

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 205 – July 24th – Romans 8:26-39

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

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Verse 26

Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται
 τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα
 καθὼς δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα
 ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις,

Now Paul answers the question, "But where is God in all this?"

ὡσαύτως adv in the same way, likewise

Moo argues that the link is to vv.24,25: "As hope sustains us in our time of suffering (vv.24-25), so also the Spirit sustains us in our time of weakness."

συναντιλαμβάνομαι help, come to help

Cf. Lk 10:40. This is what Martha says that Mary should have been doing for her.

ἀσθενεια, ας f weakness

"Those who cannot see that for which they eagerly hope need assistance to peer into the darkness ahead and to pray God's future into the present." Wright.

προσευχομαι pray

καθὼς adv as, according as, in so far as
 δεῖ impersonal verb it is necessary, must,
 should, ought

This is part of the weakness of our present condition.

ὑπερεντυγχάνω intercede, plead (for someone)

Some MSS add ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν after ὑπερεντυγχάνει. Metzger says, "the longer reading makes explicit what is implicit in the decisively supported shorter reading."

"The children of God have two divine intercessors. Christ is their intercessor in the court of heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 Jn 2:1). The Holy Spirit is their intercessor in the theatre of their own hearts (Jn 14:16,17)." Murray.

Wright comments, "Here, as in vv. 15-16, Spirit-inspired prayer is a key part of the experience of inaugurated eschatology (cf. Zech 12:10, where in the context of the coming great eschaton, God pours out upon the house of David, and upon Jerusalem, 'the spirit of grace and supplication,' producing mourning in the midst of the promised glory). It is God's intention that redeemed human beings should be set in authority over the world, should indeed thereby be the agents through whom the cosmos that still groans in travail should be set free. At the moment, however, these human beings are weak, since their own bodies, that part of creation for which they have the most immediate responsibility, are still subject to decay and death. In this condition they do not even know what to pray for, how it is that God will work through them to bring about the redemption of the world. Paul here assumes both that the church is called to the task of intercession and that the church finds this very puzzling – a double truth that most great teachers of prayer from that day to this would endorse. But, just as it is the Spirit's task to inaugurate genuine humanness within the Christian in the form of holiness (vv. 12-14) and the *Abba*-prayer (vv. 15-16), so here it is the Spirit's task to enable genuine humanness, that stance of humbly trusting God and so being set in authority over the world, which is to be anticipated in the life of intercessory prayer."

στεναγμος, ου m groaning, sigh

ἀλαλήτος, ου that cannot be expressed in words

Either unspoken or unable to be spoken. Barrett prefers the former, in harmony with v.27. Others suggest that Paul is referring to unintelligible utterances – a form of speaking in tongues. The sense is probably of a burden beyond expression. "The Spirit's own very self intercedes within the Christian precisely at the point where he or she, faced with the ruin and misery of the world, finds that there are no words left to express in God's presence the sense of futility (v. 20) and the longing for redemption. It is not (as some very early scribes added to the text, followed by the NIV) that the Spirit intercedes 'for us'; that misses the point, and makes Paul repeat himself in the following verse. What Paul is saying is that the Spirit, active within the innermost being of the Christian, is doing the very interceding the Christian longs to do, even though the only evidence that can be produced is inarticulate groans." Wright.

Verse 27

ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων.

ἐραυνῶ search, examine, try to find out
φρονημα, τος η way of thinking, mind
ἐντυγχάνω turn to (God on behalf of), plead,
appeal
οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

The Spirit places desires and longings in the heart of the believer which we cannot express in words. But God, who searches the heart, discerns and understands these longings and answers them, for they cannot fail to be in accord with his will. In this manner the Spirit intercedes from within on our behalf.

Verse 28

Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.

The thoughts here pick up that of v. 17b.

ἀγαπῶ love, show love for

The call to love God was the most basic demand of Torah. It becomes a description of the Christian, cf. 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; Eph 6:24.

συνεργεῶ work with, work together with,
help

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

παντα συνεργει εἰς ἀγαθον can be translated in one of two ways according to whether παντα is taken as subject or object of the verb:

- i) "All things work together for good ...";
- ii) "He (i.e. God, or the Spirit) works together all things to produce good ...".

To remove the ambiguity, some mss add ὁ θεος after συνεργει. Wright argues that God must be the subject of the verb; he is the one who directs all things to the ultimate good of the believer. "All things' – not just the groanings of the previous verses, but the entire range of experiences and events that may face God's people – are taken care of by the creator God who is planning to renew the whole creation, and us along with it."

προθεσις, εως f purpose, plan, will
κλητος, η, ον called, invited
οὖσιν Verb, pres ptc, m & n dat pl εἶμι

This provides confident ground for the promise. The God who planned and purposed all things from the beginning will see it all through to completion. His calling of his people is part of that unshakable plan. "Through faith in Jesus Christ 'all things' assume the form of a relationship in which the activity of God is not a mere stage play enacted for our observation, but is an activity in which we are intimately involved. This is the background of Romans 8 in which Paul explains that nothing either possible or conceivable can thwart the salvation of Christ." Berkouwer. Christians, "like Israel, are assured that they are called for a purpose – namely, to show forth the praises of the one true God in all the world (cf. Eph 1:11-12; 1 Pet 2:9). And – this is still the thrust of v. 28 – those who find themselves in this category can be assured that the purpose will be fulfilled. God will accomplish it." Wright.

Verse 29

ὅτι οὖς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς·

προέγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s προγνωσκω
know already, know beforehand,
choose beforehand

'Foreknow' does not mean simply that God knew beforehand who would believe. This foreknowledge is not God's response to something which he sees in us but is God's act by which he distinguishes between one person and another (cf. 11:26). It speaks of a relationship established in eternity – God setting his love on his people before time began (cf. Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2; Acts 2:23; Rom 11:2; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:17, also Gal 1:15.). "Foreknowledge is a form of love or grace." Wright.

προορίζω decide from the beginning,
predestine

This is distinguished from *προεγνώ* which is equivalent to God's act of election, in that it focusses on the *destiny* which God has determined for his people.

συμμορφος, ον having the same form,
sharing likeness

εικων, ονος f likeness, image

πρωτοτοκος, ον first-born, first

The aim of the conformity spoken of is firstly that Christ should be preeminent, but secondly that he should be preeminent among many brethren.

"This process will bring God's renewed people to the point where they reflect the Son's *image*, just as the Son is the true image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; 3:10). They are, that is, to become true, because renewed, human beings.

This is the point, at last, to which the long argument beginning with 1:18 was looking forward. The image of God, distorted and fractured through idolatry and immorality, is restored in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God; and the signs of that restoration are visible in those who, like Abraham, trust in God's life-giving power and so truly worship and give glory to God (4:18-22). But the purpose is never simply that God's people in Christ should resemble him, spectacular and glorious though that promise is. As we saw in vv. 18-21, it is that, as true image-bearers, they might reflect that same image into the world, bringing to creation the healing, freedom, and life for which it longs. To be conformed to the image of God, or of God's Son, is a dynamic, not a static, concept. Reflecting God into the world is a matter of costly vocation...

Conformity to the Son means, of course, conformity to his death." Wright.

Verse 30

οὓς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὓς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὓς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.

δικαιοῶ justify, acquit, declare & treat as righteous

δοξάζω glorify, exalt

The aorist signifies the inevitable completion of the purpose and plan of God: it is settled.

"All has been accomplished in Christ: the fore-shaping of Christ's people to be his younger siblings; their call through the gospel that announces his lordship; their justification by faith in the God who raised him from the dead; their glorification so that they are now already seated in the heavenly places in him (see Eph 2:6, and in the light of that, Eph 1:20-22; Col 3:1-4)... All these things, including 'glorification,' have happened already to and in Jesus, the Messiah; and what is true of the Messiah is true of his people... The steady beat of the verbs within Paul's solemn rhetoric underscores the steady beat of God's unshakable purpose set forth in the Messiah and completed by the Spirit." Wright.

Verses 31-39

Paul concludes his argument of chapters 5-8 with a "magnificent celebration of God's eternal commitment to his people." Moo.

These verses share several key words and themes with the beginning of Ch 5.

Paul "adduces two reasons for us to celebrate our security: the *work* of God for us in Christ (vv.31-34) and the *love* of God for us in Christ (vv.35-39)." Moo.

Wright comments, "The argument of this paragraph is, in fact, the same as that of 5:6-10: that since God's love has done for Christians all that has been done in Christ, there is no power that can shake that love now, or turn it aside from completing the job. The love of God, enjoyed in the present, will outlast and defeat all enemies, including death itself."

Verse 31

Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταῦτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν;

ἐροῦμεν Verb, fut act indic, 1 pl λέγω

ταῦτα all the many reasons for the confidence that Paul has written about in chapters 5-8.

Paul now poses four rhetorical questions, the implicit answer to each of which is 'Nobody'. Each question is followed by the reason or ground for the implied answer, 'Nobody.'

"They are proffered not as a challenge to Paul's readers to think up clever answers or counterexamples but as a demonstration of the certainty of his case." Wright.

τίς καθ' ἡμῶν; Not that there are no adversaries, vv.35,36 refer to opposition. The thought is simply that no adversary is of any account when God is for us.

Remember that Paul is writing this, "not from a comfortable armchair with the world at his feet, but on his way to fulfil a difficult and dangerous mission (delivering the collection to Jerusalem) that might cost him his life for one reason (opposition from Torah-observant Jews), and to begin another perhaps even more dangerous and difficult mission (to Rome, and thence to Spain) that might cost him his life for a different reason (the clash between his gospel and Caesar's kingdom). These, together with the normal hazards of his life as a missionary, and the threats from spiritual as well as human and natural forces, will be noted presently. But Paul stands firm as a Jewish-style monotheist: there is one God, and if this God is on our side, then no force on earth or elsewhere can ultimately stand against us." Wright.

Verse 32

ὅς γε τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίζεται;

γε enclitic particle adding emphasis to the word with which it is associated

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own

φειδομαι spare, refrain from, keep oneself from doing

God did not spare him from the full measure of judgement due to our sin. "The way Paul puts it here suggests a comparison between Christ and Isaac. As Abraham did not spare his beloved son Isaac, so God does not spare his beloved Son (see Gen 22)." Moo. Only Jesus *did* suffer death for us: God did what Abraham had not done, for Isaac was spared.

παραδιδωμι hand or give over, deliver up

"Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas for money; not Pilate for fear; not the Jews for envy: but the Father for love!" Winslow.

οὐχι (emphatic form of οὐ) not; used in questions expecting an affirmative answer.

σὺν αὐτῷ It is impossible for Christ to be given to us without 'all things' (all that is included in the promises and blessings of God) being given to us also, for all these things are *in him* and come to us with him. Cf. 1 Cor 3:21-23; 2 Cor 6:10.

χαρίζομαι grant, give, bestow

Verse 33

τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ; θεὸς ὁ δίκαιων·

There is some debate over the structure of Paul's argument in vv. 33-36. Do the opening words of 34, τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν belong with v.33 or with v.34? Murray argues that the phrase belongs with v.33, but it is equally possible to see the remainder of verse 34 as the answer to this opening question. Moo thinks that "The NIV reflects probably the best of options, with each verse featuring a question and answer." So also Wright who argues that this preserves the pattern of Paul's argument with his rhetorical questions:

- Who can be against us? No one; God, after all, did not spare the Son (vv. 31b-32)
- Who will bring any charge? No one; God, after all, is the justifier (v. 33).
- Who will condemn? No one; Christ Jesus, after all, died, was raised, and intercedes (v. 34).

ἐγκαλεω bring charges against, accuse

ἐκλεκτος, η, ον chosen

δικαιοω see v.30

There is no higher court of appeal than that of the judgment of God, who has already pronounced the verdict. Cf. Is 50:8-9a.

Verse 34

τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν; Χριστὸς ὁ ἀποθανών, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεὶς, ὅς καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν·

κατακρινω condemn, pass judgement on

ἀποθνησκω die, face death, be mortal

μᾶλλον adv more; rather, more than that

μᾶλλον δὲ formally indicates amendment or correction to something. Here it stresses that the death and resurrection of Christ are inseparable aspects of one work for us.

ἐγερθεὶς Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom s ἐγειρω raise

The aorist pass refers to the work of the Father.

Some MSS add ἐκ νεκρῶν after ἐγερθεὶς. Metzger writes that the longer text has "the appearance of being an explanatory gloss."

δεξιός, α, ον right, δεξια right hand

Indicates sovereignty, dominion and glory.

ἐντυγχανω see v.27

Viewing the latter part of the verse as an answer to the opening question, the logic is this: Christ died for us, enduring our condemnation. More than that, he is risen and now intercedes for us. Who then can bring anything before the judgment seat of God which will result in our condemnation when we have such a Saviour as our advocate? He never loses a case.

"That he makes intercession 'for us' is the reminder that the particularity of concern and provision which we noted already in the 'for us all' of v.32 is exemplified here also.

Intercession must have regard to the distinctive situation of each individual." Murray.

Wright comments, "As the servant songs have already been alluded to in this passage, it is possible that, with Jesus' atoning and justifying death also mentioned, we should detect a reference to the intercessory work of the servant of the Lord in the fourth song, at Isa 53:12."

Verse 35

τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; θλίψις ἢ στενοχωρία ἢ διωγμὸς ἢ λιμὸς ἢ γυμνότης ἢ κίνδυνος ἢ μάχαιρα;

χωρίζω separate

του Χριστου some MSS read του θεου while B reads θεου της ἐν Χριστῳ (see v.39). The reading Χριστου is strongly supported and binds together verses 34 and 35.

Christ not only defends us, he loves us, cf. Gal 2:20. There follows "a formidable list of potential enemies who seem bent on separating believers from God's love... Paul speaks of that which he knows; he had himself faced all these enemies, except perhaps the sword, and he must have known that this too might come his way, whether judicially in a Roman court or casually on the road (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-29)." Wright.

θλίψις, εως f trouble, suffering
στενοχωρία, ας f distress, difficulty, trouble
διωγμος, ου m persecution
λιμος, ου m & f famine, hunger
γυμνοτης, ητος f nakedness, poverty
κινδυνος, ου m danger, peril
μαχαιρα, ης f sword, war, violent death

Verse 36

καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Ἐνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

"The quotation of Psalm 44:22 in verse 36 is a bit of a detour in the logic of Paul's argument. But the detour reveals two of his key concerns: to remind us that suffering is a natural and expected part of the Christian life (cf. 5:3-4; 8:17), and to root the experience of Christians in the experience of God's old covenant people." Moo.

ἐνεκα (ἐνεκεν and εἵνεκεν) because of, for the sake of

θανατω kill, put to death, put in danger of death

ὁλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

λογιζομαι reckon, count

προβατον, ου n sheep

σφαγη, ης f slaughter

As those who follow the Saviour, the Lamb of God, and are being conformed to his image.

Verse 37

ἀλλ' ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς.

ὑπερνικαω be completely victorious

Not only a conqueror but completely and gloriously so. It is because Christ has more than conquered (cf. Col 2:15) that we have this confidence. "In other words, we are not only able to win a victory over these enemies, we are able to see them off the field entirely." Wright.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

The aorist may signify particularly the love which God has shown us in the cross of Christ.

Verse 38

πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε θάνατος οὔτε ζωὴ οὔτε ἄγγελοι οὔτε ἀρχαὶ οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα οὔτε μέλλοντα οὔτε δυνάμεις

πέπεισμαι Verb, perf pass indic, 1 s πειθω
persuade; perf act & pass have confidence, be confident

"The final γὰρ gar of this section explains the shout of triumph in terms of the settled conviction (grounded on what Paul knows of the Messiah, Jesus, the Lord of the world and 'our Lord') that the one true God has poured out, through this Jesus, love of the most powerful and unbreakable kind." Wright.

οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)
θανατος, ου m death

The last enemy (1 Cor 15:26).

ζωη, ης f life

The present life with all its difficulties.

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, origin, power

Murray and Moo suggest the contrast here is between angels and demons.

ἐνεστῶτα Verb, perf act ptc, n nom/acc pl
ἐνιστημι be present
μελλω (ptc. without infin) coming, future

οὔτε δυνάμεις breaks the pattern of contrasting pairs. Murray suggests the meaning here is 'mighty work.'

Verse 39

οὔτε ὕψωμα οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἕτέρα
δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ
θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

ὕψωμα, τος n height
βάθος, ους n depth

Cf. Eph 3:18 for similar use of spacial language.

κτίσις, εως f creation, what is created
ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different
δυνήσεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s
δυναμαι

χωρίζω see v.35

"The love of God from which we cannot be separated is the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is only in Christ Jesus it exists, only in him that it has been manifest, only in him is it operative, and only in Christ Jesus as Lord can we know the embrace and bond of this love of God." Murray.

"As the chapter began with 'no condemnation' (Rom 8:1), so it ends with the bookends of 'no separation' (8:35,39)." Moo.

Wright comments, "We are back with the picture that has been there in Romans from the beginning: God and creation, with the human race poised in between, belonging within the latter but called to reflect the image of the former. Idolatry had reversed God's intended order: humans had worshiped that which was not God, had ceded power to that which, being itself corruptible, could only bring death. Now, in the Messiah, Jesus, humanity had been restored; death has been defeated, and creation itself, so far from being shunned as essentially evil, awaits its redemption. Christian assurance, despite caricatures, is the very opposite of human arrogance; it is the fruit of humble, trusting faith. Those who follow the Messiah into the valley of the shadow of death will find that they need fear no evil. Though they may sometimes seem sheep for the slaughter, yet they may trust the Shepherd, whose love will follow them all the days of their life."

And he concludes by offering the following 'paraphrase' of the final two verses of Romans 8; "Paul has spoken, and we must speak, of the love of the one true God. This love of God calls across the dark intervals of meaning, reaches into the depths of human despair, embraces those who live in the shadow of death or in the overbright light of present life, challenges the rulers of the world and shows them up as a sham, looks at the present with clear faith and at the future with sure hope, overpowers all powers that might get in the way, fills the outer dimensions of the cosmos, and declares to the world that God is God, that Jesus the Messiah is the world's true Lord, and that in him love has won the victory. This powerful, overmastering love grasps Paul, and sustains him in his praying, his preaching, his journeying, his writing, his pastoring, and his suffering, with the strong sense of the presence of the God who had loved him from the beginning and had put that love into action in Jesus. This is the love because of which there is no condemnation. This is the love because of which those who are justified are also surely glorified. And this is the love, seen supremely in the death of the Messiah, which reaches out to the whole world with the exodus message, the freedom message, the word of joy and justice, the word of the gospel of Jesus."

Romans 8:31-39 – Postscript

Wright, speaking of the OT allusions in the previous verses, comments, "By skilful use of this complex web of biblical allusion and quotation, Paul is underscoring his basic contention from 3:21 onward. Those who believe in Jesus the Messiah, who respond with love to God's loving action in his death and with faith to God's raising him from the dead, are constituted as the renewed Israel of God. They are the true children of Abraham; they are the true servant people; they are the people who claim and sing as their own the psalms of the faithful covenant people. Law, prophets and writings are thus called in as witnesses to the fact that, in the midst of suffering and oppression, the one God of Israel has, in long-promised redeeming love, reconstituted Israel in and around Jesus as the true people of this one God."