Romans 8:26-30

Verses 26-27:

--***Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.***

--***Likewise*** relates back to all that Paul has been showing the Spirit does in our lives: new law of life, led by the Spirit, made sons and daughters through adoption, made heirs of God, given the firstfruits of redemption, stirring faith, hope, and love, etc. and helping us in our ***weaknesses***—particularly our weaknesses in prayer.

--The word for ***helps*** was used when two people cooperated in moving or carrying something too heavy for one to handle alone.

--Then Paul tells us something wonderful (well, I find it wonderful), he says ***we*** (including himself!) do not know how to pray as we ought. I'm glad the apostle is humble enough to admit he didn't always know what to pray.

--Certainly, there are plenty of times that we do know what to pray for. But the *why,* and *when,* and *how* very often escape us. *Think of the demoniac; Disciples send the people away/call down fire; Paul with the thorn (3x) + to the Philippians under house arrest, Peter w/Jesus etc.*

--The Spirit makes intercession for us in these prayers. He knows our ***groanings,*** or the Greek could be *sighs*. We don't need to prescribe to Him. We simply need to come to Him, cast all of our cares on Him, and depend on Him. *Prescribing to God our own answers to prayer gets us into trouble.*

--Prayer isn't always about how good our words sound, or using special trick words, or repeating phrases. In fact, Jesus instructs us not to do that very thing! We should share our hearts with Him through our words, but Paul recognizes times when words and understanding fail.

--We don't need to pray with all eloquence or all knowledge, but we do need to pray with all our hearts, where the Spirit is searching and helping anyway.

--Do not be disturbed in those times when you don't know what to pray or how to pray. Don't be disturbed when you are suffering or in so much emotional pain you can't even think straight. In those moments, your very self becomes the prayer.

--The Holy Spirit will make intercession for us ***according to (the will of) God.*** Notice that *the will of* is in italics. The Spirit knows God's very heart, nature, and yes, His will too.

--In all of this, we should be instructed by the apostle Paul's humility and freely confessed *need* and *dependence*. Paul wants us to truly *feel* that spirit in contrast to the formulas, methods, and declarative knowledge we find in religious circles today.

--There are so many exhortations to prayer throughout the Word of God, but so little instruction in relation to forms. God wants us more in relation to Him because He knows our penchant to devolve from reality to religious rite or exercise like: "the secret" + "the prayer of Jabez" + "meditative practices" + "$1000 power-prayer classes" + "circles and symbols" etc.
--Paul's ***we*** is a dagger to all the unbiblical methods and mechanics out there. It brings us back to personal reliance on a personal and present God. So don't get discouraged in prayer—get dependent on the Holy Spirit!
--May I please bring another witness to bear?
*Bunyan (Prayer): *"And indeed here is the life of prayer, to have the heart kept with God in the duty. It was a great matter for Moses to keep his hands lifted up to God in prayer; but how much more then to keep the heart in it! (Exodus 17:12). . . And verily, may I but speak my own experience, and from that tell you the difficulty of prayer to God as I ought, it is enough to make your poor, blind, carnal men to entertain strange thoughts of me. For, as for my heart, when I go to pray, I find it so loth to go to God, and when it is with him, so loth to stay with him, that many times I am forced in my prayers, first to beg of God that he would take mine heart, and set it on himself in Christ, and when it is there, that he would keep it there. Nay, many times I know not what to pray for, I am so blind, nor how to pray, I am so ignorant; only, blessed be grace, the Spirit helps our infirmities (Psalm 86:11)."**
--It is easy to fall into the form of a religious practice, but it is much harder to keep the life, the reality, the power, and the spirit of them. In fact, it would be impossible if not for this new Spirit of life and intercession.
--The Holy Spirit is all over the world, with everyone simultaneously working for and caring for every individual son and daughter of God. And He is looking for those willing to join Him and Christ in the work of intercession. What a blessing when we do, however ignorant we feel.

Verse 28:

--***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***

--Here is a verse we often don't really want to hear from others. Truly, we need this spoken to us by the Lord Himself.
--This verse is something of a summary of **8:1-27,** and only those who love and are called have a right to this promise to be comforted by it. Not all men love God, nor do all men care very much for His purposes, and to them, even good can turn to evil. Some men are pressing into hell with a load of sermons and truth strapped on their backs!
--Yet Paul is speaking this truth to the sons and daughters of God to remind them we will never come out the loser for loving Him.
--He wants us to be sure of this and says ***we know***. This is to be one of our *modest certainties* in life. A blessed surety of Christian knowledge. *Study further the phrase ***we know,*** especially in Romans, 1 + 2 Corinthians, and 1 John*

--What ***we know*** is that ***all things!*** are working for good. This tells us a few things:
1) We cannot judge God's Person or work based on one lonely incident, isolated circumstance, or even on a single life. God is working everything together for a final end. We are too often tempted to see ourselves selfishly out of the context of Him, others, or any purpose other than our own.
2) All things include all the things we are not thinking about because we don't see them, but God still does! As Christians, we live with a personal God in a world that is both supernatural and natural. So all things include all things in all realms—seen and unseen.
--All things also include present suffering and joy as well as eternal suffering and joy. Present life and death, as well as eternal life and death. Eternity—God's ultimate purpose—changes the view of things.
Ephesians 3:10-11:** ***To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
3) Yes, all things include the good and the bad here on earth. Even humans understand mixing the harmful in for the ultimate purpose of healing in the end—venom in anti-venom or chemo to kill cancer. The cross of Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate example of this.
--Yet, it does not end there. We start to talk about evil, but we often forget to talk about the good. If the cross has so much of our good in it, what of the crown? If even the trials on earth work for our good, what of eternal reward in glory?
--Our discontent with God's hand in our lives—particularly with petty pains and petty annoyances—does not flatter us at all. This verse is for more than when you get cancer. It is also for when you are forced to change your diet, your social circle, or plans for the day, or any of the infinite levels of self-indulgence that exist in all of us and cause us to live as something less than what God would have us to be.
2 Timothy 1:8-9:** ***Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*
--Every single day He is working His good in us and would to God that we had eyes to see His hand in more of it. Trust and faith become the issue. Today, where God has you, His good plan is *working* for you a far more eternal weight of glory.
--For those of us ***who love God*** and ***are {the} called according to His purpose***, we will only discover more and more, both here on earth and in eternity beyond, that all things truly do work together for good. There is a great force, an unseen purpose that hedges our way because of the sheer will and power of the Purposer.

Verses 29-30:

--***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.***

--Paul essentially wraps up this doctrinal section of his epistle with one of the most beautiful and glorious doctrinal statements in the Bible.

--Of course, that is why theologians argue over it so much! What matters most is that these things are true, true as divine revelation. How we attempt to systematize these truths with our fallible theology remains far from divine inspiration.

--This is a declarative statement by Paul. This is not explanatory. These things are true and do not need to be reconciled. They are already reconciled because they are in the Word of God. We are to have our theology of *how Bible truth works,* but we ought to hold our man-made systems with great humility.

--We tend to make more of an issue of these things than the Holy Spirit does, as incredible godly men and women have been on either side of opposing theological systems for ages: Athanasius/ Augustine + Luther/Melanchthon + Whitefield/Wesley + R.C. Sproul/Tozer, etc.

--All these things are spoken of as if they have already happened because they are secure in Christ Jesus. God had the end in view from the very beginning and will therefore make sure we get there. Not one of His own will be left out!

Acts 15:18:** ***Known to God from eternity are all His works.*

--In the end, we see the Father has His sons and daughters, Jesus Christ has His bride and brethren **(John 20:17 + Hebrews 2:11)**, and the Holy Spirit has His pure people and temple.

--This is meant to encourage us and exhort us. If you won the lottery and were going to have 200 million transferred into your bank account on the first of the new year, how rich would you feel tonight?

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12:** ***As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

--Our ending image is that of Christ, not Adam! We are something more than Adam was and God's great work is conforming us into that something more seen in a resurrected Christ Jesus.

--Like the lesser things, such as thumbprints or snowflakes, each person we meet is a unique reflection of the image and likeness of God. They make a special type of impression that no one else could ever make. *One of the great blessings of a large body of Christ is knowing a wider variety of believers who display Christlike faith, courage, conviction, sweetness of spirit, servanthood, purity, authority, surrender, spiritual light and revelation, thankfulness, communion, love, etc.*

--There are seven colors in the rainbow. Each has a thousand different shades and can be combined to produce countless other colors and shades. So each man and woman carries some measure of divine beauty—some shade of Christlikeness or form of divine love that will distinguish them from every other creation in the universe for all of eternity.
--You and I are unique because God is infinitely unique.
--And as the image of Christ becomes sharper, so does the glory and impression of that image in us. Seeing and experiencing the unique ***image of His Son*** in each of us will be one of the greatest joys of heaven. Glorified man will glorify God more than anything that is not God Himself. Redeemed humanity will be another way God reveals His infinite perfections to us.
--Why is the end of all God's work to conform us into the image of Christ? Because the more we are like Christ, the more we are truly ourselves (who He made us to be) before God and man. And when we are most perfectly holy, we will also be most perfectly happy and most perfectly free. And so God will continue to work all things toward this expected end.