

GOD REVEALS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Romans 8 is one of the most profound chapters in all of Scripture where Paul brings to a climax his arguments for both justification (3:21 - 5:21) and sanctification (6:1 - 7:25). They are given freely to those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He bases his whole defense for these two doctrines on three facts: there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus (8:1); there are many benefits given to believers by the work of the Spirit (8:2-27); and there is no possible separation from the love of God (8:28-39).

In chapter 7 Paul described the defeated condition of a believer living under the dominion of the sin nature, but in chapter 8 he declares the victorious experience of a believer living by the power of the Spirit. The believer receives many positional and practical benefits by the work of the Holy Spirit. First, the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death when Christ acquitted us from all condemnation (8:1-13). Second, the Spirit of God has placed us into the family of God to be joint heirs with Christ and we will be glorified with Him (8:14-17). Third, the Spirit is the first evidence of the glory we will receive from our inheritance with Christ (8:18-30). Fourth, the previous achievements of the Holy Spirit's work in us give us assurance that we will never be separated from the love of God (8:31-39).

I. The Believer's Acquittal from God's Condemnation — 8:1-13

A. Statement of the Believer's Acquittal — 8:1

8:1 — "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" – The death of Christ Jesus as payment for our sins is the basis for our acquittal from all condemnation; He died in our place. We are justified by faith in Christ alone and not by any works of our own. The work of the Spirit makes justification possible through the new birth (Jn 3:5-7). When justification is present, condemnation is absent (5:16; cf. 8:34). "Therefore" refers in particular to 7:25, but in general to 3:21-7:25.

"Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" – This conditional phrase is not found in most Greek texts. We do not know how it got into some Greek texts, but it looks like a scribe took this phrase from 8:4 and added it to 8:1. He may have done it to give mature believers proof of their salvation from their walk, and to make young believers prove their salvation by their walk. This phrase weakens the first phrase that there is no condemnation to those who have received Christ Jesus for justification.

B. Spirit's Work in the Believer's Acquittal — 8:2-11

1. Set free by the Spirit — 8: 2

8:2 — The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the condemnation of the Law. The law (ruling power) of the Holy Spirit makes us free from the law (ruling power) of sin and death. This is done by the Holy Spirit's ministry in regenerating us (Jn 3:3, 5; 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6). His ministry delivers us from the guilt of sin when He regenerates us. The Spirit will focus our attention on Jesus Christ Himself (Jn 15:26; 16:13-15) and on what He did when He made us a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The best is still coming when we meet Jesus; we will be like Him with no more sin (1 Jn 3:2). Then we will be completely sanctified (1 Thess 5:23). Sanctification is based on the finished work of Christ just as our justification is based on it. With regard to the law of death, we will have victory over it. When Jesus comes for all believers in the Rapture, both the dead and alive, "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:51-57; cf. 1 Thess 4:16-17).

2. Strengthened by the Spirit — 8:3-4

8:3 — The nature of Christ's work is to condemn sin in the flesh. There is a great distinction between the Law of Moses and the grace of Christ. The Law of Moses condemned sin in us by making a legal charge against the sinner (Rom 3:19-20). The grace of Christ condemned sin in us by paying the penalty for the sinner.

"Condemn" — This word is used in the New Testament in two ways: (1) to declare a sentence being rendered; and (2) to execute destruction (1 Cor 11:32; 2 Pet 2:6). The Law could judicially condemn the sin nature, but it was weakened by sinful flesh to execute the judgment. The Law had no way to carry out its judgment against the sin nature, because all people had sinful flesh. That would be asking sinners to destroy their beloved king (sinful nature). So, the Law made good judgments, but it had no power to enforce them.

"In the likeness of sinful flesh" — God sent His Son to become a man. His Son had the likeness of sinful flesh, but He did not have sinful flesh. There was no sin in Him when He became a man (1 Jn 3:5) and He never committed any sin as a man (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22). The likeness of sinful flesh was the closest possible relationship to sinners that God would allow His Son to become. "Likeness" is the word that guards the sinlessness of Christ.

"And for sin" — Christ did what the Law could not do. He condemned sin in the flesh by His grace and truth (Jn 1:14, 17). He graciously and fully paid the penalty that the Law demanded of all sinners. The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary defeated the power of the sin nature. When sinners receive Christ's sacrifice for their sins, they are set free from the bondage of their sin nature.

8:4 — "That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us" — The purpose of Jesus Christ's death on the cross is not only for our justification (to declare us righteous), but also for our sanctification (to make us righteous). We are to conform to His likeness, which will be completed when we see Him as He is (cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Jn 3:2). By the strength of the Spirit we are conformed to the likeness of Christ. Our part in this process is to yield to the Spirit as He instructs us from the Scriptures that He inspired.

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" — This is the right place for this phrase, not in v. 1. Those in the "flesh" (vv. 3-13) refers to unsaved persons; those in the "Spirit" refers to the saved persons.

3. Stimulated by the Spirit — 8:5-8

8:5 — "After the flesh . . . after the Spirit" — Those that are after flesh (unsaved sinners) are stimulated by the things of the flesh to be conformed to the world (cf. Gal 5:19-21). They are directed and controlled by their sin nature. The things of the flesh absorb their thoughts, interests and decisions in order to gratify themselves. Those that are after the Spirit (saved sinners) are stimulated by the things of the Spirit to be conformed to Christ (cf. Gal 5:22-23). The believer is to have the mind of the Spirit by meditating on the Scriptures, which reveals the wisdom of God's mind. That is where we discover His thoughts, which guide us to know His will (Rom 12:2; Isa 55:8-9). They are directed and controlled by their divine nature that has made them a new creation in Christ (2 Pet 1:4; 2 Cor 5:17). They desire, plan, and do the things that please God. The outline below shows the difference between the unbelievers and the believers.

	Unbelievers	Believers
Realm:	are after the flesh (8:5)	are after the Spirit (8:5)
Respect:	desire the things of the flesh (8:5)	desire the things of the Spirit (8:5)
Result:	carnal (fleshly) mind is death (8:6)	spiritual mind is life (8:6)
Reaction:	carnal mind is enmity against God (8:7)	spiritual mind is peace with God (8:6)
Repute:	not subject to the Law of God (8:7)	walk after the Spirit of God (8:4)
Response:	cannot please God (8:8)	desire to please God (<u>2 Cor 5:9</u>)

4. Settled by the Spirit — 8:9-11

8:9 — Now Paul wants to settle the minds of believers, so he speaks directly to them. He assures them that they are not in the flesh (unsaved), but in the Spirit (saved), if indeed the Spirit dwelt in them. He was quite certain that all were saved, but he allowed for the possibility that some in the church had made a profession of faith, but did not receive Christ. If so, they did not have the Spirit and were not saved.

The Spirit is very active in our salvation and sanctification. Briefly, He convicts the sinner of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:7-11); He brings the sinner into God's family through the new birth by faith in Christ (Jn 1:12; 3:5, 14-17); and then He dwells in the sinner to teach him or her about one's life in Christ (Jn 16:13-15). However, the Spirit does not dwell in them, if they are not saved. A sure indication of the Spirit's presence in our lives is a change of life with a growing desire to know, love, and obey God. When we are saved, the Spirit continues to work to make us like Jesus Christ. He wants us to love believers, unbelievers, and even our enemies as Christ did. He wants us to hate sin and help sinners as Christ did. When we are growing in Christ-likeness, the Spirit will settle our minds and hearts.

"The Spirit of God dwell in you" — The root meaning for "dwell" is to live in a house. God's Spirit dwells in a believer's body; it is His house. Our bodies were bought by the blood of Jesus Christ to be a temple of God (1 Cor 6:19-20). We must not grieve the Spirit with unconfessed sin (cf. Eph 4:30). Give the Spirit a clean temple in which to live. We glorify God by having a clean heart and mind.

"Spirit of God . . . Spirit of Christ" — The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ refer to the same Spirit Who is the third Person in the trinity, or as some say, the triunity. Thus, the Spirit unites believers to God and to Christ. All three have the same nature and attributes and work together in perfect harmony. Knowing that the Spirit Who dwells in us is God, should quell any doubts and fears we might have about salvation.

8:10 — "Christ be in you" — How can Christ be in us when He is seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven? When Christ ascended to Heaven, He sent the Spirit to be in all believers (Jn 15:26; 16:13-15). The Spirit is exactly like Christ, but without a body. So, Christ in the Spirit would go with them wherever they would go in all the world (Mt 28:20). This same fact is true of God the Father and His Son. Jesus told Philip, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9; cf. 14:7-11).

"The body is dead" — Our bodies are destined to die on account of Adam's sin (Heb 9:27).

"The Spirit is life" — Even though our bodies will die due to Adam's sin, the Spirit imparts eternal life in all believers because of God's righteousness through Christ's sacrifice of Himself for our sins on the cross (3:21-22; 2 Cor 5:21; Jn 3:5-7).

8:11 — "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you" — "If" begins a conditional phrase that is true, so "if" can be translated, "Since the Spirit." This eliminates any question about the Spirit dwelling in believers. It is a fact that the Spirit dwells in all believers.

"The Spirit of Him" — "Him" refers to God, the Father. This is the second reference to the phrase "Spirit of God" in Romans 8 to indicate the intimate relationship between God and the Spirit (cf. 8:9).

"Raised up Jesus, from the dead" — God by the Spirit raised Christ from the dead three days after His crucifixion. Christ bore the sins of every person on the cross and was buried in the grave. Only the power of God by the Spirit was able to raise Him from the dead. This is the most powerful miracle in the Bible.

"Dwell in you" — This phrase is used two times in this verse to inform us of God's work in us by the Spirit. First, God saved us by His Spirit, Who now dwells in us. When we humbled ourselves before God and asked Him to save us, the Spirit saved us by spiritually placing us in Christ to die with Him, be buried, and be raised with Him. This verse expressly refers to the power of God by the Spirit to raise us with Christ from the dead (6:3-4, 8, 11). The Spirit also saves us from the power of every sin by placing us in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). We must allow the Spirit dwelling in us to change

and sanctify us. Second, the Spirit of God dwelling in us will soon resurrect our corruptible mortal bodies and transform them into incorruptible immortal bodies (6:5; 1 Cor 15:51-54).

5. Supported by the Spirit — 8:12-13

8:12-13a — The Spirit will support all believers that sincerely want to overcome the sinful deeds of their flesh. They do not need to get into a 12-step program to overcome their addiction to drugs, or alcohol, or immoral sex, or pornography, or gambling, or any fleshly thing that controls their lives. The Spirit has the power to conquer any and every fleshly desire in their lives. The power He had to give them the new birth by faith in Jesus Christ is the same power He has to give them victory over every addictive sin by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 6:1-14; 1 Cor 10:13). We owe nothing to flesh to satisfy its desires, but we do owe everything to Christ to satisfy His desires. He desires that we work to bring lost souls to Him to be saved (Jn 4:34-36). He desires that we bring forth fruit that lasts (Jn 15:16). He desires that we teach saved souls all things that He taught His disciples (Mt 28:19-20).

Is Paul referring to a carnal (fleshly) believer, or is he referring to an unbeliever? The context in 8:3-11 shows that Paul identified those in the flesh as unbelievers and those in the Spirit as believers. Paul begins his conclusion in 8:12 with the word, "therefore" and contrasts those in the flesh with those in the Spirit. Those in 8:12-13 that live in the "flesh" must refer to unbelievers — they will die, that is, be separated from God and cast into Hell. If a person claims to be a believer and lives in the flesh, he or she has no proof of being saved. Those persons need to examine the reality of their faith (2 Cor 13:5).

8:13b — "Mortify" — It means something is put to death. We must actively put to death the sinful deeds of the body (our flesh) that serve our sinful nature (6:19). To fulfill this obligation, we face a paradox: we must put to death the deeds of the flesh so we can have life in the Spirit. We are responsible to destroy these sinful deeds, which begin with the desires of our hearts (Prov 4:23). However, we cannot do it in our strength. We must confess our sin, yield ourselves to the control of the Spirit, and stop our sinful deeds, trusting in His power as we obey Him (Eph 5:18). He will destroy every sinful practice in our lives.

II. The Believer's Adoption into God's Family — 8:14-17

The Holy Spirit ministers in our lives in three ways to bless us in the family of God.

A. Led by the Spirit — 8:14

8:14 — First, we are led by the Spirit into the family of God as sons of God. A "son" (*hios* in the Greek) has the position of an adult in the family of God, while a "child" (*teknon* in the Greek) is considered a newly born one in the family of God. More will be said about the child of God a few verses later (8:16-17). Paul used this concept to show how God improved our status compared to the status of Old Testament believers who were born under the Law. They were considered as children that needed the Law to govern them. Then He sent His Son to be born under the Law to redeem them from the Law so all believers might receive the adoption of sons (Gal 4:1-5). As a "son" of God, we now have a mature position with God with freedom and privileges previously unknown to Old Testament believers. It is an act of God's grace (Eph 1:5).

After we are saved, we are led by the Spirit to understand the truths revealed in the Scriptures (Jn 16:13). Then the Spirit leads us to apply each truth of the Scriptures to our hearts so that we grow in love for Jesus Christ (Jn 16:14). We must truly love Jesus to glorify Him as we give a gracious and godly witness of Him to lost sinners in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

B. Loved by the Spirit — 8:15

8:15 — Second, we are loved by the Spirit and brought into the family of God to have a loving relationship with our heavenly Father. We did not receive the "Spirit of bondage" to make us tremble with fear before God, but we received the "Spirit of adoption" that allows us to call out to God,

"Abba, Father" (cp. Gal 4:6). "Abba" is a tender Aramaic expression of love for one's earthly father, like "daddy," or "papa." Praying to God as our Father or Daddy indicates a very close relationship to God. This near and dear relationship to God by the Spirit gives us confidence that our heavenly Father hears our prayers and will answer those that show our love for Him and His glory.

C. Lifted by the Spirit — 8:16-17

8:16-17 — Third, the Spirit uplifts us when He witnesses to our spirit that we are the children of God. He assures us that we are in the family of God, whether we are young or old, mature or immature. This is the internal witness of the Spirit which makes the presence of God certain and real to us. The term "children" (*tekna*) refers to our new birth by the Spirit (Jn 3:5-8). If, then, we are children of God, we are heirs of God. Furthermore, we are more than simple heirs; we are joint-heirs with Christ. Although this union with Christ involves suffering with Him, it also promises supreme, eternal glory with Him (2 Tim 2:10).

III. The Believer's Anticipation of God's Glory — 8:18-30

A. The Attitude When Suffering — 8:18

8:18 — Paul told the believers that the sufferings of this present life were not even worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. If we embrace this attitude and take the long look while suffering in our ministry for Christ, we will be able to endure the suffering (cp. 2 Cor 4:16-17). Christ is our example. He suffered for us and endured to the end on the cross to save us. For His obedience, He received the ultimate glory from His Father (Phil 2:9-11). The glory belongs to Christ, but He shares His glory with us.

How shall the glory be revealed? Should it be "in us" or "to us"? "The Greek word is *eis*, but it can be translated both ways. Both translations are true, but the timing for each glory is different. In one sense Christ's glory is already "in" us because the Spirit of Christ began to dwell in us when we received Christ as our Savior. God knew we would receive Christ, so He already has justified and glorified us (8:30). So, the glory of the Spirit of Christ "in" us shall be revealed to others as we suffer for Christ. In another sense His glory will be revealed "to" us when He takes us (His bride) to Heaven in the Rapture for His marriage to the Church. His glory will be revealed to us further when He brings us back to earth to rule with Him in His Kingdom for 1000 years (Rev 3:21; 20:4, 6). And more glory is planned for us when we are brought into the New Jerusalem. Christ's glory "in" us and "to" us should enable us to endure suffering for Him.

B. The Assurances from Creation — 8:19-22

We need to be assured that God is in control of all things when we suffer for Christ. Some assurances are provided for us as we examine the hope in God's creation.

8:19 — Paul said creation eagerly waits with expectation for the glorious manifestation of the sons of God (all believers). This eager waiting is also expressed in 8:23, 25. The manifestation of believers will occur after the Tribulation when Christ will bring all believers into His Millennial Kingdom. Since all creation is waiting for this spectacular event to occur and liberate them from its suffering, believers should be uplifted knowing that they are not suffering alone. All creation is waiting for Christ to come again to save them from suffering. In due time Christ will come to usher them into His glorious Kingdom to reign with Him (Rev 20:6).

8:20-21 — There are two reasons why the creation is waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. First, it was made subject to vanity (life without meaning) by the curse of God when Adam sinned. His curse affected all finite creation with corruption. This curse includes wars, storms, famines, earthquakes, wild beasts, insects, disease, murder, adultery, and other destructive things (Gen 3:17-18; Ps 107:34; Isa 24:5-13). So, it is waiting with hope for the glory it had before sin entered the world.

Second, creation had no choice in its curse; it was subjected to the bondage of corruption by the will of God when Adam sinned, but it will be delivered from this bondage when the sons of God are manifested (revealed). This means that both the sons of God and creation will be set free of suffering together.

Why should God curse all creation for Adam's sin? The answer to this question is found in Genesis 1:26. When God made Adam and Eve, He gave them the authority to rule all the creatures He had made. God made Adam and Eve the king and queen of the earth. Satan took note of this because he wanted the earth for his kingdom. In order to do this, he had to conquer Adam, the present king. How would he do this? He needed to get Adam to obey him and thus sin against God. That act of rebellion would deny God was his Master and it would make Satan his ruler. Then Adam would have to give his kingdom to Satan. He got Adam to sin through Eve when they both ate the fruit of the tree that God forbid them to eat (Gen 3:1-6). Notice, Satan told Jesus that his rule of the earth was given to him (Lk 4:6). Who gave it to him? Not God, but Adam. When a king is defeated by another king, the victorious king is ruler of the conquered king and all his subjects. That seems to be the reason why God cursed Adam and all creation with bondage and groaning. He allowed them to be under the ruthless rule of Satan.

Why should the creation be liberated from the curse when the sons of God are revealed? Jesus Christ will conquer Satan's kingdom and He will put the curse on him and his followers. How will this happen? Christ will defeat and destroy all the armies of Satan's two chief leaders, the Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet, at the end of the Tribulation. He will cast both of them alive into the Lake of Fire. Then He will have a mighty angel bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit (the abyss) for 1000 years. After this Jesus will judge the nations or Gentiles (the Greek word for both nations and Gentiles is the same). Their judgment will be determined by their treatment of the Jewish believers ("my brethren") during the Tribulation (Mt 25:31-46). Those that treated the Jewish believers kindly will receive eternal life. Those that mistreated the Jewish believers will suffer everlasting punishment. Are they saved by their works? No! They prove their faith in Christ by the way they treat the Jewish believers. After Satan and all unbelievers have been removed from the earth, Christ will set up His Millennial Kingdom and all true believers will reign with Him over the whole earth for 1000 years (Rev 19:11 - 20:10). This is when the believers (the sons of God) will be revealed. It is the rule of Christ that will liberate creation from their curse of Adam's sin and return them to the blessings it enjoyed when first created (cf. Isa 65:18-25).

8:22 — The groans and travails of all creation are compared to a woman going through the pains of childbirth. Since the pain and travail are now present, the birth of a new world under the future reign of Christ is affirmed and it gives us assurance.

C. The Anticipation of Glory — 8:23-30

1. Assurance of hope — 8:23-25

The biblical expectation for our hope gives us assurance that our suffering is not in vain. We have hope for complete glorification because the Holy Spirit dwells in us as God's guarantee that He will keep His promise.

8:23 — The fact that we have the Holy Spirit in us as the first-fruits gives us hope. How is that so? The first-fruits in Israel's harvest were those products of the first part of the harvest. Those products were brought to the temple with thankfulness and with confidence that God would provide food for all their needs. In a sense this is seen in Hannah, a barren woman, who promised to give God her first-born son. God blessed her with Samuel, whom she gave to God, and He gave her three more sons and two daughters (1 Sam 1-2). Hence, the Holy Spirit in us is God's first-fruits of glory to believers. It is His earnest or down payment of all the glory He promised us. His promised glory will be experienced by church-age believers in the Rapture before the Tribulation. Then all believers will be brought into Christ's Millennial Kingdom after

the Tribulation. More glory will bless believers when they are escorted into the New Jerusalem after the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

Paul referred to the "Holy Spirit of promise" as "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:13-14). Our groaning is a sighing (not complaining) caused by our life in a sinful world. This is not our home. We wait for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies when the sons of God will be clothed with immortal and incorruptible bodies (1 Cor 15:50-55; Phil 3:21). This is a vital element in our legal relationship to God as adopted sons.

8:24-25 — We are saved by faith with hope for complete salvation which has not yet been experienced. We have not yet been saved from sickness, suffering and death. We still sin, so we hope for that aspect of our salvation which we have not yet seen. Ultimately, we will be sinless and experience no sickness, suffering or death. Our hope for these things will be fulfilled. In the meantime, we will groan within ourselves as we await the redemption of our bodies. If we cannot see the object of our hope, then we must exercise patient endurance as we eagerly wait for our complete salvation.

2. Assistance of the Spirit — 8:26-27

8:26 — The intercessory work of the Holy Spirit will help believers in the midst of their suffering. Our infirmities cause us suffering while we wait for the redemption of our bodies. The Holy Spirit aids us in our suffering because we do not know how we should pray. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. We have two divine persons making intercession for us: Christ Who is in Heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25) and the Holy Spirit Who lives in us (8:26-27; Jn 14:16-17). The nature of the Holy Spirit's intercession is "with groanings which cannot be uttered." These groans cannot be uttered in words and goes beyond our comprehension. These groanings do not indicate a lack of content but that they cannot be articulated in human language.

8:27 — "He that searches the hearts" — It is God Himself that searches our hearts (1 Chron 28:9; Ps 139:1; 1 Cor 4:5). The mind of the Spirit is in each and every experience. Since the Holy Spirit makes intercession according to God's will for all the saints, we are guaranteed that God knows the content and purpose of the Spirit's intercession. Hence, these unutterable groans of the Holy Spirit are clearly understood by God and are in harmony with His purpose. This is a comfort in suffering.

3. Affirmation of God's sovereignty — 8:28-30

8:28-30 — God's sovereign plan comforts us when we suffer. because we know He works all things together for good. First, it is good, because it will glorify Him, which He rightfully deserves. Second, it is good, because it provides us many benefits that we otherwise could not obtain. This assurance about God's goodness is limited to those who love God. We prove our love for God when we sincerely receive His Son as our LORD and Savior and submit to Him as our LORD God. Those who do this are the ones that God has called to accomplish His purpose. When did God decide which ones He should call? In God's mind, He called certain sinners before He created anything (Eph 1:4). How did He do it? He gave all sinners the responsibility to choose or reject His Son as their Savior. He called those sinners that He foreknew would choose His Son to save them (8:29-30; Jn 1:12). The correct grasp of foreknew is critical in interpreting Romans 9-11, so we are going to give it extra attention.

"Foreknew" — Some teachers change the meaning of foreknew, many deny its clear meaning and give it the force of election, and others say God simply foreknew what His sovereign will had already determined. The meaning of "foreknew" can be determined if we follow the hermeneutical rule taught by Dr R. V. Clearwaters, founder and first president of Central Theological Seminary in Minneapolis: the interpretation of any word should be "the closest natural equivalent, first in meaning and second in style." The natural meaning of "foreknew" is knowing what will happen before it happens or exists, as in

prophecy. The natural style of "foreknew is knowing how it and cognates are usually used" in the Bible. One example is from Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet 1:2).

To begin, we will look at four ways that Bible teachers say how God "foreknew" us. First, there are teachers who interpret "foreknew" to mean that God fore-loved some sinners and elected them. Here is their reasoning. When Adam knew Eve, he loved her, and she became pregnant with Cain. So, when God foreknew some sinners, He fore-loved them, and they were elected to be His children. But God loved the whole world, not some sinners, and He gave His Son to die for all sinners. This interpretation changes the natural meaning of the word from "foreknew" to "fore-loved."

Second, others boldly say that God's election cannot be made on some advance knowledge of a sinner's decision. That is too cold and formal. God's election is a warm decision made by His sovereign love. So, they make "foreknew" to be equivalent to being "elected." Here again, they simply change the meaning of a good word to fit their theology. Actually, it is good that God foreknows a sinner's trust in Christ before He elects, predestinates, and calls them. It would be a disaster for God to predestinate a person that turned out to be an unbeliever.

Third, some Christians believe God "foreknew" who would be saved, because He planned it that way by His sovereign will. This puts God's election before His foreknowledge. That changes the order found in this text where it says, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate." But these Christians say an unsaved person is spiritually dead in sins and cannot seek God and find Him (3:11; Eph 2:1). However, they fail to recognize that the situation changes when God seeks them (Lk 19:10; Isa 55:6-7). Then sinners are commanded to seek God. How does God seek lost sinners? He seeks them by His work in creation where some of His attributes are seen. He seeks them by their conscience which is enlightened by the law that He has written on their hearts (2:15). He seeks them by the Spirit Who convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:8-11). He seeks them by the witness of His ambassadors as though He begged them to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor 5:20). Since God is seeking them, they are commanded to seek Him so they can find Him and be saved (Isa 55:6-7).

Fourth, there are believers that believe it is the sovereign will of God to require sinners to freely receive His gift of salvation by faith in His Son, or freely reject it by unbelief in His Son. The Scriptures tell us that God demands sinners to participate in His election of them. We have no right to say that God cannot do it that way. After all, God is sovereign and He can do it any way that pleases Him. Read John 3:16, 36 and Rom 10:9-13 to see how God's sovereign will and our free will work together in His plan of election.

Notice the two "wills" in John 3:16 and 36 that determines whether we are elected or not elected. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (God's sovereign will), "that whoever believes on Him," (our free will), "should not perish, but have everlasting life" (God's sovereign will). And, "he that believes on the Son" (our free will) "has everlasting life" (God's sovereign will); and "he that believes not the Son" (our free will), "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him" (God's sovereign will). These two verses reveal how God's sovereign will works with our free will to elect or not to elect us. God exercises His sovereign will first; He gave His only Son. We could do nothing to be saved until God gave His Son. However, He will not elect us until we accept the gracious gift of His Son. He foreknew who would and who would not accept His Son. God's foreknowledge precedes His election.

Foreknowledge is an attribute of God. He is omniscient (knows all things). That which God "foreknew" expresses His foreknowledge. The knowledge of God is unlimited. This means He knew all people from the time of their conception to the day of their death (Ps 139:1-6). He knew all would sin. He knew that He needed to send His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of all people (1 Jn 2:2; 1 Pet 1:20). He wanted all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). He "foreknew" those who would freely receive His Son as His gift of love to them. He predestined those he foreknew to be conformed to the image of His dear Son before the ages began (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9). His foreknowledge also determined those He called, justified and glorified. It is a marvelous attribute of God.

God wants all people to be saved, but He will not make sinners receive His love gift. Instead, He has wisely left that decision for all sinners to make by their free will. If He forced His decision on them, it would not be love on His part, nor would He receive true love from them. So, He lets us decide whether to receive or reject His gift. Some teachers say the act of receiving God's gift is a work for salvation. They go on to say, if work is done, then it is no longer a free gift, but it is the payment for work we have done. But receiving God's gift is not a work for our salvation. Such a notion is contrary to the Bible (Jn 1:12). Jesus forgave a sinful woman, who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, who kissed His feet, who anointed His feet with fragrant oil, not for her works, but for her faith (Lk 7:44-50). Her works sprang from her love for Jesus, even before He announced that she was forgiven. Salvation is a gift from God (6:23).

"Predestinate" — On the firm foundation of God's foreknowledge, God has predestinated all His children to be conformed to the very image of His Son, Whom He dearly loves. This will happen when we see Him. We no longer have the sin nature. We will think like His Son. We will act like His Son. We will love God as His Son loves Him. We will glorify God as His Son glorifies Him.

"Firstborn" — This is a Greek idiom (*prototokon*) referring to Christ's rank or priority over all creation; it does not refer to His birth (cp. Col 1:15, 18; Heb 1:6). Christ's rank gives Him the privilege to sit at the right hand of His Father's throne. It also gives Him supreme authority as Head over the Church.

8:30 — "Moreover" — This word indicates an unbroken link of what God foreknew about each person to what He would do for those that would believe on His Son. The Aorist tense in Greek verbs and the context indicate that He predestined, called, justified, and glorified them in His sovereign plan before His Son created anything.

"Called" — God has called believers to fulfill His purpose (8:28). What is His purpose? His purpose is to have believers love, worship, and glorify Him, which He rightfully deserves (Eph 3:21; cf. 2 Pet 3:18). When He conforms believers to be in the likeness of His Son, it will fulfill His purpose. He has designed all things for His glory, but we will bask in His glory (8:18, 30). So, we can be assured that all things will work together for good "to them who are the called."

"Justified" — God declares sinners to be righteous, not on the basis of their good works, because they have none (Isa 64:6), but on the basis of Christ's good works and sacrificial blood (1 Pet 2:21-24). This was declared by God in eternity past by His foreknowledge for all that would receive His Son.

"Glorified" — In God's mind we already are glorified. It is a sure thing, but we have to be transformed into Christ's likeness for that to become a reality in our lives. Then we will be glorified with His Son (8:17).

IV. The Believer's Assurance of God's Love — 8:31-39

The fact that we will not be separated from the love of God is a comforting assurance. His presence will always be with us as a result of all the previous achievements of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

A. God Is for Us — 8:31-33

1. He foreknew us — 8:31-32

8:31 — "What shall we say to these things?" — The "things" refer to God's foreknowledge, predestination, call, justification, and glorification of us (8:28-30). Who can be against us, when God does all this for us? We will have enemies, but none will be able to stop the things that God will do for us (cp. Josh 1:6-9).

8:32 — Since God delivered His own Son into the hands of His enemies to provide a ransom for our sins, He surely will provide us all the things needed to save them (8:28-30). This is another example of Paul's logical mind where he proceeds from the greater to the lesser.

2. He justified us — 8:33

8:33 — God could justify us by His Son because He lived a sinless life (1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5). But that was not enough. Jesus also had to shed His blood and die for our sins to justify us. But that was not enough. He also had to be raised from the dead to make it possible to justify us. But that was not enough. We had to receive Jesus as our Savior before God could justify us. After we were justified, Who would be able to bring any charge anything us? No one would be able to make God reverse His declaration that we are righteous. How is this possible? God made His Son, Who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in His Son (2 Cor 5:21). That could be called, "The Great Substitution." He received our sins and we received His righteousness. When we have God's Son, we are justified. This is our assurance of eternal life (1 Jn 5:11-13).

B. Christ Is for Us — 8:34

8:34 — Who can condemn us since Christ is for us? Paul cites three ways that shows Christ is for us. First, Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (3:21-26; 4:8-11; 6:4-10). Second, Christ was resurrected from the dead to assure us that He buried our sins in the grave, when we received Him as our Savior. Third, Christ has ascended to Heaven to sit at the right hand of God where He intercedes for us with His Father when we are accused by Satan (Rev 12:10; Job 1-2). No one, not even Satan, can condemn us, when Christ is for us.

C. Christ's Love Keeps Us — 8:35-39

8:35-36 — Nothing can separate believers from Christ's love. Paul gave a list of things that are unable to separate a believer from Christ's love: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril (danger), or sword. He ought to know; he experienced all these things and they could not separate him from Christ's love. We need to trust in His love, even if we need to die for Him, because He died for us.

8:37 — "More than conquerors" – We can conquer every foe that tries to come between us and Christ. But more than that, Christ will bless us richly for remaining faithful to Him. That makes us more than conquerors.

8:38-39 — In addition to the physical things of the world that cannot separate us from Christ's love (v. 35), the invisible things of world also will be unable to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.