritance – is ours because he has given us Jesus.

## **2. Who Will Condemn Us? (8:33-34)**

*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?*

Who will bring an accusation against those whom God has chosen?

After all,

*It is God who justifies!*

And the God who has justified you – who has declared you “not guilty” in Christ –  
has never before gone back on his word!

*Who is to condemn?*

What judge is there who would condemn you?

*Christ Jesus is the one who died –*

*more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God,  
who indeed is interceding for us.*

The one who has authority to judge is the one who died for you!

Your advocate at the right hand of God is the only one who has authority to condemn!

This the demonstration – the proof – of what Paul said at the beginning of Romans 8:

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

### **3. What Can Separate Us from the Love of Christ? (8:35-36)**

And so Paul asks,

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?  
shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,  
nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

When God calls you into fellowship with himself through Jesus Christ,  
there is nothing that can tear you away.

The love of Christ is a love that will not let you go!

As it is written,

*For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*

This is from Psalm 44 – which we sang earlier –  
a Psalm of the cross.

It is a song about unjust suffering –  
about suffering that seeks to draw us away from the LORD our God.

Why do you suffer?

Sure, part of your suffering is due to your own sin – your own foolishness –  
and the purpose of that is to teach you “don’t do it again!”

And part of your suffering is due to the “common wrath” of God  
against rebellious humanity.

And God’s purpose in his common wrath  
is to remind all humanity of the coming judgment,  
and to urge all humanity to repent.

But then there is part of your suffering that is designed to conform you to the image of Christ.

Indeed, *all* of your suffering *should* do this!  
as you humble yourself under the gracious hand of God.

Notice the things that Paul includes:

Tribulation and distress – these are general words for all sorts of troubles;

Persecution – suffering especially for the name of Christ

Famine – this can happen at any time to anyone in any culture

It is part of the common wrath of God,

but the Christian that endures famine clinging to Christ the LORD  
may say that even that “common wrath” is suffering with Christ.

**Conclusion: In Christ We Are More than Conquerors (8:37-39)**

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

More than conquerors.  
In the midst of famine,  
    in the midst of nakedness,  
        in the midst of distress,  
  
we are more than conquerors.

Why?

How can Paul say that we are more than conquerors in all these things?

Remember the cross!

Paul has been reminding all along:

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...  
Christ Jesus is the one who died...*

How did Jesus conquer?

On the cross Jesus endured tribulation,  
    distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and the sword.

That is *how* he conquered!

And therefore, when we are killed all the day long through persecution, through trouble,  
    even through enduring God’s common wrath,  
        we are more than conquerors.

*For I have been convinced that neither death nor life,  
    nor angels nor rulers,  
    nor things present nor things to come,  
        nor powers,  
    nor height nor depth,  
        nor anything else in all creation,  
    will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*