

Dear Friends and Family,

Victory in Jesus!

In 1939, E.M. Bartlett wrote this endearing hymn, which would be the last and most famous hymn he ever wrote.

According to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, “In 1939, a stroke rendered Bartlett partially paralyzed and unable to perform or travel. Amid such bleak circumstances, he wrote his final and most beloved song, “Victory in Jesus,” an optimistic number that has been sung by millions in worship services and recorded by gospel’s biggest names.”

Here is a wonderful and surprising rendition I think you’ll enjoy: https://youtu.be/lhXg_mISN0I

Bartlett passed away just two years later. It wasn’t until the 1960s that the song became popular with evangelical Christians. Today it is published in over 72 denominational hymnals. But how could a man, who had spent his entire life devoted to writing and performing Southern Gospel music, write not only his most famous hymn, but a hugely optimistic one, declaring ‘Victory in Jesus’, while he was nearly paralyzed from a stroke?

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Romans 8:36

No matter what our circumstances are today, we can all proclaim Victory in Jesus!

Pastor’s Point of View

Day 1 - READ: Romans 8:26-27

Consider the context of what Paul is writing about here. Remember that in Romans 6, we learned that as believers, we are dead to sin. In Romans 7, Paul showed us we are united with Christ. However, Paul acknowledges that our two natures are continually at war with one another. We will struggle with sin as long as we are alive. In Romans 8, he outlines that there is no condemnation for that struggle. Paul forbids a continuation of blatant sinning and instead pleads that we strive for holiness, while also acknowledging that we are justified before God through Christ. Our bodies are suffering along with this present creation, longing for the day we will be set free (8:18-25). We hope for that which is not seen, for a future with our Lord.

Paul transitions here to the Spirit. What is it that he says the Spirit helps us do?

What are we incapable of, according to Paul?

The groaning of the Holy Spirit, according to this text, is inexpressible. That means it cannot be uttered or that it baffles words. This verse does not say, as some have tried to interpret it, that while we are praying we should go into a trance-like state of groaning and moaning. It means that we should acknowledge our incapacity to pray or even know how to pray and allow the

Spirit to intercede for us. He will take our inability to express our needs to God, and express them in an inexpressible way.

Recognize that the Spirit's intercession for us is according to the will of God. Be clear that this verse is about the intercession NOT about our prayers. It doesn't say that our prayers are the will of God, it says that the intercession of the Spirit is according to the will of God. This makes perfect sense, as the Spirit intercedes to the Father, they are both one and know their own heart and mind and will for us.

This idea is key to understanding the next phrase.

Day 2 - READ: Romans 8:28-30

Consider: Based on what we learned from verse 27, what does it mean that God causes all things to work together for good?

What about when bad things happen? What about suffering in my life or in the life of someone I care about? (HINT: Look back at verse 18)

What does it mean to be called according to "His purpose"?

Paul uses a logical progression immediately following this idea to further explain it. He defines for us this calling in the following manner.

1. God foreknew us - this is not a statement of knowing our choices or what actions we will take, it is an intimate relational knowledge of who we are, before we were. God's foreknowledge does not remove our freewill, instead it brings about great comfort in knowing that He cares so deeply about us that He knows every hair on our head.
2. He predestined us - remember that Paul is defining those whom God called according to His purpose. Because He foreknew us, He also predestined us to become conformed to the image of Christ.
3. It is those whom He predestined, He called.

These verses are much debated and somewhat controversial, among some circles. However, it is important to consider Scripture in context with Scripture. Paul does not suggest the removal of free will, on the contrary, he makes it explicitly clear that we make choices every day (Romans 7:15). These verses are about what Christ has done for us.

- Those whom He called He justified
- Those whom he justified He glorified - AMEN!

**"Oh victory in Jesus, my Savior forever
He sought me and He bought me with His redeeming blood
He loved me 'ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood"**

Day 3 - READ: Romans 8:31-35

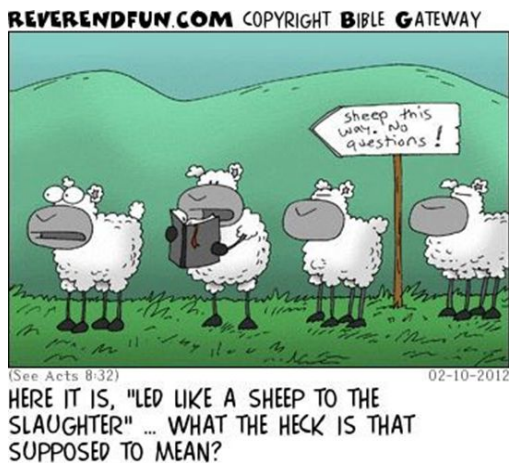
This is it. Look at this section of scripture and the list of all the questions Paul asks here.

- What then shall we say to these things?
- If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?
- He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- Who will bring a charge against God's elect?
- God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns?
- Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
- Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Now, answer them according to what we've learned from this text.

Day 4 - READ: Romans 8:36-39

Meditate on Romans 8:36-37



OR



Memorize verses 38-39

E.M. Bartlett, nearly paralyzed from a stroke, knew that nothing could separate him from the love of his savior.

**"I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing
How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see
And then I cried,**

**Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit
And somehow Jesus came and brought to me the victory.”**

May you see your life through a lens of victory through Christ no matter what trial you are facing. Remember whom you serve!

More than a conqueror,
Pastor Matt

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*