

Life: God's promise of victory

September 17, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for Oct. 4 focuses on Romans 8:28-39.

When was the last time you heard a coach say, "We're in this game to lose it." Or maybe a player who said, "I'm going to give my full 50 percent today." The answer is never. These lackadaisical attitudes will not achieve the goal of victory.

Life isn't a game, but everyone still longs for the victorious life. God promises victory for those living the Christian life even in the most dire circumstance.

God has a plan, and it is for our good (Romans 8:28-30)

The "we know" of verse 28 refers to common knowledge. People say, "Everyone knows that," whatever "that" may be. In this case, the Apostle Paul said everyone knows God transforms desperate situations in life to something good. It's expected of him.

Scott Peck famously wrote, "Life is difficult." Everyone understands his statement, for life is not easy. In the midst of life's difficulties, God is at work. Think of it—God works when we are in difficult times. He's about the work of redeeming the situation in which we find ourselves to bring about whatever good may come.

God works toward the goal of redeeming bad circumstances in life and will affect whatever good possible. Some say he turns plan "B" into plan "A." People who find themselves in a situation in life where God's ideal goal for them cannot be met—Plan B—may experience God's transformation, so their lives can be back on track for what he wants—Plan A. Now, this isn't denial of the consequences of lives on Plan B but recognition of God's

ability to transform any situation so good will be produced.

God works for the best outcome in every situation for those who have been called according to his purpose. People who have heard God's call to salvation and put their faith in Jesus Christ will experience God's work in the difficult days of life.

How does this work? First, through God's foreknowledge. God knows about each person's salvation. In this context, God's foreknowledge not only refers to salvation, but also refers to the entire life of the Christian. God always knows what has happened and what will happen. Thus, with such a vast knowledge, God works to bring good.

Second, those God foreknew, he predestined. God controls salvation. The emphasis is on the fact we don't save ourselves. God and God alone saves. Those who are saved have a goal to be like Jesus. God works in every Christian's life to bring about the fulfillment of this goal. Naturally, every Christian should work with God in becoming more Christ-like.

Third, those who are predestined are called. Here they are called to make a faith decision concerning Jesus Christ. Some see this call as a draft. You have been selected without choice. Others see the call as a personal decision. You have been given the opportunity to take this choice. Either way, God wants you, just like Uncle Sam in the old Army recruiting sign, "I Want You."

Fourth, the called are justified. God places believers in proper relationship with himself. Christians can stand before God in a right relationship knowing the righteous judge will acquit them of all sins.

Finally, the justified are glorified. The Christian's final glorification will take place in eternity, but for now, each believer experiences a small amount of God's future honor and glory. What a tremendous experience for life now.

God already has given us his best—Jesus Christ (Romans 8:31-34)

There are times when it seems God works against us. In reality, he's not. God works for us; he is for us. Now, if God is for us, then no one or anything can be against us. God walks with us even through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4).

If God is for us, then what do we have to fear? Nothing (2 Timothy 1:7). Proof God is for believers may be seen in the fact he did not spare his own Son. He gave his Son to die on the cross for everyone. So, if God was willing to give his own Son, then certainly he would be willing to give us anything else we need for life.

Of course, believers don't receive everything they want. Rather, God gives all believers need, and most of all, believers need salvation.

In verse 33, Paul shifted his terminology to the courtroom with the words "charge" and "condemn." Who would bring a charge against Christians? No one. Christians are justified. They stand before God and need not fear his judgment. They will be declared innocent.

Who can rightfully condemn believers? No one, since Jesus Christ took the condemnation of the world upon himself on the cross. The cross was effective, and the resurrection proves its effectiveness.

Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35-39)

In verse 35, Paul expresses the idea of separation, which looks back to the charges and condemnation against Christians in verses 33-34. The dangers listed in verse 35 were real, and Paul faced these dangers. His audience related to what he was saying, for they faced the same dangers. These dangers pressure believers to question God's love. Paul assured them of God's love in all circumstances.

Paul's quote from Psalm 44:22, a lament Psalm, shows the psalmist affirming his faith in God despite experiencing difficult circumstances.

In all these dire circumstances, Christians are more than conquerors. N.T. Wright said not only have Christians won the game, they have seen their opponents off of the field.

Paul finalizes his argument in verses 37-39, which show the totality of what could separate Christians from God's love. His flourish of extreme statements firmly attests to the fact nothing separates believers from the love of God in Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.

Many people never have won anything in their lives. They've never won a game or contest. Never been part of a winning team. Never won a competition. Yet, everyone can win. My mom loves to play board games. Her idea of "winning" is playing the game with family. She couldn't care less if she won or not. She just enjoys the family playing a game in an environment of love.

All of us can win. God makes it possible. You are loved. What a victory.