Romans 8:26-39

Before We Dive In: Of what things, beliefs, ideas, or theories are you utterly convinced of? What convictions do you have that are so strong, absolutely nothing could change your mind?

Pause to read Romans 8:26-39 and watch the Scripture in Motion video that brings these verses to life. Let the Word speak to you before entering into the study and discussion.

Opening Question: What images or moments stood out to you most, and how did they connect back to what you had just read in Romans 8:26-39?

The video illustrates some of the most comforting words spoken in the Bible, especially to believers living in a city often hostile to their faith. As a few examples, Paul reminds us that even when we are weak and don't know what to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. He also assures us that God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, even when we cannot understand his purposes in the midst of suffering. And above all, he points us to Jesus Christ, who took upon himself the condemnation we deserved, so that we might stand forgiven and righteous before God. Though stated explicitly at the end, the common thread running throughout this passage is that no hardship, suffering, persecution, or even death itself can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Dive Deeper: Revisit the passage and identify the promises God gives us through Paul's words. Which of these promises brings you the greatest comfort in your life right now, and why?

The video opens with a woman sitting crouched, trapped within a box of bricks. That very box she sits in is then surrounded by brick wall upon brick wall, seemingly impossible to break through. Yet, the Spirit can. Interceding for us through groans our finite language cannot begin to articulate, the Holy Spirit reaches us when we are isolated, stuck, and afflicted, so that he himself can know and understand our hearts. The beginning of our relationship with God is not based on our works, perfection, earning, or winning; our relationship with God begins with his love for us. At the core of his heart is the desire to care for us, which is why he gives us his Holy Spirit: to guide, strengthen, and sustain us that we might be his light to the world.

Dive Deeper: We are reminded at the beginning of this passage that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us even when we cannot find the words to pray. In what ways does this promise encourage you in your prayer life? What comfort does this bring when you don't know what to say to God?

Predestined, called, justified, glorified: this is what God does for those in his family. The video uses squares to represent believers and members of God's kingdom, with Christ being front and center. When Paul speaks about God "predestining," the Greek points to the word, "proorizó," which translates to "before horizon" or "before boundaries". We can see that God writes the story to all of creation in a way no other can, calling after people by name to his goodness.
Predestining is not about God choosing the people who *will* or *will not* be saved — it's about God choosing *to save*, deciding to come and alter the course of history forever. With God's predestination, he calls us to himself with a beckoning invitation. Through this calling, he justifies us, forgiving our debt completely and declaring us righteous. And in this justification, he promises that we, too, will share in his radiant glory, conforming us to the very image of his Son, Jesus Christ. What Good News for his chosen people!

Dive Deeper: Remember the four actions Paul describes God taking on behalf of his people in verses 29-30. Which do you find most comforting? Which do you find the most challenging to understand? Why?

Remember the beginning in verse 26 where we are told the Spirit intercedes for us. We need God to get to God, and the Spirit does just that — he gets us to God. Now, in verse 34, it is our Savior, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us, too! Just as we cannot bring ourselves into a relationship with God through our own efforts, can anything we face separate us from his love either? The answer is a resounding no, and we have more than mere words to trust in this promise.
The great gifts of baptism, communion, and God's Word are our means of being predestined, called, justified, and glorified. From infancy to adulthood, baptism can never be undone. Through the Lord's Supper, we can see, touch, and taste the real goodness of God. Through faith, which comes from hearing the Word of God, we know we are chosen. By no other way can we enter into or be taken from his kingdom!

Dive Deeper: In what ways do the sacraments and God's Word serve as tangible reminders of God's love and faithfulness? How have these gifts strengthened or encouraged you in your own walk of faith?

While God promises goodness, provision, intercession, and grace, he does not promise a life without hardship. In fact, Jesus himself promised a life that includes hardship in John 16: "You *will* have suffering in this world" (John 16:33, emphasis added). As long as the devil prowls the earth, our hearts, bodies, minds, and souls will always be game for the evil one. Yet, in verse 34, Paul reminds us of the very foundation of our hope: Christ Jesus died, was raised, and now speaks on our behalf. Because of his victory, we can be certain of whom we ultimately belong to. Let's revisit the lists in verses 35 and 38–39: Neither affliction, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, death, life, angels, rulers, nor anything else can pluck us from our Father's hand. Nothing! Not a single thing can undo what Christ has accomplished for us. Through his death and resurrection, we belong to our Father in heaven, and nothing can ever separate us from his love.

Dive Deeper: Read John 10:27–30. How does Jesus' promise that no one can snatch us from our Father's hand bring comfort in the midst of the suffering and hardships described in Romans 8?

Discussion Questions

1. Paul assures us that God works all things together for good, yet the world is still full of suffering, hardship, and loss. How can we cling to this promise when we find ourselves in the midst of difficult circumstances? Can you recall a time when God brought something good out of a painful situation in your own life?

2. Of all the powers listed in Romans 8 that try to separate us from the love of God, which do you see most at work in the Church and the world today?

3. What makes prayer such a vital aspect of a Christian's life? What does prayer accomplish in our own lives, in the lives of others, and in the world around us?

4. What does it mean that we need God to get to God? Why is it important to recognize that our relationship with him begins with his work rather than our own?

5. Looking back at this passage and video, remember the myriad of promises and gifts God gives us. What thoughts, lies, or experiences in your own life tempt you to doubt or forget these promises?