

So where does this leave us?

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn then to Romans chapter 8, and we're going to be looking at verses 28 to the end.!

How to be very positive about the Christian life. And if you have been reading, or even if you are listening to the reading, you might have some objections to that.

And you might say, but, but, but, but, but, but, the Christian life that Paul describes, even in the bit that we read, isn't positive.

It says in verse 17, we share in his sufferings. And you might say, sufferings aren't very positive. In chapter 8, verse 35, it talks about trouble, and hardship, and persecution, and famine, and danger, and sword, and things like that.

[1 : 27] He's not saying, we don't experience those things. He's saying, we do experience those things, to one degree or another. And you might say, well, that's not very positive. I thought the idea of coming to church was that they'd make you want to be a Christian, but this talk about suffering, and persecution, and trouble, puts me off the idea.

And there's other things that Paul says as well. In verse 26, he says, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. And when he says weakness, I don't think he means the odd weakness or two.

You know, when you sprain your ankle, and have a cold, or something like that. I think he's saying that our whole life is under the heading weakness. We are never strong in ourselves.

The only strength we ever have is the strength that God gives us. And we are in a condition of weakness. And all of this is the present time. Verse 18, I consider our present sufferings.

He says, and in verse 22, we know that these things occur in the present time. So, you might say, that doesn't really set us up this morning for being very positive about the Christian life.

[2 : 47] And you might be thinking, as I came along this morning, I didn't feel very positive. I was conscious of perhaps being persecuted, or perhaps suffering, or perhaps being weak.

And, you know, you might be saying, the trouble with you Christians is you're always pretending that the world isn't like that. But it is like that. Well, says Paul, I wrote all those things, and yet Paul also wrote, in verse 37, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us. Which is an amazing thing to him to write. In all these things. So, he doesn't say these things don't really happen if you're a Christian. He says, no. In all these things, we are.

And he uses the word conqueror, meaning you triumph over something. You somehow beat it. And then he puts another word in front of it to mean uber, over.

On top of. We are more than conquerors. So, that's quite something, isn't it? Let's look carefully at what he says, because I think he is telling us how to be very positive about the Christian life.

[4 : 07] What have we seen so far, previously? We saw him making a calculation in chapter 8, verse 18, because I didn't quite give you the whole context.

He talks about the present sufferings, but he calculated and said, I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

So, you remember he did that calculation? Do you remember I had to go at making a mobile phone out of two coffee cups and a piece of string? But it wasn't worth comparing with a proper mobile phone.

And Paul says, Paul says, our present sufferings, they're not worth comparing with the grandeur and the greatness and the brilliance of what will be.

So, he's telling us that we need to take time into account and not just measure it as things are now, but where we're heading to and how things will be.

[5 : 11] I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. And this is all through Jesus Christ.

The suffering is sharing in Christ and the glory is sharing in Christ. So, that was something that we looked at the other day. And then we looked also, verses 18 to 25, this whole matter of hope. So, he says that the Christian life is lived, leaning forwards, with the word meaning a stretched out neck, in eager expectation.

See if I can find it. It's in verse 23. We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of the body. He says the whole Christian life is lived, leaning forwards, on tiptoe, leaning forwards to what will be.

And that's what salvation is. It's salvation in hope. It's looking forward. And I've drawn on the screen a couple of people leaning forward. Hope.

[6 : 21] And then we also saw a rather mysterious passage help. Verse 26 and 27. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

We don't know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And we had a rather mysterious interchange between God who searches our hearts and then in our hearts where we don't really know what we should be thinking really, but the Spirit who is within us intercedes for us.

And the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And even when we're making no sense at all, yet prayer is going up sort of around us, which God is answering because it's the Holy Spirit who is interceding for us.

Difficult thought to get our heads round, but we had these two things, hope and help. Hope for the future and help in our weakness, in the present by the Holy Spirit.

That's what we looked at previously. And now we're going to come and look at the verses I mentioned. And I'm going to put it under three headings of ways to be confident and positive.

[7 : 50] I'm going to talk about purpose and justice and love. So let's look at verses 28 to 30. So he's just carrying on without much of a break from what he's said previously and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those he predestined, he also called. And those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified.

So let's look at those verses. There's a huge amount in them, but we'll just look at them for a few minutes. He's painting a picture of God who presides over the present time.

And in this present time, we're there, and a whole lot of things are going on. So I've drawn a picture of us being born in upon by all sorts of things.

[9 : 06] In all things, it says God works. So what are these things? No, let me start that sentence again. There is a purpose for it.

That's what he's saying. We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

And he says, we know this. I don't know whether we always do. and it's certainly worth being reminded of. What he's doing is saying he's painting a picture of us here in this present life and he says that God has a purpose.

And I'm assuming that purpose stretches out into the future, into the world to come future. God called us according to his purpose.

Now let's bring the things in and the things, well he says all things, so I think that's things. So you have things in your life, don't you?

[10 : 15] You have things. Life's full of things. Things like getting up in the morning and things like not sleeping very well and things like winning at cricket or losing at cricket and things like having children and things like getting old and things like looking for work and things like being overworked and things like having people around you and things like having nasty surprises and things like having wonderful surprises.

Life's full of things, isn't it? And God is presiding over all these things. things like so I'm going to include for the sake of argument good things.

So there's good things that God brings into our lives, happy things, things that make you smile, things that warm your heart and it says that in all things God works for the good of those who love

him.

So those, so God is working in all things and we're including the good things. but it says in all things so we want to include the bad things too.

Not saying they're not bad but it is saying that God works them, works in them. God works them together. There's different ways of translating this.

[11 : 41] But the thought being that God who rules everything, none of these things is outside his control. None of these things is outside his control.

They come sort of from his hand in a sense. And God is able to shape these things and orchestrate these things and bring something out of these things according to his purpose.

And what it says is in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.

So I'm going to bring in those two words there. They're people who love God and they're called according to his purpose. So let me just say for a moment it's not everybody that this is true of. It isn't true of everybody. You couldn't go out into the street and say Mr. X Mrs. Y I can guarantee that God works for your good in everything that happens to you.

[12 : 50] You can't say that to everybody but you only say it to the people whom God has called whom he has got a purpose for and at this present moment they're people who love God.

So I'm not going to assume that everybody in this room that this applies to maybe you're not yet maybe you haven't yet heard the call of God. maybe you haven't yet got a heart that loves God but if you have I'm going to try and emphasize this to you that he's saying that all things all the things in your life this amazing wise loving God is able to work and work together for his purpose for your good and I think that is such an amazing and powerful thought.

You might like to be thinking of things in your life that you most think I wish those things hadn't been there if only they weren't there and then to stop and say actually they are there can't do anything about that and this verse is telling me that God uses that for good according to his purpose changes a lot of things doesn't it if we can hold on to that thought let's let's continue the thought because he says verse 29 for and now he's going to make a succession of sort of links in a chain and it starts off with foreknowing those God foreknew now please notice it doesn't say that he foreknew an action he didn't foreknow that you would trust in him for example or he didn't foreknow that you would believe him he foreknew you which is slightly different significantly different saying that there is according to this it says it in the Bible before you even existed that God somehow knew you it's a pretty amazing thought isn't it what was

God doing before he made the world he was thinking of you he was thinking of you God foreknew certain people those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son so let's take that predestined it's a word which means to mark out beforehand he marked these people out with a purpose so we've come back to the idea of purpose and the purpose is that they should be conformed or morphed actually is sort of what it says in Greek changed you know how you do you ever see morph morph was a little character wasn't he made out of plasticine and he was sort of changed into a certain shape and he spoke with a certain voice as well but we won't go into that but God has known you and marked you out to be morphed into into what into the likeness of his son so if your name was

Algernon which I don't hope it isn't anybody here so I'm not trying to pickle anybody here if your name was Algernon God has in mind to have an Algernon shaped version or a version of Jesus Christ who is particularly Algernon do you get the idea that he's taking you as you are individually and specially but somehow making a version of you which is like Jesus Christ so that the glory which belongs to Jesus Christ and the holiness that belongs to Jesus Christ and the wonder of Jesus Christ will be expressed or embedded in the future version of you those he foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers so this is the family that we've been talking in

[17 : 32] Sunday evenings about family and sort of as if human family on earth was the be all and end all but the Bible doesn't say that the human family on earth is the step to the great family where Jesus Christ is the elder brother and there are many brothers and sisters many siblings that's the family of which our human families are sort of stepping stones or pointers but that's the real family worth thinking about that isn't it and those he predestined says Paul coming back to his links in a chain he also called so what does he mean by called he means a particular call if you're a Christian you will know exactly what this means that there was a point in your life where you heard the voice

of Jesus say come unto me and rest and perhaps up to that time you hadn't heard maybe you can identify the time quite definitely or maybe you can't say well once there was a time when

I never heard his call and then I did I couldn't get away from it or it might even be that you say well to be honest as I grew up in a Christian home I had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home you might say I never been conscious!

of time when I didn't know the call of Jesus okay well don't mind really but the point being that he called in such a way that you heard can you imagine please putting a paper clip on your kitchen table and I want you to imagine yourself getting all your will power and saying to that paper clip come here okay I want you to try really hard and I want you to use all your will power and I want you to speak quite sternly and commandingly to that paper clip come I will leave to you to guess the outcome now take the same sort of thought and think of Jesus standing outside the tomb of Lazarus he's not a paper clip he's a dead man and I want you to imagine his voice which is actually more powerful than your voice and

I want you to imagine Jesus saying to this dead man Lazarus come out and the effect of the call of Jesus to this dead man was he came out that is the call of God those he predestined he called and when he called in that commanding voice he called you from the dead wake up follow me come to me and you did that's the power of the voice of Jesus Christ as he calls with what theologians call the effective call or the effectual call he calls people to himself and then Paul takes on the chain he says those he called he also justified so he takes this thought in the direction of our legal position because as we come to

God we are effectively criminals we're effectively people who are wrong under the law of God under the commands of God in our relationship with God and the thing that Paul says is he changes that legal status so that we're no longer frowned on as criminals but smiled on as citizens his movement is from calling to justification a change of legal status and then he goes on from there jumping ahead to glorification those he foreknew who knows who those people are only God knows who those people are but he foreknew some people and he marked them out and then he called them in space and time and he justified them that was the foundation change in their status and says Paul so just as surely as he did all those things in the past he glorifies them in the future it's an unbroken [22:19] God is the truth behind what it is to be a Christian and if you're a Christian you might care to be looking back and thinking yeah that's what God did for me isn't it an amazing thing to see it from that perspective let's think about this it talks about purpose God's deep and settled purpose he has decided you see he has the purpose if that shows up on the screen almost God's purpose that to be made like his son to have a huge family of many brothers for people to be glorified God has this deep and settled purpose and he has decided that he will do this and nothing and no one will stop him just ponder that thought because if you're a

Christian you're caught up in this thought God has a deep and settled purpose he's decided this is what he's going to do and nothing is going to stop him not even you nothing is going to stop him doing this nothing and no one will stop him fulfilling his good purpose which you are caught up in I think this enables us to be very confident and positive and the second thought he uses all things to produce this good including blessings including disappointments including setbacks including opposition including frustrations he uses all things please take it at face value think of the things in your life you're saying oh if only I could

I could be a real Christian and a good Christian if only or you know fill in the blank and then repent of thinking that because it says God works all things together for good even those things that you feel are such disadvantages take heart because God is great enough and big enough to even weave those things into his wonderful plan if you want a technical word for this it's not a word that Paul uses here it's God's sovereignty in other words his ability to rule all things according to his purpose for the good of his dear people so that was number one we can be confident and positive because of God's purpose let's look number two we can be positive and confident because of God's justice let's go on to the next verses what then shall we say in response to this 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 along with him graciously give us all things who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen it is God who justifies who is it that condemns Christ Jesus who died more than that who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ now I'm going to stop there because I want to make love the third point let's think about this against us and us their intention is to spoil life for us to damage us to

harm us or to punish us something like that being against us if someone on the contrary is for us is on our side they are there to enrich us to do us good to bless us and you could perhaps add some more words in there but do we get the distinction between those who are against us and those who are for us and

Paul says what shall we say in response to this if God is for us who can be against us I've made it out in a little table who can be against us if God is for us it doesn't mean there can't be any such people as opponents or opposing forces but what he means is they'll never win!

[27 : 05] That's what he means if God is for us who can be against us who can successfully be against us if God is for us you see and let's follow his argument through then 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 please notice there's another for there he gave him up for us he did not spare!

his own son Jesus Christ to spare is if somebody is headed for harsh treatment and you stop that happening you spare them so if you were at school and you didn't do your homework then you needed to go into detention which is pretty harsh and cruel perhaps the teacher might say oh well there's only once and they spare you that harsh treatment now God did not spare his son harsh treatment he did not spare!

him he did not spare his son his son took the harsh treatment as it says he gave him up he handed him over for us all Christ was not spared harsh treatment he was given up for us all and he says if that's what God did for us how will he not graciously give freely give us everything else that's a good question what is meant by this I think what he's saying is every good blessing and every possible positive if he's given us Christ how will he say oh well I won't bless you with anything else now he's going to say I've given you my son what more could I give what will I possibly hold back in terms of positive things could mean it could mean could things in life that we were talking about before and sort of saying that these things

God will take in his hand and make into blessings for you well he did not spare Christ how will he not with him freely give us all things and then he repeats the same sort of question verse 33 who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen and then he says again a moment later who is it that condemns so in my list of things I put the question against us who will accuse who will successfully accuse us who will successfully bring any charge against us who will condemn us now of course in one sense the answer is lots of people lots of things because the experience of feeling accusation feeling that there are charges against us feeling that we're condemned is something that all

Christians experience from time to time to one degree or another and what Paul is saying is okay you feel condemned you might feel accused you might feel that there are charges brought against you but please notice that there is another side to this that's against you but God is for you and you need to take into account the balance of this if God is for you who can really be against you and he says well who can bring any charge against those whom God has chosen so God has said to the said of these people they're the ones I'm going to bless I'm not against them I'm not trying to damage or spoil or harm or punish them these are the ones I've decided to enrich and to do good and to bless so there's a matter of his justification so the justification is

[31 : 24] God saying of people I am working I have worked decisively so that I have completely adequate grounds to say of this Christian person not guilty not guilty charged but not guilty accused but not guilty you're right he puts us into the box of people takes us out of the box mark guilty and puts us into the box mark not guilty righteous and you say well how can God do that well he says God does do it and how does God do it he does it because Jesus Christ died for us he bore the penalty for us he bore everything that accused people need to bear he bore condemnation for us and it's all used up at the cross of

Christ and there's none left over to attach to us Christ died for us and Paul goes on and he says more than that he was raised to life there's a positive where raised he was raised into this position of victory and success and clearness from all charges and we are with him in that and he goes further and says he is at the right hand of God and he's interceding for us so every time the accuser says they're rotten look they've done that again or look at what they did in the past you're not going to forget that are you and Jesus Christ said well I've got a!

very good answer to that I died on the cross for those people so shut up and get out the expulsion of Satan the accuser from heaven I saw Satan fall as lightning he is kicked out he and his accusations get out of here so we can be positive and confident because of justice it isn't that God

is sort of bending the rules to be on our side no he's keeping the rules so let's try and summarize that Jesus suffered harsh treatment on the cross he was given over to death and sin and wrath for us he died and rose and is enthroned and interceding for us he's on our side he's on our side he's not neutral he's not against us he's on our side if Jesus

Christ is on our side what does it matter who else chirps up against us and the accuser or the condemner is kicked out shut up and get out and we need to remind ourselves of that I think we often need to remind ourselves of that when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin we've really got to go through that process yes I have said this yes that is what I did in the past yes that was true of me but there is a but but Jesus Christ died on the cross so no condemnation that was the second reason for being positive the justice of God and let's come to the third reason which is the love of God so the purpose of God the justice of God and we can be positive because of the love of God so let's follow the thought on there isn't really a break I've just done that for convenience verse 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we face death all day long we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ

[36 : 11] Jesus our Lord and I think he writes it with emphasis even as to speak it with emphasis he's talking here about the love of God and it is love that is in Christ Jesus you see that in verse 39 he's not talking about the general love of God he's not talking you couldn't again you couldn't go up to any man woman and child and say this is true of you hopefully you might be able to say that at some future point this is to do with Christians this is who people who are in Christ and let me invite you again if you know!

you're! outside Christ you're not really sure you need to get sure and you need to sort this out with Jesus Christ and say I can hear what they're saying about how brilliant it is to be a Christian and how all your past is forgiven and how you can be totally positive about the present and the future I really really would long to be in that situation don't feel I'm that sort of you trust me now why don't you trust me go and have that conversation with Jesus Christ so I'm saying that this is about the love of God and I want to say or try to say it's not about sentimentality please notice the vocabulary of delight is not here it doesn't say God delights in us I think delight does say that in the Bible it doesn't say it an awful lot it's not it's not about delight in these verses anyway it's about power it's about a powerful relationship commitment to defend these things can't touch us because of the love of

God we can't be separated from the love of God the love of God is powerful to defend us the love of God here is powerful to defy opposition sort of the love of a warrior almost isn't it shall trouble or hardship or persecution or nakedness or danger or sword God defies these things the sword says I'm going to kill these Christians and then they won't be Christians anymore and that will be the end of them and God says no they're in my love I defy the sword to do anything to touch these people it's a defying love angels and demons now we'll sort these people out we'll get them off course we'll attack them we'll bang them out until they don't know whether they're coming or going we'll sort them out says the angel demons and the love of God says you certainly will not do that you certainly will not I defy and

God's love is powerful to deliver his purpose so let's not be too sentimental about it let's think of the way Paul's saying there's a purpose I want these people to be like Jesus Christ I want them to be in glory I have a purpose to make sure every single one of them is there and every single one of them is like that and that's what I'm going to do and my love will ensure that that's what happens and the question Paul says is who will separate us from the love of God who will get in such a position as to separate us from the love of God and he goes through the list which I've already read out and he interestingly quotes from Psalm 44 which is a psalm about the scattered exiles we're scattered through the nations and considered like sheep to be slaughtered and Paul says Christians are like that scattered among the nations very vulnerable in many ways

Christians do get put to death don't they isn't it funny they don't seem to get put to death in England these days why is that I'm not really quite sure it does seem Paul thinks!

[40 : 36] this is a normal it's! normal why doesn't that happen here I'm not petitioning that it would happen please don't get me wrong but it just makes you think perhaps we live in a rather abnormal situation but he says whatever these things against us death life spiritual powers present future anything else we are kept by God's love verse 35 verse 35 who shall separate us from the love of Christ verse 37 from him who we are more than conquerors through him who loved us I think he's looking at the cross isn't he he loved us and gave himself for us and then in verse 39 he says nothing will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord I think he's telling us that we can be very positively confident we can be very positively confident because of the purpose of

of God which nothing will make him change not going to be out voted not going to be taken to the court of appeal to change his mind because he is the court of appeal his purpose justice that all the condemnation which might justly make him change his mind that's all been dealt with and here we can be positively confident because of his love his powerful love to defend and defy and deliver so let me again say all this is in Christ all this is wrapped up in Christ you need Jesus Christ you need Jesus Christ and if I put it respectfully you might say well I need more Bible study and Bible study would be great but it isn't just Bible study you need you need the Bible study by which you will come to grapple with Christ and Christ will come to embrace you what you need is Jesus Christ and let me finish with that final the question that Paul asks himself what shall we say in response to all these things what shall we say in response to all these things that God works all things together for good that nobody can condemn us that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ leave that question with you God