

Small Group Questions Romans 8.26 - 37

1. Reflect on the breadth, strength and permanence of how Paul describes the salvation that Christ has won in 8.31-39. The sermon mentioned three themes in v. 31-36. What are they; do you see more? Is this the typical way you think of your relationship with God when you wake up Monday morning? Why or why not? What do you have a hard time functionally believing in v.31-39? What fruit should this true statement of salvation yield in us?
2. 8.31 - 39 puts our salvation in very intense radical terms. But what can produce such a rich reality? 8.26 - 30 needs to be understood in strong enough terms to be able to produce the reality of 8.31 - 39. The sermon argued that it is produced by two main points here: a strong view of God's sovereignty over all things (8.28) and a strong view of God's initiating salvation and guaranteeing its outcome (the chain of salvation in 8.29-30). These are topics that to some degree we will not now understand as fully as we would like and that can also offend some of our cultural ideas¹, yet God has revealed them to us to seek to understand and reflect on. How do you understand these two ideas? What is problematic to you? What is helpful? Besides affirming and supporting the radical statement of salvation in 8.31-39, God wants us to grasp and grapple with v.28-30 because it is in His scriptures. How do we receive and learn to give thanks for what he has revealed to us even as we may struggle with its meaning?
 - a. One possibly helpful image is to think of our freedom to express faith and God's election to faith as two sides of the same coin, seen from our inside-time, limited perspective, and God's outside-time, full perspective, respectively. Is this helpful? Why or why not?
 - b. Note: while there are traditions that take the ideas in 8.28-30 and press them beyond scripture's views of God's sovereignty and election, there are also traditions that argue against both of those in one way or another. The sermon was in the tradition we see in Augustine, Calvin and Luther that God's sovereignty and His election of believers are Biblical concepts that God has chosen to reveal.

¹ Note to Leader: you might want to pursue this line of thought, if you think it will ultimately yield edifying discussion.

- a. If some in your group find these idea off-putting, it might be interesting to discuss why that is so. If one thinks that this is not what scripture is saying then we have an exegetical question. If one finds these offensive ideas that could not possibly be true, then we have a question about the nature of God's revelation to us. If one says these questions create disunity when we talk about them, then we have a question about how we should handle the topics that God has spoken to us that tend to divide Christians. In the first instance, we need to seek how to accurately and humbly scripture. In the second instance, while we should listen to a cultural bias against some ideas, Tim Keller's argument that if God's revelation is universal and true then we should expect it to offend every culture and time period at least in some ways (e.g. Western Enlightenment thought certainly champions human ability and rational determination in counter-distinction to God's sovereignty and election.) In the third option, we have to think about how can seek to both be faithful to the breadth of traditions while also being faithful to our particular tradition and its requirements for elders, and how to do all that within the implicit call to study all of scripture for our edification.

3. The sermon suggested that 8.31-39 should enable in us three things: our pursuit of this God's amazing love for us, our calm in the midst of trials because he is in control, and our willingness to risk in the areas he is leading us because he has us so firmly in his love. What are the specific applications of this for you? Where does this passage intersect your life with specific application? Which one in particular do you need to act on? How can you encourage each other in this?
4. Pray for the reality and application of this passage.